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AND ITS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

By

Dan Mudoola

MAKERERE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

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COMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN THE MILITARY  
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By

Ian Mudoola



"Ugandans are a gentle people; they are law abiding - It is the Government which has staged a revolution against the people. Ugandans have not staged a revolution against the Government - But every human quality has a limit. There may come a time when the people of Uganda will be forced to stage a revolution - Do not misuse our army, do not misuse the police. Do not make them hate their own fathers, mothers and sisters -"

Martin A. Okello  
(M.P. West Nile and  
Madi Central) 1967.

On the eve of Independence and immediately thereafter, a euphoric atmosphere prevailed in Uganda. Uganda recovered Independence with all the trappings of constitutionalism. A constitution had been worked out, the result of protracted negotiations among the major political actors - the two major parties - the Uganda Peoples Congress, the Democratic Party - the Kingdom areas and Busoga, the districts and the retreating colonial power, the United Kingdom. The constitutional arrangements sought to work out political formulae for balancing the conflicting interests of the major political actors. These formulae were characterised by a periodically elected Parliament, a Cabinet drawn from and responsible to Parliament, federal and quasi-federal statuses for Buganda and the kingdom areas and Busoga respectively the powers of the major organs of government,

the civil service and the judiciary, were defined. On the first Independence anniversary the constitution was amended to provide for a ceremonial president to replace the Governor-General.

On the occasion of opening the first Independence Parliament the Queen's representative, the Duke of Kent, members of the coalition UPC-KY government and, to some extent, members of the Opposition were in a sanguine self-congratulatory mood. The Duke of Kent promised that his Government "would foster the spirit of tolerance and goodwill between all the peoples of Uganda - It would - pay due heed to the traditional beliefs and customs of the diverse peoples of Uganda. It would respect individual rights of the common man. It would recognise the special status and dignity of the Hereditary Rulers of the Kingdoms and of the Constitutional Heads of the Districts".<sup>2</sup> In equal measure, the Prime Minister, Apolo Milton Obote, believed that "traditional institutions would form a firm foundation upon which our newly independent state could be advanced."<sup>3</sup> The leader of the Opposition, Basil Bataringaya, however, cautioned against "tribalism and factionalism, our two most deadly enemies - and unless we can acquire - a sense of common purpose - we can never be sure that our future path will be entirely smooth".<sup>4</sup>

Within a space of less than four years another actor who had never been part of the political calculations leading to independence came to the scene. This was the Uganda Army. On the 25th January, 1964, there was an army

mutiny whose objectives were apparently limited; it was suppressed. In 1966, with an army purged of his opponents, Milton Obote overthrew the 1962 constitutional arrangements, chased out Sir. Edward Muteesa II, Kabaka of Buganda and President of Uganda, introduced an Interim Constitution, followed by the 1967 Constitution and ruled, basically with army support, until he was overthrown in the 1971 January coup. From 1971 to 1978, Idi Amin used the army as an instrument of rule until he was overthrown by a combination of Tanzanian and Ugandan forces. In spite of the misgivings about the activist role of the military in politics and some apparent efforts to define its place in the Uganda by National Liberation Front regimes, the Uganda Military has been actively involved in the Ugandan political processes. From 1981 until July, 1985, Uganda was embroiled in a Civil War, with the National Resistance army seeking to overthrow Obote. Under harassment from the NRA, Obote was overthrown by the Uganda National Liberation Army led by "The Okellos" who, in turn, were swept out by the National Resistance Movement.

The objective of this paper is to explain the circumstances that have given rise to the political activist role of the Ugandan Military. S.P. Huntington, in his incisive study, attributes the interventionist role of the military in the politics of changing societies to a state of political institutional normlessness, a situation in which there are no widely accepted and legitimate procedures for resolving conflicts, short of physical show of force. In such a situation social political forces are highly politicised.

and are all competing to advance interests peculiar to themselves through rules of the game they seek to dictate to other competing social political forces. The military dramatically enter the political arena simply because they happen to have the advantage of the means of coercion.

Writes Huntington:

"Each group employs means which reflect its peculiar nature and capabilities. The wealthy ambe; students riot workers strike, mobs demonstrate and the military coup. In the absence of accepted procedures, all these forms of direct action are found on the political scene. The techniques of military intervention are simply more dramatic and effective than the others because as Hobbes puts it 'when nothing else is turned up, clubs are trumps.'"

Huntington's model can go a long way to explain the circumstances that have led the Ugandan military to play a political activist role in the Ugandan political processes. The major argument of the paper is that the political activist role of the military in Uganda has been the result of failure on the part of successive Ugandan political leaderships to work out widely accepted institutionalized means of resolving conflicts by peaceful means.<sup>6</sup> Political leaderships operate within the formal rules only to the extent to which these rules tactically serve their interests and are only too ready to operate outside these rules when it serves their interests. The Ugandan military is not insulated from this institutionless arena. It became a political actor when competing socio-political forces, in a bid to tilt the balance in their favour, sought the support of the military. The result was that the Ugandan military, after independence, was built, expanded and equipped

in response to internal political cum military crises which, in turn, ultimately led to its nakedly activist role on its own terms.

The Uganda Military in the Making

On Independence day the presence of the Ugandan military was only marked by a few troops which took part in the ceremonies and by a young officer, Karugaba, who had recently passed out from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. Karugaba was the Aide-de-Camp to the Duke of Kent, the Queen's representative at the Independence ceremonies. At the time of Independence the Uganda Rifles, the successor to the colonial army, the King's African Rifles, consisted of only one battalion of about a thousand men, the greater majority of whom had been recruited from the then Northern Province, especially from Aoholi. The Rifles were, at the time of Independence, officered by British officers, seconded from their metropolitan units.

For its size and equipment, the Uganda Rifles had overwhelming tasks to perform. It was deployed to maintain law and order in various parts of the country where there were tensions arising from attempts at secession among the Bamba/Bakonjo from the Toro Kingdom, cattle rustling in Karamoja, and the spillover effects from the civil disturbances in the Congo, the Sudan and Ruanda.

It was in response to the above tasks and, probably for symbolic reasons, that the Ugandan leadership saw a need to expand and equip the Uganda Rifles. Initially, the expansion was characterised by goodwill from the

government and the opposition but also by some apparent caution with regard to expenditures involved and maintenance of "standards."<sup>7</sup> A programme for expansion of the army and training an officer corps was launched. In the budget for the financial year 1962/63, the army estimates were doubled in order "to meet the full cost of maintaining our First Battalion - for a full financial year" and in order to build another battalion in Moroto.<sup>8</sup> Provisions were made for establishment of a training wing at Jinja for officer cadets and arrangements were made with the British government to have Ugandans trained at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and the school for officer cadets at Mons, Aldershott. Already by mid-1963, according to Felix Onama, Minister of Internal Affairs, there were 28 Ugandan officers serving in the army and a further 30 were undergoing training.<sup>8A</sup>

There was goodwill all around to expand the army and train a Ugandan military officer corps. Onama's programme was endorsed by the Leader of the Opposition, who, however, felt uneasy about the alleged "highhandedness" of the expatriate officers with "other officers and the alleged political and regional considerations going into recruitment of the Ugandan officer corps in the making."<sup>9</sup>

But for all this programme of expansion and training, at this stage, the government appears to have been in no hurry to unduly fully Ugandanise the officer corps as is evidenced in the President's speech:

"The expansion of the Uganda Army continues to go ahead as planned- It is the government's hope that by the end of 1964 eight Company Commanders will be Ugandans and that by the end of 1965 two Battalion Commanders will be Ugandans. It will be seen that if this plan comes to fruition then the roles of those officers seconded to us from the British Armed Forces will gradually change and it is hoped that they will remain in an advisory capacity."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, according to the President, a Uganda Army fully commanded and officered by Ugandans would go according to the timetable which would take a couple of years from the date of the President's speech. But on the 25th January, 1965, the Government leaders were rudely jolted out of their timetable when men of the First Battalion at Jinja refused to obey orders ostensibly demanding pay increases and improvement in their conditions, generally. Details of what happened need not detain us here<sup>11</sup> but the significance of the mutiny lies in the government's reaction to the incident, their interpretation of the events and the politico-military consequences arising from the incident at Jinja.

The government immediately acted- approached the British government for military assistance to quell the mutiny<sup>12</sup>. The British government promptly sent a battalion from the Staffordshire Regiment who took control of the situation immediately on their arrival and disarmed the mutinous troops. Men of the Headquarters Company and A Company were dismissed. A Court-Martial was set up to try the ringleaders. By the 14th March, 1964, men of the Staffordshire Regiment were ready to go.



It now remained for the leadership to take a post-mortem of the January events. Abdala Anyuru introduced a motion in Parliament regretting the events in Jinja "but do note with great appreciation and satisfaction the promptness with which government dealt with the situation"<sup>13</sup>. The official interpretation is worth noting: The event had no political implications; it was an isolated incident involving men of the Headquarters Company and A Company who had gone on strike over pay and, therefore, their deplorable behaviour could not be generalised with respect to the Ugandan military as an institution<sup>14</sup>.

The occasion however, provided the members to air their views about their army with particular reference to their particular role and to the regional imbalance within the military. Martin Okello was not happy with the way the governing party had allegedly ingratiated itself with the military during the election preceding Independence, to which he attributed the unhappy events at Jinja.<sup>15</sup> Ali Kisekka was unhappy about the regional imbalance in the army favouring the Northern Region and in this he saw negative implications for nation-building.<sup>16</sup> But the Northern members were all out to defend the Doctrine of Ethno-Functionalism<sup>16A</sup> with particular reference to the military. For Lakidi:

"Some people are born to be good traders, some are born to be very good civil servants, some are born to protect this country - The North has been heavily accused that the recruitment is all the time going to the North. I think many people should be grateful to the North, and particularly to my tribe, Acholi. The Acholi have pledged themselves

to protect this country. If they are in the army they have got to be supported. - If people are beginning to speak in this House to discredit them - their morale in the army, the police and prisons would be lowered."<sup>17</sup>

In the aftermath of January events, the military gained more than they had bargained for. They obtained their pay rise. <sup>the</sup> At the time of the mutiny, "there had been 55 officers, including 2 majors and 14 captains and the rest Lieutenants."<sup>18</sup> Immediately after the mutiny, the command of companies was taken over by Ugandans. Seven months after the mutiny, there was a big promotion exercise in which nineteen Ugandan officers were promoted. Shaban Opolot was promoted to Brigadier and appointed Commander of the Uganda Army; Idi Amin was promoted to Colonel and made Deputy Commander. The rest were promoted to ranks ranging from Lieutenant Colonel to Temporary Major and Temporary Captain.<sup>19</sup>

It is worth noting that in the light of later subsequent complaints about a predominantly Northern officer corps, in this promotion exercise, ethnic representation appeared somewhat balanced: 6 Iteso, 3 Nubians, 4 Banyankore, 2 Banyoro, 3 "West Nilers" and 1 Langi.

What were the politico-military consequences of the mutiny? We have already noted that the government tended, at least in the public, to regard the mutiny generally as of limited consequence. The mutiny reflected the fragility of the politico-civilian institutions in the making; after the mutiny, inevitably, politicians had to take the military as part of their political calculations for survival; but there was no serious effort to work out political mechanisms for ensuring that civilian supremacy prevailed over the military.

During the critical January days, the actors in containing the mutiny were confined to Obote himself and a few cronies, the British government and officers and men of the Staffordshire regiment. The political parties had to content themselves with sending congratulatory messages after the event, and Parliament had "to note with appreciation and satisfaction with the way government had handled the situation". There had been no single civilian social political force to stand in the way of the mutineers. Obote had to swallow his pride and invite the erstwhile colonial power to protect the civilian institutions- hopefully.

In spite of all the appearances, the visibility of the military was not lost to the politicians. They had taken care not to condemn the military as an institution. The speeches in Parliament has been punctuated by words of gratitude to those who had remained loyal. This should have been the time for reflection to see how the role of the military could have been redefined in the now up-coming new nation state. In Tanzania after such similar events, the Tanzania government had taken steps to ensure that civilian supremacy was not questioned that easily. To demystify the monopoly of use of arms, national military service was introduced, the whole army, at least officially, was disarmed and disbanded, the new army was to be socialized and politicised into its new roles and it was made clear where, ultimately, legitimate power lay- within the ruling party.

In the Ugandan case, in civilian-military relations the leadership stuck to and invoked the simple Command-ObeY Model in which the military were an instrument of the state; it had to be disciplined and had a clear chain of command. But they had no idea how this could be operationalised. The absence of an official operational formula for domesticating the Uganda military meant that in their factional bid for power, groups would have to work out their own private agenda for politicising the military on their own terms, which, as we shall see, has had tragic consequences for the country.

Expansion equipping and training of the army proceeded uninterrupted between the years 1964 and 1970. In the course of six years four battalions were established- the First Battalion at Jinja, the Second at Moroto, the Third at Mubende and the Fourth at Mbarara. In addition, there were other formations. An Ordnance Depot was established at Magamaga; an Artillery Regiment and Signals Training Wing at Masindi. After the confrontation with Sir Edward Muteesa, the Malire Mechanised Specialist Reconnaissance Regiment was established in the former Kabaka's Palace in the centre of Kampala. This was an elite mobile regiment well equipped with Armoured Personnel Carriers, Shermans tanks and Recoilless guns. Brigade headquarters were established at Mbale for the First Infantry Brigade and at Masaka for the Second Infantry Brigade. A Training Wing for recruits and Senior NCOs was established at Jinja. A School for paratroopers was established at Lubiri. With the assistance of Israelis, an Airforce was established early in 1965.<sup>20</sup>

We should emphasise that this expansion and equipment of the army was basically a response to internal and border problems. At the height of the expansion, there were troubles in Karamoja, in the "Lost Counties", in the heartland, Buganda where a State of Emergency had been declared after the events of 1966. It is worth noting that some of these battalions were established in or near the epicentres of trouble- Mbarara close to Bakonjo/Bamba county; Mubende, in the "Lost counties"; Moroto, in Karamoja.

The consequences arising out of such a relatively large military establishment within so short a time are not hard to see. The army emerged as a highly visible institution and acquired a status it had never enjoyed before. The political leadership spoke of it eagerly and were only too ready to give it whatever it could afford.<sup>21</sup> This in turn must have generated into the army a creeping sense of functional indispensability. Ugandanisation of the officer corps had not quite gone according to the leaders' original timetable and as Felix Onama, Minister of Internal Affairs, had to admit. "Our Ugandan officers are, therefore, plunged into work and responsibility far larger than they could have expected in the normal course of army career".<sup>22</sup> Before the officer corps were drawn into the power struggles of the mid-1960s, they had not quite settled down to an esprit de corps which, hopefully, would have insulated them from political cross-pressures.

Political Crises - the 1966 Crisis

From 1964 onward, tensions erupted within the civilian political institutions that were to turn Uganda into a virtually institutionless arena, with groups ignoring the formally established rules and seeking to impose rules only they themselves understood. The period between 1962 and 1966 was one of apparent peace not necessarily because the leaders were committed to working within the formally established constitutional framework but simply because none of the leaders and the groups they represented felt strong enough to overthrow the rules of the game. There were already signs within a few months after Independence to show that groups would play game only to the extent their interests would be served. Addressing a press conference in April 1963, Obote said, "The Uganda Peoples Congress will never be dislodged from power by any mathematical manipulations."<sup>25</sup> What, if these mathematical manipulations were carried out according to the established constitutional rules? Obote was to provide the answers early in 1966.

Tensions which ultimately undermined constitutionalism arose from conflicting interpretations of Buganda's autonomy, conflicting interpretations of constitutional rules of the game; the "Lost Counties issue, and cleavages within the Uganda Peoples Congress, the ruling party. The sum total of all these crises was to undermine constitutionalism and bring the military into the political arena with contending political actors vying for support within the army.

The Uganda Peoples Congress alliance with the Kabaka Yekka had risen out of a desire on the part of the two parties to reap maximum advantages out of the alliance. Soon after forming the coalition government, there were conflicting interpretations of the constitution, with Buganda seeking to take over central government police stations in Buganda. With relations somewhat strained, the Buganda leadership believed they could play game by taking the central government to court and/or withdraw from the alliance, which provoked Obote into making the "no mathematical manipulations" statement already referred to above.

By October 1964, numerically, through "crossings" in parliament from the Democratic Party and Kabaka Yekka, Obote was strong enough to allow the plebiscite to take place in the "Lost Counties" of Buyaga and Bugangaidzi, to the extreme annoyance of the Buganda government. In the plebiscite the population voted for return of the counties to Bunyoro. The announcement of the results of the referendum was followed by the resignation of Michael Kintu's government at Mmengo and widespread rioting in Buganda. To contain the situation, Obote warned that "maximum force" would be used to quell any disturbances, which was literally interpreted by some men of the Special Force, a para-military organisation. At Nakulabye, in the suburbs of Kampala, Special Force men opened fire and killed an indeterminate member of people.

The Nakulabye massacre, as it has been called, is notable for a number of reasons. It marked the beginnings of use of naked force in the Uganda heartland. True, force had been used

in the troubled marginal areas - Toro, Karamoja and on the borders - but it had never been so close to Kampala. The incident also marked the beginnings of alienation between Buganda and the Obote government, which alienation was worsened by the provocative statements of Onama, the Minister of Internal Affairs and his overprotectiveness of the atrocious behaviour of the security forces in Buganda. Although a Commission of Inquiry was set up to investigate the Nakulabye massacre, relations between Buganda and the central government were never to be the same.<sup>24</sup> The UPC-KY alliance came to an end.

All had not well within the leadership of the Uganda Peoples Congress since the 1964 Gulu UPC Delegates Conference where the populist Secretary-General, John Kakonge was ousted and replaced by Grace Ibingira.<sup>25</sup> With the break up of the UPC-KY Alliance and massive "crossings" to the government party, numerically the UPC looked formidable, but within this were inherent seeds of instability. There emerged cleavages, mainly along regional lines. The anti-Obote supporters took advantage of a motion alleging that Obote, Colonel Idi Amin, Nekyon and Felix Onama had amassed wealth during Uganda/Congo border clashes to seek censure of the Obote administration. The motion was seeking a Commission of Inquiry into these allegations and suspension of the Army Commander Idi Amin, from duty. With the support of the UPC parliamentary group, the motion was passed.<sup>26</sup>

Clearly this was a revolt against Obote. In the normal course of events, strictly within the constitutional rules of the game, a number of courses of action were open to Obote,



namely, he could have dissolved Parliament and called for new elections to seek a new mandate, formed a new government pending new elections the date of which he would determine, called for an emergency UPC Delegates Conference to explain his case and thereby "corner" his opponents, or simply have awaited the outcome of the Commission of Inquiry. But Obote chose the perilous but apparently easier path by arresting and detaining his five ministers and the Commander of the Army, Shaban Opolot, suspending the 1962 Independence Constitution, declaring himself President, and introducing an Interim Constitution. The lone voice to react against all this was the Buganda government which called on him and his government "to remove themselves from Buganda soil". This provided Obote with a neat cassus belli - he sent troops to attack the Kabaka's Palace which he occupied after some fighting. Sir Edward Muteesa fled into exile. Buganda was declared a Disturbed Area.

Clearly, Obote was operating outside the established constitutional rules of the game. He had ignored the civilian institutions - he had not resolved the crisis within parliament, nor through the party. He was only able to do this because he had won the support of a faction within the army under its Commander Idi Amin. While the civilian political institutions were under strain through the cleavages we have outlined above, these cleavages spilled over into the army, with factions aligning themselves with their civilian counterparts. Before his arrest, Shaban Opolot was reported to be aligned along with some "Bantu" officers with Sir Edward Muteesa and the, by now, detained ministers.

Obote had moved fast to purge the army of suspect officers and won the full support of Idi Amin. Thus he was able, with critical army support, to resolve a basically constitutional issue by military means. The army had mounted the political stage.

Obote's Search for Legitimacy -

The way to the 1971 Coup.

After the defeat of Sir Edward Muteesa and his opponents within the party, Obote proceeded to define his own rules of the game. He drafted the 1967 Constitution and presented it to Parliament, whose options were severely circumscribed, for, to any casual observer, the military were the meaningful power behind the throne. Uganda was declared a Republic; monarchies were abolished; a Presidency of which Obote himself was the incumbent, was established; briefly, this was a unitary constitution.

With the defeat of his opponents, the party in disarray, and a cowed parliament, purely in naked physical power terms, Obote was at the height of his power. Dizzy with success, he told his parliament:

"Hon. Gentlemen, there is nothing to regret; what we have to deal with is clear. What we have is determination and in the Government we are determined - I have given you a full statement, it is up to you to give the necessary support. You have a big responsibility, all of us have a big responsibility. Some philosopher once said 'The midwife of an old society pregnant with old society pregnant with a new one is force'. It is my view that Buganda is an old society pregnant with a new one".<sup>27</sup>

In some sense, however, Obote was a prisoner of his own success, as normally happens in such situations. The politico-civilian institutions were either cowed or in disarray. The net effect of this success was to undermine the civilian political institutions which he so badly needed to legitimise his rule. Obote acquired a "Conqueror mentality"<sup>28</sup> reflected in his speeches, actions and actions of his troops occupying Buganda. The Kabaka's Palace (Lubiri) and the headquarters of the Buganda Lukiiko (Parliament) were regarded as war booty and were converted into barracks and army headquarters respectively, the latter to be renamed "Republic House". The atrocious behaviour of the troops in Buganda was a subject of bitter comments by Baganda members of Parliament, some of their relatives having been victims of such behaviour, but only to draw sarcastic barbed remarks from Mr. Onama, the Minister of Defence.<sup>29</sup>

For some two years Obote nursed the army as his critical power constituency. He took salutes at passing out parades, attended weddings of high ranking officers, witnessed army exercises and, <sup>of</sup> course, made speeches on these occasions. In a space of about one and a half years, Obote visited various military installations six times.<sup>30</sup> All these, in the normal course of events, would not have been out of the ordinary since he was the Commander in Chief, but they are telling in the context of the times we are discussing. His officers were well rewarded. In April 1968, Amin was promoted to Major-General and appointed Chief of Defence Staff and "Principal Military Adviser to the Cabinet and the Minister of Defence"; Colonel Suleiman Hussein and Colonel Pierino

Yere Okoya were promoted to Brigadier.<sup>31</sup> In general, the military were doted upon materially.

The net effect of introducing the new constitution by extra-legal means was a politico-institutional void which Obote, after his physical consolidation, recognised had to be filled. He must have realised that he was riding on the back of a tiger and had, therefore, somehow, to devise means of domesticating it by "re-organising" the Uganda Peoples Congress on his own terms, introducing formal politico-cultural norms to sustain him in power and by building counterveiling forces to neutralise the military.

We have already noted that immediately before and after the 1966 Crisis, the Uganda Peoples' Congress was in disarray. The major political question of the day had been solved by the sword. In 1968, Obote called a Delegates Conference, the first since 1964, and defined the rules on his own terms. From past experience, he realised that the party could provide an independent power base. He now sought to strengthen his hand over the party. At this conference, he was "re-elected" President of the Party for a seven-year term and was given the power to nominate officials who held office only at his pleasure.<sup>32</sup> In this way the party was dependent on Obote, not vice-versa. For the next three years, until he was overthrown, one cannot say that high policy decisions originated from party organs. The party simply served as a forum through which, policies worked out by Obote, were simply legitimised. It is worth noting that the Common Man's Charter and the accompanying Move To The Left documents had all been drafted outside the

party organs, and were then "debated on" and approved in the party fora. The critical nerve centre of power remained the army.

The introduction of the 1967 Constitution and abolition of the monarchies had left a politico-cultural void which had to be filled. There were even no formal politico-cultural values to sustain the formal political arrangements. For a political system to survive it cannot depend on show of physical force alone; it must be backed by a core of political values, at least, among the politically significant social forces. With his opponents in prison, or dead, or in exile, or sulky, Obote made some attempts to introduce documentary ideological bases for the new order in a political environment that was latently hostile. This he did by trying to identify the "enemies" and by introducing the Common Man's Charter and the attendant documents.<sup>33</sup>

We have already seen that the 1966 crisis had been sparked off by a revolt within the UPC leadership. Basically the crisis had been over Obote's leadership and his colleagues had been out to have him removed. In control of the mass media, the regime set about portraying the 1966 events as a revolution against forces of "Imperialism", "Feudalism" and in defence of the "Common Man". Sir Edward Muteesa was picked on as the bete-noir. The semi-official ideologue of the regime was Akena-Adoko, Head of the intelligence service, euphemistically called the General Service Unit. In his book, The 1966 Crisis he provided the ideological rationale for the "Revolution".<sup>34</sup>

The Common Man's Charter and the Move To the Left documents were supposed to herald a new political era in which the Common Man's interests were paramount, in which the gap between rich and poor would be narrowed, or closed altogether, and one in which there would be meaningful political participation. A theoretically ingenious formula for electing members of Parliament and the President was worked out.

The establishment and strengthening of the General Service Unit and the Special Force in the late mid-1960s were an apparent attempt to have them as countervailing forces to the military. Much as the army had been pampered, Obote was not quite too sure of them. Originally the General Service Unit had been set up as a "counter-espionage" organisation, especially to watch over the activities of foreign missions. But as the internal political crises intensified, its activities became increasingly domestic. The members of the service were trained in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Israel. The Special Force had been built under colonial rule to handle domestic problems too big for the police to handle. After Independence, as domestic problems became more intense, the Special Force was expanded and equipped in military fashion. The building up of the General Service Unit and the Special Force was not easily lost to the military. With a subdued Buganda and without any active or potential power centres to challenge Obote's rule, the military must have come to very uncomfortable conclusions. In the last two years before the 1971 coup, relations between the General Service Unit and the Special

Force on the one hand and the military on the other were strained. Immediately after the January 1971 coup, members of the General Service Unit and Special Force were rounded up and the organisations were disbanded.

These attempts to reorganise the party, to introduce new political formulae and build countervailing forces to neutralise the military did not go far to regularise the Obote rule and make it less dependent on the army. This failure may be attributed to a latently hostile or apathetic political environment, to the highly personalised civilian institutional arenas for handling conflicts and the power struggle shift from civilian to military institutions.

In spite of his physical military victory over Buganda, Obote never quite made any political inroads into Buganda. The Baganda remained subdued, bitter and sulky. Until the 1971 coup, Buganda was in a State of Emergency. And this is the economically, culturally and politically strategic heartland of the country. Because Buganda was either politically demobilized or subdued, this left the legitimacy of the Obote regime rather tenuous. Professor Ginyera-Pinyowa, lamenting the quarrel between Obote and Amin to which he partially attributes the January 1971 coup, does not see any correlation between the political marginalisation of the Baganda and the coup.<sup>35</sup> True, the Baganda had been disarmed, but the state of Emergency in Buganda made Obote more unduly dependent on the army for fear of domestic upheavals and this, in turn, generated within the military a sense of politico-functional indispensability and relegated the crucial importance of civilian political

institutions as legitimizing instruments into the background. The way the Baganda cheered Amin immediately after the coup helped to legitimise the Amin coup domestically and internationally.

The political organs within the ruling party and Parliament had been either so personalised or cowed that no meaningful resolution of political conflicts could have taken place. The ascendancy of the military could have been contained if the institutions had been meaningfully strengthened, but strengthening of civilian institutions, would in themselves, have undermined Obote's power position. Meaningful power struggles shifted from civilian political institutions to the military. Here, Obote was placed at a tremendous disadvantage in that this arena was too closed to him to freely operate. He had left two of his closest supporters, Onama and Amin too long in strategic positions. As relations between Amin and Obote soured, other institutional civilian social forces simply helplessly assumed spectators' roles. Probably Obote would have saved himself if he had played the game Marshall Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev had played on Marshall Zhukov that is, the hero should have been removed precisely at the height of his success.<sup>36</sup>

Tensions within the military, tensions which culminated into the January, 1971 coup, arose from inter-service rivalries, generational cleavages within the officer corps, polarisations within the military along ethnic lines and clumsy attempts on the part of Obote to have Amin neutralised in the army. We have already touched on the rivalries between the Special Force and the General Service Unit on



the one hand and the army on the other. The strengthening of the General Service Unit and Special-Force simply alienated some elements within the army further.

As the army became more functionally complex, there was a need to recruit and train officers with a relatively higher education. There were some signs that some of these younger men were increasingly coming closer to command positions. Tensions within the officer corps between the relatively well educated officers and officers from the ranks were common knowledge at the time. Coupled with this was the polarisation within the army along ethnic lines. By the late 1960s there were signs that Obote was seeking to build a smaller and more reliable, hopefully, base among the Acholis and Langis as evidenced by the strategic command positions officers from these groups held and the elite units the men manned. Amin responded by carrying out recruitments of his own and by surrounding himself with officers he could trust.<sup>37</sup> There then followed the mysterious murder of Brigadier Okoya and death in a car "accident" of Lieutenant-Colonel Omoya.

In late 1970, Obote took advantage of Amin's absence to carry out promotions within the army, which promotions left no doubt that Amin was on the way out. At this stage, with the army highly polarised, it was a question of who struck first. While Obote was away in Singapore, attending the Commonwealth Heads of State Conference, Idi Amin staged his coup d'etat.

In the light of the processes by which the military acquired visibility and assumed a nakedly activist role in

Ugandan politics, we may argue that the Amin coup and the policies he pursued after the coup, pushed to a logical conclusion trends set by Obote, which increasingly rendered political institutions for resolving conflicts powerless. By the time Amin assumed power, they were so fragile that it needed a simple announcement to have them banned. Party political activities were suspended, and Parliament was dissolved, and in the next eight years, until he was overthrown, all institutions - civilian and military - were subjected to the dictates of Idi Amin.<sup>38</sup>

The Amin regime lasted some nine years and yet it did not operate through institutions for resolving conflicts short of use of force or terror. Terror was used as an instrument of domestic policy. Again, this pushed to a logical conclusion a precedent set by Obote when he used the army as an instrument of domestic policy. True, Obote was relatively more sophisticated to give his courses of action some semblance of legitimacy through formal organs of the party and government.

#### The Military in the Post-1979 Regimes

The removal of Idi Amin did not relegate the military in the background. After all, he had been removed by military means - by a combination of the Tanzanian Peoples Defence Force and Ugandan troops. We shall only discuss the politics of the Uganda National Liberation <sup>Front</sup> and the Obote regime to the extent that the military influenced the politics.<sup>39</sup> In these regimes, the military was virtually the king-maker until, with the coming in of the "Okellos", the kingmaker

became king. Yusufu Lule and Godfrey Binaisa were removed partly because they had alienated the kingmakers and Milton Obote reassumed the Presidency mainly with the support of the Military Commission. The orchestrated December, 1980 elections were simply meant to legitimise the de facto State of Affairs.

After the 1978/79 "Kagera War", Ugandan leaders were highly ambivalent towards the Military. With the defeat of Idi Amin's army, there was some chance for redefinition of the role of the military in the newly "liberated" country. On the one hand they saw the military as the most effective instrument in the removal of Idi Amin and as a critical factor in the power struggles that ensued; on the other they saw the military as a monster that could swallow them if they did not, somehow, try to domesticate it. As liberating instrument, the new Uganda National Liberation Army enjoyed a honeymoon relationship with the leaders and civilians alike. As a critical factor in the ensuing power struggles, the army was the object of ingratiating attention from various political forces. Hence, such labels as "Museveni's", "Obote's" and "Muwanga's soldiers were freely bandied out.

The Ugandan leaders' attitudes towards the military as a liberating instrument, as a critical factor in the power game, and then as a monster that had to be domesticated were highly contradictory. Factional vying for support within the military implied a sense of political helplessness and hopelessness in the absence of viable civilian political institutions to contain the military. Under the UNLF, steps were taken in an apparent effort to subordinate the military

to civilian control. The general thinking among some of the the UNLF Leadership was that a future Ugandan military monster could only be prevented from emerging if efforts were made to strengthen the UNLF as an organisation by: proportional ethnic representation in the new army, having a literate army with an educated officer corps, representation of the military in the UNLF organs and Parliament, politicising the army and building a peoples' militia as a counter-veiling force.

The tentative steps or ideas to domesticate the new army either generated hostility from various political forces or were introduced into an environment that completely misunderstood the ideal objectives of such steps or ideas. The apparent assumption behind strengthening the UNLF vis a vis the military was that the army could only be neutralised if there was a strong civilian organisation. But, as we have discussed elsewhere,<sup>40</sup> factions within the UNLF had little in common beyond the label. Proportional ethnic representation was Lule's idea.<sup>41</sup> His opponents were quick to point out that, since Buganda and the Southern areas generally are numerically powerful, these areas would have come out at greater numerical advantage and that this was a blatant way of one group establishing hegemony over the army. The area that would have been most adversely affected, if Lule's ideas had been implemented, would have been the North generally, and Acholi and Lango specifically. And this inevitably would have entailed a change in the balance of military and political power, for which the Northern leadership were not prepared! Henry Makmoot clearly echoed

these fears in the National Consultative Council and invoked the Doctrine of Ethno-functionalism:

"-There are tribes which are much, much bigger than others; so you could expect about half of the army coming from that tribe or the tribe which is more fortunate or tribes which are related - And in Uganda - I stressed this when I contributed to this debate much earlier in May/June - that there are sections of the population who just cannot fight even if they are soldiers. (Interjections). And I will stress this that there is evidence to that effect. Even in the recent fighting there is evidence that some people just could not stand fires (Sio). This I am stressing because practice is different from theory"<sup>42</sup>

The search for a literate army and an educated officer corps was a response to the low levels of literacy and education in the Amin army and its officer corps, respectively, to which some leaders attributed the bestiality of Amin's army. Of course, opposition to this proposal, muted as it was, was based on particularistic considerations. Political groups, making a rush for support within the army and seeking to establish their bases within, could not have had education and general literacy as important criteria, particularly if they considered them politico-military disadvantages. Certainly, Lule earned the active hostility of the predominantly Northern core of the UNLF who had marched from the Uganda/Tanzania border. Again, implementation of the educational criteria would have entailed a change in the politico-military balance of power to the disadvantage of the Northern leadership.

The UNLF leaders in Moshi saw that they had to come to grips with reality by recognising the UNLA in the making

as an interest group. Not only would interests peculiar to the military be taken care of by military representatives, but military representation would also enable the military to participate in the decision-making processes in the top civilian organs. But this was simply an ideal. In the factional power struggles that ensued within the UNLF and UNLA, the military representatives inevitably identified themselves with factions or parties they supported. In Obote's bid for power, critical elements within the Military Commission clearly demonstrated where their sympathies lay by supporting Obote.

Politicisation of the military and establishment of a peoples' militia were Museveni's ideas, when he was Minister of Defence. In his policy paper, submitted to the National Consultative Council, he argued for a politicised army and a peoples' militia on the grounds that all armies are, in any case, political and that a peoples' militia was one of the surest guarantees for domestic stability, security and democratisation of the instruments of coercion, all of which would make it difficult for any adventurer to hold the population to ransom by staging a coup d'etat.<sup>43</sup>

Given the factional politics of the UNLF and the fragmented nature of the UNLA, Museveni's ideas of a politicised army and a peoples' militia were a little too advanced. True, his ideas were supported in the National Consultative Council, but expressions of support were simply declarations of intention and were not any closer to the political and military realities prevailing at the time. The underlying

assumption of a politicised army is that there is either a hegemonic party or a residual consensus of internalised political ideas which can be inculcated, hold the military as an institution together, and that the military is ready, as a result, to accept the supremacy of civilian political institutions. In the case of a peoples' militia, where this was implemented, especially in Acholi, the militia were simply personal followers of individuals or factions and were sources of instability as events were later to prove.<sup>44</sup>

That efforts by the UNLA to domesticate the military had miserably failed was illustrated by the assumption of power by the Military Commission, whose political sympathies, as we have seen, lay with the Obote UPC. The military were, thus, able to demonstrate that they still had the veto power to determine which rules were preferable to it.

On his second assumption of power, Obote found himself in the same old trap, the same trap which ultimately had led to his downfall, namely, having to use the military as his critical basic constituency. True, he had assumed power through appearances of an election which his party had "won", but the critical power behind the throne was the military. The Uganda Peoples Congress continued to simply play the functions of legitimisation as it had done before the 1971 debacle.

Within a few months of his assumption of office, he was saddled with a guerrilla war of attrition in mainly the strategic heartland of Buganda. In his second struggle for power, he tried the strategy of encirclement of Buganda, a strategy which had paid off well in his first bid for power

during the early 1960s.<sup>45</sup> As a result of this successful strategy, Buganda had been forced to break out of the encirclement by seeking an alliance with the UPC, an alliance at the time tactical, but which turned out to be disastrous for Buganda and, eventually, for Uganda. But the Buganda of the 1980s was radically different from that of the 1960s. Surrounded as they were during and immediately after the December, 1980, elections, to break out of the encirclement, the Baganda were not prepared to seek a parley with Obote. They sought to break out of the encirclement by armed uprising led by various groups, the most prominent of which, it turned out, was the National Resistance Movement led by Yoweri Museveni. Obote swallowed the bait by seeking a military solution to the uprising which, with the advantage of hindsight, turned out to be a disaster for Obote, because the 1980s were different from the mid-1960s when Obote depended basically on the military to rule.

The 1980s were different for a number of reasons. Firstly, force was too dispersed for him to use it effectively as an instrument of domestic policy; secondly, for all the appearances of elections, legitimacy was too tenuous in the strategic heartland; thirdly, his clumsy attempts to build the army as a critical basic constituency boomeranged; fourthly, resources were too scarce to be allocated to his friends and enemies in civilian life and the army to be of political utility; and, fifthly, the guerrilla war had such a heavy toll on his military supporters that this led to polarisations within the military, which culminated into the July, 1985 coup.



drove to take Kampala on a broad Saturday morning, on the 27th July 1985.

Conclusion: The "Okellos" and The NRM Victory

In this paper we have argued that the political visibility and eventual activist role of the military in Uganda have been the result of failure on the part of Uganda leaders to build institutions capable of domesticating civil conflicts, but have chosen to build the military in response to internal politico-military crises. With the institutional vacua that were created by Obote and Amin, the military assumed such roles that it could either play king-maker or play king. The coming in of the Okellos in July, 1985, created a highly polarised politico-military situation in which the antagonistic politico-military forces, the Okellos and NRM, appeared so evenly balanced that Uganda appeared well set for a prolonged civil war.

The Nairobi Peace Talks which dragged on for some four months arose partly out of a realisation on the part of the contending forces that, for the time being, they could not dictate terms and partly in order for the antagonistic forces to mobilise resources for a final showdown. With forces apparently evenly balanced, and without a formula to regulate relations between them, the Nairobi Peace Talks were aimed at working out some kind of modus operandi but the terms of the peace accord which was eventually signed were so complicated for the contracting parties and involved so much give and take that none of the groups, in the circumstances prevailing, could, any way, have adhered to it.

The Nairobi Peace Talks gave time to the two parties to prepare for a final showdown. In their pronouncements and their actions the Okellos demonstrated that, if given a chance, they would prefer a showdown and dictate their own terms. They effected political and military appointments designed to keep the NRM out, they sought alliances with military groups that were hostile to the NRM and carried large scale mobilisation. The NRM and their military arm, NRA, were not caught napping. They also used the Nairobi Peace Talks to internationalise their message, carry out large scale mobilization and extend their control of areas. By the end of December, 1985, they were poised on the outskirts of Kampala.

There are a number of implications arising out of the NRM victory, which implications are likely to have a strong bearing on civilian-military relations and the building of political institutions. The armed uprising was a reaction against the use of the military as an instrument of domestic policy, dating back to 1966; the movement grew because of a politico-military symbiotic relationship between the National Resistance Army and the civilian population; and the NRM victory has exploded the myth of "martial Tribes", a myth propagated by the colonialism and echoed by the Odas, the Lakiidis and the Maknots, and marked a shift in the balance of politico-military power from marginal groups to the strategic heartland groups.

Throughout this paper we have seen that the military has been a critical actor in political developments in country, since 1966 and this eventually provoked an armed

uprising from the population. Martin Okello's prophecy has been fulfilled. The movement succeeded because the civilians among whom the movement took roots realised it was, ultimately, in their physical interest to support the guerrilla movement. This early symbiotic relationship then may provide bases for an integrated civilian - military relationship. This may change the role of the military which, hitherto, had been predatory. Coupled with this, the NRM victory has wrested monopoly of the use of force from marginal groups in whose interest it was not to build viable political institutions.

The result may be then a situation in which there is a balance of socio-politico-military forces, a situation in which no one group will feel confident to dictate terms because it has monopoly of the means of coercion. Such a situation augurs well for building viable civilian political institutions for domesticating conflict. The experience of the last twelve months, since the NRM assumed power, has shown that the National Resistance Movement also realise that, in the final analysis, they cannot dictate terms and are in the process of working out a formula that can accommodate conflicting interests. Stability will depend on a realisation by conflicting socio-politico-military forces that use of coercion in settling domestic conflicts is self-defeating, as Obote has, hopefully, learnt at the cost of his "throne".

FOOTNOTES

1. Uganda Parliamentary Debates (Henceforward Hansard), Vol.71, 1967-1968. Government Printer Entebbe. Page 163.
2. Hansard, Vol.1, 1962-63, Government Printer, Entebbe, P.2.
3. Ibid. P.3.
4. Ibid. P.34.
5. Huntington, Samuel, P. Political Order in Changing Societies, Yale University Press, 1968. Page 196.
6. For a more detailed discussion of the problems of institutionalisation in Uganda, see Dan Mudoola, "Post-Colonial Politics in Uganda - An Interpretation" in Mawazo Vol.6, No.2, December, 1985.
7. Hansard Vol.14, 1962-63. Pages 663-4.
8. Ibid.
- 8A. Hansard, Vol.14 Pages 664.
9. Hansard Vol.18, 1962-63 Pages 402-3
10. Hansard, Vol.19, 1963-64. Page 6.
11. For details, as officially given, see the debate on a motion introduced by Abdalla-Anyuru in Hansard, Vol.23 1963-64. Pages 861-989.
12. Ibid. See Obote's version of events, pages 938-39.
13. Ibid. Page 861-862.
14. Ibid. Obote's Speech.
15. Ibid. Okello's speech, Page 887.
16. Ibid. Ali Kisakka's speech, P.954.
- 16A. For an elaboration of this concept see Dan Mudoola, "Post-War Politics in Uganda," Paper given to the Conference on Crises of Development in Uganda, Copenhagen, Denmark, 25th-28th December, 1985.
17. Hansard Vol.23, Lakidi's speech, P.P. 959-60
18. Ibid. Obote's speech, page 934.

19. Uganda Argus, 9th September, 1964.  
Among those promoted was a Lieutenant Oyite-Ojok to "Temporary Captain." Incidentally at the height of Oyite-Ojok's military "triumphs", the mass media reported him as "Sandhurst trained" but according to the Uganda Argus, 22nd November, 1963, he was trained at the Mons Officer Cadet School, Aldershot. He appears in a group photograph, in the Argus issue, with Katabarwa Matovu, J.E. Ebitu, Z. Ariko, B.M. Ekiring, E.B. Kamara, B.J. Kisira, and S.E. Lukakanwa.
20. For all this information on these military formations, I am grateful to Major Gideon Lusweswe, formerly Deputy Quartermaster-General, Uganda Army.
21. In materially relative terms, compared to their civilian counterparts, the life of Ugandan officers in the 1960s was one of comfort and it was "trendy" for society Ugandan girls to marry young Lieutenants, Captains and even Brigadiers, although there were too few to go around.
22. Hansard Vol. 28, 1963-64. Page 2060.
23. Uganda Argus, 12th, April, 1963. Obote addressing a press conference in Kampala.
24. For more details about and reaction to the Nakulabye Massacre, see Hansard, Volumes 41, 42 & 43.
25. For a comprehensive overview of the UPC as a party in government see, Mujaju, Akiiki, B. "The Role of the UPC as a Party in Government" in Canadian Journal of African Studies, Vol.10, No.3, 1977.
26. Hansard, Vol.58, 1965-66. Pages 995-1046, for details of "The Ocheng Motion".
27. Hansard, Vol.60, 1966-67. Page 59.
28. I am grateful to Professor Akiiki Mujaju for this concept which neatly sums up the attitudes of Ugandan rulers towards their "target" Groups.
29. For example, have a look at his reactions during the Debate on the Nakulabye Incident. Op.cit.
30. For example, note his visit to Mbarara barracks, reported in Uganda Argus, 18th July, 1966; to Gulu Army barracks, 27th August, 1966;

to Arua. "to attend the wedding of the Army Chief of Staff, Col. Amin", to Kabamba Army Training School, in Uganda Argus, 26th March, 1968; his visit to Karamoja, "inspecting recruits" 9th April, 1966; visit to Army Headquarters, 13th April, 1968; address to Airforce Personnel at Gulu Airbase, 6th May, 1968.

31. Uganda Argus. 10th, September, 1964.
32. Also see, Gingyera-Pinyowa, Appolo Milton Obote and His Times Nok-Publishers, 1978. Pages 56-66.
33. The Move to the Left Documents were: The Common Man's Charter, Nakivubo Pronouncements, and the National Service Proposals.
34. Akena-Adoko, 1966 Crisis. Published by Milton Obote Foundation.
35. Gingyera-Pinyowa Op.oit. See especially pages 231-245.
36. On his return to the Soviet Union, after commanding Soviet Forces in Germany, Zhukev was immediately relegated into the background by Stalin, but later, Krushchev recalled him from oblivion to be Minister of Defence. During Krushchev's struggle for power in the Central Committee of the party, Zhukev made his tanks conveniently available in and around Moscow in support of his patron, who immediately after his problems accused Zhukev of "Bonapartist" tendencies and removed him from office.
37. Some of these officers took care to keep Amin informed of domestic developments and his impending arrest while he was away in Egypt to attend Nasser's funeral and provided him with a strong military escort from Entebbe Airport where he arrived from Egypt, unannounced. Among the escort were Major L. Ozi (later to be his Chief of Intelligence) and Mustapha Idris (later to be his Chief of Staff and Minister of Defence).
38. There is now substantial literature on the Amin regime among which are: Lofchie, M. "The Uganda Coup: Class Action by the Military" in Journal of African Studies, Vol.10, No.1, 1972 Twaddle, M. "The Amin Coup" in Journal of Commonwealth and Comperative Politics.  
  
Southall, A. "General Amin and the Coup" JMS, Vol.13, No.1, 1975. Martin, David, General Amin. Kyemba, H. The State of Blood. Mazmui, A. Soldiers and Kinsmen.

39. On the politics of the UNLF, See Mudoola, Dan, "Post-War Politics-" Op.cit.
40. Ibid.
41. National Consultative Council Debates, Vol.I (Unpublished). See President Lule's speech to the National Consultative Council, on the 22nd May, 1979.
42. National Consultative Council Debates, Vol.4 (Unpublished). Makot's speech, page 755.
43. National Consultative Council Debates. Vol.3 (Unpublished), Museveni's speech, pages 684-692.
44. The Acholi militia men among Tito and Bazilio Okello's group which swept on to Kampala on the 27th July, 1985!
45. Also see, Mudoola, Dan, "Post-War Politics-". Op.cit.
46. For this information, I am grateful to a colleague who was well placed to follow these events.

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