CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICS, ETHNICITY AND CONFLICT IN UGANDA, ACHOLILAND IN PERSPECTIVE, 1962-1986

The entity called Uganda is a result of a colonial policy that sought to transform a multiple aggregation of different groups of people into a viable political state. Although the British were not successful in forging a national identity, if indeed that was ever their intention, the country remained largely peaceful in the colonial period. While British colonial authorities' policies sowed the seeds of the weeds that overran Uganda after independence, Ugandans themselves must take blame for nurturing rather than uprooting and destroying those weeds. In the post-independence period, ethnic cleavages and conflict have dominated Uganda's politics. The crux of this study's argument is that the conflicts in post-colonial Uganda and Acholiland in particular can be fully understood only as largely a result of divisive politics, characterized by ethnic manipulation and ethnic stereotyping.

Introduction

One of the post-independence political concerns in Uganda is that conflict has been very detrimental to national peace, stability and national unity. Between 1962 and 2006, the country was dogged by civil conflicts and violent change of governments. There is evidence in the country's history to show that all the post-colonial conflicts that Uganda has experienced have taken on an ethnic expression.

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The first major conflict after independence in 1962 was the 1966/1967 political crisis that pitted the Baganda, the country's largest ethnic group under King Mutesa II, then also President of Uganda, against Prime Minister Milton Obote, supported by the army. This turned out to be a conflict between northerners and southerners. The 1971 coup by Idi Amin, supported by his Kakwa and Lugbara kinsmen that overthrew Obote, the civil war of 1981-1986 led by Yoweri Museveni, supported by Baganda, Banyankole and Banyarwanda against Obote II government and the insurgency in northern and eastern parts of Uganda between 1987 and 2006 have all had ethnicity as one of the driving factors. In all these conflicts, ethnicity has been manipulated, stereotyped and politicized.

Ethnicity and Politics: A theoretical overview

Ethnicity is neither immutable nor inherently conflictual. However, ethnicity becomes politically important when and where people are mobilized on the basis of objective characteristics such as culture, language, and territory. In this situation, ethnicity becomes an instrumental and destructive feature in a country's politics. As Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe have noted:

> Once ethnicity becomes a salient feature in politics, people increase its intensity by adopting ethnic explanations of succeeding events. Ethnicity then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; inspiring competing organizations and scapegoating.[445]

Ethnicity has exercised profound influence in Uganda's politics both in the colonial and post-colonial periods to varying degrees. Every ethnic group within

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[445] R. Melson & H. Wolpe, "Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A theoretical Perspective", in *American Political Science Review,* 64, 4 (Dec. 1970), 1115-1230.

post-colonial Uganda wants to be recognized and reckoned with in leadership matters and politics, irrespective of the size of its population. Postcolonial political leaders in Uganda have exacerbated the situation by giving more attention to members of their ethnic community than to national issues. As Okalany has noted, "post-colonial leaders in Uganda have tended to promote and focus much attention on members of their ethnic background for top jobs before others are thought of".[446]

In the case of Uganda, various groups have used ethnicity to obtain and use state power in order to gain access to scarce resources commanded by the state. Such a situation then facilitates the economic and political insubordination of other groups and generates discontent among the disadvantaged ethnic groups against the source of deprivation. Ethnic identities are therefore strengthened and may become the principle of organization and mobilization for rebellion. Brass observes that "by monopolizing access to cabinet posts and top positions in the military and parastatal enterprises, dominant groups stir up ethnic hostilities thereby provoking coups and conflicts".[447] The Ugandan case is illustrative of the entrenchment of ethnicity in politics and how ethnicity has led to political conflicts.

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[446] D.H. Okalany, "Ethnicity and the Culture of Eating in Uganda, 1962-1986", 188.
[447] P. R. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison,* (New Delhi: Sage Press, 1969), 178.

Ethnicity

Scholars have conceptualized ethnicity differently, especially with regard to two key issues: ethnic formation and the function it plays in society. Primordialists have explained ethnicity as an archaic reality underlying modernity. They perceive ethnic identities largely in terms of their powerful emotional and psychological holds on their membership. As Thomas Spear has put it, "Primordialists attempt to explain ethnicity's emotional power through evoking a common history, culture and destiny potently symbolized by blood in defense of group interests".[448] Primordialists like Thomas Spear, Edward Skills and Clifford Geertz assume that ethnicity are a historical artifact or that it does not change.[449] In spite of the revolutionary nature of historical change in the context of modernity, primordialists are of the view that ethnic identities are inevitable and, therefore, present in modern states.

This is not true, as ethnicity is not static and remains vibrant even in modern-day situations. In modern-day situations of scarce resources, ethnicity is ethnic consciousness 'acted out' in relations with others, whether individuals or groups, to maximize gains in situations of conflicting interests and claims over scarce resources, namely, values, statuses, and/or goods. In addition, primordialists also ignore how "tribes" have usually been modern constructions through colonial invention, which froze the inter-play of identities.[450]

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[448] S. Thomas, "Neo-Traditionalism and the limits of Invention in British Colonial African" 1- 27: 17. See also E. Skills, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil ties", in *British Journal of Sociology,* 7, 2003 113-45 and for more details see Clifford Geartz, T*he Interpretation of Culture*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
[449] Edward Skills, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil ties", *British Journal of Sociology*, 7 (1957), 113-45.
[450] P.J. Nederveen, "Deconstructing/ Reconstructing Ethnicity: A Paper presented at a workshop on Ethnicity and the State in East Africa, (OSSREA: Addis-Ababa, June 1996), 3-5.

The second area of contention concerns the notion of the construction or "invented" nature of ethnicity.[451] Scholars have argued out that ethnic identities are social constructs defined by historical conditions. In this case, since ethnicity is a construction, it is amenable to deconstruction. These scholars respect the view that ethnicity is not static and is constructed depending on historical circumstances.

The other important feature of ethnicity which impacts on this study is the function it plays in contemporary society, especially in the field of politics. J. Hutchinson and A. Smith[452] present the theory of the instrumentalism of ethnicity. According to them, ethnicity is mainly a political weapon or currency which people and especially political leaders find convenient to mobilize for selfish goals. In a sense, ethnic identity is a political resource just like money, and/or votes. Similarly, other instrumentalists like Michael Banton and Michael Hochter[453] argue that ethnic identities are not inherent in group or social formations. They see ethnic identities as social capital brought to bear on the political negotiation table by different groups at different times. This is in line with J. Hutchinson and Smith's position as stated above. The selfish goods or goals for which ethnic identities are used as vehicles to achieve are measured in terms of wealth, power and status. Joining ethnic or national communities

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[451] For detailed study See T. Ranger (Ed.), "The Invention of Traditional", in Ranger T. and Hobsbawn .E. (Eds.), *The Invention of Tradition,* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 234-334.

[452] J. Hutchinson. & A. Smith, Have propounded in-depth the function ethnicity plays in contemporary society or how it acts as a weapon". See J. Hutchinson & A. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 8.

[453] Others like M. Banton, "Modelling Ethnic and National Relations", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 17, 1994, 2-19 and Michael Hochter, "Explaining Nationalist Violence", *Nations and Nationalism,* I (1995), 53-68 contend that Ethnicity identities are today used as social capital for political negotiations.

helps to secure these ends either by influencing the state or in certain situations through secession.

Using the above context, the ongoing conflict in Acholiland in northern Uganda must be seen as an effort by Acholi political elites to change the political leadership in Uganda, not through the ballot but the gun. Seen in this light and despite primordialists' claims to the contrary, ethnicity lacks boundaries. Given that politics generally involves the process of distribution and re-distribution of scarce economic resources on the basis of values, political actors are adept at using different strategies, including ethnic affinities to their advantage. In that respect and consistent with the claims of this paper, ethnicity is not necessarily conflictual. Rather, ethnicity is always politicized and manipulated in the competition for goods and services as is evident in many African countries, including Uganda

In the political arena of most countries of Africa where ethnicity is politicized to the extent that it serves as a principle for capturing political power, it has often culminated in political conflicts or civil wars. Countries like Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Uganda are notoriously plagued with problems of ethnicity. Hence, their people have continued to experience political instability. As Michael Olisa has noted,

> If ethnicity can be formulated as an explanatory theory of an internal conflict, the theory is that unarmed or armed conflict will explode over time where two or more ethnic groups constituting a territorial sovereign state live in mutual suspicion or distrust arising from prolonged perceived or

actual monopoly of political power by one or more such groups and exclusion of others from such power.[454]

Politics

Chabal and Daloz contend that in Africa, the boundaries of politics contrast significantly from those prevailing in Western political systems. Whereas politics in the West is predicated on a well-defined separation between the political realm, on the one hand, and the more economic, social, religious and cultural areas, on the other, this is clearly not the case in Africa.[455] While it is true that politics is about allocation of resources, in Africa, including Uganda, the boundaries of politics are porous to the extent that it is expected that politics will lead to personal enrichment of the political leader and members of his ethnic group just like it is expected that wealth will have a direct influence on political matters. Significantly, therefore, there has not emerged in Africa the kind of differentiated political realm which is the foundation of politics in the West. Consequently, as each leader came into power, as Okalany notes, the members of that particular ethnic group would rejoice saying "It is our turn to eat" or "we have fallen into things". Indeed, key positions in government and other departments are dished out first to "tribesmen" before the other ethnic groups are remembered.[456]

We, therefore, argue that Uganda's instability and conflict is a function of a negative polarized imbalance of socio-political forces in which groups dictate

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[454] M. Olisa, "Standing on Sinking Sand: Ecomog and the Liberian Conflict", in P. Anyang-Nyongo (Ed.), *Arms and Dagger in the Heart of* Africa*: Studies in Internal Conflict,* (Nairobi: Academy Science Publishers, 1993), 269.
[455] P. Chabal & J.P. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrumen*t, (Oxford & Bloomington: the International African Institute/James Currey/Indian University Press, 1999), 26.
[456] D.H. Okalany, "Ethnicity and the Culture of Eating in Uganda", 188.

political terms only acceptable to themselves. This state of political affairs, in turn, generates reaction from temporarily marginalized ethnic groups who seek, using political or any other resources available to them, to overthrow the established political order. This then leads to frequent conflicts. Conflict in post-independence Acholiland draws its roots from such politics.

Colonialism and the construction of ethnicity

Once the British colonialists established the multi-ethnic state of Uganda, they made no efforts to forge its inhabitants into a unified and viable political entity. In the 68 years of uninterrupted colonial rule, the British halted and froze the natural process of historical evolution in Uganda. As J. Mugaju notes, the process of cultural diffusion through trade, intermarriage and migration was disrupted partly because the British then emphasized the differences and prejudices rather than the similarities between the people of Uganda. British policy of "divide and rule" enhanced the sprit of ethnic consciousness and chauvinism which became a source of tension and conflict in post-colonial Uganda.[457] Uganda's post-colonial leaders simply perpetuated this process of ethnic incompatibility started by the British.

The thrust of British colonial policy before 1945 was to keep Africans apart and to promote disunity, ethnicity and parochialism. The British implemented this policy through the system of indirect rule. Indirect rule was justified mainly on the argument that it would be cheaper to permit traditional authorities to carry out administrative tasks under British supervision than to have British officers

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[457] J. Mugaju (Ed), *Uganda's Age of Reform: A Critical Overview*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1999), 12.

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do so themselves.[458] The indirect rule system simply enhanced ethnic identification.

In conformity with the politics of 'divide and rule', the British colonial authorities did not establish a uniform system of administration over the whole protectorate. In Buganda, the British found and used a well organized traditional state on a relatively large scale. Having allied with the Baganda in the military expedition against the Banyoro under Kabalega in 1899, they negotiated a treaty with important Baganda chiefs. The Buganda Agreement of 1900 rewarded the chiefs with grants of freehold land (contrary to traditional custom) and rewarded the Baganda generally by giving them administrative control over large areas of land taken from the defeated Bunyoro.[459] The 'agreement' guaranteed the position of the Kabaka and introduced a modified version of a traditional Baganda hierarchy of chiefs, acting under the supervision of British officers. This treaty was central to the development of Buganda separatism since it gave them the feeling that they were equal to the British.[460] The British then used Baganda agents to conquer the rest of Uganda and to establish an effective colonial administration.

However, by treating Buganda as a 'state within a state', the British created seeds of ethnic tension and conflict in Uganda. The Baganda developed a high

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[458] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,*96.

[459] The counties Bunyoro lost to Buganda included Buyaga and Bugangaizi. These became known in Uganda's history as "lost counties" and were the burial grounds for Bunyoro Kings. This became an issue of political dissent and enmity between Buganda and Bunyoro in the post-colonial period which leaders continued to exploit at different times.

[460] P. R. Cranford, "The Politics of Indirect Rule: Uganda, 1900-1955" in D. Anthony Low and R. Cranford Pratt (Eds.), *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900-1955*: *Two Studies,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 178.

sense of ethnic nationalism and this was reinforced by their economic and political centrality in Uganda. Others parts of Uganda were then considered by the British as 'satellites' of Buganda. This has since led to anti-Baganda sentiments in the rest of Uganda.

The British then set out to introduce a pattern of rule over what they perceived as the "rest of the tribes" of Uganda, and that rule reflected aspects of their relationship with the Baganda. They recognised the three Kingdoms of Ankole, Bunyoro and Toro as areas for reconstruction. Consequently, they expanded the kingdom of Ankole to include some smaller kingdoms to the west like Buhweju and Mpororo. The British also expanded Toro as a buffer to Bunyoro, while they reduced Bunyoro in size as punishment for its rebellion against British colonialism.[461] This means that none of the kingdoms corresponded exactly to the areas under their influence in the pre-colonial period. The most noticeable feature with this new adjustment was that the ethnic interest of areas expanded into was not taken care of, leading to increased ethnic tension among the different ethnic units in Uganda.

Besides, the British sent a Muganda collaborator and an important chief-Semei Kakungulu to Busoga to "weld scattered chiefdoms into a tribal organization,"[462] and also to Teso and Bukedi in eastern Uganda. Baganda agents went to Lango in northern Uganda and Kigezi in western Uganda as well. In these areas, Baganda agents were used to rule people who had no history of hierarchical

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[461] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 98.
[462] H. B. Thomas & Scott, *Uganda*, 9.

rule. The Baganda agents were, thus, sent out to establish hierarchical chiefly rule in such areas which had no tradition of hierarchy like Teso, Kigezi and Lango. Therefore, while Buganda retained its own system of government, other parts of Uganda had their systems destroyed. This use of Baganda agents was to become a problem later leading to conflict between Baganda agents and the immediate post-independence government under Prime Minister Obote. It also partly explains why during the 1950s and 1960s, the ambitions of Buganda nationalism clashed with the integrative policies of the central government.

The Uganda version of indirect rule significantly contributed to the growth of ethnic identification. Most importantly, it sanctioned the notion that the existence of an ethnic unit was a valid basis for an administrative unit. At the same time, British policy increased the frustration of ethnic units which had lost territory or traditional office bearers then replaced by Baganda agents. By using Baganda agents and by giving Baganda a degree of self-government denied all other Kingdoms and districts, the British contributed to the resentment other people felt for the Baganda and to their growing awareness that only by demonstrating a cultural unity approximating that of the Baganda could they get similar concessions from the British. This belief survived the colonial period, leading to a situation of competitive demands on the central government by different ethnic or tribal groups. For instance, the frequent demand for districts today by almost each ethnic group is testimony to the above.

Besides, the other important element that entrenched ethnicity in the body politic of Uganda were the arbitrary territorial colonial boundaries among cultural and linguistic aggregates, which eliminated the fluid situation typical of the earlier period. One important reason for drawing district and county boundaries in accordance with cultural and linguistic aggregates was to simplify the task of keeping law and order for colonial officers.

The 1949 Local Government Ordinance and other subsequent Acts determined that the district (or kingdom) would be the basic local government unit. The new Ordinance of 1949 gave corporate powers and responsibilities to the district councils of those areas where no agreements had been signed. This Ordinance even spelt out clearly that districts were to be composed of one tribe. In the process of determining district boundaries, much care was taken to include wherever possible and practical, one ethnic group in one district. These district councils discussed and dealt with issues which affected their population only; hence promoting ethnic rather than national loyalties.

In the 1950s, the colonial policy based on tribes led Governor Cohen to suggest that African members of the Legislative Council should be elected by district councils because "abler representatives would likely be chosen, since it is the district which is the natural unit of public life everywhere outside Buganda: and where tribal loyalty and cohesion is strong."[463]

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[463] For details on this see "Correspondence Relating to the legislative council in Uganda", quoted in D. Apter. *The Political kingdom*, in *Uganda: A Study of Bureaucratic Nationalism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 272.

In 1958, the district was made the constituency in those areas in which representatives were to be elected. By necessity, the district also later became the 'natural unit' for organization of political parties on the eve of independence; with the result that political parties in independent Uganda tended to follow ethnic categorization of the country.

In this new administrative re-arrangement, Buganda again led the way. In the 1955 Agreement, which reflected the 1900 treaty, the central government's control over the Buganda government was greatly reduced. Buganda, for example, gained the right to select its chiefs and other officers through its own Appointment Board. It also could introduce government by ministers on the pattern of the English National government. Baganda civil servants, who had been posted to other districts, returned to take up newly created positions in the Kabaka's government. In this way, "tribalism and local service appointment were brought together as never before".[464]

The other kingdoms and districts were anxious to acquire the same governmental structure and autonomy. As Leys put it, "both the colonial administration and non-Baganda political leaders (saw) political development then in terms of building up their own kingdom and district administrations to comparable level of competence and vigour".[465] Since competition with Buganda was, by definition, ethnic, the rivalry stimulated the entry of ethnicity

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[464] D. Apter, The *Political Kingdom in* Uganda, 362.
[465] C. Leys, Politicians *and Policies*: *An Essay on Politics in Acholi*, *Uganda,* 9-10.

into politics. In the period towards independence, each district struggled to achieve "federal status" and a "constitutional head", as Buganda had.

Regional disparities and conflict in Uganda

Economic distortions compounded the problem of ethnicity during the colonial period. British colonialism created regional imbalances and ethnic specialization. Southern and, to some extent, eastern Uganda became regions of peasant producers of cotton and coffee. These cash crops were augmented by foreign owned tea and sugar plantations as well as trade and import substitution industries. Other areas, such as Kigezi, Ankole and West Nile, became labour reservoirs for the monetary sector of the colonial economy. Acholi, Teso, Lango and, to some extent, West Nile became catchment areas for the armed forces and police. The British were happy to leave Karamoja as "a human zoo" for posterity.[466] Cash crop production was officially discouraged in northern Uganda and West Nile because it would negatively affect the labour flow to the south. The result of this 'division of labour' was the building of ethnic cleavages that would entrench ethnic consciousness in the country in the long run. Therefore, through 'divide and rule' tactics, one region was pitted against another and one nationality (tribe) against another. As Mamdani, has summed it up,

> Every institution touched by the hand of the colonial state was given a pronounced regional or nationality character. It became a truism that a soldier must be a northerner, a civil servant a southerner, and a merchant an Asian.[467]

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[466] J. Mugaju (Ed.), Uganda's *Age of Reform,* 15.
[467] M. Mamdani, *Imperialism and Fascism in Uganda* 10.

These distortions proved troublesome for the rulers of independent Uganda. As a result of the assignment given to the north (of providing soldiers and policemen), in the post-colonial period, the ruling elite from this region was quick to exploit this military predominance to acquire and retain power undemocratically. The regional inequality that resulted from this policy also helped to crystallize ethnic consciousness in post-colonial Uganda.

Discrepancies in regional and, therefore, ethnic development and wealth characteristic of Uganda have produced antagonisms that have often led to violence, either directly or indirectly. The greatest, and most problematic disparity created by the colonial power, the British, and sustained by post-colonial leaders was precisely between the centre-Buganda and the rest of the country or, geographically, between the North and South.

In Uganda, as in many other African countries, the spread of new social and economic influences radiates out from the capital city.[468] Kampala and Entebbe, both in Buganda, were the focus of colonial influence, since it was there that Captain, later Lord; Lugard established the first permanent military presence. Most Ugandans are deeply aware that, to a large extent, the Baganda owe their prominent position to this fortuitous historical event.

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[468] If one follows up the historical pattern of establishing modern facilities like post office, roads, railways, one finds that the nearer a 'location is to Kampala, the higher the possibility of it obtaining modern facilities like post offices and banks.

Socially, the British colonial administration considered the Baganda as superior to other ethnic groups in the Protectorate[469] and it was, in effect, by extending Buganda rule that the rest of Uganda was consolidated. As the process of ethnification intensified, as Mamdani notes, "the Buganda kingdom impressed its future colonialists and came to represent the most developed example of a centralized model".[470] With time, the Acholi society was to represent the stereotyped other. Buganda's political institutions were exported to the rest of the country. The Baganda were used as partners in the conquest of Uganda and later as sub-imperialist agents. Such moves were bound to upset other Ugandans, feed anti-Baganda sentiments, and encourage other ethnic groups to unite against the Baganda.[471]

Buganda was not only the nucleus from which European expansion to the rest of Uganda radiated, but it also received early benefits in the fields of education, medical services and communication networks, among others. Because of its proximity to the administrative centres of Kampala and Entebbe, Buganda gained more from the multiplier effect of government development initiatives than the isolated regions of the protectorate, such as the Northern Province. When cash crops, starting with cotton, were introduced in 1903, Buganda was the first region selected for experimentation.[472] The production of these cash crops was based on both peasant and migrant labour mainly drawn from the North, West Nile, Kigezi and Rwanda. In the north, principally Acholi and

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[469] M. Twaddle, *The Expulsion of a Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians,* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 303.
[470] M. Mahmood, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda*, 28.
[471] Ethnic nationalism tended to develop and deepen from this kind of political process. For instance the Bagisu and Banyoro who were ruled by Baganda sub-imperialists consolidated as a 'tribes" partly in opposition to Buganda agents.
[472] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 51.

Lango, the colonialists recruited soldiers and policemen, as well as labourers, for factories and plantations in the South.[473]

While other areas, including the Eastern Province, began to grow cash crops on a notable scale in the 1950s, it was noted that "one of the principal developments since the World War II has been the concentration of agricultural wealth in certain areas of the protectorate and especially Buganda".[474] This regional concentration of agricultural wealth means that Baganda peasants were richer than others despite the official appropriation of their surplus. Therefore, through divide and rule tactics, one region was pitted against another and one ethnic group against another.

During the colonial period, bursaries were accorded to pupils who excelled to enable them attain higher educational grades. In parts of Buganda, non-Baganda were officially segregated from the scheme. Christine Obbo explains how children of immigrants into Mukono in Buganda could not access such scholarships. She quotes a former teacher of a prominent secondary school, who stated:

> In all my classes, the non-Baganda children were hard working and often achieved top grades even in Luganda (language of Buganda). Every time I recommended any of these children whom the fellowships are meant to reward, none of them ever received any. The headmaster always managed to reward the academically poor pupils just because they happened to be his children or those of his Baganda friends and relatives.[475]

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[473] M. Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda,* 10.
[474] C. C. Wrigley, Crops *and Wealth in Uganda*, 69-80.
[475] C. Obbo, "What Went Wrong in Uganda?", in H. Holger Bernt & M. Twaddle (Eds.), *Uganda Now*, (London: James Currey, 1988), 208.

Such ethnic segregation through education enabled Baganda to forge ahead of other districts and tribes.

Moreover, most of the social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals was also concentrated in Buganda. In a country with an enormous income gap between peasant farmer and civil servant, the importance of gaining a place in secondary school and in university can scarcely be underestimated. Until independence in 1962, the Baganda filled a disproportionate number in secondary school places. For instance in 1920, Baganda had 368 schools, Western and Eastern Provinces had 42 each and there was none in Northern Uganda.[476] On the eve of independence in 1960, Baganda filled 29 percent of the secondary school places available, while Acholi had 7.1 percent, Lango, 6.5 percent and Japadhola had 1.4 percent. This is despite the fact that, according to the 1959 population census, Baganda constituted a mere 16.3 percent of a total population of 11 million people.[477]

Buganda's overrepresentation continued even at Makerere University College; the only university in East Africa during the colonial period. Considering that university degrees were the gateway to the most powerful positions and greatest economic opportunities, the fact that 40 percent of the 1698 persons who entered Makerere before 1954 from all parts of East Africa were Baganda explains much of their predominance on the eve of independence.[478] Although the Baganda's overrepresentation has dropped, they still provide a large percent

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[476] T. Kabwegyere, *The Politics of State Formation in Uganda*, 179.
[477] Government of Uganda, *Uganda Census: Annual Report of the Education Department,* (1961), 27-28
[478] J. E. Goldthorpe, An *African Elite: Makerere College Students, 1922-1960,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 24.

of university entrants today. In the colonial period, government policy was carefully tailored to promote and protect the position of Buganda in Uganda, since, according to the British, Buganda had not exhibited any social resistance to central authority.[479]

Economic transformation in the field of industrial development in the colonial period still favoured the Baganda at the expense of other ethnic groups. When the capital city Kampala - already offering many central government jobs - attracted industry, the Baganda were more available to take up wage employment. This enabled them to be more stable employees and advance more rapidly into skilled position.[480]

On the contrary, areas like Acholiland did not easily benefit from such opportunities except when their children migrated South in search of paid jobs. By 1963, there was no industry in Acholi, except the two cotton ginneries owned by the West and East Acholi co-operative unions. The Acholi trading sector, by 1963, consisted of 556 traders, of whom 445 were Africans. A year later, the number of African traders had risen to 507.[481] In other words, apart from a few Asian traders in Gulu and Kitgum, trade was still mainly an affair of tiny village stores.

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[479] In his praise of the Baganda as agents in the implementation of Indirect rule, Lord Lugard strongly believed so. Quoted in Apter David, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study of Bureaucratic Nationalisms,*(Princeton; Princeton University Press 1967) , 366.

[480] Fallers Lloyd, *Bantu Bureaucracy*: *A Century of Political Evolution among the Basoga of Uganda* (Chicago: University Press, 1965), 148.

[481] C. Leys, Politicians *and Policies: An Essay on Politics in Acholi,* 15.

Translated into political terms, this regional imbalance generated a psycho-chronic sense of grievance among the "deprived" and a psycho-chronic sense of possessiveness among the disadvantaged. The sense of regional deprivation was always reflected in the Parliamentary speeches of the Northern leadership. Such was the economic plight of the Acholi soon after independence in 1962 that Alexander Latin, the area member of Parliament, introduced a motion urging the Uganda Development Co-operation to establish cattle ranches in Acholi. As he strongly stated:

> Acholi District is poor. It has remained poor for a long time for various reasons. It is far away from the cattle trade and money circulation. There is lack of employment in the district. This has been illustrated in many ways. In the past, we did get a lot of people coming down here (Buganda) in search of work. Most of them go back worse than when they came and this did not help them very much...Acholi District is one of those areas in Uganda which has lagged behind economically.[482]

Another member of Parliament, Okello voiced the same grievance about the situation in West Nile (Part of Northern Province) when he asserted:

> What I know, [all] the government (both colonial and post-colonial) does think about West Nile is to keep it a human zoo, and get cheap labourers from it, to work in places like Kakira, to work in Kawolo (both sugar plantations) and in places where new industries will be started-because I do believe that government does think that if one, two or more industries are started in West Nile, the flow of labour from that 'district to other districts will be stopped.[483]

This sense of possessiveness in the expression of ethnic nationalism continued into the post-colonial period and partly explains why the Acholi army officers organized a coup against a fellow northerner, Obote, in 1985 and was part of

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[482] Uganda Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard,* 20., 284-285
[483] Uganda Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard,* 35, 3135-3136

the many reasons Idi Amin advanced to justify his military takeover in 1971; again overthrowing Obote, a Langi from the north.

The general country employment statistics in 1967 showed how Buganda was ahead of other regions. Also in 1967, out of the registered employees, 109,800 were in Buganda, 58,800 in the Eastern Province, 53,300 in Western Province and 20,000 in Northern Province (Acholi, Lango and West Nile combined).[484]

With time, members of other ethnic groups became acutely conscious that they had to become 'strangers' in the home of the Baganda to earn high incomes. They resented the fact that the development of their schools and hospitals lagged behind those in Buganda. They watched the Baganda consolidate their numerical advantage by becoming the educational and economic elite as well. By demanding a share of the benefits of development equal to that of the Baganda, the disadvantaged 'tribes' intensified the ethnic basis of Ugandan politics. The Baganda were only out competed in the police and Army where the Acholi and Langi were dominant.

Even though Buganda's greater wealth created frustration among the Acholi, Langi and West Nilers who were their labourers, the same differential modernization process under colonial rule also created resentment in other districts and kingdoms. The case of the Bakonzo and Bamba in Western Uganda; and Bagisu-Sebei in Eastern Uganda illustrates this.

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[484] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 51-148.

The Bakonzo and Bamba, put under the Toro Kingdom by the colonialists, found themselves disadvantaged in the number of schools, medical facilities, dispensaries and positions in the district administration in comparison to the Batoro under whose rule the British had forcefully placed them. Soon after independence, the Bamba/Bakonjo resentment against Toro Kingdom culminated in the Rwenzururu Movement against both the central government and the Batoro.

Similarly in Eastern Uganda, the Sebei-Bugisu merger negatively affected Sebei who lost land to the more densely populated Bagisu in the lowlands which traditionally belonged to the Sebei. By 1962, the Bagisu were producing twice as much of the coffee marketed in Sebei as the Sebei themselves.[485] In the course of time, the Sebei, like the Bakonzo-Bamba, strengthened their ethnic demands for separate districts partly because of such economic inequalities.

As Kasfir has rightly noted, differential modernization might not have had such serious ethnic consequences if colonial policies of indirect rule, administration, education, courts and local government had not conditioned Ugandans to think in ethnic terms.[486] However, given the structure of resource allocation and the fluidity of politics in Africa, Uganda included, feelings of ethnic deprivation became a potent source of political participation. The struggle for political power has therefore been common largely due to the need to use the state to

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[485] M. Twaddle, "Tribalism in Eastern Uganda", in P. H Gulliver (Ed.), *Tradition and Transition in East Africa, Studies of the Tribal Element in the Modern Era*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 345.
[486] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 113.

access economic resources which are always scarce. Political elites in Uganda have always used their ethnic constituencies to achieve this.

With their high incomes and other economic advantages, the Baganda then developed sophisticated tastes. As Elkan pointed out,

> Everybody (in Uganda) needs money to pay their poll-tax, and in most areas there is a sale of 'cloth, cigarettes, soap and bicycles. In Buganda, there is also a sale for refrigerators,' motorcars and dinner jackets.[487]

The Baganda came to realize that they were more prosperous than the other inhabitants of the country.[488] They became arrogant to the extent that in 1930, they were described as having "translated the old sense of superiority into the idea that skilled labour is the sphere of Baganda and unskilled work that of other tribes".[489]

The arrogance and economic advantages of the Baganda made them unpopular with other Ugandans. Little did they realize that, in two crucial areas, the army and police, the British had disadvantaged them. The colonial regime had, in pursuit of the strategy of "divide and rule", armed the economically disadvantaged Acholi, Langi and other Sudanic speakers and demilitarized the more privileged Baganda. When Milton Obote took power after independence in 1962 as executive Prime Minister, he not only continued army recruitment from his fellow northerners, but also turned guns against the Baganda in the 'famous' 1966 crisis. Since the balance of power in underdeveloped countries

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[487] E. Walter, *The Economic Development of Uganda*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 112.
[488] R. Audrey, "Traditional Values and Current Political Behaviour", in Lloyd Fallers (Ed.), *The Kings Men: Leadership and Status in Buganda on the Eve of Independence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 294.
[489] L. Mair, "Local Government in Busoga", in *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies,* 5, .2 (1967), 11.

like Uganda has continued to lie more with coercive elements than with those who own the means of production, under-representation of the Baganda and other Bantu ethnic groups in Uganda's armed forces up to 1986 created a dangerous imbalance for them.[490]

In the December 1980 elections for president and members of Parliament, Milton Obote could tellingly ask his rival Paul Semwogerere of the Democratic party and Yoweri Museveni of the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM), who happened to come from the South and West of the country, respectively, where their armies were and, if they did not have them, how they hoped to take power. Consequently, to Obote and his ethnic army, the ballot was irrelevant. This kind of thinking and practice explains the history of conflicts that has become associated with post-colonial Uganda.

Religious sectarianism was another source of instability in post-colonial Uganda. The introduction of Islam in the 1840s and Christianity in the late 1870s left Uganda divided into several religious factions. These factions soon became entangled in politics. In the 1880s there was what Mugaju described as a "Christian Revolution". This revolution, involving in-fighting between the Protestants and Catholics, led to the overthrow of the traditional power of the Kabaka (King) of Buganda, paving the way for the ascendance of Protestants in the politics of Buganda and Uganda at the expense of the Catholics.[491] Throughout the colonial period, the Protestants (or Anglicans) became the 'de

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[490] For a detailed analysis of politics and military in Uganda see classical work by Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda,* 1890-1985, (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1987), and A. Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy*, (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976).
[491] J. Mugaju, *Uganda's Age of Reform,* 15.

facto' established church in Uganda. Protestants exploited this to dominate the colonial administration and local government. Muslims and Catholics were, henceforth, marginalized. This religious polarization continued as a strong factor in the struggle for independence, beginning in the 1950s with the formation of political parties. Political parties like the Democratic Party (DP) and the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) were formed along such religious lines. This added a new level of polarisation in Uganda, in addition to their ethnic leaning.

Political parties and ethnicity in Uganda

Wallerstein argues that "the most important mechanism to reduce the conflict between ethnicity and national integration is the national party".[492] In the case of Uganda, the opposite is true. Ugandan political parties, instead, exacerbated ethnic political participation. A brief analysis of the formation and nature of the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), the Uganda National Congress (UNC), Kabaka Yekka (KY) and the Democratic Party (DP) as the main political actors up to 1966 will help to illustrate this concern. None of the above- mentioned political parties developed national central organizations. Instead, they were oriented toward district politics and vulnerable to the appeals of ethnic movements. As Cherry Gertzel has noted of UPC, "the national organization of the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) controlled neither the National Assembly nor policy statements of district branches".[493] Nearly all UPC local party officials were

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[492] I. Wallerstein, "Ethnicity and National Integration", in Pierre van Berghe (Ed.), *Africa: Problems of Change and Conflict,* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965), 138.
[493] C. Gertzel, "How Kabaka Yekka Came to be", Africa *Report,* 9 (1974), 113.

stationed in the areas of the ethnic units to which they belonged.[494] The tribal or ethnic link in this party since its formation was even acknowledged by some of its stalwarts. John Kakonge, once the Secretary General of the party, stated: "the basic forces in the formation of the U.P.C were tribal and personal, and its structure was based on a conglomeration of tribes".[495]

The main challenger to UPC, the Democratic Party (DP), also showed few signs of centralization of power and found it extremely difficult to impose a single approach to strategy, policy, or candidate nominations on branches or members.[496] The Uganda National Congress (UNC), formed by Ignatius Musaazi and the predecessor to the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), made headway only where it was able to take advantage of local issues.[497] It never developed a specifically national appeal. The Lango branch of the UNC, for example, was run by local notables rather than by the national party officers. In Buganda where its leaders were commoners, it reaped full support from the rural masses but was rejected by the Buganda government to which it posed a fundamental challenge. As one official of the Buganda government remarked,

> We disagree with being united (as the UNC seems to suggest), with those territories which have different customs, ways of living and agreements which are entirely different from ours.[498]

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[494] J.S. Nye "TANU and UPC: The Impact of Independence on Two African Nationalist Parties" in J. Butler and A. A. Castgno (Eds.), *Boston University Paper on Africa: Transition in Africa Politics,* (New York: Fredrik Praeger, 1965), 23.

[495] For details on the remark and UPC internal structure see S. Kakonge; "The Political Party, its Structure, Organisation and its Members", Challenge of Independence, (Kampala: The Milton Obote Foundation, 1966), 3.

[496] D. Rothchild & M. Rogin, "Uganda" in Gwendople M. C. (Ed.), *National Unit and Regionalism in Eight African States* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), 390-391.

[497] D. Apter, "Political Parties and National Integration", in J. Coleman & G. Roseberg (Eds.), *Tropical Africa*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), 379.

[498] Quoted in *Uganda Post*, September 25th 1953, *Uganda Herald*, October 24th 1953.

When its leaders felt that the integrity of Buganda was threatened during the crisis over the exile of the Kabaka of Buganda in 1953 by British Governor-Cohen, the UNC abandoned its efforts to gain nationwide following.[499]

Ethnic considerations feature prominently in the failure of Ugandan parties to develop strong national organization and outlook. Besides, in the 1950s, the colonial policy of thinking in terms of tribes worsened the situation. In 1958, the district became the constituency unit in those areas in which representatives were to be elected. By necessity then, the district also became the "natural unit" for organization of the political parties. Benedicto Kiwanuka, leader of the Democratic Party (DP), claimed that in the 1958 elections, the first direct elections to the legislative council, they chose primarily on 'tribal' grounds".[500]

After the 1961 elections that were won by the Democratic Party, the stage was then set for DP-UPC struggle to achieve absolute majority in the National Assembly elections of 1962 since the winning party would form the first independence government. As Kasfir notes, both parties were forced to take up local grievances and accept deviations from the national line. For example, both parties felt constrained to support the demands of Ankole, Bunyoro, Toro and Busoga for full federal status. This meant that such areas would be autonomous (as ethnic units in Independent Uganda).[501] Benedicto Kiwanuka, then the Prime minister and leader of the Democratic Party, further agreed that

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[499] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 114.
[500] B. George, "Tribalism in Politics", in Gulliver (Ed.), *Tradition and Transition in East Africa: Studies of the Tribal Element in the Modern Era,* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 64.
[501] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 115.

Sebei should have their own district, independent of Bugishu. He also supported the Bemba and Bakonzo demand for autonomous districts away from Toro. The result of such political manipulation was to further legitimize ethnic political participation within the national arena, since the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) had to respond in kind. In 1962, Uganda held another election in preparation for Independence. This election won by the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) was still largely determined by ethnic and religious considerations than national considerations. As proof of this, only nine out of the 185 African candidates were born outside the district in which their constituencies were located.

Indeed, as Godfrey Binaisa, the UPC Attorney-General, remarked six months after independence: "We (UPC) are not a mass party because most of our Members of Parliament are here for tribal merits".[502] The point to emphasize here is that UPC's victory in 1962 did not only dislodge the Democratic Party (DP) from national office, but it also strengthened the structure of ethnic political participation in Uganda's politics.

In Tanzania, the coming of independence increased national integration because an alien colonial administration was to be replaced with a local indigenous government. In Uganda, the opposite was true. The departure of the alien government tended to remove the force that had, at least, encouraged unity within the nation-state. With the British gone, each tribe began to think of how resources would be allocated or distributed and how they would stand to benefit

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[502] J. S. Nye, "TANU and UPC" "The Impact of Independence on Two Nationalist Parties", 231.

rather than uniting as Ugandans. One result in Uganda was an increased willingness to regard ministers and senior civil servants "as representatives of their respective tribes, whose function in government was to safeguard and plead tribal interests in matters of appointments, distribution of development projects and social services".[503]

Besides, the coming of independence in Uganda also aroused fears of future ill-treatment and an upsurge of political activity among smaller ethnic units. In Bunyoro, for instance, the "Lost Counties" issue, which was about whether the counties surrendered by Bunyoro to Buganda (Buyaga and Bugangazi) should be returned, produced agitated pronouncements and desperate maneuvers that resulted in violence and arson. In Eastern Uganda, Sebei "nationalists" also organized their followers behind the demand for a separate district instead of being part of Bugisu/Mbale district. Similarly, at the same time, Bamba and Bakonzo leaders also began to demand entrenched constitutional protection from the Batoro, and when they failed to get it, they converted the cultural thrust of the Rwenzururu movement into a political weapon. In the north, the Acholi from the eastern part demanded a separate district, and even tabled a motion in Parliament in October 1963 on this issue, but the proposal was defeated.[504]

Other smaller ethnic groups like the Bahororo living in Ankole and the Iteso of Bukedi in Eastern Uganda also demanded separate districts.[505] This increased

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[503] A. M. Obote, "The Footsteps of Uganda's Revolution", *East African Journal*, 5, 10 (1968), 7.
[504] C. Leys, Politicians *and Policies,* 6.
[505] D. Rothchild & M. Rogin, "Uganda", 413.

demand for districts based on ethnic demarcations became a pronounced feature in Uganda's post-independence politics. It justifies the argument that in the colonial and later post-colonial periods, ethnic political participation seemed to provide some protection against an uncertain future.

The above analysis illustrates how the colonial construction of power led to the institutionalization of ethnicity in Uganda's body politic. As Mamdani observes,

> Everywhere, the local apparatus of the colonial state was organized either ethnically or on a religious basis. This is why one finds it difficult to recall a single major peasant uprising over the colonial period that has not been either ethnic or religious in inspiration.[506]

Whereas this contradictory tendency of ethnicity had led to the creation of Uganda in 1962, post-colonial practices by the mainstream nationalists who took charge of the state exacerbated ethnicity in the country's body politic.

Ethnicity and Politics in the Post-colonial period

British colonialism sowed the seeds but did not reap the fruits of sectarianism, regionalism and authoritarianism. However, though the legacies of colonialism were difficult enough, they were not insurmountable. It was only unfortunate that the inheritors of the colonial state pursued short-term and self-centered policies which made the situation worse. Instead of correcting mistakes of colonialism, post-colonial practices by the mainstream nationalists saw the reproduction, rather than the destruction, of ethnicity in Uganda's body politics. The reforms adopted by the political leadership that inherited the central state

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[506] M. Mamdani, "Historicising Power and Responses to Power: Indirect Rule and its Reform", *Social Research*, 66, 3, (1999), 17-18.

apparatus were limited as far as the deconstruction of the political base of ethnic consciousness, restructuring the economy to diffuse the ethnic and regional material expression and the liberation of civil society were concerned.[507]

The nation-state and ethnicity (political developments towards independence)

On October 1962, Uganda achieved independence from Britain and became a republic, replacing the White Governor General Sir Andrew Cohen with an African president, Sir Edward Mutesa II, a year later. This transfer of power marked the only peaceful change of government in Uganda's history as an independent nation.

Uganda's road to independence was not a simple one. One of the problems that challenged early Uganda nationalists was the position of Buganda in independent Uganda and the person to be head of state when independence finally came. Independence was ushered in by political activities mainly from Buganda because the Baganda had been the first people to receive Western civilization from the colonialists. In 1958, when contesting elections for the Legislative Council (Legco), three political parties emerged in Buganda, namely, the Democratic Party (DP) led by Benedicto Kiwanuka, the Progressive Party (PP) led by E.M.K Mulira, and the Uganda National Congress (UNC) led by Ignatius Musazi and J.W. Kiwanuka. The membership of all these parties was fully

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[507] M. Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject*, 288-291.

Buganda and its leadership likewise, was dominated by Baganda.[508] A study carried out in 1958 revealed that, out of thirty persons whose ethnic origin could be identified (using local districts), twenty-five were Baganda; two were from Acholi, and one each came from Busoga, Lango and Toro[509]. This fact did not go down well with the other regions of Uganda, since for a long time they believed that the British favoured the Baganda. When the Uganda National Congress (UNC) weakened, Obote from the north rose to lead its splinter group: the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC).

In the elections of 1961, in preparation for independence, Benedicto Kiwanuka defeated UPC under Obote to become the first Prime Minister. The defeat of Obote intensified ethnic and religious polarization in Uganda. First, the Acholi and Langi felt that the Bantu group that amalgamated in their support to Kiwanuka did so to humiliate and ridicule the northerners.[510]

In 1961, representatives from all political parties in Uganda then and representatives of local governments and the Kabaka's (King's) government met at the Lancaster House Conference in London. This conference still gave greater control of government to Buganda. Buganda was to take full control of vital sectors like internal affairs and security, infrastructural developments in the fields of health, school development and transport.[511] The implication of this was that while Buganda was held in high esteem, other regions and ethnic

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[508] D.H. Okalany, "Ethnicity and the Culture of Eating in Uganda", 189.
[509] D. Gugin, "Africanisation of the Ugandan Public Service", PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967, 127.
[510] Interview with 80-year-old Cuthebert Obwangor , 2007.
[511] Interview with 80-year-old Cuthebert Obwangor , 2007.

groups were made to look secondary. This trend of events was to affect the later political developments leading to the deep ethnic divide in Uganda.

The second major problem that emerged on the eve of independence concerned the person to be the Head of State of Independent Uganda. Even when Benedicto Kiwanuka was already Prime Minister following his victory in the elections of 1961, Ugandans were still seeking for the Queen of England to remain Head of State for an Independent country.[512]

While Obote and his party, the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC), promised that the Kabaka (king) of Buganda, as Head of State, would have supreme political powers, the Democratic Party under Benedicto Kiwanuka de-campaigned the UPC in other kingdom areas like Toro, Ankole and Bunyoro on the grounds that, if Buganda was given supreme power as suggested by UPC, Baganda would enslave people from other areas then resident in Buganda.[513] Kiwanuka's position did not make the Democratic Party popular among the supporters of the Kabaka, famously referred to as the 'Mengo' clique in Uganda's history. Buganda's parliament, the Lukiiko, accused the Democratic Party and Kiwanuka of betraying Buganda to the rest of the country.[514] In April 1962, the Baganda decided to form the Kabaka Yekka or 'King only' Party to protect the interests of the Buganda monarchy. In the elections of 1962, Obote manipulated the Baganda by entering an "unholy alliance" with the Kabaka Yekka (KY) party

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[512] G. Ibingira, *The Forging of an African Nation: The Political and Constitutional Evolution of Uganda from Colonial Rule to Independence, 1994-1962,* (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 241.

[513]The politics of the day in Uganda on the eve of independence intensified ethnic and regional polarization. Obote later used this division to ally with the Kabaka Yekka (King only) party of Buganda to ride to power.

[514] Interview with Mathias Ngobi, 27 October, 2007- Jinja.

to defeat the Democratic Party under Kiwanuka. Subsequently, Obote became the Prime Minister of Uganda with executive powers, while the Kabaka (King) Mutesa II became the non-executive President as had been agreed in the Lancaster-London Conference of 1961.[515] In this way, Obote from the north had successfully manipulated the largest ethic group (the Baganda) to come to power as Prime Minister of Uganda with executive powers. The second battle was how to keep this position and power. This then marked a new stage in Uganda's politics where ethnic consideration became significant.

Faced with intermittently intense ethnic political involvement, post-independence Uganda governments have adopted a variety of strategies. To some extent, these resulted from the political difficulties in which each leader found himself. In all the eight governments from 1961 to 2006, the leaders were willing to accept ethnicity as a legitimate basis for political participation; first for capturing power and also in keeping such power.

The Democratic Party under Benedicto Kiwanuka, which formed the first African government before independence in 1961 and ruled for a short time, had relied on the hatred that other ethnic groups had towards the Baganda in order to win the 1961 elections. Thereafter, he came under too much pressure to abandon reliance on bargains with ethnic middlemen and appeals to ethnic movements, especially the Bakonzo-Bamba and Sebei movements.[516]

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[515] D. H. Okalany, "Ethnicity and the Culture of Eating in Uganda", 190.
[516] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 195.

The Uganda Peoples Congress that came to office in 1962 and was assured of power only because of its parliamentary coalition with an avowed ethnic movement, the Kabaka Yekka (KY), largely exhibited politics of ethnic manipulation to stay in contention up to 1971.

After coming to power through the UPC-KY alliance, the UPC government first manipulated the political situation using ethnic issues. Obote did this especially after 1962 to gain political ground in Buganda and in other parts of Uganda; especially in the Kingdom areas of Southern Uganda.[517] In 1963, Obote began to argue that the diversity of ethnic identities was inherently negative and obstructive to successful nation building and development. This was a remarkable observation. While Obote's move towards a policy of minimizing the use of ethnicity in national affairs was good, the method he used of manipulating different ethnicities could only work in the short run. Because ethnicity is fluid and can be evoked in certain situations, it can also be dangerous in the longer run. This is how it turned out to be in the later years of Obote's rule. Public assertions of ethnicity in political life were eliminated but ethnic linkages remained strong in private.

Ethnic manipulation under Obote I government

To come to power, Obote had manipulated the Baganda through his 'unholly alliance' with the Kabaka Yekka (King alone) Party. However, for political survival, he had to introduce government measures to reduce the political use of ethnicity. Even then, however much effort was directed against Buganda, by

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[517] Obwangor, 2007 interview Soroti

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the time of his fall from power in 1971, he left Baganda with a heightened sense of their own ethnicity. It was this that later leaders like Idi Amin exploited to win over the Baganda as temporary friends after overthrowing Obote in 1971. After overthrowing Milton Obote in 1971, Amin had to explain his actions and employ different techniques in the first few months of his rule in order to gain legitimacy. One of the most productive techniques he employed was to offer ethnic concessions to those hurt by Obote's policies. The Baganda were the main recipients. The major tactic adopted by the government was first, to release forty-five of the ninety-two detainees, many of whom were publicly recognized as prominent Baganda.

Current Uganda President Yoweri Museveni also exploited ethnic hatred between the Baganda and northerners (Obote was a Langi from northern Uganda) to win support for his bush-war efforts in Luwero in Buganda. Museveni believed that "the problem in Uganda is that the leadership has mainly been from the north. The southerners, who are mainly Bantu, have played a peripheral role since independence in 1962. Therefore, Museveni also argues passionately how the Acholi as a whole and Obote's Langi tribesmen had participated in the looting of the south.

After the failure of the Nairobi Peace Talks held in Nairobi under the chairmanship of President Daniel Arap Moi in 1985, the NRA/NRM under Museveni intensified its efforts to over-run Kampala. While fighting in the southern part of Katonga in Buganda, the NRM/NRA under Museveni brought in Ronnie Mutebi, in order to reinforce Buganda's anti-northerner ethnic

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politics[518]. Museveni also made Professor Yusuf Lule (who had ruled Uganda for 68 days after the fall of Idi Amin) chairman of his National Resistance Movement as a way to attract support from Buganda.[519] In this way, Museveni used the Baganda as "pawns" in creating and perpetuating the stereotype of Obote, Acholi and Langi as the bane of Uganda politics

In 1960 when the Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) was formed out of Obote's wing of the Uganda National Congress (UNC) and the anti-Buganda Uganda People's Union (UPU), Obote asserted that "African nationalism hates small states".[520] In March 1963, he again stated that;

> the tribe has served our people as a basic political unit very well in the past. But now, the problem of putting the tribe above national consciousness is a problem we must face, and an issue we must destroy.[521]

In spite of UPC's coalition with the Kabaka Yekka (KY) Party between 1962 and 1964, the UPC government under Obote took a number of steps to counter ethnic politics. Unfortunately, different ethnic groups that had grievances or interests emanating from the colonial period like the Baganda, the Bakonzo-Bamba, the Sabiny of Sebei perceived Obote's moves negatively. The Baganda, in particular, felt that after coming to power through alliance with the Kabaka Yekka (King Alone) Party, Obote was turning against them. From 1963, Buganda became the main problem that Obote had to deal with up to the 1971 coup by Idi Amin.

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[518] Ronald Mutebi was an heir of Kabaka Mutesa II who had been deposed and exiled by Obote in 1965. By so doing, Museveni and his NRM/NRA assumed the Baganda that their Kabaka to be was part of the struggle.
[519] Prof. Lule was initially chairman of the Uganda Freedom Movement and as a staunch Muganda monarchist dedicated to restoring monarchism in Buganda (which Obote had abolished in 1966).
[520] *Uganda Argus* 3 Feb. 1960,
[521] Quoted in D. Rothchild and M. Rogin, "Uganda", 418.

The UPC government under Obote rejected demands by Buganda that *Ebyaffe* (our things) be returned to them. They, for instance, wanted to retain parts of Bunyoro's burial grounds that the colonial government had given to them as reward for collaborating with the British. They also wanted to dominate politics in Buganda unilaterally. The UPC and Obote refused to concede Buganda to Kabaka Yekka (KY) Party and, instead, began organizing party branches in Buganda in 1963.[522]

Before 1966, Obote was too weak politically to insist on changes in the political process that might have resulted in reducing the role of ethnicity in politics. First, he did not command total supremacy in the National Assembly then and, second, there were several disputes within his party (the UPC) in spite of the majority it held in parliament and in district councils by the end of 1964. In the UPC, there was a bitter fight for the position of Secretary-General between John Kakonge, the candidate of radicals calling for national mobilization, and Grace Ibingira, a representative of more conservative local notables with close links to the Kabaka (king) of Buganda's government.[523] This internal fight was only solved through ethnic manipulation in the Gulu UPC conference of 1964.

According to Kirunda-Kivenjija, then in-charge of the UPC Research Bureau in 1963-1965, the conspiracy to remove Kakonge was finalized in 1964 in Kampala and involved allowing Busoga District to send more representatives to the Gulu

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[522] C. Gertzel., *Party and Locality in Northern Uganda,* 12.
[523] The climax of this conflict later involved Obote, his cabinet and party ranks. There were even rumours that Obote had been overthrown by Grace Ibingira and the Baganda at the height of this conflict. In this political circus, Obote could not deal with ethnic de-participation in Uganda's body-politic.

Conference than other districts. It also involved issuing new 'white' entrance cards to delegates loyal to Obote and against Kakonge as aspirant for Secretary-General. In the earlier preparation for this conference, all delegates were supposed to have and use 'Red cards' for one to be allowed entry. However, as a last minute ploy to deny Kakonge's supporters entry, Obote and his supporters decided to design new white cards as the official-entry cards for any delegate to attend without the knowledge of other delegates opposed to Obote. Most Kakonge's supporters and would-be voters were, thus, eliminated and Kakonge lost to Ibingira for the post of Secretary General.[524] Having dealt with internal dissent, Obote then moved on to deal with the National Assembly.

The struggle for control of the ruling UPC Party intensified due to the influx into the UPC of unprincipled members of parliament who crossed the floor from Kabaka Yekka Party and the Democratic Party in the period 1963-1965. This move strengthened the UPC in the National Assembly into 1966. As Kasozi has noted, most of those who crossed the floor realized that it was 'violence not votes' that decided who controlled the distribution of resources in Uganda at that material time.[525] It, therefore, followed that, since Obote had the means to satisfy their greed, it was ultimately Obote who benefited from their political shifts in the National Assembly. This unprincipled behaviour has remained a major characteristic of Ugandan politicians. By December 1964, the UPC had seventy-four seats, the DP had nine and the KY eight in the National Assembly.[526] Although these members never represented the UPC's actual

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[524] Interview with Kirunda-Kivenjija -2007. See also N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 51, 148.
[525] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence,* 71.
[526] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence,* 71.

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political strength and level of support among the Ugandan voters at the grassroots, Obote used their shifts to support UPC then to enjoy substantial political "legitimacy" that also gave him the legal justification and psychological ability to use violence against his competitors, both in the UPC party and the Uganda State.

Obote's political machinations to weaken opponents fit well in S. P. Huntington's model, which attributes political instability to absence of viable political institutions capable of domesticating power.[527] It also reflects the dishonesty of the petty bureaucratic bourgeoisie members of parliament in changing party loyalties without consulting the voters. All these political activities laid the ground for conflict in Uganda in the not-too-distant future.

Uganda's complex politics and political violence began effectively after 1964. The first explosive political problem that the UPC government under Obote handled constitutionally was the long standing political dispute between Buganda and Bunyoro kingdoms over the, so-called, 'lost counties'. The counties in question were Buyaga and Bugangaizi. These counties belonged to Bunyoro before colonialism but were given to Buganda Kingdom as appreciation for its assistance in the conquest of Bunyoro kingdom by the British. Bunyoro had been the ancient enemy of Buganda and during the religious struggles in Buganda between the Protestants and Catholics, (1888), Bunyoro had given

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[527] S. P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, 3.

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shelter to many dissidents from Baganda preparing to attack the Buganda Kingdom.[528]

In 1893, when British forces overran Bunyoro and drove out Kabarega, they had done so with the assistance of the Baganda collaborators.[529] The British had not found it expedient to resolve this dispute before independence and it was provided in the independence constitution that the Uganda government would carry out a referendum in those two counties in not less than two years after independence to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants as to whether they wanted to remain in Buganda, return to Bunyoro, or be constituted into a separate district.[530]

The question of the return of this land had dominated politics for the Banyoro since. In 1901, the successor to Kabarega resigned as Omukama (King) over the "persecution" of Banyoro in the "lost counties". In 1921, a political-ethnic committee, the Mubende-Bunyoro Committee was formed to agitate for the return of the land.[531]

Ethnic-political participation came to a climax over this issue. In anticipation of this referendum, the Kabaka's (King's) government, led by the Kabaka himself, had tried to influence the outcome in advance by resettling a big number of

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[528] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 137.
[529] J. Beattie, The *Nyoro State,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 74-94. See also F. Burke, *Local Government and Politics in Uganda*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1964), 77-85.
[530] S.R. Karugire, *Roots of Instability in Uganda,* 51.
[531] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 137.

Buganda ex-service men in those counties.[532] In June 1964, Mutesa II (King of Buganda) burned down a Banyoro village in the "lost counties" because, as he explained, "a meeting to whip feelings against him was to be held there".[533] Mutesa had gone to the lost counties to try to prevent their transfer to Bunyoro. As independence approached, the Banyoro became fearful that an independent African government would be heavily dependent upon Buganda support and would refuse to entertain any notions of changing the boundaries. Two commissions set to resolve the impasse suggested different solutions. One resolved that the issue be solved through a referendum after independence and the other wanted the two counties to be transferred to Bunyoro before independence and that Mubende town, which contained certain shrines, be declared a municipality and thus be placed under the central government', rather than Buganda's jurisdiction.[534]

In 1964, Obote had gained an absolute majority in parliament and was no longer dependent on Buganda's goodwill for political survival in parliament.[535] In August 1964, a referendum bill was introduced in Parliament. The results showed that Buyaga and Bugangaizi overwhelmingly supported a merger with Bunyoro. In Buyaga, 8327 people voted for and only 1,287 voted against transfer. In Bugangaizi the figures were 3,275 for and 2,253 against joining Bunyoro.[536]

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[532] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 137.
[533] The Kabaka of Buganda, (Edward Mutesa), *Desecration of My Kingdom*, (London: Constable, 1967), 170.
[534] This position is in N. Kasfir's *The shrinking political Arena; Participation and Ethnicity in African Politics* (1976)
[535] G. Ibingira, *The Forging of an African Nation,,* 69.
[536] I. Hancock, "The Buganda Crisis of 1964", *African Affairs,* 69, 275 (April 1970), 109-23.

The result of this referendum heightened ethnic tension and political differences between Mengo (the seat of the Kabaka) and the central government. It also led to civil commotion and bloodshed in Buganda and parts of Bunyoro and confirmed that Ugandans did not regard themselves as a people of one country but as essentially belonging to their parochial and sometimes hostile local government units. The UPC-KY alliance, having achieved its only purpose of ousting the DP from office, finally fell apart. Initially the UPC –KY alliance seemed to work well. Obote had, at around that time, even acquired a Muganda wife in what was always described in academic circles as "political sex" aimed at some superficial gesture of nationalism and unity of the people of Uganda. However, after the Bunyoro saga and at the height of hostility in Buganda, Obote even resorted to vulgar description of Baganda as "a good Muganda is a dead one".[537]

Therefore, Obote's insistence on following the constitutional requirement of holding a referendum marked an early stage in his willingness to introduce a policy of ethnic de-participation. However, while later events like the confrontation of 1966 (i.e. the Buganda crisis of 1966) crystallized this policy, it also made the Baganda more defiant of Obote, both after 1966 and 1971 when Amin overthrew Obote and in his second regime between 1980 and1985, when the Baganda supported Museveni's bush war in Luwero Obote.

In 1966, the Penal Code (Amendment Bill, 1966) was enacted. This bill made it an offence for any political organization to use names or symbols associated

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[537] T.V. Sathyamurthy, "The Social base of the Uganda Peoples Congress, 1958-70 in *African Affairs*, (1975), 416.

with the rulers of federal states or constitutional heads of districts. The bill targeted the Kabaka Yekka (KY) Party as it was the only political party using the name of the Kabaka. Even when Grace Ibingira, in a lengthy statement to parliament, tried to persuade the nation that the bill was to protect all political parties against the excesses of their opponents,[538] the Baganda saw it as a ploy to destroy the KY party legally and subject the Kabaka (King) to some internal restrictions since he could not use the party to canvass for support or project his contrary views. The passing of this bill ended the legal existence of the Kabaka Yekka (KY) Party.

In December 1969, Obote banned all other political organizations after an attempt on his life at Lugogo stadium[539]. In this manner, the UPC legalized its monopoly of Uganda's political life at a time when it had become a conspicuous minority party in the country. The UPC then resorted to violence to control the wider opposition that developed against it over time.

The 1966 crisis was the last major political showdown between Obote and the Baganda Kingdom. On 24 May, 1966, Obote ordered the invasion of the Kabaka's palace at Lubiri on grounds that the Kabaka Mutesa II was planning a rebellion against the central government. The Kingdom of Buganda had passed a resolution on May 20 1966 asking the central government to move away from the "soil" of Buganda, which Obote described as "rebellion against the authority

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[538] For details on the debate, emotions and counter-accusation from the few Baganda members of Parliament of the KY Party. See Uganda Parliamentary *Hansard*, 53, 3450
[539] S.R. Karugire, *Roots of Instability in Uganda,* 52.

and oneness of Uganda".[540] Obote then sent his army commander Major General Idi Amin to bombard the Kabaka's palace at Lubiri in Mengo in the heartland of Buganda. The Ugandan army was, at that time, predominantly Nilotic in composition, with a few officers of Bantu origin.[541] After a day of fighting, the Kabaka was defeated and fled to Britain where he later died in exile. In his book entitled *Desecration of my Kingdom*, Mutesa said he had anticipated the attack on his palace. "We had been suspecting such a move for weeks," he said, "and I myself had been surprised when nothing happened the previous evening".[542]

After his victory, Obote then proceeded to introduce his own rules of the game, disguised as attempts to reduce the political use of ethnicity, and feudalism in Uganda. First, he abrogated the 1962 independence constitution and introduced the 1966 and 1967 constitutions in its place. The 1966 constitution kept many articles contained in its predecessor but removed several of the legal provisions that encouraged ethnic participation. Among the changes was the virtual elimination of autonomous powers of districts and federal kingdoms. It also targeted Buganda, where it declared that the Buganda government would not have the privilege of electing its members to the National Assembly or have the right to give official lands to chiefs. It reduced the Kabaka and other kingdom rulers to a ceremonial role on the same level as constitutional heads in the districts[543]. Henceforth Buganda was to be treated as a district no different

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[540] Obote's speech in *Saturday Vision*, May 24. 2008:10-11
[541] G.F. Engholm and A. Mazrui, "Violent Constitutionalism in Uganda", *Government and Opposition, 2. 4 (July – October* 1967), 585-599.
[542] G.F. Engholm and A. Mazrui, "Violent Constitutionalism in Uganda", 585-599.
[543] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 200.

from any other district in Uganda. All this was an attempt to weaken Buganda politically since it was the main threat to Obote's presidency. For instance, by reducing the Kabaka to a ceremonial position, on the same level as constitutional heads in the districts, Obote would remain the only dominant political figure in Uganda. Leaders after Obote like Idi Amin and Yoweri Museveni ably exploited Buganda's new level of ethnic nationalism against Obote to overthrow him in 1971 and rally support for the Luwero war of 1981-1985 against Obote by Yoweri Museveni.

Talking of the long term effects of the 1966 crisis on Uganda's politics, former Katikkiro (Prime Minister) of Buganda, Joshua Muayanja-Nkangi, says; "Obote ushered in militarism. From 1966 to almost 1985, the coming of Museveni, constitutionalism was almost out. I think there was only one year when there were no gun shots in this country. It was terrible".[544] Some pundits like Jaberi Bidandi Ssali, leader of the People's Progressive Party, even think that since the 1966 incident, in order to rule the country, they had to conquer Buganda first.

The 1967 constitution carried the changes of the previous year another step forward. First, and of great symbolic importance, the 1967 Republican Constitution abolished kingdoms and all kings, with the exception of the Kabaka of Buganda, were given pension. It also eliminated constitutional heads and divided Buganda into four (4) districts on the same basis as all other districts.[545]

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[544] Interview in the *New Vision*, 24, May 2007.
[545] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena*, 200.

Consequently, the new constitution increased the powers of Prime Minister Obote who then usurped even the powers of the president. Hence, by eliminating the independent powers of the districts and kingdoms, removal of Buganda's special privileges and the creation of a new and more powerful presidency, Obote thought he had dealt a death blow to ethnicity in politics and the role of Buganda in national politics. To the contrary, the Baganda were determined to assert themselves. The result was conflict.

The final humiliation of the Baganda came in 1968 when government took over the premises of the Buganda Parliament, the Lukiiko, in order to use the buildings as the Uganda Armed Forces Headquarters and converted the Kabaka's palace at Lubiri into a barracks. This act symbolizing the final desecration of the Kingdom was quite unnecessary, given that the effective powers of the Kabaka and the Lukiiko and already been destroyed.[546] Under the Emergency Regulations that the security forces used, they were also allowed to arrest without warrant. While justifying the actions of the army in storming the Lubiri or palace of the Kabaka under these regulations, Obote stated: "It is within the context of the Emergency Regulations that security forces (yesterday) brought under this control all the palaces of the Kabaka".[547] This act of taking control of Lukiiko was a gross affront to the Baganda, which further alienated them and reduced the chances of reconciliation between them and Obote's administration

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[546] A. Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890-1985*, 83.
[547] See Obote's speech in *Saturday Vision*, May 24, 2008, 10.

According to Obote, it was the considered view of the government that everybody; inside and outside Uganda should know that "this country (Uganda) is one and shall remain one; under one administration, one Parliament of which honourable members now assembled are elected representatives of the people and Buganda remains an integral part of Uganda".[548] However, the long-term effect of Obote's move was to exacerbate ethnic mobilization and destroy any chance of democratic solutions to ethnic cleavages. While it is true that Obote was trying to break up the heaviest concentration of power in the land (i.e. Buganda kingdom), safeguard his position and perhaps concentrate on the nation-building objectives of his UPC party, the method he used increased the state of ethnic nationalism among the Baganda and other kingdom areas of Uganda instead. Until 1971 when Idi Amin overthrew him, Obote regarded the Baganda as so hostile and unreliable that he kept Buganda under a state of emergency throughout this period (i.e. 1966-1971).[549] Indeed, as Hon. Byanyima, MP Ankole North East then said, "the removal of the government and Parliament from Buganda could not mean the removal of opposition".[550]

The southerners and westerners, who cherished kingdoms as part of their cultural heritage, felt aggrieved with their abolition, while the northerners, largely the Acholi and Langi, rejoiced. This became a watershed in post-independence politics in Uganda and a source of constant friction. The Baganda and people from the western part of the country also felt that the economy of Uganda, which they had dominated for many decades, was about to shift from

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[548] See Obote's speech in *Saturday Vision*, May 24, 2008, 10.
[549] H.B. Hansen, *Ethnicity and Military Rule in Uganda*, 66-71.
[550] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena,* 200.

their hands into those of the "uncivilized warriors" of the north and the east of Uganda.[551] It is evident, therefore, that Obote's partisan authoritarianism played a key role in keeping ethnic consciousness alive in the country and waiting for an opportunity to re-assert itself.   Obote himself was under no illusions that government measures promoting ethnic de-participation between 1962 and1970 had eliminated ethnicity as a political force. As he later warned,

> If the pull of the tribal force is allowed to develop, the unity of the country will be endangered. To reduce it to its crudest form is our duty because the pull of the tribal force does not accept Uganda as one country, does not accept the people of Uganda as belonging to one country, does not accept the National Assembly as a national institution but as an assembly of peace conference delegates and tribal diplomats, and legislative functionaries, and looks at the government of Uganda as a body of umpires or referees in some curious game of "Tribal Development monopoly.[552]

Besides, Obote's political manouvres of 1966-1971 also eroded the significance of parliament, the political parties and other civilian institutions as arenas for resolving political conflicts. The army, henceforth, was to become the arbiter in essentially civilian conflicts. For instance, after suspending the constitution and appointing himself executive president of Uganda, he quickly arrested five of his senior ministers; all southerners. These were Grace Ibingira, Kirya, Lumu, Magezi and Ngobi) whom he accused of insubordination.[553] Obote achieved all this with what appeared to be relative ease by the blatant use of his northern dominated army. In 1971 when Amin stormed the political stage, civilian

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[551] D. Okalany "Ethnicity and the Culture of Eating in Uganda" ,190. Okalany uses the derogatory word "uncivilized" to portray the way Buganda hold other tribes; especially Nilotic Acholi, Langi and their historical enemies- the Banyoro they have a tendency to refer to any tribe other than theirs as "Bacholi", "Banyoro" to portray low level of education and social advancement.
[552] This position was expressed in the proposals for New Methods of Election of Representatives of the People to Parliament: Document No. 5 on the 'Move To The Left' (Kampala: Milton Obote Foundation, 1970), 6-7
[553] S.R. Karugire, *Roots of Instability in Uganda,* 57.

political institutions were just too weak to contain the army. The ethnic divide that the country then suffered from partly explains the ease with which Idi Amin successfully executed the coup.

The other long-standing problem which Obote failed to resolve from the beginning was the Bakonzo-Bamba conflict with the Batoro. The Batoro, a break away Bunyoro ethnic unit, exercised control over the Rwenzori mountain areas where the Bakonzo/Bamba live; a part of Toro district, formerly Toro kingdom. Many Bakonzo living in the mountains had never experienced the sovereignty of any outsider; not even colonial authorities. Both Bamba and Bakonzo traditional political systems were decentralized in contrast with that of the Batoro.[554]

On the eve of Independence and in the first few years after independence (1961-1964), the Bakonzo/Bamba complained of discrimination in the provision of education, especially in the award of bursaries and scholarships.[555] The reluctance by the central government to solve this problem led to violence by both the Bakonzo/Bamba against the Batoro. The delay in resolving this question was partly because Obote was sure of political support from Toro whose son of the soil later was Obote's Vice President (Babiiha) and Minister of Animals, Game and Fisheries. There was more to gain from Toro by way of political capital than the few and scattered Bamba.

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[554] N. Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena*, 13.
[555] *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Recent Disturbances amongst the Bamba and Bakonzo People of Toro*, (Kampala: Government Printer, 1962), 6-11.

In April 1964 thousands of Bakonzo and Bamba were massacred by the Batoro on the orders of Omukama George Rukidi. The Bakonzo/Bamba then decided to go to the bush and fight for their rights.[556] Instead of resolving the problem through political means, the Obote government harassed and imprisoned the Bakonzo-Bamba. A statement by the Minister of Animals, Game and Fisheries, J.K. Babiha, a Mutoro, warning that the Bamba and Bakonzo faced extinction "within 10 years...and there will be nothing but to declare their areas a national park" greatly annoyed the Bamba-Bakonzo and led them to embark on a guerrilla war.[557] This marked the beginning of the struggle of the people of Mt Rwenzori against the government of Uganda and for respect. This struggle continued until 15 August 1982 when Omusinga Charles Wesley Irema-Ngoma, the traditional head of Bakonzo/Bamba, decided to negotiate with the government for the recognition of the Bakonzo/Bamba.

In all these disputes, Ugandans mobilized for political action as Baganda, Bamba, Bakonzo, and Banyoro and not as Ugandans. In all the ensuing struggles, ethnic groups emerged and played prominent political roles. Fred Burke rightly described Ugandan politics immediately after independence that tended toward continued political and administrative fragmentation as "the legacy of tribalism and separatism".[558]

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[556] S.R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda,* 176. See also Syahuka- Muhindo, "The Rwenzururu Movement and Democratic Struggle", in M. Mamdani & Oloka-Onyango (Eds.), *Uganda: Studies in Living Conditions, Popular Movements and Constitutionalism*, (Kampala: JEP and CBR, 1994), 299.
[557] *Uganda Argus*, March 11, 1964.
[558] F. Burke, *Local Government and Politics in Uganda*, 231.

The major problem that Uganda suffered from in the immediate post-colonial period is that the political class that inherited the nation-state reproduced rather than deconstructed ethnicity in Uganda's body politic. The main objective of any serious nation-state project should have been to dismantle and concurrently rebuild institutions that would destroy ethnicity and regionalism in national politics. As Mamdani notes, the reforms in Uganda were limited, as they did not deconstruct political bases of ethnic consciousness and restructure the economy to diffuse ethnic and regional material expression".[559]

Where Obote attempted to deconstruct the body politic, the methods used were questionable. For instance, in 1969 when he declared the UPC as the only political party in Uganda on grounds that he aimed at political unity through one-party politics, the result was just the opposite. As Burke put it, "majority power was employed primarily to harass and destroy the opposition rather than to pursue policies to which the minority might be opposed".[560] Even though the colonial state had not been intended to be a school of democracy, as Berman[561] reminds us, the political elite who took over should have done their best to adopt acceptable democratic reforms.

Instead, independence was followed by militarism and military regimes, the stifling of civil society as parties were banned and by ethnically-based state systems. These characteristics run through all the post-colonial regimes in Uganda. These were or have been employed by the Amin regime (1971-1979),

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[559] M. Mamdani, Politics *and Class Formation in Uganda,* 288-291.
[560] F. Burke, *Local Government & Politics in Uganda,* 231.
[561] B. Berman, "Ethnic Pluralism and Political Centralization", 329.

Obote II (1980-1985), and the current ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) government (1986-to-date).

The Idi Amin regime 1971-1979

While Obote attempted a strategy of ethnic de-participation between 1962 and 1971, Idi Amin's policy remained more ambiguous and hence, to a great extent, aroused the very ethnic fears that Obote tried to dampen.

Amin's seizure of power was welcomed with enthusiasm and excitement especially in Buganda. For many Ugandans, Amin was the 'saviour of Uganda' from the Obote dictatorship. Most people expected the Amin regime to usher in an era of peace, reconciliation, national unity and economic prosperity. To their utter surprise, the opposite was true. The conflicts that characterized his regime can be explained largely by his attempt to use ethnicity to settle old political scores.

The British press heralded Amin's military takeover. Now that Obote was out of the way, Britain could "pursue the course of her own strategic interests lightened of one mill-stone".[562] Their support and praise for Idi Amin was, however. short lived and it was not long before Amin declared himself conqueror of the British Empire (CBE), to Britain's dismay.

Nelson Kasfir suggests that explanations of the actions of Amin and his government must be considered with much caution because his policies seemed

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[562] *The Daily Telegraph*, 29 January 1971.

to change from day to day. His approach to ethnicity in politics followed suit. A month after taking power, Amin said "we want to build our country as a single, united and strong nation; and not as a federation of petty and powerless tribes that are jealous of one another".[563]

This was a back up of the 18 points Amin gave to justify the 1971 coup against Obote. In the eight years of his rule, ethnicity and victimisation along ethnic lines became the order of the day.

Amin's difficulty in justifying the coup was a consequence of the awkward fact that he took power without the support of a large segment of the army. The split in the army between those who remained loyal to Obote and those who supported his coup accounts for Amin's constant reference throughout much of 1971 to "guerillas" attacking Uganda and for the subsequent massacre of soldiers and officers which came to public attention in June and July 1971.[564]

The sixteenth of the 18 points Amin gave to justify the coup singled out Obote's nepotism in the army as a major cause for the coup. He contended that he was forced to act because "Acholi and Langi" soldiers attempted to disarm soldiers of other "tribes" on Obote's orders. He then stepped in to prevent a "mutiny".[565] As he argued,

> Obote, on the advice of Akena-Adoko (then chief of Intelligence), has sought to divide Uganda Armed Forces and the rest of Uganda by picking out his tribesmen and putting

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[563] This was in "Speech to the Nation by His Excellency Major-General Idi Amin Dada". For details, see the *Uganda Gazette,* 64, 8 (26 February 1979), 79.
[564] Collin Legum's report in *The Observer*, London, 25, July 1971:5.
[565] *The People*, 27 Jan. 1971, 1.

them in key positions in the Army and key parastatals. Examples are the Chief General Service Officer, the Export and Import Corporation, Uganda Meat Packers, the Public Service Commission, Nyanza Textile and a Russian Textile Factory to be established in Lango.[566]

By casting political action in ethnic terms, however, Idi Amin immediately created a threatening situation for people both inside and outside the army who were easily identified as Acholi and Langi. From the start, therefore, he reversed Obote's policy of avoiding all public reference to ethnic units as political actors.

As Hansen writes of Amin's position then:

> Obote the individual became identified with the whole Lango group and his regime with the Acholi as well. This reflects the kind of ethnic stereotyping that came to characterize Ugandan politics during the Amin era. In the 1980s, Museveni's guerillas in Luwero Triangle were often referred to as 'Banyarwanda' and non-Baganda of Nilotic stock became the "Bacholi. [567]

During the early years of his violent rule, Idi Amin extended conflict into Acholiland by ordering mass killings of Acholi army personnel as well as executions of prominent Acholi intellectuals, politicians, religious leaders, including Jonan Luwum, then Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, and Acholi civilians. It is widely acknowledged that thousands of Acholi civilians died and that many more fled the country.[568] Innocent Acholi civilians and intellectuals were then stereotyped on account of their kinsmen in the Obote army.

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[566] Appendix 4, S. R Karugire, A *Political History of Uganda*, 238.
[567] Appendix 4, S. R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda,* 238.
[568] A. G. G. Ginyera-Pinycwa, *Northern Uganda, in National Politics*, 4. See also H. Holger Bernt, *Ethnicity as a Political Feature in Uganda*, 110, or H. Kyemba, *A State of Blood,* 44, or P. Mutibwa, *Uganda Since Independence,* 87.

By the beginning of 1973, 20 out of the 23 Acholi and Langi army officers of the rank of Lt. Colonel and above at the time of the coup had been killed.[569] The selective liquidation of opponents, real or imaginary by Idi Amin did not appear to be alarming because of the ethnic division in the country then. An insider in Amin's regime from 1971 to 1977 wrote of the pattern of atrocities in the early period of Amin's rule as follows:

> His (Amin's) 'enemies' at this stage were principally the Acholi and Langi. Obote was a Langi (sic)- sufficient reason for Amin to suspect the entire tribe – and the Acholis also formed a large proportion of the armed forces, so Amin lumped them together. He used to tell his cabinet that there were 'mopping-up' operations going on, but we (the cabinet) had no idea what this meant until later.[570]

The killing of people mostly from these two ethnic groups (Acholi and Langi) had the effect of dividing the country. These two groups were widely perceived as having been the main beneficiaries of the Obote administration and the majority of people from other ethnic groups tended to be indifferent to the massacres that were taking place. In an attempt to co-opt the support of Acholi and Langi, Major Oboma, a senior Acholi officer, made an appeal on Uganda Radio for the Acholi and Langi to accept the change of government, so as to save the lives of innocent people in their region.[571] It is clear that both the regime and the population then perceived and evaluated security and allegiance in linguistic and ethnic terms.

The seeds of ethnicity that Idi Amin sowed were to affect Uganda more adversely after his fall. In his speeches, Amin tended to stereotype people as if their

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[569] J. Mugaju, *Uganda's Age of Reform,* 28.
[570] H. Kyemba, *A State of Blood,* 44-45.
[571] Uganda Government *Annual Report*, (Kampala: Government Printer, 1972), 32-33.

ethnic identity were the most salient features of their personality. For instance, he referred to the Obote partisans undergoing military training in Tanzania as mainly "Alur, Acholis (sic), Langi and Bagisu...". "According to the latest information", he once stated, "Lango (sic) are no longer in the majority... Alurs and Jonam are being smuggled out in larger numbers to Tanzania".[572]

In discussing rumours of another coup, Amin said, "Last year there was confusion among the Alur people, then among the Jonam, and now it is the Lugbara".[573] The crux of the matter then was that being born from any of such ethnic (tribal) groups was a crime no matter whether one was in the army or was a peasant farmer tilling the infertile soils in such regions. Ethnic manipulation and stereotyping that became a salient feature of Amin's eight years rule led to uncontrollable killings and conflict in much of the country.

In later years, he could not even trust his Kakwa brothers or Lugbara cousins to execute his policies. He then resorted to Nubians (brought to Uganda from Sudan by the British during the colonial conquest phase) and Banyarwanda (from Rwanda) as the most reliable ethnic groups to man his internal security system. Nubians became an important political factor after 1971 and they held many important positions in the government and the army during Idi Amin's rule. When Idi Amin launched the "economic war" in 1972 and expelled all Asians, including citizens, from Uganda within three months, most of the property confiscated from Asians was either taken over by Government officials

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[572] *Uganda Argus*, 14 October, 1971, 1.
[573] *Uganda Argus*, 8 October, 1972,1.

or was handed over to Nubians and the few trusted army officers like Malyamungu, Faroak and Minawa.[574] According to Major Zed Maruru, a retired air force senior pilot who worked with Idi Amin, the State Research Bureau was staffed by trusted Nubians and Banyarwanda mercenaries.[575]

Major Maruru also states that he would not blame Amin for all the deaths that occurred because Amin's henchmen would take it upon themselves to kill, well knowing that nobody would care to cross check if Amin had given the order. Secondly, the henchmen were so close to Amin that even if the facts came up, it was believed that getting them prosecuted was not possible.[576]

Later on, especially after the fall of Amin in 1979, West Nilers were to be stereotyped on the basis of Amin, who was himself a Kakwa of that region. West Nilers who lived in Gulu town fled for fear of indiscriminate persecution[577]. During Obote's second term in power (1980-1985), soldiers in the new army, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), took revenge on people living in the West Nile region.[578] This led to conflict in the West Nile region against Obote II government as pro-Amin insurgent groups such as Uganda Rescue Front (URF), Former Uganda National Army (FUNA) launched attacks from Congo (then Zaire)

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[574] Nubians are a complicated lot of people. Members of this ethnic unit have lived in what is now Uganda for over a hundred and fifty years they even include people who can trace their ancestors back to Northern Nigeria, who settled in Sudan on their way back from Mecca. They were among the "Sudanese soldiers recruited by the British for the conquest of Bunyoro in the 1890s and late taken into the King's African Rifles. They illustrate how ethnicity can be fluid. They have since remained in Uganda (as a recognized) ethnic group and occupy large tracts of land in Bombo (Some 30 kms from Kampala) where Idi Amin gave them surveyed land.
[575] Interview with Major Zed Maruru, *Daily Monitor,* July 22, 2007, 12.
[576] Interview with Major Zed Maruru*, Daily Monitor, July 22*, 2007, 12.
[577] F Sverker, *Living with Bad Surroundings*, 97.
[578] J. Crisp, "Nationalism, Human Rights and Population Displacement: Luwero District", in *Reviews of African Political Economy*, 27/28 (1984). See also A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda,* 17, P.G. Okoth & B. Ogot, *Conflict in Contemporary Africa,* 106.

and the Sudan into the West Nile region of Uganda, adding to the violence in that region. Within a few years, some 300,000 people had fled to neighbouring Sudan.[579] This shows how far Amin and later Obote's actions increased the significant importance of ethnicity in Uganda that fuelled conflict.

During the Amin regime, a Moslem-Christian division also became manifest. Idi Amin was not only a West Niler but a Nubi-Muslim as well. In the eyes of many Ugandans, political and military powers were ultimately connected with the social order of regional division. Amin and his contemporaries were simply continuing what had been initiated during the colonial years. In his years, ethnic and religious polarization intensified.

By 1975, Amin had created several new ethnically and religiously based security organizations, which reported directly to him and which ruthlessly killed thousands of Ugandans. According to a report by the New York City Bar Association's Committee on International Human Rights, the estimated number of victims of Amin's reign of terror was between 100,000 and 500,000. According to the report,

> Within three months after he took power, Amin suspended all democratic rights, gave the army dictatorial powers of arrest and punishment and set up a military tribunal to try political offenders. A period of terror administered by the army (dominated by Sudanese mercenaries, the Anyanya, Kakwa and Nubian ethnic groups from Amin's West Nile region) and security forces followed.[580]

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[579] H. Bond & E. Barbara, *Imposing Aid,* 32-42.
[580] Quoted in *Human Rights Watch*, (1997), 32.

In his period, ethnicity and religion were, once again, used to reconfigure the state structures as a basis of power. His promise of democratic rule at the time of the coup was quickly forgotten as he became a principle agent of tribalism, religious sectarianism and dictatorship. In the 1970s, at the height of Amin's dictatorship, Ugandans at home and abroad failed to form an effective liberation movement to rescue their country from the reign of terror. The politicians could not transcend the politics of ethnicity and regionalism. As Mugaju summarises the situation then, "Within the country, Ugandans were too terrified and traumatized to resist Amin while Ugandan refugees were too scattered to organize an effective opposition-group".[581]

When Idi Amin was overthrown in 1979 by a combined force of the Tanzanian Army, the Tanzanian Peoples Defence Forces, and Ugandan guerilla armies under the Uganda National Liberation Front/Army, there were celebrations in much of the country. There was also a ray of hope that the country would settle and enjoy peace. Unfortunately, this hope was shattered sooner than later, as the Ugandan political elite fought each other for supreme power. Between 1980 and 1986, Ugandans experienced major political disagreements, rigged elections, suppression of democratic principles and rights, ethnic divisions and conflicts.

1979-1986, the Years of Political Experiment and Social Chaos

After the fall of Idi Amin in 1979, it was hoped that Ugandans and especially the political and military elite, would realize that the country's problems were

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[581] J. Mugaju, Uganda's *Age of Reform,*31.

mainly due to political disorganization and division. This did not come to be and instead, between April 1979 and January 1986, Ugandans were subjected to the inept rule of five separate governments and a major internal civil conflict in Luwero in Buganda. As Kasozi notes of the five governments,

> None had a firm hold on the police, the secret services or the prisons. As a result, lines of authority and power in both government and paramilitary agencies were chaotic, with the result that soldiers in the Binaisa, Obote II and Okello governments often defied orders and could indulged in unprofessional behaviour throughout most of this period.[582]

The short-term umbrella government, The Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) government, under Yusufu Lule (who ruled for 68 days) and Godfrey Binaisa, who came after Lule, did not support immediate restoration of multiparty politics and were removed from power through violent and undemocratic means. In May 1980, Obote loyalists in the Military Commission led by Paulo Muwanga carried out a coup and, once again, the question of the military became central in the politics of Uganda.

The fall of Idi Amin exposed the fragmented nature of Uganda's political elite. In the brief Lule period, politics in Uganda was largely determined by nine contending forces. First and most important was Tanzania, whose military forces had conquered Idi Amin. Second was the thirty-member National Consultative Council (NCC) elected at the Moshi Conference in Tanzania. This organ was largely used by Tanzania to mislead the International community that all political decisions then were taken by Ugandans, even when the Tanzanians pulled the strings behind the scenes. Third, and a potential danger,

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[582] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence,* 128.

were the pro-Obote elements in the army and civilian administration, including General Tito Okello and Chief of Staff of UNLA, David Oyite Ojok.

As Lule later complained, there were many pro-Obote individuals in the government that had been forced on him by Tanzania and who occupied key positions in administration and sought Obote's return to power[583]. Moreover, there was the Kikosi Maalum, a para-military group known for its high military preparedness and brutality, under David Oyite-Ojok.

In addition were fighting groups like FRONASA led by Yoweri Museveni and other minor groups that claimed to have contributed to the fall of Idi Amin like members of the Democratic Party (DP), and Uganda Freedom Movement,[584] the Gang of four (Edward Rugumayo, Dani Wadada Nabudere, Omwony Ojok and Yash Tandon), and the Nairobi Group which included Tarsis Kabwegyere.

These different political-military groups were largely ethnic organizations and always interpreted political issues along ethnic lines. For instance, when President Lule reshuffled his cabinet on 7 June 1979 without consulting Tanzania and the National Consultative Council (NCC), he was accused by other Ugandan politicians of favouring Buganda. He was also accused of making a grave political mistake when he made his first address to the nation in his local language (Luganda). Although the number of Baganda he appointed to key ministries was proportionate to their overall share of the population, this was

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[583] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 129-131.
[584] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence*, 129-131.

enough to frighten non-Baganda.[585] This exposes the importance of the 'Buganda factor' in the country's politics since the colonial times. As Mazrui (1974) has written, "Uganda is an impossible county to govern effectively with the support of Buganda, but is also impossible to govern effectively without the support of the Buganda".[586] The Buganda problem recurred and seemed to override other issues in the later conflicts.

For instance, when Lule suggested recruiting proportionately for the army from each of Uganda's regions, he was opposed because that move would give undue advantage to the Baganda who formed the majority population in Uganda. His administrative innovation of creating four regions and appointing four regional commissioners, two of whom were Shaban Opolot and Balaki Kirya (both men were anti Obote), also brought him problems with the pro-Obote elements in his government. This led to politics of alliance and counter alliance against and for President Lule. Lule's failure to fully comprehend the dynamics of the prevailing political forces and the ethnic factor in Uganda's politics brought him down.

The transition from President Yusufu Lule to Godfrey Binaisa was followed by bloodshed. When the population took to street demonstrations in Lule's support, troops were deployed and dead bodies were later discovered in the Kololo Golf Course in Kampala and elsewhere. Godfrey Binaisa's reign ended in May 1980 when Paulo Muwanga leader of the Military Commission carried out a coup against the Binaisa Government. This Commission was chaired by Paulo

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[585] Translated in political terms, the number of Baganda mattered because there was fear of Baganda domination since the colonial times. Such politics of divide and rule employed by the British was carried on with in the post-colonial period by the different leaders as a way to consolidate their power.
[586] A. Mazrui, *The Social Origins of Uganda's Presidents,* 3-25.

Muwanga with Yoweri Museveni as its deputy. Other members were Oyite-Ojok, Tito-Okello, Zed Maruru and Captain Omaria. This was an arm of the Uganda army (UNLF) which had usurped powers of the main body (UNLF). Once again, the question of the military and retention of power were central in Uganda's post-independence politics.

Second Obote government (The Luwero civil war of 1981-1986) and the manipulation of Ethnicity

The period 1980-1986 was another traumatic moment in Uganda's politics and history. On 10 December 1980, the partisan Military Commission organized a multi-party election in which four (4) main parties (UPC, D.P, UPM and CP) participated. The outcome of this election, allegedly won by UPC and Obote, was disputed by all other political parties. This became a recipe for conflict between 1981 and 1986.

Even before the controversial elections of 1980, as Mugaju notes, plans were already underway to resist what was regarded as the Tanzania-sponsored restoration of Obote to power. Different fighting groups emerged on the eve of the elections. For instance, Moses Ali formed his Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA) regrouped in Sudan with the aim of fighting Obote in case he was forcefully imposed on Ugandans and later, in 1981, Yoweri Museveni launched his famous armed struggle in the Luwero Triangle in Buganda.[587]

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[587] J. Mugaju, *Uganda's Age of Reform,* 36.

Other fighting groups opposed to the Obote II government included the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM), the Uganda National Liberation Front-Anti-dictatorship (UNLF-A) and the Federal Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU).[588] Once again, the political elite in Uganda had failed to work out a formula for balancing internal political differences, and conflict resulted. The competing factions for political power then opted to operate outside the political formulae established by the constitution.

Once in power after the 1980 elections, Obote made no effort to respect the opposition. The spirit of tolerance and reconciliation, which is essential for the functioning of multi-party politics and democracy, did not exist in Uganda under the Obote II regime. The 1980s elections, as Mugaju rightly noted,

> broke all the principles and practices of multi-partism. The nomination of party candidates was a farce. During the campaigns, there was more talk about which party had more military commanders and was capable of 'meeting violence with violence, intimidation with intimidation' than which party programmes were likely to pull Uganda out of the post-Amin quagmire.[589]

The result was a declaration of war in February 1981 against the government by Yoweri Museveni, the leader of the Uganda Patriotic Movement who had himself lost a constituency election to Sam Kutesa of the Democratic Party. Ethnicity then became a major factor in the subsequent war and mobilization of different guerilla movements.

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[588] J. Mugaju, *Uganda's Age of Reform*, 36.
[589] J. Mugaju, and Oloka-Onyango (Eds.), *No-Party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and Realities,* 22.

The hopes that had been raised by the return of an elected civilian government after the 1980 'victory' of Obote and the UPC, according to Omara-Otunnu , were endangered from the start by rival claimants to political power who had been disappointed by the election results. Within days of the election results, President Obote declared his view on the role of the Army in internal security in an interview with the BBC:

> I don't think Uganda is threatened by her neigbhours: I can't see any neigbour wanting to invade Uganda. So the issue is not the external problem; it is internal security. And that is not a police job; it is an army job.[590]

A number of groups were involved in the struggle to oust Obote after the rigged 1980 elections. First was the National Resistance Movement (NRM) led by Yoweri Museveni and his NRA; largely people from Ankole and Kigezi in Western Uganda, then Former Uganda Army (FUNA), the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNFR) from West Nile, Uganda Freedom Movement, (UFM) and the Federal Democratic Movement (FEDEMU), exclusively from Buganda.

Obote faced intense and sustained military opposition throughout his second tenure. Although Obote victimized ethnic groups like the Baganda and the Banyarwanda in Luwero who would not willingly support his administration,[591] he failed to cow them into submission. Instead, such groups fought back using the same tool, ethnicity, in politics and the army which Obote himself had used to rule since 1966.

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[590] *BBC World Service,* 13 December 1980, quoted by Omara Otunnu in *Politics and the Military in Uganda.*
[591] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*, 145.

The Luwero civil war of 1981-1985 exposed the extent to which political manipulation based on ethnic and religious differences became the main means used by political elite in Uganda to mobilize and rally the masses for their cause. First, Museveni, as leader of the National Resistance Army/Movement, took advantage of the intense dislike of Obote in Buganda and launched his guerilla war in the region. As Lwanga-Lunyiigo observed,

> The National Resistance Movement leadership fell prey to the myths of Acholi as a martial tribe in whipping up the threat of the "Anyanya" and "northerners" in order to get support for the war in Buganda where Obote had deposed the Kabaka in 1965.[592]

Yet, in reality, as Lamwaka has noted,

> The Acholi never started the war in Luwero, neither did the Acholi civilians and elders organize themselves and bless the atrocities. Although a good number of top commanders in the UNLA (the Uganda army) were Acholi, there were also many from other ethnic groups, the real blame should have gone to the government of the day; that is Obote II and partially shared by Museveni himself who started the Luwero war, individual commanders, including the Acholi soldiers, could then be blamed individually.[593]

Gersony, an external observer, supports the above argument; "the Acholi," he states,

> were only one of the several ethnic groups prominently represented in the Uganda army, Acholi forces in the army appears to have been generally subordinated to senior officers of president Obote's Langi tribe.[594]

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[592] S. Lwanga-Lunyiigo, "The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict", 45.

[593] C. Lamwaka, quoted by F. Sverker, *Living With Bad Surroundings*: *War and Existential Uncertainty in Acholiland Northern Uganda,* 118.

[594] R. Gersony, The *Anguish of Northern Uganda: Results of a Field-based Assessment of the Civil Conflict in Northern Uganda*, (London: International Alert, 1997), 10.

In an interview with *DRUM Magazine* in Nairobi in 1985, Museveni categorically stated that "the problem in Uganda is that the leadership has mainly been from the north. The Acholi are everywhere: in the army, big offices, etc. The southerners, who are mainly Bantu, have played a peripheral role all these years since Independence in 1962."[595]

Such collective blame (a kind of stereotype) was extended to the "northerners" in general and to the Acholi in particular because of their presence in Luwero. Besides, Yusufu Lule who had been deposed by the pro-Obote forces backed by the Tanzanians was made leader of the National Resistance Movement (NRM) for the purpose of whipping up support in Buganda.

The NRM and other guerilla movements that sprung up against the Obote II government also had largely ethnic support. For instance, the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) led by Andrew Kayira was also launched in Buganda. This was a Ganda chauvinist organization which did not have much appeal beyond Buganda. Then there was the Federal Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU) that aimed at the restoration of kingship in Buganda.[596] Such movements, including the NRM of Yoweri Museveni increasingly entrenched regionalism and ethnicity in military politics in Uganda.

The manipulation and stereotyping of the Acholi was not restricted to the National Resistance Movement of Yoweri Museveni. As the Luwero War

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[595] *Drum Magazine*, October 9th 1985.
[596] J. Okuku, "Ethnicity, State Power and the Democratic Process in Uganda", 19.

intensified, sectarian cleavages began to emerge within the UNLA. Some of the people interviewed in Acholi[597] were of the opinion that Obote had manipulated the Acholi in the Luwero Triangle war for his own political ends. Indeed as Pain Dennis points out, "for his political survival, Obote had begun to look at the Acholi officers in the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) as being rather independent of his political motivations and therefore a danger to his rule".[598]

The Acholi, on their part, complained that the deaths in Luwero were disproportionately high and that only Obote's tribesmen, the Langi, were being promoted[599]. Between 1983 and 1985, Obote increasingly relied on a small core of officers from his own sub-ethnic group to take command of the army. For instance, Captain Ageta, who was a relatively junior officer, was put in-charge of a newly created "Reconnaissance Unit" that was equipped with mounted guns and operated within the Central Brigade where Luwero was located. The Acholi commander-Bazilio Okello-Olara was in charge of this brigade but could not direct Captain Ageta's activities. When Bazilio Okello later discovered that Captain Ageta was engaged in unlawful activities and wanted to punish him, Brig. Smith Opon-Acak, a relative of Obote and Army-Chief of Staff after the death of Oyite-Ojok, told Okello that Ageta was directly answerable to the chief of staff.[600]

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[598] P. Dennis, "Bending the Spears; Producing Consensus for Peace and Development in Northern Uganda" (London: International Alert, 1997), 50.
[599]. Human Rights and Peace Center Doc, 2003, 30.
[600] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda,* 172.

The point here is that the rift between Obote and the Acholi officers and men in the army was based on ethnic considerations rather than disagreements on military priorities. Obote intensified this rift when he promoted many Langi officers so that, by the end of 1985, the Acholi had lined up behind Vice President Paulo Muwanga (A Muganda) in opposition to Obote (a fellow northerner)[601].

At the height of the Luwero war, Obote's cabinet was also divided between two principal factions. The first was led by Obote as president and consisted of young men in their early forties or late thirties, including Chris Rwakasisi, 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. The other faction led by Paulo Muwanga, possibly with the co-operation of Prime Minister (then) Otema Alimadi, was backed by Acholi army Commander-Tito Okello and other Acholi Officers. Obote's politics of divide and rule had greatly weakened his government by 1985. The Muwanga faction and Acholi soldiers even felt that the Luwero war was wasteful and wanted direct negotiations with Yoweri Museveni.[602] Paulo Muwanga used this period to establish links with the NRM and Museveni who was then in exile in Sweden.

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[601] Human Rights & Peace Centre document, 2003,30.
505 A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda,* 172-173.

The Overthrow of Obote

On 27 July 1985, Obote was overthrown by his one-time loyal Acholi commander Tito Okello, backed by Bazilio Okello-Olara. The two Okellos then formed a Military Council to administer the country. By the time of the 1985 coup, Milton Obote was gradually setting a stage for the elimination of Acholi officers from the Uganda Army. The National Security Agency (NASA) was then essentially an anti-Acholi intelligence organ whose reports had indicated secret contact between the Acholi, the Democratic Party, the National Resistance Movement/Army and the late Catholic Cardinal Emmanuel Nsubuga (RIP).[603] As early as 1984, Obote had virtually handed over the responsibility for the Luwero Triangle war to NASA. It was at that time that the Acholi officers began to retreat to the north from where they organized the final assault on Kampala and overthrew Obote.

The 1985 coup epitomized the politics of ethnic manipulation that characterized the second Obote regime. It was an internal coup by the Acholi officers as a pre-emptive self-defence move by the Acholi military elite against their Langi brother. It worked well for the National Resistance Movement of Yoweri Museveni who easily exploited the situation to defeat the Okellos in 1986 and come to power. Once again, the bullet, rather than the ballot had determined Uganda's course of politics.

The rise of the National Resistance Movement and Conflict in Acholiland, 1986-2006

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[603] P. Dennis, "Bending the Spears", 30.

After Obote's overthrow in 1985, Tito Okello and his cousin Bazilio Okello set up a military commission to administer the country. Its leader Tito Okello became government leader and president of Uganda, with Bazilio Okello as chief of Staff. The period that followed was that of violence, leading to another violent change of government when Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army (NRA) fought his way into power on 26 January, 1986.

The Okello government, commonly referred to as the Military Junta, rushed to incorporate all the fighting forces and to reconcile with remnants of the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) and the Former Uganda Army (FUNA). They also tried to persuade the NRM of Yoweri Museveni to join them in a coalition government. The NRA/M rejected this call on grounds that "there had been no fundamental political change in Kampala".[604]

From August to December 1985, peace talks were held in Nairobi under the chairmanship of Kenya's president Arap Moi. These Nairobi Peace Talks, which later became dubbed 'peace jokes", were never a serious preposition to stop the National Resistance Movement/Army under Yoweri Museveni from completing its mission of ethnic cleansing of the Acholi from the political scene. Bethuel Kipligat, then permanent secretary in the Kenya Ministry of Foreign Affairs and who played a key role in facilitating the negotiations, described the four months of negotiations as a process of "haggling and cajoling" by the two parties. He said:

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[604] A.B.K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda,* 174.

> They began the talks by hurling insults at each other and continued to do so throughout the proceedings. Museveni denounced the previous regimes in Uganda as 'primitive and backward'. He initially refused to negotiate with the military council delegation, dismissing them as 'criminals.' He in turn was accused by the military council of delaying the negotiation process unnecessarily . . . Once an agreement was reached on an agenda item, Museveni would change his position the following day; or put forward new demands on the same matter.[605]

It is clear that with this kind of manoeuvres, no serious agreement could be reached. Participation in these 'peace jokes' was part of the NRM/A's military strategy because they used the four months to arm themselves for the final assault on Kampala. The NRM/A succeeded in hoodwinking the Okellos but set a precedent of mistrust that has dogged later peace talks between the government of Yoweri Museveni and the different rebel groups in northern Uganda.[606]

On their way to Kampala, the NRM/A brought in Ronnie Mutebi, Buganda's Kabaka king-to-be, in order to reinforce Buganda's anti-Northerner ethnic politics by playing up the issue of restoration of the Buganda monarchy to win support for the final push against "the Okellos' in Kampala. Supported by the Uganda army dominated by the Acholi, Obote had been responsible for the dismemberment of the kingdom in 1966.

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[605] B. Kipligat, "Reaching the 1985 Nairobi Agreement", in L. Okello (Ed.), *Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace; Initiatives to End Violence in Northern Uganda* (London: Conciliation Resources and Kacoke Madit, 2002), 25.
[606] At the time of writing this work, the government of Uganda under Museveni and the LRA of Joseph Kony were looked up in peace negotiations. However there is skepticism that this may not work because of suspicions by LRA delegates that Museveni simply wants to portray a different face to the International Community that he wants to end war through peace negations which is not so because of what he did in 1985 to Okello (An Acholi).

This hatred of the Acholi and the playing up of the "Luwero Triangle" hysteria led to many ordinary Acholi people (then referred to as 'Ba-choli or Anyanya') to be killed mercilessly in parts of Buganda. Therefore, although Museveni had benefited greatly from the Acholi rebellion against Obote, he rejected any settlement where he could have shared political power with the Acholi. The ethnic manipulation of the Acholi, first by Obote and, later, by Yoweri Museveni is testimony to the fact that the post-independence political elite would only adopt political formulae acceptable and beneficial to them at the expense of the other groups. Marginalized groups would always resort to violent means to capture state power, leading to conflict. Politics of ethnic instrumentalism largely accounts for the conflicts in post-colonial period.

The civil war in the "Luwero Triangle" between Obote and his UNLA and Yoweri Museveni's NRA was the result of failure by all the political leaders since Uganda's independence to rise above ethnic and religious divisions and organize the country along democratic lines. Instead, the Uganda political elite continued the politics of 'divide and rule', especially the politics that increased the divide between the south and the north of the country.

Museveni and the NRA's rise to power and Continued conflict in parts of Uganda

After intensive negotiations in Nairobi chaired by Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi, Okello and Yoweri Museveni's NRM signed the Nairobi Accord in December 1985. However, after only a few weeks, the peace accord fell apart when the NRM complained that the Military Council under Tito Okello had not honoured its terms. In the first place, the Military Council was accused of taking

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unilateral decisions on major matters of policy and administration and made a number of key appointments in sectors of government and society without consulting the NRM. Besides, the Military Council flew in thousands of former Amin soldiers, many of them former Anyanya fighters from Sudan and Zaire (DRC), and from West Nile to the Central Province and reintegrated them into the UNLA, contrary to the terms of the Accord[607]. Between September 1985 and January 1986, the NRA intensified its activities, leading to the capture of power on 26, January 1986. The NRA victory in Uganda was quite unusual and unique in Africa. It was the first successful overthrow of an indigenous government by a locally based guerilla movement.

In contrast to the Military Commission, the NRA/M of Yoweri Museveni exhibited political astuteness and used every opportunity to maximum advantage. Although when he first went to the bush, Museveni claimed that it was because Obote had rigged the elections, when Obote was overthrown, he still refused to abandon his guerilla offensive, alleging that the new government was committing human rights violations and that he himself would change the system.

The most striking characteristic of President Museveni's early moves as President was his manipulation of ethnic and linguistic factors for political ends. Although he made general statements of his opposition to "tribalism" for the benefit of the international media, within the country, he presented the struggle for power as a confrontation between Bantu and non-Bantu speakers

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[607] W. Gazozo, "Point and Counter-point in Uganda" in *AfricAsia*, 9, (1986), 43-44.

and, more specifically, as a struggle between southerners and northerners[608]. He claimed that what he termed the 'political mess' in Uganda had been brought about by the mismanagement of the country, ever since independence, under the political leadership of people from the north. This was clearly an example of stereotyping.

Museveni's appeal to ethnic and linguistic loyalties proved very successful in winning him support and he was able to build up his army's numbers, first in the bush and later as president. His outburst against the Acholi and reference to past leaders as "swine", or "primitive" or "pigs" made the northerners hostile to his government.[609]

The NRA victory did not lead to immediate peace in all parts of Uganda. In eastern Uganda, the Uganda Peoples Army (UPA) opposed the new government with military means from 1987 to 1992.[610] When this insurgency eventually died down, remaining factions joined rebels in northern Uganda.[611] In the West Nile region, the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF), a rebel group that was formed after Amin's fall from power, signed a peace pact with Museveni and the new government. Splinter groups, notably the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and

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[608] A. Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890-1985*, 176 states that Museveni's reference to past leaders negatively has become common in his speeches especially on NRA Liberation days (26 Jan.) of every year. As he praises his NRM for the achievements, he always makes derogatory reference to past leaders especially Obote, Okello and Amin as problems that Uganda had for leaders.
[609] *The Monitor Newspaper* 1992, October.
[610] J. de Berry, "Life after loss: an Anthropological Study of Post-war Recovery in Teso, Eastern Uganda, With special reference to young people", London School of Economics and Political Science (PhD Thesis), 2000, 66.
[611] A.G. G. Ginyera Pincywa, *Northern Uganda in National Politics*, 22.

the Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF II), however, continued the armed resistance.[612]

In Western Uganda, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) came into being, with bases located in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and then there was the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), also in western Uganda. At the time of writing, both ADF and NALU have seriously been weakened.

In northeastern Uganda, heavily armed Karamojong cattle rustlers have remained a problem to the NRA, while in Lira district, the homeland of Milton Obote, there were clashes between the Uganda army and police and a rebel group calling itself the Citizens' Army for Multiparty Politics (CAMP). This movement was, however, crushed.[613] Other, but now defunct post-Obote 'rebel' movements included the Ninth Obote Movement (NOM),[614] and Force Obote Back Again (FOBA).

The most serious resistance that the NRA/NRM government has faced since 1986 came from different rebel groups in Acholiland. From 1986 to 2006, northern Uganda and especially Acholiland has been the centre of armed resistance and military battles. The 1997 study by Robert Gersony entitled *The*

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[612] M. Leopold, "The War in the North-- Ethnicity in Uganda " in T. Allen and J. Seaton (Eds.), *The Media in Conflict: War Reporting and Representations of Ethnic Violence* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 221. See also T. Ofscansky, "War-fare and Instability along the Sudan-Uganda border: A look at the 20th Century" in J. Spaulding & S. Boswick (Eds.), *White Nile, Black Blood: War, Leadership and Ethnicity from Khartoum to Kampala*, (Asmara: The Red Sea Press Inc., 2000), 195-208.

[613] *The Monitor* 10 Nov. 1999, *The New Vision* 1999, 23 Nov.

[614] Amnesty International Uganda: *The Failures to Safeguard Human R*ights (London: Amnesty International, 1992), 16.

Anguish of Northern Uganda argued that conflict in the north was, in fact, a continuation of the war in the "Luwero Triangle". Gersony argues:

> In a sense the struggle initiated by the NRA in Luwero in the early 1980s has never been concluded. It continued in Luwero through 1985. In early 1986, it was fought in Kampala and has continued in Gulu and Kitgum since that time. In essence the opposing parties remain the same, as do some of the tactics.[615]

The next chapter analyses the causes of conflict in Acholiland between 1986 and 2006.

In conclusion, conflict that has bedeviled post-colonial Uganda is largely about political power, which according to the NRM government (1986 to date), has been held for too long by the 'northerners'. Ethnicity has been used in mobilization by one group in power against the other. While Obote, for example, tried to isolate the Baganda and make them appear to be the most dangerous political problem for independent Uganda, successive governments after him, and especially the Amin and Museveni governments have portrayed the problem of Uganda as essentially caused by northerners, but especially by Acholi political–military dominance. President Museveni, especially, believes that all the Acholi people were/are part of the wrongs done by the Acholi soldiers in the South since independence. In this way, ethnicity is instrumentalized for selfish political ends. Such politics has led to polarization along ethnic lines, leading to the conflictual post-independence history associated with Uganda. It is the playing out of this ethnic and religious politics

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[615] R. Gersony, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda,* 12.

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that was at the base of the fragmentation and what Ogenga-Otunnu refers to as

the "fractured state".[616]

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[616] Ogenga-Otunnu, "Causes and Consequences of the War in Acholiland", in Okello Lucima (Ed.), *Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace*: *Initiatives to End the Violence in Northern Uganda,* (London: Conciliation Resources and Kacoke Madit, 2002), 20.

CAUSES AND THE DYNAMICS OF CONFLICT IN
ACHOLILAND, 1986-2006

Introduction

The National Resistance Movement Army (NRM/A) led by Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986 promising to restore security to the people of Uganda after 14 years of tyranny and massive violation of human rights. At his swearing-in ceremony as president, Museveni stated:

> The second point on our programme is security of person and property. Every person in Uganda must have absolute security to live wherever he wants. Any individual or any group who threatens the security of our people must be smashed without mercy. The people of Uganda should die only from natural causes which are beyond our control, but not from fellow human beings who continue to walk the length and breadth of our land.[617]

To the contrary, not every part of Uganda has enjoyed peace, security and human rights as promised by President Museveni in 1986. While, most Ugandans south of the River Nile[618] have enjoyed greater levels of security and prosperity as a result of relative peace since the NRM/NRA came to power in 1986, the conflict in Acholiland defies this trend. Since 1986, violent conflict has gripped the sub-region of northern Uganda, referred to locally as Acholi or Acholiland. Conflict in this sub-region has resulted in the abduction of almost 10,000 children, widespread human rights violations, the destruction of social and economic infrastructure, and displacement of over half the population-many of whom live in life-threatening conditions in the so-called protection

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[617] *BBC Summary of World Broadcast*, ME/8171/B/8, 31 January, 1986.
[618] River Nile makes a geographical divide between Southern and Northern Uganda at Karuma. Acholiland lies in the geographical north of Uganda

villages.[619] This chapter will analyze the causes and dynamics of conflict in Acholiland between 1986 and 2006. 2006 is important because conflict has subsided since then as a result of attempts towards peaceful settlement of the conflict.

The rebellion in Acholiland

The conflict in Acholiland in northern Uganda raged on from 1986 with several rebel groups emerging to fight the government of General Yoweri Museveni. The groups that emerged include; the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA), led by Brig. Odong Latek, the Holy Spirit Movement Forces (HSMF), led by self-styled prophetess-Alice Auma Lakwena, the Holy Spirit Movement II (HSM II), led by Alice's father-Severino Lukoya Kiberu, and the Uganda Christian Democratic Army (UCDA), led by Joseph Kony. [620]

Between 1986 and 2006, conflict in the Acholi region of northern Uganda has undergone major transformations. As soon as the NRM took over the main urban areas of Acholiland around March 1986, the regime launched a major witch hunt for the Acholi Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) soldiers who had fled from Kampala with their weapons.[621] The defeated UNLA soldiers fled from Kampala largely because of fear of revenge by the NRA who they had engaged in several military battles in the Luwero Triangle in Buganda between

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[619] The exact number of internally displaced people is still a contestation and government is currently trying to come out with exact numbers when these people return to their homes.

[620] The UCDA led by Joseph Kony changed names several times between 1988 and 1991 before it adopted its current names of Lords Resistance Army. It is the LRA that has engaged the government of Uganda and its forces longer till this day.

[621] M. L. Pirouet, "Human Rights in Museveni's Uganda", in. H.H. Bernt & M. Twaddle (Eds.), *Changing Uganda*: *The Dilemmas of Structural Adjustment and Revolutionary Change,* (London: James Currey, 1991), 97. See also Frank-Van Acker, " Uganda: The Lords Resistance Army, The New Order No One Ordered".

1981 and 1985. The Acholi and Langi-dominated UNLA had been used especially by Obote and, later, by Tito Okello to maintain their grip on power. To make matters worse, the "popular" perception in the south, that almost everybody from northern Uganda, especially the Acholi, was 'Anyanya' made Acholi soldiers and people from that region terribly insecure[622]. This constituted a threat that made many Acholi ex-UNLA soldiers and youth to join rebel ranks against the NRM government. The first rebel group (UPDA) was therefore formed out of UNLA Generals and unskilled youth who had joined due to threats by the NRA.

The second transformation was a spiritually inspired peasant rebellion led by Alice Auma Lakwena. A study carried out in 1996 by Charles Asowa of Makerere University and Bertha Amisi of Emergencies Response Information Centre, Action Aid-Kenya, on "The Impact of Peace in Northern Uganda: A search for solutions" pointed to the emergence of a reform movement in the form of a peasant rebellion. The study points out that the objective of this new movement was to deal with the consequences of the Luwero war and the war that had started in Acholiland. Accordingly, the report emphasizes that the rebellion began by Alice Auma Lakwena was intended to "cleanse the Acholi society from within and possibly eradicate witchcraft and sorcery".[623] However, even when Alice Auma Lakwena claimed so, the rebellion had military and political implications. As Weeks Willet (2002) rightly notes,

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[622] J. Mugaju & Oloka-Onyango (Eds.), *No Party Democracy in Uganda*: *Myths and Realities,* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2000), 112.
[623] Action Aid, *Report of the Two-day Conference on the Challenges for Peace in Northern Uganda: A Search for Solution*, (Kampala, Action Aid,1997).

The emergence of armed prophetic movements in Acholi in early 1986 coincided with a period of political uncertainty and upheaval within Acholiland and between the Acholi and the rest of Uganda, including their relationship with the central government (NRM) in particular.[624]

The Holy Spirit Movement Forces (HSMF) attracted the political and military elite from outside Acholiland like Lango, Teso and Budama in Tororo district of Eastern Ugandan who had either been members of the defunct UNLA or the Obote II regime deposed by Tito Okello. The HSMF philosophy included "using religion, cleansing ex-soldiers and general society of witchcraft and sorcery".[625] Its leaders told rebels that the stones they threw against the NRA enemy would explode like grenades, and nut oil smeared on their bodies would deflect NRA bullets. A hymn-singing semi-circle of rebels would advance towards the NRA and as the first line fell, the line behind would step over the bodies creating an apparently invisible advancing wall.[626] Using these quasi-religious methods, the HSMF easily attracted a following from the illiterate rural population as well as frustrated ex-UNLA military elite. The HSMF rebels reached within 100 kms of Kampala before they were defeated by the NRA. Much as it was a broader organization than the UPDA, it did not go beyond the Nilotic ethnic 'groups in the northern and north-eastern Uganda.

The main difference between the UNLA/UPDA and HSMF of Alice Auma Lakwena is that while the former fought in order to regain recognition in the sharing of power in Kampala, which they had sought through the Nairobi Peace

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[624] W. Willet, "Pushing the Envelope", 62.

[625] S.S. Kayunga, "The Impact of Armed Opposition on the Movement System in Uganda", in J. Mugaju & J. Oloka-Onyango (Eds.), *No-Party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and Realities*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2000), 113.

[626] A. Borzello, "The Rebels and the Convent Girls", *Electronic Mail and Guardians,* (Johannesburg: South Africa, 1997), 16.

talks of 1985-6, the latter wanted reform and spiritual purification of the Acholi and other Ugandan communities.

The third transformation was the amalgamation of both the Uganda Peoples' Democratic Army (UPDA) and Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF) into Joseph Kony's Lords Resistance Army. It is this group under Joseph Kony that continued to wreck havoc in Acholi up to 2006. There have been many efforts to broker peace since 2007.[627]

Another major transformation in this conflict was its intersection with other conflicts in the region. Although the causes of conflict in northern Uganda and southern Sudan are varied, the conflicts became interlinked over time. Southern Sudan was home to different rebel militia groups; the largest being the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA) of John Garang opposed to the Arab dominated Khartoum government under General Omar Bashir and the Lords Resistance Army of Joseph Kony. Since 1994, the Lords Resistance Army's (LRA) known support came from the Sudanese government in retaliation for Uganda government's support of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army insurgency. In October 2002, the Lords Resistance Army helped the Sudanese government recapture the Sudanese garrison town of Torit from the SPLM/SPLA. As a reward, the Sudanese government supplied LRA with arms and ammunition, including anti-tank landmines.[628]

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[627] At the time of writing this work, the government of Southern Sudan was still persuading Joseph Kony to sign a peace deal after protracted negotiations at JUBA under the chairmanship of Southern Sudan Vice president Riek Machar.
[628] See *International Crisis Group-Africa Report*, 77, 2004, 7.

Although the government of Uganda repeatedly denied giving political support to the SPLA/SPLM, it is well documented fact that Uganda gave military assistance to the SPLM/SPLA, including the deployment of the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) inside Southern Sudan which enabled the two (SPLA & UPDF) to defeat the Sudan national army and the LRA in the Equatoria and Bahr-El-Ghazal area. They also captured many garrisons of the Sudan army at Yei, and Tonji towns in Southern Sudan.[629] As a result of differences between the governments of Uganda and Sudan, LRA benefited as the government of Sudan increased its support for the LRA. It is this support that partly explains why the LRA managed to resist for this long. As Catherine Barnes & Okello Lucima have noted, "from 1994 until recently, the Sudanese government backed the Lord's Resistance Army (one of the rebel groups in Acholiland) at least in part retaliation for Uganda's support of the rebel Southern Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA)".[630] Therefore, while there were continuities in the conflict in Acholiland, there were also discontinuities.   Similarly, the destruction as a result of the 20 years of conflict cannot be attributed to one rebel group or to the rebel groups in Acholiland alone. The NRA also played a part.

The causes and dynamics of the conflict in Acholiland

The roots of the current conflict between the NRM government of Uganda and the different rebel groups in Acholiland are entwined with the history of conflict in post-independent Uganda and particularly the rise to power of the National Resistance Movement/National Resistance Army. It is deeply rooted in inter-

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[629] Human Rights Watch, Abducted and Abused: Renewed conflict in northern Uganda, 2003, PDF Version downloaded, July 2003, and available online http//www.hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0703
[630] C. Barnes, & L. Okello, "Introduction" in L. Okello (Ed.), *Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace: Initiatives to End the Violence in Northern Uganda*, (London: Conciliation Resources, 2002).

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ethnic competition for power in both government and military. The conditions for this competition were largely set during colonial rule and it has since been manipulated by the different post-independence Uganda governments. At the national level, the conflict in Acholiland is rooted in Uganda's challenge of developing a legitimate system of governance that promotes the collective aspirations of its plural society. Political conflict, historically organized along ethnic, regional and religious lines, has repeatedly undermined Uganda's 'nation building' project. The conflict in Acholiland began soon after Uganda's last regime change in January 1986, when the NRM/A took power after five years of insurgency by overthrowing a military government led by Tito Okello Lutwa, a General from Acholi. It was triggered by the NRM's methods for consolidating control over the northern part of Uganda. Such methods met divergent responses from the Acholi.

Until the NRM came to power in 1986, the economic and political pattern between the north and south regions of Uganda was such that the Acholi-Langi had dominated the military while the southerners had remained key holders of vital offices and the economy. This was the legacy of British colonial rule and its policy of divide and rule which immediate post-independent Uganda leaders simply reinforced. The British regarded the northern part of Uganda as a problem area. At that time, they described it as "a disturbed area, hostile territory, in which there were some tribes powerful enough to offer stiff and prolonged resistance" to their occupation".[631]

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[631] J. P. Berber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism in Northern Uganda, 30-36.

The matter was exacerbated by the infusion of large amounts of weaponry from Ethiopia. Thus, when the British decided to take control of the north, it was out of its concerns to secure the south and west of the country then regarded as the productive areas, which it effectively did and where it wanted to install immediate administration. Until 1921, therefore, the area called the north (Acholiland included) was under military occupation by the Northern Garrison. There was then an assumption of power and authority over the area "in which the tribes had no say".[632] This historical background and the fact that Uganda was unevenly developed by the British colonizers led to the 'North-South' divide in which the north was used as labour reservoir, creating the south as a producer of cash crops. The 'North-South' divide, therefore, results from an economic imbalance that suited the objectives of the colonial leaders. Unfortunately post-colonial leaders in Uganda have carried on with this.

Between 1894 and 1945 the colonial Kings African Rifles (KAR) was a relatively balanced military force representing a cross section of Ugandan society. Ugandans from both the North and South were recruited into the British colonial armed forces (KAR), but this changed radically after 1945. After World War II, the British realized that most of the Ex-Service men who had been at the vanguard of the anti-colonial struggle in several parts of Africa were interested in movements to refrain their lost independence. In Uganda the problem was that several ex-servicemen were from the south of the country, from a region where the educational and economic elite was also concentrated.[633] Fearing the

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632 J. P. Berber, "The Moving Frontier of British Imperialism in Northern Uganda", 30-36.
633 S. S. Kayunga, "The Impact of Armed Opposition on the Movement System in Uganda", 111.

consequences if that region also had large numbers of trained soldiers, the British began to recruit mainly from the Acholi, Langi and West-Nile in the north. Consequently, the Acholi and West Nile ethnic groups came to dominate the KAR. In this way, however the British had created a balance of power between an elite largely drawn from the south and an army or military elites from the north.

The economic divide was also such that industrial development and cash crop production were for the south, while the north was kept as labour reservoir. While one may argue that the British had created a balanced political-military and economic situation devoid of conflict, these policies still created an intractable challenge to building a united nation state when independence came on 9th October 1962 largely because of failure by post-independent leaders to re-unite the country. The Acholi, in particular, had been told by the British colonial masters that they had been warriors, effectively transforming them into a military ethnocracy.[634] Besides, military service became the principal source of livelihood for thousands of families in northern Uganda. The post-colonial governments of Obote and Idi Amin, both from the north, found this formula politically expedient, which, in turn, further fuelled ethnic polarization and the militarisation of politics.

When the NRM came to power in 1986, the above political formula was also overthrown. The NRA, a southern-dominated guerilla army, became the new

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[634] S. Lwanga-Lunyiigo, "The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict 28-29. See also a. Omara-Otunnu *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890-1985*, 32-33.

national army. This change in the political-military pattern meant that the economic livelihood of thousands of Acholi people who had hitherto depended on the army was significantly affected. Worse still, the popular view in the south and especially Kampala that almost everybody from northern Uganda, especially Acholiland, was "Anyanya,"[635] made the people from the region terribly insecure. It was this sense of political, social and economic insecurity that the sponsors of insurgency in Acholiland capitalized upon to start rebellion. The defeated Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) soldiers who had fled to northern Uganda and formed the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA) exploited this situation to start rebellion against the NRA/NRM government. It was this force which invaded Uganda and attacked the newly victorious NRA on 22 August 1986.[636] The central factor therefore remains the shift in military and political balance from north to south and how this left the many former Acholi soldiers helpless and unemployed. The NRA victory had ended Acholi military dominance before and after independence. Young Acholi men had few job prospects other than the army and this partly explains why they were easily lured into one or the other of the different rebel movements that sprang up in Acholiland against the NRA/NRM.

The failure by the colonial and, later, post-colonial governments, to integrate Acholiland into the productive south also accounts for the current conflict. During the 68 years of British colonialism in Uganda, Acholiland was marginal in many ways. First, it was widely viewed as occupied by a tribe of a quite

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[635] Anyanya are a Southern Sudan tribe. To refer to the Acholi and northerners in general as 'Anyanya' was to imply that they were not Ugandans, and who had no place in Uganda's politics.
[636] S. S. Kayunga, "Impact of Armed opposition on the Movement system in Uganda", 112. See also International Crisis Group, *Africa Report*, 77, 2004, 7-8.

different and inferior order. Hence, the Acholi were perceived to have little to contribute to the development of the colonial economy[637]. It was out of this that Acholiland was regarded as a labour reservoir for the south. Besides, they were to serve in the security forces because they were "a martial tribe, with superior physique, good habits of discipline and unsophisticated outlook"[638]. As a result, Acholiland was left to lag behind economically. When colonial rule ended in 1962, the Acholi had more soldiers in the national army than any other Ugandan ethnic group, and their prominence in the Ugandan national army grew after independence.

Economically, Acholiland remained poor during the colonial and in the immediate post-colonial periods. The prosperity of the south, especially the sugar plantations in Kakira and Lugazi, was largely because of their labour. By 1963, there was no industry in Acholi, except the two cotton ginneries owned by the West Acholi Co-operative Union. The trading sector, by (1963) consisted of 556 traders, of whom 445 were Africans. A year later, the number of African traders had risen to 507.[639] Translated into political terms, these regional imbalances enriched the producing areas and impoverished the labour supply areas (the north), thereby increasing the potential for violence.

By accepting the structure of politics organized and crafted by the colonialists under the 'divide and rule policies', the Ugandan leaders failed to avoid the ethnicisation of politics in the country, which has torn down the fabric of the

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[637] R. R. Atkinson, The *Origin of the Acholi of Uganda*, 4.
[638] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, 178-181 & 218.
[639] C. Leys, *Politicians and Policies*: *Essay on Politics in Acholi*, 15.

Uganda society, leading to conditions of conflict all round. The civil war that raged on in Luwero between 1981 and 1985, just like conflict in Acholiland, between 1986 and 2006, was a product of this failure of all the political leaders since Uganda's independence to rise above ethnic and religious divisions and organize the country along democratic lines. Rather than continue the "blame politics" and especially blame of the colonialists for what Acholiland is, one should question the role of post-colonial leaders. Nationalists in Uganda should have combated that division and differential economic development by uniting the people, promoting equal development opportunities because that is what nationalism is supposed to achieve. In Uganda it was just the opposite.

Uganda's leaders from the north, starting with Milton Obote and, later, Idi Amin failed to reverse this trend and integrate the Acholi into the South. For the period he was in power, Obote exploited Acholi dominance in the army to keep hold of power. Obote's undemocratic political manoeuvres, which exploited ethnic and religious differences, were reminiscent of the "divide and rule" politics of the British. His political strength was based on playing both ethnic and religious differences to win support from the east, the west and parts of the north by manipulating these divisions. He used the same manipulation in the army, which Museveni has continued to deploy.

With Amin's coup in 1971, the Acholi's special access to the military turned into a deadly liability. From the early stages of the coup, the Acholi and Langi were marked as enemies and bore a heavy share of the brutality and killing that Amin's men rained upon the country. After Idi Amin's overthrow in 1979 (with

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Acholi soldiers playing a prominent role), Acholi ethnic identity throughout the 1980s alternatively offered opportunity or danger as one regime gave way to another in a spiral of political violence played out, all too often, in ethnic terms. Some Acholi interviewed are of the opinion that Milton Obote's second regime (1980-1985) was the worst time for the Acholi soldiers in the UNLA. Acholi soldiers who formed the majority in the infantry were made to fight the NRA in Luwero triangle for what they considered Obote's political ends. Obote relied on a small core of officers from his Lango tribe for top army posts. They give the example of Captain Ageta who was put in-charge of the newly created 'Reconnaissance Unit" in Luwero and never took orders from Brigadier Bazilo Okello, an Acholi.

Obote also appointed his cousin Brigadier Smith Opon Acan to the influential position of Army Chief of Staff following death of David Oyite Ojok in 1984. Oyite, like Opon- Acak were both Langi and cousins to Obote[640]. He did this for his political survival, not respecting the fact that he had exposed the Acholi to hatred by other tribes. Indeed as Pain (1997) put it "It is true that for his political survival, he (Obote) began to look at the Acholi officers in the UNLA as being rather independent of his political motivations and therefore a danger to his rule".[641]

Since the rise to power of NRM under Yoweri Museveni until 2006, Acholiland never enjoyed peace. The area has seen a wave of insurgency as one rebel

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[640] Interview with P. Mulira, October, 2007.
[641] P. Denis, "Bending Spears", Quoted in *The Hidden War; the Forgotten People* (Kampala: Huripec, 2003), 29.

movement rose and gave rise to another. The NRA entered Acholiland as conquerors and not liberators as was the case in the south. In the south, Museveni fought to liberate the Bantu from 'northern domination" and poor leadership from the north. As he stated in an interview to *Drum Magazine,* "The problem in Uganda is that leadership has mainly been from the north. The southerners, who are mainly Bantu, played a peripheral role all those years since independence in 1962".[642]

Whereas it is true that Obote, Idi Amin and Tito Okello were from northern Uganda, reconciliatory politics and leadership dictate against such ethnicised statements. The end result was failure to integrate the North to the South leading to conflict. Today, under the NRM, there is a Ministry for Northern Uganda but little has been done to integrate the north to the south. Such negative attitude by the NRM leadership, unfortunately also led to the Acholi negative attitude of the NRM and Museveni. As Evelyn Grace Anywar, a performing artist and an Acholi based in Nairobi put it. "The Acholi feel rejected. The Acholi feel hated. They feel unwanted. In their every day life, young Acholi feel excluded from Ugandan citizenship".[643] In such a state, most of them got lured easily to different rebel groups.

Whereas the above stated position reflects the mood and attitude of Acholi people towards the NRM, it also illustrates their role in the current conflict. Their failure to come to terms with the changes ushered in by the new NRM

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[642] *Drum (East) Magazine*, 9
[643] Quoted in M. Leopold, "The War in the North", 228.

government in 1986, especially their displacement from controlling the military; which they had dominated since 1945, partly accounts for their positive response to the different rebel groups that sprang in Acholi. In explaining the emergence of armed prophetic movements in Acholiland in early 1986, Willet Weeks states that "the emergence of armed prophetic resistance coincided with a period of political uncertainty and upheavals within Acholi and between the Acholi and the rest of Uganda; including their relationship with their central government (NRM) in particular".[644]

In this case, and, as Heike Behrend also notes, the actions of political players and their servants in the military had provided the preconditions for the catastrophic situation in Acholi i.e. the state of conflict.[645] The period 1986 to 2006 has been the most tumultuous for the Acholi military elite and peasants alike.

The NRM under Y. Museveni and Conflict in Acholiland 1986-2006

The NRA/M seizure of power in 1986 effectively meant that, for the first time since independence in 1962, socio-economic, political, military powers and political leadership shifted from the North. This development produced a great deal of resentment against Museveni for having displaced a Northerner, Tito Okello, from power. According to Ogenga Otunnu, the new administration (NRM), which absorbed political and military groups from the South and Moses

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[644] W. Willet, "Pushing the Envelope, Moving Beyond ;Protected Villages; in Northern Uganda"27.
[645] H. Behrend, *War in Northern Uganda*: *The Holy Spirit Movement of Alice Lakwena*.

Ali's Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) from West Nile, then engaged in intensive anti Acholi propaganda. The leader of this negative propaganda on the Acholi was President Museveni himself".[646]

In his book, *Sowing the Mustard Seed,* Museveni argues passionately that the Acholi people as a whole had participated in the looting of the South, almost qualifying Ogenga Otunnu's views above. As Museveni states:

> You could not say that they were fighting to bring resources to the north, other than by way of looting and corruption; for social corruption had widely taken root in the region (Acholiland). Under previous regimes (Obote and Okello), the soldiers, most of whom came from the north, had been free to loot civilian property. Whenever they looted, they would take them (loot) to their homes and their parents would not ask where they obtained them . . . In this way the whole community in Acholi and Lango became involved in the plundering of Ugandans from the south for themselves.[647]

This kind of attitude about the Acholi as a whole reflects how far Uganda politics has been ethnicised. While it is true that certain Acholi individuals in the army may have looted, it is not justified to conclude that the entire Acholi community benefited and supported such actions. Such politics of ethnic stereotyping only increased fear among the Acholi, especially the youth and ex-soldiers who, henceforth, joined different rebel groups against the NRM governments. As Odong-Otoo, Member of Parliament for Pader in Acholi, put it,

> while it is true to say that economic hardship in many parts of Uganda, not Acholi alone, forced certain groups of people to join the army, there is no conclusive evidence to prove that the Acholi used their position in the army to loot other parts of Uganda.[648]

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[646] Ogenga-Otunnu, "Causes and Consequences of the War in Acholiland", 6.
[647] Y.K. Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, 177-178.
[648] Interview on 5/May 2007, Kampala.

This illustrates how the NRM also fell prey to colonial and post-colonial politics of ethnic stereotyping and manipulation like previous leaders. The Museveni regime had learnt nothing from the previous mistakes and the end result was continued conflict in Acholiland.

The victorious National Resistance Army entered Gulu in March 1986. According to Caroline Lamwaka, Ogenga-Otunnu, Catherine Barnes and Okello Lucima,[649] at first, the NRA, soldiers in Gulu were well-disciplined and respectful. However, within a short time, serious breakdown in discipline occurred among the National Resistance Army and the other forces like Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) and Federal Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU) that had joined the NRM.

First, the NRM regime launched a witch hunt for the Acholi UNLA soldiers who had fled from Kampala with their weapons. Immediately the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) forces, then largely Acholi, were defeated at the battle of Katonga River in January 1986, most UNLA Acholi and Langi soldiers sensed danger and began to leave Kampala for their homeland in northern Uganda, carrying along with them their property and families.[650] Most of them feared that the victorious NRA forces and the Baganda based movements like UFM and FEDEMU might revenge for the atrocities they were accused of in the Luwero

[649] C. Lamwaka, "The Peace process in northern Uganda, 1986-1990". See also Ogenga-Otunnu, "Causes and Consequences of the War in Acholiland", and C. Barnes and L. Okello (Eds.), *Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace*.
[650] A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*.

Triangle in Buganda and other accusations laid against the Obote II and Okello governments.

As Catherine Barnes and Okello Lucima have noted, the newly victorious army comprised poorly integrated units like FEDEMU,[651] which were indisciplined and bent on revenge. Being largely composed of Baganda who wanted the return of the Kabaka and accused the Acholi for their role in destroying Buganda Kingdom and exiling of their Kabaka Mutesa I, FEDEMU resorted to direct revenge against the Acholi. After 1986, some errant NRA officers who were bent on revenge mistreated the surrendering ex-soldiers. George Kanyeihamba has observed, elsewhere that,

> the NRA High Command was to make an error by entrusting
> one of these joining groups (FEDEMU) with responsibility of
> mopping up the remnants of the UNLA in the northern region
> of Uganda where that group inflicted so much havoc and
> terror on the population there that the consequences would
> alienate the majority of the population in that region from the
> NRM for decades.[652]

While there was an initial period of relative peace, army units like FEDEMU were responsible for instances of extra-judicial killings and other human rights violation.[653] For example, in August 1986, the Federalist Democratic Movement (FEDEMU), a Buganda militia then operating with the National Resistance Army (NRA), massacred 40 civilians in former president Tito Okello's village at Namukora in Kitgum,[654] partly in retaliation for UNLA killings in Luwero. In July 1987, the NRA executed some 97 civilians in Kona-Kilak in Gulu. In June

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[651] Most of the Federal Movement of Uganda (FEDEMU) fighters were Baganda who were hurriedly integrated into the NRA partly to boast their (NRA) numbers and also to win the support of Buganda. Most of them were still bitter and accused the Acholi of the atrocities in Luwero.

[652] G. Kanyeihamba, *Constitutional and Political Development of Uganda*, 237.

[653] C. Barnes & L. Okello (Eds.), *Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace*, 1.

[654] C. Barnes & L. Okello (Eds.), *Protracted Conflict, Elusive Peace*, 1.

1988, 40 civilians were massacred at Koch Goma.[655] NRA/FEDEMU atrocities increased suspicions that a war of revenge was being undertaken against the Acholi. At this stage, the understanding of the NRA and FEDEMU was that the defunct Uganda National Army (UNLA) stood for Acholi soldiers. As a result, the destruction that followed Museveni's takeover affected almost all sectors of Acholi to a degree never experienced before.[656]

Besides this witch hunting, there was also what many Acholi informants believe was a deliberate strategy of impoverishing them (Acholi) through looting their cattle. As 80-year old Okello Osira of Padibe put it, "They remove our cattle to make us (the Acholi) poor, to be able to control us".[657] He claims that he lost between 20-60 heads of cattle at the hands of the NRA and that many lost even more to Karamojong cattle rustlers. Available data provided by veterinary officers in Gulu seems to support the fact that Acholi lost most of the cattle stock in the period 1986-1997. Data provided indicates that in 1985, Gulu and Kitgum districts had a total cattle population of 285,000. However, because of cattle raids from the Karamojong and looting, this was reduced to approximately 5,000 heads by 1997.[658] The social outcome of this was that in their everyday life, ex-Acholi soldiers and young and elderly people in Acholiland felt excluded from Ugandan citizenship.

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[655] For details on this and other forms of torture on the local people see *Human Rights Watch: The Scars of Death: Children Abducted by the LRA in Uganda*, (Sept. 1997).
[656] Amnesty International *Uganda: The Failure to Safeguard Human Rights*, 1992.
[657] Interview with Okello-Osira, October 2007.
[658] Quoted in *Huripec Report,* 70.

A senior government official from Acholiland, talking on condition of anonymity, believes also that the NRM victory produced a great deal of resentment against Museveni for having displaced an Acholi, Tito Okello, from power. He said:

> Northerners and Acholi in particular felt cheated by the British who had used them in the King's African Rifles and the Baganda during colonial rule. This second cheat (because they helped overthrow Obote in 1985) by Museveni made us feel even more bitter.[659]

Acholi elite in Kacoke Madit meeting[660] in London between 17th & 19th July 1998 also questioned why war had persisted in Acholiland even when other areas like West Nile, Teso had been pacified. In this way, the historical fault line of ethnic politics had re-emerged.

Talking about the discipline of the NRA in Acholiland, President Yoweri Museveni's half brother Salim Saleh, then commanding the conquest of Acholiland, is quoted to have said that "In August 1986, the NRA 35th Battalion under Andrew Kayiira (a Muganda) and leader of (FEDEMU) then deployed in Kitgum committed mistakes against the population after being attacked by the UPDA in the area of Namukora". He admits that "this act tarnished the otherwise unblemished discipline track record of the NRA".[661]

Although there is room to argue that indiscipline may not have been as a result of official government policy against the Acholi, it had far-reaching effects largely because of the history of ethnic abuse and provocations that had been

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[659] Interview, 30 June 2007, Kampala.
[660] Kacoke-Madit or big meeting of Acholi in the diaspora 17-19 July 1998.
[661] *New Vision*, Sunday 29th June 2003.

characteristic of Uganda since independence in 1962. Acholi member of

Parliament Odong-Otto seems to confirm this when he states that,

> It was not the 35th Battalion that was responsible for the Namukora atrocities but NRA dominated by Museveni's Banyankole and Baganda whose main objective was to carry out an ethnic revenge against the Acholi for their alleged dominance of Uganda armed forces and politics before 1986.

He even questioned why the attack on the UPDA became an attack on the

ordinary people who were caught in between the early spontaneous rebellions

even before the UPDA appeared in the area.[662]

The point to be made from the above is that, while the NRA's behaviour and

thirst for revenge partly accounts for the conflict in Acholiland, it also relates to

the problem of the militarization of the Ugandan society after independence.

Since Independence in 1962, security forces in Uganda acquired an identity of

their own, with civilian control non-existent. Besides, competition concerning

which ethnic groups would form the constituent core of the security forces drove

a history of violent political change. To enjoy the benefits of the state or access

to top political positions and power, the control of the security forces has been

so crucial in Uganda. As Acker Frank has noted,

> In practice, Uganda's modern history has been an example of the state using its authoritative mechanisms (the military) to identify and exclude from its enjoyment groups of people, 'internal outsiders' from within the national boundaries.[663]

The history of marginalization in key sectors has been driven by the selective

composition and use of the army; turning the military into a vehicle of domestic

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[662] Interview with Odong-Otto, 5 May 2007, Kampala.
[663] Acker Van Frank, "The Lords Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered", 339.

politics. Suffice to say, the conflict in Acholi is partly out of the desire of ex-Acholi soldiers and politicians to regain control of the military (as was till 1986) and to use it as a vehicle of domestic politics. All successive regimes in Uganda have grossly misused the military to achieve their selfish aims.[664] The case of Uganda illustrates how the state has become the instrument of violent retaliation in the arena of domestic politics. In such a case, the military can be either a public good or a public bane.

Conspiracy theorists believe that the current conflict in Acholiland was well-planned years before the NRM came to power. According to Ndebesa Mwambutsya, Godfrey Asiimwe[665] and Jakayo Ocitti,[666] the present power brokers in Uganda, NRM leaders, were determined to remove the political "leadership" from the north at all costs. They contend that until that leadership had been taken and secured against any possible reversal, a war against the northerners was to be pursued. The first case they all present is Museveni's determination to sabotage the 1985/6 Nairobi Peace Talks and to use this as an excuse to buy time and capture Kampala. Thus, it is argued that "Museveni did not place much significance to these talks" and "kept calling the Kampala group bandits, tyrants, killers" as a way to annoy them into walking out of the talks"[667]. It is further contended that Museveni only used the 'Peace Talks' period as a delaying tactic until his military group had gained enough strength

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[664] Alfred Obita at the Kacdit meeting- July 17-19th 1998.
[665] Ndebesa Mwambutsya is a lecturer in Department of History-Makerere University and a political critic. He has advanced such views in seminars and political talk-shows in different F.M Radios and Television. He is also a member of an elite political organization –The Free Think Movement". Asiimwe holds a PhD in Development Studies and Masters Degree in History and is currently the Head of Department of History.
[666] Prof. Ocitti retired from Makerere University where he served for over 35 years and is currently part-time lecturer in Gulu University. He is an Acholi from Gulu and critic of the Movement government of Museveni.
[667] Interview with Ndebesa Mwambutsya, 2007.

to strike at the Okello government in Kampala. Indeed, Museveni's negativity to peace talks with the UPDA and other rebels later in 1997 seems to confirm this. In 1997, he openly declared "personally, I want no peace talks with criminals".[668] When Uganda's sixth Parliament passed the Amnesty Bill in late 1999, as a formal way through which rebels could surrender under state protection, President Museveni at first refused to assent to the Bill arguing: "why should these thugs who kill our people get state protection. We should kill them, we shall kill them off".[669]

Ocitti goes further to argue that the Luo (Acholi are Luo) and the Banyankole (Museveni's tribe) have never co-existed. He then refers to the great migratory times of the Luo, beginning from 1500AD when they crossed into Bunyoro-Kitara Empire of the Bachwezi and the latter simply 'disappeared'. The Chwezi Dynasty that had ruled Bunyoro-Kitara Empire is the historical forefather of today's Banyankole tribe to which Museveni belongs. There is still some mystery as to why this great empire simply crumbled when Luo migrants walked in and occupied the northern part of it. Claims such as this that the Chwezi felt they could not stay in one empire with foreigners (i.e. Luo ancestors] are rife in Uganda's history. While there are different reasons given for the breaking up of the Bachwezi Empire, Ocitti feels that the Bachwezi hatred for the Luo remains paramount. He then concludes that the current conflict is "pay back" time by the offspring of the Bachwezi like Museveni and his Banyankole dominated NRA on the Acholi (as a sub-section of the Luo). Rather

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[668] *East African 22*, March 1999*, The New Vision 26 April 1999.Quoted in the Crusader 29th November 1997.*
[669] *New Vision, 8*, Jan. 2000, See also *East African* 22 March 1999.

than debating the accuracy of such views, what matters is that such views still paint a picture of Uganda's post-independence politics as dominated by ethnicity and its manipulation and stereotyping.

It is true that the current leadership was wary of the part the Acholi had played in the politics and military of Uganda since Independence. The problem was how far they ethnicised this problem as if the entire Acholi, as an ethnic group, had dominated the leadership and army at the expense of other groups. This politicization of ethnicity has been a source of friction and conflict in Uganda.

Other Senior NRA leaders, charged with the duty of executing war in northern Uganda, also fell prey to Museveni's strong views about the Acholi or northerners in general. Having a particular perception is not bad. However perceptions which are too biased about a community in general and which are expressed by leaders can be very dangerous, as this borders on ethnic mistrust and stereotyping. Former Army Commander James Kazini, who took over from Mugisha Muntu in 1998, once stated in reference to war in Acholiland: "If anything, it is local Acholi soldiers causing problems. It is the cultural background of the people here; they are very violent. It's genetic".[670] The deductions to be made from the above statement and which impact on this study and position on this conflict are several.

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[670] Quoted in *Human Rights Watch*, Sept. 1997, 33.

First is that the NRA soldiers and officers executing the war failed to properly identify the enemy to be dealt with. Right from their victory and takeover of Kampala, the spirit and attitude of the NRA was to revenge against the Acholi who were accused of atrocities in the south and especially in Luwero triangle. Acholi or "Bacholi"[671] were the enemies and not the UNLA soldiers who had engaged the NRA in different battle fields in southern Uganda. As one time Prime Minister Kintu-Musoke (a Muganda) put it, "The Acholi have to pay for what they did in Luwero".[672]

The main weakness with views expressed by NRM political heavy weights like the former Prime Minister quoted above is in their failure to identify their 'real enemy' and their negativity to reconciliation with the defeated UNLA soldiers for the sake of peace. In addition, the wrongs of the few Acholi soldiers in the UNLA became the wrongs of all Acholi civilians; the elderly, the youth and innocent women, who never participated in the Luwero war. Like Museveni and Kazini, Kintu-Musoke appears convinced of the wrong of the entire Acholi community, yet some informants confirm that most of the dead in Luwero were Acholi soldiers ambushed by NRA as they either passed through Luwero back north or in battle. This stereotyping of Acholi as venal and the bane of Uganda politics is a factor in the conflict.

According to Caroline Lamwaka, NRA soldiers often justified their looting and harassment of civilians as revenge for the abuses allegedly committed by Acholi

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[671] "Bacholi" is synonymous with many Acholi. It is a local phrase for Acholi in plural.
[672] *The Monitor 1996,* 129.

UNLA soldiers in Luwero triangle. They would tell people, "we are recovering our properties from Luwero".[673] This reinforced the perception that the NRA/M viewed people from the north as enemies. The NRM failed to integrate the north since they regarded people from this region as 'thieves', 'murderers', and 'backward'. Their brutality forced many local Acholi and ex-soldiers to join one or the other of the different rebel groups that sprang up in Acholiland. The significance of NRA atrocities and attitude have been confirmed by Charles Alai, a former Deputy Minister in Museveni's government (1995-2000), 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 Army/Movement because his life was threatened.[674] Andrew Adimola, a senior ex-administrator from Gulu also claims that Bazilio Okello, coup leader against Obote in 1985, would have come out of the bush in 1986 had Museveni not insisted that he should be charged as a criminal.[675]

Against this background of mistrust, in May 1986, the NRM government ordered all former Uganda Army soldiers to report to barracks. The order was met with deep suspicion, in part, because it was reminiscent of Idi Amin's edict of 1971/72. In 1971/1972 Idi Amin ordered all Acholi and Langi soldiers who had fled Kampala following Obote's overthrow to return their arms and report to different barracks. Once the soldiers responded positively, many were massacred[676]. Amin's actions firmly reinforced competitive retaliation on an ethnic basis in Uganda politics because after his fall in 1979, Acholi and Langi

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[673] C. Lamwaka, "The Peace Process in Northern Uganda, 1986-1997 ", 7
[674] Interview with Charles Alai, Sept, 15, 2007.
[675] Interview with Charles Alai, Sept, 15, 2007.
[676] Ogenga Otuunu, "Causes and Consequences of the War in Acholiland", 4.

soldiers in the UNLA took revenge against the people of West Nile for what Idi Amin had done in 1971/1972. Many Acholi believed that they could hear an echo of this experience when Museveni's NRA ordered UNLA soldiers back to barracks in 1986. Many of them believed that revenge was the basis of this order.

Consequently, some ex-UNLA soldiers went into hiding in Southern Sudan as others took up arms. Most of such ex-soldiers and Acholi youth then joined the Uganda People's Democratic Army of Odong Latek.[677] A report by International Crisis Group 14 April 2004 also confirms this. The NRA's response to this development worsened the situation because attacks made were not well organized, and hence affected civilians largely. The attack on the UPDA became an attack on ordinary people who were caught up in the spontaneous rebellion.

The NRA war against the UNLA and Okello government also exposed their other weakness that had a bearing to the conflict in Acholiland. When the NRA was at war with Obote II and Okello soldiers between 1981 and 1986, the message by Museveni was that "we want to liberate Ugandans from bandits, tyrants and killers".[678] This made the NRA to be seen in the south as liberators. In the north, they regarded themselves as conquerors. The message to ex-soldiers, who were largely from Acholiland and Lango, was "they either surrender or we shall crash and kill them". In his public address at PECE stadium in Gulu on 5 May 1988, Museveni promised to 'kill', 'shoot to kill' any rebel or rebel

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[677] Ogenga Otuunu, "Causes and Consequences of the War in Acholiland", 4.

[678] President Museveni still believes that UNLA and the Obote and Okello regimes stand to be blamed for all the killings in Luwero, and other parts of Uganda, especially the South. He exonerates his NRA and has on several occasions described UNLA soldiers, Acholi and past leaders as "swine or pigs, fools, killers etc".

collaborators or ex-soldiers who did not surrender: Besides, on their assumption of power, the NRM leadership made it clear that the armies they had fought had been defeated and that there was no question of power sharing with them.[679]

Such strong statements from the head of state were regarded by the Acholi as war threats to all of them. He was not reconciliatory at all. The NRA/M then failed to dismantle the belief among the Acholi that the new regime hated all of them. They also failed to convince the elders and local Acholi that their (NRA) targets were the few bad elements in the UNLA. This failure to expose the ex-soldiers and isolate them from the general population made NRA to be seen as enemies of the entire Acholi community.[680] The NRM/NRA relied heavily on a military rather than political approach in dealing with opposition in Acholiland. Museveni's strategy and solutions did not integrate the people of the north with those of the south but rather accentuated their divisions along ethnic lines, as British colonial rule had done 44 years ago.

Whereas sources within Acholiland and the Acholi community in the Diaspora emphasize internal causes to the conflict and more so the issue of revenge against the entire Acholi community for the atrocities allegedly committed by UNLA soldiers in Luwero, the NRA/NRM government on their part locate the

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[679] These were Museveni's remarks when Uganda Freedom Army and FEDEMU made claims that they had also helped liberate the country. They had suggested that even good elements in UNLA should be integrated.

[680] Out of accounts of betrayal of the Acholi by various Uganda governments, three episodes stand out: Amin's order in 1972 for all troops to report to barracks and the subsequent ethnic purges; the flouting by the NRM of the Nairobi Peace Accord of 1985 and the belief that the Acholi paved way for Museveni by overthrowing Obote and Museveni paid back by betraying them. Then after the 1988 Peace Agreement with the UPDA, the government followed with major military operations.

beginnings of the conflict in external incursions with the attack on Bibia by the UPDA from Southern Sudan.[681] The point to note, however, is that the involvement of the Sudan government in the conflict should be regarded more as a factor that exacerbated a conflict that was already in progress. The involvement of Sudan began when the rebel Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), acting in concert with the NRM/A government of Uganda, attacked the Uganda Magwi Camp of Acholi refugees inside Sudan. This forced the UNLA soldiers and Bazilio Okello to move the war deep inside Uganda by attacking the NRA contingent at Bibia.[682]

The first rebel movement that the NRA/NRM faced in Acholiland was the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army/Movement (UPDA/M). It was formed by ex-UNLA generals partly for revenge and in order to reverse the humiliating defeat by the NRA. Besides, its members; who were largely ex-soldiers wanted to regain recognition in the sharing of power. After an unsuccessful military campaign, the UPDA held negotiations with the NRM government that led to a peace agreement in 1988.[683]

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[681] Most government and Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Documents; some of which are classified contain --such explanations.

[682] This dimension in the conflict, with the support of the government of Sudan to the rebel UPDA continued and is largely responsible for the continued LRA attacks and military strength till 2006. The Sudanese government has supported the LRA with logistics and military equipment and the LRA established its bases in Southern Sudan located close to military installations of (its army) of the Sudanese government. For details see Amnesty International 1997, Human Rights Watch, 1997, De Termmerman, Els, *Aboke Girls: Children Abducted in Northern Uganda* 2001, and UNICEF/World Vision, *Shattered innocence: Testimonies of Children abducted in Northern Uganda* (Kampala: UNICEF, World Vision Uganda, 1997).

[683] This peace deal brought to surface the division in the ranks of the UPDA/M. The London based political wing led by ex-Obote Prime Minister Otema Alimadi was not included in the peace agreement. It was only in 1990 that the government signed peace agreement with Otema Alimadi's faction of the UPDM/A.

From 1988 to 2006, the conflict eventually took on a traditional and modern religious tone in the person of Alice Auma Lakwena and her Holy Spirit Movement Forces (HSMF) as well as Joseph Kony's Lords Resistance Army. This transformation was largely as a result of the weaknesses and failure of UPDA to root out the NRA from Acholiland. Heike Behrend, who has done much research on the HSMF, contends that the UPDA/M had perceived the struggle against the NRA as purely military and not a political struggle. The UPDA equally thought it would recapture power within a very short time. When this failed, disillusionment emerged and this partly explains why it quickly went into peace talks with government.[684] Followers of the UPDA who initially included many ex-soldiers, who later joined Alice Auma Lakwena, felt that the leadership of the UPDA failed to grasp or even ignored the structural issues that forced people to join the movement in the first instance. The NRA/M solution was to give jobs to some of the UPDA leaders and to integrate some UPDA soldiers into the NRA.

Unfortunately for Alice Auma Lakwena and rebels who joined her movement (HSMF), the struggle was not to get jobs but to cleanse the society and especially Ex-UNLA soldiers, the NRA soldiers and other Ugandans of social injustices like ethnic purges, rape, witchcraft, and sorcery which they believed caused moral decay in Acholiland and Uganda. Alice Auma Lakwena and the Holy Spirit Movement forces (HSMF), therefore, never thought of armed struggle from a purely militarist perspective and attracted the political and military elite from outside Acholiland, unlike the UPDA. HSMF's philosophy of purification of society significantly appealed to a peasant dominated society where acts of

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[684] H. Behrend, *Is Alice Lakwena a Witch,? 170-173.*

witchcraft were common.[685] The LRA shared many of Alice Auma Lakwena's rituals and beliefs, including her powerful blending of Christianity and Acholi religion.[686] After 1990, the conflict acquired an international dimension with the involvement of the government of Sudan under President Omar Bashir in support to the LRA of Joseph Kony. It then became a proxy war because the Sudanese government supported the LRA as a punishment to Uganda because of her close ties to the USA in their fight against the alleged terrorist regime in Sudan.

Alice Auma Lakwena and Holy Spirit Movement Forces (HSMF)

Alice Auma Lakwena's rise, organization and short-lived rebellion against the NRM/NRA has raised debate in different circles. While the Uganda government officials dismissed Alice Lakwena as "a lunatic prostitute of Gulu Town turned witch",[687] a position echoed by some western journalists like Catherine Bond of the BBC,[688] Lakwena's followers like Professor Newton Ojok, former Minister of Education-Obote II government, believed that she was "God sent" and with a genuine cause. The aims of the HSMF were different from that of the UNLA Generals who constituted much of the UPDA, although both rebel groups remain part of the history of political developments of post-colonial Uganda.

While the UPDA 'Generals' fought to regain recognition in the sharing of power in Kampala and regain focus after their defeat by the NRA in 1986, the HSMF of

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[685] A. Borzello, "The Rebels and the Convent Girls", 61.
[686] S. S. Kayunga, "The Impact of Armed opposition on the Movement system in Uganda", 114.
[687] H. Behrend, *Is Alice Lakwena a Witch?,* 162
[688] Catherine Watson, a former British journalist of the BBC is quoted in HURIPEC Report, 'The hidden war: the Forgotten People (Kampala: Huripec Report 2003), 43, to have described Alice Lakwena as a "Voodoo priestess" who had wonderful millenarian promises while Catherine Bond regarded her as a former prostitute.

Alice Lakwena were more concerned about wider issues of human rights and governance. Such issues included the role of the armed forces in society, their behaviour towards civilians, and the character of the political leadership in the "peace agreement" of the "Generals" with the NRM government.[689]

Behrend Heike contends that, after returning to their villages, the defeated UNLA Acholi soldiers tried to take up the lives of peasants again but only few succeeded. While in the army, she asserts:

> they had learnt to despise the peasants' way of life and had made an easy living from looting. Conflicts in the villages increased when some of them began looting and raping their neighbours. Worse still, because they had been defeated by the NRA, they were ridiculed by other villagers and were viewed as killers and impure because they had not been cleansed of the blood spilt.[690]

Accordingly, the rebellion by the HSMF of Alice Lakwena was intended to "cleanse the Acholi society from within and possibly eradicate witchcraft and sorcery".[691] In Behrend's strong views above, we still find ethnic prejudice characteristic of post-independence politics in Uganda.

The point to note, however, is that the HSMF and Alice Auma Lakwena's rebellion was not entirely an Acholi ethnic affair. First, she had blamed the Acholi traditional leaders and elders for not living up to their expected responsibilities of disciplining the young soldiers then accused of gross misconduct in the Luwero war. She also blamed the Church for failing to

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[689] HURIPEC Report, (2003), 45.
[690] H. Behrend, *Is Alice Lakwena a Witch*? 165.
[691] ACTION AID, *Report of the Two-Day Conference on the Challenge for Peace in Northern Uganda: A Search for Solution,* (Kampala: Action Aid ,1997)

contain witchcraft which had intensified and turned inwards to explain increasing death in Acholi on the basis of increased witchcraft accusations.[692]

The above position stands contrary to President Museveni's position on the Lakwena war. He refers to Alice Lakwena's military activity and support as "tribal opportunism that brought such large members to her side",[693] when, in fact, the rebellion drew support from other ethnic communities in the east of Uganda. Even when President Museveni believed that Alice Auma did not commit crimes, he still remained proud to say that the NRA was able to "mow down"[694] thousands of these unarmed young people. The unanswered question is whether he did "mow" them down simply because they were Acholi whom he accused of Luwero atrocities.

The other area which made the HSMF clash with the NRA was the conduct of the victorious NRA soldiers in Acholiland. Heike Behrend tells us that the NRA and FEDEMU soldiers sent to Kitgum took the opportunity to loot, rape, murder and revenge. To escape from this, some of the Acholi ex-soldiers took up arms again and went to the bush to join newly formed rebel groups.[695] The rise of the Holy Spirit-Movement Forces and Alice Lakwena was, therefore, partly because of the need to cleanse even the NRA and FEDEMU soldiers. The rise of Alice Auma Lakwena and the HSMF as a rebel movement against the NRM government was a consequence of preceding wars. Although itself generating

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[692] *HURIPEC Report,* 43. See also H. Behrend, *Is Alice Lakwena a Witch?* 165.
[693] *HURIPEC Report*, 43. See also H. Behrend, *Is Alice Lakwena a Witch?* 39.
[694] When addressing Ugandans on the 15th Anniversary of NR/M victory over Obote forces in 2004 at Kololo Airstrip-Kampala, Museveni referred to the massive death of Lakwena followers in that way, "Mow them down".
[695] H. Behrend, *Is Alice Lakwena a Witch?* 165.

violence, despair and death, the HSMF nevertheless tried to end this cycle of violence and to heal not only individuals but also society. As Behrend has noted, "Alice Auma Lakwena and the HSMF invented a religious discourse which attempted not only to reconstruct the economy and effect political change but also to create a new moral order and then reconcile the people.[696]

The HSMF waged war, not only against an external enemy (NRA/M government), but also against internal enemies and against rival resistance movements like the UPDA and the Uganda Peoples Army. The war was also against witches, pagan spirit mediums, and men and women accused of practising witchcraft, as well as against impure soldiers-whether from NRA, UPDA or FEDEMU. Accordingly, anyone who had killed or raped in the course of war or practiced witchcraft was considered impure. Thus, her aim was to cleanse society by destroying government troops accused of evil acts but also people in Acholi who were held responsible for all the evil in the world. Hers was, in the words of Kriger, a war within a war, expressing not only class tensions but also gender and generation tensions.[697] As a religious discourse, the HSMF emphasized moral rehabilitation and explained the causes and solutions of all the problems of Uganda biblically, urging everyone to turn to "Our Lord Jesus Christ and becoming God-fearing people".[698]

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[696] H. Behrend, "War in Northern Uganda", in C. Clapham (Ed.), *African Guerilla*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1998), 247.

[697] N. Kriger, *Zimbabwe's Guerilla War,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992*)* also describes a war within a war of liberalisation in Zimbabwe.

[698] Ex HSMF forces believe that this was the only way of cleansing society, and all soldiers involved in the war; whether NRA, UPDA or FEDEMU.

The approach adopted by the HSMF of Alice Auma Lakwena had a background in Acholi history and religion. During and after the First and Second World Wars, Acholi soldiers in the Kings African Rifles (KAR) returned with cloth, buttons or an insignia of the enemies they had killed and underwent the purification ritual.[699] But in the confusion of the civil war in Uganda, many UNLA soldiers were unwilling to undergo purification rituals. To Alice Auma Lakwena, such soldiers remained impure and the unspecified spirits of those killed were "regarded as responsible for the misfortune that struck Acholi. The elders, Behrend asserts, regarded the historical fall of Acholi, the loss of state power, the increasing use of witchcraft, as a punishment, a sign of condemnation resulting from a transgression against the moral order". There was need to purify society and this was what Alice Auma Lakwena attempted to do.

The rise of Alice Auma Lakwena and her activities was a great political-military threat that the NRA of Museveni had to deal with militarily. First, claiming holy powers to cleanse even the NRA of wrongs, which its leader (Museveni) did not believe they committed, would turn a larger section of the Acholi against the government and its forces. Worse still, the HSMF was not only an army of some 7000 to 10000 soldiers that waged war, but also a new regional cult which spread its indigenized Christian messages as its army advanced. This threatened the NRA/M government because, wherever it passed, in Acholiland and, later, Eastern Uganda, the civilians in the so-called 'liberated areas' became morally educated and rehabilitated. As Behrend notes, "During the

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[699] H. Behrend, "War in Northern Uganda", 249.

march towards Kampala, ritual centers called yards were established where people listened to Lakwena's teachings of love, unity and repentance.[700] Thus, the Lakwena movement transcended particularistic interests and limitations based on language and ethnicity, as NRM leaders claim.

The Holy Spirit Movement Forces (HSMF) rebellion led by Alice Auma Lakwena was short lived. After a successful battle against NRA forces at Corner Kilak, the HSMF marched to Lira and, in October 1986, reached Tororo and Busoga in eastern Uganda. At the end of October 1986, they lost a decisive battle near Jinja town.[701] In December 1986, Alice Auma crossed to neighbouring Kenya where she was imprisoned because she had no identity card or passport.[702]

The rise of Alice Lakwena and the HSMF increased the politics of ethnic stereotyping in Acholiland and Uganda. While government officials believed that Lakwena's forces were part of a marauding band of Acholi ex-soldiers accustomed to looting and rape as a way of survival,[703] local Acholi believed that it was the government's plan to eliminate the Acholi and Alice Lakwena was simply executing this plan. As one respondent put it, "The Lakwena appeared in Acholi because of the plan drawn by Y. Museveni and his government to kill all the male youth in Acholi as a revenge for what happened many years back".[704] Rather than debate the accuracy of such an accusation, what matters

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[700] H. Behrend, "War in Northern Uganda", 249.

[701] The defeat of Lakwena and HSMF near Jinja at Magamaga has drawn different views. Some believe Museveni had asked a powerful medicine man from Ghana or Tanzania to defeat Lakwena.

[702] H. Holger Bernet & Twaddle (Eds.), *From Chaos to Order: The Politics of Constitution Making in Uganda*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1994), 166.

[703] This view was expressed by President Museveni himself in his book, Y. K. Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed; The Struggle for Democracy in Uganda*, (London: Macmillan, 1997).

[704] *HURIPEC Report,* 58.

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more is that it exposes the extent to which politics in Uganda has been ethnicised. In a situation of internal crisis where the people felt helpless and lacked protection even from Government, such views remained a latent cause for most of them drifting into rebellion.

The fighting in northern Uganda (Acholiland) continued after the defeat of the HSMF and Alice Lakwena. Alice's father Severino Lukoya continued to offer resistance to the NRM. He surrendered in August 1989 because, according to Behrend, his soldiers had left him. The next rebellion under Joseph Kony and his Lords Resistance Army proved remarkably durable and resistant to military defeat. This illustrates the dynamics of conflict in this sub-region.

The dynamics of conflicts in any society often depend on whether the component parts of that society perceive their interests as being in consonance with one another.[705] In Uganda, the lack of sufficient structural integration of the different parts of the country into one state and the consequent perception of divergent interests that the various constituent parts have been conscious of, have in large measure, informed the dynamics of internal conflicts in the country. Conflicts in the country, Acholiland included, have been a consequence of disturbances of social, political equilibrium and shifts in the locus of power, together with concomitant economic benefits. The rise of Alice Auma Lakwena and the (HSMF) and the LRA and Joseph Kony should be seen within this background. Once conflict began in Acholiland, it kept spreading.

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[705] S. Andreski Stanislav, *Military Organisation and Society*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd, 1968), Chapter 8.

The LRA and continued conflict in Acholiland

Joseph Kony, leader of the Lords Resistance Army, was a fighter in the Uganda Peoples Democratic Army (UPDA). When the "Generals" decided to sign a peace accord with the government, Joseph Kony split off from the leadership and, with other fighters who did not accept the peace accord, decided to continue the war against the government.

According to Charles Alai Kony had already left the UPDA by the time of the negotiation of the peace accord. Alai adds that Kony took with him some of the more "illiterate" and "primitive" officers because of fear due to the atrocities they had committed while in the bush.[706] Like Lakwena, Kony promised to overthrow the government of Yoweri Museveni, purify the Acholi people, and govern along the ten commandments of God. The realities of the LRA conflict, however, appear to be far removed from any of the Lord's moral claims. Despite years of government attempts to stamp them out, the Lords Resistance Army, often called the Kony rebels by the Ugandan government, proved remarkably resilient. It has been the tragedy of Ugandan politics that violence became a solution of first, rather than last resort, in which every war can be justified since it is always embedded in a history of attack and counter attack, leading to suffering and revenge. The rise of the LRA and Joseph Kony is part of this history.

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[706] In an interview Alai makes this claim. Onyango-Odongo disagrees that the atrocities were by Kony and the few officers who joined him. He emphasizes that the rise of Kony was a result of NRA's abuse of power.

In 1988 Kony called his movement the Uganda Peoples Democratic Christian Army (UPDCA). Later he changed the name and called it the Uganda Christian Democratic Army (UCDA). In 1991, he again renamed it the Lords Resistance Army (LRA); a name it retains to this day.

According to the government of Uganda, the LRA is a creation of the Sudan government from the remnant of old armies of Idi Amin (1971-1979) and Obote (1980-1985). President Museveni, himself an advocate of such views, even claims that the LRA rebels like those of Alice Lakwena are "culturally backward" people, an expression common in Ugandan conception of the Acholi as violent and war prone.[707] Museveni holds the view that rebellion in Acholiland is connected to the so-called 'martial race theory' or the result of a culturally innate people. The rise of the LRA and the persistent conflict between it and the government of Uganda should be seen in the context of the history of conflicts in Uganda.

Other prominent politicians and scholars, like the current minister of Disaster Preparedness in the NRM government, Tarsis Kabwegyere,[708] conclude that the rebellion in Acholiland is a peripheral matter, or simply an "Acholi question". Such views and conclusions propose that the LRA war, like the earlier ones, is an Acholi rebellion; initiated by Acholi and, consequently, for the Acholi themselves to end. This kind of ethnic stigmatization of the Acholi instilled fear in most of them, especially the youth, enough to join the different rebel groups

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[707] Y. K. Museveni, quoted in Amii Omara-Otunnu, "The Struggle for Democracy in Uganda", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* 30, 3 (1992), 443-463.

[708] T.B. Kabwegyere, "Civil society and the Democratic Transition in Uganda Since 1986," in J. Mugaju & J. Oloka-Onyango (Eds.), *No Party Democracy in Uganda: Myths and Realities,* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2000), 41.

against a government they believed hated all Acholis. As one elder, Ladit Arweny, put it:

> We (Acholi) are commonly spoken of, throughout Uganda as grasshoppers. Now, we Acholi feel that what is being said in other parts of Uganda by other tribes of Uganda is not totally right. Now, in the bush, the composition of rebels is composed by all tribes of Uganda, except that the majority are Acholi, and leadership is again an 'Acholi' leading. You find all tribes even Banyankole; Museveni's tribe, they are also there.[709]

Such stereotypes about the Acholi, in general, do not only provide simple and deceptive explanations of complex issues but are also dangerous breeding grounds for bigotry, fear, resentment, animosity, hatred, and ethnic conflict and cleansing. 'In extreme cases, stereotypes have culminated in mass violence, ethnic cleansing, pogrom and genocide'.[710]

In some circles, the conflict in the Acholi sub-region has been seen as an attempt by the Acholi to secede and form their own state. Brigadier Kasirye-Gwanga, formerly a fighter under FEDEMU, but later integrated into the National Resistance Army and given charge of the war against the Lords Resistance Army, holds this view. As he put it "the Acholi are generally secessionists with a history of greed for power. They want their own state, they do not want to be part of Uganda but we shall deal with them. They want to belong elsewhere and relate with the terrorists of Sudan".[711]

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[709] Interview in Gulu town, February- March 05, 2006.

[710] A.B.K Kasozi, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda*. See also P. Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform you that Tomorrow we Will be killed with our Families*, (New York: Picador, USA, 1995), 195.

[711] Interview in Mukono, 2007.

The message delivered by the Army officer quoted above smacks of ethnic stereotype. Whereas it is true that much of Southern Sudan is inhabited by people closely related to the Acholi of northern Uganda,[712] the secession of the north or of the Acholi to form a state of their own has never been an official issue. In their frustrations because of unending conflict, Acholi politicians like Norbert Mao, currently Local Government Chairman in Gulu, and Member of Parliament of Arua, Municipality, Akbar Godi, have often wondered why war has ended elsewhere except in the north. It is in the heat of such moments that they have threatened to mobilize the local people to demand protection from government as a right or else move on to secede and form the Nile State. Such utterances come up in the course of the unending conflict not as source of it.

The conflict in Acholiland should be seen essentially as part of a wider regional war complex with significant links to many other conflicts in Uganda and the neighbouring states like Sudan, and the Congo (DRC). What the people of Acholi have always yearned for is peace and protection from a government they feel has over the years neglected them or left them to the rebels. A parliamentary Group interviewing people in Acholiland encountered the same and reported that: "From the majority of witnesses was an appeal to perceive the insurgency as a national issue rather than an Acholi affair or 'Northern question'".[713]

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[712] F. K. Girling, *The Acholi of Uganda*, 1.

[713] F. Sverker, *Living With Bad Surrounding*, 149, See also Parliament of Uganda, Report *of the Committee on Defence and International Affairs on the War in Northern Uganda Entebbe,* (Government of Uganda : Government Printer, 1995), 53.

Between 1998 and 2003, the government launched the infamous 'operation North' and 'operation Iron Fist'. Both operations involved large scale use of the military with heavy armaments in combing Acholiland of rebels and rebel collaborators. But instead of total peace, these operations flashed the rebels out of their hideouts in the bushes to Acholi doorsteps. The operations proved disastrous in escalating the conflict and exacerbating the humanitarian situation.[714]

In addition, government also armed ill-trained Acholi youth to counter LRA attacks. According to Bishop Odama of Gulu Catholic Archdiocese, the "bow and arrow Groups",[715] as they were known, "were half 'trained youth, armed with bows and arrows to resist rebels using sophisticated fire power". Although it appeared like a sign that the local people were supportive of government attempts to end the conflict, it turned out to be the most dangerous strategy because the LRA then turned all its attention on civilians who they accused of allying with the government forces. Bishop Odama emphasizes that "the NRM government came up with this strategy because it regarded the conflict as an Acholi affair".[716] The Bishop concluded that:

> Uganda has 65 tribes. The obligation of good leadership should be to forge this nation together so that no ethnic group feels a sense of less or more belonging to Uganda than the other. The action of NRM leaders has jeopardized the identity of the Acholi who now feel ostracized, rejected and without government.[717]

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[714] Frank Van Acker, "The Lords Resistance Army. A New Order No One Ordered", 337.
[715] These were locally and ill-trained Acholi youth meant to guard villages from LRA attacks. Similar groups were created in the Teso area in the 1980s to guard the area from Karamojong cattle rustlers and LRA rebel infiltration.
[716] Interview with Bishop-Gulu Catholic Archdiocese headquarters, October, 2007.
[717] Interview with Bishop Odama Baptist-Gulu Catholic Archdiocese headquarters, October, 2007.

The duration of the war and its brutality have also called into question the role of government and its top commanders. Local informants and some scholars feel that the conflict is economic. Behrend and Meillassoux , writing on conflict in Rwanda, contend that for most soldiers in conflict areas, war becomes a business and one which is more profitable than peace. They argue that soldiers develop an essential interest in keeping the war going or extending it to other terrain for the purpose of economic gains.[718] In Uganda, politicians from the north and local informants also feel that the conflict in Acholiland is commercial; something that the Uganda People Defence Forces spokesman until 2007, Major Felix Kulagye, dismisses as "simple conspiracy theory".

Member of Parliament for Aswa-Regan Okumu contends that some top commanders within the army profit directly or indirectly from the conflict. Examples he cites include the theft of all cattle from Acholi in the period 1987-1988, at an estimated value of 24 million dollars, in which the NRA was, at least, passively involved in so far as it failed to prevent it.[719] Other classic examples are more mundane forms of corruption such as padding army pay rolls with 'ghost' soldiers, of whom there were more than 10,000 according to an army audit in 1997, or trafficking in army fuel, to which a green colorant has been added to prevent its sale to civilians.[720]

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[718] H. Behrend & Meillassoux, C., " "Krieg in Ruanda", *Lettre*, 26, 1994 .

[719] Interview with M.P. R. Okumu December, 2007, Kampala.

[720] S. Perrot, "Entrepreneurs de I'insecurite: la Face cahcee de I'armee ougandise Politique Africaine 75, (Oct. 1999), 55. A court martial was set up in early 2004 at Makindye-Kampala to try senior army officers accused of defrauding the military by creating "ghost soldiers".

Whereas in 1997, President Museveni also criticized Army commanders for the monthly disappearance of Ushs 400 million funds earmarked for financing the government war effort in the north,[721] he still maintained that the conflict in Acholiland should largely be blamed on the Acholi and the rebel leaders' love for a lavish lifestyle. As he states, "the war in Acholi is about the personal enrichment of rebel leaders, 'parasites of society', fighting for a lifestyle they cannot afford through legal toil".[722] Such views became the official government position as the rebels continued to hack to death many innocent Acholi children, women and the elderly.

The conflict in Acholiland kept worsening by the year. Willet Week argues that one of the factors that led to this situation was the internal alienation of the Acholi as well as the Sudanese government support to the LRA. He argues that the internal alienation was aggravated by two inter-related factors. The first was the actions of the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (formerly the NRA) "which has at various times behaved with severity and often brutality in dealing with the civilian population".[723] The second is the support the government provides, through the Acholi districts (i.e. Gulu, Kitgum and Pader), to the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army" which is seen as the motivation for the Sudanese government's support to the LRA".[724]

The International Crisis Group in its April 2004 report also noted that;

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[721] *New Africa*, October issue, 1997.
[722] Museveni's State of Nations Address, in *New Vision* 6, June 2003
[723] F. Sverker, *Living With Bad Surroundings*, 38.
[724] F. Sverker, *Living With Bad Surroundings*, 7.

> Sudan has been central to the LRA's survival. When it (LRA) is under serious military pressure, it has been able to retreat safely to Southern Sudanese rear bases to recuperate and rearm. Sudan has also provided medicine and food. Despite the agreement with Uganda, Sudan continues to support the LRA from bases near Torit and Juba, which it claims are refugee camps.[725]

This implies that without Uganda's indirect routing of armed support to the SPLA, the LRA would never have been able to find safe haven in the Sudan to operate against the NRM in Acholi districts as it did since 1994. This makes the conflict more of an intricate regional issue beyond just local Acholi grievances. It also exposes the extent to which the conflict in Acholiland is an outcome of political developments within Uganda since independence and attempts to portray it as an 'Acholi affair' simply supports our view on ethnicisation of politics by Ugandan leaders.

Out of the above regional dimension of the conflict, the Uganda state and government must accept part of the blame for the lack of proper political judgment that plunged the country and Acholiland in particular into conflict. First, it failed to unite the people of Acholi behind the NRM/A and second it also failed to influence the Acholi/Madi ethnic groups in Southern Sudan not to support the Lords Resistance Army rebels then based in Southern Sudan. Even if many argue that this would be a difficult task since southern Sudanese communities like the Dinka have blood relations with the Acholi, attempts to bring peace by lobbying those communities to support the new NRA government and using Southern Sudanese leaders like General Garang would have possibly

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[725] For details, see International Crisis Group, *Africa Report*, 77, (14 April 2004), 7.

helped. The weakness of NRA/M leadership was in the indiscriminate branding of all Acholi as rebels.

The argument more often advanced by the NRM government is that it supported the SPLM/A simply as a fulfillment of their Pan-African duty.[726] Here, the NRM government failed in leadership because it cannot claim to be Pan Africanist by supporting the SPLM/A in Sudan and yet pursue ethnic division and war at home in Acholiland. The action of the NRM government only strengthens this study's position that the conflict in Acholiland is an outcome of bad politics characteristic of post-independence Uganda. It also justifies the study's earlier position that the conflict in Acholiland has strong causes imbedded in Ugandan politics and history than just being a war by 'criminals'; for criminal purposes like 'looting from the South' without political aim. Thus one can no longer also argue that the conflict in Acholiland is a war of the 'remnants' of the earlier Obote and Amin armies of the past, but an army of children (many of them under age) that have been forced into it, not by the 'remnants' but Kony-a product of both the internal rebellions against NRA in Acholi and Alice Lakwena. The NRM government has, over time, stereotyped rebels and the general population in Acholiland and branded them as rebels or terrorists, but this name-calling does not help in resolving the conflict. They have also dismissed Kony and the LRA as a group of criminals guided by so-called spiritual powers.[727]

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[726] *Human Rights Watch: Stolen children: Abduction and Recruitment in Northern Uganda*, Available online: http://hrw.org/reports/2003/uganda0303/

[727] *The Monitor* November 22, 1999. See also Gulu Chairman, Norbert Mao. Quoted in *HURIPEC Report*, 134-135.

The history of Africa is rich in political movements guided by and mobilized through a recall to a people's religious past; for example the Maji-Maji rebellion in Tanganyika, 1905-1907 and the Chimurenga wars of 1896-97 in modern Zimbabwe. Therefore, it is possible that the LRA and Kony only resorted to metaphysical means to express their political demands. In 1994 Betty Bigombe, then minister for the Pacification of Northern Uganda, made attempts at ending the war through peace negotiation with the LRA and its leadership. After she had spent three months in the jungles in Acholiland, the LRA still refused to lay down arms citing fear of revenge and lack of trust of Yoweri Museveni.[728] Due to Betty Bigombe and Ateker Ejalu's[729] efforts, many rebels were persuaded to leave the bush. Betty Bigombe has argued elsewhere that, even though Kony resorted to the use of religion and claims of spirit possession, he nevertheless, speaks sense about his intentions. She is quoted as saying:

> Of course, Kony speaks sense. I remember one night while I was in the bush talking peace with the leader, I went with him one mile away from the crowd and he spoke perfect sense. The use of spiritual powers does not stop him from speaking sense.[730]

The conflict in Acholiland should be seen as part of Uganda's post-colonial politics and not just as an act of the Acholi as a 'martial race' or 'violent people by nature'. The German military philosopher, Clausewitz defined war as "the extension of politics by other means".[731] This implies that both sides to the

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[728] *The Monitor* November, 22 1999

[729] Ateker Ejalu was a politician from Teso and Minister in Museveni's first cabinet till 1998 and was involved in peace negotiations with the Uganda People's Army of Peter Otai then operating in the Teso Region till 1987. He was co-opted to assist negotiate with LRA rebels during the first Betty Bigombe attempt in 1994.

[730] *Sunday Vision*, August 31, 2003.

[731] F. Sverker, *Living With Bad Surroundings,* 56.

conflict in Acholiland are extending politics to the people but in different styles and with serious negative consequences.

It is also impossible for a people to wage a protracted war for over 20 years for only "criminal" purposes without a political aim. The NRM government and leadership evaded their responsibility for a long time by accusing some Acholi political leaders of giving support to the LRA instead of using other means to end the conflict. It is also understood that many of these leaders that President Museveni perpetually accuses of supporting Kony include Members of Parliament and former Presidential candidates-Kiiza Besigye and Paul Semwogerere, and their respective political organizations. However, one wonders whether all these opposition politicians are criminal yet they served the NRM government in different capacities before they fell out with the current establishment due to internal disagreements. It can be concluded that Museveni takes such an illogical position partly because he regards the conflict as an "Acholi affair", orchestrated by former defeated soldiers.

To attain meaningful peace, both sides in the conflict need to know that they have committed previous criminal acts against the people of Acholi, and it is time they see peace as a necessity. Most informants believe that President Museveni does not want peaceful negotiations to end the conflict because of his hatred for the Acholi. As a focus group in Minakulu concluded; "So long as

Museveni is in power, the UPDF (Formerly NRA) will continue killing the people of Acholi".[732]

Other informants still have a vivid memory of their loss of property and especially cattle in the early days of the war and believe the loss was a 'master plan'. As they stated "we had animals (cattle) and all our animals have been taken by Karamojong and the NRA. It was by raiding, looting and the use of force and sometimes killings.[733] All this summarizes the result of bad governance and politics. The NRM government never took steps to allay the fears of the people or to change its image through vital political and economic development of Acholiland. They instead fell prey to ethnic politics characteristic of post-independence Uganda.

The repeated calls by the Acholi that peace can only return to their area if Museveni leaves power also indicates the level of distrust because of failure by the government to protect the Acholi. Most Acholi civilians remain in a state of despondency and frustration. As one respondent put it in 2006:

> We have nowhere to turn to now. The conflict is now coming
> to 20 years and this camp is the only place we shall be killed
> in. Our cries should be sent to the whole world. Talking will
> not solve anything now except leadership change. There is no
> need of over staying in power.[734]

Understandably in their frustration, the people of Acholi have voted against the NRM and president Museveni since 1996. This largely expresses their feeling about the lack of peace since NRM came to power. This may not be the best

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[732] Interview with Focus Group 5, Minakulu- Gulu, 15 Nov. 2007.
[733] Interview with Focus Group 5, Minakulu- Gulu, 15 Nov. 2007.
[734] Interview at Pajule, 5 February, 2006.

way to express their frustrations but the fact that all they have known since 1986 is war explains their action. The NRM government has not helped to reverse the situation either.

Other respondents in a focus group interview at Paibona are of the view that the conflict in Acholiland is a political war fought to ensure that the political and economic leadership of Uganda should be taken away from the Nilotic people in the north and vested permanently in Bantu people in the south of Uganda. According to them, this plan was hatched in 1986 by Museveni and the NRA. They cited the way political posts were distributed in 1986, with only one Acholi, Betty Akech, as cabinet minister. In the NRA, all the top Generals are Banyankole from Museveni's region.[735] They contend that it is the intention of the new rulers of Uganda to eliminate the Acholi military capacity forever so as to achieve their plans of 1981.

At the center of the above argument still lies ethnicity and fear as factors leading to the conflict. Even if one may argue that the fears expressed by members of the above focus group remain hearsay, the attitude of the NRM leadership in Acholiland did not help the situation. They entered Acholiland as conquerors, not liberators and made no attempts to reconcile with the local people. Indeed, what transpired fits well in E.A Brett's view that "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

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[735] Interviews at Paibona- October 13, 2007.

resistance is impossible".[736]   The failure by the Museveni's regime to integrate the north largely laid basis for continued conflict.

The conflict in Acholiland can also be explained by analysis of situational factors within Acholiland itself. At the time of the NRM/A takeover in 1986, and in a situation of extreme upheaval, there was a leadership crisis and a deep-rooted generation gap within Acholi. As Frank Van Acker has rightly noted, "Acholi political and military leaders then showed themselves to be incapable of protecting Acholi interests, and demonstrated little imagination in dealing with the crisis".[737]   As Behrend also adds:

> traditional leaders were unable to appease and exorcise *cen* (bad spirits) and exterminate the witchcraft that plagued the land on the return of the former Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) soldiers after Okello's fall. In this vacuum, Alice Lakwena of the HSMF and Joseph Kony of the LRA, both in their twenties, emerged as leaders to offer what they considered a holistic solution; based on Acholi culture to reinvent traditions of healing and cleansing. These new 'leaders,' did not only establish a new social hierarchy in Acholiland but also successfully mobilized the population during the late 1980s and 1990s.[738]

In addition, the combination of a number of other elements directly supported the operational capacity of insurgents in the Acholi sub-region; such as the proximity of Sudan; a huge country with its own share of rebellion and tenuous or non-existent government control of the southern area bordering on Uganda.

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[736] E. A. Brett, "Neutralising the Use of Force in Uganda", 145.
[737] F. Van Acker, "The Lords Resistance Army: A New Order No One Ordered", 344.
[738] H. Behrend, Quoted in *HURIPEC-Uganda, Report,* 47. See also F. Van Acker, "The Lords Resistance Army. A New Order No One Ordered", 345.

This area offered easy access to arms even before the advent of direct support to the LRA by the Sudanese government.[739]

The issue of arms proliferation is closely related to the quick succession of wars in Uganda and neighbouring countries, especially Sudan and Congo (DRC). Sudan became the most important source of such arms and support to rebels in Northern Uganda partly because of its border divided Acholi; people; fall in southern Sudan. As Professor Collins has repeatedly pointed out, "boundary adjustments in the early part of the 20th century failed to take into account ethnic realities. By splitting groups such as Acholi, Madi and the Kakwa, the European colonial powers unwittingly created a situation whereby conflict became part of the political landscape along the Sudanese-Uganda border.[740] The result is that in 2004, an AK 47 gun sold for as little as Ushs 25,000 (approx. $12) in the Sudanese border town of Kajo-Keji.[741]

Moreover, the rebellion could tap into the economic and political resources of a large Diaspora of Acholi with a history of strained relations with the Museveni government. To gain an idea of the potential offered, the best place to look is in the area of capital flight. Estimates by Collier and others indicate that by 1986, some 60 percent of private wealth in Uganda was held abroad. By 1997, the

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[739] H. Behrend, (1999) Quoted *in HURIPEC-UGANDA*, Report, 47. See also F. Van Acker, "The Lords Resistance Army. A New Order No One Ordered", 345. See also Ofcansky, I, 2000, "Warfare and Instability along the Sudan-Uganda Border", 202-204.

[740] For a recent assessment of the Acholi and Madi communities, see Tim Allen, "Ethnicity and Tribalism on the Sudan-Uganda border", in Katsuyoshi Fukui and J. Markakis (Eds.), *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, (London: Currey, 1994), 112-139. Another useful study is Adefuye, "The Kakwa of Uganda and the Sudan: The Ethnic Factor in National and International Politics", In A. I Asiwaju, *Partitioned Africa*: *Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984, (*London: St. Martin's Press, 1985), 51-69.

[741] Larjour Consultancy, South Sudan; Case Study covering a number of countries in Central Africa and Western Equatorial", Jei, December 2002, Paper presented at a Pax Christi Conference on the Proliferation of Small Arms in the DRC, Sudan and Uganda, Arua, February, 2003.

Uganda government had turned the tide on capital flight, but an estimated 50 percent of private wealth remained abroad.[742] Support from the Acholi in the diaspora still illustrates that events in Acholiland had attained an international dimension through ethnic linkages in politics.

Finally, there was the huge stock of former Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) soldiers which was important as a catalyst of rebellion because it formed a fertile recruitment ground for rebel movements and created social turmoil.[743] Former UNLA soldiers had less to lose by joining rebel movements. As Behrend sated:

> for most of the soldiers, whether they fight on the side of the government or its opponents, the war has become a business and one which is more profitable than peace. They have thus developed an essential interest in keeping the fighting going or extending it to other terrain, for example Rwanda.[744]

As the conflict in Acholiland ran its course to 20 years, it became a system of production and created a form of life which "normalizes and banalizes violence and brutality; and blurs the distinction between war and peace".[745]

For as long as the conflict in Acholi persisted, most government officials explained it as the result of the fact that the local people supported the Lords Resistance Army. There are reports that "some villagers especially in Kitgum and Pader do follow the bandits into their hideouts and donate goats and fowl.

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[742] P. Collier, A. Hoeffler & C. Patillo, *Flight Capital as Portfolio Choice, Development.* Research Working Paper 2006, (World Bank: Washington D. C, 1999).

[743] The situation was exacerbated by the corruption within the Uganda army where army commanders created "ghost soldiers", and inflated army pay rolls to make extra money. In 2005, the Defence Ministry under the President set up a committee to investigate this issue.

[744] H Behrend and Meillassoux, "Krieg in Ruanda", 26.

[745] F. Van Acker, "The Lords Resistance Army: A New Order No One Ordered", 345.

Some even chat up the commanders and share meals.[746]   Government representatives[747] in the north are wont to claim that there is an active level of support for collaboration with the LRA. The Minister of Security until 2005, Betty Akech, who also hails from Acholiland, re-emphasized the above position of local Acholi support to the rebel groups. As she observed,

> There are people who are benefiting from the war; the shopkeepers, the drug dealers and so on. We know also that there are children giving up rebellion and coming back home, but there are instances where their families send them back. There was a girl who came back with Ug. Shillings 3 million (about $ 2500) and said she was tired of the war. But her mother asked her how she could come back when she could get so much money from the bush.[748]

This not to say that the LRA war is an Acholi affair, grounded in Acholi history or that the LRA is acting as the agent of, at least, part of the Acholi constituency. Besides the fact that substantial operational collaboration of the Acholi with the LRA is not proven, atrocities that this body has committed since 1986 left destroyed homesteads, abducted children, women and helpless old people in Acholiland. It is inconceivable that an organization that exists because of local support would commit grievous atrocities on the same constituency that supports it. Such a position, therefore, supports the contention that the conflict in Acholiland has been used to stereotype the Acholi community in general.

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[746] Onapito Ekamoloit, *New Vision,* 4, October 2002.
[747] Such views have been expressed by Resident District Commissioner-Gulu, Rtd. Colonel Walter Ochora, in an interview on 5 May, 2005\7. President Museveni has also held such strong views about local Acholi collaboration with the LRA.
[748] John Etum, "Acholi Support Kony-Akech" *New Vision*, 9 May. 2003.

It might even be correct to argue that, as the conflict persisted, the Acholi lost trust in the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces because of its failure to protect them just as they did in the LRA for their brutally.

In conclusion, any complete and correct analysis of the causes of the conflict in Acholiland must go beyond simply looking at Acholi social institutions and the psycho-sociological behaviour of the Acholi, and to recognize the politics of the situation at the national and regional levels. The conflict in Acholiland should be seen as part and parcel of Uganda's post-colonial history and politics characterized by violence and counter-violence. With the militarization of politics and ethnic purges that had already begun under Obote in the 1960s, the state; which according to philosopher-Thomas Hobbes ought to limit violence has increasingly itself become an instrument of violent retaliation. Whoever took over state power, (the NRM and Museveni included) was not only able to gain wealth, but also to take revenge against members of other ethnic or religious groups (as in times before the existence of the state). Such a situation only provokes resistance and militant counter reactions. The conflict in Acholiland (1986-2006) must be seen in this context.