

WARID: Uganda (LRA) 1986-1991
STARDATE: 26 November 1986
ENDDATE: 31 December 1991¹
Related cases: Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo (AFDL) 1996-1997
Democratic Republic (DR) of the Congo (RCD) 1998-2004
DR Congo (MLC) 1998-2002
DR Congo (CNDP) 2006-2009
Sudan (SPLA, NDA) 1983-2004
Uganda (ADF) 1996-2002
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Reviewers: Kevin Dunn, Klaus Schlichte

Conflict overview

When President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) came to power in 1986 – ousting the government of Tito Okello that had been dominated by Northern Ugandan ethnic groups –, several rebellions started in Acholiland, Northern Uganda. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a quasi-religious ethnic armed group led by Joseph Kony, had been active since 1987 and came to be the most persistent rebel movement in Uganda. Kony built up his rebel army largely from the defunct Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), which had been led by Alice Lakwena. Alice, a young Acholi woman, claimed that she was a medium of the Holy Spirit Lakwena who had ordered her to purify the Acholi people and save them from oppression. She led an army onto Kampala, but the HSMF was crushed in November 1987. Together with a few followers, she fled into Kenya. Kony –

1 Our two reviewers were not unanimous concerning the end of the war. While one did not take issue with claiming the end of the war to be 1991, the other strongly opposed, maintaining that it has continued to this day. Indeed, we must highlight that the LRA never disappeared and the conflict was never resolved; rather, the LRA rather shifted its attention away from Uganda and towards Southern Sudan in 1992, before returning to Northern Uganda with renewed strength in 1994. This shows that, in 1991, the conflict dynamics shifted significantly. For instance, the Sudanese government started its support for the rebel movement when it sought refuge there and employed it against the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Furthermore, peace negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the LRA started in 1993, leading to a cease-fire agreement between the LRA and the Ugandan army on 2 February 1994, only to collapse a few days later. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), which serves as the basis for determining our sample of civil wars, records a sharp dip in the number of deaths after 1991; for 1992 and 1993 it lists no deaths in this conflict (for more details, see footnote 5). Being aware that this decision might seem highly problematic to some, we nevertheless decided to assess the end to the war to be 1991, with a renewed outbreak in 1994, thereby keeping the case within our sample.

allegedly the cousin of Alice – claimed to continue her struggle, creating the Holy Spirit Movement II (HSM), which later became the LRA.²

A deep north-south divide has run through Uganda since colonial times, leaving the northern population marginalized and underdeveloped. Although the LRA reiterated these grievances and made itself out to be the advocate of Acholi in some pronouncements, the insurgents' demands remain unclear. For one, several such alleged LRA manifestos are likely not genuine. Moreover, the LRA heavily targets their own fellow Acholi, whom they claim to fight for. Kony has repeatedly stated the goal of purifying the Acholi population and installing a Ugandan State ruled by God's Ten Commandments; apart from that, he has voiced no consistent political aims. Thus, it is unclear whether his political aims were limited to Uganda's north or aimed at toppling the regime in Kampala.³ The LRA made use of guerilla tactics and conducted strategically important raids on army posts, though it also targeted civilians and abducted children as new recruits. The NRA commenced its counter-insurgency offensive in mid-1989. On 31 March 1991, the NRA's Operation North started with the clear aim of severing the link between the LRA and the local population and annihilating the rebels. To this end, a state of emergency was declared in Acholiland. The operation was accompanied by massive human rights violations by the NRA that generated popular resentment against the NRM/A. Indeed, the operation caused a significant increase in civilian casualties due to both the NRA/M's brutality and the LRA's retaliation against government-sponsored civilian militias such as the 'Bow and Arrow Groups' (Refugee Law Project 2004: 43). The army forced civilians into protected camps, reinforcing the humanitarian crisis. After 1991, the LRA's activity in Uganda decreased significantly, as the rebel group retreated into Southern Sudan. Peace negotiations eventually started in 1993 but collapsed in 1994, causing a renewed outbreak of violence.⁴

As there was a radical drop in the level of violence after 1991, we assess that the war ended on account of low intensity, in accordance with the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)

2 He was joined by combatants of the Ugandan People's Democratic Army (UPDA). The UPDA had fought the Museveni government but concluded a peace deal in 1988. However, those who refused the peace joined Kony's HSM. Additionally, the HSM abducted several former UPDA soldiers and integrated them into their ranks. The HSM was renamed numerous times, first into Lord's Salvation Army, then the United Democratic Christian Force, and finally the Lord's Resistance Army (Doom 1999: 16-22).

3 As a result, we cannot be sure whether the Ugandan state as a whole or only Acholiland ought to be considered the disputed territory. We will settle for the whole of Uganda, as the LRA's claim to have Uganda governed in accordance with the Ten Commandments seems to be aimed at the government in Kampala. We must admit, however, that the 1987-1991 rebellion remained confined to Acholiland. In later years, when the war broke out anew, LRA activities expanded to eastern Uganda and to neighboring South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic (Ahere/Maina 2013: 1).

4 See Ahere/Maina 2013; Allen 1991, Behrend 1999; Bøås 2004; Doom/Vlassenroot 1999; Dunn 2007; Finnström 1999 and 2006; Gersony 1997, Lamwaka 2002; O'Kadamerie 2002; van Acker 2004.

[WARENDUC=5; WARENDOS=5; WARDUR=49].⁵ The UCDP's best estimates indicate 5,623 battle-related deaths between 1986 and 1991.⁶ Fatalities attributed to one-sided violence by both the LRA and the government have to be added. One-sided violence by government forces is only recorded for 1990 and 1991. However, only the killings in 1991 were connected to the conflict with the LRA, whereas violence in 1990 happened in eastern Uganda and was connected to the Government-Uganda People's Army dyad. Considering this, UCDP estimates that a total of 5,873 people were killed **[FATALUC=6000]**. Considering that the armed struggle restarted in 1994 with unprecedented levels of violence, most case-specific literature does not consider the war to have ended in 1991, claiming that it has continued up to this day. Consequently, we cannot find information about the number of deaths for what we might call the first phase of the LRA war. According to United Nations' (UN) estimates, the death toll for the war between 1987 and 2012 was 100,000.⁷ UCDP data indicates that 15.4% of all victims died in the first five years of the war (1987-1991). Applying that share to the UN estimates, we can conclude that the first phase of this war claimed 15,400 lives **[FATALOS=15000]**. According to World Bank figures, the Ugandan population in 1987 was about 15,736,000 **[PREWARPO=15700000]**. Thus, the death toll amounts to 0.01% or 0.02% of the pre-war population, depending on the estimate used **[INTENSUC=0.04; INTENSOS=0.1]**.

The military balance at the end of the war

Although the LRA was massively weakened by NRA operations, it was not dealt a decisive blow. After peace talks opened in 1993, the NRA refrained from pursuing a military victory **[VICTORY=0]**.⁸ As a guerilla movement, the LRA employed a hit and run strategy, not aiming at territorial control. Both the NRA and the LRA were instead trying to establish control over the population by either forcing them into so-called protected camps (NRA) or

5 Contrary to other civil wars, which hovered on the threshold of 25 deaths per year for several years, the drop in the number of deaths recorded by the UCDP is significant in the case of the LRA. For the dyad Government of Uganda-LRA, the UCDP lists 816 deaths in 1991, 102 people fell prey to one-sided violence by the LRA that year, and 59 deaths are attributed to one-sided violence by the government. Thus, the conflict claimed almost 1,000 lives in 1991, but experienced a radical drop, with no deaths recorded for 1992 or 1993. In 1994, 149 people were killed. Even though the rebels physically shifted their focus to Southern Sudan from 1991 on, there is no evidence of large-scale fighting involving the LRA in Sudan in the UCDP data until 1995. Due to this clear and significant reduction in conflict intensity, we decided to regard the war between the LRA and the Government of Uganda as having finished in 1991, experiencing a renewed outbreak in 1994 (See http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=160®ionSelect=2-Southern_Africa#; 13 Feb 2015).

6 http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=160®ionSelect=2-Southern_Africa# (2 Aug 2014).

7 See the report of the UN Security Council at: http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2013_297.pdf, (30 May 2014).

8 Byaruhanga Rukooko 2005: 214.

abducting them (LRA). The account of popular support for the LRA is highly ambiguous but does not indicate large scale popular support [REBTERR= -1].⁹ As the rebels did not controlled any territory during the war, the question of who controlled more territory at the end of the war is irrelevant [MORETERR=n.r.]. Cunningham et al. (2009) assess the LRA's fighting capacity as 'moderate'. We deem it necessary to revise this assessment, however. Cunningham et al. assume that the war between the Government and the LRA ended in 2001. The LRA's fighting capacity increased significantly after 1991 and especially from 1994 onwards, when Sudan began providing full-scale support to the rebels, including more sophisticated weaponry and landmines (Bøås 2004: 289; Doom/Vlassenroot 1999: 28, van Acker 2004: 337). It therefore seems reasonable to assess the LRA's fighting capacity after 1994 as 'moderate'. However, in the first phase of their insurgency, the rebels did not have this support. Apart from relying on small weapons, they reportedly threw stones that were supposed to be turned into grenades when they hit the enemy and also fought without uniforms or shielding (Behrend 1999: 182). Moreover, they were forced to seek refuge in Southern Sudan when the NRA started its counter-insurgency offensive. We therefore conclude that the LRA's fighting capacity was low during the 1988-1991 war [REBFIGHT= -1].

Though the LRA was not defeated in 1991, it was significantly reduced by the NRA's Operation North, as we have highlighted above. The fact that the scale of violence significantly decreased after 1991 and that the rebels retreated from Uganda is an indication that the LRA could not, at the time, continue fighting as comprehensively as it had before [CONFGIGHT= -1]. Neither side managed to kill or capture one of the opponents' military or political leaders [LEADER=0].

In sum, the military balance at the end of the war strongly favored the government [WARBAL= -0.6].

The military balance in the post-war period

The ethnic composition of the Ugandan army has been a source of conflict since colonial times. The British Colonizers had mainly recruited Acholi, who suffered massacres and retaliation by several regimes after independence. Incumbent president Museveni favored his own Bahima ethnic group as army commanders (Schlichte 2005: 96). The question of reintegrating LRA rebels was never breached and there were no LRA-demands in the talks

9 Doom/Vlassenroot 1999: 16-23; van Acker 2004: 350-352.

that started in 1993 [**STATEFOR 1992-1994= -1**].¹⁰ Thus, the LRA remained a separate force. However, the Ugandan Government also supported a vast number of militias, referred to as ‘auxiliary forces’, and benefited from their actions – though they, at times, denied their very existence. Though these groups are, of course, not provided for in the Constitution, Article 3c of the 1992 National Resistance Statute serves as a legal framework, stating that such militias may be attached to the regular armed forces under arrangements made by the government. In the early 2000s, the Ugandan Government had 33,600 non-regular fighters in northern Uganda alone but supported many others, some unknown, in the rest of the country (Byaruhanga Rukooko 2005: 213, 228). The NRA was arming local defense units (LDUs) across the country that were tasked with the protection of their municipality and also served as auxiliary troops for the army and police (Byaruhanga Rukooko 2005: 216). Additionally, the NRA conducted workshops in the whole of Uganda to teach participants basic military knowledge, the use of weapons and the political aims of the NRM. In southern and western Uganda, the majority of the adult population participated in these workshops (Schlichte 2005: 93, 101). Hence, we conclude that both the NRA and the LRA commanded separate forces [**SEPFORCE 1992-1994=0**]. The troop ratio changed in favor of the rebels in 1994, being that the Ugandan Government reduced their army, while the number of LRA fighters remained stable [**TROOPS 1992-1993=0, TROOPS 1994=1, ARMS 1992-1994=n.d.**].¹¹ There was no shift in territorial control – the government remained in control of larger parts of Uganda while the rebels remained in the bush in the post-war years [**TERRCON 1992-1994= -1**]. As the government was always in control of the entire territory, we code territorial gains in favor of the government [**TERRWIN 1992-1994= -1**]. The LRA was close to defeat in 1991 and the NRA strategy of destroying civilian food stocks, killing domestic animals and displacing the population into camps deprived them of their supplies. Moreover, as explained above, the LRA did not hold any territory. Thus, we consider the LRA as strategically more vulnerable [**VULNERAB 1992-1994= -1**].¹²

There were no armed peacekeeping forces present in Uganda and neither side relied on any strong support from a permanent member of the UN Security Council [**PEACKEEP 1992-1994=n.r., P5ALLY 1992-1994=n.r.**].¹³

The post-war years were slightly more favorable for the rebels than in the immediate post-war situation. Overall, the military balance strongly favored the government [**POSTBAL 1992-**

10 O’Kadamerie 2002: 36-37.

11 See Table 2 and Table 3 in the Annex.

12 Doom/Vlassenroot 1999: 23; Lamwaka 2002: 32.

13 Fortna 2008.

1993= -0.67, POSTBAL 1994= -0.5; BALANCE 1992-1993= -0.64, BALANCE 1994= -0.55].

Economy

Uganda’s gross domestic product (GDP) per capita remained at a very low level.

Table 1: GDP per capita in Uganda in current USD¹⁴

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>GDP per capita</i>
1992	18,788,440	152
1993	19,430,461	166
1994	20,081,152	199

The scale of compromise after the war

Museveni and his NRM governed Uganda after 1986 [**GOVERN 1992-1994= -1**]. The NRM abolished the multi-party system, replacing it with the Movement-System that understood itself to be comprehensive, purportedly comprising all Ugandan factions. The NRM’s declared intention was to eliminate all forms of tribal, regional and religious sectarianism (Lindemann 2010: 31). This aim, however, was only partially implemented, at best. Competition only took place between candidates within the Movement. It was strictly controlled by President Museveni (Schlichte 2005: 89). “At the central state level, the distribution of political, military and economic power has been biased in favour of Southern and Western Uganda” (Lindemann 2010: 32). The most prominent groups in Museveni’s government and administration were people from the Banyankole, Bakiga, Banyoro and Batoro, in the west, and the Baganda in the south. Northerners and easterners remained largely excluded, with northerners being least represented in politics (Lindemann 2010: 32).

The LRA was never represented within the Movement and never strived for integration into the political system. Moreover, it lacked a political wing. This was particularly obvious in the demands voiced at the 1993/94 peace negotiations, which solely centered on the LRA.¹⁵ Moreover, there were no elections held in the post-war period [**ELECT 1992-1994= -1**]. Hence, the government had sole decision-making power and there were no veto rights in place

14 <http://api.worldbank.org/v2/en/country/uga?downloadformat=excel> (2 June 2014).
 15 From mid-1993 onwards, Ugandan Minister of State for the north, Betty Bigombe, was trying to connect with the LRA. By October 1993, the LRA and the government were discussing the modalities for peace talks, the first face-to-face meeting took place on 25 November 1993 in Pagik, Northern Uganda, though without Kony. The LRA did not bring forth any political demands; they asked for a general amnesty and insisted that the LRA had not been defeated but that they wanted peace. They were not "rebels" but "people" who were "returning home". They alleged to have fought those who rejected the way of God. They further asked for a cessation of NRA hostilities in order to organize their men for return and treatment for their sick and wounded (O’Kadamerie 2002: 36–37).

that would have allowed the rebels to participate in decision-making [**VETO 1992-1994= -1; VETOSAT 1992-1994=n.r.**].

If we assume that the LRA fought for the political emancipation of the Acholi and against grievances left over from colonial times (which is contestable, seeing that the LRA's demands were hazy and the promotion of the Acholi was not a topic at the 1993/94 negotiations), we must assess that the government prevailed on this issue. The ethnicization of the military continued, to the detriment of the Acholi. Northern Ugandans did not occupy important posts in the administration among their ranks, apart from Betty Bigombe, Minister of State for the north. Mrs. Bigombe was appointed by President Museveni in 1988 to address the conflict in the North [**SPECPRO 1992-1994= -1**].¹⁶

The drawing of borders, the economic system and the distribution of competences within the Ugandan state were not issues in the LRA's struggle [**EXBORDER 1992-1994=n.r.; INBORDER 1992-1994=n.r.; COMPETEN 1992-1994=n.r.; ECONOMY 1992-1994=n.r.; ISSUE 1992-1994=n.r.; ISSUE2 1992-1994=n.r.**]. In the 1993/94 negotiations, the LRA demanded general amnesty for their fighters so that they could "return home" without fear of government or NRA reprisals. In the context of the peace negotiations with the UPDA, the Ugandan National Resistance Council had passed an Amnesty Statute in 1987 for persons involved in insurgent activities, which, as the LRA was assured by Bigombe, would cover the LRA as well as other Ugandan rebel groups. However, a few crimes – namely genocide, murder, abduction and rape – had been considered too serious to be covered by the amnesty (Afako 2002: 65; O'Kadamerie 2002: 36-37). As the amnesty was not instated in reaction to the LRA insurgency, and as it excluded crimes committed by LRA fighters, we assume that the government did not make concessions to the rebels [**NEWCON 1992-1994= -1; NEWCON2 1992-1994=n.r.**]. Thus, there was not a single compromise between the LRA and the NRM/A [**BENEFIT 1992-1994=n.r.; BENEFIT2 1992-1994=n.r.**].

Overall, the post-war order completely favored the government throughout the post-war years [**COMPROM 1992-1994= -1**].

Stability of peace

In the course of the peace talks, Bigombe and Kony eventually met on 11 January 1994. Kony reinforced the fact that he wanted to come out of hiding with all his fighters but requested a further six months to regroup his troops. However, relations deteriorated between the LRA and the NRA who, in large part, voiced that the only option on the table was an unconditional

16 Lindemann 2010: 32; O'Kadamerie 2002: 35.

surrender of the LRA (Bøås 2004: 290). Nevertheless, a ceasefire agreement was signed between the LRA and NRA on 2 February 1994. After this meeting, however, the LRA refused to send officers to Gulu town again, believing that there was a plot against them. Further meetings were postponed indefinitely. On 6 February 1994, during his visit to Gulu, President Museveni issued an ultimatum to the LRA: they had seven days to come out of hiding, otherwise the NRA would crack down on them. The LRA retreated into safe havens in southern Sudan, only to return with more sophisticated weapons, restarting the war [SAMEWAR=1; DATESAME=22 Feb 1994; PEACMON1=26; ANYWAR=1; DATEANY=22 Feb 1994; PEACMON2=26].¹⁷ The LRA henceforth operated from bases in southern Sudan and counted on the Sudanese government's support until the 1999 Nairobi Agreement between Khartoum and Kampala effectively ended the partnership (Bøås 2004: 286, 289). Furthermore, the LRA later expanded its activities into the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Ahere/Maina 2013: 1). Renewed peace initiatives collapsed in 1996 when the rebels killed the contact people who were visiting them (Finnström 2006: 209). We may notice that both violence against civilians and abductions committed by the LRA increased after 1994, though the group still did not voice any specific demands. Thus, Frank van Acker diagnoses an extreme depoliticization of the LRA, lacking a political agenda but employing extreme violence against the community (van Acker 2004: 354).

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17 See Dunn 2007: 143-144; O'Kadamerie 2002: 39-41.

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Annex

Table 2: Troops in post-war Uganda¹⁸

<i>Year</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>LRA</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	
1991	70000	500	140	1
1992	70000	500	140	1
1993	60000	500	120	1
1994	50000	500	100	1

Table 3: Arms in post-war Uganda¹⁹

<i>Year</i>	<i>Government</i>	<i>LRA</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	
1991	some main battle tanks (MBT) 4 armored personnel carriers (APC) 80 artillery	small arms only		
1992	some MBT 4 APC 80 artillery	small arms only		
1993	5 MBT 24 APC 80 artillery	small arms only		
1994	5 MBT 24 APC 80 artillery	small arms only		

18 IISS 1992-1995.

19 IISS 1992-1995.