

APPENDIX 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been undertaken to analyse the conflict in northern Uganda. *The Anguish of Northern Uganda*, a US inter-agency report written by conflict expert Robert Gersony in 1997, is arguably the most widely cited analysis of the war. Gersony provides a detailed history of rebellion in the north and in most cases shows a balanced, complex understanding of the conflict through his over 300 interviews across the north and in Kampala. Its comprehensiveness in both examining the origins of the different rebel groups and making concrete, well-researched suggestions for ending the war is impressive. However, several weaknesses prevent the report from being the authoritative account it purports to be. First, the report fails to present the perspectives or quotes of insiders to the conflict. Its many generalisations, such as “the population still fears Kony”²⁸⁷, leave the reader wondering about the sources of evidence for such conclusions. Second, while the analysis on the causes of the first UPDA and Holy Spirit Movement rebellions is generally lucid, the author does not go into any depth about the motivations or interests – the “whys” – of the LRA. The report often implicitly assumes the LRA to be a political insurgency – e.g. in recommending similar peacemaking strategies to the political UPDA and UPA rebellions²⁸⁸ – while at the same time arguing that the group is “strikingly devoid of political content.”²⁸⁹

Finally, Gersony at certain points reveals an evident pro-NRM leaning. For example, by emphasising military humiliation, the loss of government power and the Acholi guilt associated with the Luwero Triangle massacres as the causes of the conflict (and ignoring crucial factors such as Kony’s revenge on an unsupportive Acholi population), Gersony falls into the trap of equating the current repressive rebellion with the previous popular insurgencies. His presentation of only “straw men” critiques of the government’s “protected villages” displacement policy, failing to mention more substantive points about large-scale land development plans or the creation of Acholi dependencies on the government, further reveals such a bias.

“Kony’s Message: A New Koine?” is a strong analysis by Belgian academics Ruddy Doom and Koen Vlassenroot, which examines the history, root causes,

and motivations of the parties to the conflict in northern Uganda. The root causes are identified as (1) the traditional north-south divide, with the Acholi branded by the British as “traditional warriors” (a notion later debunked by Professor Mazrui) and used as a labour reserve for sugarcane, tea, and some cotton plantations in the south; (2) the militarisation of politics, with Idi Amin’s atrocities against the Acholi in the early 1970s and Obote’s Luwero Triangle massacres in the early 1980s as two key developments. The article details the history of the conflict, beginning with the “misbehaviour” of NRA and Baganda FEDEMU troops (the latter “organised massacres in 1986”), then moving to the formation of the UPDA with ex-Amin supporters in Juba, Sudan later that year and describing Lakwena as a visionary leader. This is where Kony came in – a school dropout and former gang member involved in petty thievery, who was rejected by Alice and Fr Severino as being impure – and began terrorising the population. The authors’ description of Kony is interesting – as someone who was rejected as a community leader, but possessing a “mesmerizing voice” and his own “mix of political entrepreneurship, personal frustration, and warlordism”.²⁹⁰ Doom and Vlassenroot’s analysis of the LRA’s motivations is probing, examining how the brutal violence gives power and self-confidence to desperate field commanders by instilling fear into others and making them passive objects. An alternative explanation – that Kony wants to bring a new, “purified” order to Acholi, using the youth he abducts as blank slates for his “cleansed” indoctrination – is original, albeit a bit out of the box. Unfortunately, the study ends with a rather superficial treatment on the international dimensions, but this does little to detract from the authors’ previous analytical achievements.

The hidden war, the forgotten people, launched by Makerere University’s Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPEC) in October 2003, analyses the war as an act of long-standing ethnic vengeance against northerners by the NRM government, asserting that “the war in Acholi was caused by bad government actions against the Acholi population.”²⁹¹ It cites Museveni’s formative days with the “ethnic-based” FRONASA in Tanzania²⁹² (made up of mainly western Ugandans), as well as “the strategy of ethnic cleansing embarked on by the NRM/A” against the Acholi before the Luwero Triangle massacres because of what the NRM leadership viewed as the latter’s looting of the national cake.²⁹³ However, the scant evidence provided does not back up the report’s bold assertions sufficiently: Museveni’s interview with *Drum* magazine in 1985, which is ambiguously anti-northern and pro-democratic, a single interview with an unidentified “key informant” that the conflict was a war of revenge against the Acholi, and inconclusive descriptions of the NRM’s alliances with Yusuf Lule’s UFM/A and Moses Ali’s UNRF²⁹⁴ as somehow

cementing the anti-northern hatred.²⁹⁵ While the evidence to back up the ethnic theory may be weak, it is people's *perceptions* that matter most in a peace process. As will be outlined below, a wide majority of northerners interviewed suspect such a theory to be true (if not believe it altogether), and therefore the ethnic explanation must be granted attention as part of a national reconciliation process or "hearts and minds" campaign.

Peace strategies

Ugandan independent analyst Barney Afako surveys a spectrum of peace efforts that have been tried over the past sixteen years, including several Ugandan government initiatives, various northern religious and traditional leaders' attempts, and limited international efforts.²⁹⁶ Several lessons drawn by Afako are relevant today. First, both community (religious, traditional and others) and military leaders must be closely involved in any peace process, as these crucial figures can mobilise support for (or against) peace efforts among their powerful constituencies. Furthermore, a demilitarised zone designed to cool tensions and build confidence may be a model for future peace initiatives, as the exploratory talks in the zone set up in 2001 at Awoo Nyim led to considerable cooperation from the LRA. Unfortunately, the report does not go into detail about the substance of the unsuccessful talks, so that the reader is left with little idea as to what the LRA actually wants out of negotiations. One area of further research would be to glean lessons from how Uganda's many other insurgencies since 1986 were ended, which may provide important parallels for today's conflict with the LRA. Gersony argues that peace negotiations hold the way forward for ending the conflict, agreeing with Afako that these should be conducted directly between the two parties, as the "mediation of third parties, including the diplomatic community, would more likely encumber than facilitate a successful outcome."²⁹⁷ However, his analysis is unfortunately unconvincing, as he fails to outline the substance of such talks and thus there is no evidence for how they would address the LRA's (or Kony's) seemingly non-political interests.