Roots of the Conflict in Northern Uganda

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This article examines the long-standing civil war in northern Uganda, in part seeing the conflict there as a product of the country's colonial legacy which drew very different ethnicities together under a single government, but also looking at a number of other causal factors. Considerable attention is given to the peace-making process and the reasons it has thus far been unsuccessful.

Key Words: Uganda, northern Uganda, Africa, civil war in northern Uganda, peace-making in civil wars, African ethnicities, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, Lords Resistance Army (LRA), Uganda's National Resistance Movement Organisation (NRMO).

Introduction

Analysis of the impact of the colonial legacy on the post-colonial African state has been a subject of much recent research. Attention has focused on the colonial legacy's impact on almost all facets of the post-independent state in African economic, social and political sectors. Between 1966 and 2007, a series of books have discussed conflicts in Uganda, one of the five countries forming the East African sub-continent. But none of the conflicts has been as enduring or as devastating as the conflict in northern Uganda, which has caused numerous deaths, and displaced millions of people in much of the northern and eastern parts of Uganda. Indeed the former United Nations under Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, has termed it one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world, characterized by the over 1.5 million people living in camps for internally displaced peoples.[1]

In this conflict, the northern tribes and to some extent the eastern Luo-speaking tribes, which are historically leaderless and politically marginalized, have been engaged in a protracted conflict with the central government forces dominated by the Baganda, Banyakole and Batoro,

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[1] Former United Nations under Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland visited Northern Uganda in 2003 and spent a night in one of the Internally Displaced Peoples' Camps. He made these remarks after a fact-finding mission regarding the situation in Northern Uganda.

Bakiga and Banyoro. The current conflict, which is rooted in the northern axis districts of Pader, Gulu, Amuru, Kitugum and Kotido, has extended to the eastern districts of Soroti, Kaberamaido, Kumi, and Katakwi, which are referred to as an extension of the political north of Uganda. Although the actual death toll caused by this conflict has never been computed, the estimated death toll is reported to be at 300,000 people over a period of 20 years.

The central argument raised by the proponents of the northern conflict is that they are continually marginalised by their centralized neighbours' traditional authority and status. The northern tribes argue that they have suffered long-term insecurity, exploitation, subjugation, national indifference and limited government support by the southern Bantu-dominated government of President Yoweri Museveni. In contrast and in rejection of the northern tribes' claims, the central government argues that it is fighting against the atrocities and barbaric acts of terrorists of the Lords Resistance Army (LRA), supported by local collaborators and the Sudanese Government. The Kampala leadership insists that it is only protecting national interests, national security and national unity.

It is noteworthy that the conflict in the north followed two decades of post-independence political troubles, instabilities and insurgencies in the south at a time when the northern tribes were in charge of national leadership. For instance, the tenures of Milton Obote I (1966-1971), Idi Amin (1971-179), Milton Obote II (1980-1985) and Okello (1985-1986) have been described as the commencement of the current conflict. In Uganda's political and development history, these regimes have been described as the lost decades of Uganda's economic development. I, however, argue that the problems in the northern Uganda conflict have their roots in the colonial legacy, hence the title of this article.

This article examines the origins of violent conflict between the historically acephalous and egalitarian societies in northern, and to a limited extent in eastern, Uganda and their centralized counterparts in the south. I mainly use the example of the Buganda, given its unique and pivotal role in Ugandan politics, to illustrate this. Against a detailed examination of the colonial legacy, I argue that the arbitrary way in which the colonial powers aggregated different ethnic groups into novel political states is at the root of the ethnic wars that have been so harmful not only in Uganda,

but also elsewhere in Africa.

This paper analyses the failed negotiation attempts and failing peace in the northern Uganda conflict. The argument is buttressed by the spatial colonial differentiation – the colonial boundary determination that was made with little regard to the existing cultural and ethnic differences. The blame also lies in the failure of the colonial powers to re-draw the boundaries at the time of decolonisation. It is imperative to mention that, having built an administrative system in the colonial states, it was easier for the colonial powers to hand over such states the way they were at the time of decolonisation, than to attempt to re-divide then into culturally meaningful units and create a new administrative system to serve this arrangement. As a result of this, virtually every African conflict has an ethnic component.

As this paper will later highlight, the colonial structure produced a variegated nation with an eminent divide between the north and the south. Yet, it is arguable that the most justifiable reason for the existence of a state is to enable people who share similar values and cultures to live together. Hence, there is no lasting value in amalgamating majority groups to preserve their rule over minority groups that happen to have been incorporated within boundaries that were established by accident during the colonisation process. In this article I further mention that the process of doing so produced what scholars like Janine (2004) have described as "accidental states."[2] In the Ugandan scenario, this has made conflicts between the north and the south inevitable and largely explains why the resolution of the current conflict in northern Uganda continues to be elusive resulting in calls for secession.

The paper also evokes colonial ethnic differentiation constructs of the late the 18th and 19th centuries by the administration of the then British protectorate. In this example, I argue that the British interest in safeguarding its strategic interests in the Suez Canal in Egypt, in the Nile river and in the Sudan, encouraged Britain to acquire Uganda. Uganda is

[2] In this paper, I use the term accidental states to capture the imagery of pre-colonial societal sovereignties and differences, that were variedly overlooked, or in some cases exploited by the colonialists in the process of colonization and state formation. This, I argue, have contributed to the resurging of ethnic nationalism in the post colonial African state, in the form of intra-state conflicts, such as the one in northern Uganda.

home to the source of the Nile. The Nile is the lifeline of Egypt, the home of the Suez Canal. Early colonial accounts of East Africa indicate that Britain did not immediately show any interest in acquiring Uganda or East Africa because of seemingly insignificant investment returns on such an undertaking. However, the 1886 Anglo-German Agreement (signed in June 1888) partitioned the East African mainland up to Lake Victoria. The Germans had sought to acquire East Africa. This is illustrated by Karl Peters', the German imperial representative, having signed a treaty of friendship with *Kabaka* (King) Mwanga of Buganda.[3] This demonstrated the Germans' interest in Uganda, which constituted a threat to the British plan for the Cairo-to-Cape corridor to link up with the Cecil Rhodes Company in South Africa. This in part explains Britain's hasty acquisition of Uganda. To achieve this, Britain bundled the different ethnic groups together to create a single administrative colonial entity that later became Uganda. The creation of Uganda involved the use of local mercenaries like Kakungulu from Buganda. The colonial interests were advanced by both peaceful and forceful means. The 1905 Japadhola resistance to Kakakugulu and his men lead to attacks on the resisting Japadhola and Badama in Eastern Uganda (Twaddle, 1993).

Due to the advanced level of political organisation and administration in Buganda, the British colonisers found it economically effective to manage the new colony using the Buganda mode of administration and Baganda agents. This produced an early form of colonial decentralisation. However, the use of Baganda collaborators in the form of colonial chiefs to extend imperial interests in other parts of Uganda led to Buganda sub-imperialism. This Bugandan sub-imperialism was interpreted by other tribes to confer authority, power and political legitimacy from the British. This extended to the entire period of British colonial rule in Uganda and to a great extent in the post- colonial state in Uganda. The use of Buganda as

[3] Micheal Twaddle describes Karl-Peters as the founder of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kolonisation*. He disguised himself as a mechanic and travelled third class to Zanzibar by William Macknon's Indian steamship. He concluded a number of treaties with a number of chiefs on the mainland through various subterfuges. In February 1885 Karl-Peters handed these treaties to Bismarck in Berlin, just a day after delegates to the Berlin conference on Africa had dispersed. Later that year, a German Naval squadron was sent to Zanzibar to back up the new company that Karl-Peters had now established, signifying Germany's true interests in East Africa.

the model to create modern-day Uganda, in large measure made Buganda a super and/or treaty state, with some form of "favoured position in Uganda." This made the Baganda as a people and as a Kingdom, together with many of their Bantu allies in the south, feel privileged and advanced compared to their Nilotic counterparts. This to a great extent exacerbated the ethnic rifts in the country. On the other hand, it underpinned the British policies of divide and rule, and of maintaining local political control. The local control, according to Mamdani (1996), effectively concretised colonial constructs of ethnic identity, and imposed them through colonial policy. Mamdani argues that colonial fragmentary dualism led to a bifurcation of rights, with racist exploitation combined with tribal contradiction.

Interestingly, as the British forced the diverse ethnic groups into an unprecedented political amalgamation in the form of the new colony/protectorate, they tended to ascribe particular talents and proclivities to the different ethnic groups, thereby structuring the political/social and economic status, and/or aligning relationships with other groups permanently. In so doing, the British influenced social and political change as the natives attempted to adjust to the imposed political system. The acrimonious relationship that exists between the Bantu of the south and the Nilotics of the north of Uganda, is a product of the British colonial framework that bundled these different ethnic groups together, within the borders of a single political state. The 1966 attack on the *Lubiri* Palace in Buganda and the subsequent conflicts in post-independent Uganda have their historical roots in this system.[4]

Colonial Rule and the Reconstruction of Ethnic Identities

Much of the political structure in which ethnic groups in present-day Uganda interact is a creation of the British and to a large extent the Berlin

[4] In 1962, Uganda attained independence from Britain, with Buganda granted a federal status within a United Uganda. However, because of Uganda's "super state" nature, there was continued acrimony between Buganda and the Uganda government headed by the new Executive Prime Minister, Militon Obote, a Langi from Northern Uganda. This acrimonious relationship climaxed with the 1966 crisis which led to the attack on the Lubiri in Mengo, the headquarters of the Buganda Kingdom and seat of *Kabaka*. In 1967, following the 1966 invasion of Mengo, the Obote government abolished kingdoms. The monarchists had asked Obote to take away his central government from the capital Kampala to outside Buganda. They even called on the Baganda for mass defiance against the Milton Obote administration. In short, the Buganda calls for secession, which had occurred prior to independence, had again come to the fore.

Congress of 1884. Similarly, much of the political structure in which ethnic groups in colonial Uganda interacted was a creation of colonial rule as defined by Britain's indirect rule policies. This should not to be construed to mean that prior to colonialism there was no ethnic differentiation in Uganda, or in Africa as a continent. What should be noted is that many of the pre-colonial African states/societies were different and lived independently, often in conflict with their neighbours; but their level of co-operation and/or conflict was defined as independent and sovereign. By contrast, while suppressing conflict, the colonial powers sought to bring these already independent and different states into a quasi nation-building arrangement for their own convenience, and this was hurriedly formalised in the name of decolonisation, bringing together people of varied ethnicities into a single pot, into a new post-colonial state that so often had little to do with pre-colonial historical, linguistic or ethnic reality.

In Uganda's case, after the signing of the famous Buganda Agreement of 1900, the socio-economic change that accompanied indirect rule led to an emphasis on ethnicity and/or tribe. The 1900 agreement created a "very strong and unique Buganda kingdom" in the south, as a model of British administration in Uganda. Again, as previously pointed out, this agreement framed the Baganda in the south as a superior group compared to their northern counterparts. This differentiation was further underlined by the introduction of the cash crop economy as will be shown in the subsequent paragraphs.

The increased demand for plantation crops and greater supply of labour fuelled the considerable expansion of the colonial enterprise in Africa. As the British colonial wave took shape, there was an apparent need to develop plantation agriculture as a means to exploit the natural resources of the country. Like other colonies, East Africa was opened to colonial administration by building modern infrastructure in the form of roads, rails and other related types of imperial investment. Of all these, the most significant feat of the imperial venture was the building of the Uganda Railway, a 582 mile track stretching from the coast of Mombasa all the way to northern Uganda. This was heralded as the prelude to the real colonial breakthrough in East Africa. In short, the Uganda railway opened the East African Protectorate of Kenya, linking it to Uganda in the West.

However, while Kenya was established as a settler colony, with

extensive plantation agriculture taking root, the same feat was not possible in Uganda. In this relatively small country, export agriculture was shared between plantation and peasant farmers. Such a peasant economy called for a relatively extensive colonial administrative structure – in terms of technical, extension and administrative support systems to ensure the spread of quality export production, taxation and labour organisation, among other things. There was also a need to establish another important imperialist structure, the military. This was designed to protect the colonial interests from within (enforcing colonial policing and suppressing internal conflicts) and from without (warding off any possible attacks from rivals such as the Germans who had established a colony in Tanganyika). The army was also useful in stemming the Muslim slave traders who moved to the interior as far as Uganda. Therefore, given the pre-colonial history of the Acholi people which defined them as warriors, especially the tradition which included combat with their eastern (Karamojong), southern (Langi) and western (Madi) neighbours, as well as frequent conflict among the Acholi sub-clans themselves, the northern tribes easily fitted this colonial fighting role, a role that kept them underdeveloped for the entire colonial and post colonial period, through provision of unskilled military labour.

As I have pointed out, Uganda is a country of variations: varied ethnicity, varied resource bases and varied climatic patterns. In the north and north eastern regions are the Nilotics of the Acholi, Langi, Kakawa and Itesots, among others. In the south we find the Bantu tribes like the Baganda, Banyoro, Banyakore and Basoga, among others. We also find that the climate in the south is more favourable, with more forests, rivers and lakes compared to the north. As a result, plantation agriculture was rooted in the south with coffee and cotton, and sugar cane as the leading cash crop. Mineral resources such as copper, tin, limestone, phosphates, oil and others are also located in the south. In short, the south became the base for the colonial administration and industrialisation – and hence the economic backbone for this British colony. The north, on the other hand, was established as a labour reserve with many of the northern tribes imported into the south to work as labourers on the coffee, cotton and sugar plantations, particularly in Buganda. The north being a labour pool also provided the much needed recruits for the military that constituted part of the regiments for the King's African Rifles (KAR). The British

deliberately kept the politically astute and troublesome Baganda out of the Army.

It is imperative to note that as part of the British policy of divide and rule, the northerners and southerners were maintained as distinct communities. It goes without saying that the northerners are different from the southerners in various respects. Northerners are tall, dark and perceived as tense while the southerners such as the Baganda, Banyankole, Batoro are lighter and of medium height and to a great extent more relaxed. This remarkable difference, augmented by the linguistic and cultural differences, reinforces the ethnic divide and stereotypes in the country. Again, we ought to note that pre-colonial history in Uganda presents the southern ethnic groups as more politically and economically organised. The Baganda, for instance, had a centralised system of administration. This system was later used as a springboard for the extension of the imperial administration by the southern tribes, notably the Baganda chiefs who had cemented collaboration with the British. They also provided much of the post-colonial intelligentsia and later most of the country's urban and semi-urban salaried middle class.

On the contrary, the bulk of the northerners who were brought south as migrant labourers were a contradiction of their southern counterparts – revealing a sharp divide between the north and the south. Reinforced by the colonialists, the northerners were referred to as uncivilised and anti-development. The Baganda for instance, popularised this stereotype by calling their northern counterparts *banamawanga* (foreigners), and this further widened the ethnic divide. This in part explains the contradictions and conflicts that would later obtain in Uganda.

Further still, the favoured position of the southerners, particularly the Baganda, contributed to this ethnic acrimony. In most cases, the Baganda have been accurately branded semi-imperialists in reference to their role as the extension of the British imperial interests through what can be termed Buganda sub-imperialism in most parts of Uganda, with many of the Buganda chiefs getting landed estates outside Buganda. It is not surprising, therefore, that this privileged position has also worked against the true unification of the country. Buganda again affords a glowing example. The Kingdom referred to itself as a "treaty state" and therefore found itself at variance with the rest of the country. They demanded an

independent status and routinely threatened to secede as the British debated independence for the new Uganda (Ibingira, 1973). Though the British fought to keep the new state together by creating a special status for Buganda as a treaty state in the South, this plan enlarged the political cracks that were already visible and should have been mended.

In light of the above, the events that took place in 1966, only four years after the former British Protectorate was granted independence, are a manifestation of the sharp ethnic divide to which the country had degenerated. These events have also remained a lasting cause of ethnic tension in this country, and have aggravated the prevalent hate and mistrust between the northerners and southerners. The period between 1966 and 1986 saw the northern tribes hold the reigns of power but has been largely defined as a reign of bloodshed and instability in a country that was once called the pearl of Africa. The "revolution" that took place from 1980 to 1986 has been described as an ethnic revolution against the northern tribes. It aimed at overthrowing the northern Nilotic tribes and it is little wonder that it received overwhelming support from the southerners, particularly the Baganda, who felt that the Acholi were responsible for the killings especially in Luwero, due to the high proportion of Acholis in the Uganda National Liberation Army. To many northerners, the victory of the then rebel outfit was a victory of the southerners against the northerners.

It was considered an ethnic victory, highlighted by the government's statements such as: a victory against barbarism and resistors to civilisation (Museveni, 1997). This is well demonstrated in several other presidential statements. For instance, in an interview with the *Drum* magazine in 1987, President Yoweri Museveni remarked that the political mess in Uganda was a product of the misrule caused by the northerners and therefore called for unity among the southerners to unite against it (*Drum* 1997).

Therefore, as the current conflict in northern Uganda continues to rage, it can in many respects be articulated as a response to the southern-led government. It has clearly a sectarian, regional and ethnic appearance – northerners or non-Bantu against the southerners or the Bantu. This is illustrated by the events that preceded it, like in the 1966 crisis and later the 1971 coup,[5] which saw the massacre of those who were construed to be at

[5] Milton Obote, the then-President of Uganda, was overthrown in the January 1971 coup,

variance with the new regime. The 1986 "victory of the southerners" in many respects presented the same fears to the northerners. As a result, many of the defeated northerners, particularly the Acholi soldiers, took up arms to fight the new government of the day – the southern-led NRA/NRM government. These were later followed by many others in the northern districts of Kitugum, Gulu, Lira and Apac, Moyo and Arua, supported by those in the neighbouring Eastern districts.

The ethnic question in Uganda is not new. It covers all facets of life, which this conflict has in varied ways overtly illuminated. It has in many ways re-opened the historical chapters of this country, with many commentaries made to that effect. Gingyera-Pinycwa (1991) is one such commentator. He is at pains to illustrate that the political upheavals since 1966 are a product of diverging ethnic contradictions, structural difficulties and lack of national unity. Therefore, any efforts to solve this conflict should lie in understanding and appreciating this divide, which has produced new ethnic nationalism, such as threats of secession. In the following sub-section we delve into the history of the conflict and the cultural variations of the actors involved.

Historical Overview of the Conflict in Northern Uganda

We have mentioned that the nature of the conflict in the north mirrors the ethnic divide in the country. The current conflict began in 1986, and thus it has been two decades since the current government took power. The overthrow of the northern-led government of Tito Okello Lutwa (1985-1986) signaled mayhem for those soldiers who had served not only in the in the former Junta's army, but also in the previous armies such as those of the Obote I (1966-1971), the Amin (1971-1979) and Obote II (1980-1985) marked the end of the northern rule, a change that was welcomed with hostility in the northern part of the country. The remnants of the former Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), mostly Acholi. Langi, Lugubara, Luo and Maracha, joined together and took up arms against the

led by Idi Amin, until then an Army commander. Amin, a Kakwa, had been threatened with arrest by Acholi soldiers led by Oyite Ojok. The coup leader, sensing the possibility that the Acholi and Langi soldiers within the army would work against his leadership, ordered them to the barracks, and the first years of his regime saw hundreds of Acholi and Langi officers massacred. Remembering this, in 1986 many of the Acholi and Langi soldier opted not to go back to the Barracks, but instead launch a war against the new government.

new NRM government. This trend is not surprising since historically there has been a lot of political ethnicism within the military in Uganda. As indicated earlier, this ethnic politicization of the military dates back to the heyday of the colonial era. For instance, the Acholi and Langi are traditionally known to be warriors. The British colonizers exploited this to the advantage or disadvantage of these Luo-speaking tribes. For instance, because of their physical structure the Acholi helped to provide recruits for the colonial army, the King's African Rifles (KAR), that was used in quelling rebellions, especially in Sudan. This cultural attribute helped transform the Acholi into a military autocracy. This was evident in all the previous regimes that we have enumerated above. In that respect, northern tribes found it dutiful to pick up arms and fight to regain control of their once-cherished position in the country. This ethno-political competition gave birth to the current northern conflict.

As just noted, in 1986 when most of the defeated Acholis and Langi were ordered back to the barracks, they chose to start the rebellion because most of them believed they lacked political, cultural and military legitimacy in the south. To the defeated northern tribes, rebellion was seen as the only option to redeem themselves. However, it is important to point out that at this time there were conflicts even among the northern tribes themselves, a factor that was temporarily exploited by the new government. Moreover, as the new government army – the NRA (predominately constituted by southerners) – pursued the rebels in the north, it inwardly harboured ethnic hatred towards the northerners. This led to more resistance even among the civilian populations.

As many of the former Acholi soldiers belonging to the now-defeated UNLA forces crossed Acholiland, they warned Acholi civilians of impending revenge from the southern-led NRA soldiers, who would kill them on arrival in Acholiland. They urged civilians to follow them across the border to Sudan, and many did. Those who opted to remain at home held their breath, awaiting developments. Contrary to expectations, as the NRA intensified its operations especially in the early months of 1987, it did not exhibit any acts of revenge and this surprised many of the northerners even though they continued to look at the southern fighting forces with acrimony, suspicion, mistrust and fear. However, as the fighting took its toll on the NRA, especially in the years 1988-1994, it was increasingly becoming clear

that the war had taken an ethnic twist – that of the Bantu against the Nilotics. As I shall later point out, the scorched earth policy that was employed by the NRA commanders at the time affords a glowing example. Many of the retreating forces withdrew into southern Sudan, opening another dimension to the conflict.[6]

It also became clear that as the ethno-political divide took its toll on the NRA, it became increasingly difficult for it to endear itself to local masses in northern Uganda. Many of them (northern tribes) became vulnerable to the rebel activities. For example, the rural Acholi and Langi saw no one representing their interests within the NRA, and the NRA for their part seemed not to care. In a way, this vulnerability pushed many of the northern tribes, especially Acholi and Langi, into a new rebel outfit, the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA), and this went on for at least two years, 1986 to1988. Gersony (2003) noted that almost all of his sources agreed that the UPDA enjoyed overwhelming popular support among the civilian population of Gulu and Kitgum. Most recruits joined voluntarily, and civilians shared food, livestock, intelligence and other support with these rebel forces,

Gersony further points out that it appears that although the UPDA was unable to capture and control towns and major trading centres in northern Uganda, it controlled extensive portions of the countryside and regularly attacked NRA positions, especially because of the collaboration and support the UPDA received from the rural population. As expected, because of this hostile civilian environment, the NRA reacted brutally against the civilian population. During certain stages of this conflict, such as from 1986 to 1991, the NRA executed suspected rebel collaborators. Other related brutalities – such as beatings during questioning, widespread destruction of granaries and mass detentions – are reported to have been committed by the NRA. In 2004, a study undertaken by the Makerere University Refugee Law Project (RLP) revealed that the army brutalities

[6] In the early 1990s the LRA got a fresh start allegedly with the support of the Sudanese Government, making it harder for the NRA to easily defeat it until today. This situation led the Ugandan government to believe the Sudanese government was plotting the overthrow of the Kampala government, a situation which led to the Ugandan government's backing of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) which has even made the situation in northern Uganda more complex.

against the civilians drove them further into rural enclaves under UPDA control. The army was also reported to be involved in human rights abuses, and rape by the NRA was a frequent complaint. This unprofessional military conduct during the conflict caused further ethnic polarisation and resentment from the masses (RLP 2004).

In the meantime, as the war with the UPDA raged, another rebellion began further to spread anti-government sentiments among northerners. This rebel group was known as the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), led by Alice Auma Lakwena. She referred to herself as a prophetess guided by the Holy Spirit. Other accounts suggest that she was inspired by the spirit called Lakwena The fighters in the HSM used shea butter ('moo yaa'), which was believed to protect them from enemy bullets and stones dipped in 'holy water,' believing that this would turn the stones into grenades and bullets against the enemy-the NRA. The fighters underwent complex rituals and followed rules that can be defined as laws of engagement. These so-called 'Safety Precaution Rules' prescribed moral, social and military conduct and practices. HSM fighters were also not supposed to drink, smoke, steal, quarrel, have sex or take cover in the heat of battle. The fighters had to abide by these rules.

It is, however, striking that although the group used very crude and unconventional fighting methods, they won the support of the local Acholi masses partly because of Lakwena's war gospel. In large measure, Lakwena's gospel was embraced because it had a clear ethnic dimension, calling upon the Acholi to fight and recapture power from the southerners. For instance, Lakwena offered hope for worldly as well as spiritual redemption in the hour of despair caused by the Acholi's having been ousted from power and by many of them facing what at the time they believed to be persecution and possible extinction, (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999). It is therefore evident that, although the Holy Spirit Movement did not make significant progress in its quest to capture power from the southerners, it gained the support of the local northern population, and most significantly led to the emergence of Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), one of the most enduring and most tormenting rebel groups, not only in the history of Uganda, but also in post-colonial African conflicts.

Joseph Kony and the Emergence of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

As we have seen, the most significant output of Lakwena's HSM was the emergence of one of the world's most infamous rebel groups, the LRA and its leader Joseph Kony. Joseph Kony first established his group as a formidable military force in 1988. This "new" group still had some links with the HSM, and as a way of re-branding this group, named itself the United Holy Salvation Army (UHSA). This was done in an effort to give it some form of local legitimacy as well as to move it out of the Lakwena shadow of HSM, which had been disbanded after Lakwena was defeated by the government's forces in November 1987. The defeat of Lakwena's forces had signalled an early end to the conflict in Northern Uganda, something which did not go down well with those who still harboured political ambitions of regaining power. There was an instant political vacuum that Joseph Kony was able to fill. Though initially dismissed as insignificant and another of those rebel forces that was bound to be defeated by the government forces, the LRA later became a thorn in the government's flesh.

Contrary to expectations, Kony's LRA was boosted by combining forced recruitment of the remnants of the UPDA rebels with Lakwena's rear forces. The LRA under Kony made daring attacks against the government troops in the Gulu District in 1988-89. In late 1988, the NRA suffered a series of minor but militarily significant setbacks in rebel attacks. With the apparent LRA achievements, the population in Acholiland, many of whom were (are) anti-Museveni, slowly began to believe that Kony was capable of causing trouble for the regime in Kampala (O'kadameri, 2005).

Boosted by its initial military successes, the LRA called upon all northerners to join the rebellion. Significantly, the LRA language and tone of mobilisation clearly underlined an ethnic divide in the conflict. As the armed conflict raged, the LRA enlisted much local support in the form of local foot soldiers and collaborators, which made it difficult for the NRA to pursue the rebels. Moreover, the initial governmental forces' hatred for the northerners only served to strengthen the local support for the LRA rebel activities. It became increasingly hard for the government forces to make a clear distinction between the local population and rebel collaborators. This offered justification for forcing the local people into what is has been

formalised as Internally Displaced Peoples' Camps. (IDPC)

Many of the northern proponents have argued that this enforced encampment was/is a ploy to keep the northern tribes weak and under control – and also to steal their land rather than protecting them. Furthermore, as the conflict continued, the government responded by stepping up its resolve militarily to destroy the insurgency. This was in part a product of the evolving reality that the insurgency was bound to continue for as long as it had legitimacy among the northern tribes. However, this situation brought the people, especially the local peasants, to the centre of the conflict, making them pawns in the conflict. However, this must still be seen through the ethnic lens. For instance, the LRA sympathisers argue that Acholiland is the most important constituency that is supposed to offer support to the LRA. This explains why the local people in northern Uganda in some instances choose to collaborate with the rebels in anticipation of protection. It also explains why those who are seen as collaborators with the government forces face death, abduction and related brutalities, as evidenced by the Atiak massacres in 1995 and the Lokung/Palabek massacres in 1997. This can be interpreted as a way of enlisting local support or imparting fear to those who resist the rebel campaign. For instance, as reported by Gersony (2006), prior to the Lokung/Palabek massacre in January 1997, the LRA gathered a group of local people and delivered short speeches in which LRA soldiers expressed their dismay and anger that some inductees from the Kitugum District who had escaped had revealed to the UPDF where the LRA had hidden their guns.

In 1988, partly because of humanitarian pressure and partly due to complexities in the conflict, efforts were made to create institutional and political mechanisms to coordinate a strategic response to the northern insurgency. The government created a new ministerial post to address the rebellion in Acholi. Betty Bigombe was appointed the 'Minister of State for Pacification of Northern Uganda, Resident in Gulu'. This was a clear indication that the conflict's ethnic component had been appreciated and institutionalised. The controversies that later surrounded the Bigombe portfolio attest to this. These controversial connotations later led to the changing of the ministerial title to 'Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister, Resident in Northern Uganda'. This was also augmented by restructuring the military leadership in Northern Uganda. The

restructuring saw Col. Peter Kerim appointed the NRA operational commander in the north to enable the NRA to deal a decisive blow to the LRA. The government's strategy to end the war was a military one. This can be understood from Museveni's perception of the northerners and from his confidence in the use of military power.[7] Subsequently, the military operations from mid-1989 significantly weakened the LRA, but the NRA under Col. Kerim was not able to secure the complete defeat of the LRA as anticipated by Museveni.

Therefore, several other changes were made in the army to achieve victory. Col. Kerim was replaced by Col. Samuel Wasswa as the 4th Division Commander. In 1990, Minister of State for Defence Maj. Gen. David Tinyefuza, who also doubled as the NRA's chief military combat strategist, was sent to northern Uganda to achieve a final military victory over Kony's forces. The military operations that began on 31 March 1991 later became known as "Operation North". During the operation there were reports of arbitrary arrests and detentions and blanket cordon and search operations intended to net the so-called 'rebel collaborators', which in the end led to the infamous scorched earth policy in northern Uganda and the Mukula massacres in eastern Uganda.[8]

In the following years, many other strategic operations and appointments were made in the war in northern Uganda. However, what is most intriguing is that all of the strategic appointments regarding the war from 1986 to 2007 simply intensified the northerners' fears and justified their reasoning that the war represented the southerners' intention to dominate the northerners. This provided justification for continuation of the war on their part. At the same time, in spite of the brutalities committed by the LRA {such as abduction of children, rape of women, destruction of life and property, as well as displacement of the local population and the varied suffering the war has brought to the people of northern Uganda), the

[7] While some of the conflict in the eastern districts of Soroti, Katakwi Kumi, Kaberamaido were ended through negotiations, this same methodology has not been found useful in ending the conflict in the northern districts of Gulu, Kitugum and Pader. This is partly rooted in the political threat that the northern tribes present to the regime in Kampala, which creates the need to weaken and defeat them militarily.

[8] In 1998, as the hunt for the rebels in eastern Uganda ensued, many brutalities were committed by the NRA. One such brutality involved the rounding up of many adult males who were later suffocated in a train wagon in Mukula, Kumi District.

ethnic question in this conflict to a large extent gives it political mileage and legitimacy among the people in northern Uganda.

Revisiting the Colonial Legacy and Armed Conflicts in Africa

If negotiation is the best tool to end armed conflicts, why have negotiations and peace efforts to end the northern Uganda conflict been futile? Some enduring civil wars such as the war in El Salvador and that in Northern Ireland have been concluded by self-enforcing agreements. This question is posed in awareness of the fact that there have also been several conflicts that have been re-born even after numerous efforts to bring about negotiated settlements. The conflict in northern Uganda affords a glowing example. It is therefore pertinent to ask why peacemaking efforts in some conflicts like that in Northern Uganda, which has even attracted the extensive participation of third parties, have failed to achieve their objectives? What are the empirical irregularities that have precipitated the re-emergence and persistence of conflicts like this one? Do protagonists and actors in such conflicts find war more rewarding than negotiated resolutions and settlements?

It is no secret that one of the important features that have characterized post-colonial Africa is armed conflict. This situation has seen the growth of secessionist movements, armed bandits, civil unrest, armed opposition movements, and liberation movements, as well as terrorist armies. These have been responsible for state collapse as has occurred in many African Countries such as the Ivory Coast, Somalia, DRC Congo, Liberia, Chad, Uganda and Sierra Leone. This, as Clapham (2002) noted, has resulted from the fact that most of the governments in these countries ascended to power through armed conflict. This occurred in Ethiopia, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to mention just a few. Conflicts in Africa and elsewhere in the world have occupied an important place in international politics. This emanates from Tilly's (2004) analogical relationship between state formation and war, in which he says that war made state and state made war. In this symbiotic yet acrimonious relationship, he refers to African countries, where again Uganda features predominantly. In his analysis of the dynamics of factionalism in contemporary Africa, Northedge (1971) further noted that armed factions have threatened the very existence of the state. He states that this threat

has been more glaring especially where military capabilities of proponents have risen in proportion to the dependence on external patrons, and where external patrons in most cases are colonial and neo-colonial ones. This analysis has warranted scholars in international politics to study the different approaches regarding the dynamics of armed conflict in Africa. What is amusing, however, is that Uganda as a country is synonymous with armed conflict and features prominently in the descriptions of states that have hosted some of the worst scenarios of civil war.

Among all the civil wars that have taken place in this continent the war in northern Uganda features predominantly, although little has been studied about the efforts to negotiate a settlement. The northern conflict is not the only case where scholars have paid less attention to the failed efforts to negotiate settlements, but rather have focused on a few scenarios that have seemed to them to warrant incisive examination. On the whole, research on conflicts in Africa shows greater effort to understand colonial and neo-colonial constructs and external armed interventions in African conflicts, analyzing actor concerns and resource roles but inherently failing to appreciate the ethnic and political contradictions within these countries. For example, Reno (1997), Al (1995).

While the above postulation is important, it is also imperative to find out why negotiations to end conflicts in Africa have not attracted as much interest as elsewhere in the world? Can this be linked to Africa's resource curse or can it be linked to Africa's position in the international system? Or does this say something about the challenges that characterize negotiation as a tool of foreign policy? The answers to these questions look simple but are not obvious. Al (1999), who has done extensive work on war, endemic violence and state collapse, labours to explain that two themes have dominated the study of conflicts in African States in the last two decades; these are democracy and internal war. He opines that the theoretical analysis is less well developed and thus suffers from several structural weaknesses. One such weakness, he muses, is the tendency to treat violence and civil war as similar. The other is that non-state actors, such as the United Nations and NGOs, only look at the conflicts using reductionist thinking, hence making intervention the only means to diffuse the conflicts.

Young (1994) on the other hand seems to look at these issues from a rather different perspective. He seems to see them as the heritage of

colonialism. He notes that a final legacy of the colonial system in Africa is the legacy of regional crises that it left in its wake, particularly in the southern part and the horn of Africa. He gives the example of South Africa where he points out that the roots of the conflict can be traced to the catastrophic British mistake of transferring power to the exclusively white regime in South Africa in 1910, because the imperial calculus at the time deeply focused in the Afrikaner/English communities. The same problem extended to Rhodesia, which later came to be known as Zimbabwe, and later to Kenya. This same problem extended to all the African colonies, including those of the French, Portuguese, Belgians and Spanish. Hence, when the hour of decolonization came, many of them still had the colonial hangover which formed a basis on which almost all conflicts in Africa have been buttressed. What makes Young's postulation even more relevant to our conceptualization of the negotiation process in the African perspective is the fact that whenever a conflict erupts within an African country there are accusing fingers pointed to its former colonial power. Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Rwanda and Congo all afford glowing examples. It is also needless to mention the fact that with the advent of neo-colonialism, the former colonial powers wish to take center stage negotiation roles in the African conflicts either as mediators or third party players in the negotiations. Therefore, given that there are vested obscurantist colonial interests in the conflicts, which this paper will not dwell on, it becomes increasingly hard for negotiations to achieve their deserved conclusions. A colonial hang-on still looms in most of the former colonial capitals, a form of homegrown colonial nationalism.

Conceptualizing Negotiations in Armed Conflicts in Light of the Northern Uganda Conflict

Analysts of international relations have maintained that the best way to end conflict is through negotiations. This is based on the premise that negotiations are cheaper and can easily lead to a break-through in situations of confrontation. The northern Uganda insurgency has attracted numerous negotiation attempts by local and international initiatives. These have included the Acholi Religious Leaders' Initiative, the Concerned Leaders' Initiative, the Carter Initiative, the Government of Uganda with the rebels, and the current Government of Uganda and the Government of

Sudan Initiative, among others. All these attempts have been made but with no tangible results. In contrast, negotiations in various conflicts such as the Northern Ireland conflict, the Indonesian crisis, the South African case and many other crises around the globe, have led to tangible results. However, it is intriguing to ask: if negotiations have successfully ended conflicts across the world, what happened to the Ugandan negotiations and why have efforts to end this conflict through negotiations failed?

Negotiations can be defined as an attempt to explore and reconcile conflicting positions in order to reach a compromise and acceptable outcome. Whatever the nature of the outcome, which may actually favor one party more than another, the purpose of negotiation is the identification of the areas of common interest and conflict (Bartson 1998). In this sense, depending on the intentions of the parties, the areas of common interest may be clarified, refined and given negotiated form and substance. Bartson points out that areas of difference usually can and do remain. These may remain irreconcilable and perhaps become the subject of future negotiation. In fact, in some circumstances such as the northern Uganda insurgency, negotiating parties have maintained highly antagonistic or polarized relations, making the process dominated by uncivil expositions. In negotiations one has to be tough and firm but not crude and uncivil.[9]

Saul (2004) focuses on the role of states in the negotiating process. While he looks at states as the leading actors in the processes, he ignores and thus omits other obscure and non-sovereign actors such as insurgents. He also ignores certain features of the negotiating process such as agenda setting and the impact of the negotiations on outcomes. In fact, ignoring these features characterizes most negotiation in the African setting, especially when states are dealing with most of the non-sovereign actors. States as the leading actors in the negotiation process, as Saul asserts, mostly focus on the wider contexts of negotiations or settling of certain types of political-strategic issues. Such negotiations involve threats, use of force and coercive diplomacy rather than seeking to establish different sets of obligations or relations by transferring some degree of political and legal

[9] Nobert Mao, one of the delegates representing the concerned leaders in the current peace talks, once said that the uncivil conduct of people in the talks seriously harms peace efforts in the region. He mentioned that arrogance and petty radicalism will not deliver a settlement that will guarantee a better future for the combatants.

power to non-state institutions. It is because of these state-centered preoccupations among actors that are responsible for stalled negotiations between the LRA and the Uganda government.

Dawisha (1994) points out that three broad clusters of variables can be distinguished: The negotiating environment or setting, available assets and contingent variables. The first cluster includes such factors as the location of the talks, the participants (whether the talks will involve non-state actors, or just states), the extent to which the parties have regularized their contacts, sensitive relations, and the amount of domestic support and the degree of directly or indirectly related international pressure. The context can influence the scope of negotiations; e.g., differences between external parties to a civil war can limit the mandate of a UN peacekeeping operation. But Dawisha does not mention who should be involved in deciding the setting or location in which the negotiations will take place. Is this to be decided by the third party to the negotiations or the warring parties involved in the conflict? And in case of a stalemate, what happens?

In the northern Uganda scenario, deciding on the setting in which the negotiations should take place has been an unresolved issue among the actors in the negotiations. The LRA representatives have on several occasions demanded that the negotiations be taken to a different location such as Nairobi or South Africa. This has led to bitter exchanges and in most cases has derailed the negotiation process. The choice of negotiation venue can promote the confidentiality of talks and this can help to reduce or remove international media publicity. For example, the final Bosnia peace talks were held at a remote US Air Force base near Daytona, Ohio, United States, where the principal protagonists and mediators were confined for a number of weeks (Donia and Fine 1994).

The issue of setting is very relevant to the current negotiations in northern Uganda. After his visit to Uganda in January 2007, the United Nations Special Envoy for Northern Uganda, Joachim Chissano, told reporters in Maputo that the peace process does not have a future unless President Museveni's government agrees to change the venue.[10] Currently

[10] Vincent Otti, second in command of the LRA, was quoted dismissing the Uganda government's insistence on Juba as the venue, and warned: "If [President] Museveni does not want to shift to anywhere out of Sudan, then that is the end of the peace talks. We need somewhere else. If they reject, we can go back to war". This signals that a premature end to the

there is an impasse about the continued use of Juba as a host venue. While the Ugandan Government insists on Juba, the LRA is clamoring for another neutral venue, pointing to either Kenya or South Africa. This impasse has been threatening the continuation of the talks since 2006.

Boyce (1981) brings forth an important argument regarding the success of negotiations. Taking a leaf from the Torres Straits Treaty, he mentions that for a successful negotiated settlement to be possible, the parties must believe that the benefits of the agreement outweigh the losses. If their interests are dramatically opposed, an arrangement that would require one side to yield all or most of its position is unlikely to be acceptable. Many the parties to negotiations anticipate coming out of the settlements victorious. This makes many parties sit at the negotiating table with a must-win syndrome, so that neither of the parties is willing to compromise with the other. This makes the negotiations hit a deadlock. This is typically the case when states negotiate with insurgents.

What Actually Went Wrong with the Northern Ugandan Negotiations?

Now that we have noted the major prerequisites for a successful attainment of peace settlements, it is important to highlight other significant issues that represent cracks in the on-going, as well as in earlier, negotiation attempts aimed at ending the northern Uganda conflict. To begin with, there seems to be less commitment from both sides regarding the on-going talks. While overtly both sides seem interested in the peace process, in specific terms there is a great deal of non-commitment on either side. For instance, both sides have failed to respect the cessation-of-hostilities agreement that was signed before the beginning of the talks.[11] The government accuses the LRA of failure to assemble in demilitarized zones. The agreement required all the rebels to assemble at two Southern Sudan areas of Ri-Kwangba in Western Equatoria and Owiny-Ki-Bul in

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Juba talks appears inevitable.

[11] On 26 August 2006, the LRA and the government of Uganda signed a Cessation of Hositilies Agreement. The Agreement among other things required all the rebels to assemble at two South Sudan areas – Ri-Kwangba in Western Equatoria and Owiny-Ki-Bul in Eastern Equatoria. It was also agreed that the UPDF would guarantee safe passage in Uganda to enable the LRA to assemble in the designated assembly areas. The agreement also recognised that the SPLA was to monitor and protect the LRA at the assembly places.

Eastern Equatoria. However, truce observers later reported that some LRA rebels had reported to Owiny-Ki-Bul only to disappear after UPDF soldiers allegedly camped dangerously close. As a result there were more reports of crossfire between the two sides. As I have earlier indicated, this also stems from Museveni's belief in a military solution to this conflict. He has often been quoted speaking of his preference for war, which he terms "Plan B". It is no secret that the government would prefer war to the talks. The LRA side is increasingly finding it hard to believe that the government side is committed to the peace process. This is the continued mistrust, suspicion and fear among the negotiating parties that this paper has pointed out. This same exposition helps us understand the major reason the negotiations in northern Uganda are a far cry from reality. Hence this answers the question: what went wrong with the northern Uganda negotiations?

Wilkenfeld et al. (2005) states that negotiations are plainly impossible if the parties to a dispute refuse to deal with each other. Serious disputes sometimes lead the parties concerned (both states and non-state actors) to engage in communication and dialogue, but in the worst case scenarios they cut off communication with each other. If the dispute involves states, it may lead to severing diplomatic relations. This obtained in 1995 at the height of the conflict. The Ugandan and Sudanese governments severed their diplomatic relations, following counter accusations that Uganda and Sudan supported the SPLA and LRA, respectively. This inadvertently affected the 1995-2000 peace negotiations to end the war in northern Uganda.

Northedge and Donelan (1971) argued that when parties are unable to resolve a dispute by negotiation, the intervention of a third party is a possible way to break impasse and produce an acceptable solution. Such intervention can take a number of different forms. The third party may simply encourage the disputing parties to resume negotiations or do nothing more than provide an additional channel of communication. What the two authors didn't mention, however, is who proposes the introduction/intervention of the third party and where does it obtain the terms of reference to that effect? This is very significant in the Ugandan scenario because previous efforts by various leaders to initiate contact with the insurgents had generally ended in failure. For instance, Betty Bigombe, the first person to initiate negotiations between the government and LRA,

made her first contact with Joseph Kony without informing the President that such a process was underway. The decision to start talking peace was a personal one by Bigombe, and not backed by any official policy to end the war through dialogue. Having developed a reputation as a grassroots mobilizer, Bigombe was determined to make peace come to this area in spite of the cultural and political prejudice she endured in her first years as Minister in charge of the pacification of the north. In 1990, when she began to plan for talks with the LRA, she had established a reputation among ordinary Acholi as someone who could be trusted to handle the issue, although many Acholi remained sceptical about the overall intentions of the government.

The government and army did not support the move since they had little trust in the initiative. In fact it is reported that at this time the NRA was committing war atrocities and in some cases refused to protect the local population from rebel attacks. As expected, the issues for negotiation generated mixed feelings and resentment in some NRA circles as well as from the government. It is thus little wonder that although there have been subsequent third-party efforts – such as the Carter initiative, the Catholic Bishops' efforts, and the second Bigombe attempt in 2004-2005, all have been far from achieving real results, because of the continued suspicion and mistrust.

Woods (2003), who surveyed the recent literature on the political economy of civil wars, has focused on the contribution of war commodities such as diamonds, cocaine and gold. She pointed out that civil wars are likely to last longer in areas where such war resources do exist. She emphatically noted that greed replaces grudge as the insurgents develop new networks for financing the civil wars in the neighboring counties or through the military forces of those countries. The extraordinary returns from the sale of such resources may impel insurgent dissidents to defect from a negotiated agreement. For instance, Reno (1998) revealed that the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra-Leone were fuelled by the sale of diamonds. This motivated child soldiers and internally displaced persons to join the war, enticed by the promise of loot. The government, rebel forces and armed groups of mercenaries all roamed this sub-region in search of the "dollar and diamond," referring to the diamond fields of Sierra Leone. This search for the dollar and diamond finally led to the collapse of the

earlier peace talks in Ghana, leading to the renewal of the offensive in June 2003.

In cases where resources are abundant, secessionist conflicts will always occur. However, when one looks at the Ugandan scenario, there are no particular war resources to talk about. What, then, explains the fuelling of the northern Ugandan conflict? What economic aspect in this case explains its longevity? Rodriguez, one of the local leaders in northern Uganda, has noted that this same lack of war resources in part explains the failure of negotiations and the failure to attract meaningful attention despite Uganda's location along the borders of oil-rich Sudan. He further mentions that this is linked to the earlier notion of Uganda as an African success story.

Given that there are no war resources comparable to diamonds, gold and cocaine involved in the northern Uganda conflict, it is pertinent to hypothesize that there is a significant role played by corporate military interests in perpetuating the war and in curtailing a successful settlement. In his elaborate works on military regimes and development in Africa, Olatunde (1985) contends that when the military is in power a certain level of military interest in the national resources is evident in the handling of national affairs. This, he called corporate military interest. The degree of this interest, the author notes, depends on the original reasons the regime took power.

It is also plausible that in many cases the regimes that take power through either a coup or rebellion or armed struggle have a large corporate military interest and that this interest extends to the national military assignments, creating a feeling of power among those in positions of authority. This feeling of power, whether visible or invisible, makes the military proceed beyond the ordinary and proper spending of public funds for its own ends. The military can facilitate the speed in procuring and getting their requirements, but at the same time such procurements can be wasteful. In the context of the northern Uganda conflict, military commanders and those in positions of authority use this as a pathway to acquire their personal corporate interest. Power comes through procurement of obsolete equipment, purchase of non-existent services, the use of ghost soldiers and sometimes under or inflated payments, all making the war lucrative (Tangri and Mwenda, 2003). This has made many of the

northerners perceive the war as a conduit for exploitation and for subjugation of the northern by the southern tribes, especially through use of the military. This is what some on the northern side call the second wave of imperialism after the British, since most of them see the war campaign as an effort in this direction. This lends credence to calls for secession, which are common in northern Uganda.

In 1998, David Tinyenfunza made this same revelation as the then-Presidential Advisor on Security. He informed parliament that the above situation obtained in northern Uganda and in a way precipitated the continuity of the conflict. During an informal interview with one of the members in the military who preferred anonymity, he referred to the northern crisis as a cash brewery, synonymous to a wealth-creation enterprise. This confirmed the hypothesis that the war has been an avenue to enrich the military authorities. Therefore, taking this as a test case, it has increasingly become evident that efforts, including negotiations, to end this conflict are bound to be unavailing. It is thus little wonder that all earlier negotiation efforts have been futile. So we ask whether the military would really be interested in the total conclusion of the conflict. It is therefore right to argue that these non-puritanical attitudes are at least in part responsible for the persistence and renewal of the intra-state conflict in Uganda.

The above argument is also made in unison with the analysis offered by Mwenda (2006). He notes that President Museveni has less interest in ending the war peacefully, given that he believes in defeating Kony militarily. Mwenda also notes that Museveni would prefer to be remembered as an undisputed winner against civil strife in Uganda after having been confronted by endless civil strife during the 20 years of his reign. However, this interest in the military option must be understood beyond the normal local sphere. It is right to mention that the war in the north has also turned out to be a foreign policy tool for the Kampala government in the context of war against international terrorism in which the United States under Bush and the United Kingdom, formerly under Blair and currently under Brown, have such a high concern. We need not mention the role of the United States and United Kingdom in financing and supporting the war on terror. It is thus plausible to argue that this continued support from the United States and United Kingdom has in a way provided

Museveni a blank cheque to continue with the military option while fraudulently looking at the negotiation option. The military option gives Museveni and his supporters infinite access to the Ministry of Defence counter, which Mwenda has termed Museveni's cash cow since 1986. For example, the war has made the President justify increased defense spending shooting through the roof from $42m in 1992 when the rebellion was almost quelled to over $200m in 2006.

Scholars have made an even more detailed analysis of the persistence of intra-state conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s. Such scholars, led by Donald (2000), have postulated that intra-state conflicts are amenable to resolution through negotiation and mediation. They are disturbed, however, by the fact that many such conflicts that have been mediated have not thereafter enjoyed even so much as five years of peace. Hence, a reexamination has been made in light not only of the failure of the negotiations, but also of the frequent breakdown of settlement accords. This analysis has also been made against the backdrop of post-agreement difficulties, especially in the 1990s in such instances as the Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine conflicts.

The analysis made by Mulcahy(1999) revealed that 40 formal peace accords signed between January 1988 and December 1998 failed to last for more than 3 years. Walter (1997), who made a similar study, evaluated 41 civil wars between 1940 and 1990, and found only 17 of them had mediated settlements. In 8 out of these 17 cases, making up 47%, the war actually ended. Here Walter arrived at two significant conclusions. One was that 53% of the combatants had signed and had nevertheless returned to war. Walter observes that despite all the impediments to co-operation, combatants in almost half of the civil wars' peace negotiations did succeed in ending their conflict; but that, at the same time, despite the high cost of fighting, including possible defeat on the battlefield, more than half of the combatants involved in negotiations chose to return to war. This scenario is relevant in the context of the northern Uganda conflict. The existence of corporate military interests to a great extent explains why there are more benefits and rewards from the war than from a settled agreement. For example, top military commanders have been known to have a history of using war situations for profit motives. A very clear example was when Major General Salim Saleh, one of the military commanders charged with

overseeing the war in the north, was alleged to have awarded a military contract to supply war commodities in Gulu to his own private company, making up to $400,000 a month in revenue. Many more army officers followed suit and became more pre-occupied with their own military commercial interests than with the war (Tangri and Mwenda, 2003). Other accounts indicate that for this same reason such officers found it beneficial to frustrate the earlier talks by refusing to talk seriously with the rebels.

The complexity of negotiations in Uganda's context is further illustrated by the general feeling that a negotiated compromise to the conflict is primarily the responsibility of the ruling party, the National Resistance Movement Organization (NRM-O), in Kampala. The ruling party and its leader, who serves also as the President of the Republic of Uganda, and his backers apparently believe that the regime has the privilege and monopoly of negotiating the peace. This hegemonic feeling, especially on the side of the state, leads to repeated suspicion and mistrust among the negotiating parties, particularly on the side of the LRA. For instance, the LRA accuses Dr. Machar, the Chief Negotiator, of partiality in the on-going talks. It argues that Dr. Machar is so much inclined to the government's side that he cannot be neutral, given the Uganda government's historical relationship with the present-day government of southern Sudan.

Further still, the LRA demands that another neutral party join the talks as a mediator, an effort that the Ugandan government is not comfortable with. It is thus little wonder that neither of the parties can take the commitments of the other as solid. This continued mutual suspicion and mistrust must be further analyzed in relation to the local politics between the north and the ruling party. This can be demonstrated using the electoral results from the last three elections in which Museveni offered himself as a presidential candidate. The electoral results from northern Uganda have always been disappointing for Museveni, underlining his unpopularity in northern Uganda. The northerners have marginally voted for NRM in all three elections, with the NRM scoring not more than 30% in 1996, 2001 and 2006.The president on several occasions asked why the people of the north hate him "after all he has done for them". In this regard, the NRM may have limited motivation to end the war. The government perceives the north as a reservoir of government opposition supporters. This perception

holds some water in light of successive election trends since 1996-2006. The above scenario may also explain why Museveni and the NRM-O might have a limited incentive to end the war in the north. Northern Uganda is primarily seen as an unimportant constituency for the president and his party. This already-tense scenario has also been compounded by the habit of the ruling NRM-O leadership to politicize conflict for partisan and political reasons.

Conclusion

This paper set out to discuss the colonial legacy and its role in creating the ethnic conflict in northern Uganda. I have pointed out that negotiations aimed at ending internal conflicts all over the world meet varying constraints and that the conflict in northern Uganda is little different from those that have been cited in this paper. I have, however, mentioned that a high level of corporate military interest characterizes the conflict in northern Uganda. Ending this conflict would therefore require either secession or a return to normal politics augmented by genuine and just institutions that can be appreciated by the diverse ethnic groups in light of the conflict's ethnic dimension. Efforts to end this conflict must either grant regional autonomy or deploy tools that are useful in diffusing ethnic confrontations. The resolution of ethnic conflict in deeply divided societies calls for reconfiguring the political associations among identity communities. In the absence of either secession or regional autonomy, there is a need for a fresh social contract between the majority and the minority that will establish an acceptable moral and political relationship between the contesting groups in Uganda.

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