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Chapter 19

Northern Uganda: Protracted Conflict and Structures of Violence

Matthew Kustenbauder

Abstract

This chapter identifies reasons for protracted, low-intensity civil war in Uganda during the last two decades. The first is located in Uganda's history, in which social, political, and religious processes established the basic structures of violence that continue to operate in contemporary Uganda, reinforcing cleavages along regional, ethnic, and religious lines. The second is located in the complex balancing act involved in running a modern African state. After providing some historical background that frames the conflict, the chapter examines how both the NRM government of Yoweri Museveni and rebel insurgent movements have benefited from insecurity in the country. It argues that the government accrued political dividends while the Lord's Resistance Army gained personal benefits so long as the conflict continued. A shift in the geopolitical landscape, coupled with the diminishing returns of a long-duration, low-level conflict, may explain why both sides recently renewed and intensified their efforts to negotiate a lasting peace. The chapter concludes by identifying two elements—personal security for the rebels, and northern development and integration—that will be critical in order for a negotiated peace to last.

Introduction

Conventional wisdom holds that rebel movements are a threat to political elites and a burden to the state. Thus, it is in the best interests of the state to swiftly end conflicts that might undermine state authority. A growing body of literature turns conventional wisdom on its head, however, showing that protracted, low-intensity civil war can provide state and rebel actors with the justification and means for accumulating short-term benefits. Much of the discussion has focused on extreme examples in the so-called failed states of Liberia, Sierra Leone, or the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).[1]

1. See Karen Ballentine and Heiko Nitzschke, *The Political Economy of Civil War and Conflict Transformation* (Berlin: Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2005); Neil Cooper, "State Collapse as Business: The Role of Conflict Trade and the Emerging Control Agenda," in *State Failure, Collapse and Reconstruction*, ed. Jennifer Milliken (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003); Jeffrey

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This study aims to broaden the literature by examining the case of Uganda, where the persistent but controlled threat of insurgency over a period of more than two decades has served the strategic interests of both political elites and rebel insurgents. President Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) government enjoyed significant political, economic, and military advantages so long as low-level hostilities with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued. The NRM's domestic war on terror proved to be a highly effective political strategy, by which opposition in northern regions of the country was silenced through counter-insurgency measures, economic growth (primarily in the southern regions of the country) was stimulated and national debt curtailed through foreign development assistance and relief aid, and military strength was bolstered through US support. Likewise, a situation of prolonged, low-level insurgency gave the LRA a reliable and relatively safe method of defending and reproducing itself as an autonomous political community beyond the reach of the Ugandan state. LRA leaders employed different survival strategies depending upon the circumstances, even simultaneously engaging in political, economic, and military activities in order to strengthen and defend the group's continued existence, thereby securing private benefits for themselves and ensuring their own survival.

After identifying factors that have prolonged the conflict, the final section of the chapter briefly considers why peace now seems to be within reach. It argues that recent willingness on the part of the government of Uganda and LRA rebels to negotiate a settlement may be explained in terms of an erosion of benefits previously ensured by sustaining low-level hostilities contained in the north. Building on observations about the political economy of violence and its driving mechanisms in Uganda, the chapter concludes by suggesting that the peace process must capitalize on recent conditions that have restricted the flow of private and political benefits, and made the continuation of civil war unprofitable for both parties now. Given the high level of instability in the Great Lakes region, the fickleness of international donors, and the UN's hesitation to commit further resources toward resolving this conflict, peace negotiators should make every attempt to broker a deal before these strategic advantages evaporate.

Before proceeding, however, important background information is required. A perennial problem of analysis of the conflict in northern Uganda is that it often floats in thin air, with little contextualization in the broader historical, political, or religious dynamics of the region. Wars are complex and multi-dimensional affairs, and this is no less so the case in Uganda, where violence carries both political and religious significance, and violence by state and rebel actors alike is interpreted by members of Ugandan society within a particular historical framework. This analysis attempts to avoid an overly simplistic view by grounding analysis of Uganda's ongoing war with the LRA in history. Thus, I begin with a discussion of particular elements of history, politics, and religion in Uganda that help explain the coming of the LRA onto the scene, as well as the structures that prolong it.

Herbst, "Economic Incentives, Natural Resources, and Conflict in Africa," *Journal of African Economies* 9, no. 3 (2000): 270–94; J. Peter Pham, "Making Sense of a Senseless War," *Human Rights and Human Welfare* 7 (2007): 35–51; William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998); Ingrid Samset, "Conflict of Interests or Interests in Conflict? Diamonds and War in the DRC," *Review of African Political Economy* 93, no. 94 (2002): 463–80; and Manuela Travaglianti, "The Role of the State in the Natural Resources and Civil War Paradigm," Jean Monnet Working Papers in Comparative and International Politics, University of Catania, Italy, October 2006.

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History, Politics and Religion: The Social Structures of Violence in Uganda[2]

One of the first things history reveals is that war and mass forced displacements in this region of Africa are much older than they appear. Armed traders, mostly Arabs, who infiltrated the Upper Nile region from Khartoum, ravaged the lands of what has become the Uganda-Sudan border from the mid-nineteenth century. Their incursions were fueled by an insatiable demand in industrializing countries for ivory in the manufacture of billiard balls, piano keys, and other luxury items. In addition to purchasing ivory, the traders raided the population—often with the assistance of local allies—in order to procure slaves, who served as porters to transport the ivory north, but were also sold as sex slaves and trained as soldiers in the traders' private militias and the Egyptian army. These events are remembered in oral history, and the pattern of violence and abductions by the LRA in recent times has followed, perhaps even deliberately replicated, the plundering and enslavement practiced by nineteenth-century raiding parties.[3]

Around the end of the nineteenth century, the region was also affected by a series of epidemics and natural disasters that claimed the lives of both cattle and human inhabitants. The result was a shift in the population through migration, accompanied by changes in livelihood patterns. The prevalence of local, small-scale wars and feuds persisted, however, until the around the time of the First World War, when the presence of British soldiers in East Africa and the recruitment of Africans to aid in the war effort imposed a degree of stability and peace. The British moved populations and concentrated them for administrative convenience through sleeping-sickness control programs, the designation of local clan groups as separate "tribes," and the appointment of clan heads as chiefs who were officially recognized by the colonial state. Among other factors, systems of indirect rule based on artificially constructed "tribal units" and the balkanization of local languages tended to accentuate and institutionalize divisions.[4]

The extent of colonialism's role in laying the framework for structures of violence that operate today may best be illustrated in Uganda's northern neighbor Sudan, where the creation and/or reinforcement of social, political, and religious divisions

2. Unless noted, the following narrative represents the author's synthesis of information from a wide range of sources, which include: Louise Pirouet, "Traditional Religion and Christianity in Buganda and Acoli" (paper presented at the Seminar on the Societies of Eastern Africa, Centre for African Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, 8 March 1973); Tim Allen, "Understanding Alice: Uganda's Holy Spirit Movement in Context," *Africa* 61, no. 3 (1991): 371–5; Heike Behrend, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda 1986–97* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1999), 23–6; Heike Behrend, "Power to Heal, Power to Kill: Spirit Possession and War in Northern Uganda (1986–1994)," in *Spirit Possession, Modernity and Power in Africa*, ed. Heike Behrend and Ute Luig (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 23–25; Ruddy Doom and Koen Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message: A New Koine? The Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda," *African Affairs* 98 (1999): 7–16; and Lawrence E. Cline, "Spirits and the Cross: Religiously Based Violent Movements in Uganda," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 14 (2003): 115–8.

3. Tim Allen, *Trial Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Lord's Resistance Army* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 25–6. For more on the connection between the nineteenth-century eastern Africa ivory trade, slave raiding, and the use of abducted slaves in the military, see Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

4. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 26–7.

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intended as a means of control were compounded by the Southern Policy introduced in the 1920s. Under this policy, the British administered the northern half of the country, which was largely Muslim, separately from the non-Muslim south. Investments in infrastructure, commerce, and social and political institutions were restricted primarily to the northern region, while the southern region was turned over to missionaries. The result has been plainly visible in Sudan's bloody post-independence history. Two devastating civil wars — the first from 1955 to 1972 and the second lasting from 1983 to 2005 — have led to a fragile peace agreement that may well result in a permanent division of the country into two Sudans, though this is not what the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) says it wants.[5] In the case of Uganda, where no Muslim-versus-Christian or Arab-versus-African binary narrative obtains, the legacy of social engineering carried out by the British is perhaps more subtle and difficult to identify. Nevertheless, the colonial period bequeathed similar structures of division and violence that have since shaped Ugandan social and political history. The solidification of social divisions along the lines of ethnic identities, regional alliances, and religious beliefs beginning in the early 1900s created deep cleavages. After independence, customary structures were no longer sufficient to mediate the tensions that existed between competing segments of Ugandan society.

When Great Britain established the Uganda Protectorate in 1900, they perceived that the southern agriculturally based kingdoms, especially the kingdom of Buganda, had much in common with their own European monarchies. The northern pastoralists including the Acholi, however, proved more difficult to categorize or control and were regarded as primitive. In line with the economic interests of the colonial enterprise, the British developed the south as an industrially and agriculturally productive zone, recruiting and training civil servants for the colonial administration from among the Bantu-speaking southerners. The Nilotic-speaking northern regions, on the other hand, remained largely an undeveloped zone, serving as a convenient source of migrant labor and military recruits.[6] The socioeconomic divisions created under colonial rule did much to shape the identity of the Acholi people *vis-à-vis* their southern neighbors. British policies transformed the Acholi into what some scholars have referred to as a "military ethnocracy," a class of people within society who saw themselves as economically disadvantaged, yet constituting the military backbone of the state.[7]

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5. For more on the causes and consequences of conflict in Sudan see the following: Abdel Gadir Ali, et al., "Sudan's Civil War: Why has it Prevailed for so Long?" in *Understanding Civil War: Evidence and Analysis*, ed. Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005), 193–218; Karen M. Barbour, "North and South Sudan: A Study in Human Contrasts," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 54, no. 2 (1964): 209–26; M. W. Daly and Ahmed A. Sikainga, *Civil War in the Sudan* (London: British Academic Press, 1993); Yusuf Fadl Hasan and Richard Gray (eds.), *Religion and Conflict in Sudan: Papers from an International Conference at Yale, May 1999* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications, 2002); Sharon Hutchinson, *Nuer Dilemmas: Coping with Money, War, and the State* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Matthew Kustenbauder, "Religious Incitement or Political Manipulation? The Role of Religious Identity in Conflict in Sudan with Special Reference to the Oral Histories of Sudanese Diaspora" (paper presented at the Conference on Religion and Religious Identities in Africa and the African Diaspora, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, USA, 9–12 October 2008); and P. A. Nyaba, *The Politics of Liberation in South Sudan: An Insider's View* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1997).

6. Rosa Ehrenreich, "The Stories We Must Tell: Ugandan Children and the Atrocities of the Lord's Resistance Army," *Africa Today* 45, no. 1 (1998): 83–5.

7. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 7–8. See also Ali Al'Amin Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy* (London: Sage, 1975).

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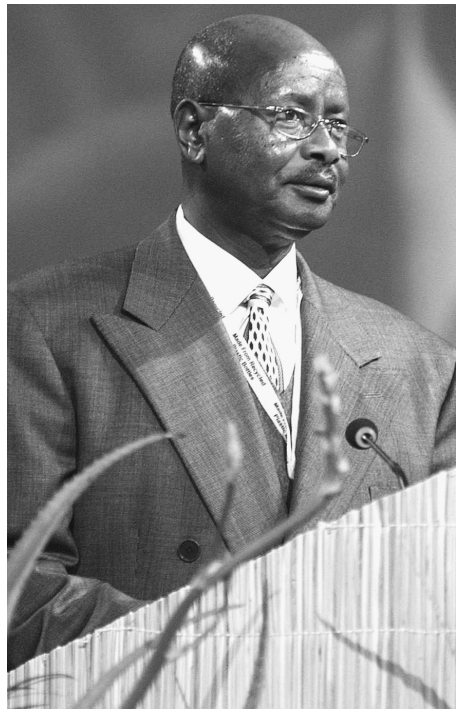


Figure 19.1 Yoweri Museveni.

After Uganda obtained independence in 1962, the ethnic division of labor between the Nilotic peoples of the north and the Bantu peoples of the south came to be reflected in the country's politics. In particular, politicized cleavages developed between groups of the north, the north-west, the south and the south-west. The old kingdoms, especially that of Buganda, kept nationalist sentiments alive and made it difficult for them to accept anything less than a privileged position *vis-à-vis* the rest of the country. Exacerbating these kinds of regional and ethnic cleavages were the byproducts of British indirect rule, religious divisions between Protestants, Catholics, and Muslims, and tensions linked to the system of multi-party politics introduced on the eve of independence.[8]

Under the country's first constitution, Milton Obote, a Lwo-speaking Langi from the north, served as prime minister, while the *kabaka* (king) of Buganda served as president. This power sharing arrangement broke down, however, when Obote's central authority was threatened by an order from the Buganda regional council for the central government to withdraw from Buganda. Most southerners, but especially the politically and economically powerful Baganda, chafed at the idea of taking orders from outsiders, especially from a northerner. Obote had the support of the military, however, which was dominated by northerners who found few employment opportunities in their part of the country and who had been favored for military service under the British. Taking advantage of his position as head of state and commander of the national army, Obote dispatched military forces in an attack on the *kabaka*'s palace. Hundreds of Baganda civilians and palace guards were killed, while the *kabaka* himself escaped into exile. Obote drafted a new constitution that dissolved the federal status of the semi-au-

8. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 28.

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tonomous southern regions, effectively forcing Buganda and the rest of the old kingdoms to come under direct rule by the central government of a single Uganda.[9] This event has been marked as a first step in the militarization of post-colonial Ugandan politics, whereby leaders increasingly resorted to military force to settle political disputes.[10]

Only five years later, in 1971, military might again determined the direction of the country. General Idi Amin, commander of the armed forces and Obote's long-time political ally, came to power after orchestrating a successful *coup détat* that overthrew Obote. Amin had learned a powerful lesson from the early days of Uganda's constitutional crisis, when he was the officer in charge of the 1966 attack on the *kabaka*'s palace. The keys of the political kingdom in Uganda lay with the military sector, and Amin was all too eager to use them. Amin's regime is remembered, even in the West, as one of Africa's bloodiest and most tyrannical. What is important to note in this context is that he quickly began courting popular support in the south (at least initially) and protecting himself from any potential counter-coup from soldiers close to Obote. Belonging to a relatively small ethnic group (Kakwa) from the north-west of the country, Amin feared that he might soon suffer the same fate as Obote at the hands of a northern dominated army. This meant that northern Lwo-speakers, Acholi and Langi in particular, became the focus of Amin's paranoia. As a result, thousands of Lwo-speaking soldiers were summarily slaughtered after being ordered to report to barracks in an attempt to purge the national army.

Many Acholi and Langi soldiers fled south to Tanzania, where they formed the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) and campaigned against the Amin regime under Obote's political leadership. In 1979, with the support of Julius Nyerere's Tanzanian troops, the UNLA invaded Uganda and ousted Amin.[11] Following general elections in 1980, which were widely disputed as being rigged, Milton Obote regained power under the auspices of the Uganda People's Congress (UPC), an Acholi-Langi political alliance.

Hopes for a return to normalcy in Uganda were quickly dashed, however, when a brutal civil war broke out in 1981. Disgruntled by the return of old political players and an alliance that threatened southern interests, many anti-Amin activists from the south and south-west refused to accept the results. Yoweri Museveni formed his National Resistance Army (NRA) and launched a bitter struggle against Obote's regime. Obote's UPC government was soon faced with guerrilla warfare emanating from a number of locations within the country. The most dangerous region of rebel activity emanated from the south, in the region north of the capital of Kampala called the Luwero Triangle. Museveni's NRA had widespread popular support there, and the government army (UNLA) met with little success. In January 1983, frustrated with the slow progress and wanting to break the will of the insurgents, Obote authorized Operation Bonanza. UNLA soldiers, mostly Acholi, brutalized civilians and NRA forces alike, killing more than 300,000 people in Luwero District. The indiscriminate killing carried out by Acholi soldiers was (and continues to be) remembered by the Baganda, perpetuating distrust and encouraging retaliation for sins committed. It also troubled the conscience of the

9. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 8.
10. Behrend, *Alice and the Spirits*, 19.
11. Amin first invaded Tanzania, which provided the UNLA, backed by Tanzanian forces, with the perfect opportunity for a serious military response. The attack was a cooperative venture with Yoweri Museveni's FRONASA forces, which also joined in the invasion and helped topple Amin's regime.

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Acholi people—transgression of the moral order by Acholi soldiers and the devastation it brought upon the entire nation played a central role in the religious discourse of subsequent military movements, including Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

For their part, Acholi soldiers also suffered great losses at the hands of NRA forces, and many Acholi began to see themselves as the victims of Obote's dirty war. Military violence along ethnic lines only escalated after the Luwero Triangle incident, and tension developed between Acholi and Langi within the Obote forces. When fighting broke out within the ranks of the UNLA, Langi troops routed their Acholi comrades, who retreated north into Acholiland to regroup. In July 1985, Acholi armed forces led by general Tito Okello returned to Kampala and swiftly defeated the Langi UNLA troops, forcing Obote into exile a second time. Okello declared himself president, and his Acholi lieutenant-general Basilio Olara-Okello became commander of the national armed forces. For the first time in the country's bloody history executive and military power was held by the Acholi.

The UNLA, however, was increasingly weakened by a number of competing factions. Acholi soldiers used the upper hand to retaliate against Langi and West Nilers, under whose dominance they had been subject during the Obote and Amin regimes respectively. In the end, the Okellos proved unable to discipline their fighting force. Aware of his vulnerability, Tito Okello quickly initiated peace negotiations with Museveni that resulted in a peace agreement signed in Nairobi. Ignoring the agreement, the NRA marched on Kampala in January 1986, crushed an ineffective UNLA resistance, and brought an end to Acholi power just six months after it had begun—a source of deep-seated grievance among some Acholi, who insist that it showed President Museveni to be untrustworthy.

When the military coupists were overthrown by the NRA, thousands of Acholi soldiers fled north to their home districts, fearing retaliation from Museveni for atrocities committed under Obote's regime. At home, they experienced humiliation as their own people mocked the defeat, calling them losers and cowards. In addition, their killing had made them unclean and threatened to bring *cen*, the spirits of the killed, into the Acholi communities. This generated internal strife along generational lines, as many of the soldiers refused to undergo the cleansing rituals administered by the village elders.[12] Unable or unwilling to return to normal village life, they committed crimes among their own people, undermining the elders' authority.

In March 1986, NRA forces occupied Acholi towns of Gulu and Kitgum, committing abuses against Acholi civilians and former soldiers. Among the NRA were troops belonging to the Baganda ethnic group abused by Acholi UNLA soldiers in the Luwero Triangle who were eager to settle the score. It seemed clear that the ghosts of the civil war under Obote had returned to Acholiland to seek revenge, and many citizens held the unpurified Acholi soldiers responsible for this misfortune. Enmities multiplied within the Acholi community as well as between the Acholi and the central government in the south, so that a process of progressive dehumanization took place on all sides.[13]

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12. There are contradictions in the literature on this point. Behrend, "Power to Heal, Power to Kill," 25, suggests that it was the soldiers who opposed the elders' demands to undergo cleansing rituals. Allen, "Understanding Alice," 378, places the blame squarely on the elders, while Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 11–12, offer a more nuanced discussion of the role of generational conflict as one reason for the failed demobilization of Acholi troops. It is likely that both sides played a role in exacerbating the internal conflict in different areas of Acholi.

13. Heike Behrend, "Is Alice Lakwena a Witch? The Holy Spirit Movement and its Fight against Evil in the North," in *Changing Uganda: The Dilemmas of Structural Adjustment & Revolutionary Change*, ed. Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1991), 164–7.

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Most Ugandans, but particularly the Acholi, experienced dramatic social upheavals during and after the colonial period. In summary, some political developments that may explain the proliferation and endurance of rebel wars against Museveni's regime are as follows:

(1) The division of the country into north and south during the colonial period encouraged regional, economic, political, and ethnic differentiation that persisted after independence. While the British built infrastructure like roads, schools, and hospitals to serve the rich industrial and agricultural regions in the south, the north remained largely undeveloped. In addition, the use of *Ganda* kings to rule by proxy highlighted differences and increased antagonism between southern settled populations of agriculturalists, and the northern ethnic groups who were largely semi-nomadic herders.

(2) The transformation of the Acholi into a "military ethnocracy" by the British further solidified ethnic divisions and had a lasting impact on Acholi identity.

(3) The militarization of politics in Uganda fostered a culture of conflict. Following Obote's deposition of *Kabaka* Muteesa II in 1966, the battle for control over public life in Uganda was increasingly waged with the understanding that the political kingdom suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.[14]

(4) A history of ethnic violence and settling scores perpetuated distrust, escalated conflict, and put the Acholi on the defensive. When the NRA came to power in 1986, propaganda broadcast on the radio and in the print media blamed the Acholi for Uganda's problems: "The bloodshed and violence of Uganda's post independence decades made many Acholi fear that it was kill or be killed: if Museveni was not overthrown, they believed his soldiers would destroy the Acholi."[15]

(5) Generational conflict between Acholi elders and young men (soldiers) and the failure to incorporate ex-soldiers into civilian life created a situation of internal terror. The difficulties of demilitarization and the troubles that it brought in Acholiland reinforced the traditional fears and discourse of witchcraft.

(6) The increasing abuse of civilians by NRA forces confirmed Acholi fears that they were now government targets. This encouraged many northern peoples to join the Acholi in defending themselves.[16]

Religious Dimensions of Uganda's Structures of Violence[17]

It was during this time of intense uncertainty and social upheaval that spirit mediums, the most well-known being Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony, began to appear

14. A modification of the words of Jesus found in Matthew 11:12.
15. Ehrenreich, "The Stories We Must Tell," 83.
16. Cline, "Spirits and the Cross," 116.
17. Unless otherwise noted, sources for this section include: Pirouet, "Traditional Religion and Christianity in Buganda and Acoli," 6–9; Allen, "Understanding Alice," 379–93; Behrend, *Alice and the Spirits*, 38–43; and Behrend, "Power to Heal, Power to Kill," 22–3.

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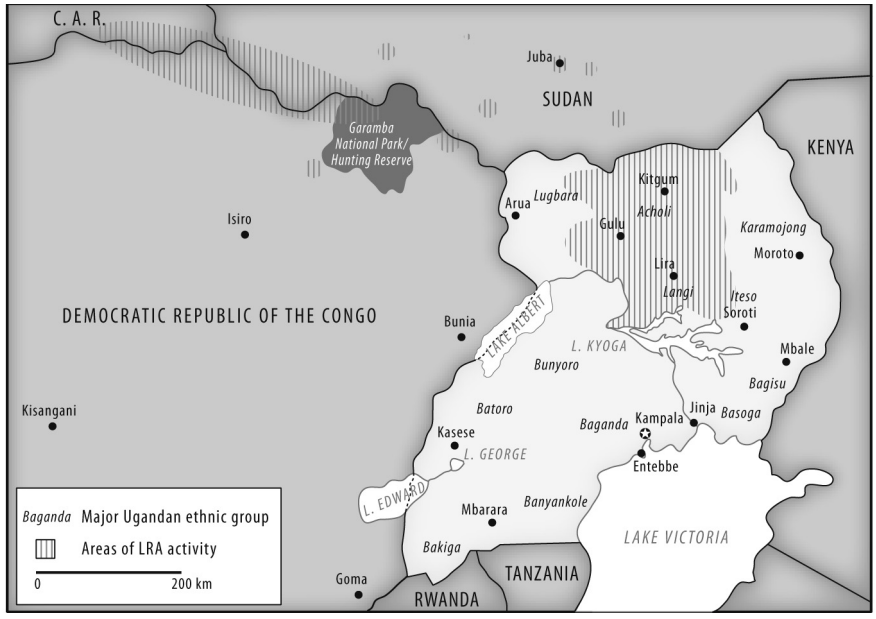


Figure 19.2 Map of Uganda, showing areas of LRA activity.

promising to heal the wounds of Uganda's violent past by purging wrong elements from society. It was common for Acholi commanders who retreated north during the Acholi-Langi infighting of the Obote II era to seek out and attach themselves to these spirit mediums, who in turn offered spiritual guidance and bolstered the legitimacy of their cause under such tenuous circumstances. The Okellos, for instance, consulted a spirit medium before wresting control of Kampala from Obote in 1985. Uganda is not the only instance of rebel leaders joining forces with local spirit mediums. Indeed, similar alliances have been noted to have taken place in Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. Such observations suggest that the religious dimension of violence in Uganda is not unique. Furthermore, it requires the LRA to be situated not only within its political milieu, but within the social and religious context of Uganda's history as well.

Like many of their Lwo-speaking neighbors in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, Acholi religious life revolves around the power of *jok* or spirit. As Evans-Pritchard has shown in his classic study of Nuer religion, the spirits are at once a source of good and a source of evil, a creative and a destructive force.[18] It is this ambivalence that characterizes Acholi belief in *jogi* (spirits), whose power may be used for healing and for killing. In pre-colonial times, Acholi chiefs (*rwodi*) would draw upon the power of the chiefdom *jok* to ensure the prosperity of the people, the well-being of their livestock, and the fertility of the land. In times of war, however, they would also call upon the chiefdom *jok* to assist them in defeating their enemies. Likewise, the *jogi* were seen

18. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Nuer Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), wrote extensively on the central place of the *jogi* (spirits) among the Nuer in southern Sudan. The religious ideas of all the Lwo peoples (ranging from southern Sudan to western Kenya) are quite similar, so that it is not inappropriate to draw upon Evans-Pritchard's work among the Nuer when speaking of Acholi religion. Pirouet, in his description of Acholi religion, relied heavily upon accounts of the Dinka and the Nuer, who were the most extensively studied of the Lwo peoples.

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as keepers of the moral order. If the people contravened the social order, catastrophe would follow. If the people upheld the social order, they would receive blessing.[19]

In the 1850s, around the time of the slave-ivory trade, increased contact with Arab traders and neighboring peoples brought foreign spirits from the outside world. These new spirits, called free *jogi*, were not bound to the locality the way that chiefdom *jogi* were, and so they mediated the benefits and dangers of the outside world. With the entry of free *jogi* came the rise of cults of affliction, presided over by spirit mediums or *ajwaka*, who were possessed by the free *jogi*. This development marks a "division of labor" between the chiefdom *jogi*, which became responsible for the good of the community, and the free *jogi*, which became responsible for individual healing through the *ajwaka*. Spirit possession, especially of women who were believed to mediate between the dangerous forces of nature and the community, became a common occurrence within Acholi society.[20]

Under British rule, a number of changes took place in the societies of northern Uganda. "Tribes" were created, chiefs appointed, cash crops were introduced, and labor migration became the norm. Christian missionaries also arrived in Acholiland in the early 1900s. Among other things, they introduced Christianity and biomedicine, setting in motion a complex process of religious change and cross-fertilization. As is the case across much of Africa, morally neutral Acholi ideas about the spirit world were made to fit within a rigid framework of dualism, the peculiar product of a distinctly European Enlightenment Christianity. The Christian god was given the name *Rubanga*, who it was explained was the source of all goodness. Meanwhile, all other *jogi* became evil spirits, associated with Satan, and were given the name *jogi setani*. One of the unexpected results of this "translation process" was that the phenomenon of witches and witchcraft increased. The hegemonic discourse of the Christian missionaries took an infinite number of morally ambiguous *jogi* and converted all but one of them (*Rubanga*) into evil spirits used for sorcery and killing. It appeared that the missionaries had produced what they were actually seeking to obliterate.

In the 1940s, the East African Revival, or *Balokole*, began a process of indigenization of the Christian message by Africans for Africans. In Acholi religion, the central idea of the *jogi* offered guidance, healing, and power to the individual and the community.[21] The Christian principle most closely associated with this idea is that of the Holy Spirit, which gained increasing importance among Acholi Christians. The choice of expression *Tipu Maleng* (literally "clean ghost") for the Holy Spirit had the advantage of being easily applicable to the Acholi idea of *jok*. The identification of the Holy Spirit with *jok*

19. Such notions of God and the moral order bear striking resemblance to the Deuteronomic code of the Hebrew Bible, in which Israel's obedience resulted in Yahweh's blessing while Israel's disobedience elicited Yahweh's curse. Thus, Acholi religious ideas are not unlike early Judeo-Christian ones, in which God is conceived of as one who is "holy other" and dangerous to the created order, the source of both blessings and curses, good and evil.

20. For more on the prominent role of women in Acholi spirit possession, see Allen, "Understanding Alice," 380–81, 386. Allen discusses the association of women with powerful and dangerous natural forces in Acholi traditional belief to explain how Alice Lakwena, a twenty-five-year-old woman, was able to raise and lead an army of men. In my own research among African initiated churches in western Kenya, I observed that the majority of those possessed by spirits (both good and bad) were women.

21. Pirouet, "Traditional Religion and Christianity in Buganda and Acoli," 8–9. In his study of traditional religion in Buganda and Acholi, Pirouet observed that while *Ganda* religion functioned as a conserving force in society, Acholi religion functioned to facilitate the adaptations and changes required by a semi-nomadic way life.

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soon gave rise to the idea of many holy spirits (like *jogi*). Especially among Acholi in the Catholic Church, which already possessed a robust cult of Mary and the saints, a whole new class of spirits appeared on the cosmological scene. With them appeared a new group of spirit mediums, who opposed the pagan *jogi* by the power of their *tipu maleng* or pure ancestors.

From the standpoint of Western culture, it can be said that many northern Acholi were not so much Christianized as Christian teaching was appropriated and recast within the idiom of Acholi religious belief. One implication was the ambiguous relationship between religion and violence. Warfare in Acholi society had always been integrally related to spirits and spirit mediums. And although spirit mediums were consulted to guarantee the benefit of society and the healing of individuals, they could also be persuaded to use their power to kill. As figures like Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony illustrate, the dualistic framework of Christianity was unable to fully capture and moralize the activity of spirit mediums in northern Uganda or confine their spiritual activity merely to healing and preventing witchcraft. Lakwena, and to a lesser extent Kony, merged Christian dualistic and millenarian ideas with older Acholi notions of the *ajwaka* and called upon the power of the *jok* to defeat their enemies. It was this fusion of religious discourse and political ideology that inspired and sustained rebel movements.

Another important factor that explains Uganda's internal divisions as well as the propensity for popular religion to be incorporated in the principles and practices of rebel movements is the mingling of church and state politics, and the overlap of church and state functions in Uganda. As Ward points out, both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches in Uganda are great "folk" churches.[22] Through the building of schools and hospitals, the publication of Christian scripture and other materials in the vernacular, the preservation of traditional ceremonies and songs, and the patronage of political parties, these churches have become integrated into the social, cultural, and political fabric of Uganda. The accidents of history, however, mean that this process has operated very differently in each church.

When Uganda became a British protectorate, the Catholic Church lost the bid for political power. The Anglican Church (the Church of Uganda) became the established church during the colonial period, and since that time it has become increasingly tied to the Buganda kingdom. The kings of Buganda were coronated in the Anglican cathedral at Namirembe, and it is reported that congregants would kneel in respect only when the *kabaka* entered the church. In 1966, just before *Kabaka* Muteesa II fled into exile, he passed his mantle on to the Anglican bishops, telling Bishop Nsubuga: "Ffe tugenda. Naye Obuganda mubukuume" (We are going. You [plural] should look after Buganda).[23] In the absence of the *kabaka*, the bishops became the focus of loyalty for many Baganda, and the Anglican Church increasingly took up the role of guarding the traditions and cultural heritage of Buganda. The effects of this close connection between the Buganda kingdom and the Anglican Church have not always been salutary. The Church has often been embroiled in bitter political struggles, embodying many of the tensions and conflicts of the state and society. Its relationship to the political parties and various governments has been ambiguous at the least, with Church leaders maneuvering to preserve their own interests. Furthermore, the strength of the Anglican Church in the south has only increased a polarization of politics in Uganda, already based on north-south disparities.

22. Kevin Ward, "The Church of Uganda amidst Conflict," in *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, ed. Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1995), 72.

23. Ward, "The Church of Uganda amidst Conflict," 76.

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While Anglicans have always been intimately tied to the highest levels of the state (all of Uganda's presidents have been Anglican, with the exception of Amin who was Muslim), Catholics have had little success in achieving political office.[24] Moreover, despite the fact that Catholics are more numerous in Uganda than any other religious group, political power has consistently eluded them.[25] As a result, the Catholic Church has largely contented itself with building up a "spiritual kingdom" parallel to the state. The Catholic sense of being deprived of their rightful position has made them an alternative community within Uganda and "a powerful critical voice *vis-à-vis* the state."[26] This is especially the case in Acholiland, which has the highest proportion of baptized Catholics of any region in Uganda. It was estimated that in 1992 Catholics comprised over 60 percent of the population.[27] For a very long time up until the fall of Idi Amin, many Acholi saw the root-cause of Uganda's instability to be the result of political injustice directed toward Catholics. By the time Museveni seized power from Tito Okello in 1985, Acholi Catholics had already endured a long history of discrimination dating back to the colonial period.

Thus, the longstanding rivalry between the Anglican and Catholic churches in Uganda has created a tendency toward the unification of religious and political interests and has reinforced the regional and ethnic divisions in Uganda. With any hopes of access to the political center dashed, the Acholi faced a new crisis—the specter of a national army under the leadership of Museveni's NRA ready to punish the Acholi severely for their role in the Luwero Triangle massacres and a failed attempt to gain control of the state. Traditional leadership structures in Acholi had never been strong, and the disintegration of the institutional life of Acholi communities caused by decades of war left a huge void. This, combined with the collapse of law and order, helps explain the rise of different kinds of therapists who could mediate these things—to address the Acholi sense of alienation through the religious language of healing, salvation, the elimination of witchcraft, and purification of wrong elements from Ugandan society. When everything else was stripped away, spiritual solutions were the only ones left, amplifying the power of religious discourse in Ugandan public life.

In identifying the possible causes of the wars against Museveni's NRM government, it is important to keep in mind that the actions of the LRA rebels and the NRM government alike are mediated through a historical framework fraught with social, political, and religious tensions, each sphere mutually influencing, informing, and interpreting the other. As we have seen, the entry of Arab ivory-slave traders in the mid 1800s resulted in adaptations of Acholi religion, which incorporated foreign elements in order to mediate change and bring healing within the society. Subsequent political events as well as the introduction of Christianity had similar effects upon Acholi religious ideas, so that the interconnectedness of religion and politics in Uganda cannot be overlooked. For this very important reason, it is neither possible nor appropriate to explain the LRA purely in terms of political causes.

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24. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 117.

25. In the early 1980s, Barrett estimated religious adherents as a percentage of the total population of Uganda as follows: 50 percent Catholic, 26 percent Anglican, and 7 percent Muslim. David Barrett, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982) cited in Ward, "The Church of Uganda amidst Conflict," n. 2, p. 103.

26. Ward, "The Church of Uganda amidst Conflict," 72.

27. Statistics of the Uganda Catholic Secretariat, *The Catholic Directory of Uganda* (Kisubi, 1992), cited in Ronald Kassimir, "The Politics of Popular Catholicism in Uganda," in *East African Expressions of Christianity*, ed. Thomas Spear and Isaria N. Kimambo (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1999), n. 12, p. 268.

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Uganda's Political Economy of Violence and the Spoils of War

The northern conflict between LRA rebels and the government, prolonged for more than two decades, has become something like Uganda's own peculiar institution. Popular media, the Ugandan government, and even some scholars have promoted what Rosa Ehrenreich has characterized as "the insanity theory."[28] Such accounts are usually devoted to graphic descriptions of the LRA's brutality against Acholi citizens, suggesting that the only possible explanation for such violence is that Joseph Kony is insane. Others have seized upon ideological elements that make the LRA equally sensational or exotic to Western readers, such as the group's initial claim that it wished to establish a new government in Uganda based on the Ten Commandments. It is difficult to read news coverage of the conflict without encountering stock quotes like this one by Farmer: "The LRA have combined the fanaticism of a cult with ruthless military efficiency, and while its apparent aim is to impose the Ten Commandments on Uganda its means could scarcely have been more evil."[29] Implicit in such evaluations is the notion that Joseph Kony and the LRA are exemplars of illogical and amoral African violence. The problem is that statements like Farmer's, ubiquitous in the popular media, obscure the underlying motivations and interests that perpetuate the conflict. Furthermore, insanity, barbarism, and religious fanaticism suggest irrationality, making negotiations unlikely if not impossible. Such impressions of the rebels as "irrational actors" serves the interests of the Ugandan government, letting Museveni and other high-ranking NRM officials off the hook, since neither Uganda's citizens nor international observers can blame them for failing to make deals with such people.

Speculation by the popular media on the question of why the LRA continues to fight without any hope of removing Museveni and the NRM from power echoes debates within the academic literature over the agenda of the LRA. Some scholars have taken the position that the LRA has no clear political agenda or strategy. This is the position of Vinci, for instance, who writes, "throughout the conflict neither Kony, nor any other member of the organization, has produced a clear and sustained description of the realistic goals of the organization."[30] Vinci makes a compelling case for the existential nature of the LRA's motivations. However, the weakness of his argument is that he denies the influence of the political, economic, and Sudanese factors on the LRA in order to bolster his point. This is because he frames his analysis in terms of motivations rather than benefits, thus failing to see that the political, economic, and Sudanese factors serve as useful strategies to accumulate private benefits. Van Acker, meanwhile, focuses on the LRA's religious motivations. He suggests that their activities constitute a kind of "religious terrorism," which does not so much seek "political gains" as it does the rejection of "the rules of society" through violence, which is "divinely decreed, and hence

28. Ehrenreich, "The Stories We Must Tell," 83, provides a helpful summary of the various theories used to explain the durability of the LRA conflict. Also, Adam Branch, "Neither Peace nor Justice: Political Violence and the Peasantry in Northern Uganda, 1986–1998," *African Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2005): 1–31, discusses possible reasons for the Ugandan military's failure and reviews the literature regarding the LRA's motives.

29. Sam Farmer, "Uganda Rebel Leader Breaks Silence," BBC News Online, June 28, 2006.

30. Anthony Vinci, "Existential Motivations in the Lord's Resistance Army's Continuing Conflict," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30 (2007): 342.

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morally justified, almost as a sacramental act."[31] On the one hand, Van Acker's analysis makes an important contribution to the literature by acknowledging the importance of religious ideology in mobilizing radical social movements and justifying acts of violence. On the other hand, such comments also reflect the problem with much of the literature on the LRA. By focusing on the violence rather than the results it produces, analysts fail to grasp the LRA's simple logic and the strategic value of terrorizing its own people.

This essay takes a different explanatory route by focusing on the benefits that have accrued to actors on each side of the conflict. It suggests that there are logical reasons why the fighting has continued in northern Uganda, where violence has become a constitutive element of the social and political structures as well as an engine of economic production. Such an approach builds upon the work of David Keen, who, in developing his argument for civil war's economic functions, has shown that conflicts can provide rebel groups and state functionaries with the cover they need to extract valuable resources.[32] Despite the heavy costs exacted in the destruction of lives, infrastructure, and social institutions, war—and the conditions of violence and instability that accompany war—can be an effective and profitable production strategy, not just for rebel groups, but for the state as well.

The following discussion will demonstrate the specific argument that for both Kony's LRA and Museveni's NRM government, a situation of low-intensity war provided the justification and the means by which both sides have engaged in the accumulation of benefits. More broadly, however, the dynamics of this conflict fit within the social, political, and religious history described above. Both parties to the conflict continue to operate within social and political processes and structures, forged in Uganda's past, that perpetuate division and foster mistrust. Meanwhile, the social costs of the conflict—that is, of the LRA's material reproduction and the NRM government's political reproduction—have been paid by the northern Acholi peasantry. More immediately, the war continues because, despite the risks involved in prolonging the fighting, the parties also have much to lose if they settle the conflict. Violence creates and sustains the conditions of the LRA's existence, just as the need for security and counter-insurgency operations justify the actions of the government and its military to the Ugandan public. Against the backdrop of Uganda's complex history, however, it is certain that the kind of simple cost-benefit-analysis each party engages in is also heavily influenced by a set of social and political categories deeply lodged in Ugandan popular memory. Such categories, structures, and processes—the legacies of both historical events and historical productions—impinge upon the actions and attitudes of both sides, limiting the possibilities considered in resolving the conflict.

Joseph Kony's LRA and the Personal Benefits of War

Before discussing the benefits gained by the LRA through the perpetuation of war, it is important to say a word about the nature of such benefits. It has sometimes been ar-

31. Frank Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (2004): 349.

32. David Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998).

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gued that Joseph Kony's LRA is little more than an armed group of venture capitalists, who use violence and the threat of violence to sustain their way of life and accumulate wealth. Such characterizations, while overly simplistic, point to the fact that for a rebel group like the LRA, the individual interests of its members are inextricably tied to the organization's success and survival.

It is important to understand what benefits, if any, the LRA gains by fighting a war it knows it cannot win. I argue that the LRA is not so much concerned with winning as it is with reproduction; that is, the continuation of its existence as an autonomous political community. Because it is an exclusive community sustained through violence against those outside of itself, the potential for LRA members—especially those born into the organization—to return to wider Ugandan society is foreclosed. Members of the LRA find their *raison d'être* within this alternative community, one with its own hierarchy, cultural and religious institutions, and criteria for assigning rewards, punishments, and status. Thus, the LRA has continued because it provides a kind of existential motivation to its members that skews the normal cost-benefit analysis undertaken when considering alternatives to war. The LRA is a relatively small community, perhaps not more than 3,000 persons in all,[33] and because it operates independently of the state, the benefits secured through violence or coercion need not be shared with those outside the organization (e.g., with the Acholi people for whom the LRA claims to be fighting). Furthermore, the personal costs of leaving the organization or giving up the fight are high. Many LRA soldiers have wives and children in the bush who rely on the LRA's continued activities for their daily provision. Deserters are killed if caught, and those who receive amnesty from the government often endure humiliation and hardship upon returning to their local communities. Work is scarce in northern Uganda, even more so for demobilized rebel soldiers with little education and no technical skills aside from warfare.[34]

Strategies of Personal Benefit

For these reasons, the terms "personal," "private," and "existential" characterize the kind of benefits received by LRA members in a situation of protracted war. In addition, while it is important to acknowledge that the LRA regularly engages in politics, commerce, and warfare—all ostensibly public endeavors—this does not contradict the fact

33. Robert Gersony, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda*, report submitted to the US Embassy, Kampala and USAID mission, Kampala (August 1997), 35, gives a figure of between 3,000–4,000. A more recent report by Tim Allen, *War and Justice in Northern Uganda: An Assessment of the International Criminal Court's Intervention* (London: Crisis States Research Centre and Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics, 2005), iii, estimates the total number of people with the LRA, including women and children, to be between 1,000–2,000.

34. These factors all come under what Vinci refers to as the "existential motivations" of the LRA. The significance of the LRA case for research on violence and conflict is that it provides evidence challenging the assertion that individuals are reluctant to engage in rebel movements because they do so at great personal risk. In northern Uganda, however, it appears that there are real gains to be made by joining and much to lose by leaving the LRA. In addition to examples cited above, of some note is Blattman's research in northern Uganda, which found that economic disadvantages created by the loss of education and training were the single most significant barrier to the reintegration of former child soldiers. See Christopher Blattman, "The Consequences of War and the Determinants of Successful Reintegration of Youth Combatants in Africa" (paper presented at the annual African Studies Association Conference, 2006).

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Figure 19.3 LRA Commanders, with Joseph Kony in center.

that the benefits it seeks are of a personal nature. That is, even the LRA's most public activities—such as village raids, abductions, attacks on the government's Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) soldiers, and even peace negotiations—are oriented toward ensuring private ends.

In order to understand the logic of LRA violence, it is necessary to recognize that prolonging the conflict actually creates political, economic, and military opportunities, which the group in turn uses to reproduce and preserve itself as an independent organization. Violence and the restraint of violence has been used as a strategy to exert political influence over Ugandan citizens and against Museveni's government that would accrue personal benefits to LRA members. In 1996, for instance, the LRA declared a ceasefire in order for northerners to vote in the presidential elections. Museveni's opponent, Ssemogerere, was the clear winner in Acholiland—in some locations receiving up to ten times more votes than Museveni. Despite this, Museveni carried the more populous southern provinces, giving him the national victory. After Ssemogerere's defeat, Kony again stepped up his attacks.[35]

Even in the absence of a clear and sustained articulation of political demands by a rebel group like the LRA, the use of violence against civilians has a "political rationale" directed ultimately at self-preservation.[36] Excessive force combined with the unpredictability of LRA attacks gave LRA field commanders a logistical advantage beyond

35. Branch, "Neither Peace nor Justice," 19.

36. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 26. Cf. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 43, who notes that for some time the LRA has produced manifestos and pamphlets listing their political demands, which have been posted on the Internet, circulated in northern Uganda as printed leaflets, and even broadcast via a radio station in Sudan called "Radio Free Uganda." While some demands propose spiritual solutions to the hardships faced by northern Ugandans, most represent reasonable responses that seek to ameliorate political, economic, and ethnic divisions separating the north from the south and provide redress for historical injustices. Generally they call for: (1) an all-party "National Conference" followed by general elections; (2) a Religious Affairs Ministry to end witchcraft and promote the Ten Commandments; (3) rehabilitation of the country's economy and infrastructure; (4) national unity through intertribal marriage and language instruction; (5) universal education; (6) the encouragement of foreign investment; (7) an independent judiciary; (8) an ethnically balanced national army; (9) improved diplomatic relations with neighboring states; and (10) relocation of the capital to Kigumba in Masindi district.

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their actual capabilities. Abductees were forced to kill, or witness the killing of, friends and family members, identifying them with murder and preventing them from leaving the LRA.[37] Through the strategic use of violence, a relatively small group of LRA rebels exercised control over a vast population. At one point, over two million civilians were living in so-called "protective villages" or IDP camps.[38] Importantly, the result was not only fear of the LRA, but also widespread criticism of the government's inability to provide security for its citizens. More research is needed on the political strategies employed by the LRA. However, it is clear from these examples that the LRA has benefited from over twenty years of conflict in the region, using violence as a means of exerting political pressure while simultaneously safeguarding its private interests.

In addition to using political strategies to achieve its interests, the LRA has also pursued what may be called economic strategies of personal benefit. Indeed, one of the most basic explanations for the LRA's continuation of the conflict is that it serves as a profit-making enterprise for those involved. Interviews with various aid workers, officials, and analysts in northern Uganda all point to the fact that the LRA's primary source of supplies is through raiding operations in the region. "Trucks carrying valuable goods are regularly looted, especially for anything that can easily be sold in the trading centers, such as bicycle tires or farm tools. Similarly, the LRA will loot villages, IDP camps, and, to a lesser extent, World Food Programme food aid."[39] The insecurity in northern Uganda spawns its own type of informal, wartime economy from which the LRA is more easily able to siphon off revenue in the form of material goods. There is an extensive literature on how international interventions such as humanitarian aid can be used by rebels to prolong the conflict. Even the peace process itself, can be used by rebel leaders as a vehicle for their own personal enrichment. "It should come as no surprise, therefore, that African transition elites do all they can to prolong these transitions for as long as possible."[40] Like other groups in the Great Lakes region, the LRA has learned that rebellion can be a legitimate and lucrative business. By prolonging the conflict, LRA members are able to make a better livelihood for themselves and for their families than if they returned to civilian life.

The use of military force is a third, and obvious, strategy deployed by the LRA to strengthen and defend its continued existence and secure benefits for its members. One frequently cited explanation for the protracted conflict is that the LRA has acted as proxy for the government of Sudan, which armed the LRA in order to punish Uganda for supporting the Southern People's Liberation Army (SPLA) insurgency in southern Sudan.[41] Assistance from the northern Sudanese government has not only allowed the

37. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 27.

38. For an evaluation of the extent and nature of displacement generated by the civil war in northern Uganda, see Paul Omach, *Civil War and Internal Displacement in Northern Uganda: 1986–1998* (Kampala: NURRU Publications, 2002). Allen, *Trial Justice*, 53, estimates the IDP camp population to have been 1.5 million at its peak in 2004. Either way, because the mortality rate in the camps was so high (1.54 deaths per 10,000 people per day, over 1 is considered to be an emergency), the point is that millions have been reduced to living in crowded, unsanitary conditions that has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands. Restoration of peace in the north following the signing of the cease-fire agreement on August 26, 2007 has already seen the shrinkage of IDP camp populations as thousands of Acholi return to their homes.

39. Vinci, "Existential Motivations in the Lord's Resistance Army's Continuing Conflict," 343.

40. Pierre Englebert and Denis Tull, "Flawed Assumptions about State Reconstruction in Africa" (paper presented at the annual African Studies Association Conference, 2006), 14.

41. Gerard Prunier, "Rebel Movements and Proxy Warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986–1999)," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (2004), 359.

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LRA to continue their lifestyle of rebellion, it has also legitimized and professionalized their activities—they became well-paid mercenaries fighting against the government of Uganda and the SPLA. With rear bases in Sudan, the LRA has until recently operated with a free hand, taking advantage of the protection, security, and immunity that a wealthy patron offered. In addition to external support, violence and the threat of violence has been used by the LRA to expand its ranks from within. A key strategy of the LRA has been to abduct young people, including children, and to educate them to be part of a new society.[42] Some of these recruits are trained as combatants, but others become sexual slaves (given as wives to reward loyal commanders) or serve as porters, cooks, and domestic laborers in the rebel's semi-permanent base camps.

In summary, the political, economic, and military activities of the LRA are primarily instruments of reproduction—strategies whose ultimate goal is the continued existence of the LRA and the personal welfare of its members. This section has shown how each of these three "strategies of personal benefit" has been deployed by the LRA. Contrary to the insanity theorists, there is, in fact, compelling evidence to suggest that rational calculations guide the LRA's actions and shape their agendas. Continuing the insurgency has made logical sense because it served the LRA's private interests.

Museveni's NRM Government and the Political Benefits of War

The central aim of this section is to analyze why Museveni has failed to resolve the conflict in the north: Is it because he is unable or unwilling? According to Van Acker's analysis, the government has taken a "three-pronged strategy" against the LRA: "applying substantial military pressure on the insurgents, thinning out their ranks with offers of amnesty, or reviving the political process through negotiations."[43] He argues that the NRM makes use of and reverses these policies depending on present circumstances and perceptions, but that there have been "many missed opportunities for peace."[44] By this account, Museveni and the NRM have made serious and strategic efforts to resolve the conflict but have simply been unable to do so.

Others, like Doom and Vlassenroot,[45] Reno,[46] and Mwenda and Tangri,[47] take a more critical view of the government's actions and intentions. This essay argues similarly by exploring the ways Museveni and his government have benefited from the conflict and the way incentive structures evolved to favor continuation of the conflict. Such an approach draws upon Reno's observation that in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the former Zaire, leaders of weak states continued to function through the

42. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 42.
43. Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army," 337.
44. Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army," 337.
45. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message."
46. William Reno, "Uganda's Politics of War and Debt Relief," *Review of International Political Economy* 9, no. 3 (2002): 415–35; "War, Debt, and the Role of Pretending in Uganda's International Relations" (Occasional Paper, Centre for African Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, July 2000).
47. Andrew M. Mwenda and Roger Tangri, "Patronage Politics, Donor Reforms, and Regime Consolidation in Uganda," *African Affairs* 104, no. 416 (2005): 449–67.

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adoption of warlord politics, consolidating political power through control over markets and private accumulation by means of personal networks of affiliation.[48] The importance of Reno's work here is the notion that political figures, entrusted with overseeing institutions intended to deliver public goods, may also use their privileged access as state functionaries to manipulate these institutions, thereby giving them political advantages. Although Uganda can hardly be classified as a warlord state, the same principles may be observed. The following discussion considers three categories of benefits that Museveni and the NRM received by prolonging the conflict in northern Uganda — political benefits, military benefits, and economic benefits. While these factors are inextricably interconnected, they shall be discussed separately for the sake of organization.

Political Factors

The Acholi are of little political significance to the NRM. They are one of several dozen ethnic groups in Uganda and a minority at that. This means that while conflict in Acholiland undermines Museveni's popularity in the north, he does not need Acholi support to stay in power. As long as the violence is contained to the north, most southerners do not bother about the conflict and even perceive it to be an inter-Acholi war.[49]

As his re-election in 2006 demonstrated, Museveni's reluctance to resolve the northern conflict has worked to his direct political advantage in at least two respects. First, his primary constituents in the southern provinces, who are also beneficiaries of NRM policies, have little reason to pressure his government to make a peace deal with the LRA. In addition, the horrific violence and weird spirituality of the LRA allow his government to present the north as a kind of barbaric periphery. Although Museveni is from the south-west and not from Buganda, he presents himself to the people in the south as the surest guarantee that the oppressions of Amin, Obote, and Okello will not return. At one point, Museveni even traveled to the north to personally oversee counter-insurgency operations against the LRA. In doing so, he seized upon the south's fears and selective memory of Uganda's political past, styling himself as the Bagandans' most faithful defender.

Second, Museveni's most formidable political opposition, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), is strongest in the north.[50] Encouraging a situation of instability and insecurity in northern Uganda is an easy way for NRM leaders to disenfranchise thousands of Ugandan citizens and effectively hamstring the opposition. Known for his hostility against multi-party democracy and opposition leaders, Museveni has often used the northern conflict to crack down on potential political opposition by tying opposition groups to the LRA and attacking rivals who question his government's actions in the north.[51] As Bøås points out, "the government's attempt to link main opposition politicians to armed rebel movements such as the LRA … is a message to the population at large about what constitutes the alternative to Museveni's

48. Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*.

49. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 32. For a long time, in fact, the war was simply called the Acholi war, and despite its brutality, few people inside or outside Uganda paid much attention. See also Jeffrey Gettleman, "Uganda Peace Hinges on Amnesty for Brutality," *New York Times*, 15 September 2006.

50. FDC presidential candidate Kizza Besigye received 37 percent of the vote to Museveni's 59 percent in the last election.

51. Cline, "Spirits and the Cross," 124.

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NRM."[52] Neighboring Rwanda has also been accused of seeking to destabilize Uganda through involvement with the LRA.[53] Museveni's rhetoric reveals a pattern in which the conflict in the north is used as a stick to beat people into loyalty to the NRM. Cline summarizes the point well: "Clearly, in various ways the continued existence of the northern insurgencies has been of some political use to the government in cracking down on potential political opposition."[54] Museveni's frequent criticism of grassroots and non-governmental institutions (NGOs) working to negotiate a peace settlement only underscores the political benefits he has gained by perpetuating the conflict.[55]

Military Factors

Closely related to the political benefits of the conflict are the military benefits. One version of the military benefits story suggests that deploying forces on the periphery is a useful safeguard strategy for any national leader. The proper maintenance and administration of a disciplined military sector is essential not only to citizens' security but also to the security of political elites. Uganda's history of coups and counter-coups illustrates the importance of control of the army for accessing power in Ugandan politics.[56] One possible explanation for the prolonged fighting in the north is that such conflicts keep the army occupied. In many low-income countries like Uganda, where troops are poorly equipped and under-compensated, it is always a good idea to keep them a safe distance from the political power center, lest they be tempted.

Another version challenges the idea that Uganda's forces are really so ill equipped. As a "successful" guerrilla leader himself, so goes the reasoning, one would expect that Museveni should easily be able to eradicate the LRA by military means. Yet the government of Uganda has long given the impression that it and the UPDF can do little unless the LRA decides on its own to give up the fight, and the international community has obediently delivered millions of dollars in development and humanitarian aid. This pattern has continued for decades, despite the fact that during the same time "Uganda's military … has shown considerable capacity to control territory and accumulate resources." For instance, during the height of Uganda's occupation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in the late 1990s, Uganda had about 10,000 soldiers and occupied an area larger than Uganda itself.[57] The irony of the situation is highlighted by northern Ugandans, who ask, "How can the president support the SPLA, the RPF and Kabila and still pretend that he is lacking the means to protect the Acholis from the LRA, a first step

52. Morten Bøås, "Uganda in the Regional War Zone: Meta-Narratives, Pasts and Presents," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 22, no. 3 (2004): 297.

53. A. Murunga, "Who is Fuelling the Conflict in North Uganda?" *The Daily Nation*, Nairobi, February 7, 2006.

54. Cline, "Spirits and the Cross," 124.

55. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 23.

56. See Ali Al'Amin Mazrui, *Soldiers and Kinsmen in Uganda: The Making of a Military Ethnocracy* (London: Sage, 1975); Dan Mudola, "The Role of the Army in Society: Lessons from Uganda," in *The Quest for Constitutionalism in Africa: Selected Essays on Constitutionalism, the Nationality Problem, Military Rule and Party Politics*, ed. Asmeleash Beyene and Gelase Mutahaba (New York: Peter Lang, 1994).

57. Reno, "Uganda's Politics of War and Debt Relief," 416.

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towards peace?"[58] The ability to exert such military power in the DRC while claiming to be unable to deal with an insurgency of a few thousand people over twenty years, even considering Sudan's damaging interference, makes the government's protestations difficult to believe.

Along similar lines, several scholars have cited evidence from the failed peace negotiations with the LRA to suggest that the army itself has at times contributed to the continuation of the conflict to the benefit of individuals in the military and government alike. Bøås writes:

> The durability of the rebellion is, however, also a creation of the Ugandan army. The peace attempt in 1994 could have succeeded. Kony clearly indicated that he wanted to come out of the bush with all his fighters. Negotiations towards this end started, but stopped when the NRA commanders insisted that the only thing to negotiate was the total surrender of the LRA.… The consequence was that the LRA left the negotiations and struck a deal with Khartoum instead. Years of war and terror were to follow.… Through cell phones, the LRA commanders continue to talk to key Acholian leaders almost on a daily basis, but unfortunately most of these attempts at rebuilding trust between the Acholian elders and their 'lost boys' in the LRA have failed due to misunderstanding or have been sabotaged by elements within the Ugandan army.[59]

The blatant subversion of the peace talks in 1994 suggests that elements within the NRM and UPDF wanted the LRA to continue to exist. Museveni's refusal of Kony's request for six months to gather his troops and to leave the bush under the protection of UN observers, together with his public announcement that Kony had seven days to come out or be annihilated, reveals less about his certainty in the capabilities of the military than his concern to keep Kony and his followers in the bush. Branch joins Bøås on this score, noting that, just as Museveni has used the military "to repress political organization among the Acholi to ensure that they could not effectively demand an end to the war," it is also the case that he has at times used elements within the UPDF to cripple or wreck the peace process.[60]

The extent to which the military has played a role in perpetuating the northern conflict in order to procure benefits is difficult to determine for sure. Other factors may explain the failure of the 1994 peace talks. After nearly a decade of dealing with the LRA, Museveni had a personal grudge against Kony; the idea of giving in to such a "bandit" was difficult to stomach. In addition, Museveni claimed to have military intelligence that Kony was using the peace talks to rebuild the LRA's military capacity and secure additional support from Sudan. It is very possible that Museveni delivered his ultimatum knowing that even if Kony refused, it was still the most strategic moment for the UPDF to strike.

There is also reason to doubt the efficacy of the Ugandan military, especially in mounting a successful counter-insurgency against guerrillas. In the first place, the LRA has not been the only rebel group to challenge NRM rule. Museveni has had to suppress literally dozens of others like it since 1986, when his own rebels captured power and became the ruling NRM government.[61] Second, as critics note, substantial resources have been diverted to support military operations in neighboring Rwanda,

58. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 32.
59. Bøås, "Uganda in the Regional War Zone," 290.
60. Branch, "Neither Peace nor Justice," 18.
61. Human Rights Watch, "State of Pain: Torture in Uganda," *Human Rights Watch* 16, no. 4 (March 2004): 14–15, notes at least six rebel groups that still existed in 2004: The Lord's Resistance Army based in the north; The Allied Democratic Forces in the west; The National Democratic Al-

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southern Sudan, and the DRC. Uganda's involvement in these regions may reveal more about the predatory and corrupt character of its military force than its capacity to eradicate rebel groups like the LRA. It also betrays those interests ruling elites consider most strategic to their political survival, which clearly do not include northern security or stability. In the case of the DRC, independent researchers and the International Court of Justice, sitting in the Hague, found that between August 1998 and June 2003 there were massive human rights violations committed by the UPDF in the territory of the DRC, including the training of child soldiers in UPDF camps, incitement of ethnic conflicts, and the killing and torture of civilians. However, such activities were ancillary to the primary enterprise of the UPDF, which was the economic exploitation of Congolese natural resources that mostly benefited powerful members of the Ugandan elite, including Museveni's half-brother and former acting General of the UPDF, Salim Saleh.[62]

This suggests a more plausible scenario in which a complex set of interests, processes, and organizational structures operating at the national level make solving the problems in the north low on the government's priority list. Political and military elites have little to gain and much to lose (revenues from resource extraction and small arms trade) by diverting troops from neighboring conflict zones and concentrating military forces in the north. As long as fighting remains on the periphery and does not pose a threat to central authority, Uganda's elites will continue to deploy military forces in neighboring regions outside state boundaries where lootable resources are more plentiful.[63] It is also likely that local dynamics in the north involving the UPDF are responsible for maintaining the status quo. Poor administration and a low-grade war economy have cropped up around the conflict, allowing senior officers to profit from allowances, cattle rustling, and trafficking in army fuel and goods, among other revenue-generating practices.[64] For instance, it is an open secret that the army was heavily involved in cattle rustling, so that by the mid-1990s, almost all Acholi cattle—the bulk of their wealth—had been stolen.[65] Thus, it is likely that Museveni has given public lip service to ending the LRA war while making private concessions to retain the loyalty of key political and military officials who might otherwise threaten his power to rule.[66]

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liance in the east; The Ugandan National Rescue Front in the northwest; The West Nile Bank Front in the northwest; and The People's Redemption Army.

62. Peter Danssaert and Brian Johnson Thomas, *Greed and Guns: Uganda's Role in the Rape of the Congo* (Antwerp: International Peace Information Service, 2006).

63. Such an observation is consistent with research demonstrating that, when confronted with limited resources, weak states often establish selective control over regions that promise to provide the highest revenues for the state. In this case, instability in surrounding regions with vast resources makes it possible and profitable for Uganda to exercise military control *beyond* its borders while allowing pockets of instability *within* its borders to remain.

64. Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army," 354.

65. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 49.

66. Despite allegations of human rights abuses in the DRC, General James Kazini was promoted to Commander of the Armed Forces on November 4, 2001. His promotion was only one of a series of changes in the army high command in which President Museveni has increasingly surrounded himself with trusted members of his own Hima ethnic group. Others involve Salim Saleh (the president's half-brother, who was supposed to be in retirement from the army), Elly Tumwine, and David Tinyefuza. Such patterns are troubling to those familiar with Ugandan history; they are an indication of the extent to which the president views the army as his ultimate power base, and his concern to ensure that it remain loyal.

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Economic Factors

In addition to political and military factors responsible for prolonging the northern conflict, Museveni and his government reap economic benefits from it. Northern Uganda has no natural resources of commercial interest, so economic plundering was not the impetus for violence there as it has been elsewhere in Africa, such as Sierra Leone, the DRC, or even Nigeria. Nevertheless, because of the continued military presence and insecurity in the region, a low-level war economy has sprouted and become deeply entrenched. It is hardly surprising that various actors—from national leaders all the way down to local officials—have come to rely on these new economic arrangements and do whatever necessary to sustain them. This is what Doom refers to when he states, "some government agents or officials are blocking the peace process in the pursuit of a private agenda."[67] There is also the question of the government's motives in setting up the controversial protective villages to which many Acholi have been forced to move at the army's coercion. Considering the north's colonial history as a labor reservoir for southern commercial endeavors, some have even suggested that the effort to move Acholis off their farms into camps amounts to little more than forced proletarianization.[68]

International development assistance also plays a significant role in any discussion of economic benefits that may come as a result of perpetuating the LRA conflict. Since Yoweri Museveni seized power in 1986, Uganda has enjoyed economic growth and some degree of overall poverty decline. The apparent success of the Ugandan state is viewed as so important as to render local failures—including human rights abuses, political manipulation, and corruption—unimportant.[69] A large portion of Uganda's federal budget and private sector operations are reliant on foreign aid. The conflict in the north, but particularly the specter of child soldiers and protective villages, gives the government a powerful bargaining chip in its negotiations with donors. After all, what aid agency or Western government wants to cut funding to a government that is trying to save its people—especially its children—from abduction, mutilation, rape, and other brutalities? Moreover, while Museveni's government does an excellent job of using the conflict with the LRA (and Uganda's reputation as structural adjustment's success story) to keep the aid flowing, many analysts now believe that such assistance actually weakens "internal incentives to build effective administration."[70] The bottom line is that Museveni's government depends on foreign aid for its economic and political survival, and any means of securing aid that does not pose significant disadvantages will be used. The northern conflict certainly fits the criteria, making foreign assistance another means of profit-generation for Museveni's government.

Summary Remarks on the Benefits of Prolonged, Low-Intensity Conflict

This analysis has aimed to bring together evidence of the major ways that both parties to the conflict in northern Uganda seem to use the war to suit their political, eco-

67. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 32.
68. Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army," 343.
69. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 27.
70. Reno, "Uganda's Politics of War and Debt Relief," 419.

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nomic, and military interests. It does not argue that the LRA or Museveni's NRM instigated the conflict for the sake of accumulating benefits. Instead, it supports the observation that "the longer a civil war, the more likely it becomes that people will find ways to profit from it,"[71] which suggests that the reasons for continuing a conflict are often different from the reasons that a conflict began. In the case of the LRA's insurgency, fought over such a long duration, the structures have become entrenched and self-sustaining and therefore dependent on the conflict's continuation. Thus, both sides have had incentives to perpetuate the war. For ordinary soldiers, it is a means of ensuring regular income and provision for them and their families. For Museveni and regional and international leaders, it has been a way to bolster political positions and serve their own political agendas.[72] And, for Kony and his commanders, profiteers in the business and military sector, and even government officials, it has been an opportunity to accumulate wealth, power, and a certain degree of prestige.

Shifts in the Geopolitical Landscape: Limits to the Political Economy of Violence in Uganda

One may reiterate that war can be a lucrative production strategy for both parties involved, but it is difficult to sustain over an extended period. Renewed efforts at peace negotiations between Museveni's NRM and Kony's LRA suggest that there are, in fact, limits to the benefits gained through sustaining violence and instability. The following section identifies several possible reasons for the current transformation in the political landscape—namely, factors that formerly made it advantageous for each party to sustain a low-level conflict have now changed. Taken together, these factors have resulted in diminished resources for both the LRA (e.g., personal wealth, security, and arms for making a livelihood of fighting) and Museveni's government (e.g., credibility inside Uganda, which weakens the NRM's monopoly on political power, and diminished credibility abroad, which threatens the flow of essential foreign aid). Such geopolitical changes have simultaneously threatened to starve the Ugandan economy and undermined Museveni's political hold, as well as hampered the LRA's ability to sustain itself as an autonomous and "untouchable" political community. In short, the conflict is now "ripe for resolution."[73]

Kony's LRA and the Personal Costs of Continuing the War

There are several factors that make continuing the war personally costly to Kony and the LRA. One such factor is due to political shifts in the region. As part of the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the northern Government of Sudan (GoS) and the southern Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Khartoum agreed that it would no longer fund LRA operations, which had formerly been di-

71. Keen, *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*, 43.
72. Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 35–6.
73. See William I. Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

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rected at destabilizing northern Uganda and weakening the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In fact, the LRA has found itself in opposition to its former patron. As early as 2004, it was reported that the LRA began fighting GoS troops and raiding GoS villages.[74] In an interview, Kony threatened the Sudanese government, saying, "I want to tell the Sudanese lords to keep away from us because if they attack us as they have done this month [March], we will fight and set their villages on fire."[75] The GoS has responded to such threats by actively combating the LRA, as well as forming an alliance with the SPLA and UPDF to do the same. The result has crippled the LRA, significantly reducing its funding, access to arms, and ability to sustain itself, including its women and children. Most recent reports by UN peacekeeping forces (MONUC) operating in the DRC suggest that the LRA has broken into several smaller groups, resorting to banditry for daily survival.[76]

A second factor that has eroded the LRA's position is the comprehensive Amnesty Act, enacted by Uganda in January 2000. It has helped to sap support for the LRA, as fighters (some commanders as well as child soldiers) have trickled out of the forest and returned home to receive social and economic reintegration benefits provided by the legislation. The promise of amnesty and financial packages makes it more difficult for the LRA to retain its fighting force and weakens morale. On the government's side, there is little to lose. The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program has been funded largely by international donors, not by the government of Uganda, reinforcing the old pattern that the NRM is only willing to settle with the rebels so long as it does not cost anything.[77]

A final factor to consider is the reduction in personal security felt by LRA leaders. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued warrants for the arrest of the top five LRA commanders. Such action has raised the stakes for Kony and his commanders, since they now risk being captured by MONUC forces in the DRC or by other government forces elsewhere, which would be obliged to hand them over for ICC prosecution for crimes against humanity. There is little doubt, then, that the ICC indictments have combined with the other factors mentioned above to push the LRA into its present talks with the NRM.

Museveni's NRM and the Political Costs of Continuing the War

If there are compelling arguments to suggest that the LRA now stands to benefit from a peace settlement, evidence for the government of Uganda is even greater. The constellation of factors comprising the old system that for so long served the NRM's political and economic interests has undergone a shift. New developments at the national, regional, and international level have converged to hold the government of Uganda

74. Vinci, "Existential Motivations in the Lord's Resistance Army's Continuing Conflict," 344.

75. IRIN News, "Sudanese Militia Vow to Fight LRA Rebels," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 20 April 2004.

76. Albert Caramés, Vicenç Fisas and Eneko Sanz, *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Report: Uganda* (Barcelona: School for a Culture of Peace, Spanish International Co-operation Agency, 2006), 5.

77. See Caramés et al., *Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Report: Uganda*, for a detailed evaluation of the DDR process in Uganda.

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more accountable to the northern Acholi and to the international community. The costs to Museveni for allowing the conflict to fester, combined with the benefits to be obtained through peace, have brought him to the bargaining table with renewed determination to reach a settlement.

One important change in the geopolitical landscape is the mounting external pressure on the government of Uganda to solve the LRA conflict and develop the north. Much of that pressure has come in the form of threats to suspend aid, and Museveni has good reason to be concerned about the sustainability of Uganda's economic growth should foreign donors and capital investors pull out. The amount of foreign aid entering the country was estimated at $989 million in 2005–06 alone.[78] In addition, while Uganda's average economic growth rate may stand at six percent, the primary beneficiaries of such growth live in the south, where the bulk of industry and modern infrastructure exists. The north, meanwhile, has remained undeveloped. Ironically, the economic sustainability of such a situation has been made possible by the financial support of the international community since 1996, when the government adopted the policy of "protective villages" as part of its anti-insurgency strategy. In early 1997, the first World Food Programme food relief was delivered to 110,000 people living in "protected" IDP camps. By 2002, the number of people receiving food relief was over half a million.[79] These figures represent the work of only one of countless humanitarian agencies that kept the relief operation in northern Uganda going for years.

By 2003, however, the contradictions in Museveni's ability to transform Uganda into an economic success story[80] while at the same time drawing international relief organizations into long-term, institutionalized arrangements in the north began to raise the hackles of observers. UN Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Egeland, in November 2003 described the situation in northern Uganda as "totally unacceptable" and "the most forgotten crisis in the world," and he called upon the international community, the UN, and donors to take action.[81] Egeland's statements revealed the darker side of Museveni's policies, which quickly earned the former darling of the international community much bad press. Key international donors threatened to pull funds if the structures of violence that sustained human suffering in the north were not dismantled. In January 2004, the US Congress passed the Northern Uganda Crisis Response Act, which in addition to rerouting previously unrestricted aid to assistance programs in the north, also warned the Ugandan government to reduce corruption and increase professionalism within the military. Pressure on Museveni increased in 2005 when Uganda lost some $73 million in donor aid due to human rights abuses in the north, governance concerns, and treatment of opposition politician Dr. Kizza Besigye. The UK alone pulled $36 million in aid for the second year in a row, directing it instead to northern development efforts. In January 2006, the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling on the government of Uganda to do more to protect the northern population.

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78. Fawzia Sheikh, "Uganda and Foreign Aid," *World Press*, 2 May 2005.

79. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 53.

80. There is evidence to suggest that Uganda's economy is not, in fact, a glowing success story, and that structural adjustment policies have encouraged government corruption and consolidation of power. See Arne Bigsten and Steve Kayizzi-Mugerwa Bigsten, *Is Uganda an Emerging Economy?* Report for the OECD project "Emerging Africa" (May 1999); and Mwenda and Tangri, "Patronage Politics, Donor Reforms, and Regime Consolidation in Uganda."

81. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 73.

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There is little doubt that the punitive reactions of the US, the UK, the UN, and other international donors significantly altered the cost-benefit considerations that up to that point placed limited value on establishing security in the north. Due to the importance of donor aid to the Ugandan economy (representing nearly 40 percent of the national budget), Museveni could not afford to appear indifferent. He moved quickly on two fronts in order to stave off international criticism. First, he took measures to improve UPDF military performance and ordered the investigation and prosecution of army corruption crimes in the north, some of which even implicated the president's own brother. Second, he created more space for peace talks by extending the Amnesty Act to include LRA commanders and giving protection to those who returned home.[82]

There are other factors besides international sanctions, however, that make the continuation of the conflict a costly affair. One of them is the need to attract private foreign investment to fund the country's industrialization. Despite Uganda's steady economic growth since the 1990s, the country's economic recovery has been hamstrung by its heavy reliance on the agricultural sector (coffee alone accounts for about 30 percent of the country's exports) and low production and export earnings. A central feature of Museveni's re-election campaign in 2006 was his vision to spur economic growth through the creation of several industrial estates: "We will build the infrastructure; we shall advertise the estates. Anybody who wants can come. If they don't come the government itself can build the factory; they can be privatised later."[83] Peace and stability in Uganda are essential to whether anybody will come. Despite its containment in the north, continued conflict with the LRA decreases the likelihood that foreign investors will view Uganda as a safe place to do business.

Another factor is Uganda's need to remain competitive in emerging regional markets. Now that a peace agreement has been signed between northern and southern Sudan, Uganda hopes to take advantage of development efforts and economic growth opportunities generated by an oil-rich southern Sudan. It can only do this, however, if northern Uganda is itself stable. Uganda's main competitor, Kenya, already has an economic advantage. Insecurity and lack of essential infrastructure due to rebel activities places Ugandan business and government at a distinct disadvantage when competing for lucrative business contracts because Uganda will find it more difficult to provide reliable services to its northern neighbor.[84]

An additional regional factor that makes the LRA conflict increasingly politically costly for Museveni is that it undermines the country's reputation within the East African Community (EAC), which is comprised of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and more recently Rwanda and Burundi. Uganda is the only member state to suffer from a long-term civil war that has increasingly been publicized in the regional and international press. With the fast tracking of the process toward the EAC's political and economic integration (as early as 2013) comes increased pressure on Uganda from its neighbors to clean up its act.

In addition to external pressures to end the war, there are growing domestic pressures for political liberalization in Uganda. This, combined with Museveni's need to sat-

82. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 74–5.

83. Yoweri Museveni, quoted in "Uganda's Museveni Dreams of 2013," *BBC News*, 11 January 2006.

84. See John Young, "Sudan's Changing Relations with its Neighbors and the Implications for War and Peace" (paper delivered at Money Makes the War Go Round? The EU and Transforming the Economy of War in Sudan Conference, Brussels, Belgium, 12–13 June 2002).

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isfy Western donor nations by implementing democratic reforms in order to receive Western aid, makes his regime vulnerable. Museveni has been forced to implement multi-party elections, which means that he can no longer afford to isolate the north. In the past, marginalization of the north was not only possible but politically advantageous, since it represented the main challenge to Museveni's government. However, beginning in the 1990s, northern representation in Parliament was required. In the most recent multi-party elections, opponents to Museveni gained significant ground in the north and the east. Museveni's political legitimacy at home may now hinge on his ability to bring an end to decades of fighting and work toward northern development and integration.

Peace Prospects in Uganda: Dismantling Structures of Violence

While considerable emphasis has been placed on negotiations between the Ugandan government and senior members of LRA rebel forces, it will take more than a signed agreement to keep rebels from returning to the forest with their weapons. Two major factors will determine whether Kony and his rebels agree to surrender, and whether peace can be sustained in Uganda more generally.

The first has to deal with their personal security following disarmament. This makes the current indictments of the International Criminal Court a major topic of speculation. The concern of the ICC is to show that there is not impunity for rebels. The Ugandan government must walk a tight line between appeasing the ICC and giving the rebels some assurance that they will not simply be handed over.[85] The most recent report by the International Crisis Group suggests that one way forward may be for the remaining rebel leaders to be given sanctuary in a country that is not party to the ICC agreement.[86] While this is a controversial suggestion, everyone involved recognizes the unlikelihood that the LRA leaders will agree to disarm if they are not guaranteed some form of immunity. ICC indictments and international attention, however, may also provide the LRA with the assurance they need that Museveni will honor a peace deal that guarantees their immunity. From this perspective, ICC charges that are eventually withdrawn may not do the job in preventing impunity, but they will have brought peace. Given the enormous cost of prolonged war in northern Uganda, it is likely that few will complain if peace is finally achieved and security returns to the region.[87]

The second factor determining a lasting peace will have to do with northern development and integration. To be sure, security must be restored; it has been the main excuse for government policies (like "protective villages") responsible for exacerbating the political and economic isolation of the north and creating two Ugandas. More impor-

85. For the best and most recent monograph on the LRA conflict and the role of the ICC in bringing peace and justice to the region, see Allen, *Trial Justice*.

86. International Crisis Group (ICG), "Northern Uganda: Seizing the Opportunity for Peace," Kampala/Nairobi/Brussels: ICG Africa Report No. 124 (26 April 2007).

87. The ICC's role in facilitating peace is hotly contested. Critics claim that the Court's indictments ruin any hopes of Kony agreeing to a peace. Proponents of the ICC have argued that the Court (if given a free hand) will discourage future abuses by rebels or dictators—they credit ICC indictments for bringing Kony and his cronies to the negotiating table in the first place.

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tantly, however, political elites will need to address the perennial problem of northern underdevelopment. It is a cause that Kony's LRA has increasingly championed as of late, perhaps in an effort to make claims to legitimacy as a political opposition rather than a self-interested warlord. On this score, it seems that Kony has used international attention to leverage his position in the negotiations. Museveni is in a difficult position if he does not make peace with Kony. Now that the entire world is watching, Kony has made the shrewd move of presenting genuine political complaints. Deep cleavages in Ugandan society will need to be addressed in order for peace in the north to last. Mechanisms to ensure more equal development and north-south integration will go a long way in addressing the ethnicization of politics and social inequalities and turmoil that have plagued Uganda since its independence.

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