

2023-12-20

# Galula in the Bush: A Case Study of Counterinsurgency Theory Using the Insurgent Conflicts in Postcolonial Uganda, 1981-2006

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Kingston, F. W. P. (2023). Galula in the bush: a case study of counterinsurgency theory using the insurgent conflicts in postcolonial Uganda, 1981-2006 (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada). Retrieved from <https://prism.ucalgary.ca>.

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Galula in the Bush: A Case Study of Counterinsurgency Theory Using the Insurgent Conflicts in  
Postcolonial Uganda, 1981-2006

by

Fenner William Patrick Kingston

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HISTORY

CALGARY, ALBERTA

DECEMBER, 2023

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## **Abstract**

This thesis uses primary and secondary sources to analyse the applicability of David Galula's counterinsurgency theories as described in his 1964 work *Contre-insurrection: théorie et pratique* to three cases from the insurgent conflicts in postcolonial Uganda from 1981 to 2006. These conflicts include the National Resistance Army (NRA) in the Luwero Triangle from 1981 to 1986, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in northern Uganda and southern Sudan from the group's founding in 1987 to its formal departure from Uganda in 2006, and the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and United National Rescue Front (UNRF I&II) insurgencies in West Nile district between 1986 and 2002.

These three cases offer examples of localised insurgent conflicts fought between national armed forces and regionally or ethnically motivated insurgent groups. This provides substantial evidence that Galula's theories apply in contexts other than the international, expeditionary and/or colonial counterinsurgent campaigns to which his theories have previously been applied. It concludes that Galula's theories offer both civilian and military leaders a model for counterinsurgency operations that they can readily apply. Galula's theory stands up when scrutinised in the context of thirty years of conflict in which ethnic, regional, geographic, and religious factors affected the insurgencies, thereby showing its applicability across a wide range of potential insurgencies.

## **Acknowledgements**

À tous ceux qui m'ont montré l'exemple, merci.

## List of Abbreviations

ADF	– <i>Forces alliées démocratiques</i> (Allied Democratic Forces)
AFDL(C)	– <i>L’alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre</i> (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre)
AI	– Amnesty International
ARLPI	– Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
AROPIC	– Aringa-Obongi Peace Initiative Committee
COIN	– Counterinsurgency
D, D, R & R	– Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reinsertion, and Reintegration
DP	– Democratic Party
DRC	– Democratic Republic of Congo
EDF	– Equatorial Defence Force
FEDEMU	– Federal Democratic Movement
FLN	– <i>Front de Libération Nationale</i> (National Liberation Front)
FRELIMO	– <i>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique</i> (Liberation Front of Mozambique)
FRONASA	– Front for National Salvation
FUNA	– Former Uganda National Army
HSM	– Holy Spirit Movement
ICC	– International Criminal Court
IDP(s)	– Internally Displaced Person(s)
LRA	– Lord’s Resistance Army
MDRP	– Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme
MLC	– Movement for Liberation of Congo
NATO	– North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCO	– Non-Commissioned Officer
NGO	– Non-governmental Organisation
NRA	– National Resistance Army

NRA/M	– National Resistance Army/Movement
NRM	– National Resistance Movement
RCD	– Rally for Congolese Democracy
RENAMO	– <i>Resistência Nacional Moçambicana</i> (Mozambican National Resistance)
RPF	– Rwanda Patriotic Front
SADC	– Southern African Development Community
SPLA	– Sudan People’s Liberation Army
SWAPO	– South West Africa People’s Organisation
TPDF	– Tanzanian People’s Defence Force
UA	– Uganda Army
UFM	– Uganda Freedom Movement
UNHCR	– United Nations Human Rights Commission
UNITA	– <i>União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola</i> (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
UNLA	– Uganda National Liberation Army
UNRF I	– United National Rescue Front (First Iteration)
UNRF II	– United National Rescue Front (Second Iteration)
UPC	– United Peoples’ Congress
UPM	– Uganda Patriotic Movement
UPA	– Uganda People’s Army
UPDA	– Ugandan People’s Defence Army
UPDA/M	– Ugandan People’s Defence Army/Movement
UPDM	– Ugandan People’s Defence Movement
USAID	– United States Agency for International Development
USMC	– United States Marine Corps
WNBF	– West Nile Bank Front
ZANU	– Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	– Zimbabwe African People’s Union

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## **Introduction**

Between 1981 and 2003, Uganda experienced a period of constant internal strife characterised by numerous armed insurgencies. The violent overthrow of Idi Amin in 1979 and Milton Obote's return to power in 1980 began nearly two decades of insurgent conflicts. Obote's winning the December 1980 national election caused Yoweri Museveni to launch an armed insurrection in the south of the country. Obote's United People's Congress (UPC) relied on support of northern Ugandans, while Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) relied on that of southerners. North vs south regional tension defined Ugandan politics from pre-colonial times up to the 1980s and continues to influence the country into the present. Between 1981 and 1986, Museveni's insurgent group, the National Resistance Army (NRA) fought the central government's armed forces, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). UNLA never succeeded in destroying the NRA, and, by late 1985, Obote's top general, Tito Lutwa Okello, used the ongoing war as a justification to oust Obote and then install himself as a military dictator. In early 1986, the NRA overthrew Okello's regime and installed itself as the government. Going from insurgents to counterinsurgents, the predominantly southern NRA then fought numerous campaigns against rebel groups in Uganda's North and North-west, including against Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), Juma Oris' West Nile Bank Front (WNBF), and Ali Bamuze's United National Rescue Front II (UNRF II). The LRA remains active into the present but has been expelled from Uganda into remote areas of neighbouring states, while the WNBF collapsed in 1998, and UNRF surrendered in 2002.

These conflicts serve as an excellent case study for the applicability of seminal counterinsurgency (COIN) theorist David Galula's ideas on how to defeat insurgencies. The recent NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan and subsequent Taliban takeover of the country has

raised questions about western counterinsurgency theory. The insurgencies in Uganda between 1981 and 2006 exemplify domestic counterinsurgencies in which regionalised rebels combat a postcolonial state's armed forces. As domestic counterinsurgencies, they provide opportunities for analysis that the more thoroughly studied insurgencies of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, namely the colonial or international expeditionary campaigns such as the British in Malaya and Kenya, French in Algeria, USA in Vietnam, or the Russians in Afghanistan, do not. This thesis examines these conflicts by applying Galula's theories as an analytical framework to the Ugandan insurgencies, an approach that the literature has so far not taken.<sup>1</sup> Peace and conflict studies, political science, sociology, and numerous journalistic works have described these insurgencies, but none have discussed these wars as a case study in domestic counterinsurgency. This thesis seeks to address this gap in the literature and demonstrate the validity of Galula's theories on how to best combat insurgent forces. These theories hold up to scrutiny in cases which include regional, ethnic, political, geographic, and religious motivating factors, making Galula's work a viable model for civilian and military leaders to readily use when designing their COIN strategies and tactics.<sup>2</sup>

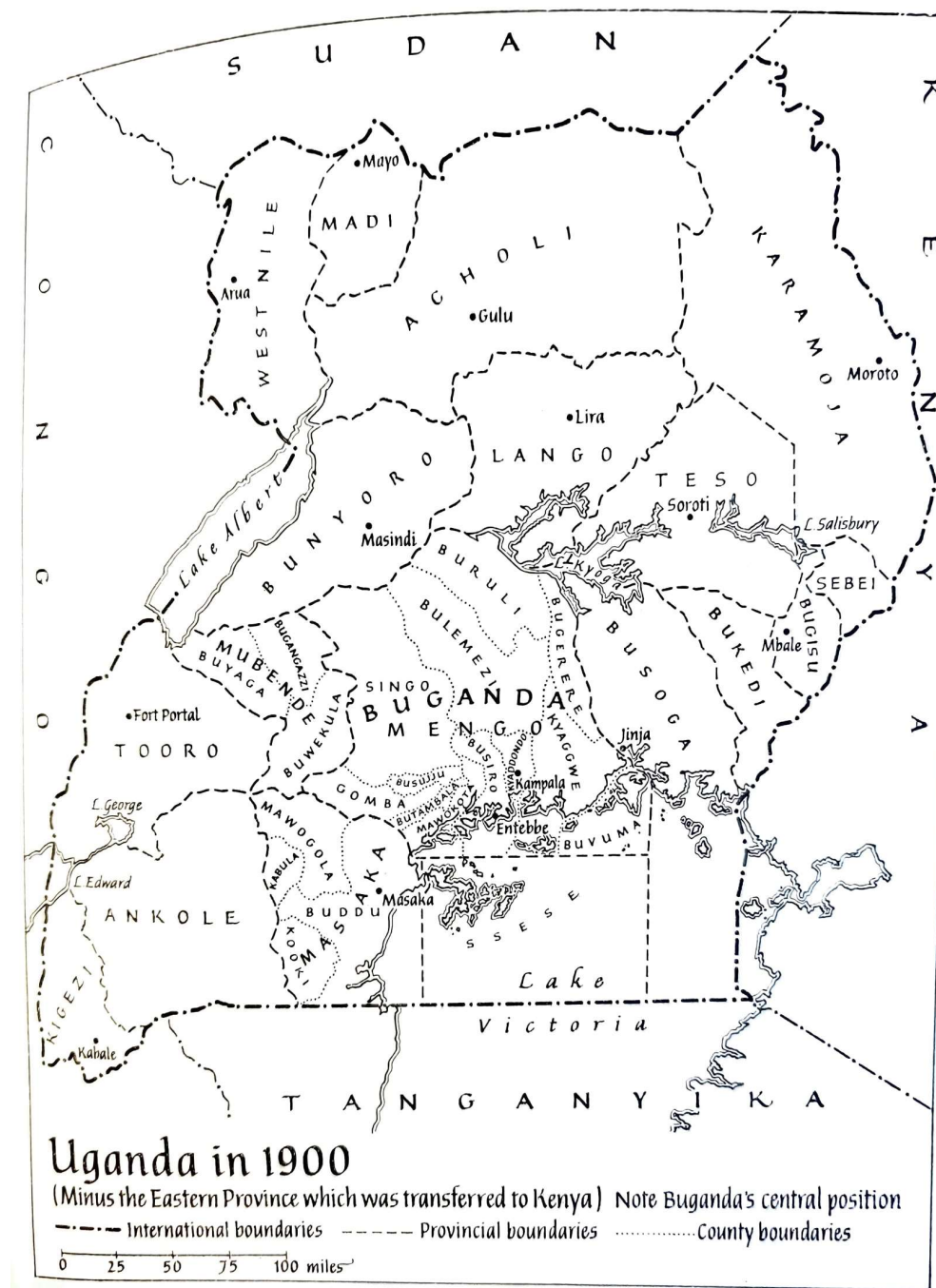
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<sup>1</sup> Stuart Jordon Randell, "Never Bring a Knife to a Gunfight: The Confrontation between the GoU/UPDF and the LRA in Northern Uganda, Viewed from a Fourth Generation Warfare Perspective," abstract (Master's Thesis, Royal Roads University (Canada), 2008), [https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/002/MR41762.PDF?oclc\\_number=669240893](https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/002/MR41762.PDF?oclc_number=669240893). The closest current approximation to this thesis comes from Stuart Randell, who investigated how the NRA's war with the LRA went from a localised insurgency to a 'fourth-generation' war. Randell approached the LRA case from a political science perspective, and concluded there exists a need for "multi-dimensional approaches to counterinsurgency".

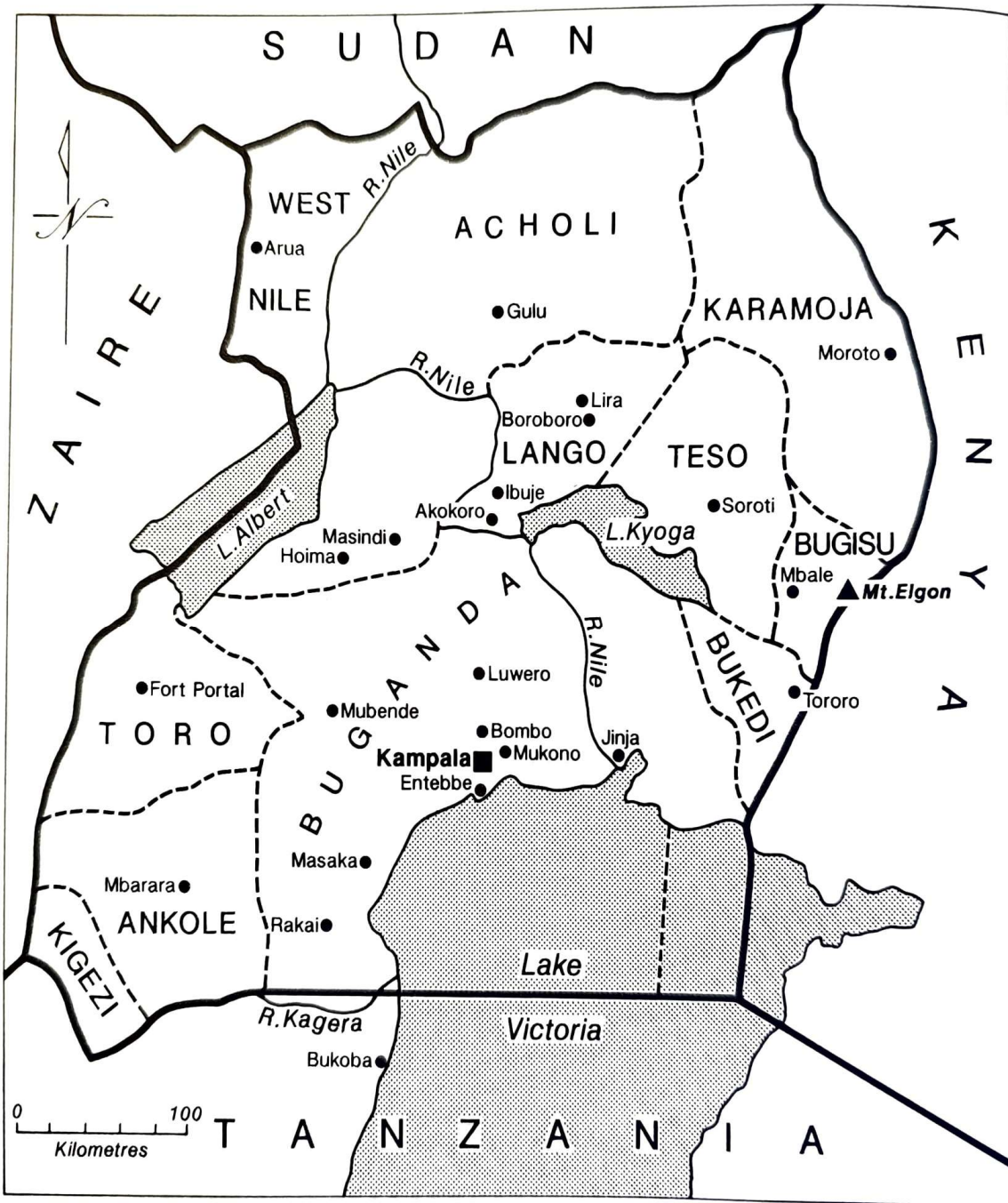
<sup>2</sup> Canadian Armed Forces, "Canadian Forces Joint Publication 01: Canadian Military Doctrine," Government of Canada Publications, last modified April 2009, accessed November 21, 2023, [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2010/forces/D2-252-2009-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2010/forces/D2-252-2009-eng.pdf). Throughout this work, 'strategy' and 'tactics' will be defined according to the definitions used by the Canadian Armed Forces. 'Strategy' will be as the policy objectives set forth by an armed group or state's senior leadership or governing body, and the actions taken to achieve these objectives. 'Tactics' will be defined as the planning and conduct of battles and engagements.

## Historical Context for the Ugandan Insurgencies

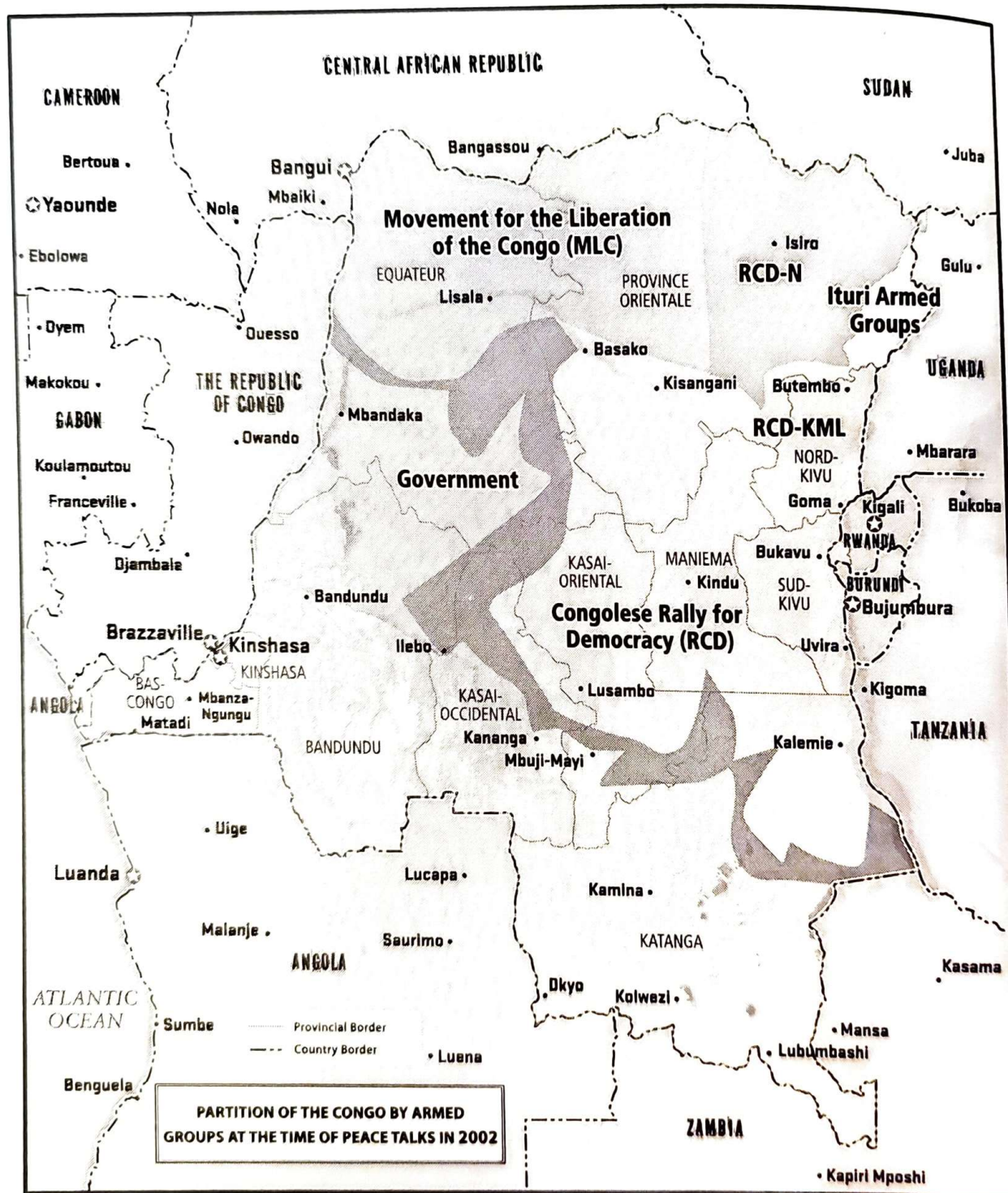
### 1: Uganda and its Regions in the Early Colonial Period, 1900<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda: From the Foundation of the Kingdom to 1900* (London, United Kingdom: Longman, 1971), xvii.

2: Uganda and its Regions after Independence, 1962<sup>4</sup>**UGANDA 1962**

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Ingham, *Obote: A Political Biography* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 1994), xii.

3: Partition of the Democratic Republic of Congo by Armed Groups, 2002<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York, USA: PublicAffairs, 2012), xvi.

The insurgencies in Uganda between 1981 and 2006 pitted northerners against southerners, an enmity that has characterised Ugandan society from precolonial times into the present.<sup>6</sup> This enmity existed in the pre-colonial era, but the colonial period between the declaration of the British Protectorate of Uganda in 1894 and independence in 1962 exacerbated these regional divisions.<sup>7</sup> When they arrived in what would become Uganda, the British encountered a territory starkly divided by climactic zones. These zones determined agricultural viability, with the more northern zones being arid, while the zones further south towards Lake Victoria enjoyed much more annual precipitation, making them ideal for agriculture. Accordingly, the northerners generally lived as decentralised pastoralists, and the southerners formed centralised kingdoms focused on farming. In the south, the Kingdom of Buganda dominated the especially fertile areas along the northern edge of Lake Victoria.<sup>8</sup> After intervening on behalf of the Christian Protestant faction in the Buganda civil war of the 1890s, the British chose to support and therefore empower the kingdom's elites as their intermediaries in the region because of their wealth and influence relative to the other native ethnic groups.<sup>9</sup> Relying on the Buganda Kingdom's powerful position in the region, the British spread northward to conquer the pastoralists.<sup>10</sup> The British took nearly twenty years to finally put down northern rebellions, with the Acholi ethnic group in particular proving tenacious.<sup>11</sup> This lengthy campaign convinced the British to employ northerners as soldiers in the colonial defence forces

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<sup>6</sup> Kiwanuka, *A History*, 136-137.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Sebastian Wegner, *The International Criminal Court in Ongoing Intrastate Conflicts: Navigating the Peace-justice Divide* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 152.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Twaddle, *Kakungulu and the Creation of Uganda: 1868-1928* (London, United Kingdom: James Currey, 1993), 20-21.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Otieno Wasonga, *The International Criminal Court and the Lord's Resistance Army: Enduring Dilemmas of Transitional Justice* (London, UK: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Twaddle, "'Tribalism' in Eastern Uganda," in *Tradition and Transition in East Africa: Studies of the Tribal Element in the Modern Era*, ed. P. H. Gulliver (London, UK: Routledge, 2004), 200.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Amone and Okullu Muura, "British Colonialism and the Creation of Acholi Ethnic Identity in Uganda, 1894 to 1962," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, no. 2 (2014): np.

defining them as members of supposed natural “martial races”.<sup>12</sup> The British made the southerners, especially Buganda elites into colonial agents for much of the rest of the broader territory as part of the indirect rule system.<sup>13</sup>

Uganda gained independence on 9 October 1962.<sup>14</sup> Symbolising the historic privilege of the southerners, the *Kabaka* or king of Buganda became the ceremonial president of the country. Milton Obote, a northerner of the Langi ethnic group, rode a wave of anti-southerner sentiment to win the first election for Prime Minister. Obote exploited northerners’ feelings of disenfranchisement for the sake of political expediency. He eventually used the northern-dominated army to force the *Kabaka* to flee into exile in 1966 thereby eliminating the last vestige of southern privilege<sup>15</sup> This allowed Obote to assume complete control and take the role of executive president. He couched his vitriolic rhetoric in assertions of the need for rectifying regional inequality inherited from the colonial era.<sup>16</sup> A wily politician, he fomented the political and economic grievances of the Northern Provinces in a bid to solidify his base of support in the decade preceding self-rule.<sup>17</sup> After studying at Makerere College in the early 1950s and travelling in Europe to expand his knowledge about how to run a western-style political organisation, Obote returned to Uganda. His studies and travels, coupled with what he saw as dysfunctional Ugandan nationalist parties, motivated him to found the Ugandan People’s

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<sup>12</sup> Heather Streets-Salter, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2017), 7-9. Streets-Salter’s book uses the example of the British in India to illustrate how colonial conceptions of race drove recruiting priorities throughout the British Empire.

<sup>13</sup> Frederick J.D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 1965), 196-198. The indirect rule system relied on locals in the colonies to act as the agents of the British colonial authority while remaining subservient to colonial officials, which helped cut administrative costs.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Twaddle, "Ganda Receptivity to Change," *The Journal of African History* 15, no. 2 (1974): 305.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas P. Ofcansky, *Uganda: Tarnished Pearl of Africa* (Boulder, CO: Routledge, 2018), 26-42.

<sup>16</sup> A.B.K. Kasozi, Nakanyike Musisi, and James Mukooza Sejjengo, *The Social Origins of Violence in Uganda, 1964-1985* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 60-62.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Laruni, "Regional and Ethnic Identities: The Acholi of Northern Uganda, 1950–1968," *Journal of African Studies* 9, no. 2 (2015): 215.

Congress (UPC) in 1952.<sup>18</sup> The new party included people Obote recruited from existing parties and leveraged the discontent among the northerners from the outset.<sup>19</sup> This trend of inflammatory rhetoric continued as Obote's political star rose. In a letter to the *Uganda Herald*, he argued that the colonial powers had favoured the southerners at the expense of the northerners: "We semi-hamites and Norsemen [Nilotes] of Uganda feel that the Congress aiming at 'Self-governance in Uganda is therefore hastening and leaving us behind because of our present inability to aim so high.'"<sup>20</sup>

The January 1971 coup led by General Idi Amin coincided with Obote leaving Uganda to attend a Commonwealth conference in Singapore.<sup>21</sup> Amin, one of the first two Ugandans to be promoted to the officer corps before independence, quickly rose to become the commander of the Ugandan Armed Forces.<sup>22</sup> In 1970, he had been demoted and removed from his post by Obote over fears that the general could challenge the president's authority. Amin's significant following in the Ugandan armed forces, a result of his recruiting campaigns among his Kakwa ethnic group, made such a challenge very possible.<sup>23</sup> Obote meant to arrest Amin under charges of misappropriating public funds in late 1970, and driven by the instinct of self-preservation, Amin seized power with Obote absent.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the day on 25 January 1971, Amin's forces completed their takeover of Kampala largely without bloodshed. Obote did not return

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<sup>18</sup> Ingham, *Obote: A Political*, 54.

<sup>19</sup> Ingham, *Obote: A Political*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Hugh Dinwiddie, "The Search for Unity in Uganda: Early Days to 1966," *African Affairs* 80, no. 321 (1981): 503.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Leopold, *Idi Amin: The Story of Africa's Icon of Evil* (New Haven, USA: Yale University Press, 2020), 178-179.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Pearson, "Ugandan Dictator Idi Amin, Ousted in 1979, Dies," *Washington Post* (Washington, USA), August 17, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Timothy Parsons, *The 1964 Army Mutinies and the Making of Modern East Africa* (Westport, USA: Praeger, 2003), 200-201.

<sup>24</sup> Richard J. Reid, "Idi Amin's Coup d'État, Uganda 1971," *Origins: Current Events in Historical Perspective*, last modified January 2021, accessed November 20, 2023, [https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/idi-amins-uganda-coup-1971?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://origins.osu.edu/milestones/idi-amins-uganda-coup-1971?language_content_entity=en).



following the coup, which left Amin in control. He ruled until 1979 through divisiveness and corruption.<sup>25</sup> On 5 August 1972, Amin ordered the expulsion of all Ugandans of Asian heritage, ostensibly because their presence sabotaged the Ugandan economy. Only one thousand of the original sixty-thousand Asians remained in the country by 1973, and Amin redistributed their businesses amongst African Ugandans to disastrous results.<sup>26</sup> He continued this tactic of encouraging ethnic divisions and hatred despite its severely negative impact on Uganda and its national unity.<sup>27</sup> He played ethnic groups off against each other to ensure that no one group ever gained enough strength to challenge his rule and famously supplemented this tactic through brutally exterminating those who he felt posed a threat to his regime.<sup>28</sup> Amin also had critics murdered such as in the case of the 1977 targeted killing of Anglican Archbishop Janani Luwum (a northerner like Amin) whose murder was staged as car accident after publicly denouncing Amin's despotic rule.<sup>29</sup>

In the latter half of the 1970s, Amin began to show increasing paranoia, and political weakness. Amin strained his tenuous hold on power through inflammatory foreign policy. In the 1976 Israeli Raid on Entebbe, Amin allowed the German and Palestinian hijackers of Air France 139 to land and hold the aircraft's passengers hostage at Entebbe Airport in late June 1976.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Amnesty International, *Uganda: The Human Rights Record 1986-1989*, 5, March 1, 1989, accessed February 8, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/001/1989/en/>.

<sup>26</sup> Vali Jamal, "Asians in Uganda, 1880-1972: Inequality and Expulsion," *The Economic History Review* 29, no. 4 (1976): 602.

<sup>27</sup> Randolph John Nogel, "Human Rights and Uganda's Expulsion of Its Asian Minority Human Rights and Uganda's Expulsion of Its Asian Minority," *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy* 3, no. 1 (1973): 107. Of the Asians Amin expelled, most came from Pakistani or Indian backgrounds, but their families had lived in Ugandan for generations as part of the British colonial system. These Asians according to Nogel, controlled 90% of the Ugandan economy, and made up 80% of the country's doctors, lawyers, and teachers.

<sup>28</sup> John Darnton, "Idi Amin: A Savior Who Became the Creator of 8 Years of Horror," *The New York Times* (New York, USA), April 30, 1979, accessed January 12, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/04/30/archives/idi-amin-a-savior-who-became-the-creator-of-8-years-of-horror.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Leopold, *Idi Amin*, 276.

<sup>30</sup> Judah Ari Gross, "Entebbe in Person: A New Oral History Challenges Official Account of 1976 Rescue," *Times of Israel* (Jerusalem, Israel), August 23, 2021, accessed November 20, 2023, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/entebbe-in-person-a-new-oral-history-challenges-official-account-of-1976-rescue/>.

The Israeli *Sayeret Matkal* special reconnaissance unit carried out Operation THUNDERBOLT on the night of 3-4 July rescuing the mostly Israeli prisoners.<sup>31</sup> This assault, which made headlines internationally, severely damaged Amin's attempts to portray himself as a powerful military leader both domestically and on the global stage.<sup>32</sup> During the period between Op THUNDERBOLT and 1978, Amin began to remove senior officers from their powerful positions in the Uganda Army (UA).<sup>33</sup> These senior officers leveraged those soldiers loyal to them to begin plotting against Amin. This worsened Amin's paranoia, and he began using the Tanzanians as a scapegoat accusing them of harbouring Ugandan exiled groups. These accusations meant to give the various factions within the Uganda Army a common enemy in the Tanzanians, thereby deflecting their ire from Amin. Several assassination attempts in October 1978 deepened his paranoia and desperation to keep power, which led him to order the invasion of Tanzania on 30 October.<sup>34</sup> After the Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF) repulsed this initial invasion, Amin's forces invaded again at the end of November.<sup>35</sup> The Tanzanian leader, Julius Nyerere, used the Ugandan aggression as an opportunity to depose Amin, who he found embarrassing to postcolonial Africa's international credibility.<sup>36</sup> The TPDF evicted the Ugandan invaders in January 1979, then crossed the border and smashed their way to Kampala. Amin fled

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<sup>31</sup> IDF Editorial Team, "Operation Entebbe," The Israel Defence Forces, last modified February 1, 2018, accessed November 20, 2023, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/wars-and-operations/operation-entebbe/>.

<sup>32</sup> The United Nations Security Council, "S/PV 1939," United Nations Documents Archive, [https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.1939\(OR\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/PV.1939(OR)). Amin's foreign minister, then-Lieutenant-Colonel Juma Oris, complained that the Israeli operation constituted an act of aggression against Uganda in the UN Security Council meeting that convened a few days after Op THUNDERBOLT.

<sup>33</sup> Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin* (Westport, USA: L. Hill, 1982), 51.

<sup>34</sup> Martha Honey, "Nyerere Vows to Drive Ugandans Out," *Washington Post* (Washington, USA), November 3, 1978, accessed November 18, 2023, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1978/11/03/nyerere-vows-to-drive-ugandans-out/32441a4f-e050-41df-b109-c1ca415b79a8/>.

<sup>35</sup> Leopold, *Idi Amin*, 284.

<sup>36</sup> Peter F. B. Nayenga, "The Overthrowing of Idi Amin: An Analysis of the War," *Africa Today* 31, no. 3 (1984): 69-70.

first to Libya, then Saudi Arabia.<sup>37</sup> The TPDF invasion force included exiled Ugandans and Rwandans of Museveni's Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) that the Tanzanians trained throughout the 1970s.<sup>38</sup> FRONASA also trained with the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) government armed forces in Mozambique during that same decade, giving them a well-rounded tactical background.<sup>39</sup> The TPDF occupied Uganda briefly to provide security and stability, while Museveni leveraged his influence as FRONASA's leader to become the Deputy Prime Minister in the interim government of Yusuf Lule, an Obote acolyte.<sup>40</sup>

Both Obote's and Amin's northern-dominated regimes failed to advance the standard of living for Ugandans, and created a culture of desperation, poverty, and state terrorism against the population.<sup>41</sup> The fighting during the Tanzanian invasion destroyed significant infrastructure, which exacerbated the pre-existing problems facing Ugandan civilians. Political turmoil and general lawlessness characterised Lule's interim government, and he lost power after sixty-eight days.<sup>42</sup> Godfrey Binaisa (formerly Obote's Attorney-General) took control, and subsequently lost power after he attempted to eliminate party-based voting. Paulo Muwanga, another Obote man, then took power and used his position as the head of the Military Commission to lay the groundwork for Obote's return and victory in the election of December 1980, mostly through violent suppression of the UPC's political enemies.<sup>43</sup> The Democratic Party (DP) under Paul

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<sup>37</sup> Alicia C. Decker, *In Idi Amin's Shadow: Women, Gender, and Militarism in Uganda* (Athens, USA: Ohio University Press, 2014), 204-205.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy J. Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict in the Twentieth Century* (London, UK: Routledge, 2018), 120-121.

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan Fisher, *East Africa after Liberation: Conflict, Security and the State since the 1980s* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 40.

<sup>40</sup> Fisher, *East Africa*, 58.

<sup>41</sup> Amnesty International, "Human Rights Violations in Uganda," news release, June 1978, accessed January 27, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afr590071978en.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> Jimmy K. Tindigarukayo, "Uganda, 1979-85: Leadership in Transition," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 26, no. 4 (1988): 609-611.

<sup>43</sup> Reid, *A History*, 73.

Ssemogerere and the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) under Yoweri Museveni claimed that the DP won the election, but Obote took power anyway. These two parties represented southerners, and Museveni declared the election fraudulent, then launched his NRA insurgency in response, while the DP remained politically active but functionally unimportant.<sup>44</sup>

The NRA fought the government in southern Uganda during the Luwero Triangle War, then took power when it defeated UNLA, by then the state armed forces. With their defeat of UNLA in 1986, the NRA became the national armed forces of Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) government. Shortly after taking power, the NRA then launched counterinsurgency campaigns against northerner insurgent groups. It first battled the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), defeating it in 1987. With the flight of HSM leader Alice Auma to Kenya, the LRA under Joseph Kony absorbed many of the HSM's fighters.<sup>45</sup> The LRA quickly turned into a serious threat to civilians and regional stability in northern Uganda's Acholiland.<sup>46</sup> The NRA fought northerner insurgent groups in the West Nile region, led former Obote or Amin officers, between 1986 and 2002 as well.<sup>47</sup>

During the campaigns against the LRA, WNBF, and UNRF in northern Uganda, Museveni succeeded in passing a new constitution in 1995.<sup>48</sup> In this constitution, Museveni's

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<sup>44</sup> Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard Seed: The Struggle for Freedom and Democracy in Uganda*, 2nd ed., ed. Alice K. Muhoozi (Nairobi, Kenya: Moran, 2020), 172.

<sup>45</sup> Erin Baines, *Buried in the Heart: Women, Complex Victimhood and the War in Northern Uganda* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 104-105.

<sup>46</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda: Amnesty International Condemns 'Callous and Calculated' Killings by Ugandan Rebels," news release, July 18, 1996, accessed September 25, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/002/1996/en/>.

<sup>47</sup> Artur Bogner and Gabriele Rosenthal, *The "Untold" Stories of Outsiders and Their Significance for the Analysis of (Post-) Conflict Figurations. Interviews with Victims of Collective Violence in Northern Uganda (West Nile)*, August 23, 2014, accessed September 8, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.17169/FQS-15.3.2138>.

<sup>48</sup> Government of Uganda, "Constitution of Uganda," International Labour Organisation, last modified September 22, 1995, accessed November 20, 2023, <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/44038/90491/F206329993/UGA44038.pdf>.

NRM government established a legal framework that laid out the rights and responsibilities of all Ugandans. Importantly, this period of national legal change aligned with a transitional period for the national armed forces. Also in 1995, the NRA changed its name to the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF).<sup>49</sup> The NRA had, since 1981 when Museveni declared his rebellion, served as the armed wing of the NRM. Changing the name of the armed forces from NRA to UPDF meant to show that the army no longer belonged to any one political party but represented Ugandans as a whole. Functionally, though, the NRM still exercised complete domination of the political system, and Museveni's friends and relatives still made up most of the UPDF's leadership.<sup>50</sup> Publicly, Museveni claimed that he meant to downsize the armed forces, to reduce military spending. This downsizing would also ostensibly allow the Ugandan Government to purchase enough equipment to move from being an almost entirely light infantry-based force into a proper national standing armed forces.<sup>51</sup> Between 1995 and 2000, the UPDF managed to purchase numerous aircraft and armoured vehicles, mostly from Ukraine in the wake of the USSR's collapse.<sup>52</sup> This made the UPDF a relatively well-equipped force by the end of the 1990s, and allowed it to morph from a light infantry force into one with some specialised capabilities such as mechanisation and air power.

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<sup>49</sup> Government of Uganda, "Our History," Uganda People's Defence Force, last modified 2023, accessed November 20, 2023, <https://www.updf.go.ug/who-we-are/our-history/>. Throughout this thesis, either NRA, UPDF, or occasionally NRA/UPDF will be used, depending on the period being discussed. The NRA will be used for periods before 1995, the NRA/UPDF will be used for periods in and around 1995, and the UPDF will be used from 1996 and onwards.

<sup>50</sup> Crisis Group, "Uganda: No Resolution to Growing Tensions," news release, April 5, 2012, accessed November 20, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/uganda/uganda-no-resolution-growing-tensions>.

<sup>51</sup> Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard*, 268-269.

<sup>52</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SPRI Arms Transfer Database," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, last modified 2023, accessed November 19, 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/armstransfers>.

In the surrounding nations, wars raged concurrently, some of which prompted the deployment of UN peacekeeping missions.<sup>53</sup> These wars included the Angolan Civil Wars of 1975-1988 and 1992-2002, the Rwandan Civil War of 1990-1994 including the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, the Second Sudan Civil War of 1983-2005, and the First and Second Congo Wars of 1996-1997 and 1998-2002, respectively. These proximate wars, often complicated by cross-border insurgencies and refugee crises, bled over into Uganda.<sup>54</sup>

The First and Second Congo Wars embroiled many African states between 1996 and 2002, including the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Sudan, Libya, Zimbabwe and Namibia, whether through their direct intervention or because of spillover from their own concurrent civil wars.<sup>55</sup> In the First Congo War from 1996 to 1997, Rwandan, Ugandan, and Angolan forces invaded Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)) and executed a regime change against the Zaïrean dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko.<sup>56</sup> The Rwandans and Ugandans created and supported *L'alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (ADFL) soon after their invasion. This rebel group acted as their proxy in DRC and helped destabilise Mobutu.<sup>57</sup> After Mobutu's ouster, the three invaders installed ADFL leader and veteran Congolese revolutionary Laurent-Désiré Kabila as President,

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<sup>53</sup> The United Nations, "Past Peace Operations," United Nations Peacekeeping, last modified 2023, accessed November 20, 2023, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/past-peacekeeping-operations>.

<sup>54</sup> The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, ed., "Democratic Republic of Congo," The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, last modified 2023, accessed October 13, 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo>. The UNHCR counts 529 000 refugees, 5.6 million IDPs in DRC as a whole, and 4 million IDPs in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces specifically as of November 2023.

<sup>55</sup> Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2012), 351-353.

<sup>56</sup> Filip Reyntjens, *The Great African War: Congo and Regional Geopolitics, 1996-2006* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 45-46.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy J. Stapleton, ed., *Modern African Conflicts: An Encyclopedia of Civil Wars, Revolutions, and Terrorism* (Santa Barbara, USA: ABC-CLIO, 2022), 88-89.

who they believed would allow them to accomplish their respective goals.<sup>58</sup> The Rwandans intended to pursue and crush the exiled Rwandan Hutus many of whom had been involved in the genocide against the Tutsi. The UPDF sought to destroy insurgents from West Nile and Acholiland, and the *Forces alliées démocratiques* (ADF) rebels from western Uganda that used eastern DRC as a staging area for attacks against Uganda. The Angolans meant to defeat the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) rebels that had used Mobutu's regime to smuggle diamonds and fund their war effort against the Angolan government.<sup>59</sup>

Kabila proved less amenable to Rwanda and Ugandan interests than they had hoped, however. When Kabila tried to boost his domestic legitimacy in Congo by expelling Rwandan forces, the Rwandans and Ugandans invaded again in 1998, this time with Burundi in tow. This second invasion further complicated the already messy security environment in eastern DRC. The Rwandans set up the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) as a Congolese proxy rebel group to further their interests in the DRC, while the Ugandans did the same when they created the Movement for Liberation of Congo (MLC). By this point, though, Kabila had joined the Southern African Development Community (SADC) calling on it to help him repulse these invasions. Of the SADC member states, only Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia deployed troops to aid Kabila, against the will of South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory*, 114-115.

<sup>59</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, "Business and War in Angola," *Review of African Political Economy* 28, no. 90 (2001): 637.

<sup>60</sup> Prunier, *Africa's World*, 185. The Angolans joined Kabila to continue to fight UNITA, which by this time had begun developing relationships with the governments in Kigali and Kampala. The Namibians got involved to support Angola, which had helped them gain independence in the South African Border War. The Zimbabweans deployed to solidify their investments in eastern DRC, investments that Kabila had enabled. The South Africans, Botswanans, and Zambians feared fighting fellow American allies Uganda and Rwanda, nor did they fancy helping an unelected government.

Laurent Kabila believed that continuing the war would help him hold onto power. On 16 January 2001, one of his bodyguards killed him, and his son Joseph Kabila took power.<sup>61</sup> The younger Kabila brought the important belligerents to the negotiating table; he had been calling for peace talks before his father's death. This resulted in the Global and Inclusive Agreement, which took place in December 2002.<sup>62</sup> The Rwandans and Ugandans, in the face of international pressure following the agreement, eventually withdrew their forces from eastern DRC. They remained involved in DRC, though, mostly through their continued support for insurgent groups.<sup>63</sup>

The Second Sudan Civil War of 1983-2005 involved Umar al-Bashir's government forces trying to suppress the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), an insurgency based in what would eventually become South Sudan. Al-Bashir took power in a military coup from Sadiq al-Mahdi in June 1989, and the new government intensified aggressive Arabisation and Islamisation policies in the predominantly Christian southern Sudan.<sup>64</sup> Throughout the first half of the 1990s, al-Bashir provided material and logistical support to Ugandan rebel groups, including the WNBF and LRA, who he allowed to establish training camps in Sudanese territory. Museveni's regime supported the SPLA throughout the 1990s on behalf of the USA, which sought to isolate the Sudanese for being a state sponsor of terror. Al-Bashir provided significant aid to northern Ugandan insurgents in response. By 1997, though, the Sudanese

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<sup>61</sup> Reyntjens, *The Great*, 252-253. For conspiracy theories over Kabila's assassination see Colette Braeckman's *Les nouveaux prédateurs : politique des puissances en Afrique*.

<sup>62</sup> Jason K. Stearns, *The War That Doesn't Say Its Name: The Unending Conflict in the Congo* (Princeton, USA: Princeton University Press, 2021), 34.

<sup>63</sup> Stearns, *The War That*, 40.

<sup>64</sup> Caroline Cox and John Eibner, "Khartoum's Loss Is the World's Gain," *Wall Street Journal* (Brussels, Belgium), February 14, 1997, Europe edition, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fkhartoums-loss-is-worlds-gain%2Fdocview%2F308235715%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.



began to prioritise their oil exports, meaning they sought to cultivate a less problematic image in the international market. They withdrew their support from the Ugandan insurgent groups and expelled these groups. The lack of Sudanese support for the insurgents allowed the UPDF to quickly destroy them.<sup>65</sup> By 2002, the SPLA and Sudanese government began US-driven peace talks in Kenya. These talks, which resulted in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, officially ended the Second Sudan Civil War and eventually led to the independence of South Sudan in 2011.<sup>66</sup>

The end of the Second Sudan Civil War coincided with the end of the UPDF's Operation IRON FIST II, after which the LRA began its relocation into the borderlands in northeastern DRC and southeastern CAR. The UPDF's COIN operations in the early to mid-2000s marked the beginning of a lull in insurgent activity in Uganda. The preceding decades of violent insurgencies throughout the country, including the NRA in Luwero during the 1980s, the LRA in northern Uganda from the late 1980s to early 2000s, and the West Nile insurgencies of the 1990s and early 2000s, all offered examples of postcolonial state armed forces combating regionally based insurgent groups. These three very different cases demonstrate the applicability of Galula's theories on successful counterinsurgency when considered in the context of domestic insurgencies.

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<sup>65</sup> James C. McKinley, Jr, "Albright, in Uganda, Steps up Attack on Sudan's War of Terror," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), December 11, 1997, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fhistorical-newspapers%2Falbright-uganda-steps-up-attack-on-sudans-war%2Fdocview%2F109762305%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

<sup>66</sup> Benedetta De Alessi, "Peacemaking, the SPLM/A's Political Transition during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement Era and Conflict in the Sudans," in *Making and Breaking Peace in Sudan and South Sudan: The Comprehensive Peace Agreement and beyond*, ed. Sarah M.H. Nouwen, Laura M. James, and Sharath Srinivasan (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020), 103.

## Sources and Historiography

Discussing the insurgencies in Uganda between 1981 and 2003 presents numerous challenges, with the worst being the lack of archival sources with which to work. Post-colonial African governments, and especially their militaries, do not have a culture of archiving documents for public access.<sup>67</sup> What information these governments do share online comes from either government ministries that doctor information to make sure it portrays the government positively, or media outlets that do the same. Uganda under Museveni's autocratic rule strictly adheres to this trend. The man has held power since 1986 and tends to place those that oppose him in elections under house arrest during the election period in almost comical displays of authoritarianism.<sup>68</sup> The major news organisations in Kampala often run stories that glorify Museveni and his former comrades in the NRA, vaunting their accomplishments as revolutionaries that fought for 'freedom' and 'democracy'.<sup>69</sup> Those that do not, such as the *Uganda Daily Monitor*, founded by seven independent journalist in 1993, face targeted harassment from Museveni's government.<sup>70</sup> In the face of this harassment, local newspapers

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<sup>67</sup> Derek R. Peterson, "The Politics of Archives in Uganda," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, ed. Thomas Spear (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2021), 18. Peterson's chapter discusses the secretive culture around archives in Uganda. The Ugandan government relies heavily on international funding and assistance to manage its archives, but even the Uganda National Archives in Kampala receive very little of the funding initially allotted to them in government budgets. Corruption in the Ministry of Public Service helps explain why this allotted money does not make it to the Archives themselves.

<sup>68</sup> Abdi Latif Dahir, "Uganda's Top Opposition Leader Says He Is under House Arrest," *The New York Times* (New York, USA), October 5, 2023, accessed October 13, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/05/world/africa/uganda-bobi-wine.html>.

<sup>69</sup> The Uganda Daily Monitor, "A Brotherhood Built in the Army," *The Uganda Daily Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), July 12, 2020, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/a-brotherhood-built-in-the-army-1899462>. This article exemplifies the kind of article the Uganda Daily Monitor publishes on a regular basis. It profiles old 'freedom fighters' that heroically delivered 'democracy' to Uganda, liberating it from the evil clutches of Obote and Amin. Almost every one of these profiles involve interviewing an individual that fought with the NRA, and they often became a Major, Colonel, or General after 1986. Interestingly, Museveni's son proved himself such an elite officer that he achieved the rank of Major only three years after commissioning as a Second Lieutenant.

<sup>70</sup> Bernard Tabaire, "The Press and Political Repression in Uganda: Back to the Future?," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 194.

critical of Museveni have gradually become more overtly supportive of the regime. This carefully doctored messaging compounds the issues created by a lack of available archival sources when attempting to conduct primary source research.

This situation leaves those researching African militaries few options for primary sources. Reports from NGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, or the Crisis Group offer one. Reporting from non-Ugandan news sources offer another. The numerous works that involve oral history with local interviewees prove the most useful readily available primary sources, though. Decades of NGO activity, sociological and anthropological studies, and foreign journalism created this body of interview-based sources. In the absence of readily accessible archives, these interviews pass for a primary source base about Ugandan insurgencies. This thesis uses these sources in place of archival sources and supplements them with information from books and articles. Thankfully, by the late 1990s, the advent of the internet allowed international news organisations, NGOs, and individuals conducting research in LRA-controlled areas to begin posting some materials online.

With the end of the insurgencies in West Nile in 2002, interview-based sources became more common, as researchers had less reason to fear conducting field work in the country by this time.<sup>71</sup> The literature on Ugandan insurgencies has therefore steadily grown. The academic literature on the Luwero Triangle War mostly includes articles from non-historical disciplines, although a few books have been written by both historians and journalists who interviewed

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<sup>71</sup> Frank Schubert, "'Guerrillas Don't Die Easily': Everyday Life in Wartime and the Guerrilla Myth in the National Resistance Army in Uganda, 1981–1986," *International Review of Social History* 51, no. 1 (2006).

former NRA fighters.<sup>72</sup> Some former members of UNLA even published their own stories.<sup>73</sup> Works on the NRA specifically have been constrained by both Museveni's strict control of the narrative surrounding the insurgency in Ugandan media and publications, as well as a general lack of international attention on his group during its war in the early 1980s.<sup>74</sup>

The expansive literature dealing with the LRA overwhelmingly dominates the wider literature on Ugandan insurgencies.<sup>75</sup> This literature mostly comes from field studies by sociologists and anthropologists who sought out and interviewed LRA insurgents, particularly 'returnees', the term for people who successfully escape the LRA and return to civilian life.<sup>76</sup> International academic interest in the LRA grew exponentially in the wake of a video posted to YouTube in 2012, which depicted its leader, Joseph Kony, as a child murderer and kidnapper.<sup>77</sup> Some important historical works have been written, however, with Lawrence Cline's history of the LRA standing out as a prominent example.<sup>78</sup> Another important work on the group came from Robert Gersony, hired by the United States Agency for International Development

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<sup>72</sup> William Pike, *Combatants: A Memoir of the Bush War and the Press in Uganda* (Nairobi, Kenya: William Pike, 2019). Pike's work includes many interviews with NRA soldiers and offers probably the most comprehensive picture of life in the insurgency aside from those works written by former members. A journalist, he gained impressive levels of access to the senior leadership of the NRA early in the Luwero Triangle War, including the first interview with Museveni after the outbreak of the conflict. His interviews with many of the most senior members of the insurgency throughout the war paint a vivid picture of the development of the organisation and their strategic thinking as the campaign progressed. As a non-Ugandan, his outsider's perspective enabled him to record the NRA's insurgency without falling prey to simply regurgitating their party line as a public mouthpiece for the organisation. The trust he gained with NRA leadership carried forward into the Editor-in-chief job at NewVision, the Ugandan national newspaper, beginning after the insurgents took power in early 1986. This newspaper eventually became a staunchly pro-NRA/M media outlet.

<sup>73</sup> Robeson Bennazoo Otim Engur, *Survival: A Soldier's Story* (Bloomington, USA: AuthorHouse, 2013), 174-175.

<sup>74</sup> Stapleton, *Modern African*, 339. See Patrick Whang's section for additional sources on the Bush War in Luwero from 1981-1986.

<sup>75</sup> See the edited collection by Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot, eds., *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality* (London, United Kingdom: Zed Books, 2010).

<sup>76</sup> Phuong Pham, Patrick Vinck, and Eric Stover, "The Lord's Resistance Army and Forced Conscription in Northern Uganda," *Human Rights Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (2008): 409.

<sup>77</sup> "KONY 2012," video, 29:58, YouTube, posted by Invisible Children, March 5, 2012, accessed March 5, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc>.

<sup>78</sup> Lawrence E. Cline, *The Lord's Resistance Army* (Santa Barbara, USA: Praeger, 2013).

(USAID) to produce an analysis on the security situation in northern Uganda during the mid-1990s. His 1997 report, entitled *The Anguish of Northern Uganda*, appears consistently in literature regarding the LRA.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the LRA's strategic use of terror tactics, including massacres, mass rapes, and sexual enslavement have prompted scholars to see them as a precipitator of humanitarian crisis.<sup>80</sup> Given the LRA's consistent tactic of violence against women, feminist scholars in multiple disciplines have analysed the group through that perspective as well.<sup>81</sup> More recently, scholars have begun to investigate how locals in LRA-affected areas perceive returnees. While the body of literature on these returnees remains small, it has produced compelling interviews that highlight how they reintegrate into civil society.<sup>82</sup>

The West Nile insurgencies took place in the post-internet era. Despite this, relatively little online reporting about the conflicts exists. Most of the material on the WBNF and UNRF are academic works that discuss the insurgencies in the Great Lakes region more broadly, and especially in the context of the First and Second Congo Wars. The international community's attention focused on the LRA during these insurgencies, as Kony's group both preceded and outlasted Oris' and Bamuze's forces, while also being more overtly brutal to civilians.<sup>83</sup> Much of

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<sup>79</sup> Robert Gersony, *The Anguish of Northern Uganda: Results of a Field-Based Assessment of the Civil Conflicts in Northern Uganda*, ed. The United States International Development Agency and The International Criminal Court, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/fr/evidence/anguish-northern-uganda/results-field-based-assessment-civil-conflicts-northern-uganda>. The International Criminal Court (ICC) hosts Gersony's report on its website. The ICC included elements of Gersony's work in its later indictment of LRA leadership.

<sup>80</sup> Emilee Matheson, "Lord's Resistance Army Culture Provides Opening to Prevent Attacks and Advance Humanitarian Efforts," *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* 2022, no. Special (2022): 189-190.

<sup>81</sup> Virginie Ladisch, *From Rejection to Redress: Overcoming Legacies of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Northern Uganda*, ed. International Center for Transitional Justice, October 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Phuong N. Pham and Patrick Vinck, *Transitioning to Peace: A Population-based Survey on Attitudes about Social Reconstruction and Justice in Northern Uganda* (Berkeley, CA: Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley, 2010), 13-14, [https://search-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cbibliographic\\_details%7C2587431#page/13/mode/1/chapter/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2587438](https://search-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C2587431#page/13/mode/1/chapter/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2587438).

<sup>83</sup> "World Briefing | Africa: Uganda: Children Drowned, Army Says," *New York Times*, last modified 2003, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fblogs-podcasts-websites%2Fworld-briefing-africa-uganda-children-drowned%2Fdocview%2F2229890157%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

the literature again comes from political science, which has analysed the disarmament processes involved in ending these insurgencies.<sup>84</sup> Outside of some reporting on the leaders of the insurgencies, and some interviews conducted with both former insurgents and UPDF counterinsurgents, much remains to be written on the WNBF and UNRF.

In all, completing primary source research on the Ugandan insurgencies between 1981 and 2006 proves challenging. Aside from published interviews conducted with either the counterinsurgents or the insurgents, NGO reports, or reporting by non-Ugandan news outlets, primary sources from within Uganda that deal with these insurgencies do not exist if they do not align with Museveni's strictly controlled version of events. He controls the narrative surrounding the Luwero Triangle War because it remains the foundational narrative for his public image, specifically that of being a heroic liberator and freedom fighter.

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<sup>84</sup> Patrick Vinck et al., *New Population-Based Data on Attitudes about Peace and Justice*, 2007, accessed August 29, 2023, [https://search-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cbibliographic\\_details%7C2587460?utm\\_campaign=Ale%E2%80%A6.v](https://search-alexanderstreet-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C2587460?utm_campaign=Ale%E2%80%A6.v)

**Analytical Framework: David Galula's *Contre-insurrection* and its Place in  
Counterinsurgency Literature**

The counterinsurgency campaigns fought between the various armed groups in Uganda between 1981 and 2006 represent an underexamined example of late-20<sup>th</sup> and early-21<sup>st</sup> Century domestic insurgent conflict. Most of the well-studied insurgencies of this era involved a foreign expeditionary force deploying to a colonial territory or country and attempting to destroy a local liberation or national insurgent force there. One expeditionary counterinsurgency in particular, that of the French colonial state in Algeria, influenced the writing of the work that serves as the analytical framework of this thesis.

David Galula wrote his 1964 *Contre-insurrection*, a text which greatly informs NATO COIN doctrine to this day, to preserve the lessons he learned as a French officer while fighting the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) insurgency during the Algerian War of Independence in the 1950s.<sup>85</sup> Its continual prominence as a COIN model made it a natural choice as an analytical model for this thesis. Galula, a Tunisian-born, Moroccan-raised, and Saint-Cyr-trained French army officer, used the violence he witnessed during the Algerian war to develop theories of counterinsurgency that still hold considerable weight today. His experiences prior to deployment to Algeria included serving as an observer in China between 1945 and 1948. During this time, he watched and studied the Chinese Communist revolution and its insurgent tactics under the

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<sup>85</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Counterinsurgency: A Generic Reference Curriculum," ed. Andre D. Rakoto and Gary Rauchfuss, The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, last modified September 2017, accessed February 12, 2023, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2017\\_09/20170904\\_1709-counterinsurgency-rc.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_09/20170904_1709-counterinsurgency-rc.pdf). NATO published this document as a supplement to counterinsurgency curricula for its member states' professional military education cadres. It references Galula's work numerous times, in sections on theory as well as in those concerning implementation.

leadership of Mao Tse-Tung, who successfully applied his three rules of revolution.<sup>86</sup> This experience made Galula consider the West's Cold War against communism as a political struggle supplemented by military operations.<sup>87</sup> His work proposed a methodology for how to conduct an effective counterinsurgency campaign, that used violence as a tool to destroy ideologically driven insurgencies.<sup>88</sup>

His theories built on those popularised by Carl von Clausewitz and Charles E. Callwell, in their respective works on warfare. Galula's first chapter paraphrased Clausewitz's famous "War is merely the continuation of policy by other means".<sup>89</sup> When adapted to the case of insurgencies, Galula morphed this phrase into "Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means."<sup>90</sup> His work also echoes late nineteenth century British army artillery officer Charles Callwell's writing on the role a uniformed armed force can play when fighting guerillas. Callwell's writing drew on his experiences in British colonial efforts in the late 1800s and describes, like Galula did nearly a century later, the specific steps armies must follow to find, engage, and destroy guerilla forces.<sup>91</sup>

Galula's theories, in their entirety, require some protracted discussion here. The eight operational steps for a successful counterinsurgency stand out as the most important aspect of his work. The eight steps include: 'Destruction or Expulsion of the Insurgent Forces', 'Deployment

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<sup>86</sup> Zedong Mao, *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Eastford, USA: Martino Fine Books, 2017), 92. Mao's three rules include: 'All actions are subject to command', 'Do not steal from the people', and 'Be neither selfish nor unjust'.

<sup>87</sup> David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), 69-70.

<sup>88</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 75.

<sup>89</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2006), 28-29. Clausewitz's ideas influenced Western military theorists so importantly that Galula paraphrased him on *Contre-insurrection's* very first page.

<sup>90</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 1.

<sup>91</sup> Charles Edward Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 63-71.



of the Static Unit’, ‘Contact with and Control of the Population’, ‘Destruction of the Insurgent Political Organisation’, ‘Local Elections’, ‘Testing the Local Leaders’, ‘Organising a Party’, ‘Winning Over or Suppressing the Last Guerillas’.<sup>92</sup> These steps, detailed in the seventh chapter, summarise the theories Galula laid out in chapters two through six. They encapsulated the points he repeatedly made about the importance of developing a beneficial relationship between COIN forces and civilians in the insurgent-affected areas. They also accounted for how ideology, doctrine, the two types of revolutionary wars, and the interplay between strategy and tactics could either positively or negatively impact either COIN forces or their insurgent enemies. The steps served to operationalise these theories, laying out exactly how COIN forces, and the leaders that deploy them, ought to act in theater. As will be seen from the three case studies below, these steps required that strategic decision makers guiding COIN campaigns follow the steps sequentially. Failure to follow the steps in order, as demonstrated by the UNLA forces discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, leads to a breakdown of the model and an inability to progress further in the steps.

Discussing the content of Chapters One through Six of *Contre-insurrection* elucidates Galula’s theories, clarifying why he chose to organise his steps as he did. Chapter One defined revolutionary wars according to what Galula identified as determining characteristics of such conflicts, including, but not restricted to, the following: asymmetries between COIN and insurgent forces, the importance of popular support to all parties to the conflict, the impact of logistics on the fighting, the effects of ideology and propaganda, and that revolutionary wars remain unconventional throughout. Chapter Two specified the prerequisites for a successful insurgency. Galula asserted that for an insurgent group to achieve its aims, it must have: a

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<sup>92</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 75-94.

relatable cause that ensures popular support, a weak COIN force opposing it, advantageous geographic conditions, and at least some outside support. Should the insurgency display these characteristics, he argued, the COIN forces would be unable to overcome the insurgents. Chapter Three outlined several patterns Galula identified among the insurgencies he studied, most notably the 'Orthodox Pattern (Communist)', and what he called the 'Bourgeois-Nationalist Pattern'. Insurgents adhering to the 'Orthodox' pattern focused on not just a complete takeover of the state, but the subsequent enactment of Communist principles of societal organisation. Conversely, those that adopted the 'Bourgeois-Nationalist' pattern put concerns about post-revolutionary society aside in favour of simply overthrowing the national government. This chapter also identified some inherent vulnerabilities in both patterns that could emerge during the campaigns of those following these models. Chapters Four and Five dealt with how COIN forces could counter insurgents in either a 'Cold' or 'Hot' revolutionary war using both direct and indirect action. These two types of conflict differed primarily in their application of violence. Galula highlighted the 'Cold' revolutionary war for how insurgents in such a conflict did not employ illegal violence to achieve their aims. Those, like the WNBF discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, fighting a 'Hot' revolutionary war specifically employed illegal acts and/or violence to further their goals. Chapter Six of Galula's work bridged the gap between the theories in the previous chapters and his eight operational steps, detailing how theater commanders and political leaders could prioritise their efforts to turn a strategic vision for the COIN campaign into tactical direction for subordinate commanders. Having laid out his theories and assumptions, Galula then focused on tactical concerns in steps one and two, then moved into more strategic considerations in the following six steps. In these later stages, he emphasised the employment of political manipulation to ferret out and destroy any holdouts remaining after the

kinetic operations in steps one and two. In so doing, Galula showed how the theories in Chapters One through Six can be practically applied.

The historical context in which Galula's theories emerged, namely that of the Algerian War of Independence, heavily impacted his work. *Contre-insurrection* continues to enjoy widespread acceptance and popularity among military theorists and professional military education institutions in Western liberal democracies.<sup>93</sup> Galula's work continues to influence Western military thought precisely because it came from a Western officer, making it somewhat Western-centric, but Galula's situation presents some issues that have led to legitimate criticism of his work. Douglas Porch condemned *Contre-insurrection* for its narrow-mindedness. He accused Galula of offering simple solutions to the complex problems presented by the COIN force-civilian relationship, and of treating civilians as a monolith instead of attempting to understand locals in Algeria as having different ethnic and cultural needs from civilians in France.<sup>94</sup> Grégor Mathias echoed Porch's assertion that Galula thought too tactically about how to earn civilian trust. Mathias highlighted some flaws with Galula's eight steps in the former's microhistory of the latter's actions at Djebel Aïssa Mimoun sub-district of Kabylia, Algeria in 1956 and 1957.<sup>95</sup> Mathias provided some evidence that Galula's eight steps did not actually enable a COIN victory in this situation, as he argued Galula fell prey to focusing on killing guerillas versus eliminating popular support for FLN forces in the area. Galula's eight steps specifically forbade such a blunder, yet Mathias asserts that Galula chose to focus on tactical victory over strategic victory, and then exaggerated the validity of his eight steps as being

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<sup>93</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, "Counterinsurgency: A Generic," The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

<sup>94</sup> Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 322-324.

<sup>95</sup> Grégor Mathias, *Galula in Algeria: Counterinsurgency Practice versus Theory* (Santa Barbara, USA: Praeger Security International, 2011), 54.

responsible for his success. While Mathias provides some interesting evidence to support this assertion, he fails to conclusively debunk Galula's theories and their application. This thesis rejects Mathias' dismissal of the validity of Galula's eight steps. The case of the NRA in Luwero Triangle War, discussed in Chapter One, clearly demonstrates that the eight steps hold up when applied to this case, and that they must be followed sequentially to be effective.

Galula, like Callwell did, drew on his experience as a colonial military officer to create a model that would allow future COIN campaign planners to avoid the mistakes made in Algeria and defeat insurgent forces through a step-by-step approach. Galula's steps begin with the "Destruction or Expulsion of the Insurgent Forces" and progress to "Winning Over or Suppressing the Last Guerillas".<sup>96</sup> Galula also detailed the prerequisites for a successful counterinsurgency, how ideological cause can motivate rebels, and laws for defeating revolutionaries in armed conflict. While African and military historians have written about the wars in Uganda between 1981 and 2006, the historiography lacks analyses of these conflicts through the lens of counterinsurgency. This thesis uses Galula's theories to frame these conflicts, thereby breaking new ground as a history of counterinsurgency in postcolonial Uganda, while also verifying that Galula's theories hold true in COIN contexts outside the over-examined and over-explained cases of international expeditionary intervention.

#### Historiographical Survey of Insurgency/Counterinsurgency Literature

The post-9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq prompted an explosive growth of the already expansive literature on counterinsurgency. In this enormous literature, Galula stands a seminal work. Multiple important publications, covering a multitude of insurgent conflicts reference or

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<sup>96</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 75-93.

echo him. These books show repeatedly that most expeditionary force and colonial COIN campaigns have failed because they share inherent problems, including logistical hurdles, poor relationships with local leaders, political instability in the invaded country, and IDP crises created by counterinsurgent operations. Whether in the international or specifically African context, the huge COIN literature also demonstrates that counterinsurgencies tend to fail because counterinsurgent forces focus more on eliminating guerillas (tactics) than they do turning the local population against the insurgency (strategy). In the few examples of successful COIN campaigns such as the British in Malaya, the campaign's leaders prioritise winning public support over killing insurgents, leading to strategic victory.<sup>97</sup> Failed expeditionary or colonial COIN campaigns call into question what lessons can be drawn from such campaigns except in the negative.

American scholars occupy a large niche in the COIN literature. The failures in the expeditionary COIN campaigns during the Vietnam War and the post-9/11 wars have required the creation of a body of work to understand why these campaigns failed.<sup>98</sup> Much of the blame for these failures can be attributed to the US Armed Forces' doctrinal focus on tactics instead of strategy that dates to before America's entry into the Second World War. The United States Marine Corps first published its *Small Wars Manual* in 1940, and this work drew inspiration from Callwell to describe how conventional forces ought to fight guerillas.<sup>99</sup> Future US doctrinal manuals kept this focus on destroying insurgents in tactical engagements up to the time of the

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<sup>97</sup> John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, 10th ed. (Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 192-197.

<sup>98</sup> Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism*, 2nd ed. (Dulles, USA: Brassey's, 2005), 37-38. See also David Kilcullen's *The Accidental Guerilla* and *Counterinsurgency* for analyses of the US' campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

<sup>99</sup> United States Marine Corps, "Small Wars Manual," The United States Marine Corps, last modified December 22, 1990, accessed October 7, 2023, <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Publications/FMFRP%2012-15%20%20Small%20Wars%20Manual.pdf>.

Vietnam war, which resulted in the infamously ineffective COIN campaign in Vietnam.<sup>100</sup> Shortly after the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions, the US Armed Forces began publishing new manuals that included large sections on the strategic importance of winning local civilian support. These manuals, including the US Army's *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* and the jointly produced US Army/US Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, echoed Galula's insistence on local relationships.<sup>101</sup> Despite these recent attempts to adapt American COIN doctrine to better focus on strategic victory through 'winning hearts and minds', political and military leaders still struggle to shift their focus away from tactical successes. As Douglas Porch put it, American COIN's adherents represent a group of tacticians "who eschew the imponderables of war made up of politics and mass psychology" in favour of mythologised ideals of winning wars without fighting.<sup>102</sup>

American narratives tend to dominate the counterinsurgency literature because of their recent major counterinsurgency campaigns, but other scholarship on global examples of insurgency must be mentioned here as well. Some scholars have identified the importance of avoiding Western-centric viewpoints and emphasise the need to not treat all insurgencies as the same type of conflict.<sup>103</sup> These more globally focused works parallel the American literature in that they demonstrate the importance of a focus on strategic, not tactical, victory.<sup>104</sup> The Soviet

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<sup>100</sup> The United States Army, *Field Manual 31-21: Guerilla Warfare and Special Forces Operations* (Washington, USA: The United States Department of the Army, 1961), 103-164.

<sup>101</sup> The United States Army, *Field Manual 3-24: Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, 2nd ed. (The United States Department of the Army, 2014). See also The United States Army et al., *The U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago, USA: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>102</sup> Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing*, 315. For additional critique of Clausewitzian theories of warfare, see Martin Van Creveld's *The Transformation of War*.

<sup>103</sup> Jeremy Black, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency: A Global History* (Lanham, USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 203-205.

<sup>104</sup> Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington, USA: Brassey's, 2002), 189-191.

expeditionary counterinsurgency in Afghanistan during the 1980s demonstrates this well.<sup>105</sup> The Soviet leadership that planned the invasion focused too intensely on forcing a regime change in Afghanistan. This meant that when Soviet forces achieved this objective, there were no plans in place to facilitate a withdrawal.<sup>106</sup> Without a coherent withdrawal plan or strategic vision for the campaign after their initial tactical success, the Soviets found themselves mired in a bloody counterinsurgency until their troops withdrew in 1989.<sup>107</sup>

The literature surrounding African expeditionary and colonial COIN campaigns require mention here as well. The British victory during the Mau Mau Emergency in Kenya in the 1950s presents somewhat of an outlier in the broader COIN literature.<sup>108</sup> Despite the myth of British “minimum force” counterinsurgency, the British in 1950s Kenya mounted a repressive campaign that eliminated the Mau Mau rebels and then granted the colony independence.<sup>109</sup> The British were able to succeed in Kenya because Mau Mau was a small, divided and poorly equipped movement that lacked external support and sanctuaries common to African insurgencies of subsequent decades. France’s strategic failure against the *Front de Libération Nationale* (FLN) during the Algerian War of Independence in the 1950s and early 1960s came as a result of a focus on tactical victories. French expeditionary forces crushed the FLN’s combat forces but lost

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<sup>105</sup> Michael R. Fenzel, *No Miracles: The Failure of Soviet Decision-Making in the Afghan War* (Stanford, USA: Stanford University Press, 2020), 119.

<sup>106</sup> Amin Saikal and William Maley, eds., *Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 85-86.

<sup>107</sup> Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan* (London, United Kingdom: Harvard University Press, 2011), 174-148.

<sup>108</sup> Daniel Branch, *Defeating Mau Mau, Creating Kenya: Counterinsurgency, Civil War, and Decolonization* (New York, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1. See Louis B. Leakey’s *Defeating Mau Mau* for contemporary history of the Emergency’s events.

<sup>109</sup> Huw C. Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 228. See David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York, USA: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005) and Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya* (New York, USA: Henry Holt, 2005) further information on the British colonial authorities’ atrocities during the Mau May Emergency.

the war anyway by not accounting for growing Algerian nationalism.<sup>110</sup> The French eventually decolonised in the face of this surging Algerian independence movement, when they saw they could no longer garrison the country effectively and when the conflict began to impact metropolitan France. The Portuguese in Guinea, Angola, and Mozambique during the 1960s and early 1970s repeated the mistakes of other tactically driven COIN forces. The Portuguese expeditionary forces adhered too strictly to tactical doctrine to effectively conduct a strategic campaign against the local liberation movements.<sup>111</sup> After the military coup in Portugal in 1974, COIN forces withdrew, representing yet another strategic failure.

In Southern Africa, colonial white-minority states' COIN forces made similar mistakes to the French expeditionary forces. In the Rhodesian Bush War in the 1960s and 1970s, the COIN literature describes a similar situation.<sup>112</sup> The Rhodesian Security Forces innovated new warfare technologies and tactics, but eventually lost the strategic war for the support of Zimbabwean locals by focusing too much on killing guerillas and victimising many civilians in the process driving them to support the insurgents.<sup>113</sup> This led to the collapse of the Rhodesian state in 1979. The South Africans, like their northern neighbours in Rhodesia, emphasised tactics in lieu of strategy during the Border War from the 1960s to the 1980s.<sup>114</sup> The South African Defence

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<sup>110</sup> Alf Andrew Heggoy, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Algeria* (Bloomington, USA: Indiana University Press, 1972), 261. See Neil MacMaster, *War in the Mountains: Peasant Society and Counterinsurgency in Algeria, 1918-1958* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020) for more on Algerian nationalism at the grassroots in the lead up to and during the Algerian War of Independence.

<sup>111</sup> John P. Cann, *Counterinsurgency in Africa: The Portuguese Way of War, 1961-1974* (Solihull, United Kingdom: Helion & Company, 2012), 60-61.

<sup>112</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, *Counter-insurgency in Rhodesia* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2015), 243. See also J.R.T. Wood, "Countering the Chimurenga: The Rhodesian Counterinsurgency 1962-1980," in *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, ed. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (Oxford, United Kingdom: Osprey, 2010) and Charles D. Melson, *Fighting for Time: Rhodesia's Military and Zimbabwe's Independence* (Philadelphia, USA: Casemate Academic, 2021).

<sup>113</sup> Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War: A Military History*, revised ed. (Barnsley, United Kingdom: Pen & Sword Military, 2009), 52-53.

<sup>114</sup> For different views on the SADF in the Border War, see Leopold Scholtz, *The SADF in the Border War, 1966-1989* (Solihull, United Kingdom: Helion, 2015) and Timothy J. Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa: From the Dutch-Khoi Wars to the End of Apartheid* (Santa Barbara, USA: Praeger, 2010).



Force also innovated effective COIN tactics during its campaign in South West Africa, which is now Namibia.<sup>115</sup> Again like the Rhodesians, the South Africans won many battles and killed many insurgents. They lost the war regardless, and Namibia gained independence in 1990, while the white-minority apartheid South African state lost power in 1994.<sup>116</sup> The literature on COIN in Africa includes a large body of work on expeditionary and/or colonial campaigns. However, it hardly touches on COIN conducted by post-colonial African regimes despite the proliferation of insurgencies across the continent.

The vast literature on counterinsurgency both within Africa and without offers numerous examples of the successes and mistakes made during expeditionary counterinsurgencies from which policy makers and military commanders can learn. This state of the literature raises several questions, though. What about examples of successes and mistakes in a domestic insurgency? How does prevalent counterinsurgency theory hold up when applied to localised insurgent conflict? Is counterinsurgency theory even relevant in such a case? Uganda's wars between 1981 and 2006 provide an ideal opportunity to put counterinsurgency theory to the test.

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<sup>115</sup> Timothy J. Stapleton, *Warfare and Tracking in Africa, 1952-1990* (Abingdon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2016), 118.

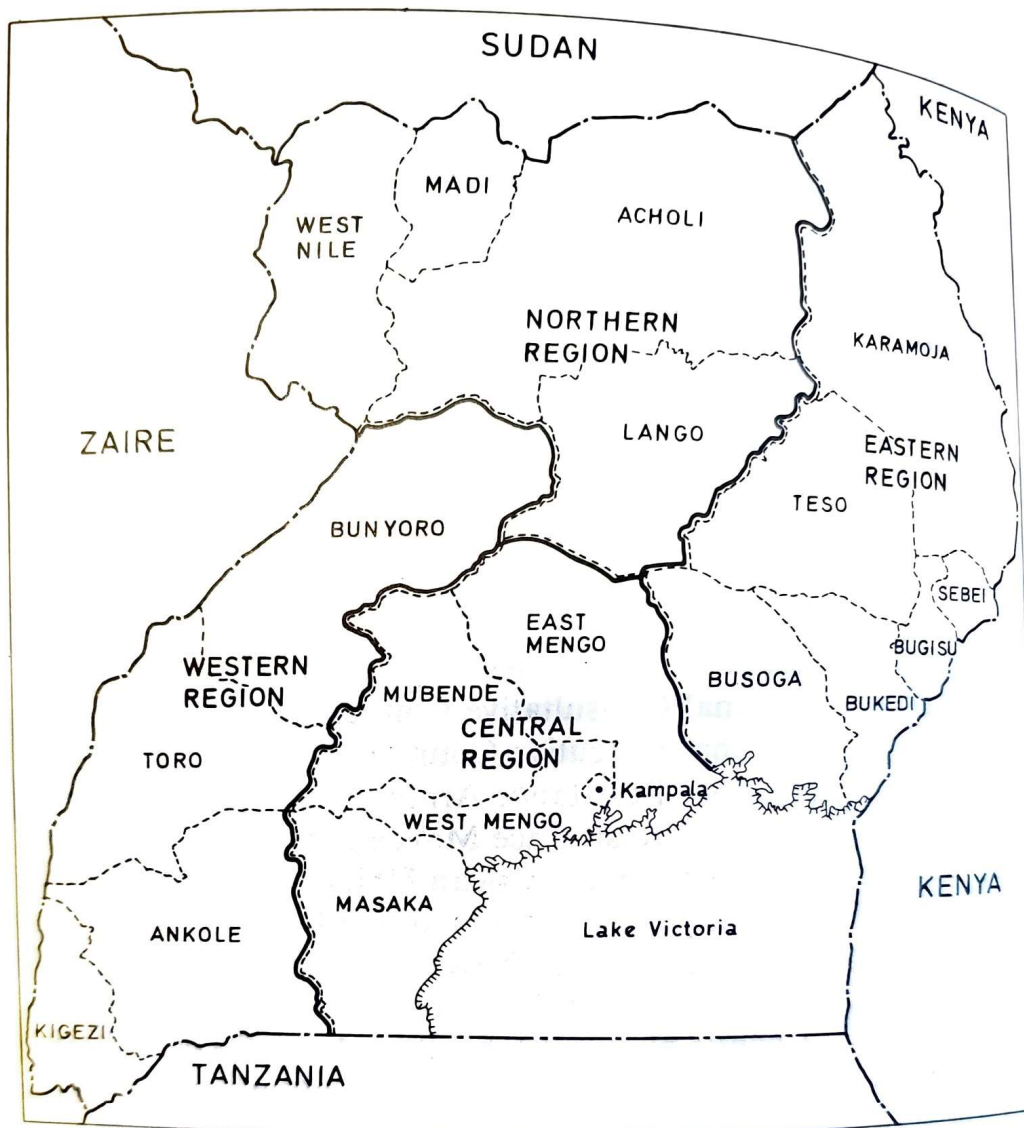
<sup>116</sup> Stapleton, *Modern African*, 302-303.

## Chapter 1: The NRA Insurgency in the Luwero Triangle War, 1981-1986

### 4: Operational Areas of the NRA in Uganda and in the Luwero Triangle, 1981-1986<sup>117</sup>



<sup>117</sup> Pike, *Combatants: A Memoir*, vi.

5: Uganda Near the End of the NRA Insurgency, 1985<sup>118</sup>

**Uganda, Showing International, Regional and District Boundaries in 1985**

*Key:*

- District boundary
  - Regional boundary
  - International boundary
- Scale:*  
1 inch = 100 miles

<sup>118</sup> Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military*, xiv.

By January of 1986, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni found himself at the head of a division-sized contingent marching into Kampala.<sup>119</sup> This chapter focuses on the conflict that led to Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) taking the Ugandan capital by force after five years of insurgency against the central government.<sup>120</sup> Between 1981 and 1986, Museveni's forces fought Milton Obote's United People's Congress (UPC) government. The NRA won small victories which eventually snowballed into the complete collapse of the government, and the erstwhile insurgents took power. This conflict, known as the Luwero Triangle War, offers a compelling case study to evaluate the validity of David Galula's theoretical eight steps for successful counterinsurgency operations. It offers numerous examples that demonstrate these steps hold up when applied to a real-world conflict in which a national armed force carries out domestic operations against a regional insurgent group. The UPC's actions during the war confirm the steps' validity in the negative, as they did the opposite of what the steps require and thus failed in their COIN efforts. Correspondingly, the NRA's actions confirm the steps' validity in the affirmative. The group's relationship with the local population allowed the insurgents to survive UNLA's attempts to destroy them. By managing to survive long enough that the Ugandan government began infighting, the NRA eventually used the popular support they enjoyed in southern Uganda to overthrow the northerner-controlled regime.

### Context of the Luwero Triangle War

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<sup>119</sup> Richard J. Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 53

<sup>120</sup> Available literature identifies Museveni's group by several names, often interchangeably, and occasionally several at once ('The NRA/M'). Simply put, 'National Resistance Movement' (NRM) means the political organisation led by Yoweri Museveni in the aftermath of the December 1980 election. 'National Resistance Army' (NRA) refers to the militant wing of this political organisation. For the sake of consistency, this work refers to Museveni's organisation as the NRA unless otherwise specified.

Armed hostilities in the Luwero Triangle War began on 6 February 1981, in what the NRA's narrative calls the "First Battle of Kabamba".<sup>121</sup> Museveni put his promised rebellion into action after Obote won what the UPM and DP called a fraudulent election in December 1980.<sup>122</sup> The UPM morphed into the NRM, then begat the NRA, as several members of this political party began acting as armed insurgents. Their raid at Kabamba, which is described below, put them in armed opposition to the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). At Kabamba, Museveni and his loyalists captured several vehicles, killed a few UNLA men, and retreated deeper into the bush in Luwero district. From this point on, they engaged in guerilla warfare against UNLA and other northerner paramilitary groups loyal to Obote, who, as president, also held the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Ugandan armed services according to the 1967 version of Uganda's Constitution.<sup>123</sup> After a few guerilla actions, the government forces began concerted efforts to round up the insurgents and drive them out of Luwero. These efforts, led by the formidable Major-General David Oyite-Ojok, saw the UNLA counterinsurgents and their paramilitary allies force the NRA to retreat further north into the region known as Singo.<sup>124</sup> The NRA's retreat to Singo in late 1982 and early 1983 coincided with the Obote government conducting clearance operations throughout Luwero, during which government and government-allied forces committed atrocities that, by the end of the war, left

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<sup>121</sup> Muhoozi Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan Resistance: A Tradition of Maneuver* (Kampala, Uganda: Fountain Publishers, 2010), 64. Kainerugaba's book glorifies the NRA and its actions throughout the war in Luwero, painting them as brilliant victories by both a morally and militarily superior force compared to UNLA enemies, making it a highly subjective source that adheres to an ideologically driven narrative.

<sup>122</sup> Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890-1985* (New York, USA: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 154-55. Museveni, who held the position of the Vice-Chairman of the Military Commission, the government body responsible for election oversight, asserted that rampant election fraud in the December 1980 election put Obote in power, despite the DP receiving the most votes. Given his position, Museveni's claims of Obote rigging the results largely fell on deaf ears, since the public perceived these claims as resulting from his not having won the election.

<sup>123</sup> G. N. Uzoigwe, "Uganda and Parliamentary Government," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21, no. 2 (1983): 265.

<sup>124</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 100.

over two hundred thousand dead.<sup>125</sup> With Oyite-Ojok's death in a helicopter crash in early December 1983, UNLA lost one of its most effective leaders, which took some of the pressure off the NRA and allowed it to keep fighting.<sup>126</sup> Even with this easing of pressure, the insurgents found themselves depleted to the point that, by early 1985, they began sending negotiators to attempt to begin peace talks with Obote's government. By this time, though, support for Obote within his armed services deteriorated to the point that his Chief of the General Staff, General Tito Okello, and other Acholi began plotting a coup.<sup>127</sup> Obote fled to Zambia, and Okello took power, although his support base proved as rocky as his predecessor's.<sup>128</sup> By the end of January 1986, UNLA and Okello's government both fell into disarray, and, with the various factions of the collapsing government focused more on fighting each other than fighting the NRA, the insurgents swept south to Kampala.<sup>129</sup>

#### Application of Galula's Eight Steps to the Luwero Triangle War

The eight steps for successful counterinsurgency operations Galula describes require that the counterinsurgent prove competent enough to progress through the sequence correctly, although Luwero best demonstrates the first four among these. Should the counterinsurgent find themselves hung up on a step, they necessarily cannot progress to the next step until having

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<sup>125</sup> Edward A. Gargan, "A Gruesome Past Is Still Haunting Ugandans," *The New York Times* (New York, USA), August 24, 1986, accessed October 9, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/08/24/world/a-gruesome-past-is-still-haunting-ugandans.html#:~:text=Here%2C%20in%20the%20Luwero%20triangle,that%20took%20power%20in%20Uganda>.

<sup>126</sup> "Rebel Leader Museveni Reacts to Oyite Ojok's Death," *The Uganda Daily Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), December 15, 2019, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/magazines/people-power/rebel-leader-museveni-reacts-to-oyite-ojok-s-death-1864984>. This article provides a transcript of Museveni's official statement following reports of Oyite-Ojok's death. It shows how much the NRA feared Oyite-Ojok for his ferocity, while also demonstrating their respect for his ruthless effectiveness.

<sup>127</sup> Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military*, 162-163.

<sup>128</sup> Ingham, *Obote: A Political*, 207.

<sup>129</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency, *Uganda: Obote's Dimming Prospects*, iii, 1984, accessed October 8, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170123155530/https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP85S00317R000200030004-2.pdf>.

removed the obstacle to their progression. The Luwero Triangle War demonstrates what a halt in progression of the sequence can look like for the counterinsurgent, with the UPC regime's prosecution of their campaign providing an ideal example of egregious incompetence on the part of a counterinsurgent force. In fact, the government's actions proved so detrimental to their own success that they failed to progress past the first of these eight steps. Their inability to progress past the first step does not preclude analysis of other steps, however. The NRA's actions offer examples from the insurgent perspective that can serve as case studies to test the validity of steps two to four. The Luwero Triangle War does not offer much that would enable the testing of steps five through eight, though, as the war ended in total insurgent victory before the fifth step, 'Local Elections', could take place. Steps five through eight will therefore be ignored in this chapter.

Galula's eight steps emphasise the importance of developing a relationship with the local population, something the UPC not just ignored, but intentionally contravened. The central government's forces killed civilian non-combatants, destroyed their properties and sources of livelihood, and committed other war crimes such as killing children and rape during their campaign in Luwero. None of these actions promoted the development of a tactically or strategically beneficial relationship between the central government's COIN forces and the civilians in Luwero, and this prevented the counterinsurgent forces from progressing through the eight steps in the sequence.

The NRA, for their part, enjoyed the strategic advantage of being primarily made up of southerners. This demographic characteristic helped them, as their insurgency took place in Luwero, a southern district in Uganda. While the counterinsurgents engaged in war crimes and other atrocities, which worsened the government's relationship with Luwero's civilians, the

NRA portrayed itself as representative of all southerners oppressed by the northerner-dominated government and army.<sup>130</sup> The NRA's Code of Conduct, discussed below, allowed them to develop a materially beneficial relationship with the local population. The supportive relationship between Luwero's locals and the NRA degraded the ability of the counterinsurgents to engage with the locals in such a way as to gain the locals' support in their counterinsurgency efforts. The deterioration of the relationship between counterinsurgent forces and locals shows the validity of Galula's eight steps and the strategic advantage to the insurgents if they develop and sustain a supportive relationship with the locals instead. By 1985, after four years of government forces' atrocities against Luwero's people, the NRA enjoyed such significant support that they managed to recruit tens of thousands of (mostly southern) Ugandans and began their march south towards Kampala. They enjoyed this popular support because they focused on their relationship with the locals in Luwero, a strategic choice that clearly differentiated them from their government opponents and greatly increased their chances of a successful campaign.

Galula's First Step in a Successful Counterinsurgency: Obote's Failures to Destroy the NRA, 1981-1982

Applying Galula's theoretical first step, Destruction or Expulsion of Insurgent Forces, to the earliest days of the conflict demonstrates that Obote's forces set themselves up for failure. The first step, and its sub-steps, provides a clear plan for counterinsurgents to follow, and the central government contravened the requirements of this step in every meaningful way. In essence, the first step constitutes a clearance operation mixed with a classic advance to contact:

1. Mobile units, plus units earmarked to stay in the area in order to reinforce whatever static units were originally there, are suddenly concentrated around the area. They start operating from the outside in,

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<sup>130</sup> Amnesty International, "Human Rights Violations in Uganda," news release, June 1, 1982, accessed November 24, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/012/1982/en/>.



aiming at catching the guerrillas in a ring. At the same time, units garrisoning the adjoining areas are ordered to intensify their activity on the periphery of the selected area.

2. The sweep is next conducted from the inside out, aiming at least at expelling the guerrillas.

3. The over-all operation is finally broken down into several small-scale ones. All the static units, the original as well as the new ones, are assigned to their permanent sectors. A part of the mobile units operates as a body, centrally controlled; the rest is lent to the sectors. All the forces work on what is left of the guerrillas after the two earlier sweeps.<sup>131</sup>

Such operations can be performed by conventional military forces, even those untrained in formal counterinsurgency tactics and doctrine. UNLA's tactics during this period were based on the infantry tactics Ugandan armed forces carried over from the British Army during independence.<sup>132</sup> It supplemented this basic infantry doctrine with COIN training from foreign military advisors.<sup>133</sup> Galula noted the importance of destroying guerillas in his first step. UNLA's basic infantry tactics and COIN training should have made them able to destroy the NRA guerillas as this first step specified. Despite having the training and tactics necessary for success, the counterinsurgents managed to fail to destroy the guerillas. Instead of destroying the NRA's fighting forces, UNLA focused on terrifying Luwero's civilians through violence. Not only did this ensure that the COIN forces failed to complete Galula's first step and then progress to the second, UNLA's actions bolstered NRA recruitment efforts.

From the outset of the insurgency in early 1981, UNLA state forces failed to adequately respond to the threat posed by the NRA. The government's inability to destroy the NRA in its infancy helps illustrate the incompetence that characterised the rest of their COIN campaign.

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<sup>131</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 75.

<sup>132</sup> For basic British infantry tactics see The War Office, *Infantry Training Volume IV: Tactics - The Infantry Platoon in Battle* (London, United Kingdom: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1960), 12-13.

<sup>133</sup> The Department of National Defence, "Operation UMIAK – Commonwealth Military Training Team - Uganda (CMTT-U)," The Directorate of History and Heritage, last modified November 25, 2021, accessed March 8, 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/past-operations/africa/umiak.html>. Numerous Commonwealth nations participated in the COIN and police training mission for Obote's forces, as did other states such as North Korea. Foreign military assistance and training cadres failed to develop UNLA into an effective counterinsurgency force, and these assisting nations mostly abandoned their training missions by the end of 1985.

Museveni and a small group of supporters began offensive insurgent actions with what Museveni's son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, refers to as the 'First Battle of Kabamba' on 6 February 1981.<sup>134</sup> This marked the first time the NRA attacked central government assets directly. It remains a vitally important foundational narrative in the NRA's accounts of the war over three decades later, so much so that Museveni later established the Uganda Military Academy at Kabamba to train future Ugandan Army leaders.<sup>135</sup> Kainerugaba and Museveni's written works both describe it in meticulous detail, further indicating the importance of this event to both the leader of the NRA/M, who remains Head of State for Uganda, and his likely eventual successor.<sup>136</sup> Despite how much Museveni and his son glorify this raid as an example of NRA tactical brilliance and excellence in leadership, a more dispassionate analysis of the attack reveals that it suffered from shoddy planning and execution.<sup>137</sup>

The NRA, at this point only numbering thirty-four fighters equipped with twenty-seven firearms, attacked the UNLA camp at Kabamba on the night of 5 February 1981. The camp was poorly defended and relatively remote, presenting an ideal target for the NRA's surprise attack. The insurgents broke their force down into three sections during the assault, with one section attempting to loot the quartermaster stores, one engaging the gate sentries, and one attacking the armoury where UNLA soldiers slept; a detachment also targeted the communications office. The

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<sup>134</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan*, 64-70.

<sup>135</sup> Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces, "About Us," Uganda Military Academy Kabamba, last modified 2023, accessed September 9, 2023, <https://www.updf.go.ug/training/uganda-military-academy-kabamba/>.

<sup>136</sup> Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard*, 160-164.

<sup>137</sup> Dennis Katungi, "Tarehe Sita: How the First Battle for Kabamba Was Planned," *The Kampala Post* (Kampala, Uganda), February 6, 2022, accessed September 8, 2023, <https://kampalapost.com/index.php/content/tarehe-sita-how-first-battle-kabamba-was-planned>. Katungi, at the time of writing this article in 2022, served as the Head of Communications & Media Relations at the Uganda Media Centre, a branch of the Government of Uganda's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology and National Guidance. This Ministry's mandate includes the goal of creating "awareness and understanding of the shared concept of concept of National vision, National values, National Interest and National Common good as basic elements in shaping the behaviour and character of the nation." according to their website.

NRA killed two UNLA soldiers but failed to capture weapons from the quartermaster. Of the three sections, only the one that attacked the gate guards accomplished its objective.<sup>138</sup> The insurgents managed to steal some vehicles and escape with no dead and only one wounded, making the attack on the camp a relative success. During the operation, UNLA forces mounted a weak defence, and failed to respond effectively to a raid by a small number of insurgents. UNLA's inability to defeat the NRA in this operation foreshadowed how the rest of the war would progress as interviews with some of the NRA's fighters show.

Between 1981 and 1984, the NRA's insurgent tactics relied on simple guerilla actions and gaining the support of the locals in Luwero.<sup>139</sup> The NRA's attacks on government forces often involved emerging from the bush, killing one or two soldiers, then retreating to the bush before a counterattack could be executed. Insurgent tactics this simple offered UNLA and its allies every opportunity to adapt their counterinsurgent tactics in turn, but their indiscipline and lack of professionalism prevented the application of even this most fundamental principle of combat.<sup>140</sup> A boxing analogy helps illustrate this principle: if one boxer throws a jab multiple times in the same way, his trained opponent should first recognise this pattern, then adapt his counter-punch timing in anticipation of the exposure that the first boxer's jab causes. Despite adaptability to enemy tactics being one of the most important fundamental skills of any fighter, whether boxer or soldier, UNLA counterinsurgent forces failed even in this respect. Interviews conducted with NRA members highlight UNLA's inability to execute effective counterinsurgent

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<sup>138</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan*, 68-70.

<sup>139</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 100. Sometimes called the 'shift' of 1982, the retreat to Singo marked the beginning of the second phase of the Luwero Triangle War, in which UNLA forces held the initiative in the conflict. Despite holding the initiative, and generally being the aggressor, UNLA never succeeded in wiping the NRA out. By 1985, the counterinsurgents' campaign began to falter because the senior leadership of Obote's regime in Kampala found itself riven by infighting.

<sup>140</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency, *Uganda: Obote's*, iii.

tactics.<sup>141</sup> These interviews offer some valuable insight into the tactical and strategic ineptitude of Obote's forces, who continuously sabotaged their own chances of success. The counterinsurgents relied on massacres and destruction to attempt to pacify the locals in Luwero through terror.<sup>142</sup> This strategy proved ineffective and ensured the government forces never progressed past Galula's first step of destroying the insurgents while also helping the insurgents develop a beneficial relationship with the local population.<sup>143</sup>

In Frank Schubert's interviews with veterans of the Luwero Triangle War, several of his subjects stand out, most notably a student at Makerere University in Kampala in 1981 named Kenneth Ruhinda (later Major Ruhinda of the UPDF). Ruhinda's story demonstrates the counterinsurgents' tactical ineptitude as much as it does their lack of effective intelligence work. He claimed that he and fellow supporters of the UPM, who publicly opposed Obote's UPC in the wake of his election, had been forced out of the campus by UPC supporters as Obote's loyalists solidified their hold on Kampala.<sup>144</sup> After being forced out of Makerere, Ruhinda hid from UPC sympathisers in Kampala, which Obote's forces dominated through violence in the wake of his election. While still in the city, Ruhinda sought out a covert NRA recruiter, who helped him escape the city into the bush in Luwero. Ruhinda's case offers an example into the dissident-insurgent pipeline that Museveni's people in Luwero gradually established within major centres, including Kampala. In another example, the story of Gertrude Njuba parallels that of Ruhinda. After the arrest of her husband, she snuck out of Kampala and joined the NRA without being

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<sup>141</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 93

<sup>142</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency, *Uganda: Obote's*, 6.

<sup>143</sup> Precious Delilah, "Museveni Awards Medal to Woman Who Hid NRA Fighters," *The Uganda Daily Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), May 2, 2022, accessed October 8, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/museveni-awards-medal-to-woman-who-hid-nra-fighters-3801754>.

<sup>144</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 100.

picked up by government forces. She even managed to act as a courier between NRA forces hiding in the bush in Luwero and sympathisers in Kampala, and recruited deserters from Obote's forces, all the while remaining unchecked by counterinsurgent forces until she fled to Kenya in 1984. That the NRA managed to execute such covert recruitment operations in the counterinsurgents' stronghold demonstrates the ineffectiveness of UNLA intelligence capabilities. It also shows the government's inability to destroy NRA recruitment pipelines, efforts which, if left unchecked, ensured that the NRA could replenish its reserves should they lose fighters in combat.<sup>145</sup>

Another one of Schubert's interviews details the experiences of youth that joined the NRA after the government forces robbed and/or murdered their families or loved ones. One Godfrey Lwanga, a Grade 10 student in Luwero during the war, found his parents dead at the hands of counterinsurgency forces after returning home to "collect his school fees" in the middle of 1982.<sup>146</sup> Lwanga felt he had nowhere to go and no local family to support him, and so found an NRA recruiter, joining their ranks shortly thereafter. Much like Lwanga, Jamir Gyagenda, thirteen years old in that same year, watched horrific destruction in his village, barely fifteen kilometres from Kampala, carried out by Obote's loyalist forces. Gyagenda witnessed soldiers search his house, destroy the house with a grenade, arrest his father, then return later to murder most of the adult men in the village. After the soldiers wrought this carnage, the boys of the village buried the men, and Gyagenda used his dead uncle's crops to keep himself alive. Like Lwanga, he felt that he had nowhere to go to find support, and so found it, along with other boys

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<sup>145</sup> The Uganda Daily Monitor, "The Women Who Fought in the Bush War," *The Uganda Daily Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), January 26, 2018, accessed September 12, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/magazines/full-woman/the-women-who-fought-in-the-bush-war-1737760>.

<sup>146</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 101.

from his village, in the NRA and their training camps.<sup>147</sup> Much of this youth recruiting occurred after the war shifted in 1982 from Luwero deeper north into Singo, after Major-General Oyite-Ojok escalated specifically counterinsurgent operations against the NRA.<sup>148</sup>

After the retreat to Singo, the rebels relied on recruitment from small villages throughout the region to increase their manpower.<sup>149</sup> Schubert attributed the switch in recruiting emphasis from urban to rural areas to the terrorising violence the COIN forces visited upon the civilians of Luwero, and that this switch served more as a means of individual survival than it did an NRA strategy.<sup>150</sup> His interviews showed that many of those who chose to join the NRA during the early years of the conflict did so out of desperation, fear, or a need for vengeance. To illustrate this point, Schubert quoted Mugishu Muntu, who would later become an important commander with the NRA, as saying “[T]he main recruiting officer for the NRA was Obote himself.”<sup>151</sup> By the end of 1982, the UPC government’s attempts to put down the NRA led to a bitter irony: by expelling political opponents from Kampala’s public spaces such as Makerere University, and by terrorising the civilians around Luwero, Obote and his loyalist forces drove those they victimised into the arms of the NRA. The counterinsurgents never truly succeeded in controlling the areas in which the insurgents operated, and the central government thus proved unable to destroy the insurgent force as Galula outlined in his first step. Despite not completing the first step, the government moved on to the second and third steps concurrently, which, as other

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<sup>147</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 101-2.

<sup>148</sup> Joshua Kato, "Oyite Ojok, One of Uganda's Best Soldiers," *NewVision* (Kampala, Uganda), February 8, 2012, accessed September 19, 2023, <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1299481/oyite-ojok-uganda-soldiers>.

<sup>149</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 100.

<sup>150</sup> Wasonga, *The International*, 12. Termed Operation BONANZA, beginning in January 1983 UNLA forces killed hundreds of thousands of civilians, and purposefully destroyed towns, and farms, creating an IDP crisis in Luwero.

<sup>151</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 101.

interviews with NRA fighters indicate, prevented the government from achieving these later steps.

#### Application of Galula's Second and Third Steps: Luwero and Singo, 1982-1984

The actions of the NRA after the retreat to Singo demonstrate the validity of Galula's second and third steps, 'Deployment of the Static Unit', and 'Contact With and Control of the Population' when applied to the Luwero Triangle War. This section discusses these two steps together, as the counterinsurgents moving into and establishing bases in Luwero and Singo coincided with their overwhelmingly negative interaction with the locals in these regions. The NRA's discipline during this period reinforced its positive relationship with the locals taking advantage of the government's strategic ineptitude. The insurgents' strict adherence to principles of not causing unnecessary harm to the locals increased the slim chances of surviving in the face of the government's technological superiority. Between 1962 and 1985, Uganda acquired three hundred and seventy missile systems, three hundred and ninety-six tanks and other armoured vehicles, thirty-eight jet fighter aircraft, thirty-one helicopters, and thirty artillery pieces.<sup>152</sup> In early 1982, the NRA only possessed fewer than three hundred rifles, five machine guns, and approximately one hundred anti-vehicle mines. While the NRA captured most of its weapons from Obote's forces, it also received occasional weapons shipments from the Libyans as the Luwero Triangle War progressed.<sup>153</sup>

In Galula's steps two and three, the counterinsurgent forces must station a force that can maintain "direct and continuous contact with the population" with each civilian group in the area

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<sup>152</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SPRI Arms," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

<sup>153</sup> Joshua Kato, "NRA's Tale of 3 Guns and '30 Commandoes,'" *NewVision* (Kampala, Uganda), January 10, 2023, accessed November 23, 2023, [https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/nras-tale-of-3-guns-and-30-commandoes-NV\\_151286](https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/nras-tale-of-3-guns-and-30-commandoes-NV_151286).

that the central government seeks to rid of insurgents.<sup>154</sup> These groups can differ in what distinguishes them, whether that be their ethnicity, religion, culture, and/or language; the delineations among the groups ultimately matter less than does the importance of identifying them and then deploying a static force to liaise with them. Step two focuses on the deployment of a standing force to the region in which the insurgents primarily operate. For the counterinsurgents of Obote's regime, this posed a strategic challenge, as most of them came from northern ethnic groups such as the Acholi and Langi.<sup>155</sup> The southerners in Luwero and Singo saw the counterinsurgent forces deployed to their region as a foreign occupation force. This perception negatively impacted the counterinsurgents' ability to achieve the demands of the third step: the establishment of a trusting relationship between counterinsurgent forces and the local population. Specifically, the third step requires the following:

1. To re-establish the counterinsurgent's authority over the population.
2. To isolate the population as much as possible, by physical means, from the guerrillas.
3. To gather the necessary intelligence leading to the next step — elimination of the insurgent political cells.<sup>156</sup>

The NRA's Code of Conduct, which Museveni enforced using the death penalty, undermined Obote's forces' ability to sway the civilians in Luwero because it differentiated the NRA from the counterinsurgent forces based on the levels of violence the two sides visited on the locals. By showing himself and the NRA to be different from the central government forces, Museveni allowed Obote's forces to continuously make the mistake of committing atrocities against those civilians they meant to control. This deepened the hole that Obote's forces insisted on digging for themselves in terms of their relationship development with locals in Luwero and Singo.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 77.

<sup>155</sup> Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military*, 163.

<sup>156</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 81.

<sup>157</sup> Nelson Kasfir, "Guerrillas and Civilian Participation: The National Resistance Army in Uganda, 1981-86," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 43, no. 2 (June 2005): 281.



The lack of discipline the government forces showed allowed Museveni and the NRA to survive despite the odds of doing so being stacked heavily against them. It also negatively affected the counterinsurgents' ability to recruit and use local informants as human intelligence sources, which in turn hurt the effectiveness of their campaign.

Issued by December 1981, the NRA's Code of Conduct stipulated prohibitions of the following: murder, rape, betrayal, and the refusal to obey an order leading to NRA fatalities. These prohibitions, if violated, usually meant death, although the enforcement mechanisms varied.<sup>158</sup> This harsh justice differentiated the NRA from groups elsewhere in the region, such as the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (Mozambican National Resistance, or RENAMO) in Mozambique that used brutality against civilians as a strategic tool to show locals the weakness of the counterinsurgents, in this case the FRELIMO state.<sup>159</sup> RENAMO required their recruits to commit immoral acts to truly alienate them from their lives prior to joining the cause, ensuring that its new members stayed with the group out of necessity.<sup>160</sup> NRA leadership encouraged acts of goodwill towards locals throughout Luwero and Singo as part of its Code of Conduct, which further highlights how it differed from other rebel groups in Africa during this period.

When a fighter committed an offence which violated the Code of Conduct, the NRA leadership would court martial them to publicly display the consequences for such a violation.<sup>161</sup> In these cases, the leadership ensured that other fighters and civilians in these areas witnessed the repercussions of a lack of discipline, and that accountability for egregious behaviour became the norm, not the exception.

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<sup>158</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 110.

<sup>159</sup> Lisa Hultman, "The Power to Hurt in Civil War: The Strategic Aim of RENAMO Violence," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 4 (2009): 53-54.

<sup>160</sup> Margaret Hall, "The Mozambican National Resistance Movement (Renamo): A Study in the Destruction of an African Country," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 60, no. 1 (1990): 831-832.

<sup>161</sup> Cherry Gertzel, "Uganda's Continuing Search for Peace," *Current History* 89, no. 547 (1990): 207-208.

Enforcement of the Code of Conduct did more than just keep NRA fighters in line during their insurgency. It showed civilians among whom NRA fighters operated the difference between Museveni's group and Obote's government forces and exacerbated the challenges with which Obote had to contend as he tried to eliminate the NRA. Among the insurgents themselves, it created a culture of uncertainty, as the Code could be applied unequally outside of the core prohibitions. In practice, this meant that insurgents could never be sure if their actions would be declared as a Code of Conduct violation and so they lived afraid of not just UNLA and its allies, but each other. Denouncement by fellow NRA members could come at any time, and this meant that they had to police their actions to avoid punishment at the hands of their commanders.<sup>162</sup> Such punishments included imprisonment (if facilities allowed), beating, or demotion. Execution remained a credible threat to those who contravened the Code throughout the war, as demonstrated by a case late in the war. In a ruthless display of consequences for violating the Code of Conduct in 1985, the NRA executed two of its members. The two members in question killed several villagers in Semuto, a town approximately fifty kilometres from Kampala.<sup>163</sup> Their drunkenness when they killed the villagers did not absolve them of responsibility in the eyes of those judging them, and both died at the hands of their fellow NRA members. This very public execution showed not just the insurgents, but the civilians in the area that the NRA would not tolerate such comportment.<sup>164</sup>

Keeping its members in line with the threat of swift, harsh punishments allowed Museveni and his fellow NRA leaders to, in essence, play the part of the counterinsurgents according to Galula's objectives for step three. The NRA supplanted UNLA's – and its

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<sup>162</sup> Kasfir, "Guerrillas and Civilian," 284-285.

<sup>163</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 110.

<sup>164</sup> Gertzel, "Uganda's Continuing," 207.

supporting forces known as the Youth Wingers' – legitimacy in the eyes of the locals, at least in questions of moral conduct and how such conduct enabled the development of a positive relationship between armed force and civilians. The Youth Wingers' effect on the relationship between NRA and civilians in Luwero and Singo must be mentioned here, as their brutality shocked many in the region. This group, made up of mostly male youths or young adults that supported the UPC regime, inflicted horrors on civilians in Luwero. Their affiliation with the UPC and the tacit approval with which the central government blessed their actions meant that they had little to fear in terms of repercussions, and could therefore murder, rape, and loot as they pleased so long as UNLA forces could report that insurgents or insurgent supporters had been killed.<sup>165</sup> They enhanced UNLA's capabilities in that they spread terror among civilians with little need for material or manpower support, and their marauding allowed UNLA and other government forces to focus their efforts on trying to destroy the NRA. While they outwardly appear to have been a force multiplier for Obote, the Youth Wingers degraded his side's counterinsurgency viability.<sup>166</sup> This clearly contravenes Galula's steps, and the difference between this behaviour and that of the NRA only further cemented the observable divide between the government's and NRA's way of conducting operations.

By showing themselves to be different from the state forces in terms of their treatment of civilians, the NRA furthered their rebellious efforts against the central government. Maintaining discipline through an outwardly visible Code of Conduct helped the insurgents sustain a positive relationship with the local population in Luwero. As described in Galula's second and third steps, such a positive relationship offers only benefits to the insurgent, which correspondingly

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<sup>165</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 100.

<sup>166</sup> Jeff Crisp, "National Security, Human Rights and Population Displacements Luwero District, Uganda, January-December 1983," *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 27/28 (1983): 170.

disempowers the counterinsurgent. The government forces' interpretation of 're-establish authority over the population' came in the form of tactical decisions to rape, murder, and loot as means of controlling locals in Luwero and Singo through terror. Fred Bamwesigye, a former Lieutenant in UNLA that defected to the NRA in April 1982, highlighted these tactics in interview he gave in 1983:

Once Captain Kiduli, the commander of 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion at Bombo barracks, issued orders saying that whoever is found in the operational area should be regarded as an enemy and therefore killed. Any human being, man, woman, or child. I saw such massacres.<sup>167</sup>

The counterinsurgents' strategic choice to use terror tactics and war crimes as the basis for their operation in Luwero and Singo ensured that their campaign perpetually sabotaged its own likelihood of success. Instead of isolating the insurgents from the local population, the counterinsurgents' actions drove the locals towards the insurgents. The locals never saw the value in cooperating with the counterinsurgent forces during the time that the government forces garrisoned parts of Luwero and Singo. Conversely, aiding the insurgents increased the likelihood that they could eventually rid themselves of the occupying force, and be less likely to suffer marauding, undisciplined soldiers or paramilitaries. This being the case, despite holding every meaningful advantage in manpower, materiel, and logistics, UNLA and its allies failed to achieve the requirements of Galula's second and third steps.

#### Application of Galula's Fourth Step: Failed Police Actions, 1983-1985

If a counterinsurgent force manages to complete the first three of Galula's steps, then they should be well-positioned to begin step four: Destruction of the Insurgent Political Organisation. In this step, the counterinsurgent forces assume supporting roles as policing forces to replace military forces in operations against the insurgents. In Galula's words:

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<sup>167</sup> Pike, *Combatants: A Memoir*, 55.

This is, in essence, a police operation directed not against common criminals but against men whose motivations, even if the counterinsurgent disapproves of them, may be perfectly honourable. Furthermore, they do not participate directly, as a rule, in direct terrorism or guerrilla action and, technically, have no blood on their hands. As these men are local people, with family ties and connections, and are hunted by outsiders, a certain feeling of solidarity and sympathy automatically exists toward them on the part of the population. Under the best circumstances, the police action cannot fail to have unpleasant aspects both for the population and for the counterinsurgent personnel living with it. This is why elimination of the agents must be achieved quickly and decisively.<sup>168</sup>

This fourth step highlights the trend, as seen with how it handled the previous steps, of Obote's government failing to understand how its actions undermined its successes against the NRA. UNLA did not use the NRA's retreat to Singo to tighten its control of Luwero, improve its relationship with the locals, or stand up a police force capable of ferreting out the final pockets of NRA sympathisers in Luwero. Instead, the counterinsurgents devoted significant efforts to displacing approximately one hundred and twenty thousand people into thirty-six camps.<sup>169</sup> As the NRA would later do in Acholiland, UNLA used these camps to isolate civilians from the NRA. This decision to sweep the civilians in Luwero out of their homes and place them in these camps backfired because UNLA committed atrocities against civilians in these camps, including public killings, tortures, and rapes. These atrocities ensured that instead of quashing local support for the NRA, the insurgents would continue to receive help from the region's civilians, mostly in the form of willing volunteers.<sup>170</sup> This camp tactic was a well-established COIN tactic, including in Africa, and had been used in both Kenya and Rhodesia before the outbreak of the LRA insurgency.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 87.

<sup>169</sup> Crisp, "National Security," 169. These camps ranged in size, with the smallest numbering roughly one hundred people, while the largest held nearly twenty thousand.

<sup>170</sup> Jeremy M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 266-267.

<sup>171</sup> See Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning* for information on the use of camps in Kenya. See also A. K. H. Weinrich, "Strategic Resettlement in Rhodesia," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 3, no. 2 (1977): 207-208 for information on a similar tactic during the Rhodesian Bush War.

Local aid allowed the NRA to stay active, at a time when they suffered from critical shortages of weapons, nearly all of which came from successful raids against government forces. Weapon shortages caused the insurgents to develop training schemes that often shocked their prospective recruits. Kenneth Ruhinda's interview with Frank Schubert gives some insight into the desperation of the situation of the NRA during this period:

They were putting on tattered combat shirts. One or two were holding rifles. I remember the present army commander was one of them and you looked funny in a tattered combat shirt and holding an ancient G3 rifle. We kept whispering, is this what we have come to do really? What we had imagined was that we would just find piles of modern glittering rifles, shiny brand-new combat uniforms, Russian tinned food, and that kind of stuff. That's what we thought. We never knew we would go through a lot of trouble even to get dressed on our own.<sup>172</sup>

Ruhinda found himself promoted to a position of leadership in the NRA by late 1983. He, and other members of the NRA's leadership taught combat tactics to recruits with wooden guns as training aids, as any weapons and live ammunition captured in raids or ambushes immediately returned to battle in the hands of the insurgents. These conditions led to the creation of what the NRA called its 'commandos', intentionally unarmed insurgents tasked with keeping avenues of retreat open after the NRA conducted raids on government infrastructure or counterinsurgent forces. These commandos also kept watch of secured materiel seized in these raids. Ruhinda's story again proves useful here: "We nicknamed them 'commandos' to indicate to them that they were so experienced that they went into battle without the need for arms. Of course, the truth was that we had no arms to give them."<sup>173</sup> The NRA suffered logistical challenges throughout its time hiding in Singo, and these challenges extended beyond lacking weapons.

The insurgents also lacked significant stores of medical supplies, which hindered their ability to return their wounded to combat readiness, and this attrited their personnel, further

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<sup>172</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 102.

<sup>173</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 103.

increasing pressure on them beyond what the counterinsurgents already applied. By the end of 1983, so few medicines and bandages remained that the insurgents turned to looting abandoned homes for anything that could be turned into bandages. In many cases, torn up mattresses served this purpose.<sup>174</sup> Lacking the medical capabilities required to keep its fighters healthy worsened the NRA's pre-existing challenges of a lack of personnel, technological and material inferiority, and absence of tenable bases. Despite attempts to create field hospitals and makeshift care centres, many NRA fighters died of tropical disease and contamination in their water supplies, all while on the run from UNLA and other government forces. Jamir Gyagenda described the medical situation of the NRA as follows:

People died there! Malaria! People didn't have blood. They died and they staggered being mobile to and fro. We ran and the government had got to know that we are going to Entebbe. They sent flying patrols and you had to run back at night. We died in swamps. They called it biteebe [quicksand] and it took many of us while crossing the river.<sup>175</sup>

Disease takes a combatant off the battlefield just as efficiently as any bullet, and while UNLA killed its fair share of insurgents, so too did sickness. Casualties due to disease continued to eat away at the NRA's manpower throughout their time in the bush in Singo, and their ability to conduct operations suffered during this period. As a result, UNLA's and the UPC's superiority over the NRA intensified, yet, in keeping with Obote's government's record, remained unexploited.

During the retreat to Singo, the NRA's problem with lack of food matched or even surpassed its medical challenges. NRA members resorted to foraging and scavenging to feed themselves in many cases, with those who successfully organised food logistics for the

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<sup>174</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 103.

<sup>175</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 103.

insurgents immediately receiving special treatment and authority.<sup>176</sup> Some of the stranger items that found their way into NRA stomachs included cow skins, cassava peels, grass, and even tree bark.<sup>177</sup> These foods proved understandably insufficient, and fighters took what they could from fields abandoned during UNLA's clearance operations. The insurgents also tried to plant cassava and matooke (a relative of the plantain) in these abandoned fields, but these efforts failed to produce the amount of food required to nourish a fighting force, let alone a few individuals. Jamir Gyagenda's account again helps elucidate the desperation of the NRA's logistical situation:

Sometimes we got one stick of cassava and it was for three days because we had to hide from government soldiers. You ate and sometimes you could spend four hours there and then you had to go to another place. Most people on the rebel side suffered a lot because they didn't have legs and they were attacked by them.<sup>178</sup>

Not only did the insurgents have to remain mobile, but they had no consistent ability to stockpile food and support themselves with established supply chains. Running from bush camp to bush camp, the NRA somehow managed to keep enough of its fighters fed to carry out operations. UNLA controlled the main routes throughout Luwero using roadblocks and checkpoints, and this interdiction allowed them to throttle the NRA's supply chains further. Like with the case of the medical supplies, the advantage that their choking of the insurgents' food supplies presented went unexploited by Obote's forces. It drove popular resentment, as did the other police actions in the Luwero Triangle, which caused the insurgents' ranks to swell throughout late 1983 and

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<sup>176</sup> Risdell Kasasira, "Maj Zizinga Will Be Buried with Military Honours - Army," *The Uganda Daily Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), January 25, 2021, accessed October 7, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/maj-zizinga-will-be-buried-with-military-honours-army-3268114>.

The case of Maj Oliver Zizinga demonstrates the importance of logisticians to NRA command. Recruited in 1981, Zizinga demonstrated her ability to coordinate getting food to rebels on the front line. She soon became the personal caretaker for Museveni, and followed him wherever he went, to ensure he stayed fed, thereby gaining special access to the leader of the insurgents. Soon after the NRA took Kampala, Museveni promoted her to Captain.

<sup>177</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 102.

<sup>178</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 102.



1984. Despite their lack of weapons, the insurgents did not lack for manpower, making the government's policing of Luwero ineffective overall.<sup>179</sup>

By late 1984, the NRA's force size increased to the point that it began to seize the initiative in the campaign from the counterinsurgents. The attack on the UNLA artillery unit in the town of Masindi early on 20 February 1984 catalysed this seizure of initiative by the insurgents.<sup>180</sup> Accounts of the assault from NRA members assert approximately seven hundred fighters participated, although only about half the assailants carried firearms.<sup>181</sup> The remainder acted as the 'commandos' mentioned above. The battle at Masindi paralleled the NRA's first offensive action at Kabamba three years earlier, with the insurgents targeting armouries, supply warehouses, and barracks. The outcome in this battle benefited the insurgents much more than in their first raid, though, and the NRA left Masindi the day after having acquired almost seven hundred guns and a large stockpile of ammunition. In addition, the rebels captured field artillery pieces, specifically 122mm howitzers, which subsequently allowed them to begin using fire missions in support of their assaults on government forces.<sup>182</sup> With these weapons now available to them, the insurgents began to aggressively engage government troops. As a result, by 1985, the government could no longer sustain its police actions in Luwero, as its combat power necessarily refocused on conventional combat with the NRA.

Galula's fourth step in the process of defeating an insurgency clearly outlines how counterinsurgent forces can use separate police forces to round up remaining pockets of insurgency and eliminate them. As part of this step, dividing counterinsurgent forces into police and military forces must take place. Critically, the military commander in the area retains overall

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<sup>179</sup> Pike, *Combatants: A Memoir*, 92-93.

<sup>180</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan*, 98-99.

<sup>181</sup> Schubert, "Guerrillas Don't," 103.

<sup>182</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan*, 100-101.

control of operations during this step. Dividing forces this way allows the police forces to dedicate all personnel and resources to their 'purge', during which they positively identify and round up any remaining insurgent sympathisers that may remain in the area after the obvious insurgents have been pushed out or killed. The police concern themselves purely with apprehending sympathisers, while the military directs its efforts to maintaining stability in, and forceful control of, the area. The overarching intent during this step focuses on the swift apprehension of sympathisers with minimal negative impact on the area's civilians. UNLA and the UPC overlooked two vital parts of this step during their efforts to push the NRA out of Luwero: divide the counterinsurgent forces and cause minimal disruption to the locals. Instead, Obote's forces chose to inflict catastrophic damage to civilians and their property throughout the Luwero Triangle and not modify their force structure to create the police force for which Galula's step calls. This blunder ensured that despite the overwhelming superiority they enjoyed, Obote's forces failed to capitalise on their advantage and destroy the depleted NRA between 1982 and 1984. From this example, a lesson on the allocation of resources can be extracted: when attempting to finish off a weakened insurgent force that the counterinsurgent dominates in terms of capability, the counterinsurgent's forces must be subdivided to allow separate specialist teams to simultaneously maintain stability and eradicate any remaining pockets of resistance.

#### The Effect of the Counterinsurgent's Failures to Implement Galula's Theories: Governmental Collapse and the NRA's March on Kampala

The NRA at the end of 1984 looked very different from the NRA that retreated into the bush in Singo a little over a year earlier. After almost four years of fighting, the UPC failed, despite enormous technological advantage and having imported foreign

counterinsurgency trainers from Great Britain, Canada, and North Korea, to destroy the insurgents because of their constant blunders and incompetence.<sup>183</sup> This incompetence came to a head in early 1985. Acholi members of UNLA, embittered by what they perceived as different treatment between them and their Langi comrades, began plotting to oust Obote. The Acholi soldiers believed that Obote, a Langi, chose Acholi to deploy to the bloodiest battles of the Luwero Triangle War instead of Langi soldiers. They believed that Obote preferred Acholi die instead of other Langi, and this perception proved an important motivation for Acholi revolt.<sup>184</sup> In late 1984 and early 1985, in response to concerns among his advisors that the Acholi might turn on him, Obote created the National Security Agency (NASA). This secret counter-intelligence service spied on the army and its senior leadership, to allow Obote to root out any dissenters or potential traitors. NASA failed to eliminate Acholi threats to Obote's regime, and Brigadier Bajilio Okello, an Acholi and the senior commander of UNLA forces in Gulu, put the coup into action in early July 1985. Okello claimed that he led the coup to prevent additional loss of life in Uganda in a press release he issued on 11 November 1985:

The main reasons for the action taken by the Army of 27 were: to stop bloodshed in the country; and to create conditions for viable peace, unity, development, and the observance and promotion of human rights. In fact the UNLA merely responded to the anguished voices of the people of this country who have suffered far too long at the hands of dictators and self-seeking politicians. I can assure you there were no other compelling reasons for the takeover apart from the ones I have just mentioned.<sup>185</sup>

Having lost control of whatever government remained following the division in the military, Obote fled to Kenya on 27 July 1985. The coup installed General Tito Lutwa Okello, Chief of

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<sup>183</sup> Pike, *Combatants: A Memoir*, 45.

<sup>184</sup> The Independent, "Obituaries: Milton Obote," *The Independent* (London, United Kingdom), accessed February 10, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/milton-obote-318821.html>.

<sup>185</sup> Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military*, 165. The literature occasionally names Brigadier Okello as 'Basilio' Okello instead of 'Bajilio' Okello, though the press release above came signed "Lieutenant-General Bajilio Olara Okello", according to Omara-Otunnu. While the literature spells his name interchangeably depending on the source, these two names represent the same historical figure.

the Defence Staff at the time, as the President of Uganda, and he promoted Brigadier Bajilio Okello to Lieutenant-General with the post of Chief of the Defence Forces. Tito Okello held power through the end of January 1986, but only just. Factionalism in his ranks fractured the capital region, and various powerful members of the military claimed districts of the city for themselves. While Tito Okello struggled to impose his will on the capital, and Uganda more broadly, the NRA advanced steadily south, bearing down on Kampala.

The NRA arrived at the outskirts of the city and found it essentially ungoverned, with the numerous factions fighting each other for control.<sup>186</sup> The insurgents began to move into the city proper, cleaning up pockets of resistance as they moved deeper in. The remaining UNLA forces in the city offered a tenacious defence, and the NRA forces split their battalion-sized elements to destroy whichever group controlled a given area of the city.<sup>187</sup> Late in the evening of 26 January 1986, NRA fighters dominated enough of the city that Salim Saleh, Museveni's brother and senior commander on the ground, radioed Museveni indicating the success of the insurgents' cleanup operations.<sup>188</sup> The NRA left some gaps in their advancing units to offer UNLA the opportunity to withdraw. Many UNLA fighters fled back to their northern homelands, eventually reforming into insurgent groups in the late 1980s, including Tito Okello. He challenged the NRA again as the insurgents-turned-counterinsurgents consolidated their power throughout the country, as will be discussed in Chapter 3. Okello fleeing the city signalled the NRA's victory in the Luwero Triangle War, a compelling example of an insurgent force that lacked significant foreign support defeating a numerically, militarily, and logistically superior counterinsurgent force and claiming power.

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<sup>186</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, "Uganda in Transition: Two Years of the NRA/NRM," *Third World Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (July 1988): 1159.

<sup>187</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan*, 164-165.

<sup>188</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan*, 170.

The Luwero Triangle War offers numerous cases that can be used to evaluate the validity of Galula's theories on the steps necessary for a successful counterinsurgency. The actions of the counterinsurgents demonstrated these steps' validity by showing the results of failing to adhere to them. The NRA, for their part, showed how an insurgency can win when it gains the support of civilians. During the opening engagements of the war in 1981, the counterinsurgents failed to destroy the nascent insurgency, despite it having pitifully few active members. The counterinsurgents' inability to achieve this vital first step prevented them from progressing through the next three steps, which in this case required winning the support of locals in Luwero and Singo districts. UNLA forces sabotaged their own COIN efforts by making the critical strategic error to use terror tactics against the locals instead of focusing on locating and destroying NRA strongholds. The counterinsurgents destroyed farms, homes, and carried out mass executions of civilians in Luwero and Singo, actions which drove these civilians to provide material and manpower support to the NRA.

The NRA exploited the support the locals gave them to survive the counterinsurgents' offensives against their insurgency with meagre food, medical, and weaponry supplies, which they replenished slowly by raids on government units. The insurgents survived long enough that their enemies destroyed themselves from within. The counterinsurgents' inability to progress through Galula's steps required for a successful counterinsurgency exacerbated ethnic divisions within Milton Obote's regime. Acholi soldiers, maddened by their perception that Obote, an ethnic Langi, sent them to serve as cannon fodder in the fight against the NRA, carried out a coup against him in July 1985. This coup installed an Acholi dictator, Tito Okello, but Okello too failed to destroy the insurgents, who by the end of 1985 possessed enough manpower, weaponry, and popular support in Luwero and Singo to advance south and dislodge the

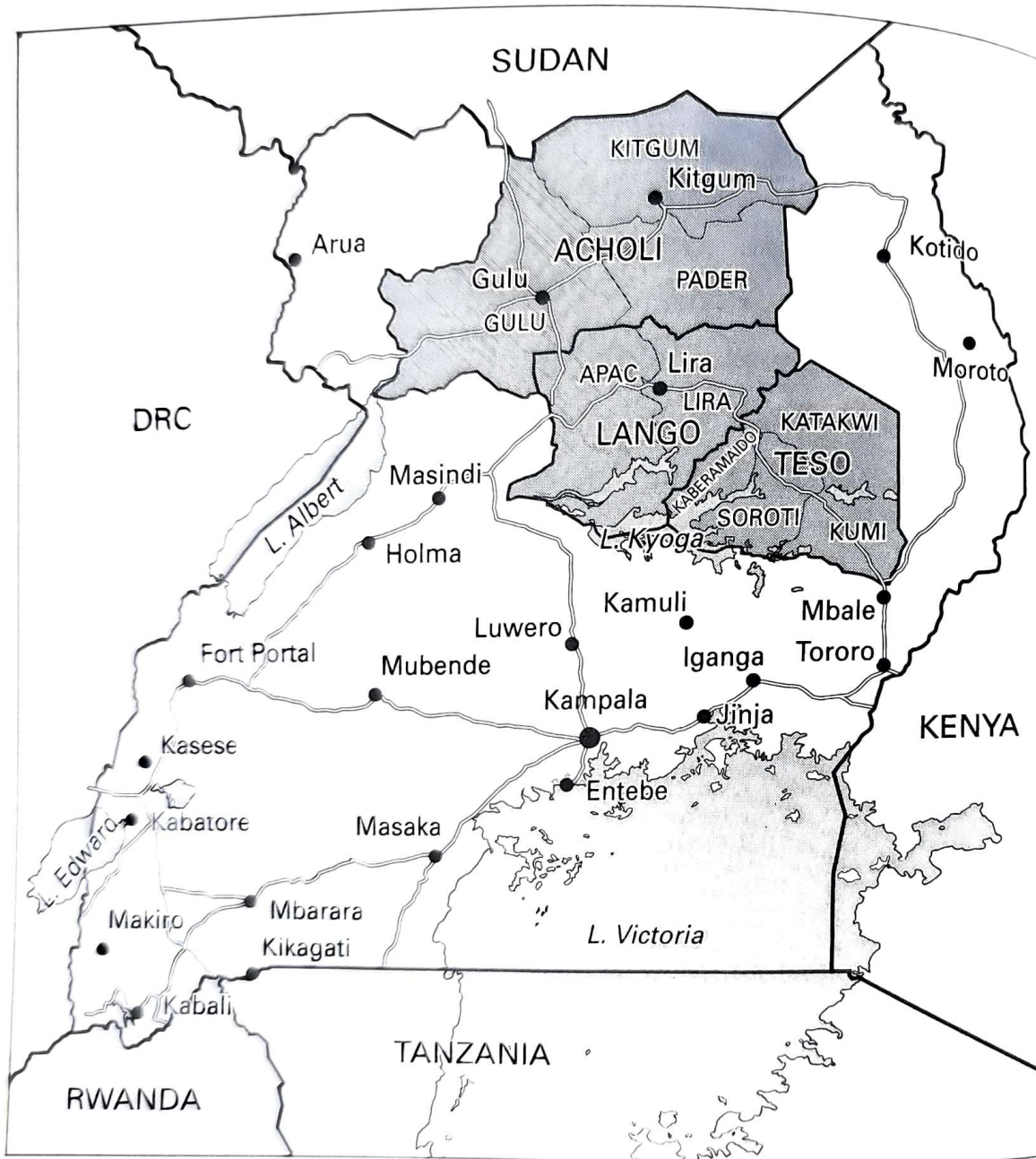
counterinsurgents from the capital in Kampala, marking the NRA's transition into a more conventional military force.<sup>189</sup> By expending resources on terror tactics against civilians to try to break popular support for the NRA, the central government demonstrated the validity of Galula's theoretical first four steps of a successful counterinsurgency in the negative. Failing to destroy an insurgent force ensures the counterinsurgent cannot progress to the subsequent steps of deploying a static unit to win local support through effective police actions that would then enable the destruction of the insurgents' political organisation amidst the locals.

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<sup>189</sup> Kainerugaba, *Battles of the Ugandan*, 108.

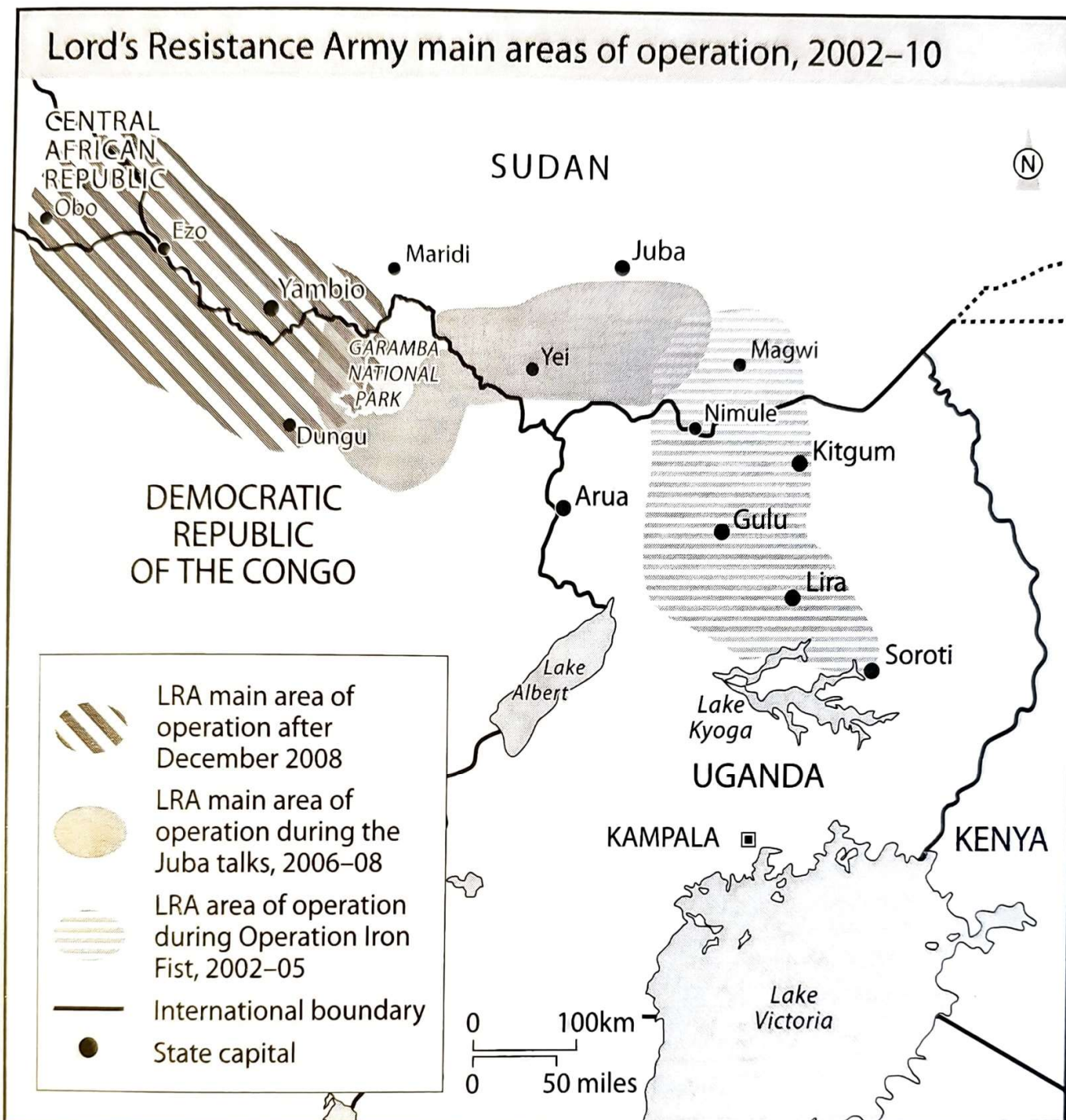
## Chapter 2: The LRA Insurgency in Northern Uganda, 1987-2006

### 6: LRA-Affected Areas in Northern Uganda, 1987-2006<sup>190</sup>



**Districts of northern Uganda affected by the LRA**

<sup>190</sup> Allen, *Trial Justice*, xviii.

7: LRA Operational Areas in the Great Lakes Region, 2002-2010<sup>191</sup>

<sup>191</sup> Allen and Vlassenroot, *The Lord's*, ix.



On 20 April 1995, approximately one hundred and twenty members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) swept through the city of Gulu in northern Uganda and abducted eighty-two civilians. That Sunday, the *Toronto Star* reported that the LRA slaughtered their prisoners on the banks of the river Awic and quoted a Ugandan military officer who claimed, on behalf of Museveni's government, that the group killed seventy-three of eighty-two of these abductees before fleeing the city. The LRA killed most of the other nine civilians it abducted while it fled, and government forces found their bodies further along the riverbank.<sup>192</sup> This massacre helps demonstrate this insurgent group's method of conducting operations. The LRA was expelled from northern Uganda in the mid-2000s, and it continues to employ terror tactics against civilians in the border area of the Central African Republic and DRC.<sup>193</sup> Museveni has tried to destroy the LRA insurgency many times since its creation in 1987, but Kony remains free despite these attempts.<sup>194</sup>

This chapter focuses on the period between the LRA's founding in 1987 and the group's formal departure from Uganda in 2006. The LRA insurgency helps demonstrate the validity of David Galula's 'Prerequisites for a Successful Insurgency', largely due to the NRA/UPDF's ineffective counterinsurgency strategies or tactics.<sup>195</sup> The NRA's ineptitude enabled the LRA's survival, which this thesis asserts constitutes a type of success in and of itself. The LRA's operations during this period generally succeeded because they correspond to the prerequisites Galula identified: 'Necessity of a Cause', 'Strategic Criteria of a Cause', 'The Nature of the

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<sup>192</sup> "Ugandan Guerrillas Slaughter 82 Civilians," *Toronto Star* (Toronto, ON), 1995, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fugandan-guerrillas-slaughter-82-civilians%2Fdocview%2F437228184%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

<sup>193</sup> Ledio Cakaj and Roméo Dallaire, *When the Walking Defeats You: One Man's Journey as Joseph Kony's Bodyguard* (London, United Kingdom: Zed Books, 2016), 18.

<sup>194</sup> Allen and Vlassenroot, *The Lord's*, 20-21.

<sup>195</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, "Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army," *Review of African Political Economy* 31, no. 99 (2004): 139-140.

Cause’, ‘Tactical Manipulation of the Cause’, and ‘Diminishing Importance of the Cause’.<sup>196</sup> The LRA insurgency offers many examples of these sub-factors. The NRA/UPDF’s generally ineffective COIN operations against the LRA throughout the insurgency offer numerous examples as well.<sup>197</sup>

### The First Prerequisite of a Successful Insurgency - Cause

Joseph Kony used Christian religious rhetoric and calls for a righteous war against the NRA state which he claimed brought suffering to the Acholi people.<sup>198</sup> His reasons for starting the LRA align well with Galula’s first prerequisite for successful insurgency, ‘Cause’, which states the following:

The first basic need for an insurgent who aims at more than simply making trouble is an attractive cause, particularly in view of the risks involved and in view of the fact that the early supporters and the active supporters—not necessarily the same persons—have to be recruited by persuasion.<sup>199</sup>

Discussion of the earlier Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) helps explain the cause for the LRA’s founding, as well as the terror strategy that the latter employed effectively between 1987 and 2003.<sup>200</sup> The LRA emerged from the remnants of HSM in the mid-1980s.<sup>201</sup> The HSM, led by Alice Auma (who later adopted the name ‘The Lakwena’), attempted to violently overthrow

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<sup>196</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 11-16. Galula identified the following four criteria as prerequisites for a successful insurgency: ‘Necessity of a Cause’, ‘Strategic Criteria of a Cause’, ‘The Nature of the Cause’, ‘Tactical Manipulation of the Cause’, and ‘Diminishing Importance of the Cause’.

<sup>197</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda: Human Rights Violations by the National Resistance Army," news release, December 4, 1991, accessed November 5, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/020/1991/en/>. Especially during the late 1980s, Museveni used the offensives against the LRA as an excuse to consolidate his power through force, jailing political opponents from the Democratic Party, and allowing his NRA soldiers to run amok through northern Uganda. This lack of discipline led international watchdog organisations like Amnesty International to accuse Museveni of allowing his forces to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity.

<sup>198</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 179.

<sup>199</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 16.

<sup>200</sup> "Ghosts of Atiak Massacre Haunt Acholi 15 years later," *The Uganda Daily Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), May 7, 2010, accessed August 18, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/ghosts-of-atiak-massacre-haunt-acholi-15-years-later-1472630>.

<sup>201</sup> Heike Behrend and Mitch Cohen, *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits: War in Northern Uganda, 1985-97* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016), 172-180.

Yoweri Museveni's newly installed government soon after he deposed Tito Okello in 1986. Based in northern Uganda's Acholiland, the movement displayed cult-like characteristics, as it blended Acholi spiritual traditions with Christian-based commandments. Using this blended religious ideology, Auma recruited many followers throughout northern Uganda, although most came from Acholiland and had served with the now-defeated UNLA.<sup>202</sup> Auma offered her recruits forgiveness for their past sins through a culturally important Acholi concept known as *maleng*. Behrend and Cohen's *Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirits* describes this concept as follows: "*maleng* does not precisely correspond to our Western ideas of purity; instead, it indicates a semantic field comprising healing and the undoing of witchcraft as well as sanctification".<sup>203</sup> This 'purification process' allowed Auma to provide something that struck a chord with many Acholi: the purging of witchcraft, sorcery, and *cen*, "the spirits of enemies killed in war"<sup>204</sup>. She claimed the process would give adherents invulnerability in battle, notably immunising them to bullets.<sup>205</sup> By the end of 1986, Auma convinced many Acholi that she could deliver *maleng* and paired this with assurances that by joining the cult's militant wing, the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), combatants would be absolved of their sins after death. This powerful ambrosia of belief, structure, and lies empowered Auma and her movement, which eventually caused almost ten thousand people to join her as she led a southward push to take Kampala in the summer of 1987.<sup>206</sup> The NRA halted her movement's advance south in collaboration with militias from the southern ethnic groups, although Auma reached Jinja, only

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<sup>202</sup> Cline, *The Lord's*, 3-5.

<sup>203</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 45.

<sup>204</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 45.

<sup>205</sup> "Christian Rebels Wage a War of Terror in Uganda," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), March 5, 1997, accessed August 22, 2023,

<https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fblogs-podcasts-websites%2Fchristian-rebels-wage-war-terror-uganda%2Fdocview%2F2237228664%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

<sup>206</sup> Allen and Vlassenroot, *The Lord's*, 36.

fifty kilometres east of the capital.<sup>207</sup> Their defeat near Jinja caused the HSM's collapse.<sup>208</sup>

Auma then fled to Kenya, where the Kenyan authorities imprisoned her.<sup>209</sup> After Auma's imprisonment, Kony emerged as a new prominent rebel leader in Acholiland expanding his LRA through absorbing former HSM fighters.<sup>210</sup>

Kony's construction of a personality cult stands as the defining feature of the LRA's leadership. Kony has shown that he will not tolerate challenges to his domination of the group, and regularly executes anyone who tries.<sup>211</sup> Relatively little of his personal history appears in the literature involving the LRA's formation.<sup>212</sup> Kony claimed to be Alice Auma's cousin, although no sources exist that can corroborate this, and he paired his assertion with an unsubstantiated account of a three-day spiritual possession he experienced. The literature provides two different versions of Kony's spiritual possession, with one version recounting Kony's claims of possession by Juma Oris (who was still alive at the time), and the other version asserting that Lakwena, the same spirit that possessed Auma, possessed Kony as well.<sup>213</sup> Kony used this spiritual 'reasoning' to further his calls for a Christian holy war against the NRA, and his supposed holy empowerment helped convince many to join his group.<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, "Uganda: The Lord's Resistance Army," in *African Guerrillas: Raging against the Machine*, ed. Morten Bøås and Kevin C. Dunn (Boulder, USA: Rienner, 2008), 134.

<sup>208</sup> Hans Peter Schmitz, "Rebels without a Cause? Transnational Diffusion and the Lord's Resistance Army," in *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*, ed. Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 127. Auma's movement advanced as far south as Jinja, under 100km from Kampala, before the NRA halted them.

<sup>209</sup> "Christian Rebels," *New York Times*.

<sup>210</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 174.

<sup>211</sup> Ledio Cakaj, "Joseph Kony and Mutiny in the Lord's Resistance Army," *The New Yorker* (New York, USA), October 3, 2015, accessed September 12, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/joseph-kony-and-mutiny-in-the-lords-resistance-army>.

<sup>212</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 179.

<sup>213</sup> Dunn, "Uganda: The Lord's," 134-135. Juma Oris led the WNBF in its own insurgency in West Nile during the mid- to late-1990s.

<sup>214</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, "Uganda: The Longevity of the Lord's Resistance Army," in *Africa's Insurgents: Navigating an Evolving Landscape*, by Maria Eriksson Baaz, et al., ed. Morten Bøås and Kevin C. Dunn (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2022), 218-219.

Despite how many northern Ugandans initially joined the LRA, after the HSM's defeat Kony had to contend with other armed groups in Acholiland in the early years of his insurgency. Large numbers of UPDA and former UNLA soldiers lived in Acholiland in 1986 and 1987, so Kony found himself initially opposed by both. The UPDA used the Sudanese border as a shield against the NRA, although Brigadier Odong Latek, one of Amin's cronies, often led the group in cross-border raids on civilians in Acholiland.<sup>215</sup> Latek's incursions brought many fighters back into northern Uganda, and some of these helped fill out Kony's ranks by late 1987. These fighters included Latek himself after the NRA-UPDA peace agreement of May 1988.<sup>216</sup> Former dictator Tito Okello, an Acholi, briefly led what remained of UNLA in the region, but his subordinates challenged his authority which forced him to flee Uganda.<sup>217</sup> When the NRA arrived in the northern towns of Kitgum and Gulu during their consolidation campaign in late 1986 and early 1987, they helped drive many of these former soldier's into Kony's group, which he briefly called the Uganda People's Democratic Christian Army during this period.<sup>218</sup> The NRA's actions in Acholiland in 1986 and 1987 confirmed the locals' fears of reprisals for the actions of previous northern regimes. Amnesty International reported in 1989 that the NRA's soldiers carried out extensive looting, massacres, and rape campaigns between 1986 and 1989.<sup>219</sup> Auma's defeat further south meant that Acholi men only had one armed group to join, as the UPDA and former UNLA soldiers lacked any coherent defence plan against the NRA. If the people in the region chose not to join Kony's group, he ordered them kidnapped, raped, or killed, and, in some cases,

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<sup>215</sup> Emma Mutaizibwa, "The Roots of War: Birth of Rebellion in Northern Uganda," *The Observer* (Kampala, Uganda), August 4, 2011, accessed September 15, 2023, <https://www.observer.ug/component/content/article/34-news/news/14564-birth-of-rebellion-in-northern-uganda>.

<sup>216</sup> Cline, *The Lord's*, 29.

<sup>217</sup> Frank Van Acker, "Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army: The New Order No One Ordered," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (2004): 341-342.

<sup>218</sup> Bruce Baker, *Taking the Law into Their Own Hands: Lawless Law Enforcers in Africa* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2017), 56-57.

<sup>219</sup> Amnesty International, *Uganda: The Human*, 24-26.

all three.<sup>220</sup> This campaign of terror helped establish the LRA's position in Acholiland, and Kony's group relied on fearmongering to further drive recruitment. According to the LRA, the NRA state forces meant to wipe out Acholi people, so only by joining the insurgency could Acholi prevent the southern occupiers from carrying out this mission.<sup>221</sup> After Latek joined the LRA with his former UPDA fighters, he orchestrated Kony's shift in tactics.<sup>222</sup> Before Latek's push for tactical change, Kony used 'Holy Spirit Tactics', which he based on his interpretations of Christianity. These tactics included praying for a rock to turn into a grenade, guaranteeing that faith would grant an HSM fighter invulnerability to harm, or using the shape of the cross as a tactical formation in combat.<sup>223</sup> Latek's intervention saw the adoption of more conventional and rational guerilla tactics allowing the LRA to cement itself as the dominant insurgent force in the region after it defeated the forces of Severino Lukoya, Alice Auma's father.<sup>224</sup>

Lukoya attempted to capitalise on his daughter's popularity following her exile and subsequent imprisonment in Kenya. Her failed rebellion against Museveni in late 1987 led to her personal downfall, but the passion that her supporters held for her cause remained. With his daughter out of the picture, Lukoya attempted to win the war she had failed to win.<sup>225</sup> Lukoya did not display his daughter's charisma, though, and this led to a general lack of command and control within Lukoya's ranks. Without a firm grip on his follower's, Lukoya's group took significant casualties during insurgent operations.<sup>226</sup> He even attempted to capture the city of Kitgum in

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<sup>220</sup> Baker, *Taking the Law into*, 57.

<sup>221</sup> Ronald R. Atkinson, "The Northern Uganda War, 1986-2008," in *From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army* (n.p.: International Peace Institute, 2009), 6.

<sup>222</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 182.

<sup>223</sup> David A. Hoekema, *We Are the Voice of the Grass: Interfaith Peace Activism in Northern Uganda* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019), 84-85.

<sup>224</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 176.

<sup>225</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 175.

<sup>226</sup> Dunn, "Uganda: The Longevity," 223.

February and March of 1988. These attempts failed, and he lost nearly 450 of his followers throughout this period.<sup>227</sup> His weakness as a leader, coupled with much of his force being made up of child soldiers, made him an easy target when Kony sent LRA fighters to capture him in August 1988.<sup>228</sup>

Latek joining the LRA, Okello fleeing the country, and Lukoya's pathetic play for power created the conditions necessary for Kony to solidify himself as the only viable rebel leader in Acholiland by 1989. Kony's fearmongering, religious justification for rebellion, and terror tactics all demonstrated the validity of Galula's theory on the importance of 'Cause' as a prerequisite for successful insurgency.<sup>229</sup> This potent mix of rhetoric and action allowed Kony to "attract the largest number of supporters and repel the minimum of opponents.", as Galula put it.<sup>230</sup> Those that joined the LRA willingly did not have to suffer the punishments that the group inflicted on those who refused membership. This made the LRA into a terrifying insurgent force, which they demonstrated in their attacks in 1988 and 1989. These attacks illustrated what Galula called "Tactical Manipulation of the Cause", in which the insurgency translates cause into effect on the ground.

The LRA attack on a school in Apac district on 21 March 1989 helps illustrate how the causes for the LRA's insurgency translated into actions taken in operations. In what later became known as the "Aboke Girls' School Raid", insurgents attacked Saint Mary's College.<sup>231</sup> They abducted ten teenage girls to forcibly marry insurgents and serve as sex slaves and, as well as

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<sup>227</sup> Behrend and Cohen, *Alice Lakwena*, 176.

<sup>228</sup> Dunn, "Uganda: The Longevity," 223.

<sup>229</sup> Kevin C. Dunn, "Killing for Christ? The Lord's Resistance Army of Uganda," *Current History* 103, no. 673 (2004): 209-210.

<sup>230</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 13.

<sup>231</sup> Cline, *The Lord's*, 34.

thirty-three additional villagers.<sup>232</sup> While abducting the girls, LRA fighters killed villagers as a means of instilling fear in the locals. Of the ten kidnapped girls, one later died in battle, while nine escaped. These girls returned home, but the LRA returned in October 1996, this time in a force of about two hundred insurgents. The fighters took one hundred and thirty-nine girls in this second assault, and one of the nuns teaching at Saint Mary's followed the insurgents. What happened next illustrates the almost incomprehensible violence that the LRA employed during this period.

Sister Rachele Fassera, together with a male teacher, followed the trail of the LRA band. After meeting the leader of the LRA group, the nun had to travel with them some distance, especially after the LRA members and their abductees came under attack by the UPDF and fled to escape the pursuit. After arriving at a safe area, the LRA commander, with only minimal prodding, stated that he was going to release 109 of the girls, keeping 30 of them. Although Sister Rachele obviously protested, the commander refused to change his mind; to emphasize his seriousness, when the 30 who had been separated began to protest, he ordered his troops to beat them. After having tea and cookies with the LRA leaders, Sister Rachele and the 109 girls were released.<sup>233</sup>

This incident shows how the LRA approached operations. Kony's religious dogma, the basis for his group's insurgency, called for the creation of a new race in the LRA camps.<sup>234</sup> Abducting girls like those from the Aboke school meant to further this supposedly divine mission, as these girls would become 'bush wives' to forcibly marry LRA fighters and give birth to children in the camps.<sup>235</sup> LRA operations all meant to further Kony's new religion, thereby turning 'cause' into effect on the ground. These operations traumatised the women and girls of Northern Uganda, trauma which has begun to be studied only recently.<sup>236</sup>

The raids on the Aboke Girls' School demonstrate the depravity of the LRA, and how the almost reflexive violence it inflicts on its victims desensitises its fighters to atrocities and crimes

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<sup>232</sup> Allen Kiconco, *Gender, Conflict and Reintegration in Uganda: Abducted Girls, Returning Women* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 69.

<sup>233</sup> Cline, *The Lord's*, 34.

<sup>234</sup> Kathy Cook, *Stolen Angels: The Kidnapped Girls of Uganda* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2007), 37.

<sup>235</sup> Sam Dubal, *Against Humanity: Lessons from the Lord's Resistance Army* (Oakland, USA: University of California Press, 2018), 18.

<sup>236</sup> Erin Baines, "Forced Marriage as a Political Project: Sexual Rules and Relations in the Lord's Resistance Army," *Journal of Peace Research* 51, no. 3 (2014): 407.



against humanity.<sup>237</sup> One former LRA child soldier's story illustrates the horror that the group inflicted on those it captured:

One boy tried to escape, but he was caught. They made him eat a mouthful of red pepper, and five people were beating him. His hands were tied, and then they made us, the other new captives, kill him with a stick. I felt sick. I knew this boy from before. We were from the same village. I refused to kill him and they told me they would shoot me. They pointed a gun at me, so I had to do it. The boy was asking me, "Why are you doing this?" I said I had no choice. After we killed him, they made us smear his blood on our arms.... I still dream about the boy from my village who I killed. I see him in my dreams, and he is talking to me and saying I killed him for nothing, and I am crying.<sup>238</sup>

The nonchalant attitude of the LRA commander who ordered the assaults on Aboke Girls' School demonstrates just how effectively, and effortlessly, the LRA turned their cause into action. This period at the end of the 1980s exemplified what Galula called "The Diminishing Importance of the Cause". He defined this sub-component as follows: "The importance of a cause, an absolute essential at the outset of an insurgency, decreases progressively as the insurgent acquires strength. The war itself becomes the principal issue, forcing the population to take sides, preferably the winning one."<sup>239</sup> In this period, the LRA showed itself capable of carrying out kidnappings, mass rapes, massacres, and torture with impunity. This strength allowed the LRA to focus less on their initial ideological cause for rebellion, and more on inflicting terror on any civilians who did not support the insurgency.<sup>240</sup>

### The Second Prerequisite of a Successful Insurgency – The Weakness of the Counterinsurgent

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<sup>237</sup> Bede Sheppard, "Remembering the Wisdom of Uganda's Aboke Girls, 20 Years Later," Human Rights Watch, last modified October 7, 2016, accessed October 30, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/10/07/remembering-wisdom-ugandas-aboke-girls-20-years-later>.

<sup>238</sup> Rosa Ehrenreich, "The Stories We Must Tell: Ugandan Children and the Atrocities of the Lord's Resistance Army," *Africa Today* 45, no. 1 (1998): 79.

<sup>239</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 16. These sub-factors include 'Strengths and Weaknesses of the Political Regime', 'Crisis and Insurgency', and 'The Border Doctrine'.

<sup>240</sup> Adam Branch, *Displacing Human Rights: War and Intervention in Northern Uganda* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71.

In 1989 and 1990, the LRA's operational tempo slowed to the point that Museveni's government declared the end of the war. This declaration did not reflect the LRA's capabilities, nor did it align with the government's determination to destroy the insurgency. By 1991, the LRA dominated the insurgency space in northern Uganda, and Kony's group presented the most dangerous internal security threat to Museveni's government. In this period, the actions of NRA showed the validity of Galula's theory of the 'Weakness of the Counterinsurgent' as a prerequisite for a successful insurgency. The NRA showed its weakness as a counterinsurgent force by, as UNLA did in Luwero, failing to secure the region in which it conducted its operations.<sup>241</sup> As the NRA lacked the counterinsurgency capability to destroy the LRA, it resorted to war crimes and crimes against humanity to attempt to subdue northern Ugandans and terrify them into supporting the campaign against the LRA.<sup>242</sup> The government employed undisciplined paramilitary groups to supplement its forces during these operations in the early 1990s. It also used the common 'protected camps' COIN tactic ineffectively, which made civilians forced into these camps targets of opportunity for LRA attacks. These examples showed the northerners that the NRA state forces could neither keep them safe nor maintain the discipline required to focus on finding and killing LRA rebels.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> The United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Resolutions 1653 (2006) and 1663 (2006)*, by Kofi Annan, accessed August 29, 2023, <https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?OpenAgent&DS=S/2006/478&Lang=E>.

<sup>242</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda," news release, September 20, 2005, accessed September 30, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2005/09/20/uprooted-and-forgotten/impunity-and-human-rights-abuses-northern-uganda>. The actions of the NRA during this operation drove some popular support for the LRA, but the insurgents squandered this support quickly, as during this period, they would occasionally mutilate their civilian targets, including cutting off their ears, lips, noses, hands, and/or feet.

<sup>243</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda - Army Violates Human Rights, Government Evades Responsibility," news release, December 4, 1991, accessed October 6, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afr590241991en.pdf>.

Despite their proclamations of victory, the NRA restarted the war with the launch of Operation NORTH on 27 March 1991. In this offensive, Museveni's forces blacked out communications in northern Uganda, expelled foreign journalists from the region, and began clearing houses to ferret out any LRA fighters.<sup>244</sup> This operation saw the counterinsurgents arrest and illegally detain anyone who resisted the NRA's forces. Those the NRA arrested and detained later faced charges of treason. The NRA also interrogated tens of thousands of civilians around Gulu to unmask LRA sympathisers. This intrusive operation prompted residents of Gulu to accuse the government forces of rampant abuse, including torture, rape, looting, and killings that filled mass graves. In a disturbing example of NRA treatment of civilians, Acholi women in northern Gulu reported to Amnesty International that they had "been raped and seven men killed, four of them suffocated in a 'torture pit' - trapped in a hole two metres deep, covered with logs and earth and filled with smoke from a fire lit overhead".<sup>245</sup> In late 1991, Museveni's senior military officers mendaciously declared Op NORTH a brilliant success that caught three thousand rebels in just the Kitgum district. For the Acholi, Op NORTH confirmed the government's inability to keep them safe from the LRA. It also confirmed that the counterinsurgents used Kony's group as an excuse to carry out violence against the Acholi people. The already adversarial relationship between the northerner civilians and southerner counterinsurgents worsened as a result.

In the later stages of Op NORTH, the NRA's low manpower and inability to properly garrison northern Uganda required them to stand up militias known as 'Arrow Boys'. These militias, literally armed with bows and arrows, assisted the NRA in its repression of locals across northern Uganda, and helped reinforce NRA troops during Op NORTH. The NRA recruited these

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<sup>244</sup> Branch, *Displacing Human*, 72.

<sup>245</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda - Army."

militias from the remnants of the Uganda People's Army (UPA), a minor rebel group that formed around 1987 from former UNLA soldiers upon their return to their northern homelands.<sup>246</sup> The government feared giving guns to former insurgents, who they believed might simply turn around and use those guns against NRA troops, but they assessed bows and arrows would not pose a significant threat to counterinsurgent forces if the militias chose to rebel again. The government employed these militias across northern Uganda, nominally to enhance the government's ability to protect civilians, but the militias' actions suggest otherwise. These militias brutalised their fellow northerners in several districts in the early 1990s, including Kitgum, Gulu, and Teso.<sup>247</sup> The Arrow Boys helped the NRA carry out its campaign of repression against northerners, which further deteriorated the locals' trust in the government. Their example demonstrates one of the factors Galula noted as a potential weakness of a political regime, the "machine for the control of the population".<sup>248</sup> This factor included numerous sub-factors but the example of the Arrow Boys best illustrates the "armed forces" sub-factor, which describes the importance of the insurgent-counterinsurgent ratio.<sup>249</sup> Their case showed that the NRA lacked the numbers necessary to fully garrison northern Uganda, and this weakness forced them to rely on paramilitaries to achieve an insurgent-counterinsurgent ratio that would allow them to properly control the north.

After Op NORTH, the NRA used the 'protected camps' tactic to attempt to isolate northern civilians from the LRA. These camps, which ran from the early- to late-1990s, caused a crisis of

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<sup>246</sup> Magnus Taylor, "On the Trail of Uganda's Arrow Boys," Crisis Group, last modified March 16, 2017, accessed September 29, 2023, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/trail-ugandas-arrow-boys>. Some sources attribute the formation of these groups to the efforts of Betty Bigombe, discussed below, but the literature does not conclusively determine whether she acted autonomously to create these groups, if Museveni ordered her to do, or if she created them at all.

<sup>247</sup> Taylor, "On the Trail," Crisis Group. The Arrow Boys later received rifles from the government, and, at their peak, included 7000 fighters. The UPDF marshalled these militias into battalion-sized elements, and the government considered them an important enough asset that the Army assigned a Major to each element.

<sup>248</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 17.

<sup>249</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 21.

IDPs in Acholiland specifically and failed to achieve the NRA's objective of eliminating the LRA threat.<sup>250</sup> While this tactic may have helped prevent civilians dying from LRA attacks, it instead caused them to die, in much greater numbers, because of the NRA's complete failure to properly administer the camps and support those they claimed to be protecting. With thousands of Acholi civilians forced into a select few locations, the LRA used the camps to further their goal of undermining faith in the government through terror.<sup>251</sup> In establishing these camps, the NRA violently removed hundreds of thousands of civilians from their homes and farms. One example demonstrates how liberally the NRA applied military force to evict civilians that chose to remain after eviction orders: "...in some cases were beaten if refused to move. A number of witnesses claimed that the UPDF shelled near reluctant villages in order to create fear and force the civilians to move."<sup>252</sup> In the camps, horrible living conditions led to more daily deaths than the number of LRA fighters the counterinsurgents managed to kill during Op NORTH. Overcrowding, lack of food, rampant disease, and inadequate medical supplies all contributed to the misery in these camps. Counterinsurgent troops also reportedly stole food assistance supplies meant to feed the IDPs, as one official detailed:

In certain cases, humanitarian assistance meant for the IDPs has always [sic] been diverted by Government forces. Government troops in some instances have used food assistance meant for the internally displaced. In addition, government officials entrusted with the task of managing relief are known to have diverted it for their own use.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> "Acholi Ordered Back to 'Protected Camps,'" *The New Humanitarian* (Geneva, Switzerland), October 4, 2002, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/34969/uganda-acholi-ordered-back-protected-camps>.

<sup>251</sup> Adam Branch, "Neither Peace nor Justice: Political Violence and the Peasantry in Northern Uganda, 1986-1998," *African Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (2005): 7.

<sup>252</sup> Ogenga Otunnu, "The Path to Genocide in Northern Uganda," *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees / Refuge: Revue Canadienne Sur Les Réfugiés* 17, no. 3 (1998): 8. This article includes tables detailing the numbers of IDPs in the various camps in both Kitgum and Gulu.

<sup>253</sup> Otunnu, "The Path," 9.

In addition to stealing the aid supplies intended for the IDPs, the NRA destroyed Acholi granaries and crops. This ensured that the Acholi had nothing to go back to, and helped the NRA keep them in the camps, where they could more easily be controlled.<sup>254</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, Museveni's government continued to deny international assistance organisations' accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Government forces' purposeful targeting of aid organisations' relief supplies meant for the camps made such assistance work too dangerous for many NGOs, who had to stop operations to keep their workers safe. Museveni's officials insisted that they had the situation under control, in rebuttals that amounted to 'Crisis? What crisis?'. The Ugandan government accused international aid organisations of violating its national sovereignty and overstepping their mandates, as state forces, it asserted, did everything they could to keep the civilians in the north safe. These assertions conflicted with Ugandan officials' simultaneous claims that the insurgencies did not pose any real threat to the northerners. The government kept repeating this evident lie as the LRA carried out numerous raids and abductions on IDPs living in the camps, abductions which largely targeted children.<sup>255</sup> Rather than establishing a camp and posting a group of soldiers to guard it, the government instead created easy, undefended targets for the insurgents. The counterinsurgents, including very senior government personnel, also actively terrorised the IDPs confined to the camps through targeted arrests and torture.<sup>256</sup> Near the end of June 1998, Major Kakoza Mutale, Presidential Advisor to

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<sup>254</sup> Otunnu, "The Path," 9.

<sup>255</sup> Finbarr O'Reilly, "Uganda's Shell-shocked Children; Youths Who Had to Kill or Be Killed Get Aid in Gulu Camps but Thousands Still at Risk in New Wave of LRA Violence," *Toronto Star* (Toronto), August 10, 2003, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fnewspapers%2Fugandas-shell-shocked-children-youths-who-had%2Fdocview%2F438621881%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

<sup>256</sup> James C. McKinley, Jr., "Christian Rebels Wage a War of Terror in Uganda," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), March 5, 1997, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fblogs-podcasts-websites%2Fchristian-rebels-wage-war-terror-uganda%2Fdocview%2F2237228664%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

Museveni, tortured more than one hundred and fifty IDPs that he arrested in various camps across northern Uganda.<sup>257</sup> The counterinsurgents did not actively defend the ‘protected camps’, which made the LRA’s campaign easier. The insurgents knew where the government concentrated the locals and knew they did not emplace any defensive forces or installations around the camps. The government used the camps as a means of ethnically cleansing northerners instead of protecting them, demonstrating a complete tactical and strategic failure as a counterinsurgent force.

As they did during Op NORTH and using paramilitaries such as the Arrow Boys, Museveni and senior officials throughout the upper echelons of the Ugandan government and military, actively worsened the security situation across northern Uganda. The government chose to use war crimes and crimes against humanity to repress civilians into rejecting the LRA instead of protecting them, evidence of a total lack of military discipline or leadership among the senior military staff. Rather than disempowering the LRA, the counterinsurgents empowered them. They allowed the LRA to continue their operations with relative impunity, meaning Museveni and his people not only enabled these operations, but that they were complicit in the LRA’s brutality.<sup>258</sup> The government lied about the security situation, expelled foreign journalists, disabled foreign assistance NGOs, and used this lack of international visibility to inflict horror on the Acholi. The choices the counterinsurgents made showed them to be too strategically, tactically, and morally impotent to destroy the LRA, so they resorted to destroying the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians while claiming to defend them.<sup>259</sup>

### The Third Prerequisite of Successful Insurgency – Geographic Conditions

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<sup>257</sup> Otunnu, "The Path," 9-10.

<sup>258</sup> Tobias Jolly Owiny, "The Festering Wounds of LRA Insurgency," *The Uganda Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), April 3, 2023, accessed August 13, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/the-festering-wounds-of-lra-insurgency-4183416>.

<sup>259</sup> Otunnu, "The Path," 10.

In any land war, the ground itself plays a major role in how the various combatants can employ their forces. The NRA insurgents in Luwero during the early 1980s benefitted from the thick 'bush' presenting UNLA state forces with numerous logistical hurdles, such as the need to move troops by road, thereby exposing them to ambush. The LRA benefitted similarly from the physical geography of northern Uganda which challenged the NRA's (later the UPDF's) ability to deliver combat power to battle against the insurgents. Galula noted the importance of what he called "Geographic Conditions" on the probability of an insurgency's success, and mentioned eight factors that affect how geography impacts insurgency. As he put it: "If the insurgent, with his initial weakness, cannot get any help from geography, he may well be condemned to failure before he starts."<sup>260</sup> Museveni's strategic blunders helped the LRA survive the government's attempts to destroy it, but the geographic conditions of northern Uganda and how the LRA framed its fighters' understanding of the land, certainly helped the insurgents survive as well. Of the factors Galula described, 'Climate', 'Terrain', 'Configuration', and 'International Borders' affected the LRA's ability to carry out operations the most, therefore demonstrating their applicability in the Ugandan case.

For Galula, remote or rugged terrain decidedly favours the insurgent: "It helps the insurgent insofar as it is rugged and difficult, either because of mountains and swamps or because of the vegetation."<sup>261</sup> Conversely, climatic conditions tend to favour the counterinsurgent: "Contrary to the general belief, harsh climates favour the counterinsurgent forces, which have, as a rule, better logistical and operational facilities. This will be especially favourable if the counterinsurgent soldier is a native and, therefore, accustomed to the rigours of the climate."<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 21. The eight factors include: 'Location', 'Size', 'Configuration', 'International Borders', 'Terrain', 'Climate', 'Population', and 'Economy'.

<sup>261</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 24.



In the LRA's insurgency, most of the counterinsurgent troops came from southern Uganda, with most of their training centres being proximate to Kampala. The south sees significantly more precipitation over the course of the year and tends to be more humid. The LRA's forces therefore held the advantage in terms of both terrain and climate, as the government forces had to acclimatise to fighting in the hot, dry conditions of northern Uganda.

The LRA enjoyed the advantage of being acclimatised to the aridity of northern Uganda during their operations in the region, which helps illustrate the validity of Galula's theory on the importance of climate in counterinsurgency. Their tactics favoured flexibility and mobility, as they did not possess the logistics required to engage in protracted battles with the NRA/UPDF.<sup>262</sup> This advantage in climate, as Galula noted, stemmed from the counterinsurgents' having been trained in the south, with its drastically different climactic conditions. The North experiences roughly half the annual rainfall of the South, making getting used to the dryness a challenge for southerners.<sup>263</sup> This difference in counterinsurgents' training environment vs operational environment matters for many reasons. Fighting in dry versus wet environments present different problems at both the unit and individual level, problems which can significantly change how an armed force conducts operations. Weapons and vehicles require different maintenance routines, troops need to hydrate differently, caloric intake requirements change, logistical problems arise, and transportation considerations change as well. Dry environments, like the LRA-affected areas of northern Uganda, necessitate some specific, important tactical adaptations, all of which can either increase or drastically decrease a force's

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<sup>262</sup> Human Rights Watch, "The Christmas Massacres: LRA Attacks on Civilians in Northern Congo," news release, February 16, 2009, accessed October 15, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/02/16/christmas-massacres/lra-attacks-civilians-northern-congo>. This report by Human Rights Watch details the LRA's flexibility, mobility, and just how quickly they could strike a target and disappear before being counterattacked.

<sup>263</sup> Muzu Sulemanji, *A Contemporary Geography of Uganda*, ed. Bakama B. BakamaNume (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: Mkuki na Nyota, 2010), 9.

readiness for battle. Individual or crew-served weapons require less oil, as too much lubricant can gum up a gun's firing mechanism if sand or dust mix with that lubricant. Vehicles on roads tend to produce large dust clouds, which impair driver and commander visibility, while also alerting enemy forces of a vehicle-borne unit's approach.<sup>264</sup> The NRA/UPDF forces in the LRA-affected areas had to contend with acclimatising themselves to the aridity and logistical considerations that operations in northern Uganda necessitated.

The LRA also benefited from the terrain during their insurgency. At the macro level, Ugandan lies on a plateau within a mountainous rim, and resembles a western European-style crown.<sup>265</sup> In the approaches to the Sudanese border, around the Kitgum and Gulu districts in the north, the land contains significant swathes of hilly, remote bush which the LRA used to protect themselves from attack. In land such as this, sleeping during the day in a ravine or in the bush, then conducting operations at night or around dusk/dawn gives the insurgent a significant advantage. In the early 1990s, Museveni's army did not have significant night-vision capabilities. While the NRA possessed helicopters, these were not suitable for fielding field air-mobile troops to act as a quick-reaction force to deploy and destroy LRA installations.<sup>266</sup>

An important part of the LRA's effective use of the terrain can be attributed to how they changed the meaning of certain words from the Acholi language to frame life in the bush as normality in the minds of their fighters. The LRA came to characterise their world in a binary, according to the Acholi concepts of '*lum*' (bush) and '*gang*' (home). Anthropologist Sam Dubal

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<sup>264</sup> Atkinson, "The Northern," 6.

<sup>265</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Uganda," The World Factbook, last modified August 29, 2023, accessed August 23, 2023, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/uganda/>.

<sup>266</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SPRI Arms," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

explained how the LRA's fighters adopted these concepts to fit their understanding of their insurgency and its place in the world:

According to this prevailing wisdom, the “bush” is the bad space where animals live, and the “home” is the good space where humans live. The LRA rebels came to challenge what humanity really meant by virtue of living their lives for years in the *lum* while engaged in what they called “gorilla warfare.” In doing so, they assaulted the normative ontological categories used by civilians to divide humanity from its others, showing by virtue of their own lives the amount of interchange between animality and humanity.<sup>267</sup>

The LRA reversed the traditional meaning of *lum* as the Acholi understood it. Changing the meaning of *lum* helped frame life in the bush as a natural environment for humans, which made the difficulties of bush life less of a concern to the insurgency's members. In both a literal and metaphorical sense, the bush became their home.<sup>268</sup> This made the insurgents much more comfortable fighting in the bush than their counterinsurgent enemies, which gave the LRA a significant advantage.<sup>269</sup> Where the counterinsurgent forces based their operations from their outposts and encampments throughout Acholiland, and eventually returned to larger garrisons in the south, the LRA could conceivably live anywhere throughout the northern Ugandan scrublands. This made them less reliant on establishment and maintenance of supply chains than their opponents and enabled them to effectively use the bush for both infiltration and exfiltration in their operations. The counterinsurgents therefore struggled to implement effective tactics to find and destroy LRA camps, or to attack the insurgents as they fled after hitting a target.<sup>270</sup>

Another important aspect of the LRA's reframing of the Acholi concepts of the land (terrain) and home involves how it helped normalise brutality for its fighters. Changing the meaning of *lum* enabled the LRA leadership to justify the barbarity their fighters visited on

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<sup>267</sup> Dubal, *Against Humanity*, 83.

<sup>268</sup> Opiyo Oloya, *Child to Soldier: Stories from Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 90.

<sup>269</sup> Dubal, *Against Humanity*, 86.

<sup>270</sup> Oloya, *Child to Soldier*, 81-82.

civilians, as if they lived in the spaces normally reserved for beasts, they could become beasts themselves. Animals do not worry themselves with concepts of humanity, justice, or the ethics of killing. The LRA's characterisation of their tactics as "gorilla warfare" and, by consequence, their fighters as "gorillas" reframed the horrors the insurgents inflicted on their fellow humans as a natural process, in which stronger animals preyed on weaker animals.<sup>271</sup> Part of this process involved dehumanising recently abducted recruits. In these cases, the LRA would return to where they abducted fresh recruits (often children), then force those recruits to torture and kill members of their community and, in some cases, their family members.<sup>272</sup> These indoctrination processes helped ensure that the LRA's new fighters had no home to which to return, which in turn helped destroy the concept of *gang*. With their *gang* destroyed, the recruits had no choice but to adopt the *lum* as their new home.<sup>273</sup>

Both 'Climate' and 'Terrain' as described by Galula played important roles in the LRA's resilience as an insurgency. The counterinsurgents, mostly southerners, had to adapt to the aridity of the operational zones in northern Uganda. The LRA exploited the counterinsurgents' lack of acclimatisation to the northern climate, and reliance on outposts and roads for logistical support, to effectively implement hit-and-run tactics. The rebels also used the bush effectively for both offensive and defensive purposes. Their ability to live in the bush, driven by indoctrination that made their recruits embrace a sense of inhumanity, meant that they could strike targets and disappear before government forces could respond. The government, for their part, lacked the capabilities that would have allowed such responses in a timely manner, such as

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<sup>271</sup> Dubal, *Against Humanity*, 83.

<sup>272</sup> Tor Arne Berntsen, "Negotiated Identities: The Discourse on the Role of Child Soldiers in the Peace Process in Northern Uganda," in *Culture, Religion, and the Reintegration of Female Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda*, ed. Bård Mæland (New York, USA: Peter Lang, 2010), 42-43.

<sup>273</sup> Dubal, *Against Humanity*, 83.

air-mobile or rapid-response groups. These conditions ensured that the NRA/UPDF could not overcome the advantages that northern Uganda's physical geography afforded the insurgents, and which help illustrate the applicability of Galula's theories on the importance of the land to the success of insurgent groups.

#### The Fourth Prerequisite for a Successful Insurgency – Outside Support

Two other factors related to physical geography, 'Configuration' and 'International Borders' proved themselves as impactful advantages that enhanced the LRA's effectiveness during their insurgency. In the LRA's case, these two factors distinguish themselves from the other important elements of physical geography because of how they enabled the fourth and final prerequisite "Outside Support". Galula defined this prerequisite as follows:

No outside support is absolutely necessary at the start of an insurgency, although it obviously helps when available. Military support short of direct intervention, in particular, cannot be absorbed in a significant amount by the insurgent until his forces have reached a certain level of development. The initial military phase of an insurgency, whether terrorism or guerrilla warfare, requires little in the way of equipment, arms, ammunition, and explosives. These can usually be found locally or smuggled in.<sup>274</sup>

The proximity of Sudan to the LRA's operational areas in Acholiland during the early 1990s became important to the insurgency's survival after a series of failed peace talks in 1993-1994. After the talks collapsed, the NRA/UPDF state forces resumed their operations against the LRA.<sup>275</sup> This pushed the insurgents to use the Sudanese border as a shield and establish themselves in southern Sudan, with the Sudanese government's support.<sup>276</sup> Galula described 'Configuration' as being a potential obstacle to an insurgent force's chance of success: "A

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<sup>274</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 26. This prerequisite includes the following factors: 'Moral Support', 'Political Support', 'Technical Support', 'Financial Support', and 'Military Support'.

<sup>275</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda: Breaking the Circle: Protecting Human Rights in the Northern War Zone," news release, March 26, 2011, accessed October 8, 2023, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/reports/uganda-breaking-the-circle-protecting-human-rights-in-the-northern-war-zone/>.

<sup>276</sup> Nikolas Groß, Johanna Speyer, and Jens Thalheimer, *Uganda (LRA) 1986-1991*, ed. Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2, accessed August 17, 2023, [https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk\\_publicationen/Uganda-LRA-1986-1991.pdf](https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_publicationen/Uganda-LRA-1986-1991.pdf).

country easy to compartmentalize hinders the insurgent.”<sup>277</sup> For the LRA however, Uganda’s configuration favoured their operations. The porous border that lacked natural obstacles, such as mountains, between Uganda and Sudan meant the insurgents could easily move in and out of Acholiland into then-southern Sudan. As a result, the LRA could also benefit from the ‘International Borders’ factor, which Galula described as “The length of the borders, particularly if the neighbouring countries are sympathetic to the insurgents, as was the case in Greece, Indochina, and Algeria, favours the insurgent.”<sup>278</sup> The inclusion of ‘Configuration’ and ‘International Borders’ in this section of the chapter helps demonstrate both the complex relationship between the various enabling factors in a successful insurgency, as well as the validity of Galula’s theories when considered holistically.

The first peace talks between NRA and LRA representatives took place in 1993-1994. Their failure led to increased LRA cross-border operations and illustrate the validity of Galula’s theories on the importance of international involvement in insurgencies. The talks represented a transitional period for the LRA insurgency. The group shifted its posture from a more defensive one focused on survival in the face of the NRA offensive operations between 1987 and 1994, to a more aggressively offensive one. The overt support of the Sudanese government under Umar al-Bashir between 1994 and 1999 enabled this shift in strategy, ending only when the Ugandan and Sudanese governments agreed to stop supporting insurgencies in each other’s territories.<sup>279</sup> The talks’ failure also demonstrates that neither Museveni nor Kony genuinely intended to make peace, as they broke down when both leaders took stances that left no room for

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<sup>277</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 23.

<sup>278</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 23.

<sup>279</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Uprooted and Forgotten."

compromise.<sup>280</sup> This all but ensured that the LRA would use any available advantage, such as the Sudanese border, to continue to terrorise northern Uganda.

Surprisingly, members of Museveni's government made the initial moves in bringing Kony and his leadership to the negotiations. In 1988, Museveni reshuffled his cabinet as part of efforts to pacify northerners in West Nile and named Betty Bigombe as the 'Minister of State for Pacification of Northern Uganda, Resident in Gulu'.<sup>281</sup> In late 1993, Bigombe acted on her own accord to contact the LRA leadership and bring them to negotiations. She began by encouraging Acholi elders to recall the young men the LRA either recruited or abducted and convince them to leave the group. She located and began working with an Acholi elder, Yusuf Okwonga Adek, who had access to Kony. Bigombe did not tell Museveni that she had succeeded in contacting an LRA commander initially, but worked secretly to convince Adek to act as a messenger between her and Kony.<sup>282</sup> Once she succeeded in contacting Kony, she then informed Museveni, and he ordered her to appraise the local NRA commander, Colonel Samuel Wasswa, of the situation.<sup>283</sup> Once Bigombe discussed the situation with Col Wasswa, she began sending formal communications as Museveni's representative, and by October 1993, Kony replied to her letters.<sup>284</sup> On 25 November 1993, the LRA and government representatives met in person at Pagik, a town in the Gulu district. Bigombe brought with her several Acholi elders, as well as, interestingly, Col Wasswa. The LRA senior leadership did not attend, although the group's

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<sup>280</sup> Billie O'Kadameri, "LRA/Government Negotiations 1993-1994," *Accord* 11 (May 2002): 39-41.

<sup>281</sup> O'Kadameri, "LRA/Government Negotiations," 35.

<sup>282</sup> Yemisi Akinbobola, episode 11, "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: A Conversation with Betty Bigombe," June 30, 2021, in *She Stands for Peace Podcast*, produced by The United Nations, podcast, audio, 32:00, accessed October 3, 2023, <https://music.amazon.co.uk/podcasts/820a4dd3-faa4-4b84-858e-4cd3e82fa4b0/episodes/b6d79452-210a-40fd-a06f-719fa2f17822/she-stands-for-peace-episode-eleven-women%E2%80%99s-participation-in-peace-negotiations-an-interview-with-betty-bigombe>.

<sup>283</sup> O'Kadameri, "LRA/Government Negotiations," 35. Colonel Wasswa replaced Colonel Peter Kerim as 4<sup>th</sup> Division Commander in Acholiland after Museveni sacked the latter for his failure to destroy the LRA during Op NORTH.

<sup>284</sup> O'Kadameri, "LRA/Government Negotiations," 39-41.

representatives brought a recording of Kony in which he made numerous demands. None of these demands invited compromise:

They asked for the past to be forgotten and a general amnesty to be given to all the fighters. They insisted that the LRA should not be seen as a defeated force but as people who had responded positively to the peace initiative because the LRA itself wanted peace. They asserted that they were not ‘surrendering’, but ‘returning home’, and they did not want to be referred to as ‘rebels’, but as ‘people’. The delegation described why they had begun their struggle, that they were fighting those who had rejected the way of God and therefore had to struggle against both the NRA and UPDA fighters.<sup>285</sup>

Bigombe and Kony met in person on 11 January 1994. Kony blamed Acholi elders for his brutalising of the Acholi people and insisted that the government allow him six months to marshal his fighters so they could leave the bush together. At another meeting on 2 February, Lt Col Toolit, Col Wasswa’s second-in-command, almost fought two LRA commanders.

After the meeting on 2 February, the LRA accused the government of trying to set up an opportunity to arrest the LRA leadership in its entirety and refused any further meetings. Kony laid the blame for the breakdown of talks at the feet of the NRA, and blamed the Acholi elders a second time. Less than a week later, Museveni visited Gulu, commemorating the one-year anniversary of Pope John Paul II’s visit to the region.<sup>286</sup> Museveni declared that the LRA had taken advantage of his government’s goodwill, and used the peace talks to engage in banditry.<sup>287</sup> He used this opportunity to issue the ultimatum that the LRA had seven days to surrender, otherwise his armed forces would destroy them (the fact that all previous attempts to destroy the LRA had proven abject failures notwithstanding).<sup>288</sup> With this ultimatum, Museveni definitively torpedoed the possibility of the talks progressing further, and the LRA began its complete

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<sup>285</sup> O’Kadameri, "LRA/Government Negotiations," 37.

<sup>286</sup> "Key Events in the Uganda Conflict," news release, November 17, 2004, accessed September 30, 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/52073/uganda-key-events-uganda-conflict>.

<sup>287</sup> "The Roots of War: How Bigombe's Efforts to End LRA War Failed," *The Observer* (Kampala, Uganda), September 14, 2011, accessed October 22, 2023, <https://www.observer.ug/news-headlines/15057-the-roots-of-war-how-bigombes-efforts-to-end-lra-war-failed>.

<sup>288</sup> O’Kadameri, "LRA/Government Negotiations," 37.



relocation across the border into southern Sudan. The proximity of Acholiland to Sudan made this a feasible move for the LRA, despite having no fleet of vehicles to speak of. By the end of February 1994, the LRA successfully moved into new camps in southern Sudan, taking advantage of the ‘Configuration’ and ‘International Borders’ factors. The Uganda-Sudan border, which the Ugandan troops would not cross for fear of causing a war with the Sudanese state, ensured that the LRA could train its fighters safely and stage infiltrations across the frontier.

Having used the breakdown of the 1993-1994 peace talks to exploit the ‘Configuration’ and ‘International Borders’ factors, the LRA moved into an aggressive stance in their fight with the NRA. Between 1994 and 1999, their ferocity justified their term “gorilla warfare”. Supplied with Sudanese weapons, vehicles, medical and food aid, the LRA bloodied the nose of the NRA continuously, and Museveni’s claims that he would destroy Kony’s group showed themselves to be nothing more than bluster.<sup>289</sup> In this period, Galula’s theories on the importance of “Outside Support” truly show their validity, and the Sudanese government’s overt military support for the LRA made this period of ruthlessness possible.<sup>290</sup>

Galula described the importance of military support to insurgencies from outside actors as follows: “either through direct intervention on the insurgent’s side or by giving him training facilities and equipment”.<sup>291</sup> In the LRA’s case, the period between the LRA’s move to southern Sudan and the end of its support from the Sudanese government in the late 1990s shows the validity of this theory. The Sudanese government used its paramilitary force in southern Sudan,

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<sup>289</sup> Zachary Lomo and Lucy Hovil, *Behind the Violence: The War in Northern Uganda* (Kampala, Uganda: The Refugee Law Project, 2004), 28.

<sup>290</sup> Toyin Falola and Timothy J. Stapleton, *A History of Africa*, combined volume ed. (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2022), 590.

<sup>291</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 26.

the Equatorial Defence Force (EDF) to supply the LRA.<sup>292</sup> The Sudanese regime saw supplying the LRA as a justified retaliation for the Ugandan government's support of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), support that the United States quietly backed.<sup>293</sup> The Americans, through their proxies in Kampala, used the SPLA to destabilise Umar al-Bashir's Islamist regime throughout the 1990s, and the SPLA offered an ideal mechanism through which to do so.<sup>294</sup> American concerns that al-Bashir's dictatorship actively provided safe haven to jihadists and other religious extremists, and that northern Sudanese Muslims committed human rights abuses, such as enslavement, caused the Clinton Administration to implement policies by 1992 to isolate the Sudanese government from the international order.<sup>295</sup> The Americans used the Ugandans as a convenient tool to further these policies, and the Ugandans welcomed the Americans' assistance. Museveni's government turned to the Americans because Uganda's other international funders made their support contingent on military spending limits.<sup>296</sup> The Sudanese watched as Museveni's government bungled its peace talks in 1994 and leapt at the opportunity for revenge at the Ugandans' support for the SPLA.

This Sudanese support manifested in several important ways, all of which relate specifically to the aspects of military support that Galula described, and which significantly increased the LRA's operational effectiveness. While the regime in Khartoum claimed in 2006

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<sup>292</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Behind the Violence*, 29.

<sup>293</sup> Michael Wilkerson, "Why Can't Anyone Stop the LRA?," *Foreign Policy* (Washington, USA), April 15, 2010, accessed November 7, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/04/15/why-cant-anyone-stop-the-lra/>.

<sup>294</sup> Raymond L. Brown, *American Foreign Policy toward the Sudan: From Isolation to Engagement*, 12-14, April 2003, accessed November 9, 2023, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA441626.pdf>.

<sup>295</sup> Tim Allen, *Trial Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Lord's Resistance Army* (London, United Kingdom: Zed Books, 2006), 50. The Clinton Administration also accused al-Bashir of supporting Usama bin-Laden's al-Qaeda in its bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, as well as helping plot failed assassination attempts against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak through the 1990s.

<sup>296</sup> Sandrine Perrot, "Northern Uganda: A 'Forgotten Conflict', Again? The Impact of the Internationalization of the Resolution Process," in *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, ed. Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot (London, United Kingdom: Zed Books, 2010), 193-194.

that it never supported the LRA, evidence shows otherwise.<sup>297</sup> The Sudanese government's evident lies have been disproven by international NGOs, including Human Rights Watch, whose personnel interviewed former LRA members, such as one thirteen-year-old former child soldier who described his time at Jebellin camp in southern Sudan:

In the camps, we were together with the Arabs [Sudan government army]. The Sudan government gave food to the commanders, but we had to find our own food. I saw Sudanese Arab soldiers deliver weapons to the commanders of the LRA. The guns were brought to the LRA camp by airplane, and the soldiers unloading the guns were Arabs. They were big guns, machine guns. Other times, the guns were brought by lorries. The camp was called Jebellin, near Juba. [LRA leader Joseph] Kony was stationed there.<sup>298</sup>

Not only does this directly contradict al-Bashir's regime's account, it demonstrates that the Sudanese government expended considerable military resources to fly supplies into the LRA's camp. Jebellin camp lay approximately fifty kilometres from Juba, the Sudanese regime's major stronghold in southern Sudan during this period.<sup>299</sup> This helps further demonstrate the Sudanese regime's support for the LRA, as a despotic government would likely not have tolerated a brutal insurgent organisation like Kony's group near one of its regional capitals had that group posed any threat.

In addition to providing the LRA with automatic weapons, the Sudanese supported them with training, and allowed the LRA to establish its camps close to Sudanese army military bases.<sup>300</sup> One thirty-four-year-old LRA escapee told Human Rights Watch workers:

We went to Kit II, near Juba. It is about twenty-five kilometers north of Zabular. There were about four brigades [of LRA] there, about 6,500 people. The camp was very large, and some were taken to Nisito, where the sick were kept. Those are the LRA camps I know: Kit II and

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<sup>297</sup> Human Rights Watch, "The CPA and Security in Southern Sudan," news release, March 2006, accessed November 1, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/background/africa/sudan0306/7.htm>.

<sup>298</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Northern Uganda and Sudan's Support for the Lord's Resistance Army," news release, July 29, 1998, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/campaigns/sudan98/testim/house-07.htm>. Jebellin camp has also been spelled 'Jabalayn' or 'Jebelen' in some sources.

<sup>299</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights Watch World Report 1990 - Sudan," news release, January 1, 1991, accessed October 29, 2023, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/467fca2c14.html>.

<sup>300</sup> Richard J. Reid, *Warfare in African History*, New Approaches to African History (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 172.

Nisito. The main supplies always came from Juba, but the main base is Kit II. Kony was staying at Kit II when I was there. The Arabs had a camp about two kilometers away. The Arabs brought uniforms and ammunition, which they exchanged for marijuana. I stayed at Kit II for eight months.<sup>301</sup>

The camp at Kit II housed an impressive number of LRA fighters, but others housed several thousand insurgents as well. Kony's main camp at Aru-Kubi in Sudan counted roughly four thousand inhabitants at its height in 1996-1997. Known as 'New Gulu' or 'Kony Village', he used it as a base from which to launch cross-border assaults into Uganda, but also to devastate the province of Eastern Equatoria in which it lay.<sup>302</sup> Attacking Sudanese civilians in Eastern Equatoria allowed Kony to stockpile additional food, weapons, and ammunition to supplement the stores given to his organisation by al-Bashir. Al-Bashir made his support for the LRA contingent on Kony's assistance in the Sudanese government's war with the SPLA in southern Sudan. These camps in southern Sudan enabled LRA operations across the border into Uganda, such as when the LRA massacred more than one hundred and fifteen people at the Achol Pii refugee camp on 12 and 13 July 1996. Amnesty International reporting on the incident described the carnage: "People were cruelly hacked to death with machetes or shot at point-blank range. We call on both movements [the LRA and WNBF] to put an immediate end to such attacks -- no political conflict gives the right to massacre and maim."<sup>303</sup> The LRA claimed the SPLA carried out this attack, but AI refuted these claims as not credible. Without Sudanese material support, the LRA would have lacked the transports required to rapidly deploy their fighters into northern Uganda from their Sudanese bases. The barbarism the LRA showed at Achol Pii represented just one of many such cases which the Sudanese military support enabled. The Sudanese support for the LRA between 1994 and 1999 made the LRA's brutality possible, demonstrating the

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<sup>301</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Northern Uganda."

<sup>302</sup> Mareike Schomerus, "'They Forget What They Came For': Uganda's Army in Sudan," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (2012): 126.

<sup>303</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda: Amnesty."

importance of “Outside Support” and, specifically, ‘Military Support’ as Galula described them, as prerequisite for a successful insurgency.

### The End of Sudanese Support for the LRA and Operation IRON FIST I, 2002-2003

On 8 December 1999, the Ugandan and Sudanese governments ended their overt hostilities by signing the Nairobi Agreement.<sup>304</sup> This agreement between Museveni and al-Bashir focused on the disarmament and disempowerment of the rebel groups in their respective countries. The agreement specified that the two governments would cease logistical support to any insurgencies in the other’s territory, particularly the SPLA and LRA. As the period between 1994 and 1999 showed, external military support, specifically military logistical support, significantly increases an insurgency’s combat power, as well as its ability to survive a national government’s attempts to destroy it. The Nairobi Agreement’s signature showed Galula’s theory in the negative as well, because of how quickly an insurgency can be forced onto the back foot when its sponsors abandon it. The third provision of the agreement, “We will make every effort to disband and disarm terrorist groups and to prevent any acts of terrorism or hostile actions that might originate in our territory that might endanger the security of the other nation.” proved the most impactful, as it made the subsequent Ugandan government cross-border offensives against the LRA a legal possibility.<sup>305</sup> Whereas previously Ugandan state forces could not legally enter Sudanese territory, an action which would have constituted an act of war, this provision removed this legal barrier to UPDF units pursuing the LRA. Without the support of the Sudanese

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<sup>304</sup> United Nations Peacemaker, "Agreement between the Governments of Sudan and Uganda (Nairobi Agreement)," United Nations Peacemaker, last modified August 12, 1999, accessed October 29, 2023, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SD%20UG\\_991208\\_Nairobi%20Agreement.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/SD%20UG_991208_Nairobi%20Agreement.pdf). Both the Kenyans and Americans played a role in the signing of this agreement. President Daniel Moi of Kenya and ex-President Jimmy Carter witnessed the agreement. The Carter Centre, Jimmy Carter’s non-profit organisation meant to further the cause of international peace, helped broker this agreement.

<sup>305</sup> United Nations Peacemaker, "Agreement between," United Nations Peacemaker.

government, the LRA no longer had the benefit of well-supplied training camps or well-equipped fighters. When the UPDF came for them a few years later, they retreated to the bush once again, leaving behind the vehicles and relative safety their camps previously afforded them.

In March 2002, the UPDF crossed the border into southern Sudan.<sup>306</sup> Al-Bashir's regime allowed this offensive to go ahead because the US had declared Sudan a state sponsor of terrorism in the wake of the 9/11.<sup>307</sup> The Sudanese, keen to bring their oil to international markets, simply could not afford the Americans' sanctions. The George W. Bush Administration aggressively isolated any states that it listed as terrorist sympathisers, and this policy outright prevented al-Bashir's regime from selling its oil, sales on which this regime depended. This American pressure forced al-Bashir's hand, and he allowed the UPDF to pursue the LRA in southern Sudan. This began Operation IRON FIST I, another UPDF attempt to destroy the LRA that ran from 2002 to 2003.<sup>308</sup> The LRA had prepared for counterinsurgent operations against them, and when the nearly ten thousand troops the UPDF deployed arrived in southern Sudan, they found that the LRA had left their camps.<sup>309</sup> This meant that the Ugandan government forces once again had to contend with finding and destroying an insurgent group accustomed to bush life, and their previous failures repeated themselves. As with Operation NORTH, the Ugandan counterinsurgents took their frustrations over not being able to capture Kony out on the locals, and committed numerous war crimes.<sup>310</sup> While Op IRON FIST I killed significant numbers of

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<sup>306</sup> Atkinson, *From Uganda*, 7.

<sup>307</sup> Schomerus, "They Forget," 128.

<sup>308</sup> Amnesty International, "Open Letter to All Members of Parliament in Uganda Urging Rejection of the Impunity Agreement with the USA concerning the International Criminal Court," news release, June 23, 2003, accessed October 29, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/afr590082003en.pdf>.

<sup>309</sup> Atkinson, *From Uganda*, 7.

<sup>310</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda: Fear for Safety/Fear of Torture or Ill-treatment/possible Extrajudicial Execution, Twenty Prisoners in Northern Uganda.," news release, September 19, 2002, accessed October 20, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/004/2002/en/>.

LRA fighters, the outcome of this operation proved reminiscent of that of NORTH.<sup>311</sup> Instead of achieving its aim of destroying the LRA in its entirety, the insurgents managed to use the bush to their advantage and renew their offensives against civilians across northern Uganda. The same horrors of massive civilian international displacement repeated themselves as well.<sup>312</sup> Estimates on the exact number of IDP that either fled the LRA's renewed offensives or that UPDF operations displaced vary, but international aid NGOs have described the IDPs crisis in 2002-2003 as being at least twice as severe as than the one a decade earlier.<sup>313</sup>

Museveni claimed in July 2002 that he “would militarily end the northern rebellion by the start of the next rainy season (April 2003)”.<sup>314</sup> By 2004, IRON FIST I failed to achieve its objectives, and the LRA continued its operations. The UPDF launched Operation IRON FIST II in 2005 in another attempt to destroy the LRA, but this too failed to eliminate the group. In both operations, the UPDF committed atrocities like it had in Acholiland during the 1990s.<sup>315</sup> These atrocities gained the attention of the international community, which began to recognise the Ugandan government's atrocious behaviour following the publication of a health report detailing the mortality rates in the ‘protected camps’.<sup>316</sup> This lost Museveni significant financial aid from some of his international supporters, including Norway, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Museveni relied heavily on this foreign aid to finance his military campaign in northern Uganda, and he went to the Americans to try to make up the difference. Museveni declared the LRA a

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<sup>311</sup> "Operation Iron Fist Agreement Renewed amid Tensions," *The New Humanitarian* (Geneva, Switzerland), September 15, 2003, accessed August 25, 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/46151/uganda-operation-iron-fist-agreement-renewed-amid-tensions>.

<sup>312</sup> Kasaija Phillip Apuuli, "The International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Insurgency in Northern Uganda," *Criminal Law Forum* 15 (2004): 395.

<sup>313</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Uprooted and Forgotten." During Op NORTH, estimates placed the number of refugees at approximately 300 000. During Op IRON FIST I, this ballooned to over 800 000 at the end of 2002, although by some counts, this could be as high as 1.2 million IDPs.

<sup>314</sup> Apuuli, "The International," 395.

<sup>315</sup> Atkinson, *From Uganda*, 9.

<sup>316</sup> Perrot, "Northern Uganda," 192.

terrorist organisation. He again turned to his American backers for support, and the Americans added the LRA to their list of terrorist groups. In the post-9/11 context, this meant that the US government could direct significant financial aid to Museveni as ‘ally in the war on terror’. The Americans also aided Museveni in his attempts to have Kony indicted by the International Criminal Court. Within the year, these attempts succeeded, and the ICC unsealed its indictment of Kony and other LRA leadership on 14 October 2005.<sup>317</sup> These indictments immediately pushed the LRA to offer to negotiate to end hostilities under the condition that the indictments be dropped.<sup>318</sup>

By mid-2005, the LRA had become a thorn in the side of the Sudanese government. The Sudanese during this period actively sought to end insurgencies in their territory, and they no longer supported the LRA’s operations against southern Sudanese civilians. This led al-Bashir’s regime to push for peace talks to demobilise both Kony’s group and the SPLA.<sup>319</sup> Al-Bashir signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the SPLA/M on 9 January 2005. The SPLA/M’s leader, Dr John Garang di Mabior, became the head of the semi-autonomous Government of South Sudan (GoSS). Garang used his new-found authority to push the LRA to engage in peace talks, which Kony agreed to. With the GoSS serving as a mediator, talks opened on 14 July 2006.<sup>320</sup> While the talks initially showed promise between July and January 2007, al-Bashir’s involvement soured the process after he claimed, 9 January, that Sudan did not want the LRA and was prepared to militarily defeat Kony if he did not dissolve his group peacefully. The LRA leadership declared on 12 January that it would no longer engage in the talks. The LRA

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<sup>317</sup> Wasonga, *The International*, 45-46.

<sup>318</sup> Wasonga, *The International*, 51.

<sup>319</sup> Stapleton, *Modern African*, 192.

<sup>320</sup> Ronald R. Atkinson, "The Realists in Juba"? An Analysis of the Juba Peace Talks," in *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, ed. Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot (London, United Kingdom: Zed Books, 2010), 214.



began a move to northeastern DRC and southeastern CAR, where they remain active into the present.<sup>321</sup>

### Conclusion

The LRA insurgency represents an excellent example of how Galula's Four Prerequisites for a Successful Insurgency hold up when applied to historical cases like that of the LRA. Kony's group evaded destruction by NRA/UPDF counterinsurgent forces for many of the reasons that Galula described in *Contre-insurrection*. Kony used a mix of Acholi traditional spiritualism and Christian mythology to create a personality cult around himself. The NRA's operations in Acholiland brutalised Acholi people, many of whom turned to Kony, who they believed would defend Acholiland against the NRA. The northerner vs southerner regional divide played a significant role in this conflict. Kony's promises to serve as a northern leader that would resist the southerners' occupation of northern Uganda drew many to his cause before he began attacking civilians and government forces alike. When public opinion turned against him because of his group's barbarism, he resorted to abductions and terror tactics to punish those who resisted him or helped the southerners.

Museveni did little to assuage northerners' fears of southerners' hatred. From the beginning of the NRA's operations against the insurgent LRA, the southerners confirmed the northerners' fears by engaging in horrific tactics that brutalised the northern territories the NRA occupied. As commander-in-chief of the national armed forces, President Museveni had the authority to order his soldiers to protect civilians, especially in the 'protected camps', from the LRA. The NRA/UPDF did not establish defensive positions near the camps, which led to

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<sup>321</sup> Amnesty International, "Amnesty International Report 2022/23: The State of the World's Human Rights," news release, May 27, 2023, accessed November 10, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/po110/5670/2023/en/>.

hundreds of thousands of IDPs throughout the North, IDPs that the LRA abducted, raped, slaughtered, or sexually enslaved. This indicates that the government did not prioritise protecting those they forced into the camps, which weakened their relationship with the locals in Acholiland.

The LRA also benefitted from the physical geography of northern Uganda, which Galula described as an important factor in insurgent success. Kony and his senior followers changed the meaning of certain Acholi words to enhance their fighters' acceptance of living in the bush, as well as causing these fighters to embrace a sense of inhumanity that enabled them to inflict almost inconceivable horrors on civilians throughout the North. The proximity of Acholiland to the sanctuary of southern Sudan allowed the LRA to operate in relative safety, especially as the NRA's soldiers needed to adapt to climactic conditions in which the LRA were comfortable. The insurgents used the bush effectively during infiltration to their objectives, to carry out their operations, then to exfiltrate before the NRA could counterattack effectively. The LRA continued to use the bush offensively up to and during the failed peace talks of 1993 and 1994, in which both Kony and Museveni showed they cared more about their own cults of personality than they did about their purported dedication to peace and freedom for Ugandan civilians.<sup>322</sup> The proximity to Sudan gave Umar al-Bashir's despotic regime a willing proxy in the LRA. American pressure in the late 1990s forced the Sudanese government to stop its support for the LRA. This helped the UPDF to expulse the LRA from northern Uganda in the early 2000s. Al-Bashir then allowed UPDF forces to carry out anti-LRA operations, known as Operations IRON FIST I and II, in southern Sudan between 2002 and 2005. Coupled with ICC indictments of LRA leadership in late 2005, Kony's group engaged in peace talks with Museveni's government in

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<sup>322</sup> Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard*, 273-274.

2006. After these talks fell through, the LRA moved into the border areas of eastern DRC and CAR.

From its formation in 1987 and its formal departure from Uganda in 2006, the LRA benefited from many of the factors that Galula described in his four theoretical ‘Prerequisites for a Successful Insurgency’. Given then that the LRA continues to conduct operations in Central Africa into the present despite both Ugandan and international coalitions’ attempts to destroy it, Kony’s group demonstrably qualifies as an example of a successful insurgency, if only because of its ability to survive decades of attempts to destroy it. It remains an active threat to the civilians of CAR and the DRC today, to the degree that the ICC recently moved to continue its case against Kony despite him remaining uncaptured.<sup>323</sup> The US deployed special forces during the Obama administration to help Ugandan troops apprehend Kony, but even these efforts failed, after which the American forces withdrew.<sup>324</sup> The LRA’s history showcases the validity of Galula’s theories when applied in this example of a national armed force’s campaign against a regionally, ethnically oriented rebel organisation.

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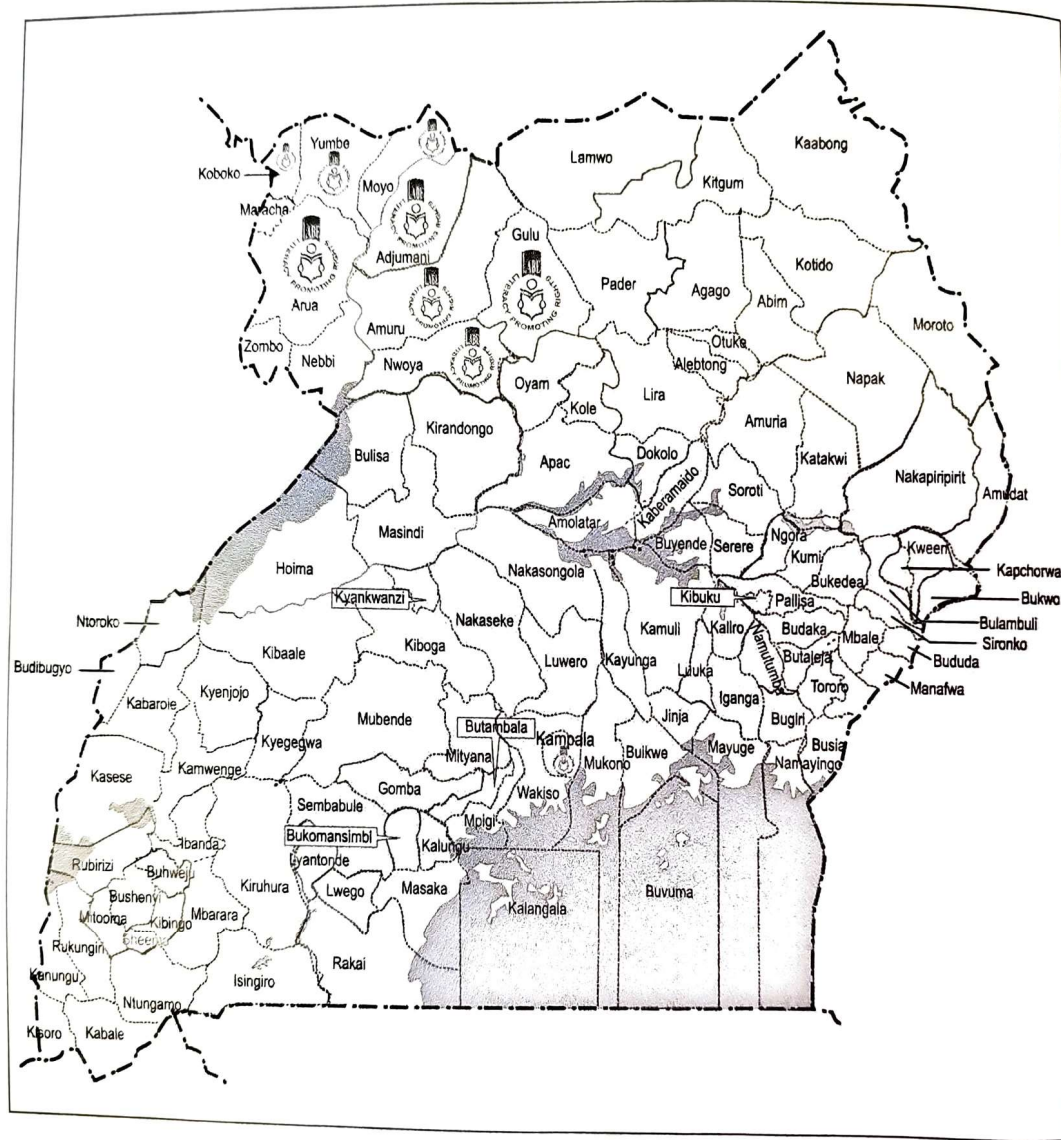
<sup>323</sup> Jiahang Li, "ICC Judges Allow Prosecutor to Move Forward with Charges Hearing in Absence of Uganda Rebel Joseph Kony," *Jurist*, last modified November 24, 2023, accessed November 25, 2023, <https://www.jurist.org/news/2023/11/icc-judges-allow-prosecutor-to-move-forward-with-charges-against-uganda-rebel-joseph-kony/>.

<sup>324</sup> Deutsche Welle, "US to End Operations against LRA," *Deutsche Welle* (Bonn, Germany), March 25, 2017, accessed November 25, 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/us-to-end-operations-against-lords-resistance-army-in-africa/a-38117991>.

**Chapter 3: The WNBF and UNRF I & II Insurgencies in West Nile District,**

**1986-2002**

8: Present-Day Uganda Showing West Nile Districts, 2023<sup>325</sup>



*Map of Uganda*

<sup>325</sup> Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard*, viii. The symbols in the northwestern districts indicate areas in which Museveni has a literacy initiative. His book provides no explanation for the symbols' inclusion.

In April 1979, the Tanzanian People's Defence Force (TPDF) supported by exiled Ugandans, ousted Amin during their invasion of Uganda. While Amin fled into exile, where he remained until his death, his regime helped create the conditions for insurgencies in the West Nile region in northwest Uganda as he hailed from the area. Despite Museveni taking power in 1986 and attempting to stabilise the country through force, Amin's influence continued to be felt in the emergence of the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and United National Rescue Front (UNRF I and II). These insurgent groups posed a serious security threat for Museveni through the late 1990s, and differ from the Uganda insurgencies that preceded them in the postcolonial era, such as the Luwero Triangle War and the LRA insurgency, because they involved Christian vs Muslim rhetoric and action. Galula's theories on the importance of ideology as a cause for insurgency, and his four laws for a successful counterinsurgency in a 'hot revolutionary war' hold their weight when applied to these two insurgencies.

### Relevant Counterinsurgency Theory and Historical Framework

In the introductory portion of *Contre-insurrection*, Galula details the importance of ideological cause in insurgency. 'The Power of Ideology' opens with:

The insurgent cannot seriously embark on an insurgency unless he has a well-grounded cause with which to attract supporters among the population. A cause, as we have seen, is his sole asset at the beginning, and it must be a powerful one if the insurgent is to overcome his weakness.<sup>326</sup>

This assertion shows its value when applied to the conflict in West Nile, in which the insurgents' assertions of tyranny by southern Ugandans held significant sway with the population. The WNBF and UNRF exploited the anti-southerner sentiment that came in the wake of the southern NRM's victory against the northern UCP. The WNBF and UNRF claimed that with southerners

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<sup>326</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 8.

in power, northerners could expect reprisals and mistreatment. They used rhetoric about historical repression of northerners, and Muslims in the Muslim-majority districts, to create a sufficiently convincing reason for many of the residents of West Nile to join their insurgencies.

Along with the power of ideology, the insurgencies in West Nile offer the opportunity to analyse Galula's laws on 'Counter-insurgency in the Hot Revolutionary War'. Galula defined the 'Hot Revolutionary War' as "when the insurgent's activity becomes openly illegal and violent".<sup>327</sup> This certainly meshes well with the WNBFI insurgency which sought to destroy Museveni's state to return to a northerner-controlled Uganda. The methodology of the WNBFI fits this description as well. Like the LRA, the WNBFI relied heavily on hyper-violent tactics to support its broader strategic aim to dethrone Museveni. The 'Hot Revolutionary War' includes four laws that Galula asserts as critical elements for such an insurgency: 'The Support of the Population Is as Necessary for the Counterinsurgent as for the Insurgent', 'Support Is Gained Through an Active Minority', 'Support from the Population Is Conditional', and 'Intensity of Efforts and Vastness of Means Are Essential'.<sup>328</sup> This chapter uses these four laws as analytical tools to evaluate Galula's theories as they apply to the cases of the WNBFI and UNRF.

### Ethnicity, Geography, and Insurgency in West Nile

A brief overview of the geographic and demographic complexities of the West Nile region can help elucidate the convoluted insurgencies, which otherwise make little sense to the uninitiated observer. The West Nile region itself includes five districts: Arua, Nebbi, Moyo, Adjumani, and Yumbe. These districts include peoples of both Nilotic and Sudanic origin, including many refugees from the numerous other conflicts in both Uganda and its neighbouring

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<sup>327</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 43.

<sup>328</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 52-55.

states. Many West Nile groups relied on refugee camps and low-yield subsistence agriculture for survival, which made them easy targets for insurgent actions. Among these refugees, many came into Uganda because of conflicts in both the DRC and what was then southern Sudan, meaning that West Nile's population had more in common with people in these neighbouring countries than did Ugandans in other districts.<sup>329</sup> The older West Nile communities also had such cross-border connections. The numerous ethnicities living together in such proximity means a general lack of stability in the region, while also making determining the allegiances of the various groups challenging.<sup>330</sup>

The intertwining of religion and ethnicity makes parsing out the demographics of the insurgents difficult, although the '2002 Census Final Report' aids somewhat, with its breakdown of the religious composition of Uganda between 1991 and 2002.<sup>331</sup> In this period, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics counted the national population as being 77.8% Christian (Catholic and Anglican), and 12.1% Muslim. While these statistics represent a national demographic picture, the '2002 Census Population Composition Analytical Report' gives a more precise breakdown. It lists the ethnicities and the percentage of these that identified as belonging to a certain religious tradition. This second report clearly demonstrates the dominant ethnic groups involved in the West Nile insurgency to include high numbers of Muslims. These dominant ethnic groups include, in descending order of identified adherence to Islam as a percentage of their population:

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<sup>329</sup> Fred Mwesigye, "Reintegration of Ex-Combatants and Peace Building in Uganda: A Case Study of the Uganda National Rescue Front I 1981-2008" (Master's Thesis, Makerere University, 2010), 26-27, accessed November 1, 2023, <http://makir.mak.ac.ug/bitstream/handle/10570/1331/mwesigye-fred-arts-masters.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>330</sup> Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers, Small Arms Proliferation Research in the Border Areas of Uganda, 37-39, December 2002, accessed September 28, 2023, <https://nisat.prio.org/misc/download.ashx?file=844>.

<sup>331</sup> Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2002 Census Final Report, 11, July 10, 2006, accessed September 28, 2023, [https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/10\\_20212002\\_Census\\_Final\\_Reportdoc.pdf](https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/10_20212002_Census_Final_Reportdoc.pdf). The Mvuba (22.6%) and Bakenyi (21.8%), while also having a high percentage of Muslim adherents, do not live in West Nile, and instead live more to the south and southwest; this generally left them out of the insurgencies.

the Nubi (94.4%), Kakwa (44.3%), Lugbara (29.1%), and Bagwere (23.9%). Of these groups, the Lugbara have the largest total population, but a lower adherence to the Muslim faith than their neighbours in West Nile.<sup>332</sup> The reports in the 2002 census provide some useful information on the ethnic and religious intertwining of the populations in Uganda and establish the potential for religious tension in West Nile because most of the country's Muslim minority lives in the region.

Of the ethnic groups detailed above, the Kakwa played the largest role in terms of their contribution to the founding of the WNBF. The Kakwa provide a clear link between Idi Amin, the aftermath of his regime, and the people who would eventually lead the WNBF, including his lieutenant Juma Oris, who Amin appointed to his cabinet in the early 1970s, then later fired. Both men came from the Kakwa group, which generally hails from Arua. Amin consistently appointed fellow Kakwa to positions of political authority during his dictatorship, with Juma Oris being the most important among these in terms of his relationship to the WNBF. Amin relied on members of his own ethnic group, like Oris, because he alienated many of the other northerners in the years immediately preceding his coup. The Acholi and Langi resented Amin for ousting Obote. They therefore resented Oris as one of Amin's most important subordinates.<sup>333</sup> Soon after Amin fled to Libya, Oris capitalised on what remaining political influence he wielded to create the Former Uganda National Army (FUNA). This force engaged in hostilities with UNLA after Obote's return from exile. Obote used UNLA as his personal security force, and immediately put these forces to work throughout Uganda, including in West Nile, to pacify locals through violence. The West Nilers, in particular, suffered greatly at the

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<sup>332</sup> Grace Stuart K. Ibingira, *The Forging of an African Nation: The Political and Constitutional Evolution of Uganda from Colonial Rule to Independence, 1894-1962* (New York, USA: The Viking Press, 1973), 5.

<sup>333</sup> Leopold, Idi Amin, 168-169.



hands of UNLA, despite FUNA's skirmishes with Obote's forces, because Obote saw the West Nilers as an important factor in Amin's coup.<sup>334</sup> During this period, Oris used the Kakwa homelands in Arua as a base from which to lead operations during the bloodshed and violence that swept through the country in 1980-1981. He claimed FUNA meant to protect Kakwa sovereignty, but the available literature provides little to support these claims.<sup>335</sup> Oris bided his time and kept his group out of the fighting that consumed Uganda throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. By 1994, FUNA morphed into the WNBF, having escaped the worst of the war between Obote and Museveni in the Luwero Triangle, and the conflict between the NRA and the LRA in Acholiland. This positioned Oris and the WNBF well to begin a 'hot revolutionary war' and attempt to overthrow Museveni.<sup>336</sup>

UNRF II developed out of the animosity created by Museveni's dealings with its predecessor, UNRF I. Throughout the Luwero Triangle War between 1980 and 1986, and in its immediate aftermath, Brigadier Moses Ali, then leader of UNRF I, maintained a relationship with rebel leader Museveni and the NRA. This relationship played an important role in the founding of UNRF II because of how Museveni dealt with Ali. Ali, a northerner from the Adjumani district (at that time still part of the Moyo district) and UNRF I mainly drew recruits from the Aringa people of the Moyo district. The Lugbara did not involve themselves in the organisation to any significant degree until the late 1980s, which changed the nature of the group and helped evolve it into UNRF II. *The Anguish in Northern Uganda*, a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) report written in 1997 by consultant Robert Gersony on behalf of the United States Embassy in Kampala, asserted that Ali and Museveni began their

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<sup>334</sup> Ingham, *Obote: A Political*, 177.

<sup>335</sup> Artur Bogner and Dieter Neubert, "Negotiated Peace, Denied Justice? The Case of West Nile (Northern Uganda)," *Africa Spectrum* 48, no. 3 (2013): 62.

<sup>336</sup> Bogner and Neubert, "Negotiated Peace," 62.

cooperative relationship in Libya before the beginning of the NRA insurgency.<sup>337</sup> This relationship proved an important element in the development of the West Nile insurgencies as UNRF I paved the way for the WNBF and UNRF II in the early 1990s. Museveni's memoir, *Sowing the Mustard Seed*, neglects to mention this relationship. Regardless, Museveni and Ali maintained a working relationship throughout the early- to mid-1980s.<sup>338</sup> Their relationship held strong even in the face of northerner solidarity rhetoric; after Obote fled a second time, and his lieutenant Tito Okello replaced him. Okello then demanded Ali support his war with Museveni. Ali refused to employ his forces in these last-ditch attempts to destroy the NRA during its surge out of Luwero and towards Kampala. Ali's refusal to aid Okello removed a significant obstacle to Museveni's push towards the capital and helped create the conditions for the NRA's seizure of power.<sup>339</sup>

On 29 January 1986, shortly after the NRA took Kampala, Ali and other elders in Arua district met with representatives of the recently ousted Okello. Okello had dispatched these representatives to UNRF I to convince its leadership of the necessity of a northerners' coalition to prevent Museveni from consolidating power. Ali and UNRF I rejected these appeals, while reminding Okello's emissaries of the violence Obote and Okello's UNLA had carried out in Arua at the beginning of the Luwero Triangle War. Like with the West Nilers Oris claimed to be defending, Ali maintained that his organisation also focused on keeping West Nilers safe from UNLA reprisals. These reprisals made use of the war in the south as cover for other concurrent atrocities in the north. Seeing that Museveni could potentially rid West Nile of the scourge of UNLA through defeating Obote, Ali sought to solidify their relationship. The two parties agreed

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<sup>337</sup> Gersony, *The Anguish*, 75-76.

<sup>338</sup> Gersony, *The Anguish*, 74-75.

<sup>339</sup> Gersony, *The Anguish*, 74-75.

to non-aggression terms. These talks also allowed the camps to put the ugliness of their shared past, namely Amin's purges of Langi and Acholi after his 1971 coup, and UNLA reprisals after Obote's return at the start of the 1980s, behind them. Soon, the Acholi in Gulu joined this coalition. By the end of March 1986, the NRA's clearance operations through the north, part of its power consolidation efforts as the new state, caused them to advance into Arua. In this district, by April, Museveni and Ali agreed to forego hostilities, with Museveni offering Ali a place in his cabinet, and amnesty for UNRF I fighters. This move enabled Museveni to focus on defeating Alice Lakwena and the Holy Spirit Movement in the Gulu and Kitgum districts, to the east. In doing so, Museveni pacified Ali, and ensured that UNRF I would not attack NRA forces while they attempted to destroy the HSM. By 1993, Ali's influence in Arua and Moyo waned to the point Oris could swoop in and recruit many former UNRF I fighters.<sup>340</sup>

The Lugbara, for their part, generally came from Yumbe district of West Nile. While having a significant Muslim population like the Kakwa, the Lugbara also had a significantly higher population overall, nearly ten times that of the Kakwa.<sup>341</sup> During Amin's reign in the 1970s, the Lugbara enjoyed some measure of societal advancement because of their shared faith with the Kakwa, but they lacked the direct ethnic link to Amin of the Kakwa. Still, as northerners, and especially as northern Muslims, they profited from the largesse of Amin and his regime. Their involvement in subsequent insurgency mostly related to their fighting as part of UNRF II, founded in 1989, which only commenced hostilities against the central government and Museveni's UPDF in 1996. By 2002, they found themselves weakened due to their lack of discipline and UPDF community outreach policies, coupled with amnesty legislation. Museveni

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<sup>340</sup> Gersony, *The Anguish*, 73.

<sup>341</sup> Uganda Bureau of Statistics, *2002 Census*, 44.

capitalised on this weakness to disarm them in a peace treaty, which took them out of the fight. The Lugbara tended to join UNRF II, but members of this ethnic group also chose to join Oris in the WNBF, which held the prestige of being led by one of Amin's closest allies who also conveniently shared their Muslim faith and enmity towards southerners. The Lugbara vastly outnumbered the Kakwa but exerted less influence on the development of these insurgencies. As the Lugbara dominated Yumbe district, mention must be made of their involvement in both the WNBF and UNRF.<sup>342</sup>

A brief discussion of the environment of West Nile can help paint a more complete picture of the West Nile insurgency. As with the Luwero and LRA conflicts, the physical geography of the West Nile districts impacted the fighting there. Arua, Yumbe, Nebbi, Moyo, and Adjumani lie along the White Nile as it leaves Lake Albert and snakes northwards to what is now South Sudan. During the period examined in this chapter (1980-2002), the Second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2006) raged, and South Sudan had not yet split from its parent country of Sudan. West Nile includes an impressive diversity of terrain features, with the five districts all having some characteristic that distinguishes them.<sup>343</sup>

Plains with some lightly hilly areas make up Arua and Yumbe districts, with a significant gain in elevation in the approach to the border with the DRC. The land becomes increasingly more arid closer to the Sudanese border, making agriculture beyond the subsistence level difficult. Moyo district, which included Adjumani until their division in the summer of 1997, lies on the eastern bank of the Nile and borders on Sudan. The district holds many swamps, wetlands, forests, and good grazing land for cattle, though the relative wetness of the ground

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<sup>342</sup> Bogner and Rosenthal, "Rebels in Northern," 179.

<sup>343</sup> Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers, *Small Arms*, 37.

over the course of the year, when compared with the other districts around it, make it a particularly frustrating COIN battlespace. Moving vehicles through this kind of terrain often leads to bog-downs. The central government forces did not possess suitable troop transport vehicles (sometimes referred to colloquially as ‘trooplift’) in the quantity required to move soldiers through the region effectively. This made counterinsurgent offensives challenging and limited their effectiveness in the region. Finally, Nebbi district distinguishes itself by its consistent highlands. Plateaus and high wetlands present similar challenges to offensives in this area, with the added complication of having to move troops and materiel into these highlands without being ambushed during the ascent. Its forested area, when combined with this already challenging ground for vehicles, allow insurgents to easily ambush these assets as they move. In all, West Nile’s physical geography presented numerous obstacles to any counterinsurgent force trying to deploy into the area, especially when attempting to use trooplift to move significant forces into the region. The remoteness, variance in ground composition, presence of large wetlands, highlands, forests, and need to respond to both open ground and closed-in ground meant that large-scale counterinsurgent offensives by the NRA (which became the UPDF after 1995) faced many hurdles as they attempted to put down the West Nile insurgencies.<sup>344</sup>

#### Application of Galula’s Theories on the Importance of Ideology for the West Nile Insurgencies

At first glance, the WNBF and UNRF held many advantages as insurgent forces. The territory they came from offered ground advantage to insurgent forces, as it made vehicular troop transport a tactical challenge for counterinsurgent commanders attempting to move their troops into the area. The local population generally sympathised with the insurgents, especially

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<sup>344</sup> Sulemanji, *A Contemporary*, 40-41.

early in the life of the two groups, because both WNBF and UNRF presented effective ideological causes for insurgency. For the WNBF, they enjoyed a great deal of support initially because of their Muslim leadership and because of the lingering influence of Amin and his northerner- and Kakwa-first policies. The insurgents ostensibly held all the keys to success, though they struggled to convince West Nilers of the validity of their cause as the insurgencies progressed. When investigating the WNBF's and UNRF's struggles to build and, more importantly, maintain popular support, Galula's 'Power of Ideology' principle as a critical aspect of insurgency becomes a useful analytical tool.

Galula discusses the possibility of both the insurgent and counterinsurgent having what they consider to be reasonable cause for conflict, which he asserts would necessarily dissolve into civil war, using the United States Civil War as an example. More interestingly, though, he states:

The probability is that only one cause exists. If the insurgent has pre-empted it, then the force of ideology works for him and not for the counterinsurgent. However, this is true largely in the early parts of the conflict. Later on, as the war develops, war itself becomes the paramount issue, and the original cause consequently loses some of its importance.<sup>345</sup>

The key point from this passage in relation to the West Nile insurgencies comes at the very end. These insurgencies quickly devolved from attempts to oust the southern regime of Museveni and the NRA/M on ideological grounds into violence for the sake of violence.

The violence the WNBF visited on the people of West Nile mimicked the intensity of that which the LRA inflicted on the Acholi around Gulu and Kitgum. Throughout the 1990s, the war with the LRA consumed much of the international media's attention on Uganda. Similarly, those human rights watchdog groups active in Uganda focused majorly on the LRA. Relatively

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<sup>345</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 8.

few sources therefore exist to document the extent of the WNBF's atrocities specifically. By 1996, Amnesty International began mentioning the WNBF alongside the LRA in their public condemnations of the massacre of civilians, usually accompanied by accusations of war crimes and/or crimes against humanity and calls for immediate cessation of hostilities. These calls had no tangible effect on WNBF activities. They continued apace. Their victims "were cruelly hacked to death with machetes or shot at point-blank range."<sup>346</sup> While these condemnations gave graphic descriptions of how the killings took place, their lack of distinction between the rebel groups responsible makes it difficult to determine anything other than the depths of depravity to which these groups sank.

The ideological basis for Juma Oris' WNBF insurgency, as well as his counterparts in UNRF II, relied heavily on the assertion that they acted in defence of their homes, and the protection of Muslims, who the Christian majority, and southerners in government, meant to destroy through neglect, violence, or both.<sup>347</sup> Oris also played to the fears in West Nile that the central government forgot them after the NRA established itself. This proved a powerful ideology to attract others to his cause. Oris soon found his nascent WNBF awash in embittered ex-FUNA and ex-UNRF I fighters that either could not join the NRA or felt disenfranchised by the lack of employment in their region.<sup>348</sup> Stefan Lindemann quotes one UNRF II recruit on their reasoning for joining the insurgency as follows:

The agreement was that UNRF combatants were to retain their ranks. But people were demoted instead ... Many UNRF deserted the army, others retrenched, others retired. The whole process

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<sup>346</sup> Amnesty International, "Uganda: Amnesty."

<sup>347</sup> Chris Dolan, *Uganda Strategic Conflict Analysis*, ed. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 19, September 2006, accessed September 24, 2023, <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida35613en-uganda-strategic-conflict-analysis.pdf>.

<sup>348</sup> Stefan Lindemann, *Working Paper no. 76: Exclusionary Elite Bargains and Civil War Onset: The Case of Uganda*, ed. United Kingdom Department for International Development, 50-52, August 2010, accessed September 21, 2023, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/120530/WP76.2.pdf>.

of integration was not done. All these things demonstrated lack of government commitment to the agreement, that the government was insincere to the whole agreement.<sup>349</sup>

Such rhetoric demonstrates what former UNRF I fighters felt about the promises Museveni made to pacify them in the first place, particularly that there would be employment with the NRA available to them should they disarm and demobilise. When the NRA attempted to assassinate Major General Ali Bamuze, a prominent former officer in Amin's regime and a major player in UNRF I, other ex-members of UNRF I saw this as concrete evidence of the government's bad faith.<sup>350</sup> Oris used these perceptions to foment further disillusionment among former UNRF I fighters and convince them to join the WNBF, so that they could take revenge on the southerners who they felt had abandoned and betrayed them.<sup>351</sup>

When the NRA announced its plans to drastically reduce its force size in the early 1990s, Oris used this policy to successfully fearmonger among ex-rebels. Museveni's memoir states that this force reduction policy meant to both cut spending and increase tax revenue, which he claims he accomplished by 1995.<sup>352</sup> The NRA cut its official armed service numbers in half, from 100 000 to 50 000, as a politically expedient way to reduce costs and demonstrate its the government's confidence in its security situation. This policy served to undo much of the progress the government previously made in demobilising and disarming West Nile rebels, many of whom Oris swayed with his rhetoric. Instead of decreasing the UPDF's operational costs in its first year (1995-1996), the budget ballooned from \$42 million with 100 000 troops to \$88 million with 50 000 troops, which called into question the effectiveness of the NRM's ability to

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<sup>349</sup> Lindemann, *Working Paper*, 51.

<sup>350</sup> "General Bamuze Laid to Rest," *The Observer* (Kampala, Uganda), October 8, 2015, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://observer.ug/news-headlines/40324-general-bamuze-laid-to-rest>.

<sup>351</sup> Lindemann, *Working Paper*, 51.

<sup>352</sup> Museveni, *Sowing the Mustard*, 308.



govern responsibly.<sup>353</sup> Oris capitalised on this policy by furthering his fearmongering among his target audience, namely unemployed and disenfranchised younger people in West Nile. His rhetoric targeted this demographic by asserting that even if they did manage to join the NRA/UPDF and find stable employment, they would just as likely find their position cut as part of the force reduction plan. His WNBF offered the alternative of well-paid employment, joining bonuses, and promises of glory in an apparently easy campaign to crush Museveni and his southerner usurpers. This messaging evidently performed well, as Kakwa, Lugbara, and even some majority-Christian ethnic groups such as the Madi and Aringa joined his group. While he generally targeted young Muslim men for recruitment, he still managed to convince significant numbers of non-Muslims to join him.<sup>354</sup>

By 1994, Oris' ideological pandering amassed enough support that he could begin to plan for offensive operations against the central government. At this point, his and the WNBF's actions moved from ideologically driven rebellion to violence. This shift in focus coincided with Umar al-Bashir's government in Sudan capturing of the border town of Kajo Keji from the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). This town, a mere twenty kilometres from the West Nile district of Moyo as the crow flies, gave the Sudanese government a logistical hub in the southern reaches of its country. From here, it could enable insurgent groups in the West Nile region of Uganda, and the WNBF benefited.<sup>355</sup> Oris lived in Juba in southern Sudan during this period, and he relied on Al-Bashir's assistance to arm and train his fighters, as well as stage them out of Kajo Keji. The distance to the Ugandan border could easily be covered in a day's (or

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<sup>353</sup> Gérard Prunier, "Rebel Movements and Proxy Warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986-99)," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (2004): 379.

<sup>354</sup> Lindemann, *Working Paper*, 52.

<sup>355</sup> William Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*, New Approaches to African History (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 124-125.

night's) walk, and the terrain in this region favoured insurgents. Generally arid, hilly, open bushland made infiltration into West Nile logistically simple, and Oris took advantage. In 1995, with favourable conditions for insurgency established, the WNBF began its campaigns in earnest.<sup>356</sup>

UNRF II, for its part, relied on similar ideological motivations in its recruiting campaigns, although it focused less on 'defence of Muslims' messaging than did the WNBF. It leaned more heavily into the northerner vs. southerner identity politics and grievance rhetoric than did the WNBF, focusing its efforts instead on recruiting through betrayal narratives. When Museveni offered amnesty to UNRF I in 1987, its members understood that Moses Ali would become Vice-President of Uganda, thereby giving them a voice at the highest levels of the government bureaucracy. Ali's access to the levers of power would help resolve many of their fears of being left behind in the rebuilding of the country after the overthrow of the northern-dominated UPC, or so they thought.<sup>357</sup>

Museveni never made good on his assurances of executive power for Ali, with the latter being made a cabinet minister then, between 1996 and 2006, Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>358</sup> In the Ugandan system, the President appoints the Prime Minister to serve as head of the cabinet.<sup>359</sup> While powerful, the Prime Minister does not possess executive authority, meaning they cannot truly control the political process or access the mechanisms of government in the way that the President or, in their absence, the Vice-President, can. The ex-UNRF I fighters understood the gap between what Museveni promised and what he delivered, and interpreted this as a reneging

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<sup>356</sup> Lindemann, *Working Paper*, 52.

<sup>357</sup> Lindemann, *Working Paper*, 51-52.

<sup>358</sup> Lindemann, *Working Paper*, 51.

<sup>359</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Uganda

of the deal that should have helped them escape the feeling of marginalisation that led them to rebel in the first place.<sup>360</sup>

Museveni's choice to not make good on his word regarding Moses Ali helped feed the grievance narrative that remnants of UNRF I would use to found UNRF II. In particular, Ali Bamuze, who helped Moses Ali found UNRF I after Amin fled to Libya, chose not to accept the amnesty offer and instead used the betrayal narrative around Moses Ali as a foundational one for his second iteration of the organisation.<sup>361</sup> Ali Bamuze, like Juma Oris, used the NRA's force reduction plan's tendency to release members without educational qualifications to enhance his messaging that the comparatively less educated northerners, especially ex-UNRF northerners, would never be treated fairly by the southerners. He also claimed that Aringa elders had been targets of arrests and extrajudicial killings by the NRA.<sup>362</sup> This inflammatory rhetoric led to an assassination attempt by the NRA, which Bamuze survived and used as 'proof' that the southerners had no intentions of sharing power and that they would resort to killing dissidents to ensure they kept control of the state. The remnants of UNRF I that chose to ignore the amnesty offer used Museveni's executive decisions against him to create narratives of being oppressed, disrespected, not being seen as equals, and victims of southerners that simply could not be trusted. While their messaging differed from that of the WNBF, which included much more direct accusations of religious persecution of Muslim northerners by Christian southerners, the

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<sup>360</sup> Lindemann, *Working Paper*, 51.

<sup>361</sup> "Gen. Ali Bamuze's Family Cries out to Museveni for Help," *The Independent* (Kampala, Uganda), October 8, 2021, accessed September 29, 2023, <https://www.independent.co.ug/gen-ali-bamuzes-family-cries-out-to-museveni-for-help/>.

<sup>362</sup> Christopher R. Day, "The Fates of Rebels: Insurgencies in Uganda," *Comparative Politics* 43, no. 4 (2011): 452.

remaining UNRF I leadership effectively employed similar narratives in terms of what they saw as disrespectful treatment by Museveni.<sup>363</sup>

This identity politics-based ideological messaging strategy worked about as well for what would become UNRF II as it did for the WNBF. Instead of ensuring peace through his offers of amnesty, Museveni's decision to not keep his promises regarding military and governmental employment for those ex-rebels who chose to disarm ensured future conflict by giving these ex-rebels at least a perceived cause to take up arms again when the opportunity presented itself. In both cases, using combinations of ethnic and religious identity messaging enabled the insurgent groups to give potential recruits an ideological reason to join the cause. In both cases, this ideological reason for insurgency ultimately lost some of its importance, and the conflicts themselves became the primary reason to keep fighting.

#### The Four Laws of Counterinsurgency in the Hot Revolutionary War

Galula's first law of counterinsurgency in what he called 'The Hot Revolutionary War' clarifies the necessity of the support of the local population for the success of both counterinsurgent and insurgent forces. He theorised that insurgents enjoy a significant tactical advantage at the grassroots level, based on the assumption that insurgents draw their recruits primarily from their home region and that they generally operate in or around that same region for most of their campaign. As he put it:

The population, therefore, becomes the objective for the counterinsurgent as it was for his enemy. Its tacit support, its submission to law and order, its consensus—taken for granted in normal times—have been undermined by the insurgent's activity. And the truth is that the insurgent, with his organisation at the grass roots, is tactically the strongest of opponents where it counts, at the population level.<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> Day, "The Fates," 452.

<sup>364</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 52.

While this seems like a self-evident observation, the WNBF and UNRF both managed to bungle their inherent tactical advantage and turn the fight in favour of the government's forces. Both had clear ideological causes for their insurgencies, and usually undertook operations in or around the five main districts of West Nile. They offered compelling religious, ethnic, and even financial motivations for their campaigns, and did not suffer for willing volunteers, at least in the early stages of their respective lifespans in the mid to late 1990s. With these tactical advantages, coupled with the demographic and geographic advantages outlined above, the WNBF and UNRF could have protracted their insurgencies far longer than they did. In fact, their situations at the beginning of their campaigns offer a compelling look at what can likely pass for ideal insurgency conditions. That both groups enjoyed such strategically advantageous terrain and local support and still managed to fail demonstrates Galula's principle well.

The WNBF and UNRF both made the strategically suicidal decisions to attack the local populations that constituted their respective bases of support.<sup>365</sup> Determining exactly why they both chose this course proves difficult with the minimal sources available. Most of the literature on the West Nile insurgencies comes from political scientists and conflict/peace studies scholars, who focused on the repatriation efforts of the government after the two groups stopped fighting, or on the Sudanese refugees that flooded into West Nile during the Sudanese Civil War. The Refugee Law Project, under the direction of Zachary Lomo and Lucy Hovil at Makerere University in Kampala, provides some answers in the form of interviews they conducted with ex-insurgents. Even so, these interviews, often with individuals who preferred to remain anonymous and generally served as low-level fighters, only develop some of the picture, leaving

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<sup>365</sup> "Ex-combatants Warned against New Rebellion," *The Uganda Daily Monitor* (Kampala, Uganda), November 14, 2017, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/ex-combatants-warned-against-new-rebellion-1726116>.

some significant gaps in the literature in terms of insight into the strategic thinking of Juma Oris and Ali Bamuze.

The interviews Lomo and Hovil conducted help provide insight into what the lower-level insurgents believed they fought for, and why specifically they carried out operations in West Nile, where most of them came from. The statements the interview subjects gave generally resound with the rhetoric that Oris and Bamuze espoused about lack of development in West Nile, feeling like second-class or forgotten citizens, and perceptions of injustices against northerners by the NRA/UPDF. Lomo and Hovil interviewed one civil servant in Moyo, who told them: “There is a feeling that we are not considered equal as other citizens in Uganda. This has frustrated the patriot feelings of our people and they have tended to head to the bush...Priorities tend to go to the areas near by the government.”<sup>366</sup> Many of the interview subjects complained that Yumbe needed its own district status, which would then require dedication of national funds and other resources as a recognised political entity. Before the central government split Yumbe off from Arua, citizens in Yumbe protested that national government resources never made it to their part of the district, instead getting used up by the bigger towns in Arua proper. Lomo and Hovil paraphrase Bamuze’s three reasonings behind forming UNRF II: “the apparent breach of the government’s agreement with the UNRF; arrests and killings without trial; and the lack of development in West Nile during the late 1980s.”<sup>367</sup> Lomo and Hovil also paraphrased Bamuze as saying that UNRF II, with the support of the Sudanese government, meant to create the conditions that would allow displaced West Nilers to return home and live in peace. Another interviewee, a UNRF commander, asserted: “we never

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<sup>366</sup> Zachary Lomo and Lucy Hovil, *Negotiating Peace: Resolution of Conflicts in Uganda's West Nile Region*, ed. The Refugee Law Project, 13, accessed September 17, 2023, [https://www.refugeelawproject.org/files/working\\_papers/RLP.WP12.pdf](https://www.refugeelawproject.org/files/working_papers/RLP.WP12.pdf).

<sup>367</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 13.

touched civilians, never. We were fighting for civilians".<sup>368</sup> Locals in West Nile had to contend with the aftermath of clashes between UNRF insurgents and UPDF counterinsurgent forces, including collateral damage to roads, subsistence farms, and villages, all ostensibly so that the locals could live peacefully. Within a few short years, the locals turned against the UNRF, which precipitated its entering into peace talks with Museveni's government in 2001, which ended hostilities in 2002.<sup>369</sup>

The WNBF, for their part, embraced the ultra-violent tactics so often employed by the LRA, including forced recruitment through mass kidnappings (including many children and youths) if individuals showed reluctance to voluntarily join. An individual forcibly recruited in Obongi, near Adjumani, related their experience:

For us we were abducted while we were catching fish and others were caught while they were in the gardens. Three hundred soldiers were ambushed at Kochi and NRA feared to follow and rescue us so we walked for one week. Two boys were killed out of our own group to illustrate to us what would be done to an escapee.<sup>370</sup>

The WNBF quickly exhausted any goodwill they previously built by offering financial bonuses to new recruits after they ran out of money and began kidnapping locals instead. This caused the civilians in West Nile to turn against them much more quickly than they did against UNRF. The WNBF liberally used Sudanese landmines in their fight against the UPDF, which certainly didn't help their cause because of the casualties they inflicted on civilians in WNBF-affected areas.<sup>371</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 13-14.

<sup>369</sup> "Bamuze Renounces Rebellion," *New Vision* (Kampala, Uganda), April 24, 2002, accessed October 16, 2023, <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1082272/bamuze-renounces-rebellion>.

<sup>370</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 14-15.

<sup>371</sup> Nikki Van der Gaag, "Field of Dreams (Sudanese Refugee Settlement in Northern Uganda)," *New Internationalist*, 1996, <https://ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fmagazines%2Ffield-dreams-sudanese-refugee-settlement-northern%2Fdocview%2F199984867%2Fse-2%3Faccountid%3D9838>.

Coupled with their habit of putting civilians between themselves and counterinsurgent forces, the WNBF ensured that their popularity evaporated.<sup>372</sup>

This collapse of local goodwill allowed the state's UPDF to undertake effective offensives against the WNBF and defeat them, through the clever manipulation of locals' opinion of government forces. In 1996, Lieutenant-Colonel Katumba Wamala, the UPDF commander in West Nile, began a hybrid campaign against the WNBF holdouts. Wamala, a southerner, served in UNLA until its defeat by the NRA in 1986, after which he joined the NRA and eventually went on to become the Chief of Defence Forces of the entire UPDF. As a soldier that wilfully joined his former enemies, Wamala had a particular insight on how to convince fighters to switch sides in a conflict. He then applied this insight with great success in West Nile, where he spent considerable resources on civilian outreach, and the goodwill he created between counterinsurgent forces and the local population enabled him to leverage the locals to convince WNBF fighters to surrender.<sup>373</sup> He fought those who refused to surrender but kept his word of not harming those who chose to return to their communities and attempt to reintegrate themselves in the community. Interviews conducted in the late 2000s by the sociologists Artur Bogner and Gabriele Rosenthal showed that these returnees reintegrated well into their communities and maintained a strong sense of comradeship and mutual support, despite the horrors they saw and, potentially, committed. Many ex-insurgents in West Nile even occupied positions of relatively senior social status after their return.<sup>374</sup> Wamala's tactic stands out as an excellent example of how counterinsurgent forces can seize the advantage of local support from

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<sup>372</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 15.

<sup>373</sup> "Rebels Turned UPDF Commanders," *NewVision* (Kampala, Uganda), September 5, 2005, accessed September 5, 2023, <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1117698/rebels-updf-commanders>.

<sup>374</sup> Artur Bogner and Gabriele Rosenthal, "Rebels in Northern Uganda after Their Return to Civilian Life: Between a Strong We-image and Experiences of Isolation and Discrimination," *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue canadienne des études africaines* 51, no. 2 (2017): np.



insurgents by focused community relation efforts. When interviewed by Lomo and Hovil, he explained his approach simply:

It was all about community outreach. We would go into a village, find out what was important to them, and show them the best opportunity. The communities used family contacts to encourage their sons back. We would go with them to pick up their son who would hand over his gun to us, so they could see for themselves that there was no harassment. My attitude was, we had guns, they had guns, and we may get killed. So if there was a way to get them out in a non-combative way, it was much better for everyone.<sup>375</sup>

He went so far as to order UPDF units to not retaliate when attacked by the WNBF, according to one of his troops. This created a culture of reconciliation that allowed insurgents to surrender safely, and not be subjected to reprisals like those UNLA had carried out so often in the early- and mid-1980s. Wamala's work did not survive the end of his command, though, and his replacement quickly undid all his progress by overinflating the incidence of insurgent activity. This reanimated the culture of fear of surrender among the insurgents that preceded Wamala's command and helps demonstrate how quickly progress with local populations can be undone if counterinsurgent commanders prioritise insurgent body counts and their own self-aggrandisement over operational success. Once this commander was replaced, WNBF fighters began surrendering again because they did not fear reprisal.<sup>376</sup> Ultimately, Wamala's tactical brilliance at manipulating the local population in West Nile helped establish the conditions required for the WNBF's defeat the following year.

Through the interviews conducted by the Refugee Law Project, the value of Galula's first law of COIN in a hot revolutionary environment makes itself evident. When properly understood and applied, as in the case of Wamala and his hybrid campaign against the WNBF, local populations can be successfully swayed to favour the counterinsurgent force, which removes a

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<sup>375</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 19.

<sup>376</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 19.

major tactical advantage that nearly all insurgent forces enjoy because of how insurgencies often start. Their generally grassroots nature hands an immediate advantage to the insurgent forces, but this advantage can be reversed when counterinsurgent commanders commit to community outreach and leveraging communities as surrender and repatriation options for insurgents. The WNBF case shows this well, as the group's fighters often came out of the bush to surrender based on pressure from their families and home communities. As one fighter put it: "We came out of the bush because we had been receiving pleas from our people, and also because of the government's blanket amnesty."<sup>377</sup>

Galula's second law 'Support is Gained Through an Active Minority' asserts that: "In any situation, whatever the cause, there will be an active minority for the cause, a neutral majority, and an active minority against the cause."<sup>378</sup> He postulated that only when the minority that supports the counterinsurgents succeeds in swaying the neutral majority can the local population be effectively employed as a tool to defeat an insurgent force. In addition, Galula claimed that in a revolutionary war, civilians become participants, whether willingly or unwillingly, as the insurgent will use them either offensively or defensively. The UNRF and WNBF offer compelling opportunities to interrogate this theory, because of the difference in their approach to their campaigns. As seen with the interviews conducted by the Refugee Law Project, these two groups, whose ideologies align quite closely, undertook operations drastically differently. Through social pressure, the counterinsurgent force seeks to use what Galula called the "active minority" to convince the majority to support the counterinsurgency. With this objective achieved, the counterinsurgent can then focus on addressing the problem of organising

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<sup>377</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 19.

<sup>378</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 52.

the “active minority” against what he called “the insurgent minority”. Accomplishing the task of organising the favourable minority against the insurgent minority allows for the possibility of a counterinsurgent victory, which Galula describes as:

A victory is not the destruction in a given area of the insurgent’s forces and his political organisation. If one is destroyed, it will be locally re-created by the other; if both are destroyed, they will both be re-created by a new fusion of insurgents from the outside. ... A victory is that plus the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population, isolation not enforced upon the population but maintained by and with the population.<sup>379</sup>

Luckily, the literature on reintegration of ex-insurgents from the WNBF and UNRF offers some interesting examples of how the favourable minority swung broader public opinion against insurgency, as well as how those who chose to surrender and reintegrate can go directly from an adversarial minority to a favourable one.

Leah Finnegan and Catherine Flew, with the anti-conflict organisation Saferworld, published a compelling ‘mini’ case study in 2008 that detailed the “Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reinsertion, and Reintegration” (D, D, R & R) programming for accepting ex-insurgents back into Ugandan civilian society.<sup>380</sup> In 2000, the Government of Uganda passed the Amnesty Act, which created mechanisms for those who chose to self-report as insurgents to begin returning to civil society. While the program did not halt hostilities in West Nile, it nonetheless enabled those who chose to leave their insurgent group the opportunity to do so, while granting legal protections against reprisal or retributions from the central government under the Act’s ‘Declaration of Amnesty’.<sup>381</sup> The Act allowed any member of an insurgent group active after the NRA took Kampala on 26 January 1986 to present themselves to the “nearest

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<sup>379</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 54.

<sup>380</sup> Leah Finnegan and Catherine Flew, *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in Uganda*, ed. Centre for International Cooperation and Security and Saferworld, 3, July 2008, accessed September 17, 2023, [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39070-doc-60. ddr\\_mini\\_case\\_study\\_uganda.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39070-doc-60. ddr_mini_case_study_uganda.pdf).

<sup>381</sup> Amnesty Act 2000, para. 3

Army or Police Unit, a Chief, a member of the Executive Committee of a local government unit, a magistrate or a religious leader within the locality” to receive their amnesty. The idea for this bold move by the central government originated, surprisingly, with the Acholi and their Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI), who envisioned a possibility for LRA members, regardless of whether they volunteered or forcibly joined, to return to Acholi society.<sup>382</sup> By 2005, the international community began to help fund D, D, R & R in Uganda through the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP), an initiative throughout the Great Lakes region to return ex-combatants to civil society. Similar amnesty initiatives in other parts of Africa, such as in Algeria after its civil war which took place between 1991 and 2002, proved relatively successful as well.<sup>383</sup> These other successful programs helped sell the MDRP to international organisations and states. As a result, the World Bank, along with many state governments, contributes significantly to the MDRP, which focuses its efforts primarily in Acholiland and West Nile.<sup>384</sup>

In the case of the WNBF and UNRF insurgents, the MDRP and D, D, R & R comprised an important element of the central government’s strategy to disincentivise insurgent activity and disempower the leadership of these groups in the process. Provided the ‘reporters’ managed to escape from their group and present themselves to one of the various authority figures listed above, their rejection of insurgency meant a reduction in available manpower for their former insurgent leader. This clearly negatively impacted their former group’s ability to engage in insurgent operations, while simultaneously empowering the minority favourable to the

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<sup>382</sup> Finnegan and Flew, *Disarmament, Demobilisation*, 4.

<sup>383</sup> "Algerians Back Civil War Amnesty," *Al-Jazeera English* (Doha, Qatar), October 1, 2005, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/10/1/algerians-back-civil-war-amnesty>.

<sup>384</sup> The World Bank collaborates with Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom to fund the MDRP.

counterinsurgency. In addition, the more neutral public tended to respond positively to the return of their family members, neighbours, and community members. This helped swing the neutral majority towards the cause of the counterinsurgent and brought more of these neutral individuals to the cause of the active anti-insurgent minority.

Finnegan and Flew's work highlighted not just how amnesty for combatants can help grow the active minority that supports the counterinsurgent force, but how Uganda's implementation of D, D, R & R can serve as a cautionary tale for future attempts at bringing similar programs to bear against an insurgency problem.<sup>385</sup> First, the MDRP makes certain demands of states that benefit from the program, including that they attempt to demobilise as a show of good faith towards the insurgents. The NRA force reduction program in the early to mid-1990s roughly halved the size of the standing armed forces of Uganda, but created problems with attempts to reintegrate ex-insurgents, as spaces often no longer existed for them to fill. The case study highlights that many of these insurgents began fighting with either the WNBF or UNRF at a very young age. As a result, transitioning into a civilian life and no longer participating in combat can prove difficult. They spent their early adulthoods as fighters, meaning a lower likelihood that they learned the social behaviours expected of them as adult citizens or acquired education and skills needed for civilian employment. The MDRP's partial demobilisation requirements deepen this issue, as forecasting the number of combat veterans that will wish to continue to live a fighter's life in the armed forces makes for a challenging prospect. Another major obstacle for D, D, R & R in the Ugandan context comes from the fact that the Amnesty Commission, the institution that ensures the proper execution of the Amnesty Act,

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<sup>385</sup> The MDRP and Amnesty Act continue into the present, and this section discusses them in the present tense as a result.

monitors demobilisation, reintegration, and resettlement, but not disarmament.<sup>386</sup> This makes enforcing the reporters' disarmament near-impossible', potentially leading to issues with ex-insurgents maintaining a stock of weapons.<sup>387</sup> A final challenge for the implementation of D, D, R & R in the Ugandan context arises from the mechanisms involved in the disarmament process specifically. The disarmed weapons handed in to authorities by reporters should be transferred to secure facilities on UPDF establishments in preparation for their safe destruction, but the public, and the reporters in particular, have no visibility into how this process occurs. No enforcement body exists to ensure those involved carry out the process correctly, as the Amnesty Act does not create an individual or team responsible for ensuring a standardised, clear, transparent process for disarmament.<sup>388</sup>

While the passing of the Amnesty Act in 2000 served as an important step in creating a national system for swinging adversarial minorities, in this case, insurgents, to the neutral majority, or, even better, to the favourable minority camp, its implementation leaves much to be desired. Finnegan and Flew's 'mini' case study highlighted some of the issues with the Act, while also offering an excellent example for how counterinsurgent forces can use amnesty legislation to put Galula's second law regarding the importance of the active minority into practice.

The third law 'Support from the Population is Conditional' states the following:

Once the insurgent has established his hold over the population, the minority that was hostile to him becomes invisible. Some of its members have been eliminated physically, thereby providing an example to the others; others have escaped abroad; most have been cowed into hiding their true feelings and have thus melted within the majority of the population; a few are even making a show of their support for the insurgency. The population, watched by the active supporters of the insurgency, lives under the threat of denunciation to the political cells and

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<sup>386</sup> Amnesty Act 2000, paras 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

<sup>387</sup> Finnegan and Flew, *Disarmament, Demobilisation*, 14.

<sup>388</sup> Finnegan and Flew, *Disarmament, Demobilisation*, 15.

prompt punishment by the guerrilla units. The minority hostile to the insurgent will not and cannot emerge as long as the threat has not been lifted to a reasonable extent.<sup>389</sup>

Galula notes that once the counterinsurgent establishes the conditions described above, four important deductions can be made. First, that security services need to crush the guerilla units and insurgent political groups before engaging in political action with the population. Second, reforms cannot be effectively implemented while the insurgents still control the locals. Third, counterinsurgents need to show they have the means and will to win. Finally, contrary to conventional military strength being assessed based on force size and logistical capacity, counterinsurgent strength must be measured in terms of the popularity of its political organisation at the grass roots. Finnegan and Flew's 'mini' case study offered an opportunity to evaluate the second law in terms of the effectiveness of D, D, R & R through amnesty legislation. Other sources on the fates of the rebels involved in the West Nile insurgencies offer examples of how the insurgent threat can be minimised to the point that the government-aligned minority began to engage openly in political culture without fear of reprisal.

On 15 December 1998, the UPDF commander in West Nile, Colonel Nassur Izaruku, offered the idea to Museveni's cabinet of beginning potential peace negotiations with UNRF II.<sup>390</sup> Bamuze told Lomo and Hovil he thought it a trap after the government leaked a letter suggesting the possibility of peace talks through one of UNRF's moles in Kampala: "We thought it was a government ploy because of what had happened with UNRF I".<sup>391</sup> After Bamuze realised that the government actually wanted to begin negotiations, both UNRF and government representatives began meeting as part of the Aringa-Obongi Peace Initiative Committee (AROPIC), with conferences held in Khartoum and then Nairobi in November 2001. These

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<sup>389</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 54-55.

<sup>390</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 23.

<sup>391</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 23.

negotiations helped relieve some of the pressure on West Nilers, as both rebel UNRF and the UPDF state military reduced their operational tempo in the region during this period. This created the conditions required for the alleviation of the threat of collateral violence in clashes between the insurgents and counterinsurgents. With the threat lifted, UNRF no longer held meaningful control of the population through terror, and the central government showed that they had the means and will to bring UNRF to the negotiating table. This also showed the strength of the counterinsurgency and meant that locals had no reason to align themselves with UNRF. Having established the requisite conditions for peace negotiations, the counterinsurgents found themselves enjoying a surge of popular support, as West Nilers could see the government intended to genuinely attempt to create peace.<sup>392</sup>

The government also benefited from the Sudanese rather suddenly forcing UNRF out of their territory. This sudden expulsion compromised UNRF's logistical support systems, such as availability of weapons, light vehicles, and safe training grounds, while also putting them within reach of the UPDF unless they managed to establish themselves in eastern DRC (formerly Zaire). This weakening of UNRF allowed more and more government aligned West Nilers to engage in civil society without fear of reprisals which only served to better the government's position during negotiations. After the government allowed Bamuze to deploy a platoon's worth of fighters into Uganda without harming them, the UNRF leader knew that the government intended to practice restraint, which gave him cause to approach the negotiations with cautious

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<sup>392</sup> Lomo and Hovil, *Negotiating Peace*, 23-24.



optimism. UNRF and the government signed first a ceasefire on 15 June 2002, then an armistice on 24 December 2002, effectively ending the UNRF as an insurgent group.<sup>393</sup>

The WNBF disintegrated in 1997 and 1998 in the face of coordinated counterinsurgency by the Ugandan government and the Ugandan invasions of Zaire/DRC during the First and Second Congo Wars. Until 1997, the WNBF enjoyed substantial material and training assistance from the Sudanese Army. The Sudanese government used the WNBF as a destabilising agent against the NRM government in Uganda between 1994 and 1997. The UPDF began coordinating its anti-WNBF COIN efforts with the SPLA and ADFL(C) rebels in Zaire in late 1996, coordination which led to the WNBF's defeat in DRC in 1998.<sup>394</sup> This situation caused the Sudanese to withdraw their support from Oris' group because continued aid to Oris would have potentially escalated hostilities between Khartoum and Kampala.<sup>395</sup> With the Sudanese government no longer buoying the WNBF, the group found itself vulnerable to attack by the Zairean rebels and UPDF.<sup>396</sup> Between 12 and 16 March 1997, the UPDF-SPLA-Zairean rebel coalition attacked WNBF fighters several times near the town of Kaya, near the Sudan-Uganda border. The Ugandans claimed they killed Oris during this assault, a lie which successfully made its way into western media.<sup>397</sup> In reality, however, Oris fell ill before the attack and retreated to Juba in southern Sudan for treatment. Local reporting in Kampala claimed he died in Juba in early March 2001, after having suffered a stroke in 1999.<sup>398</sup> Details aside, Oris no longer led the

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<sup>393</sup> "Government in Peace Deal with UNRF-II Rebels," *The New Humanitarian* (Geneva, Switzerland), June 19, 2002, accessed September 28, 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/report/32570/uganda-government-peace-deal-unrf-ii-rebels>.

<sup>394</sup> Reyntjens, *The Great*, 169.

<sup>395</sup> Stapleton, *Africa: War and Conflict*, 104.

<sup>396</sup> Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2012), 80-85.

<sup>397</sup> "Ugandan Rebel Leader Reported Killed in Fighting," Cable News Network, last modified March 16, 1997, accessed September 23, 2023, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9703/16/briefs/uganda.rebels/>.

<sup>398</sup> "Juma Oris Is Dead and Buried in Sudan," *NewVision* (Kampala, Uganda), March 11, 2001, accessed October 7, 2023, [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1038425/juma-oris-dead-buried-sudan](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1038425/juma-oris-dead-buried-sudan).

WNBF personally by early 1997 due to his poor health. Without their leader, the WNBF experienced significant defeats after the UPDF-led attacks near Kaya, which culminated in Uganda's Operation MWISHO II in 1998. MWISHO II included a series of cleanup operations against the WNBF holdouts in southern Sudan, which successfully destroyed what remained of the WNBF's combat effectiveness.<sup>399</sup>

The violent end to this violent group came after its leader refused to consider peace negotiations, which caused the UPDF and its regional allies to put Galula's fourth law into action: 'Intensity of Efforts and Vastness of Means Are Essential'. In this law, Galula states:

The operations needed to relieve the population from the insurgent's threat and to convince it that the counterinsurgent will ultimately win are necessarily of an intensive nature and of long duration. They require a large concentration of efforts, resources, and personnel.<sup>400</sup>

Cleaning up what remained of Oris' insurgency required significant coordination between a multinational coalition, and a logistical effort that could effectively put enough troops in position, in a neighbouring country, to be at the right place at the right time to cut off an insurgent leader who evaded capture or assassination for almost twenty years. Accordingly, many of the UPDF's senior officers deployed to the Sudanese theater, including General Caleb Akandwanaho (aka Salim Saleh, Museveni's brother), Mugisha Muntu, Aronda Nyakairima, and Katumba Walala, the latter holding the rank of Colonel by this time.<sup>401</sup> Pulling off operations with as many moving parts as MWISHO II evidenced the UPDF's means, will, and persistence to defeat the insurgent, thereby relieving the West Nilers of a major threat to their peaceful

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<sup>399</sup> "Ex-West Nile Rebels Return, End Rebellion," *New Vision* (Kampala, Uganda), May 9, 2004, September 27, 2023, <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1101014/-west-nile-rebels-return-rebellion>.

<sup>400</sup> Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 55.

<sup>401</sup> Muhoozi Kainerugaba, "Pics from the past. Generals Salim Saleh, Mugisha Muntu, Aronda Nyakairima (then a Brigadier) and Katumba Wamala (then a Colonel) during Operation Mwisho II in 1998. This is when the UPDF surged into Southern Sudan and destroyed the West Nile Bank Front of Juma Oris.," Twitter, November 22, 2018, 0349, <https://twitter.com/mkainerugaba/status/1065557950431924230?lang=fr>.

engagement with civil society and the political process in a manner that supports the COIN efforts of the central government.

### Conclusion

The WNBF and UNRF insurgencies in the West Nile region of northern Uganda offer excellent opportunities to evaluate the validity of David Galula's theories regarding ideological cause for insurgency and the four laws of counterinsurgency.

Despite significant demographic and geographic advantages, the WNBF and UNRF I & II eventually met with defeat at the hands of the central government forces, the NRA/UPDF, in 1997 and 2002, respectively. Especially in the early days of their existence, both groups effectively used grievance and fearmongering rhetoric to sway many disillusioned West Nilers to join their causes. The UNRF effectively employed grievance to convince many to join their movement, and the actions of Yoweri Museveni after the dissolution of UNRF I only helped to further UNRF II's leader, Ali Bamuze's rhetoric calling for rebellion. The WNBF, under Juma Oris, previously a key crony in the brutal regime of Idi Amin, perpetuated his former boss' hyperviolent ways. A Kakwa Muslim, Oris often forcibly recruited new members into his group, or scared fellow Muslims in the West Nile into supporting him with assertions that the Christians meant to eradicate them, and that only through violent destruction of the southerners could they ever be free. These ideological causes for rebellion initially met with significant success among West Nilers and help demonstrate the value of Galula's theory on the importance of ideological cause to motivate insurgency.

Unlike Oris' group, the UNRF eventually agreed to peace talks and voluntarily stood down their organisation in December 2002, with many of its members successfully reintegrating

into Ugandan civil society thanks to amnesty legislation and D, D, R & R efforts by both local and international groups.<sup>402</sup> The case of Lieutenant-Colonel Katumba Wamala offers an ideal example of how well a counterinsurgent campaign can be run when Galula's four laws get applied correctly. More broadly, the UNRF insurgency helps show the value of Galula's principles of continuous, persistent pressure by counterinsurgents on insurgents, and how well it can end for the various parties with the proper application of soft warfare techniques such as community outreach, relationship-building with locals, and opportunities for re-entry into society.

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<sup>402</sup> Will Ross, "Uganda Signs Peace Deal with Rebels," *The British Broadcasting Corporation* (Kampala, Uganda), December 26, 2002, accessed October 20, 2023, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/2607683.stm>.

## Conclusion

This thesis examined the insurgencies in postcolonial Uganda between 1981 and 2003 through the analytical lens of David Galula's 1964 *Contre-insurrection: théorie et pratique*. This analysis demonstrated, through discussion of examples of conflict in post-colonial Uganda, that Galula's theories hold up when scrutinised using case studies of national armed forces fighting regionalised insurgencies. The theories tested include four of Galula's "Eight Steps in Counterinsurgency Operations", his four "Prerequisites for a Successful Insurgency", the importance of ideology as a motivator for insurgency, and the "Four Laws for Counterinsurgency in a 'Hot Revolutionary War'". When evaluated against the cases of the Luwero Triangle War 1981-1986, the LRA insurgency 1987-2003, and the WNBF and UNRF insurgencies 1986-2002, these theories consistently showed their applicability, as well as that of many of their sub-factors.

Galula's theories remain extremely influential in Western literature on COIN and continue to influence doctrine and strategic planning in Western militaries, especially those of the NATO alliance. This literature has discussed Galula's work predominantly in the context of the British in Malaya, the French in Algeria, the Americans in Vietnam, or, more recently, of NATO in Afghanistan.

With NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan, assessing the validity of Galula's theories, and their proper application becomes a necessity. Civilian and military leaders responsible for NATO's failed COIN campaign there espoused their respect for Galula's theories, but their actions in theater demonstrate a misunderstanding of how to apply these same theories, leading

to the death of thousands of soldiers and many more thousands of civilians.<sup>403</sup> As the broader literature on COIN notes, killing insurgents in tactical engagements matters little if strategic decision-makers do not produce and then follow a strategic plan for the campaign. Galula emphasises the importance of a focus on strategy over tactics repeatedly in his work. The Ugandan insurgencies examined in this thesis show that ignoring Galula on this critical point leads to significant civilian casualties and COIN campaign failure. While Galula's work has received some legitimate criticism for its Western-centric perspective, monolithic view of civilians, and some potential exaggeration of the effectiveness of its eight operational steps, these criticisms do not debunk *Contre-insurrection's* theories. They instead point to the pressing need for the NATO community that continues to value this work so highly to refine the already-applicable model Galula created, then subsequently apply this refined theory properly in their future COIN campaigns.

The Ugandan case offers an understudied, complex series of conflicts to demonstrate that Galula's work can be applied as readily to African small wars as it can these larger, expeditionary conflicts. A lack of primary sources from archives stems from African governments' and militaries' careful curation of a narrative that supports their prestige and/or version of events, as well their systematic repression of independent journalism and international scrutiny. Despite this lack of primary sources, enough secondary sources, and research based on first-hand accounts of events exist to enable the study of these African small wars as case studies in counterinsurgency.

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<sup>403</sup> Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing*, 341.

The Luwero Triangle War from 1981-1986 pitted Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) against Milton Obote's Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA). A Tanzanian invasion in 1979 toppled Amin's regime. Then, when the TPDF-supported provisional government declared the returned Obote the victor in the December 1980 national election, Museveni began his rebellion in February 1981. UNLA's efforts to destroy the NRA insurgency failed repeatedly because predominantly northern UNLA forces brutally suppressed southerners attempting to break their support for Museveni's group. The counterinsurgents' continuous atrocities against civilians ensured that the locals in Luwero and Singo would give the NRA the support they needed to survive. This support enabled the NRA to eventually capitalise on the Acholi-led coup against Obote, a Langi, which installed Tito Okello as the new President in late 1985.

By this time, and transitioning from guerrilla to conventional warfare, the NRA amassed enough personnel and materiel to begin advancing south on Kampala, which they took at the end of January 1986. This gave Museveni the Presidency and made the NRA the national army. This case shows the importance of counterinsurgents committing their efforts to destroying their target insurgency as swiftly as possible, and the subsequent, rapid installation of an effective police force to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with locals that protects the civilian population from the insurgents. The UNLA leadership's failure to accomplish these objectives demonstrated the validity of the first four of Galula's "Eight Steps in Counterinsurgency Operations", and this led to their loss of power.

UNLA's defeat reversed the counterinsurgent-insurgent roles, and the southerners in the NRA became the state forces while the northerners became the insurgents. The remnants of UNLA returned to their northern Ugandan homelands, and led to the establishment of three

major insurgencies, namely the LRA, WNBF, and UNRF I & II. The NRA pursued these remnants into the north. The ethnic groups across northern Uganda feared the possibility of repression by the NRA (later the UPDF), fears which Museveni's forces justified through the war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing they carried out as part of their strategic aim to destroy these insurgencies.

In the case of the LRA in Acholiland, Joseph Kony used the northerner's fears to found a brutal insurgent organisation that overcame all the southern counterinsurgents' attempts to destroy it, though it was eventually expelled from northern Uganda. The LRA created a cult of personality around Kony using his self-proclaimed divine inspiration. This group went on to effectively use the northern Ugandan geography to their advantage against the weak NRA, especially the proximity to Sudan and the LRA fighters' ability to live and operate in the bush. The Sudanese government aided Kony's group significantly after he moved the LRA staging areas there following failed peace talks in 1994. Only after the Sudanese withdrew their support in 1999, given Khartoum's desire to emerge from international isolation, did the LRA face significant risk of destruction. Even then, the group managed to survive major offensives against them by Museveni's forces, during the 2002-2003 Operation IRON FIST I and 2005 Operation IRON FIST II. The NRA/UPDF's failures to destroy the LRA demonstrate the validity of Galula's theories on the "Prerequisites for a Successful Insurgency". Given its longevity and continued survival into the present, though not within Uganda, the case of the LRA illustrates these prerequisites well.

In the West Nile District, the UNRF, led by Ali Bamuze, used rhetoric based on grievance to convince many West Nilers to join its cause. This rhetoric proved very effective, because the NRA's actions in Acholiland terrified West Nilers, who feared they too would



become victims of Museveni's repression. Throughout its rebellion, UNRF leadership insisted on minimising harm to civilians, and punished its fighters caught inflicting such harm. It eventually accepted peace terms in 2002 as part of wider demobilisation and disarmament efforts based on amnesty legislation meant to use community initiatives to convince rebels to leave the bush and return home peacefully. The WNBF under Juma Oris, by contrast, brutalised the civilians of West Nile, thereby sabotaging its own chances of success. The UPDF, under the pragmatic leadership of then-Colonel (later General) Katumba Wamala, successfully employed strategies and tactics analogous to those described by Galula's Four Laws against Oris' group. Katumba Wamala worked compassionately with the local population, which ensured their continued support for his COIN efforts, and he smashed the WNBF with maximal intensity using all available means whenever the opportunity arose. His rare brand of leadership exemplifies the style counterinsurgent leaders ought to emulate in their own campaigns, a style which allowed him to help UPDF leadership crush the WNBF by the end of 1998. The WNBF and UNRF insurgencies show the validity of the importance of ideological cause, and the "Four Laws in a 'Hot Revolutionary War'", as Galula described them.

Across three decades and three different insurgent conflicts in Uganda, David Galula's theories demonstrated their applicability. This thesis tested these theories using cases that included regional, ethnic, political, geographic, and religious motivating factors, suggesting that his works can be applied to a broad spectrum of insurgent conflicts. As such, his work provides a model which both civilian and military commanders can readily apply when planning both strategies and tactics for counterinsurgency operations.

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