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Journal

Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies, 15(3)

ISSN

0041-5715

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Publication Date

1987

DOI

10.5070/F7153016977

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POLITICAL AND CIVIC VIOLENCE IN UGANDA, 1971-1986: TOWARDS A RESEARCH AGENDA

Edward Kannyo

Undoubtedly, the single most important reason why Uganda, a small state with little strategic or economic value in the context of global politics, has attracted considerable media and scholarly interest over the years is the extraordinarily high level of political and civic violence which has marked the country's post-colonial history, particularly since 1971.¹ Estimates of deaths due to deliberate killings or factors related to violence range between several hundreds of thousands to one million.²

Persistent large-scale violence in any society inevitably raises questions about the nature and viability of the state concerned, the character of political and social cleavages and conflict, and the coherence of the civil society. It is perhaps too early to study in detail the scope and political and socio-economic implications of the violence which has wracked Uganda over the last fifteen years. However, there is enough empirical evidence of a general nature to indicate some of the basic features of the violence, e.g. the various forms which violence has taken, the geographical distribution, the main perpetrators, the main

¹ Amnesty International, *Political Killings by Governments* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1983), pp. 44-49; Minority Rights Group, *Uganda and Sudan* (London: The Minority Rights Group, 1985), Report No. 66; U.S. Committee for Refugees, *Human Rights in Uganda, the Reasons for Refugees* (Washington, D.C.: American Council for Nationalities Service, 1985).

² International Commission of Jurists, *Uganda and Human Rights* (Geneva: International Commission of Jurists, 1977); Jan J. Jorgensen, *Uganda, A Modern History* (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1981) p. 315.

victims, the circumstances and the principal factors behind the use of violence.¹

Methodological Problems and the Possible Contribution of Comparative Analysis

The study of political violence entails serious methodological difficulties, not the least of which is the extreme variety of forms and contexts in which violent phenomena which can be directly or indirectly traced to politics can occur.² The same is true of other forms of individual and group violence.³

A look at the kinds of violent incidents occurring in Uganda in the period 1982-85 or aspects of violence which were reported by *The Times* (London) indicates the variety and complex interrelationships between political and civic or common criminal violence which has characterized the country's recent history. The following is a random selection emphasizing variety rather than frequency of occurrence:

1982⁴

February

- 90 people killed in (Army) search operations.

April

- Roman Catholic priest killed by gunman.

May

- Soldiers told to stop molesting and robbing civilians.

¹ The Commission of Inquiry into human rights violations which was set up by the government in 1986 might provide more reliable data than what has been hitherto available.

² Peter H. Merkl, "Approaches to the Study of Political Violence," in *Political Violence and Terror*, Peter H. Merkl (ed.) (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986) pp. 19-59.

³ John Gunn, *Violence in Human Society* (Newton Abbot, United Kingdom: David and Charles (Holdings) Ltd., 1973).

⁴ *The Times Index*, 1982 (Reading, United Kingdom: Research Publications Ltd., 1983) p. 964.

- Six men arrested for collaborating with soldiers to murder and rob civilians in Kampala area.
 - Two chiefs and chairman of Uganda People's Congress shot by gunmen in Mpigi.
- June
- British architect killed by gunman.
- July
- Several soldiers killed when military police and soldiers fire at each other in Kampala suburb.
- August
- Three North Korean (Army) officers killed by gunmen.
- October
- West German nun shot by gunmen.

1983¹

- January
- 20 killed in series of incidents around Kampala in last two weeks.
 - Over 30 killed when bus is ambushed.
 - Eight shot dead at political rally.
- March
- Gunmen attack train and lorries.
 - Permanent Secretary shot dead.
- April
- Democratic party official shot dead.
 - Troops killed 30 villagers after receiving false information that they were helping guerrillas.
- May
- 200 killed in Kikyusa refugee camp.

¹ *The Times Index*, 1983: pp. 1093-1094.

June

- Students killed in attacks on school and university f

July

- 11 hacked to death at Namalere agricultural research station.

August

- Three ruling party officials shot dead.

- Three members of Uganda People's Congress youth wing and policeman shot dead.

1984¹

January

- Guerrillas abduct 11 Red Cross Workers.

- Briton and three Swiss engineers murdered by gunmen.

- 13 murdered in village South-West of Kampala.

- Children severely injured and 30 people killed in attack on Muduuma.

February

- Guerrillas attack army and police barracks in Masir

May

- Priest dies after being shot by gunmen.

- Government admits some of its soldiers were responsible for killings at Anglican theological college at Namugongo.

June

- Death toll at Numugongo rises to 87.

September

- Soviet military attaché wounded by gunmen.

¹ *The Times Index*, 1984, pp. 997-998.

October

- Abducted Secretary-General of Muslim Supreme Council freed.

1985¹

May

- Minister escapes hand grenade attack.
- Gunmen shoot magistrate.

June

- Seven die in raid on Roman Catholic mission.
- President deposed in coup led by Army's northern commander.
- Kampala hit by looting.

August

- Supporters and opponents of former President clash in Lira.

October

- Troops hold 200 women captive at Army camp north of Kampala.

November

- 30 injured when bomb explodes in Kampala.

December

- Kampala hit by vigilante killings.
- Army soldiers accused of looting Roman Catholic mission, assaulting civilians and kidnapping girls.

It should be pointed out that *The Times* like other foreign media, usually only reported incidents that attracted international attention or involved nationals of their countries. For logistical reasons, incidents occurring in or around Kampala were more likely to be reported than those occurring elsewhere. It is also reasonable to assume that even in this region, only a small proportion of the incidents would be noted by the media. In terms of the prevalence of violent phenomena therefore, it

¹ *The Times Index*, 1985, pp. 921-922.

can be assumed that the sample reflects only the tip of the iceberg.¹

The goal of research on violence in Uganda would be to come up with a set of the theoretically significant political and sociological explanations. How much of it was due to direct competition for political power at the elite level? How much of it was fueled by the goal of economic dispossession and self-enrichment? How much of it was due to ethnic animosity? The diversity of the forms and the geographical location of acts of violence creates enormous difficulties for any effort to generate a general theoretical explanation.

One approach to the problem of complexity lies with the comparative method. Studies of similar phenomena in equivalent situations could be probed for any useful insights which might point to salient empirical and theoretical aspects. For example, the period of Colombian history generally referred to as *La Violencia*, provide intriguing parallels.

Between 1946 and 1966, Colombia "was the scene of one of the most intense and protracted instances of widespread civilian violence in the history of the twentieth century."² At least 200,000 lives are estimated to have been lost during this period.³

Numerous studies have sought to explain the causes of *La Violencia*.⁴ Thus, Paul Oquist seeks to link the changing characteristic and role of the Colombian state during the Twentieth Century and the evolving socio-economic cleavages and conflicts with the accentuation of partisan rivalry for political control of the state among the dominant classes. Briefly stated, his theory posits that *La Violencia* was the result of the "partial collapse" of the Colombian state which was caused by "intense sectarian rivalries" between the country's two traditional political parties: Liberals and Conservatives. The partial collapse of the state, "manifested in the crisis and inoperativeness of established institutions, the loss of legitimacy of the state, the state's resort to terrorist tactics which led to a further breakdown of social relations, the

¹ It is true that as the location of the country's capital and major economic and social institutions and since it was the center of the most intense opposition to the Obote regime, Buganda became the principal vortex of political violence.

² Paul Oquist, *Violence, Conflict and Politics in Colombia* (New York: Academic Press, Inc., 1980), p. xi.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-149.

physical absence of the state in large areas of the country and contradictions within the armed apparatus of the state."¹ allowed a series of social contradictions to be transformed into widespread and intense violence.

Why did party rivalry reach the stage where the state's very existence was threatened? The answer lies in the enhanced importance of the state as the direct or indirect agent of the accumulation of socio-economic resources:

The survival of sectarianism under the new circumstances of the increased importance of the state in structuring social relations augmented the stakes involved in politics. Whether one's party controlled the state or not began to affect more and more aspects of one's life, more and more intensely. The sectarian nature of governmental practice made it essential that one's party control the state in order to have the opportunity to develop contacts...that could assure economic success. Control of the state by the partisan adversary implied exclusion from access to state favors.²

La Violencia was primarily a rural rather than an urban phenomenon. Beyond partisan struggle at the elite level for control of the state, it involved the use of violence to achieve specific, ultimately economic, goals. *La Violencia* also had a mass character. There were regional civil wars between peasant supporters of the Liberal, Conservative and, in some areas, Communist parties. Struggles crystallized around traditional village rivalries, competition for control of local power structures, land control and ownership, and the appropriation of coffee crops.³

Some Empirical and Theoretical Analogies

There are striking similarities and differences between this analysis of *La Violencia* and the discernible basic characteristics of political and social violence in Uganda over the last fifteen years. A

¹ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

² Ibid., pp. 166-167.

³ Ibid., pp. 197-236.

basic difference lies in the nature of the social structures of the two societies. Colombia, like other Latin American societies, was characterized by a relatively well articulated class system in which a mass of peasants and a substantial proletariat were dominated by a residual rural oligarchy and an urban bourgeoisie. With the exception of the small remaining Indian populations, Colombia is essentially culturally homogeneous.¹

By contrast, Uganda, like other tropical African states, is characterized by a fluid social structure in which subsistence farmer working on their small holdings, nomadic communities in some areas, an emergent peasantry engaged in cash-crop production, an emergent commercial bourgeoisie, a small working class and a dominant politico-bureaucratic bourgeoisie co-exist in a context of complex relationships mediated by patron-client linkages.² Culturally, the most salient feature of tropical African states is extreme ethnolinguistic heterogeneity.

Similarities between Uganda (and other African states) and Colombia would include: a colonial legacy (of a different kind, to be sure); a basically agricultural and dependent economy and the crucial role of the state in determining processes of economic production and distribution and, hence, class formation.

Uganda's post-colonial history has been characterized by strong partisan rivalry between the country's major political parties: the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) and the Democratic Party (DP). The primary differences between them have essentially lain in the identification of their leaders and followers as essentially Protestant and Catholic respectively.³

In contrast to the Colombian experience, the DP-UPC rivalry never degenerated to the extent of armed conflict between the followers of the two parties. There are no Ugandan equivalents for the Liberal and Conservative party guerrillas who slugged it out in the rural areas of

¹ Vernon Lee Fluharty, *Dance of the Millions* (Pittsburgh: University Press, 1957).

² Giovanni Arrighi and John S. Saul, *Essays on the Political Economy of East Africa* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1973).

³ Samwiri R. Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1980).

Colombia. Nevertheless, partisan rivalry reached an unprecedented level of intensity especially during the period 1980-85. UPC leaders, "Youth Wingers" and others used their access to the coercive instruments of the state, i.e. the police and the army, to harass, imprison and even kill DP officials and supporters. In some cases, UPC officials were assassinated in retaliation. When the Uganda Freedom Movement (UFM) and what later became the National Resistance Movement (NRM) and the Federal Democratic Movement (FEDEM) launched the guerilla war against the Second Obote regime, they undoubtedly recruited many DP supporters.

A principal reason why the civil strife did not escalate to the extent it did in Colombia was the fact that partisan rivalry between the two parties did not affect the army and police. The Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA), the Special Force and other instruments of coercion were solidly under the control of the UPC until the later stages of the guerilla war when intra-military conflicts caused the decomposition of the UNLA. Essentially, DP supporters had no access to arms to challenge the UPC hegemony. It was also significant that the leadership of the DP refused to embrace and organize armed resistance.

In both Colombia and Uganda, the brutality of the counter-insurgency was considerable. During the height of the guerilla warfare in 1952, the Colombian government forces suffered some severe reverses in the Eastern Plains region: "Faced with a deteriorating situation, the army began to shoot guerilla prisoners and sometimes mere suspects. There are confirmed instances of prisoners having been dropped from transport planes in flight."¹ In Uganda, the bleached skeletons in the "Luwero Triangle" testify to the brutality of army operations in the period 1981-86.

Violence attributable to the struggle for control of local power structures in Colombia has parallels in Uganda. Oquist writes of the reasons for the intensity of the struggle for local control in Colombia:

Within the *minifundista* (small farmer) municipalities themselves, local politics are extremely important. The minimal funds and few ill-paid posts of the municipalities, and especially the social prestige to be derived from control of them, are valued by the impoverished, independent farmers. In addition, which local clique controls the town has multiple secondary implications. To

¹ Paul Oquist, *Ibid.*, p. 209.

be politically "connected" or not can make the difference between getting a loan from the *Caja Agraria* (Agrarian Credit Agency) or not; it can determine who wins a legal battle over land limits or water rights and who loses; and it can make the difference between who goes to jail and who goes home after an altercation or drinking bout in town.¹

The positions of County (*saza*), sub-county (*gombolola*) and lower level authorities are a source of wealth and social status in Uganda. Local politics in Uganda has always involved intense struggle for the control of patronage and its socio-economic rewards.² In the 1980-86 period, as the UPC regime came under increasing guerrilla pressure, UPC chiefs, local chairmen of party committees and "Youth Wingers" used their access to state resources to compel the opposition to accept their authority and to repress the recalcitrant. The victors sometimes retaliated through assassinations or simply fled to join the guerrilla movements.

In Colombia, land formed the basis of one of the socio-economic contradictions that frequently led to conflicts and violence. In parts of the country, land was lost by peasants "by simple abandonment due to the violence in general, by abandonment due to direct threats or acts of violence against their owners, or by coerced land sales at ludicrous prices. In Tolima, a particularly prevalent way to evict peasants from the land was house-burning."³

The only part of Uganda where an equivalent situation developed was Ankole and the adjacent areas of Western Buganda (Rakai) in the period 1982-83. Up to 70,000 members of the Banyarwanda ethnic group and a few others belonging to related groups were uprooted from their homes, dispossessed and driven across the border into Rwanda or Tanzania or into refugee camps within Uganda. Their houses were sometimes burned and the property, including

¹ Ibid., p. 217.

² *Uganda District Government and Politics, 1947-67*, African Studies Program, University of Wisconsin-Madison, n.d.

³ Oquist, p. 217

livestock, stolen.¹ These acts of dispossession were orchestrated by some national and local leaders of the UPC, assisted by units of the Special Force of the Police and local chiefs. The victims were deemed to be opponents of the regime in power. In addition, since many of them were refugees from Rwanda, they were easy targets.

Two major factors would seem to explain the absence of violence due to land conflicts in Uganda. In the first place, in most parts of the country, land shortage and conflicts arising from this factor do not yet appear to be critical. Secondly and, perhaps most important, unlike *La Violencia*, armed conflict in Uganda did not involve combat between peasants belonging to different parties and factions. Armed violence involved either army and police confrontations with guerrillas or army attacks on unarmed peasants or predatory attacks of the kind that occurred in Ankole and Western Buganda which were limited to that region. Thus contradictions and conflicts of the rural kind did not have full scope to express themselves in the form of open violence. Even in the case of the Banyarwanda evictions and dispossession, the impetus came from the top.

During the course of *La Violencia*, in addition to the theft of land, extortion and robbery of goods of all kinds was prevalent and this played a role in intensifying the violence. Coffee was a more important target of theft and focus of violence:

...The necessity to protect the coffee crop by force of arms led to the (farm) administrators' and landlords' utilization of organized groups of gunmen to protect their interests. Not infrequently, the groups that protected one group of farms were the predators of another group...Many of these groups enjoyed police, judicial, and political protection due to their partisan connections.²

In Uganda during the Amin regime, as the world price of coffee rose in the late 1970s, smuggling of the crop outside the country's borders became prevalent. Smugglers could obtain valuable Kenyan currency instead of the depreciated Ugandan Shilling or goods which could be sold in Uganda for huge profits. There also developed criminal syndicates which specialized in highjacking coffee trucks.

¹ U.S. Committee for Refugees, *op. cit.*, 17-20.

² Oquist, pp. 229-230.

These activities involved a certain amount of violence:

Trucks transporting coffee were assigned armed guards and smugglers were summarily executed if caught... Warfare broke out all over the northern half of Lake Victoria between Amin's patrols and the heavily armed, high-powered launches of smugglers running *robusta* coffee direct from Western Uganda to the shores of Kenya.¹

With the clear exception of the Karamoja region where cattle rustling has been a perennial problem,² sustained rural banditry has not been a major feature of recent violence in Uganda.³ However, from 1971 and particularly between 1980 and 1986, the military took advantage of counter-insurgency operations to steal from civilians: road-blocks, enter and loot homes and generally take on the character of "uniformed bandits".

Towards the end of the second Obote regime and during the short-lived Okello regime, civilians were sometimes abducted and held for ransom if they were considered prosperous. Women and girls were occasionally seized and taken into forcible slave "marriage".⁴ On the very day that it overthrew the regime, the UNLA looted homes and businesses in Kampala. Unlike Colombia, banditry in Uganda was primarily the work of the army and, to some extent, UPC officials and Youth Wingers.

¹ Aidan Southall, "Social Disorganization in Uganda: Before, During and After Amin," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 18, 4 (1980), pp. 627-656.

² "The War for Karamoja," *New African*, No. 233 (February 1987): 1920. For a discussion of the interrelated problems of a harsh natural environment, inappropriate public policies and insecurity in Karamoja, see D.J. Alnwick, "Background to the Karamoja Famine," in Cole P. Dodge and Paul D. Wiebe (eds.), *Crisis in Uganda* (Elmsford, New York: Pergamon Press, 1985), pp. 127-144.

³ Armed robbery by gangs which forcibly enter homes or hijack vehicles and often kill their victims (*Kondoism*) has been a perennial problem. However, this is different from the phenomenon of more or less permanent infestation of a given region by armed bandits or highwaymen.

⁴ Amnesty International, *Report 1986* (London: Amnesty International Publications, 1986), pp. 106-110.

General Propositions Concerning Violence in Uganda

Political and civic violence in Uganda is attributable to the gradual erosion of whatever legitimacy the state had acquired up to the mid-1960s. The erosion was impelled by the escalating use of violence to gain and hold political power. With the coup of 1971, the use of violence for political purposes was transformed both in kind and degree. Rather than imprison his real or suspected opponents, Amin chose to physically eliminate them.

The use of violence to eliminate opponents or suspected opponents could not be effectively controlled. The regime's agents increasingly took matters into their own hands. Then they extended the purposes of political violence from the strictly political goal of maintenance of power to private material gain. Thus the distinction between legitimate use of force and criminality began to be increasingly blurred. Eventually, the violence of the ostensible agents of the state provoked the counter-violence of the victims and opponents of the powerholders.

Unlike the case of Colombia, and with the distinct exception of Karamoja, there was no "partial collapse of the state". However, its capacity to carry out its ostensible administrative and social welfare functions as well as its legitimacy were eroded,¹ and this contributed to the generalization of violence.

There is widespread agreement among students of African politics about the main characteristics of the post-colonial state: its pivotal role in processes of class formation; the dominant position of the "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" and the consequent centrality of direct or indirect access to state power.² In those African states where a relatively high degree of political stability has been achieved, it has been based on what is often a civilian-military-bureaucratic coalition which has reached a minimal level of consensus about the basic character of the post-

¹ T.B. Kabwegyere, "The Politics of State Destruction in Uganda Since 1962: Lessons for the Future," in Paul D. Wiebe and Cole P. Dodge (eds.), *Beyond Crisis* (Kampala, Uganda and Los Angeles: Makerere Institute of Social Research and African Studies Association, 1987), pp. 11-24.

² Nelson Kasfir, "Relating Class to State in Africa," in Nelson Kasfir (ed.), *State and Class in Africa* (London and Totowa, N.J.: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1984), pp. 1-20.

colonial state and the uses to which state power is to be put. When the consensus has fallen below a critical level, as in Nigeria between 1966 and 1970, Rwanda and Burundi at various times in the 1960s and 1970s, Chad since the 1960s, Zaire in the 1960s, and Angola and Mozambique since their independence from the Portuguese, high levels of political violence have been difficult to avoid.

In Uganda, the colonial legacy has made it extraordinarily difficult to create a minimal level of political consensus among the dominant political and social groups.¹ Consequently, raw and naked power or violence came to be the arbiter of political disputes. However, precisely because of the fragmentation stemming from the colonial legacy, the powerholders were not cohesive enough in terms of the political organization to keep the violence within bounds. There is a sense in which Milton Obote and Idi Amin came to be sorcerer apprentices.

The various forms of violence which have occurred in Uganda over the last fifteen years point to certain normative transformations: an additional explanatory factor. More specifically, the rapid penetration of Western materialist culture most notably reflected in ostentatious consumption patterns at the level of the elites in a context of very limited social mobility prospects for the majority, regional imbalances in economic development, and the atrophy of political and social legitimacy have all contributed to the loosening of social norms which normally inhibit criminal behavior.

In Uganda, as in virtually all other African states, the colonial regime established formal education in Western-style institutions as the certified acquisition of European linguistic and scientific technical skills as the principal avenue for access to bureaucratic employment which in turn became the major source of monetary income, a comfortable modern life-style and social prestige. These processes were strengthened through the implementation of "Africanization" policies following the accession to independence.

However, such was the pattern of colonial domination that the institutional, economic and social avenues of social mobility were unevenly distributed. It was not surprising that following the acquisition of political independence, there were strong claims on the part of elites and their followers from the disadvantaged parts of the

¹ Dan Mudoola, "The Problems of Institutional Building: The Uganda Case," in Paul Wiebe and Cole P. Dodge, *Beyond Crisis*, pp. 55-64.

country to spread more widely such social mobility assets as schools, access to bureaucratic employment and communications networks.¹

In early 1971, in an address to his recently-promoted military supporters (some of whom had just risen from Sergeant-Major to Lieutenant-Colonel; Regimental Sergeant-Major to Lieutenant-Colonel; Sergeant-Major to Major and Private to Captain) Idi Amin challenged the prevailing association between formal educational and foreign (English) linguistic achievements and access to high position and social status. He encouraged his colleagues not to be "ashamed" of their lack of knowledge of English and argued that possession of a university academic degree was not in itself a sign of professional ability. It is evident that Amin was expressing resentment and rejection (albeit ambiguously since in the same statement he claimed that he spoke English "better than a European") of the prevailing norms governing social mobility changes.² This resentment is likely to have been shared by other socially disadvantaged individuals and groups in Ugandan society.

If this analysis is valid, two serious consequences can be attributed to this latent form of social conflict. The military hierarchy, the civilian bureaucracy and other public institutions were gradually invested and penetrated by political, ethnic and religious clients of the regime regardless of their technical proficiency with disastrous effects on the performance of these institutions. An even more fatal consequence was the gradual generalization of the practice of seizing private property, disregard for the basic rights to life and respect for the integrity of the person in pursuit of immediate gratification of material, social and physical needs. These activities resulted in the escalation of civic and political violence in the country.

The generalizations which have been advanced up to now have focused on the political and economic explanatory factors. However, it is far from clear that these two types of explanations exhaust the dynamics of the violence. What has not been touched on are the potentially significant socio-psychological aspects.

It would be unrealistic to ignore the contributory roles of ethnic and, to a lesser extent, religious resentment, vengeance and fear. These

¹ Ibid.

² *African Research Bulletin, Political, Social and Cultural Series*, Vol. 8, No. 5 (1971), p. 2109.

are theoretically and empirically difficult issues to handle. Nevertheless they can be politically significant.¹ It is difficult to explain the wanton killings in different parts of Buganda in 1966; killings of Acholi and Langi soldiers during the first two years of the Amin regime; killings of the inhabitants of West Nile by the UNLA after Amin's downfall; massacres in Luwero Triangle in the 1981-85 period or the lootings and killings in Lango after the 1985 coup in solely political and economic terms.

Occasionally, strong feelings stemming from the experience and perception of ethnic prejudice have been publicly expressed. Three examples culled from speeches made in the Uganda National Assembly in the 1960s illustrate the point:

1. *On the subject of the position of the Asian minority*

Paulo Muwanga:

...Go to the cities where the African wants to rent shops and when you ask the African shopkeeper what has he had from the Asians? Do you expect the African, Sir, to feel that he will always be the colleague of the man who still believes that he can look down upon him?...How can we tell the African that he should love his neighbours when he sees that all the places here are occupied by Indians and Europeans?...One day a fanatic or, let us say a man who feels..." (Interrupted by D.A. Patel, an Asian Member of the National Assembly).²

2. *During the discussion of an incident which happened in 1964 on the outskirts of Kampala when the Police shot and killed six people and injured at least some 29 others,*

Ali Kisekka said:

Mr. Speaker, these men of the security forces had been fighting a war which unfortunately people at Nakulabye had not known about because this had not been declared. They used all sorts of deadly weapons, not to maim, but to

¹ Ali Mazrui was one of the first students of Uganda politics to highlight the significance of group resentment mixed with a desire for emulation for the political history of the country. Ali A. Mazrui, "Privilege and Protest as Integrative Factors: the Case of Buganda's Status in Uganda," in *Protest and Power in Black Africa*, Robert I. Rotberg and Ali A. Mazrui (eds) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 1072-1087.

² Uganda, *Uganda Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 19, pp. 58-59.

kill. Mr Speaker, perhaps you will be in a better position when you happen to meet some of them, to ask them rather privately and friendly (sic) whether in this mission they would like to see that all of us (i.e. the Baganda) disappear from the surface of Uganda. If that is their wish, at least we should be informed so that we can leave the country and find a peaceful place where we could stay.¹

3. *During the debate on the proposals for the 1967 Constitution, John Kakonge argued:*

...Now I would like to appeal to the people who were formerly nationalists that this kind of attitude (i.e. purported ethnic arrogance) is very irritating. We know that we have been looked down upon. I have been with my Baganda friends for a very long time, from the days of Budo (high school). I know how I used to be treated and how we used to swallow a lot of insults, we have swallowed so much for a very long time. It is hurting and I think Baganda people interested in the construction of genuine nationalism should not lightly display arrogance, compunction (sic).²

Students of violence have pointed to the significance of such factors as frustration, hatred, prejudice and paranoia. About the latter, John Gunn pointed out that paranoid thoughts are not confined to individuals: "Groups, indeed whole nations can hold them."³

Summary

Explaining the extraordinarily high degree of political and civic violence which Uganda has experienced during its post-colonial history poses complex analytical problems. Violence has varied in terms of the character of the agents as well as victims; the degree and context as well

¹ Uganda, *Uganda Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 40, p. 952.

² Uganda, *Uganda Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 76, p. 1084.

³ John Dunn, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

as purposes for which it has been perpetrated.

Insights drawn from comparable phenomena in other parts of the world at different historical periods can guide the researcher to those aspects of social structure and social processes which give rise to intense political and social violence. At least one study of *La Violencia* in Colombia suggests the utility of focusing on the role of the state as the principal determinant of access to socio-economic resources and the resultant ferocity of the struggle for control of state power which in turn leads to the loosening of state structures and the escalation of violence.

The first task in the analysis of violence in Uganda is the establishment of a reliable data base. What was the toll for the period under study?

Most of the available information on the violence tends to focus on Kampala and the surrounding areas of Buganda, the Ankole/West Buganda region, West Nile and Karamoja. But is it not possible and even likely that similar phenomena occurred in the other parts of the country, perhaps on a smaller scale? A related issue is that of the relationship between the level of anti-regime insurgency and the number of the victims of political violence. Were the two factors directly correlated?

Among the victims, is it possible to discern a social profile of who was more likely to be killed or was it more random? How much of the killing and plunder was motivated by political factors, ethnic animosity, the desire for economic gain or a combination of all three?

In terms of responsibility for the violence, there is little doubt that most of it was directly due to the activities of the army and other coercive instruments of the various regimes which held power between 1971 and 1986. Nevertheless, it is a fact that there were also some civilian victims of anti-regime violence. What was the extent of the form of conflict?

A closely-related issue concerns the degree of control and responsibility for the violence from the top of the political and military hierarchies. How much of the violence was directly or indirectly sanctioned? How much of it was the result of lack of proper control over the instruments of violence?

The analysis of political and civic violence in Uganda's recent history is of more than theoretical interest. A clear understanding of the factors which gave rise to the phenomenon can enable the scholar as well as the policy maker to pinpoint and perhaps predict those aspects of the country's political, economic and social and cultural life which need reform in order to minimize cleavages and forestall or at least mitigate tension and conflict.