

# African Studies Quarterly

Volume 8, Issue 2  
Spring 2005

## Neither Peace nor Justice: Political Violence and the Peasantry in Northern Uganda, 1986-1998

ADAM BRANCH

**Abstract:** Uncertainty abounds concerning the 19-year conflict in Northern Uganda between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government. Two questions have received the most attention and could have the most bearing on efforts to resolve the conflict: first, why has the Ugandan government been unable or unwilling to end the war for nineteen years? Second, why has the LRA chosen to use extreme violence against the Acholi instead of trying to build popular support? First, this article addresses these questions, arguing that the debate has failed to take into account the political agency of the Acholi peasantry in the conflict and the relations between the peasantry and government, on the one hand, and the peasantry and the LRA, on the other. By putting the Acholi peasantry and its relations with government and rebels at the center of the analysis, the longevity of the war and the tendency by both rebels and government to use violence against the peasantry can be made sense of as a consequence of both sides' failure to realize an effective popular mobilization among the Acholi. Second, the article traces historically these failures of popular mobilization and the paths by which both the Ugandan government and the LRA came to see the population as a threat and potential enemy instead of as a potential support base. Third, by putting the people at the center of the analysis of the conflict, the groundwork is laid for putting the people at the center of the resolution of the conflict, transcending the current tendency of conflict resolution agendas to focus only on elites, treating the civilian population as passive bystanders or victims.

### INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Uncertainty abounds concerning the 19-year conflict in Northern Uganda between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government.<sup>2</sup> Factual questions, such as the number of civilians killed, the rebels' troop strength, or responsibility for certain violent acts, receive wildly disparate answers. Moral and political questions pertaining to the LRA's mass abductions of children or their reign of violence against their own people, the Acholi, lead to even greater perplexity. Among the many questions, there are two that have received perhaps the most attention and that could have the most bearing on efforts to resolve the conflict. First, why has the Ugandan government been unable or

---

**Adam Branch** is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Science, Columbia University, New York. He is currently finishing his dissertation on humanitarian, developmental, and reconstruction interventions into Northern Uganda. His recent publications have dealt with the International Criminal Court's investigation of the Lord's Resistance Army, the politics of UN military intervention, and SPLM/A local government in Equatoria, Southern Sudan.

unwilling to end the war for nineteen years?; Second, why has the LRA chosen to use extreme violence against the Acholi instead of trying to build popular support?

In the first two sections, I will address the academic debates surrounding these questions. I will argue that the debates have for the most part failed to take into account the political agency of the Acholi peasantry in the conflict and the relations between the peasantry and government, on the one hand, and the peasantry and the LRA, on the other. By putting the Acholi peasantry and its relations with government and rebels at the center of the analysis, the longevity of the war and the tendency by both rebels and government to use violence against the peasantry can be made sense of as a consequence of both sides' failure to realize an effective popular mobilization among the Acholi. In the subsequent sections, I trace historically these failures of popular mobilization and the paths by which both the Ugandan government and the LRA came to see the population as a threat and potential enemy instead of as a potential support base.

By “bringing the people back in” and placing them at the center of the analysis of the conflict — thus compensating for the current emphasis on national and international elites in explaining the Ugandan civil war — the groundwork is also laid for bringing the people back into the resolution of the conflict, thus transcending the current tendency of conflict resolution agendas to focus only on elites, treating the civilian population as passive bystanders or victims.<sup>3</sup> In the conclusion, I argue that the Acholi peasantry has, since the beginning of the conflict, been faced with the dilemma of having to choose between peace, offered by the Ugandan government, and justice, offered by the various rebel groups. However, at present, it appears that both options have been closed off. Nevertheless, there is a third option of peace with the possibility of justice through negotiations, as long as those negotiations take into account the grievances of the Acholi peasantry.

## THE GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY FAILURE

A number of parties to this debate have argued that the Ugandan military — known since 1995 as the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) — has failed to end the war because it has been unable to defeat the LRA, despite its good faith efforts. Generally, those outside the Ugandan government have pointed to the UPDF's lack of capacity and training, poor morale, involvement in Congo, and, especially, corruption to explain this inability to defeat the Northern rebels.<sup>4</sup> Most recently, the “ghost soldiers” fiasco is cited as proof of the UPDF's operational crisis.<sup>5</sup>

The government itself tends to apportion blame to an external factor: Sudan. According to Major Shaban Bantariza, the UPDF spokesman, the Ugandan military had finished the LRA by 1992.<sup>6</sup> However, in 1994 Sudan revived the defunct rebel movement by providing it with arms and allowing the LRA to establish bases in southern Sudan. Thus, argues Bantariza, between 1994 and Operation Iron Fist in 2002, when the UPDF undertook significant military incursions into Sudan to root out the LRA, the UPDF had its hands tied.<sup>7</sup>

While the Sudan factor has doubtlessly made the military campaign more difficult, the massive diversion of military resources and troops to the Congo and the permissive attitude towards corruption on the part of the government — both of which have contributed to the persistence of the conflict — could only be allowed to take place if the Northern war did not present a significant threat to the government, and if no significant constituency mobilized to demand an end to the war. That is, the government's failure to undertake the military reforms necessary to more effectively fight the LRA indicated at minimum an apathy within it, its key constituencies, and the UPDF towards ending the war.

Others have gone further and attributed the government's failure to end the war not to apathy but to intention, to the fact that the government has been unwilling to end the war. Maintaining a contained

war in the North, it is argued, serves the interests of various factions within the Ugandan government and military, and consequently both government and army have endeavored to prolong the war.

The Ugandan government and UPDF have both political and economic interests in maintaining the conflict. Politically, on the local level, many have argued that the government maintains the war as revenge for Acholi violence against the civilian population of Luwero during the NRA's civil war. Others cite the government's desire to prevent political organization among the Acholi, who are perceived as a potential challenge to Museveni's hold on power.<sup>8</sup> An explanation that holds much currency among Acholi political leaders and the Acholi diaspora is that the continuation of the war amounts to a slow genocide to eliminate the Acholi as a people.<sup>9</sup> On the national level, it has been argued that the government maintains the war against LRA "terrorists" so as provide "a crisis environment that enables the government to justify measures that would be unacceptable in different circumstances."<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the presence of the LRA allows the government to silence political dissent in the name of counter-terrorism, thus disqualifying and subjecting political opposition to persecution.<sup>11</sup> For example, vocal Acholi Members of Parliament are regularly accused of being "friends of the terrorists" by Museveni himself or by other Movementists.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the war allows Museveni to maintain a large, unreformed army upon which he increasingly bases his own power.<sup>13</sup>

On the international level, the continuation of the war has provided the means through which Museveni has re-invented himself, especially in the wake of 9/11, as America's key ally in the region. Museveni has been the recipient of significant American military aid and diplomatic support for his own "war on terror" against the LRA in exchange for serving as a conduit to the SPLA in Southern Sudan, the front line in the American "war on terror" against the Khartoum government.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Museveni has managed to dodge donor demands to reduce the military budget by citing the presence of the war in the North — even while much of the foreign aid, including military aid, has been diverted to the Ugandan invasion and militarization of eastern Congo.<sup>15</sup> The donors for their part, not wanting to damage Uganda's reputation as a "model of democracy and development," have conveniently ignored the conflict.

This brings up the economic reasons for the continuation of the war. The high level of defense spending justified by the war has created a constituency within the UPDF for its continuation. However, as analysts have pointed out, "one can hardly speak of a real war economy comparable with, say, Sierra Leone's diamond sector."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the emphasis on economic gain in the literature on the Northern war is probably more a result of the international development community's current fixation upon sources of rebel finance and the political economy of armed conflict than of its relevance to the Ugandan case.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the "ghost soldiers" fiasco has recently brought up the fact that many UPDF officers were indeed profiting from the continuation of the conflict.<sup>18</sup> The issue of land grabbing has been of concern as well. There is significant fear among the Acholi that displacement into camps is a first step towards the expropriation of their land by the government and its sale to investors.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, in a context where beneficial effects of the war for various factions of the Ugandan government and military can be identified, but intentionality is extremely difficult to prove, the war might best be thought of as a system. That is, military incompetence and corruption, the army's economic interests, the government's political interests, and American and European interests have converged to create a situation in which it is to no one's benefit to end the war. All the parties with political or economic power — Museveni, the UPDF, the United States, the other donor governments — have aligned themselves so that the continuation of the war either serves their purposes or at least does them no significant damage. That the parties involved are content to accrue the benefits of the continuation of the war is certain, but to select some factors as the definitive causes why the government has failed to end the war for nineteen years is not possible.

However, there is one party to the conflict that does not have an interest in the continuation of the war: the Acholi peasantry. The effective mobilization of the Acholi within the government's counterinsurgency would have led to the defeat of the rebels, that is, to peace. Indeed, popular mobilization as a precondition for the defeat of rural insurgencies has a long history in Uganda: it was popular mobilization that led to the defeat of Alice Lakwena in Iganga in 1987 and that stopped the incursion of the LRA into Teso in 2003. Conversely, it was the lack of popular support that hampered Obote's counterinsurgency against the NRA in the civil war in the early 1980s. In fact, the Acholi have formed militias at least twice to coordinate military efforts with the NRA/UPDF, but each time the Ugandan government has undermined the militias' military capacity and evacuated UPDF regulars from the region, abandoning the Acholi to brutal rebel retaliation. At present, the civilian population of Acholiland, especially of Gulu district, is unwilling to participate in another mobilization that will only lead to its own destruction. The failure of mobilization of the rural Acholi by the government is another element in this system — that is, if the Acholi were mobilized within the counterinsurgency, the war would probably come to an end. It is therefore important to trace the failure of mobilization by the government historically, which is the focus of sections three onward.

## LRA POLITICS AND VIOLENCE

The debate over why the LRA terrorizes the Acholi peasantry is embedded in a broader controversy over the politics of the LRA. Before proceeding, a conceptual clarification is needed. In discussions of the politics of guerrilla groups, two different questions are generally asked. First is the whether a guerrilla group has a “political agenda” that motivates its war and use of violence. Second is whether its violence conforms to a political logic, that is, if it can be understood as the means towards certain political ends of eliminating the enemy or support for the enemy, establishing control over a population, or even building support. In the best of all worlds, the violence used would be transparently directed towards the realization of an explicit, coherent political agenda. But this rarely occurs, and the LRA case challenges both these meanings.

First, the LRA leadership has at times asserted that it is fighting for the creation of a government based upon the Ten Commandments or other eschatological goals. These claims have tended to drown out the more conventional political claims the LRA has also made. Second, the LRA has concentrated its violence not against the UPDF but rather against the Acholi people, whom they claim to be fighting for. Of course, violence is a regular feature of relations between guerrilla groups and the civilians among whom they operate, as rebels need to deter defection and forcibly expropriate supplies.<sup>20</sup> However, in the case of the LRA, few analysts have been willing to locate a political rationale in its anti-civilian violence. Nevertheless, I will argue in this section that the politics of the LRA — in both senses — should not be dismissed.

The most commonly heard position in the debate is that the LRA is, in a word, “bizarre.” This is part of what anthropologist Sverker Finnstrom has termed the “official discourse.”<sup>21</sup> Promoted by the Ugandan government, international news media, many NGOs, and some academics, this discourse sums up the motivations of the LRA in the ubiquitous coda to news reports that, “The rebels have no clear political agenda but have said they want the country governed in accordance with the Christian Ten Commandments.”<sup>22</sup> The LRA, embodied in Joseph Kony, is portrayed as simply insane, the latest manifestation of incomprehensible African violence.

Some, while maintaining Kony's insanity, have located the LRA's ultimate motivation in external support. Gerard Prunier, for example, has argued that this “bizarre syncretic and millenarian movement” should be understood simply as a proxy in a war between Uganda and Sudan.<sup>23</sup> The LRA

thus has no autonomous political logic, and its dedication to meaningless violence is the prerequisite for it to be simply an instrument of others. The LRA, according to Prunier, neither has a political agenda nor does its violence have any political logic, so it will have no interest in building support.

Others have attributed LRA violence to a religious motivation. Frank Van Acker, in a 2004 article, writes:

...the LRA sees its struggle against the government of Uganda as a divine cause that is being directed and guided by God through his prophet Kony, indicated by the importance of supporting rituals and the transcendent moralism justifying wholesale acts of violence (as opposed to the conventional principle of secular terrorism of using the minimum force necessary), and the ritual intensity with which these acts are committed.<sup>24</sup>

Acker goes on to state that this “religious terrorism” of the LRA is not motivated by “political gains,” but rather “assumes a transcendental dimension,” in which violence is “morally justified, almost as a sacramental act.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, he concludes, this religious terrorism and “the lack of an explicit agenda legitimizing the use of violence epitomize an extreme depoliticization” on the part of the LRA.<sup>26</sup> LRA violence, its failure to build popular support or articulate a political agenda, according to Acker, are a result of the LRA’s other-worldly orientation, which informs its violence with a ritualistic meaning.

One problem with this account is that Acker attributes the supposed motives of a few LRA leaders to the entire LRA. It is hard to believe that the abducted children who form the bulk of the LRA and who carry out most acts of violence see their violence as divinely ordained, buy into a “transcendent moralism,” or achieve an ecstatic religious fervor when they are forced to kill family members or neighbors. This aside, Acker, like those espousing the “official discourse,” ignores the political logic in LRA violence, which other analysts have drawn attention to.

Ruddy Doom and Koen Vlassenroot, in a 1999 African Affairs article, find a “political rationale” to LRA violence, but remain ultimately ambiguous as what it implies for the politics of the LRA. They confront the “brutality and apparent arbitrariness of LRA violence” head-on, asking if “blind violence” can be distinguished from “political violence” in LRA acts.<sup>27</sup> They state, drawing on Heike Behrend’s work, that in the early days of the rebellion, “Kony’s aims were political, although it was not clear whether he wanted to topple the regime in Kampala or was limiting his actions to the north.”<sup>28</sup> However, in 1994, they argue, Kony was driven “over the edge,” becoming a “mad Max,” indulging in “auto-genocide” as an “escape” from the fact that he had lost support among the Acholi.<sup>29</sup> As they write, “It seems that Kony is no longer interested in winning a conflict, but that violence has become both a tool and an end in itself,” and that “it is very hard to see any political perspectives in the movement’s later actions....Its political message has evaporated.”<sup>30</sup>

But in investigating the present motivations of LRA violence, Doom and Vlassenroot nevertheless “find at least some indications” that there is a “political rationale in Kony’s madness,” and that “‘blind’ terror is producing political effects, even if they are partly unintended, or even undetected by those actually committing the killings.”<sup>31</sup> They point out that terror allows the traumatization of the population with minimum expenditure, useful if one’s object is to paralyze the population or to undermine confidence in the government’s capacity or will to protect its people.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, they point out that there is a “high symbolic value” to the atrocities committed by the LRA, “which is clearly understood by the Acholi community.”<sup>33</sup> Violence is directed against suspected government informers and tailored so as to prevent communication that would be detrimental to the LRA. This economy of violence, they argue, can “hardly be labeled as ‘blind’ terror,” and the political effect of terror must be

recognized, “whether clearly directed or not.”<sup>34</sup> But in the uncertainty of whether LRA violence is “clearly directed or not,” Doom and Vlassenroot leave the question of the politics of the LRA unresolved: if violence with political effects is “clearly directed,” then why term Kony mad, and why deny the LRA any “political perspectives” or “political message”? On the other hand, if the violence is not “clearly directed,” then what keeps it in conformity with a precise political symbolic order? If it is just “the action of desperate people whose main interest is in day-to-day survival in a life devoted to violence,” why does it precisely target certain individuals and employ certain symbolically loaded techniques?<sup>35</sup> For these writers, it seems, the ambiguity is produced by the disjuncture between the LRA’s apparent lack of an overall political agenda and the political logic that informs its violence.

This ambiguity is similarly found in Robert Gersony’s 1997 report, “The Anguish of Northern Uganda.” Gersony states categorically that the LRA “is strikingly devoid of political content” — that is, it lacks a political agenda.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, he asserts that the most brutal acts by the LRA are “indiscriminate,” and, when carried out, “the attacking forces demonstrate callous indifference and the unnecessary infliction of death in the course of operations which are of little military consequence,” i.e. that LRA violence has no political rationale.<sup>37</sup> But elsewhere in the report, Gersony, like Doom and Vlassenroot, recognizes that LRA violence specifically targets government collaborators, officials, and those suspected of violating LRA rules and that “it is the LRA’s demand for obedience — and its expression of anger at its perceived betrayal by its natural ethnic constituency — which motivates a great deal of the violence.”<sup>38</sup> For example, in discussing the Lokung/Palabek massacre of January 1997, Gersony explains that the LRA “gathered civilians together, delivered short speeches, and then killed some of the group. The group was then dispersed, presumably to convey the content of the speeches to the others. According to survivors, LRA soldiers expressed anger that some Kitgum abductee youngsters had revealed to the UPDF the location of hidden arms caches in their area.”<sup>39</sup> In this case, like many others, the LRA used violence as a precise punishment for defection. It is not “indiscriminate,” let alone the “sacramental act” described by Van Acker. Nevertheless, like Doom and Vlassenroot, Gersony notes the political logic of LRA violence, but still places the LRA outside of politics.

As Doom, Vlassenroot, and Gersony somewhat reluctantly recognize, LRA violence against Acholi civilians has a certain political logic. First, even if used randomly, anti-civilian violence can serve as collective punishment, as collective deterrence, or simply to stop the functioning of society and undermine faith in the government. In these cases, the random nature of the violence is calculated to realize certain political effects. LRA violence is sometimes random, but more often, it targets certain individuals; rises and falls predictably to signal the LRA’s displeasure with government actions or to forestall anti-LRA organization among the Acholi; is oriented towards concrete goals such as dismantling the displaced people’s camps; and is often explicitly carried out as punishment for breaking rules such as fleeing the LRA, reporting on the LRA, or moving on the roads on certain days. It would seem that it is the LRA’s apparent lack of a political agenda that underlies these analysts’ refusal to endow the LRA with “political content,” despite the political rationale its violence often displays.

However, the LRA’s lack of a political agenda is not universally accepted among academics. The Kampala-based Refugee Law Project, for example, argues that the LRA might have a political agenda which it has simply not effectively articulated.<sup>40</sup> This could be due to Kony’s inability or to the fact that, since the LRA has been able to sustain itself through looting and abductions, it has not needed to articulate political goals.

Sverker Finnstrom has gone the furthest in arguing that the LRA does indeed have a political agenda, locating it in its manifestos. Although the “official discourse” dismisses these manifestos as the work of an Acholi diaspora trying to manipulate the LRA, Finnstrom rejects this explanation.<sup>41</sup> Finnstrom argues that in its written manifestos and oral announcements made in the camps, the LRA

presents political demands: it has consistently demanded the end of the war through negotiations, the dismantling of the camps, the national political integration of the Acholi on an equal basis with the rest of the country, an end to the genocide of the Acholi, reparations for lost cattle, free elections, and even multipartyism.<sup>42</sup> In 1996, in fact, the LRA encouraged the population to vote for Ssemogerere and called a halt to violence during the elections, as he was an outspoken supporter of peace negotiations with the LRA. Significantly, these demands match the grievances of the Acholi population, and Finnstrom noted the interest of Acholi in the North in hearing about the agenda when given the opportunity.<sup>43</sup> Finnstrom also has documented the efforts by the Ugandan government to conceal the LRA political program by denying the existence of documents and arresting those found in possession of LRA manifestos.<sup>44</sup>

The fact that the LRA has made political demands is accepted by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in its 2004 report, “Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict.” The ICG, nevertheless, dismisses the LRA politically by invoking the scale of its anti-civilian brutality. Unlike Gersony, Doom, and Vlassenroot, who argue that the LRA’s lack of an agenda renders their anti-civilian violence meaningless despite its apparent political rationale, the ICG argues that the LRA’s political disqualification is the result of the military tactics the LRA employs. As the ICG writes, “Although it does occasionally evoke Acholi nationalism and emancipation, these are irreconcilable with its violence against the Acholi.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, “The violence the LRA inflicts upon the Acholi negates any claims it or its supporters can make that it is a legitimate champion of Acholi grievances.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, anti-civilian violence disqualifies the LRA from having a political agenda. Moreover, the ICG argues, the “scale and arbitrariness” of the LRA’s anti-civilian violence “cannot be equated to any coherent measures, such as those, for example, by the Viet Cong or the Irish Republican Army (IRA) against their respective support bases.”<sup>47</sup> LRA violence is too extreme, they state, to be the instrument in the realization of any political goals. Thus, LRA violence is resolutely non-political.

The basis for this disqualification by the ICG merits further inquiry. If the exclusion of the LRA from politics is to be based upon a political argument — of the excess of violence to the realization of political goals and to a political agenda — demonstration of the excessiveness of that violence has to be provided, which the ICG fails to do. Alternatively, the unspoken basis for the political disqualification of the LRA may be moral, in the sense that the Western academic and policy communities have deemed that the LRA, due to their massive abuses of human rights, have forfeited their right to be a genuine political force.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the LRA’s violence against children has led to its demonization internationally, and this probably most commonly underlies the international community’s refusal to bestow it with the privilege of having a political agenda.<sup>49</sup> However, the international community cannot simply decide who is using violence within justified limits and is therefore entitled to a “political agenda” while simultaneously denying agenda to those seen as using violence outside those limits. A moral judgment as to the LRA’s actions remains just that — moral — and cannot be translated into a judgment about the LRA’s politics.

Another unspoken basis for the dismissal of LRA politics could be their apparent lack of support from within the Acholi population in Northern Uganda. While it is true that the lack of support from the Acholi would disqualify the LRA from being the “representatives” of the Acholi or of their grievances at present, it does not necessarily disqualify the LRA from having a political agenda. Indeed, the LRA may see their political agenda at the present conjuncture as best fulfilled through violence. Furthermore, the LRA may still have the potential to build support among the Acholi based upon their political agenda, if their tactics could be transformed. Gersony categorically states that “it is highly unlikely that an LRA revitalized by wiser leadership and a more forward-looking political message would persuade any significant segment of the Acholi population to continue the insurgency.”<sup>50</sup> However, many of those whom I have interviewed and whom Finnstrom quotes in his book have made it clear that if it were not

for Kony — that is, if the LRA stopped its violence against civilians — they very well might be tempted to support the LRA.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the lack of support now does not render support in the future impossible.

If the LRA were to mobilize the Acholi, the war would undergo a significant transformation. The LRA would present a threat to at least the economy of the east and a threat to the trade routes to Kenya and would become a national problem, creating a constituency for peace in the South, Museveni's support base.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, donors could not ignore the war any longer, and the Ugandan government would probably be pressured towards into negotiations from inside and out. However, the Acholi have thus far refused to support or join the LRA in numbers significant enough to become a genuine threat, principally because of LRA violence against the Acholi.

None of these arguments — that the LRA is insane, that it is religiously-driven, that it lacks a political agenda, that its violence is in excess to any political goal, or that its human rights abuses or lack of open support disqualify it from politics — is convincing enough to dismiss the LRA politically. Therefore, I argue that the politics of the LRA should be considered in two ways: first, in that the violence it uses is politically structured, directed towards certain short- to medium-term political goals; and second, that it has a political agenda whose importance waxes and wanes and which, at present, conflicts with its anti-civilian violence, but which could take on relevance in the future.

I am not trying to defend the LRA — indeed, the recognition of the political character of a movement says nothing about the justice of that movement's politics. Instead, I am calling for the politics of the LRA to be taken seriously in accounting for its violence against civilians and its current apparent lack of interest in building popular support. To do this, we first need to trace the origins of the LRA's anti-civilian terror by investigating the changing politics of violence through a historical account of the relation between the population and the LRA. Second, we must inquire into the relationship between the LRA's stated agenda and the grievances of the Acholi population. This will also provide us with a view onto the possibility of the LRA building popular support in the future. These tasks both require that we bring the people back into the analysis of the conflict, and thus into the possibilities for its resolution.

The failure to mobilize a popular constituency by both the rebels and the government has been a key to the prolongation of the conflict, and accounting for these twin failures will be the goal of the rest of this article. However, there is a third possibility that has also been foreclosed in the course of the war — namely, that the rural Acholi become a constituency not for the LRA or for the government, but for peace under leadership independent of both LRA and government. Indeed, as mentioned, the rural Acholi are the only constituency for whom the war is inimical to their interests. At present, they are unable to give enough support to either government or rebels so as to bring the war to a close. At the same time, the Acholi are bereft of independent leadership due to LRA and government violence that has been designed primarily to eliminate political organization that might support the enemy. That is, the destruction of the Acholi population's autonomous political capacity is the side-effect of, on the one hand, LRA terror dedicated to destroying support for the government, and on the other, the Ugandan government's use of forced displacement, surveillance, paramilitarization, intimidation, arrest, torture, and murder to destroy support for the LRA and to silence dissent. In sum, there has not been a military resolution to the war because of the failure by both sides to effect a popular mobilization, and there has not been a political resolution through negotiations because of violent repression.

The conclusion that I will draw is that the rural Acholi, if allowed to organize, would present a significant constituency for peace. At present, international and local efforts to bring peace are concentrating upon the elites and upon putting pressure on the LRA and the Ugandan government from above in order to bring them to the table. Instead, it should be asked what can be done to lessen the

violence against the Acholi, so that they can organize and demand peace on their own terms, for it is they who are suffering in this war, and it is they who should dictate the terms of peace.

I proceed by concentrating on what I have identified as five key periods in the transformation of the triangular relation between the Acholi population, the Ugandan government, and the rebels: March 1986 to February 1987; March 1987 to September 1987, March 1991 to August 1992; February 1994 to November 1996; and post-November 1996.

#### MARCH 1986 – FEBRUARY 1987

The overthrow of the Tito Okello Lutwa regime by Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Army (NRA) in 1986, only months after Tito Okello, Bazilio Okello, and their Acholi faction within the Ugandan National Liberation Army (UNLA) had led a coup against President Milton Obote, marked the end of twenty-five years of Northern rule of Uganda.<sup>53</sup> The politicization and militarization of ethnicity had been fundamental to the Obote I, Amin, and Obote II regimes. In response, the Southern-based NRA had built a significant degree of popular support thanks to widespread resentment in the South against Northern governments and security forces. Although anti-Northern sentiment did not feature prominently in the NRA's public rhetoric, which focused on the struggle against dictatorship, Southern solidarity against the North played a key role in mobilizing support among the peasantry, as even NRA supporters have admitted.<sup>54</sup>

Once the NRA took Kampala and Northern political-military power had been effectively eradicated, the last concrete remnant of Northern rule was the contingent of undisciplined Acholi UNLA troops fleeing north. This group lacked political legitimacy among the rural Acholi and failed to find support as they moved into Acholiland and hunkered down in Gulu and Kitgum towns to await the NRA.<sup>55</sup>

The NRA, however, did not realize the political bankruptcy of the UNLA in the North. The long tradition of ethnic politics within which they had forged their revolution had produced in many minds an affinity between the fleeing Acholi troops, the security forces of the Obote II dictatorship, and the rural Acholi population.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, as the NRA approached Acholiland in late February and early March, it prepared for a long, hard fight to win Gulu and Kitgum, not due to concern about the strength of the UNLA remnants, but because deep popular resistance was expected.<sup>57</sup> Newspapers spread this fear. One reported that “the whole of Gulu and Kitgum town have been militarized with a combined force of about 30,000 men.”<sup>58</sup> Another announced that the retreating UNLA had managed to “militarize the whole region, arming nearly every human soul of five years and above including women and girls. It is now very hard for the NRA to make a difference between a peaceful civilian [and a soldier].”<sup>59</sup>

But as the NRA moved further north, the UNLA forces, failing to realize a popular mobilization, withdrew without a fight and evacuated Gulu and Kitgum by March 12, 1986. Many troops simply went home, and the rest accompanied the UNLA commanders as they fled for Sudan.<sup>[6<sup>0</sup>]</sup> By the end of March, the last pockets of the UNLA had disappeared from Acholiland.<sup>[6<sup>1</sup>]</sup> The NRA's concrete task in the region was then to incorporate the rural population, devoid of political or military organization or representation, into the national government. As the *Financial Times* (Kampala) reported, the rural Acholi saw no one within the NRA as representing their interests but also, “when asked to name representatives of their choice — who can assist in bringing peace in their area — their vagueness persists.... Acholi society is now leaderless.”<sup>[6<sup>2</sup>]</sup> However, the NRA proceeded as if occupying enemy territory, as if the Acholi were the mass base for a still-existent Northern military-political force waiting to re-take Kampala.<sup>[6<sup>3</sup>]</sup> The NRA was not liberating the North from dictatorship, but was occupying the North to finish off that dictatorship.<sup>[6<sup>4</sup>]</sup>

Since this enemy could not be found, the NRA fought it by attacking the population they believed supported it. To ‘pacify’ Acholiland, the NRA undertook a counter-insurgency without the insurgency. Some have argued that FEDEMU, an armed faction incorporated by the NRA in early 1986 and then deployed to the North without sufficient training or politicization, was responsible for the bulk of the anti-civilian violence in the early days of the NRA incursion into Northern Uganda.<sup>[6<sup>5</sup></sup> Regardless of who was responsible, reports of harassment and abuse of civilians by the NRA began circulating in mid-April, 1986.<sup>[6<sup>6</sup></sup> Violence only served to make the Acholi even more “uncooperative” with the NRA. In June, when the security situation degenerated and armed men began to rob civilians and attack government vehicles, the NRA, blaming the escalated violence on the Acholi for refusing to cooperate in collecting guns, stepped up their use of force.<sup>[6<sup>7</sup></sup> Any resistance or failure to cooperate on the part of the Acholi was interpreted as anti-NRA sedition or rebellion and punished accordingly.

When the call went out from the NRA for all Acholi to turn in their weapons and for former UNLA soldiers to report to army headquarters at Mbuya, popular memories were evoked of Idi Amin’s order to the same effect 25 years earlier, which had led to the massacre of tens of thousands of Acholi troops.<sup>[6<sup>8</sup></sup> The NRA’s orders went generally unheeded, and soon stories of looting and rape by NRA soldiers while on “their frequent operations for hidden guns” made their way into the national press.<sup>[6<sup>9</sup></sup> Acholi civilians expressed a willingness to assist in ending the insecurity, but complained that it was hard even for them to know who had guns and complained about losing property to the NRA.<sup>70</sup> By mid-August, the situation had deteriorated even further, and as attacks on the NRA and its fledgling administration increased, the NRA began broad “security swoops” or “screens,” detaining hundreds. These “panda gari” — or “get on the truck” — operations further undermined the population’s faith in the new government’s intentions, evoking more comparisons to Amin’s campaign of terror in the region. The most infamous incident was the massacre of over 40 civilians from Namu-okora by the NRA and FEDEMU, news of which spread rapidly throughout the region.<sup>71</sup> The NRA command consistently dismissed allegations of abuse, blaming it on the indiscipline of a few. Museveni himself stated that allegations of human rights abuses by the NRA were “absolutely rubbish and contemptible,” and that, “we shall not deviate from our duty of pacifying the country.”<sup>72</sup>

Resentment against the NRA occupation blossomed, and soon the Acholi were desperate for leadership that could end the violence. The counterinsurgency then brought forth an insurgency. By the end of August, the NRA approach had alienated the Acholi sufficiently enough that when three to four thousand ex-UNLA troops, known as the Uganda People’s Democratic Army (UPDA) entered Uganda from Southern Sudan, attacked Gulu Town, and then withdrew to the countryside to launch attacks against the NRA, they encountered a generally receptive, or at least tolerant, population.<sup>73</sup> The NRA itself facilitated the political redemption of the UNLA and produced the political-military threat it had wrongly assumed to exist when it had occupied the region in March.

The UPDA recognized their dependence upon the civilian population and worked to build support by forbidding looting and promising compensation for requisitioned property.<sup>74</sup> They also conducted meetings in occupied areas to explain their struggle.<sup>75</sup> The UPDA was generally successful in reining in their troops. One Catholic priest as late as December, 1986, attested that the rebels “have never mistreated people as rumors have been circulating here,” and many Acholi now look back on the UPDA almost with nostalgia, given the record of rebel groups since.<sup>76</sup> But the UPDA also used violence to eliminate NRA support, especially in the early months of 1987 when the UPDA ransacked Gulu, killing pro-NRA civilians.<sup>77</sup>

Most significantly, however, the UPDA reformed their demands to gain popular support. When they attacked Gulu in August 1986, their intention had been to capture and use it as a base for re-taking Kampala.<sup>78</sup> But the Acholi would not support the UPDA based upon this claim to power. Rather, they

were receptive to the UPDA because it appeared the only force able to stem NRA violence and establish security. Consequently, by early 1987 the UPDA had adopted a language of human rights, democracy, and the equal political inclusion of the North, dismissing charges of being tribalist as “groundless and nonsensical.”<sup>79</sup> Realizing they could not re-take Kampala and that the Acholi were increasingly tired of violence without results, the UPDA called for the implementation of NRA promises to the South — security and an end to dictatorship — in the North as well.<sup>80</sup>

The NRA responded by escalating violence in an effort to destroy rebel support. Opposition newspapers were reporting NRA atrocities by September.<sup>81</sup> The Citizen reported “persistent reports of almost incredible acts” by the NRA, including brutal killings of scores of civilians, burning villages, and torture of those suspected of collaboration.<sup>82</sup> By December 1986, these accusations had reached the national and international media. The BBC reported that the NRA was burning down grain stores and stealing cattle to deprive the rebels of food.<sup>83</sup> In February, Bishop Ogwal of the Church of Uganda declared that the NRA was behaving worse towards the Acholi than even Amin.<sup>84</sup>

Regardless of the veracity of Ogwal’s statement, it was symptomatic of a perception broadly held by the Acholi of the NRA’s intention to eliminate them en masse. Several high NRA officials had made inflammatory statements in early 1986 concerning the collective guilt of the Acholi for the atrocities carried out by Obote’s army in Luwero during the civil war.<sup>85</sup> These statements were amplified by the UPDA as evidence of the NRA’s genocidal plot, and NRA violence gave the claims additional currency. The NRA allowed Karamojong cattle raiders to loot with impunity as far west as Gulu Town, sometimes participating in the looting themselves. This destruction of one of the bases of Acholi livelihood became additional proof of the NRA’s plans.<sup>86</sup> Accusations were serious enough to warrant a series of categorical denials by the NRA.<sup>87</sup> Ultimately, in June 1987 the head of the US Committee for Refugees, Roger Winter, visited to investigate the claims of genocide, which he dismissed, even complementing the NRA on their tactics in the North.<sup>88</sup> Accusations of genocide, however, have not gone away and continue to carry weight among many Acholi up until today.

## THE DEBATE OVER THE NORTH

Despite the fact that on the ground the NRA strategy was to eradicate the rebels’ suspected civilian support base, in public Museveni consistently declared that the UPDA had no support among the Acholi, who were simply the victims of “disorganized and incorrigible criminals.”<sup>89</sup> In his words, “for a resistance movement to take root, it must be a genuine political force, it must be capably managed and the opposing side must be inept at dealing with them. All those conditions are lacking here.”<sup>90</sup> Museveni’s conviction of the NRA’s political impeccability and the rebels’ bankruptcy, both proven in Luwero, led him to announce that, because no guerrilla group without support from the population can survive, the NRA would necessarily, and quickly, defeat the UPDA. Therefore, negotiations were also out of the question. A Deputy Minister of Local government, Kahinda Otafiire, asked rhetorically in October 1986, “...Who are those people, what are they fighting for, and what are we going to discuss with them?”<sup>91</sup>

Museveni’s conviction of the logical necessity of NRA triumph has produced the disjuncture between his pronouncements of imminent victory and the reality of unending conflict. It has allowed Museveni to dismiss charges of abuse against the NRA and denounce those critical of NRA tactics as being rebel collaborators.<sup>92</sup> Finally, it has justified, in the name of the Acholi themselves, the escalation of the counterinsurgency and the NRA’s refusal to negotiate, despite uniform opposition to the military “solution” among Northerners. As Museveni said in 1986, his spirit of reconciliation had “come to an end following the atrocities being meted by those rebels in the northern part of the country.”<sup>93</sup> He “urged

NRA soldiers to use maximum force and completely exterminate the remaining rebels and cattle-rustlers from society.”<sup>94</sup> Presented with a *carte blanche* to use force by Museveni, the NRA waging the counterinsurgency chose to turn that force on the civilian population.

The result was contradictory. On the one hand, Museveni treated the UPDA as criminals, opposed by the population, and so refused negotiations. But what should have been the complement of that strategy, the political mobilization of the population against the rebels, was made impossible by NRA tactics. That is, the NRA should have either dealt with the UPDA as criminals and worked to incorporate the population into the counterinsurgency, or dealt with the rebels as if they had popular support and negotiated with the insurgents as a political force. Instead of dealing with either the population or the UPDA politically, the NRA, counterproductively, dealt with both militarily.

While the NRA’s approach was nurturing the resistance it claimed to be eliminating, a number of Ugandan academics, politicians, and journalists were calling for a political approach to the crisis.<sup>95</sup> Like Museveni, they drew lessons from the Luwero campaign. Unlike Museveni, they did not take the NRA’s political unimpeachability for granted. As one editorial put it, “What Luwero teaches about the Northern Question” was that any armed force had to rely on the people.<sup>96</sup> Unfortunately, as another paper recognized, the Acholi were fundamentally confused as to the NRA.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, the argument went, if abuses continued and the NRA failed to mobilize the Acholi, they the rebels would gain more support and forestall the NRA victory even further.<sup>98</sup>

The first, and most immediate, mode of mobilization would be to include the people in the military struggle against the UPDA. For without civilians’ assistance in reporting on rebel movements, refusing to harbor or support the rebels, or organizing and cooperating with NRA regulars in the military struggle, the rebels would not be brought into submission. For this reason, many called for the organization of citizens’ militias and better relations between the NRA and the Acholi.<sup>99</sup>

Beyond this immediate mobilization, there had to be other modes of political incorporation for the conflict to reach a sustainable resolution. On the local level, the peasantry could have been brought into the NRA project through the extension of the Resistance Council system. Many saw the Northern expansion of the Resistance Councils—as a participatory form of government and not as an administrative tool of the state—as the principle challenge facing the NRA. As John Wanambwa wrote in an editorial, “What is brewing now in Northern Uganda could, in the last analysis, prove to be the litmus test for the effectiveness of the NRM political line.”<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, representatives of the Acholi had to be included in the national government. Mahmood Mamdani pointed out that by only incorporating a few “token ministers,” the NRA was going to look like a Southern government, as regionally exclusive as the previous regimes.<sup>101</sup> A *Weekly Topic* editorial argued the same, criticizing the Southern middle class for “locking-out” the Northern middle class and making them “fertile ground for recruitment by those opposing NRA government.”<sup>102</sup> Without local participatory institutions and the development of relations of accountability between the rural population and the central government mediated by a national Acholi political elite, it was argued, lasting peace was impossible. But, despite the widespread calls for a political resolution to the crisis in the North, there was no constituency that could compel the NRA to take this political approach. Subsequently, the NRA pursued only its military solution, and the Acholi were left out of the NRA project. No mobilization or incorporation took place, whether through citizens’ militias, democratic local institutions, or national representatives.

In the debate, however, one possibility was generally overlooked, namely, that the population would not do what was necessary for either side to win. That was indeed what came to occur. Before the UPDA could build a significant level of popular support, it fell victim to factionalization and the Acholi fell victim to the NRA counterinsurgency. The UPDA did not gain the support lost by the NRA in a

zero-sum game, but rather by mid-1987 both had lost the support of the population. Only one commentator, F. E. Etori, hinted at this possibility in *Weekly Topic*, concluding that “the war might be there to stay as long as anti-popular interests hold sway on both sides.”<sup>103</sup> In Acholiland, the rebels survived and the state survived, and the population was left in the middle, not cooperating with either and being accused by each of collaborating with the other. Thus each armed group, unable to defeat the other, punished civilians as proxies for their military opponents, alienating the population further and further from themselves and making the popular mobilization necessary for military success even more unattainable. The next section will address the dynamics of this mutual loss of support.

### MARCH 1987 – SEPTEMBER 1987: LAKWENA AND THE HOLY SPIRIT MOVEMENT

In the first few months of 1987, the UPDA factionalized along two axes. First, there were personal and regional divisions among UPDA commanders.<sup>104</sup> Second, there were religious divisions, as two major movements led by spirit mediums split off from the UPDA: the first under Alice Auma, or Lakwena (Acholi for “messenger”), who founded the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) in January or February 1987, and the second under Joseph Kony, who assembled his forces around June 1987, to be known eventually as the Lord’s Resistance Army.

Factionalization was driven by new pressures on the rebels. Without any solid victories, the rebels’ prospects of forcing the NRA to negotiate were dim. Many UPDA who had volunteered in 1986 were leaving to take advantage of the amnesty. Military stalemate had repercussions with the Acholi, who saw no concrete benefits from the violence. Moreover, under the NRA onslaught, civilians were withdrawing from the UPDA as they could not provide adequate protection. In turn, the UPDA stepped up coercion to ensure supplies of food and recruits, and the line between rebels and bandits blurred.<sup>105</sup>

Personalized factionalization was minor relative to the divisions introduced by the spiritualist movements. Rumors of witchcraft and human sacrifice among the rebels began to circulate in January 1987.<sup>106</sup> By March, Alice Lakwena, formerly a “witchdoctor” for the UPDA, had begun to conduct her own combat operations.<sup>107</sup> Though much has been written about Lakwena; I concentrate on the political logic of her movement.<sup>108</sup>

Alice Lakwena and her forces, like the UPDA, saw themselves as conducting a military campaign to redeem Uganda. Whereas the UPDA would redeem the country through the political incorporation of the North and ending NRA violence against the Acholi, Lakwena proposed a deeper redemption, culminating in the eradication of violence not only by South against North, but also by North against North, leading to a new Uganda cleansed of all pernicious political forces. Whereas the UPDA wanted to rid the Acholi of NRA sympathizers, Lakwena wanted to cleanse Uganda of violence itself. In the context of escalating violence by all sides, increasing fatigue on the part of the Acholi in tolerating a war without result, and a continued lack of credible political leadership, this message of a fundamental redemption found fertile soil.<sup>109</sup> Lakwena’s Holy Spirit Movement was the first political movement in Acholiland for decades to gain lasting support from a significant portion of the population.

Lakwena mostly rejected regular military means, which did not fail to attract significant international notoriety. The HSM did use guns and even heavy artillery at times, but her forces were famous for their stones that turned into grenades, sticks that fired like rifles, and ointments that made the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces impervious to bullets. Lakwena’s HSM depended upon frightening the enemy into fleeing or surrendering, and, more importantly, upon continuously high recruitment from the population to compensate for high losses.

For several months, the HSM remained in Acholiland. Lakwena’s first target was the factionalized UPDA itself, and she overran a number of brigades, collecting their guns and absorbing the

troops.<sup>110</sup> After collecting all the volunteers available in Acholiland, Lakwena proceeded to march east and south in a bid to take Kampala. The fact that this “rebel priestess,” her troops chanting hymns as they walked into battle only to be mowed down by the NRA, made it to a few dozen kilometers from Kampala before being defeated, accomplishing what the UPDA never managed, was attributable to her mobilizing discourse. Indeed, her success was as a social movement, not as a military force — the movement survived militarily despite, and politically because of, their often suicidal tactics. The idea of a national redemption appealed to the North and East of Uganda, regions that were not beneficiaries of the security that the NRA had established south of the Nile.<sup>111</sup> It was because she called for an end to violence everywhere in Uganda that any area experiencing insecurity, oppression, or exclusion under the NRA would provide willing recruits. Once she hit the limit of the Nile, with nowhere left to go and no areas to gain new recruits, she was finished, her once-mighty army disintegrating in a matter of days.<sup>112</sup>

Thus, it is wrong to interpret Lakwena’s HSM as a tribal army or anti-modern movement. The HSM was a nationalist movement, and was only defeated when Lakwena ran up against the limits of the area where her vision of the Ugandan nation — that is, one that required a redemption from, instead of having been redeemed by, the NRA — made sense.

As Lakwena moved south during 1987, in Acholiland violence between rebel groups intensified further. Although her forces had generally avoided violence against civilians, the fragmented UPDA and the splinters of the HSM terrorized each other’s civilian base.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, once Lakwena had exhausted the supply of volunteers, those factions remaining had to step up forced recruitment. It was from this environment that Joseph Kony emerged. Without volunteers, faced by a population unwilling to support continued violence, and confronting a number of different enemies, many from within Acholiland itself, Kony turned on the civilian population. He combined Lakwena’s discourse of cleansing with the UPDA’s practice of eliminating suspected enemy collaborators, and launched a violent campaign to cleanse the Acholi of evil, where the potential for evil had been generalized.<sup>114</sup>

Museveni declared that the rebels, by killing themselves off, were doing the NRA’s job for it, and even publicly announced that Alice Lakwena “has been very useful to us,” thereby permitting the NRA to leave the armed groups to fight it out among themselves.<sup>115</sup> This was convenient for those who saw Acholi civilians as the problem; since increased violence against civilians meant decreased support for the rebels, the NRA simply withdrew from combat. Lakwena had demonstrated the dangerous potential for popular mobilization in the North behind a convincing leader, and the NRA was resolved to do whatever necessary not to let this support develop again. At the same time, it realized that the rebels did not pose a threat to the NRA government as long as they lacked popular support and were confined to Acholiland. The key then was to create a situation whereby the rebels were forced to terrorize the civilian population to the point where the civilians could not support the rebels. Thus, the NRA did not take advantage of this upsurge of anti-civilian violence to build support for itself. Rather, since it lacked any political accountability to the Acholi, the NRA could simply abandon the population to rebel violence, letting it continue as collective punishment by proxy, ensuring that the rebels did not develop support, but also doing nothing to build popular support itself.

From June 1987 on, the rural Acholi not only protested the abuse that the government troops doled out, but more frequently protested the NRA’s refusal to protect them from the rebels. As the *New Vision* put it in June, the NRA “seem to be only defending themselves and the barracks...; they are doing nothing to contain the situation.”<sup>116</sup> Or, according to the *Weekly Topic*, “the NRA mostly keeps to the urban centers in the region and leaves the rebels to roam the villages administering ‘terror to their own people.’”<sup>117</sup> When the NRA did act, it avoided the rebels and conducted operations against civilians in zones suspected to harbor rebel support.<sup>118</sup> The Acholi were “like millet in between two grinding

stones.”<sup>119</sup> Meanwhile the NRA and the rebels came to what was termed by one journalist as a “peaceful coexistence,” rarely engaging each other in combat or making any attempt to do so.<sup>120</sup>

The specter of genocide arose again among the Acholi. Some accused Lakwena of being an agent of the NRA (as some would accuse Kony of later) on account of Museveni’s declarations of their community of interests and the thousands of young Acholi whom she led to death. Cattle rustling also escalated during this period with the acquiescence of the NRA. As one commander was reported to have stated, “since the rebels claim to be in full control of that area, they should fight and stop the cattle rustlers.”<sup>121</sup> Finally, the NRA several times cut off relief aid to the North, and diverted a large quantity of the aid that did make it across the Nile, which many Acholi saw as further evidence of the NRA’s plan to eliminate the Acholi en masse.<sup>122</sup>

The NRA strategy of leaving the rebels to do as they would with the civilian population partly succeeded, for the Acholi soon had little patience left for the rebels and only wanted peace. However, the Acholi also realized that they could not actively support the government against the rebels since the NRA would not protect them from rebel retaliation and did not appear serious about fighting the rebels themselves. Whereas in the early days of the UPDA, the population did not want to mobilize because of the violence the government was using against them, from mid-1987 on, the population could not mobilize because the government refused to cooperate against the rebels.

The “military solution” was therefore no solution at all, amounting to constant escalation of anti-civilian violence from both sides. As Tiberio Okeny’s open letter to Museveni stated: “The President can bear me witness that he has had and is having many delegations and petitions on this issue of peace demanding dialogue with rebels for a lasting peace. And that, if this matter was put to a referendum, the suffering peasants would certainly overwhelmingly vote for a negotiated peace than for peace by crushing.”<sup>123</sup> Without a popular mobilization to root out the rebels in conjunction with a serious effort by the NRA, there would be no conclusion to the conflict.

### MARCH 1991 – AUGUST 1992: OPERATION NORTH AND THE ARROW BRIGADES

The waves of violence that swept through Acholiland from 1988 until 1991 followed the established pattern. Rebel factions used violence to gain recruits and supplies and root out informants. The government failed to protect the Acholi, reserving military force for use against suspected collaborators. The feeling remained among the Acholi that “both the Holy Spirit and the NRA are no longer fighting each other but they, the civilians.”<sup>124</sup> The UPDA finally collapsed, a faction of it going over to the NRA after the Pece Peace Agreements of June, 1988, but the end of violence that the agreements were expected to usher in, did not materialize.<sup>125</sup> Rather, Kony stepped up attacks in reaction to his exclusion from the agreement.<sup>126</sup> Setting a precedent that it has followed since, the Ugandan government had begun negotiations with Kony in early 1988, only to sabotage the talks at the key moment, provoking a outbreak of violence from Kony.<sup>127</sup> After that, Kony increasingly undertook mass abductions, especially of children.<sup>128</sup> The population remained unprotected, afraid to report on rebel activity, and NRA violence escalated in turn.<sup>129</sup>

Members of the Resistance Councils became targets of repression by both sides. Kony’s forces violently persecuted pro-NRM officials.<sup>130</sup> Civil servants complained that the Resident Minister for the Pacification of the North, Betty Bigombe, was dismissing Council members or civil servants whom she suspected of rebel collaboration.<sup>131</sup> The NRA also accused RCs who opposed their violent tactics of being rebel supporters.<sup>132</sup> Despite the fact that the District Administrator, the Resistance Councilors, and Resident Minister Bigombe were all aware of NRA abuses, there was silence on the issue and repression of those who spoke out. The Resistance Councils, instead of facilitating the political mobilization of the

Acholi within the NRM, became tools of the state, and the political crisis in the North had deepened considerably by 1991. As one writer explained, the Acholi “have no one to speak for them. Even the Churches which are supposed to be the voices of the voiceless have become silent now.”<sup>133</sup>

Late 1989 and early 1990 saw a period of relative calm, and Bigombe and other NRM officials declared the war over.<sup>134</sup> In mid-1990, however, there was an upsurge in violence that continued into 1991.<sup>135</sup> At that point, facing criticism in the South for premature declarations of victory, and having been promised significant funding by the World Bank on the condition that peace and security were re-established in the North, the NRA went on the offensive in its first serious attempt to win the war.<sup>136</sup> In mid-March, a “house-to-house-cordon-and-search operation for remnants of the UDCA” (the name Kony’s forces had adopted), was launched, expanding into Operation North on March 27, when the NRA ended all road transportation across the Nile.<sup>137</sup> In early April, the NRA cut off communications with the North, imposed a media blackout, and seized all radios in the region.<sup>138</sup> Once Acholiland was isolated, the NRA proceeded on two fronts. First, anyone speaking out against the operation was labeled a rebel collaborator, and dozens of Acholi political leaders were arrested, including Resistance Council members and district officials in the North, as well as and national political leaders in Kampala, most notably three Acholi members of the National Resistance Council: Daniel Omara Atubo, Zachary Olum, and Irene Apiu Julu.<sup>139</sup> Second, beginning in Gulu town and moving out from there to the villages, the NRA conducted a massive screening operation, rounding up and interrogating tens of thousands in an attempt to root out rebels and collaborators.<sup>140</sup> The NRA’s brutality in the course of the screening operation still reverberates among the Acholi.<sup>141</sup>

Museveni and Bigombe categorically denied the accusations of abuse and politically motivated arrests (to disprove of the accusations, Museveni noted that the minister who had made allegations of human rights abuses against the NRA was on trial for sedition).<sup>142</sup> The NRA was sanguine as usual. In May, Lt. Gen. David Tinyefuza, in charge of the operation, labeled it an unqualified success, and Bigombe announced that 3000 rebels had been caught in Kitgum alone.<sup>143</sup>

Bigombe spearheaded the most significant aspect of Operation North: the formation of popular militia, known as “Arrow Groups,” to assist the NRA in fighting the rebels. Once reporters were allowed back in, they noted that almost all sub-counties had Arrow Groups.<sup>144</sup> Thousands of men, armed with arrows, spears, machetes, and sticks, were mobilized against the rebels.<sup>145</sup> The popular mobilization called for since 1986 seemed to have finally occurred.

The fact that the Arrow Groups were partially formed through forced recruitment is of marginal importance.<sup>146</sup> For the first time, there was sufficient contact between the Acholi and the NRA, even if tainted with violence, for the Acholi to actively support the NRA. As long as the NRA was in the villages, cooperating with the militias and protecting those who opposed the rebels, a conclusion to the conflict seemed plausible. This development was short-lived, however. Without warning, the NRA decided that the Arrow Groups could take care of the rebels alone. Predictably, the rebels, seeing the Arrow Brigades as the key to their own demise, stepped up terror attacks on civilians, especially militia members and their families.<sup>147</sup> The NRA abandoned the mobilized Acholi population at the key moment, leaving them unprotected against an unprecedented wave of atrocities.

Kony’s forces began their first major period of maiming, cutting off hands, lips, and ears of those suspected to be working with the Arrow Brigades. A rebel commander explained the logic of maiming three years later:

You the teachers turned school children into intelligence staff of government, you turned your classrooms into operation rooms. People turned their mouths into devices for telling NRA how we have moved through a village. They used their hands to point at which direction we have taken. The NRA would follow us, attack us and some of us died, why should we leave you untouched? So we cut off your

lips, hands, ears and noses of people to teach them a lesson. We could have killed such people but killing you would depopulate us, so we punish and let you live, as the Bible clearly states.<sup>148</sup>

Kony's forces went so far as to send a letter to Bigombe announcing that she had "brought death to the Acholi" by telling the people to rise against them, and that they were going to kill all Acholi, leaving only 10,000.<sup>149</sup> Bigombe, for her part, further encouraged the creation of the Arrow Groups.<sup>150</sup>

Bigombe did her best to justify the NRA's abandonment of the militia, arguing that it was the people's duty to clean up the rebels, and so the NRA could now "relax."<sup>151</sup> Tinyefuza agreed and stated that NRA's job was done, and those few rebels remaining would be handled by the Arrow Groups.<sup>152</sup> The dimensions of the NRA blunder were soon apparent. The Operation ended in late July, and by the end of that month massacres and atrocities had begun.<sup>153</sup> Acholi elders and Resistance Councilors pleaded for the Arrow Brigades to be better armed, but the NRA refused to supply more than a handful of rifles.<sup>154</sup> In September, the *Weekly Topic* asserted that the rebels still numbered between 1000 and 1500, concluding correctly that even the cordon-and-search aspect of Operation North had been a failure.<sup>155</sup> By October, one newspaper reported, "all divisions are in total chaos."<sup>156</sup>

The reason why the NRA abandoned the Arrow Brigades is not clear. Probably, it was a strategic miscalculation influenced by the NRA's impatience to declare victory and to end the military campaign. Those who favor an NRA conspiracy attribute the desertion to the NRA's plan to wipe out the Acholi using Kony as a tool.<sup>157</sup> Alternatively, it could be an example of the NRA prolonging the existence of the rebels for its own purposes, as it would more clearly do from 1994 onwards. In any case, the withdrawal of NRA regulars marked the end of the last attempt by the NRA for a decade to finish off the rebels militarily.

If credible Acholi political leadership had existed, it would not have been so easy for the NRA to abandon the militias. However, the eradication of independent Acholi leadership under the guise of eliminating rebel collaborators — accelerated during Operation North — meant that the NRM government remained unaccountable to the Acholi, so that when the militias called for NRA assistance, it did not arrive, and when the NRA deserted the Arrow Groups, no one could protest.

The most deleterious political effect of Operation North was to destroy all organized opposition to the NRA, opposition that was in fact also independent of the rebels, in the name of eliminating rebel supporters. From then on, the government could only be challenged through secret ballot (which explains the importance of elections in Acholiland) or through appeal to the "international community" (which explains the outwards orientation of many of its current NGO, Church, and political leaders). Operation North also signaled to the rebels the danger of popular mobilization against them. Thus, the rebels ever since have reserved their most extreme violence for militias — the massacres in early 2004 in Lango, for example, were not "ethnically" motivated, but were political, precisely targeting anti-LRA militias.

Atrocities by the rebels continued unabated until early 1992, and the NRA, again, did not protect the civilian population. From mid-1992 until late 1993, rebel violence waned. This downturn signaled a new status quo between the rebels and the population. The rebels had demonstrated to the Acholi that the government would not or could not protect them, and so that mobilization against the rebels was pointless. Thus, this period of horrific atrocities and massacres, often cited as the epitome of meaningless, non-political violence, had a very specific political purpose, one which it succeeded in effecting. Through the NRA's refusal to cooperate and the LRA's year-long wave of atrocities, the Acholi were convinced to disband the Arrow Groups. The civilians de-mobilized, and the rebels, in return, scaled down their operations. Violence ebbed to the point that when Bigombe began peace talks with the rebels (now the LRA) in late 1993, they were moving freely in Gulu Town. With the reduction in violence, the Acholi came to welcome the NRA's refusal to pursue the rebels. As newspaper reported,

“The NRA is mostly confined to grass hut barracks in trading centers. Civilians say this is more effective than having mobile NRA units who leave civilians vulnerable to the wrath of the rebels when they move on and who can also misbehave out of the sight of the responsible commanders.”<sup>158</sup> By mid-1992, civilians had been included in the “peaceful co-existence” that had transpired between the NRA and the rebels before Operation North. Many hoped that the peace talks between Bigombe and Kony could take advantage of this peace and end the violence.

#### 1994 – 1996: THE FAILURE OF PEACE TALKS

The peace talks, however, were a disaster.<sup>159</sup> After months of negotiations, in February, 1994, Kony asked for six months to gather his troops and leave the bush and a UN observer team to oversee the process.<sup>160</sup> Museveni, in response, publicly announced that Kony had seven days to come out, or he would be annihilated.<sup>161</sup> Kony withdrew from the talks. Museveni declared that Kony was “not a big problem” and sent reinforcements, while the LRA stepped up attacks.<sup>162</sup> As usual, civilians bore the brunt of the onslaught, with one reporter noting “astounding revelations of bizarre excesses by the NRA and the rebels.”<sup>163</sup>

The sabotaging of the peace talks made it clear that certain sectors within the NRA wanted the LRA to continue to exist, and would do whatever necessary to ensure that they remained in the bush. Thus, one aspect of their strategy would be to refuse, or sabotage, negotiations. The other aspect would be to repress political organization among the Acholi to ensure that they could not effectively demand an end to the war. I will address this in the following section.

The LRA concentrated their violence against suspected NRA supporters and Resistance Councils were again the most common target.<sup>164</sup> Kony also began an information campaign in the villages, explaining to civilians that advisers close to Museveni, not he, were to blame for sabotaging the talks and the continued fighting.<sup>165</sup> This was one of the many times that the LRA attempted to address a political agenda to the Acholi people.

Once again, the NRA refused to respond to reports on the rebels — as one woman explained, “in most cases they [the NRA] even arrest such messengers. How can we then be sure that they are not collaborating with the rebels to kill us?”<sup>166</sup> Rumors of genocide abounded, especially with the recent example of Rwanda, and many accused the NRA of refusing to let the LRA come out in order to prolong the suffering of the Acholi.<sup>167</sup> In June, 1994, pro-NRM candidates for the Constitutional Assembly in Acholiland overwhelmingly lost.<sup>168</sup> In the words of Acholi Constitutional Assembly delegates; “one wonders whether Acholiland is part of Uganda.”<sup>169</sup>

After the failure of the peace talks, Sudan’s role came to the fore. Ugandan rebels had received limited funding from Khartoum for several years.<sup>170</sup> Now, the supply of military hardware escalated, especially through the pro-Khartoum SPLA-Nasir faction of William Nyuon.<sup>171</sup> The LRA suddenly had uniforms of better quality than the NRA.<sup>172</sup> For once they were well-armed, some with several guns each.<sup>173</sup> His effort to leave the bush stymied, Kony set up permanent bases in Southern Sudan in late 1994.<sup>174</sup> He frequently engaged militarily with Garang’s SPLA, a Ugandan beneficiary.<sup>175</sup>

Ever since 1994, the Ugandan government has used the Sudan factor to explain the duration of the war.<sup>176</sup> But the escalated hostilities in 1994 were not caused by Sudanese support. Rather, they were caused by the government’s refusal to conclude peace negotiations and let the LRA come out. Indeed, the rebels had managed for years without Sudanese support, and considering the NRA’s permissive attitude towards looting, probably could have managed for years to come. Unable to leave the bush, the LRA used anti-civilian violence as a strategy for its own material survival and ensure that the population would not organize against it. The Sudanese scapegoat allowed the NRA to further demonize the LRA

through stories of abducted Ugandan children sold into slavery in Sudan. This was a popular theme among American supporters of the SPLA, and the Ugandan government hoped to tap that source of support itself.<sup>177</sup>

At the end of 1995, there were a series of highly-publicized attacks by the SPLA upon LRA positions in Sudan.<sup>178</sup> By December, Bigombe and Museveni had declared the definitive end of the LRA.<sup>179</sup> But this euphoria only lasted until February 1996.<sup>180</sup> Then Kony's troops re-entered from Sudan.<sup>181</sup> The press went on the offensive against Museveni and those who had declared victory over the LRA.<sup>182</sup> As violence escalated dramatically in March, Museveni's response was to again reject peace talks and promise that "we shall deal with them by mid-April."<sup>183</sup> Violence went out of control with LRA massacres, and the UPDF (the successor to the NRA) employing helicopter gunships against rebels and civilians.<sup>184</sup>

There was a brief lull in the violence when Kony declared a ceasefire for the 1996 elections.<sup>185</sup> The LRA conducted political rallies, encouraged the population to vote for Museveni's opponent, Ssemogerere, and declared their intention to participate in the elections.<sup>186</sup> Ssemogerere won overwhelmingly in Acholiland. In Omoto, for example, he received almost ten times as many votes as Museveni.<sup>187</sup> But with Museveni's national victory, Kony again stepped up his attacks.<sup>188</sup> Museveni responded by sending Salim Saleh to the North, who announced the inception of a new offensive and then "total war" against the LRA.<sup>189</sup>

## 1996 AND BEYOND: THE CAMPS

Again facing pressure over his announcements of the war's imminent end, Museveni turned to a new strategy. In September 1996, the UPDF began displacing the Acholi into what it termed "protected camps."<sup>190</sup> The internment camps' total population stood at a few hundred thousand by the end of 1996, and grew to over 1.5 million by 2004.<sup>191</sup> While many government officials took refuge in the camps for their own safety, the majority of the Acholi left for the camps in response to a wide-scale campaign of forced displacement by the UPDF involving bombing and burning down villages.<sup>192</sup>

At its inception, displacement into internment camps could have made sense within a counterinsurgency military strategy. Clearing out the countryside would cut off rebel resources and give free rein to UPDF mobile units. Indeed, after the formation of the camps, the UPDF announced that anyone found outside of the camps would be considered a rebel and killed. One UPDF officer put forth an alternate explanation for the camps, stating that the camps were the bait with which to catch the LRA: "The depopulation of the villages removes the soft targets and logistics for the survival of the rebels. They would lack food, information, and youth to abduct and people to kill. Desperation would drive them to attack the Army in the camps. That will be their end."<sup>193</sup> But the possibility that the camps were part of a military campaign was quickly belied by the UPDF's actions: the army refused to protect the "protected camps." With its attention focused on DRC, once the camps were formed the UPDF began withdrawing soldiers from the North, leaving the Acholi unprotected by the regular army. Even the few UPDF that did remain rarely responded to rebel incursions.<sup>194</sup>

In their place, the government accelerated a program begun the previous year of training "Homeguards," again under the direction of Bigombe.<sup>195</sup> By February, 1995, up to 12,000 Acholi civilians had been given basic training and arms.<sup>196</sup> But, like the Arrow Brigades, the under-trained and under-armed Homeguard became an easy target for the LRA. In one case, over 200 were killed in Atiak in April 1995. After routing the Homeguard, the LRA announced, "you Acholi have refused to support us. We shall now teach you a lesson."<sup>197</sup> The LRA regularly overcame the Homeguard and then punished the civilians they were guarding, while the UPDF did not intervene.<sup>198</sup>

Homeguard numbers remain dismally inadequate. For example, one camp of over 50,000 people is protected by 45 homeguard, and another camp of 15,000 is protected by twelve homeguard.<sup>199</sup> Moreover, the homeguard earn so little (around US\$20 per month) that they at times must steal from camp inhabitants to ensure their own survival. Nevertheless, the government has used the Homeguard as an excuse not to provide regular army protection to the Acholi.<sup>200</sup> The homeguard serve other purposes as well. They are a labor reserve for the UPDF: when regular UPDF soldiers are killed, homeguards are often assigned their names and numbers so as to keep the casualty rates down.<sup>201</sup> The discrepancy between homeguard payment and UPDF regular payment ensures that a significant bonus ends up the pocket of the commanding officer as UPDF are secretly replaced by the lower-paid troops. Homeguard are without any legal recognition, and so can be used at the discretion of the UPDF.<sup>202</sup> Even those who join the homeguard to protect their homes often find themselves shipped off to Congo when they reach a reasonable level of competence.<sup>203</sup>

Besides the lack of protection, the government has provided little or no food, water, or medicine to the camps. Unable to leave the camps, the Acholi are left dependent upon the charity of foreign humanitarian organizations. With neither protection nor survival guaranteed, the Acholi have consistently demanded since the camps' inception that they be adequately protected or dismantled. In this context, the Homeguard, as the state's primary coercive instrument, took on the role of silencing political dissent. The function of the homeguard, the UPDF, and other paramilitary forces is not to provide protection to the camps, but to terrorize those in the camps into not doing anything about their lack of protection. Thus, not only did the Ugandan government again fail to forge a link between popular mobilization and the UPDF, but that mobilization, because it was inadequate, became another element of the de-politicization of the Acholi population and the further alienation of the citizenry from the government.

Those in the camps who protest the lack of security or the abuses by UPDF, Homeguards, or other paramilitaries face violent repression by those security services.<sup>204</sup> Legal and human rights activists are particular targets. As one put it, "when you want to speak freely, the government accuses you of being a rebel."<sup>205</sup> Local elections are particularly hotly contested. In one camp, a paramilitary group called the kalataska was organized by a prominent local official in conjunction with a UPDF commander to ensure that a key election would go their way. The kalataska stalked the camp in civilian clothes, going after those who spoke up in support of the opposition candidate or, increasingly, anyone known to be critical of the government.<sup>206</sup>

The failure to protect the camps made clear that the Ugandan government was no longer fighting a war in Northern Uganda. Devoid of protection, the camps do not serve a military purpose for the Ugandan government but are rather part of a political strategy to prevent organization among the Acholi that could hold the UPDF accountable or demand the end of the war.<sup>207</sup> That is, the camps do not serve to combat the rebels, but rather prolong their existence while also preventing political organization among the rural Acholi, organization that would either support the LRA, and so make the rebels a genuine threat beyond Acholiland, or that could make effective demands for peace talks.

Thus, the Ugandan government uses anti-civilian violence to prevent political organization. In the late 1980s, anti-civilian violence was in response to the fear that the Acholi were the support base for the rebels. But by the mid-1990s, as the continuation of the war came to benefit the Ugandan government and military, a reversal took place whereby the accusation of being a rebel collaborator became a convenient way of eliminating independent political organization in the North. Thus, anti-civilian violence came to be used not just to prevent the population from building a political relationship with the rebels, but also to prevent the population from organizing to demand an end to the war itself.

LRA violence against the camp inhabitants is similarly not part of a war against the government, but designed to prevent political organization against the rebels by the Acholi. The camps became an easy source of supplies and forced recruits for the rebels. In fact, there is so little protection that some Acholi support giving food and medicine to the rebels so that they stop looting.<sup>208</sup> But despite the ease of looting and recruitment, the rebels have consistently demanded the dismantling of the camps. Indeed, the LRA launches intense attacks on the camps “quite regularly,” in the words of one human rights organization, burning them down and calling on people to go back to their villages.<sup>209</sup> Although the camps may facilitate resource acquisition by the rebels, they are not in their interest politically. The camps make popular mobilization against the rebels potentially easier for the government. Moreover, they serve to reinforce the separation of the Acholi from the rebels, since it has become difficult for the rebels to have regular enough contact to carry out the ideological activities they did previously. At present, the rebels can only loot and abduct, and so the Acholi can only be further alienated from the rebels.

LRA violence has, since the beginning, been directed towards, at a minimum, ensuring their survival through looting, abductions, and destroying NRA support, and, when possible, towards building a constituency among the Acholi. Their violence is extreme, but not irrational or a-political. The conceptual and political problem caused by the disjuncture between the LRA’s statements and their anti-civilian tactics is thus a symptom of the current political disjuncture between the rebels and the civilian population, not evidence of the LRA’s lack of political content. LRA propaganda, which voices many of the demands of the Acholi civilians themselves, is directed towards building support, while their tactics are directed towards destroying opposition. At present, the LRA is prevented from bringing their tactics in line with their rhetoric by the government’s counter-insurgency, which has made it impossible for the population to support the rebels, and by the long history of stagnant war in Acholiland, which has left the population weary and unwilling to support an insurgency that shows little promise of achieving victories.

However, as a generation grows up in the camps and as joining the rebels becomes less and less of a sacrifice for those who would otherwise be condemned to a life of insecurity, hunger, boredom, and humiliation, perhaps this generation of the camps will become a new constituency for the LRA or another armed organization, and the LRA’s tactics will come into line with their rhetoric. Indeed, many LRA troops fight because they are forced to, but some male abductees remain with the LRA because the only alternative that the Ugandan government has presented them with — life in the camps — is as bad, if not worse, than life as a rebel.

## CONCLUSION: PEACE AND JUSTICE

The dilemma faced by the Acholi population is that they want both peace — that is, an end to war — and justice — that is, redress of the grievances they have against the government, from the decimation of their cattle herds, the current economic devastation, political exclusion on the national level, and NRA/UPDF violence against the Acholi peasantry. However, peace and justice appear mutually exclusive — and, at present, impossible even on their own.

By joining the government through participation in popular militias, the Acholi would choose peace without the clear possibility of justice. Furthermore, this would be at a steep price: the killing of hundreds or thousands of abducted Acholi in the LRA ranks. However, fact that the Acholi have been willing to participate in militias in the past reveals that, at times, the Acholi have indeed chosen peace over justice. But this option appears to have been foreclosed at the present. Because of the disappointments of earlier attempts to participate in citizens’ militias, the Acholi are hesitant about

joining now. Choosing to join the UPDF would not guarantee peace, but may only lead to, as before, more suffering. However, if the government can convince the population that, this time, it will be serious about a coordinated counterinsurgency and if the Acholi decide again that for the present peace is worth putting aside their grievances, the population could be mobilized behind the government and the war would probably be brought to an end.

By joining the LRA, the Acholi would choose justice over peace. But, as I have explained, this option is similarly impossible at present. Because of the LRA's history of extreme violence against the Acholi, they refuse to join the LRA in its current form. This is despite the fact that the LRA has consistently articulated, at least in its rhetoric, the grievances of the Acholi civilians.<sup>210</sup> If the LRA would change its image sufficiently among the Acholi, through either a leadership change or a strategic reorientation, and if the government continues to appear apathetic at best about ending the war, then the generation of the camps may turn the Northern war into a genuine threat to Kampala.

Because of the current impossibility of choosing either to join the UPDF or the LRA, there is a third option which enjoys near unanimous popularity among Acholi: peace with the possibility of justice through negotiations. This is preferable for many reasons. Peace would come about without the massacre of Acholi youth. The participation of civil society groups in the negotiations would draw attention to the grievances of the Acholi, which would give them a more significant chance of being addressed than if peace were achieved through military victory.<sup>211</sup> This third option is really the only one open to the Acholi at present. Moreover, only it can avoid additional death, destruction, and turmoil not only for the Acholi, but for Uganda and the region.

## NOTES

1. This essay is based upon fieldwork carried out in Gulu and Kitgum districts, Uganda in July 2001, February-May 2003, January-February 2004, and October-November 2004. It is based upon interviews and discussions with those involved in the conflict, in addition to a review of the relevant literature on the North produced by NGOs, academics, and independent researchers. Much of the data is taken from newspaper reports which were compiled with the help of the staff at Centre for Basic Research, Kampala, and the staff at Main Library, Makerere University. I have not identified those I interviewed for the sake of their security.

2. Uncertainty, which Sverker Finnstrom associated with the existential position of the Acholi living in the conflict zone, is no less a hallmark of the discourse surrounding the war on the academic, policy, and governmental levels.

3. On the importance of bringing the peasantry back into the analysis, see Thandika Mkandawire, "The Terrible Toll of Post-Colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa: Towards an Explanation of the Violence against the Peasantry," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 40.2 (2002): 181-215.

4. International Crisis Group, "Northern Uganda: Understanding and Solving the Conflict," ICG Africa Report No. 77, Nairobi/Brussels, 14 April 2004, pp. 13-18. See also Frank Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered," *African Affairs*, 103.412 (2004): 335-357, p. 353.

5. ICG 17.

6. Author's interview, Major Shaban Bantariza, UPDF Spokesman, Kampala, 23 October 2004.

7. See also Van Acker's analysis, pp. 352-353.

8. Author's interviews with Acholi political and cultural leaders, Gulu and Kampala, March 2003.

9. For accusations of genocide, see below.

10. ICG 11.
11. ICG 11-12.
12. For example, President Museveni's speech in Kaunda Grounds, Gulu Town on International Women's Day, 2003, at which the author was present.
13. ICG 12.
14. Finnstrom 155.
15. For a particularly dramatic portrayal of donor's willingness to support the Northern conflict, see Peter Chapell's documentary film, *Our Friends at the Bank* (France, 1997). I was told by a European defense analyst that the Ugandan government consistently purchases military equipment earmarked for the war in the North that is irrelevant to that conflict and is in fact much more appropriate to the war in Congo; confidential communication, European defense analyst, Kampala, April 2003.
16. Ruddy Doom and Koen Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message: A New Koine? The Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda," *African Affairs*, 98.390 (1999): 5-36, p. 31.
17. For more on this current fixation, see Mkandawire, "The Terrible Toll of Post-Colonial 'Rebel Movements' in Africa."
18. Refugee Law Project (RLP), "Behind the Violence: Causes, Consequences, and the Search for Solutions to the War in Northern Uganda," Working Paper 11, February 2004: 28; Van Acker 353; ICG 17-18.
19. Interview with MP Reagan Okumu, Kampala, 28 October 2004; interviews with human rights activists, local community leaders in Gulu District October-December 2004. See also RLP 27; ICG 11.
20. In the field of political science, see Stathis Kalyvas, Stathis Kalyvas, "Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria," *Rationality and Society* 11.3 (1999): 243-286.
21. Finnstrom 149-161.
22. "Girls Escape Ugandan Rebels," BBC Online, 25 June 2003, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3018810.stm>. See also Finnstrom's critique of this position, Finnstrom 158-159.
23. Gerard Prunier, "Rebel Movements and Proxy Warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986-1999)," *African Affairs*, 103.412 (2004): 359-383, p. 359.
24. Van Acker 348.
25. Van Acker 349.
26. Van Acker 354.
27. Doom & Vlassenroot 5.
28. Doom & Vlassenroot 23.
29. Doom & Vlassenroot 25-26.
30. Doom & Vlassenroot 26.
31. Doom & Vlassenroot 26.
32. Doom & Vlassenroot 28.
33. Doom & Vlassenroot 27.
34. Doom & Vlassenroot 27.
35. Doom & Vlassenroot 26.
36. Gersony 103.
37. Gersony 44.
38. Gersony 51.
39. Gersony 50.
40. RLP 15-17.

41. Finnstrom 165.
42. Finnstrom 161-172.
43. Finnstrom 161-164, 169-170.
44. Finnstrom 165.
45. ICG 5.
46. ICG 9.
47. Ibid.
48. On human rights' claim to be the only legitimate language in which to express resistance in the Third World, see Balakrishnan Rajagopal, *International Law from Below: Development, Social Movements and Third World Resistance* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2003).
49. Chris Dolan makes this point about the demonization of the LRA through the exclusive emphasis on children's rights in discussions of the conflict; see his "Which Children Count? The Politics of Children's Rights in Northern Uganda," available at <http://www.c-r.org/accord/uganda/accord11/children.shtml>.
50. Gersony 103.
51. Finnstrom 162.
52. These were reportedly the targets of the LRA's 2003 move east; see ICG 7-8.
53. Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890-1985* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1987).
54. See, for example, Phares Mukasa Mutibwa, *Uganda since Independence: A Story of Unfulfilled Hopes* (London: Hurst, 1992): 154-5; Odonga Ori Amazi, *Museveni's Long March from Guerrilla to Statesman* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1998): 23-38. Critics have made much of Museveni's November, 1985 interview with Nairobi-based *Drum* magazine, where he explicitly stated that the "political mess" in Uganda was a result of misrule by Northerners, and called for unity among Bantu speakers in response; *Drum Magazine (East)*, October 1985, p. 9. Dani Nabudere is one such critic, see his, "The Hidden War, the Forgotten People," *Makerere University Human Rights and Peace Centre*, October 2003. See also Omara-Otunnu 176. Refugee Law Project plays down this interview, pointing out that it is invoked so frequently by critics because it is the only instance where Museveni made this claim so explicitly; see RLP 53. For the importance of anti-Northern sentiment in the mobilization of the Baganda peasantry, see the generally laudatory Odonga ori Amazi, *Museveni's Long March from Guerrilla to Statesman*, p. 62; and Sverker Finnstrom, *Living with Bad Surroundings: War and Existential Uncertainty in Acholiland, Northern Uganda* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2003): 108.
55. "NRA, Okello Forces fight for Karuma Falls," *Weekly Focus*, 7 February 1986.
56. Finnstrom 108.
57. "War gets rough in the North," *Weekly Focus*, 18 February 1986.
58. "Bazilio, Toko command 30,000 men to face NRA," *Weekly Focus*, 25 February 1986.
59. "NRA fighters meet set backs on Eastern front," *Weekly Focus*, 4 March 1986.
60. "Bazirio, sic. forces evacuate Kitgum, Arua Towns," *Weekly Focus*, 11 March 1986.
61. "NRA completes liberation struggle," *Weekly Focus*, 27 March 1986.
62. "Gulu: The Legacy of War," *Financial Times (Kampala)*, 23 August 1986.
63. Heike Behrend "War in Northern Uganda: The Holy Spirit Movements of Alice Lakwena, Severino Lukoya, and Joseph Kony (1987-1997)" in *African Guerrillas*, ed. Christopher Clapham (Oxford, James Currey: 1998): 109; Dennis Pain, 'The Bending of the Spears': Producing Consensus for Peace and Development in Northern Uganda (London: International Alert/Kacoke Madit, 1997): 48; Amazi 62.

64. See A.G.G. Ginyera-Pinyewa, *Northern Uganda in National Politics* (Kampala: Fountain, 1992); and, "Is There a 'Northern Question'?", in *Conflict Resolution in Uganda*, ed. Kumar Rupesinghe (London: J. Currey, 1989).

65. See, among others, Robert Gersony, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda: Results of a Field-Based Assessment of the Civil Conflicts in Northern Uganda*, (Kampala: USAID Mission, 1997): 21-23; Amnesty International, *Uganda: The Human Rights Record (1986-1989)* (London: Amnesty International, 1989) and *Uganda – Human Rights Violations by the National Resistance Army* (London: Amnesty International, 1991).

66. "Gulu: The Legacy of War," *Financial Times* (Kampala), 23 August 1986; "NRA soldier goes on shooting spree," *Weekly Focus*, 18 April 1986.

67. "Rebels harass NRA," *The Citizen*, date not printed. August 1986; "Thugs Terrorise Gulu, Kitgum," *Financial Times* (Kampala), 19 June 1986.

68. Behrend 25; Doom & Vlassenroot 13-14.

69. "Four NRA killed in Kitgum," *Financial Times* (Kampala), 8 July 1986.

70. "Insecurity grips Gulu, Kitgum," *Financial Times* (Kampala), 14 August 1986.

71. Gersony 22.

72. "Museveni explains situation in Northern Uganda," *Focus*, 27 February 1987.

73. "Govt. admits guerrilla attacks on NRA," *Focus*, 15 August 1986; Behrend, "War in Northern Uganda," 24-25.

74. "Horror in Gulu: A personal account," *Weekly Topic*, 25 February 1987.

75. Interviews in Atiak, Pabo internment camps, March 2003.

76. "Govt. troops close Catholic Mission in Northern Uganda," *Focus*, 5 December 1986.

77. "Rebels draw up death lists," *Focus*, 6 February 1987; "Northern rebels now turn against civilian population," *Focus*, 23 December 1986; "Northern rebels storm Gulu," *Focus*, 24 February 1987.

78. "Gulu: The Legacy of War," *Financial Times* (Kampala), 23 August 1986.

79. The communique released by the Uganda Goodwill Mission after their trip to Sudan to consult with the UPDA listed the causes for which the UPDM/A was fighting: 1. Violation of Nairobi Peace Accords by NRM/A; 2. Invasion of Uganda by Rwandese in contravention of Geneva Convention 1951; 3. Killings of innocent people in Gulu and Kitgum; 4. NRM/A violations of human rights; 5. introduction of communistic ideology into Uganda; 6. dictatorship and discrimination by NRM/A. The basic principles for which UPDM/A stood included: 1. Fight for survival and preservation of human rights in Uganda as a whole; 2. Fight for freedom and unity of Uganda; 3. Fight for sovereignty, independence and unity of Uganda; 4. Promote democracy; 5. Fight for introduction of populist constitution; 6. Fight for establishment of disciplined and independent armed forces; 7. Promote true peace and prosperity for all people of Uganda. The list is found in, "Why Gulu – Kitgum rebels are fighting," *Weekly Topic*, 13 May 1987.

80. "Allimadi is imposter," *New Vision*, 7 April 1987.

81. "Violation of Human Rights: Govt's credibility is at stake," *Citizen*, 26 September 1986; see also "Amnesty complains of NRA atrocities," *Weekly Topic*, 4 November 1987.

82. "Atrocities shake N. Uganda," *Citizen*, 5 September 1986.

83. "Govt. troops intensify operations," *Focus*, 19 December 1986.

84. "Bishop Ogwal ashames Acholis, Church of Uganda," *Focus*, 17 February 1987.

85. See "N. Uganda: Okeny petitions Museveni," *The Citizen*, 7 December 1988, in which Tiberio Okeny states that the NRA's "scorched earth policy" in Acholiland appears to many Acholi

civilians to be “the implementation of the often publicly uttered statements by high ranking NRM officials to exterminate a people.” See also Gersony 12.

86. “Gulu witnesses brutality and atrocity,” *Weekly Topic*, 2 December 1987; personal interviews Gulu District February 2003. See also Chris Dolan, *What do you remember? A rough guide to the war in Northern Uganda, 1986-2000* (London: ACORD Working Paper #33, 2000); and Finnstrom 106-7. For more on the importance of cattle, see Gersony 27-29.

87. “People kill, burn rebels in the North,” *Star*, 25 March 1987.

88. “American says North improves,” *New Vision*, 9 June 1987.

89. “Govt. admits guerrilla attacks on NRA,” *Focus*, 15 August 1986; see also Yoweri Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed* (London: Macmillan, 1997): 33.

90. “Museveni Denounces Sudan’s Treachery,” *New Vision*, 25 August 1986.

91. “Northern consultative groups insist on total amnesty, peace talks,” *Focus*, 21 October 1986.

92. “Museveni explains situation in Northern Uganda,” *Focus*, 27 February 1987; see also “NRA Sweeps North,” *New Vision*, 16 September 1986.

93. “Museveni toughens on rebels,” *Star*, 16 January 1987.

94. “Museveni tours rebels mass graves in the North,” *Focus*, 14 October 1986; see also Editorial, *Weekly Topic*, 29 October 1986; and NRA Commander Elly Tumwiine’s statement in “Rebels are in disarray,” *New Vision*, 25 November 1986.

95. These points were made by the Northern Consultative Group in October, 1986, who called for amnesty and peace talks, arguing that the problem in the North was a political problem and the military option was making it worse; see, “Northern consultative groups insist on total amnesty, peace talks,” *Focus*, 21 October 1986; see also “Trouble in the North, by Mahmood,” *Weekly Topic*, 27 August 1986.

96. “What Luwero teaches about the Northern question,” *Weekly Topic*, 5 November 1986.

97. “Gulu: The Legacy of War,” *Financial Times* (Kampala), 23 August 1986.

98. “Re-thinking the North-East, by Mahmood,” *Weekly Topic*, 25 March 1987; Ogen John Kevin Aliro, “Unconsidered issues in the ‘Northern question’,” *Weekly Topic*, 29 April 1987; “NRM Lieutenants using wrong approach,” *Weekly Topic*, 1 April 1987.

99. “What Luwero teaches about the Northern question,” *Weekly Topic*, 11 May 1986; “Crisis in the North: Government Officials also to blame,” *Weekly Topic*, 17 September 1986.

100. “Behind the northern crisis,” *Weekly Topic*, 3 September 1986.

101. “Re-thinking the North-East,” *Weekly Topic*, 25 March 1987.

102. Editorial, *Weekly Topic*, 1 April 1987.

103. F. E. Etori, “War problem of democracy,” *Weekly Topic*, 9 September 1987.

104. In February, according to one account, there were ten major rebel groups: Awach (3000 men), Adak group, Lalogi group, Alero, Lacor, Anaka, Purongo, Pabo, Atiak, Patiko; see “Horror in Gulu: A personal account,” *Weekly Topic*, 25 February 1987.

105. “Northern rebels now turn against each other,” *Focus*, 30 January 1987.

106. *Ibid.*

107. “Fighting continues in Lira and Apac,” *New Vision*, 21 March 1987.

108. See in particular Heike Behrend, *Alice and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda, 1985-97* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1999).

109. Amii Omara-Otunnu, “The Struggle for Democracy in Uganda,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30.3 (1992): 443-463.

110. July 17, 1987, *Focus*, “Rebels launch attack on Gulu.”

111. See Mahmood Mamdani, *And Fire Does Not Always Beget Ash: Critical Reflections on the NRM* (Monitor Publications: Kampala, 1995): 50-52.

112. See “Lakwena attacks Magamaga,” “Foreign press meets Lakwena,” “Interview with a rebel,” and “Lakwena not a military threat,” *New Vision*, 26 October 1987; “Lakwena affair proved that people are the best soldiers,” *Weekly Topic*, 3 February 1988.

113. Behrend 76.

114. “Bloody ‘battle’ at Koch Goma: Peace disrupted again,” *Weekly Topic*, 9 March 1988.

115. “A footnote to Lakwena debacle,” *Weekly Topic*, 27 January 1988.

116. “Opinion: Situation in Gulu is Unbearable,” 16 June 1987.

117. “Kenya becomes rebels’ rear base,” *Weekly Topic*, 26 August 1987.

118. “Insane happenings in the ‘northern’ war,” *Weekly Topic*, 24 June 1987.

119. “Life in Gulu, Apac remains appalling,” *Financial Times* (Kampala), 29 June 1987.

120. “The fire burns again in Gulu,” *Weekly Topic*, 12 April 1991.

121. “Gulu witnesses brutality and atrocity,” *Weekly Topic*, 2 December 1987; “Human rustling hits North-East,” *Financial Times* (Kampala), 5 January 1988.

122. “Why Gulu – Kitgum rebels are fighting,” *Weekly Topic*, 13 May 1987; see also “Rebels cut off parts of N. Uganda,” *The Citizen*, 12 September 1986; “Gulu District held incommunicado?,” *Financial Times* (Kampala), 25 May 1987; and “Over 70,000 displaced by war in North-East,” *Weekly Topic*, 16 January 1987.

123. “Talk with Rebels says Okeny,” *New Vision*, 2 December 1987.

124. For reports on NRA violence, see “Amnesty concerned at reports of killings in the North,” *Weekly Topic*, 14 December 1988; for the failure to protect the Acholi civilians, see “100,000 displaced in Gulu,” *New Vision*, 14 November 1988; and “NRM officials narrowly escape rebel attack,” *The Citizen*, 3 May 1989, where the NRA admitted problems with its defense of Gulu town, after a large group of rebels entered the town, yelling and singing, and assaulted the hotel where the NRM officials were staying without any response from the NRA soldiers. See also “NRA mops up in the North,” *New Vision*, 18 March 18, which reports that the NRA troops in the area want the war to continue because of “operational allowances” and because they see it as intra-Acholi violence. For testimonies that civilians “feel that both the Holy Spirit and the NRA are no longer fighting each other but they, the civilians,” see “Rebels promote Latek,” *New Vision*, 1 November 1988. For genocide, see “N. Uganda: Okeny petitions Museveni,” *The Citizen*, 7 December 1988, where Okeny states that the NRA’s “scorched earth policy” in Acholiland appears to many Acholi civilians to be “the implementation of the often publicly uttered statements by high ranking NRM officials to exterminate a people.” As usual, the fact that the NRA actually has to defend itself against these accusations speaks to the accusations’ broad appeal: see “Holy Spirit enters Kitgum,” *New Vision*, 16 November 1988, where an NRA officer argues that, “The government troops are not out to wipe the Acholi. Some civilians believe that the government troops are in a sort of campaign to wipe them out.”

125. “Was NRM taken for a ride in N. Uganda?,” *The Citizen*, 29 August 1988.

126. On negotiations between Kony’s forces and NRA in Gulu, see “Holy Spirit talks continue,” *New Vision*, April 16, 1988; and “NRA, UPDA in final talks,” *New Vision*, 11 April 1988.

127. Caroline Lamwaka, “The Peace Process in Northern Uganda, 1986-1990,” ed. Conciliation Resources, London, *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives* (2002): 31.

128. “Holy Spirit Movement in a dilemma,” *New Vision*, 19 July 1988; “Kitgum rebels resume attacks,” *New Vision*, 30 January 1991; “Rebels abduct Gulu RC V Women Secretary,” *The Guide*, 14 March 1991.

129. “Civilians escape Gulu rebels,” *New Vision*, 19 February 1991.

130. "Holy Spirit smashed in Kitgum, Latek flees to Sudan," *New Vision*, 22 November 1988.
131. "'Anti-Lakwena' dismissals hit Gulu," *The Citizen*, 14 June 1989.
132. "Army, RCs relations deteriorate in Gulu," *The Guide*, 10 May 1990.
133. Oyoo P'Okeny, Editorial, *Weekly Topic*, 11 January 1991.
134. "Calm restored in Gulu," *New Vision*, 21 July 1989; "Peace returns to Gulu: What next?," *Weekly Topic*, 20 September 1989.
135. "Rebels in Kitgum hack 43 to death," *New Vision*, 11 April 1990; "Over 300 feared killed in Gulu crossfire," *The Guide*, 27 April 1990; "NRA, DA accused of rights violation in Gulu," *The Guide*, 2 August 1990; "Of civilians trapped between the army and rebels," *Weekly Topic*, 13 December 1990; "Civilians escape Gulu rebels," *New Vision*, 19 February 1991.
136. Behrend, Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits, 188.
137. "NRA mops up in the North," *New Vision*, 18 March 1991; "NRA launches search operation in the North," *New Vision*, 3 April 1991.
138. "Lira radios seized," *New Vision*, 4 April 1991.
139. "Kitgum DA replaced," *New Vision*, 6 April 1991; and "Atubo arrested," *New Vision*, 17 April 1991.
140. "Gulu gets Easter 'panda gari,'" *Weekly Topic*, 12 April 1991.
141. *The Citizen*, 24 April 1991, gives details abuses of detainees, dozens killed, scores tortured, looting, and rapes; I have had the locations of mass graves dating from this period pointed out to me in the course of my fieldwork in Acholiland.
142. "Museveni refutes brutality claims," *New Vision*, 14 May 1991; see also "Minister, CMs in court for treason," *New Vision*, 8 May 1991.
143. "3000 rebels netted in Kitgum," *New Vision*, 14 May 1991.
144. "Tinyefuza welcomes Red Cross," *New Vision*, 15 May 1991.
145. "Kitgum forms peoples' battalions," *New Vision*, 17 May 1991; "Gulu forms 'arrow' battalions," *The Economy*, 4 June 1991.
146. Behrend Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits, 189; "Kitgum stabilizes," *New Vision*, 30 July 1991.
147. "Kitgum rebels burn 14 in hut," *New Vision*, 4 June 1991.
148. "Kony rebels threaten," *New Vision*, 26 April 1994.
149. "Kony still in Kitgum," *New Vision*, 5 July 1991.
150. "Gulu assured of unity, peace," *New Vision*, 12 June 1991.
151. *Ibid.*
152. "Over 1500 rebels killed," *Weekly Topic*, 9 August 1991.
153. "Tinyefuza ends Operation North," *New Vision*, 30 July 1991; and "Word of advice to Betty Bigombe," *Weekly Topic*, 26 July 1991.
154. "Rebels massacre over 60 civilians," *The Guide*, 24 October 1991.
155. "Where tears and pain never seem to end," *Weekly Topic*, 20 September 1991.
156. October 24, 1991 *The Guide*, "Rebels massacre over 60 civilians."
157. Confidential interviews, Kampala February 2003, Gulu District April 2003.
158. "Kony rules revealed," *New Vision*, 14 February 1992.
159. Billie O'Kadameri, "LRA/Government Negotiations 1993-1994," ed. Conciliation Resources, London, *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives* (2002): 34-41.
160. "Kony wants UN role," *New Vision*, 22 February 1994.

161. "Bigombe, rebels meet in forest," *New Vision*, 1 December 1993; "Spirits give green light: Kony to meet Museveni," *Daily Topic*, 13 January 1994; "Museveni and Kony, make peace," *Monitor*, 25 February 1994; "Kony rebels reject Museveni's ultimatum?", *Monitor*, 18 February 1994.
162. "Kony rebels minor problem—Museveni," *New Vision*, 25 February 1994.
163. "Atrocities in Northern fighting: Secrets of NRA-Kony war exposed," *Monitor*, 11 March 1994; see also "Blood, tears flow in Gulu war," *Monitor*, 29 March 1994.
164. "Gulu attacks spread," *Daily Topic*, 23 February 1994; "Kony rebels burn minister's Pajero," *New Vision*, 23 February 1994; "Fighting erupts in Gulu," *Daily Topic*, 21 February 1994; "Rebels abduct women," *New Vision*, 13 May 1994; "Kony abducts 50," *New Vision*, 14 May 1994; "Havoc as Kony goes for RCs," *Daily Topic*, 25 May 1994.
165. "Kony rebels burn minister's Pajero," *New Vision*, 23 February 1994; "Kony rebels play soccer," 18 June 1994; "Otunnu to meet Kony in Sudan," *New Vision*, 28 July 1994.
166. "Kony gets new foreign arms supply," *Monitor*, 15 July 1994.
167. *Ibid.*
168. "Why NRM has failed in North – Bigombe," *Daily Topic*, 14 June 1994.
169. "NRA rapped for 'fearing' Kony rebels," *Monitor*, 23 August 1995; "Defence confirms Kony rebel attack," *New Vision*, 19 August 1995; "North border brings big headaches," *Monitor*, 21 August 1995; "Kitgum rocked as Kony rebels change tactics," *Sunday Vision*, 27 August 1995.
170. "Museveni and Kony, make peace," *Monitor*, 25 February 1994; Amaza 136.
171. "Kony intransigent," *New Vision*, 23 March 1994; "Kony gets new foreign arms supply," *Monitor*, 15 July 1994; "Sudan disowns Kony," *Daily Topic*, 3 August 1994.
172. "Five civilians killed," *New Vision*, 15 March 1994.
173. "Kony rebels get better weapons," *Sunday Vision*, 20 March 1994.
174. "Kony abducts boys for Sudan military camps," *Monitor*, 19 October 1994; "Kony flees to Sudan confirms Brig Shef Ali," *New Vision*, 3 November 1994.
175. "SPLA executes Kony prisoners," *New Vision*, 18 January 1995; "Terror as rebel mines blow up 23," *Monitor*, 15 February 1995.
176. "Disband Kony rebels, Museveni tells Sudan," *New Vision*, 3 May 1995; "Why has NRA failed to finish off Kony," *Monitor*, 12 May 1995; see also "Let someone take Kony as cheap labour," *Monitor*, 8 May 1995, in which Museveni blames Sudan's intention to export Islam throughout the continent.
177. "Kony abducts Children," *New Vision*, 20 February 1995; "Slavery returns: Sudanese dealers buy 110 Ugandan kids," *New Vision*, 7 February 1995.
178. "SPLA fighters kill 36 Kony rebels," *New Vision*, 3 November 1995; "SPLA rescues 100 children," *New Vision*, 7 November 1995.
179. "Kony supporters are demoralized—Bigombe," *New Vision*, 12 December 1995; "Itongwa, Kony finished says Maj. Gen. Mugisha Muntu," *Monitor*, 8-11 December 1995.
180. "Kony rebels enter Uganda," *New Vision*, 13 February 1996; "Kony attacks Kitgum," *New Vision*, 15 February 1996.
181. "Kony wants to disrupt elections," *New Vision*, 17 February 1996.
182. "Museveni telling lies about Kony?", *Crusader*, 23 February 1996; "Can Shefe Ali bring peace to Acholiland?", *The People*, 21 February 1996; "Sifting truth from hollow lies on Kony," *Monitor*, 23 February 1996.
183. "Kony rebels hit Gulu," *New Vision*, 30 March 1996; "Museveni rejects Kony peace talks," *New Vision*, 15 March 1996.
184. "Huge demos planned against Govt, Kony," *Monitor*, 13 March 1996.

185. "LRA rebels to honour ceasefire—spokesman," *New Vision*, 28 April 1996.
186. "Gulu in big panic: Kony fights for multipartyism," *New Vision*, 6 March 1996; "Kony rebels hold political rallies," *Sunday Vision*, 14 April 1996; "Kony rallies OK, says Ssemogerere," *New Vision*, 16 April 1996; "Kony rebels vow to take part in May elections," *Monitor*, 22 April 1996.
187. "Rebels blame Baganda," *New Vision*, 14 May 1996.
188. "Kony rebels plan attack," *New Vision*, 29 May 1996; "200 rebels on rampage as PM Kintu enters Gulu," *Monitor*, 7 June 1996.
189. "Saleh announces North offensive," *New Vision*, 20 June 1996; "No more talks with Kony—Saleh," *Crusader*, 18 July 1996.
190. Museveni's official decree ordering the creation of the camps came out in September 27, and wide-scale forcible displacement began on October 2; Human Rights Focus, *Between Two Fires: The Plight of IDPs in Northern Uganda* (Gulu Town: HURIFO, 2002): 11.
191. WFP Emergency Report No. 41 of 8 October 2004.
192. Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative, *Let my People Go: The Forgotten Plight of the People in the Displaced Camps in Acholi* (Gulu Town: Gulu Archdiocese, July 2001): 8-10; Human Rights Focus 16-24.
193. Senior Presidential Adviser Major Kakooza Mutale, quoted in Human Rights Focus 18.
194. RLP 30.
195. "9000 homeguards to counter Kony," *Sunday Vision*, 23 October 1994; "EC envoys assess Sudan-Kony threat," *New Vision*, 1 December 1994.
196. "Scores killed as NRA hits back," *Monitor*, 25 January 1995; "Slavery returns: Sudanese dealers buy 110 Ugandan kids," *New Vision*, 7 February 1995.
197. "Kony rebels massacre 82," *New Vision*, 22 April 1995; "Kony toll rises," *New Vision*, 24 April 1995; "Atiak's longest day of the bullet," *Sunday Vision*, 30 April 1995.
198. "Homeguards kill six Kony rebels," *New Vision*, 28 April 1995; "Govt to be sued over Atiak massacre," *Monitor*, 19 May 1995.
199. Confidential Interviews, May 2003, Gulu District.
200. Human Rights Focus 29.
201. Confidential interviews, Gulu, May 2003.
202. Human Rights Focus 27-30.
203. Human Rights Focus 30.
204. Confidential Interviews, March-April 2003, Gulu District.
205. *Ibid.*
206. *Ibid.*
207. See Acholi Religious Leader's Peace Initiative 12; Finnstrom 197-200; and Amnesty International, *Breaking the Circle: Protecting Human Rights in the Northern War Zone* (London: Amnesty International, March 1999).
208. Confidential Interviews, March- April 2003, Gulu District.
209. Human Rights Focus 10.
210. See Finnstrom's excellent exposition of this dilemma in Finnstrom 161-172. The only other organization with enough of a constituency to make serious demands is the Church, embodied in the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative. Indeed, they are the only organization that has consistently demanded the dismantling of the camps, precisely as they are not entirely beholden to foreign funds. It remains to be seen whether or not ARLPI will continue to voice the demands of the Acholi in the camps.
211. In this context, the International Criminal Court's current pursuit of "justice" in Northern Uganda is not to the point, limited as it is to the punishment of Kony and his top commanders.

**Reference Style:** The following is the suggested format for referencing this article: Adam Branch " Neither Peace nor Justice: Political Violence and the Peasantry in Northern Uganda, 1986-1998" *African Studies Quarterly* 8, no.2: (2005) [online] URL: <http://web.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v8/v8i2a1.htm>