



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

Ethnic Fragmentation and Political Instability in Post-Colonial Uganda

Understanding the Contribution of Colonial Rule to the Plights
of the Acholi People in Northern Uganda

Hannes Tornberg

Human Rights Studies

Fall 2012

Supervisor: Lina Sturfelt

Abstract

Uganda, along with a number of other African states, is a state struggling with the task of bringing together a vast range of ethnic minority groups into one nation-state decided by geographical borders drawn by colonial masters Britain during imperialism. The effects of these colonial decisions and policies are widely known to having plagued the native population during the course of history. This paper, however, attempts to locate the connections between the colonial rule of the British in Uganda and the plights of the Acholi people, one of the ethnic minority groups that is marginalized in contemporary Ugandan community.

The Acholi people is primarily indigenous to the northern parts of Uganda, an area which for many years has been plagued by a violent civil war conducted by, on the one hand, crude government forces and, on the other hand, the rebel organization the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The Uganda vs. LRA conflict has put the Acholi people in a vulnerable position and support from the government of Uganda seems lacking. The purpose of this paper is two-fold and firstly aimed at understanding the underlying structures that generate this ethnic fragmentation and the ways in which these affect the situation of ethnic minorities in Uganda. It does so by examining a report by Human Rights Watch, "*Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*". It then proceeds to explore plausible connections between the colonial rule of Britain and the plights of the Acholi people by using a theoretical framework consisting of prior studies of colonial heritage and post-colonial development. This paper shows a perspective on ethnic marginalization that is rooted in colonial heritage and can thus be an integral part of understanding the complex notion that is the post-colonial African state.

Keywords: Acholi, Africa, colonialism, ethnic fragmentation, ethnicity, Human Rights Watch, marginalization, political instability, post-colonial, Uganda

Contents

- 1. Introduction..... 1**
 - 1.1. Purpose and Question Formulation..... 1
 - 1.2. Material 3
 - 1.2.1. Primary and secondary material..... 4
 - 1.2.2. Criticism of the Sources 4
 - 1.3. Method 5

- 2. Theory and Prior Studies of Concepts of Citizenship in Post-Colonial Africa 7**
 - 2.1. Theory 7
 - 2.2. Prior Studies of General Possible Causes of Ethnic Fragmentation Within Post-Colonial Africa..... 8
 - 2.3. Prior Studies of Variations of the Concept of Citizenship in Post-Colonial Africa..... 13

- 3. A Historical Background of the State of Uganda17**
 - 3.1. The British Colonization of Uganda (1894-1962) 17
 - 3.2. Post-Colonial Ugandan Political History 19

- 4. Analysis of Acholi marginalization in the context of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict.....23**

- 5. Discussion – Discovering the Contribution of Colonialism to the Ethnic Marginalization of the Acholi people.....30**

- 6. Conclusion36**

- 7. References.....38**

Glossary of Acronyms

HRW – Human Rights Watch

ICC – International Criminal Court

IDC – Internally Displaced Camps

LRA – Lord’s Resistance Army

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NRA – National Resistance Army

UHRC - Uganda Human Rights Commission

UNLF – Uganda National Liberation Front

UPC - Uganda Peoples Congress

UPDF – Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces

UPM – Uganda Patrotic Movement

1. Introduction

Since the mid-1980's a brutal conflict has been conducted in northern Uganda. This conflict has had devastating consequences for the peoples living there and many have been displaced, injured or killed. The Ugandan government has been unable to protect this part of the population and equally unable to bring an end to the conflict. The situation in Uganda has been described as one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters and yet it has to a very little extent been brought to the attention of the international community. As a result of this the efforts by the Ugandan government have been few and insufficient to alleviate the suffering.¹

The conflict is between the Ugandan Government and the rebel organization the Lord's resistance Army (LRA). The people that have been the most affected by this conflict are the Acholi, an ethnic minority group native to northern Uganda.

This paper examines the situation in northern Uganda, the Ugandan government's efforts to protect the northern population and attempt to understand the logic of this conflict through a post-colonial perspective. This paper asks the question whether the lack of government effort in alleviating the problem may be rooted in ethnic fragmentation and conflict inherited from the colonial order that was established by the British in the late nineteenth century. It attempts to do so by examining the marginalization of the Acholi people, laying bare the insufficiency of government response to the situation and exposing the underlying social and ethnic structures, inherited from the colonial rule of Britain, which complicate the resolution of the conflict and prolong the Acholi suffering.

1.1. Purpose and Question Formulation

The ethnic fragmentation that is present in Uganda today is arguably at the root of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict and is therefore a central issue that must be understood in order to bring an end to the conflict. The purpose of this paper is two-fold. Firstly, this paper attempts to study the situation of the Acholi people in the context of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict by examining a report released by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 2005 called *Uprooted and Forgotten:*

¹ *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005, p. 2.

Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda. This is done in order to investigate in which ways marginalization of ethnic minorities in Uganda contribute to an unstable state and a sense of constant terror for many of the people within these minority groups. This paper focuses on the plights of the Acholi people since it is the ethnic minority most affected by the Uganda vs. LRA conflict. Secondly, this paper argues that the complicated nature of this situation is, to at least some extent, very much a direct effect of the policies and the conduct of the British during the colonial era. The post-colonial perspective thus contributes to the understanding of ethnic marginalization as a product of Western influence on Africa. It thus provides an alternative explanation to this occurrence rather than the traditionally perhaps more accepted premise that ethnic marginalization be rooted in the inherent savageness of the African population.

The purpose of this paper is, subsequently, to gain a sense of understanding of the complex nature of this specific conflict and the underlying structures which have created the framework within which it takes place, but perhaps primarily to understand the causality of colonial policy and its effects on the post colonial society in the aspects of ethnic fragmentation and marginalization. To promote the influence of colonial heritage on ethnic conflict and marginalization, the logic of these problems might not remain clouded in mystery and perceived through colonial myths of African society. The purpose of this paper is, as mentioned above, two-fold and can be formulated through two questions. One of them describe the attempt to achieve a broad understanding of the effects of colonial heritage on post-colonial Africa and the other attempts to reveal the marginalization of the Acholi people and its connection to colonial policy:

- In which ways can a post-colonial perspective provide a sense of understanding for the complexity of ethnic fragmentation and political instability in post-colonial Africa?
- Which signs of ethnic marginalization can these post-colonial theories help reveal in the case of the Acholi people in northern Uganda?

When combined, these two questions formulate a necessary framework for understanding ethnic conflict in the post-colonial African state in general, and for understanding the marginalization of the Acholi people in northern Uganda in particular.

1.2. Material

This paper is built on the premise that marginalization of the Acholi people in northern Uganda to at least some extent derives from the colonial rule of Britain. In order to formulate this given premise it is necessary to be able to, firstly, show such a marginalization and, secondly, to exhibit a plausible causality between the marginalization of the Acholi people and the colonial rule. In order to be able to do this I have utilized a report from HRW on the conflict between Uganda and the LRA. This report works for the purpose of this paper since that conflict for many years has been conducted in northern Uganda, the home of the Acholi people. This report, thus, has provided the insight in Acholi marginalization necessary for the purpose of this paper.

To be able to make the connection between Acholi marginalization and colonial rule I have used scientific articles which discuss different aspects of colonial heritage and the effects that colonial rule has on the post-colonial African state.

In the pursuit of relevant material for this paper I focused my search through certain keywords such as; Acholi, Africa, citizenship, colonial, ethnic conflict, fragmentation, marginalization, political instability, post-colonial and Uganda. These keywords have led me to the material, which provides the necessary theoretical framework, and primary material for the purpose of this paper.

In my search of material I have not been focused on using only very recently published articles and reports. Much of the material that has been used for the purpose of this paper is older studies, since I have adopted the premise that my material, through a post-colonial perspective, does not have to be contemporary since the understanding of post-colonial heritage and the processes caused by colonial rule are best seen over a larger timespan.

One might argue that the relatively non-contemporary material that has been used for the purpose of this paper does not provide an insight in what the situation in northern Uganda is today. I, however, propose that the problems and failures explored in this paper are such fundamentally rooted issues that the material is relevant for the understanding of contemporary Uganda even though it might not be completely time-appropriate.

1.2.1. Primary and secondary material

The primary material that has been used for the purpose of this paper is the 2005 report from HRW named *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*. This report attempts to present the devastation that the Uganda vs. LRA conflict in northern Uganda causes for the northern population in general and the Acholi people in particular. This report has been crucial for the purpose of this paper since it is through the HRW's description of the conflict that I have discovered signs of marginalization of the Acholi people from Ugandan society. The report has allowed me to understand the issues that are inherent in the infected relationship between the Ugandan government and the Acholi people. It has thus provided a strong foundation on which I have been able to apply theories of colonial heritage in order to be able to see in which ways political instability and ethnic fragmentation in Uganda today can be attributed to the colonial rule of Britain.

The secondary material used for the purpose of this paper has been divided in two sub-groups. On the one hand I have used studies on differentiations of colonial style and the differences that this generated in the colonization process. On the other hand I have used studies on post-colonial structures that have derived from the style of the colonial power and complicated notions of citizenship and nationality in the post-colonial African state. Together these studies are purposed to provide the theoretical framework to which I, for the purpose of this paper, connect the signs of Acholi marginalization located in the HRW report.

1.2.2. Criticism of the Sources

The primary material used in this paper is the report *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, published by HRW in 2005. While it provides a clear insight in the conflict between Uganda and the LRA and the issues of security and human rights that are inherent within, there are certain important notions valuable to bear in mind while reading it.

Firstly, it is important to remember that HRW, in being an international non-governmental organization (NGO) with human rights as the sole question on its agenda enters this context with a clear agenda and a clear set of priorities. It is plausible that holding such a radical position in a context as complicated as the situation in northern Uganda might produce a report that derives from the actual situation, at least to some extent. On the other hand,

however, HRW has no agenda other than promoting human rights, which makes this report nothing more than their view on the situation.

A strength of the HRW report, however, is the fact that it is founded on interviews performed with people of Acholi ethnicity and subsequently victims to this situation and the violence inherent within it. The adjacent position of HRW to the situation adds to the credibility of the situation and the report is therefor a strong foundation for investigating the marginalization of the Acholi people.

Regarding the secondary material that has been used to create a theoretical framework for the discussion of this paper, the credibility of the studies used might mainly be questioned through the question of context. Many of the articles and texts that have been used in this process are not specifically focused on Uganda but rather on colonial policy and post-colonial African states in general. This bears with it positive and negative consequences. On a positive note, this makes the secondary material of this paper neutral to the issues of Uganda specifically while it acknowledges some of the development which plausibly might be expected to have taken place there. On a negative note, however, the discussions within these prior studies might be slightly differentiating from the development that has actually taken place in Uganda. Given the logic of post-colonial patterns in Africa, however, it is plausible to assume that the theories presented in these articles are as applicable to the situation of Uganda as well as any other post-colonial African state.

1.3. Method

The method I have used for the purpose of this paper has been performed in two sequences. Firstly, I have analyzed the HRW report, mentioned above, in order to locate signs of marginalization of the Acholi people as described by HRW in the report. After having located these signs of marginalization I have applied a set of theoretical tools provided by prior studies in the field of post-colonial studies in order to connect the signs of Acholi marginalization found in the report with the colonial rule of Britain. This might be called a method of *contextualizing*, since it places these general theories of post-colonial heritage in the context of the Acholi people in northern Uganda in order to gain a greater understanding of the underlying structures that create marginalization of ethnic minorities in the post-colonial African state.

While analyzing the report by HRW I have focused on the situation as presented by HRW rather than as described by the Acholi witnesses interviewed within it. I chose to focus on the narrative of HRW since the coherence and overview of the situation provided the best analytical framework for the purpose of this paper.

As I investigated the report, I did so by closely examining every segment of it in careful search of signs of Acholi marginalization. Important to bear in mind while considering my analyzing effort on the report, however, is the fact that I entered into the work with a mindset of searching for signs of the perseverance of these colonial structures and the issues that are inherent in those kinds of colonial heritage. By keeping my theoretical framework in mind while analyzing the report I may have been slightly more sensitive to the nuances of Acholi testimonies found within, thus being able to more effectively reveal the colonial structures, which still today complicate the senses of citizenship and nationality in Uganda.

The theoretical tools that I have used to connect the signs of Acholi marginalization to colonial policy and the situation of political instability and ethnic fragmentation in Uganda today were very useful for the purpose of this paper since they provided both the connection between contemporary ethnic conflict in Uganda and the colonial rule of Britain. However, they were perhaps even more useful because the inherent logic in these theoretical tools made it possible for me to locate Acholi marginalization in the report to the extent that I did. This has made the theoretical framework explored in the following section crucial for the purpose of this paper. These theoretical tools have been closely associated with the method used to understand this situation since it has been *by* applying them to the HRW report I have been able to locate signs of Acholi marginalization and its connection with colonial rule.

2. Theory and Prior Studies of Concepts of Citizenship in Post-Colonial Africa

In order to be able to see the connection between colonial rule and heritage on the ethnic marginalization of the Acholi people in Uganda today, a framework of theoretical notions on the topics of colonial style, post-colonial political instability, ethnic fragmentation and citizenship was necessary. This section attempts to provide an insight in the thesis that I have formulated for the purpose of this paper, that the colonial rule of Britain is a contributing factor to the marginalized position of the Acholi people in Uganda today.

2.1. Theory

Even before I created the theoretical framework that came to be the tools through which I was able to study the primary material for this paper, it is important to remember that my background has made me more receptive to certain topics and issues. I bear with me a preference for human rights, for the equal value of all human beings and the pursuit of the well being of all individuals. This focus on human rights is of course the most foundational theoretical perspective that has affected this paper. It has made me attentive to the situation of the marginalized Acholi people and thus it is the very reason for conducting the analysis presented in this paper.

I have additionally been increasingly convinced that a connection between the colonial rule of Britain and the plights of the Acholi people exists. This has made the post-colonial perspective an integral part of the analyzing process. Presented in this section are the theories of post-colonial heritage that together, through their diversity of focus on the effects of colonial rule, form the theoretical foundation necessary for this paper. It is by using these prior studies that I have been able to firstly locate signs of Acholi marginalization, but also to place the Acholi situation in a historical context, thus revealing the underlying structures causing the problems.

It must be added that this paper in no means attempts to portray colonial heritage as the only underlying problem to the ethnic fragmentation in Uganda today. The theoretical framework applied to the analysis of the report in a later section is solely intended to reveal the connection between colonial rule and post-colonial ethnic marginalization. The theoretical framework used for the purpose of this paper is therefor not enough to provide a full

understanding of the factors underlying ethnic fragmentation and political instability in Uganda today, but aims solely at explaining the contribution of colonial rule to the situation.

The focus on human rights and colonial heritage has naturally revealed a certain kind of issues in Ugandan society and the structures within it. This is an important thing to bear in mind while trying to understand this paper. I argue, however, that the post-colonial perspective is a vital tool to use for understanding the ethnic fragmentation existing in Uganda in its entirety. Though every state is unique and struggles with a unique set of issues, Uganda is a classic example of a post-colonial state and this, of course, makes a post-colonial theoretical framework useful in understanding the issues that tear on the Ugandan society today.

For the purpose of this paper, the prior studies mentioned above provide notions that need to be explored and investigated in order to be able to reveal the underlying structures contributing to ethnic fragmentation and internal conflict in post-colonial societies. This is also necessary in order to understand the situation in which the Acholi people is today.

As the purpose of this paper is to understand the ways in which the colonial heritage of Britain has affected the status of ethnic minority groups in Uganda the concept of citizenship and different variations within that concept becomes relevant. This section shall therefore, in addition to the aforementioned theories of underlying structures of ethnic relations and political instability in post-colonial societies, explore different perceptions of citizenship *per se*.

2.2. Prior Studies of General Possible Causes of Ethnic Fragmentation Within Post-Colonial Africa

There are many themes that are important to be aware of when examining the heritage of political instability and ethnic tensions in Uganda. Amongst these are the concepts of differences in colonial style, politicizing ethnicity, the concepts of cycles of disproportionate ethnic rule that feed inequalities and political instability and the contradiction between federal and customary law. A Uganda-specific concept that contributes to ethnic fragmentation is also important for the purpose of this paper, the north/south divide. All these concepts will be explored beneath.

Firstly we may examine what Robert Blanton, David T. Mason and Brian Athow expresses as *colonial style* in an article depicting the differences in colonial policy and rule that the two major colonial powers Britain and France presented during the period of European imperialism. The authors present a difference between the two colonizers in their approach to the indigenous population. They examine the contribution of different colonial styles to the ethnic relations within the colony and subsequently the emerging post-colonial state. The distinction made by the authors is that of differentiating between, on the one hand, an approach in which the different ethnic societies in the colonial geographical area are assigned certain traits and occupations based on their ethnic origin and, on the other hand, an approach in which the different societies are horizontally organized and traditional structures of organization are left intact.² The distinction that they make and the thesis that they present is firstly that post-colonial states that have been ruled under British authority have inherited a system of *unranked* ethnic societies while former French colonies have inherited systems in which certain ethnicities and social groups have been attributed greater power. The authors argue that this in former French colonies has created a system of *ranked* ethnicities while former British colonies, due to the perseverance of traditional structures of social organization, are more prone to generate severe internal ethnic conflicts.³

Since Uganda is a former British colony the system of ethnic relations between different societies should be classified as *unranked* and thus be more likely to produce political instability and internal conflict. For the purpose of this paper we shall therefor try to understand the different ways in which a state expresses an unranked system of ethnic relations and how it contributes to ethnical tensions.

The primary method of the British colonial rule was to ‘divide-and-rule’ which purposely maintained traditional ethnical oppositions in order to prevent the people of the colony from forming a coalition strong enough to challenge British rule.⁴ This was combined with an agenda to exploit minority resentments by premiering cultures, which had traditionally been relegated to lower positions in the region the social services and the military. In Uganda the “militarized” ethnic group was the Acholi in the northern parts of the country, which is of certain importance to this paper since the Acholi is the minority group specifically studied in this paper in order to expose ethnic marginalization in Uganda. By promoting ethnic division,

² Blanton, Robert, T. Mason, David and Athow, Brian, “Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa”, *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2001, p. 475-476.

³ Ibid, p. 475-476.

⁴ Ibid, p. 479-480.

rural societies were effectively kept from posing political opposition since no group could grow large enough to challenge the British and their colonial rule.⁵

The British style of organizing society through unranked systems of ethnic groups bear witness of a view as the colonized peoples as unable to ever rise to the level of the British and that they, because of that, were best left to their traditional institutions of social order. After independence, this unranked kind of ethnically divided societies caused different groups to come into competition for the same rule, the same resources and the same areas of land, thus fuelling internal conflict.⁶

Another concept that contributes to political instability in post-colonial societies is that of *politicized ethnicity*, which is explored by Andreas Wimmer as he attempts to understand the questions that arise when different ethnic groups in a state are given disproportionate access to power or other social institutions in the state. Wimmer calls the ethnicisation of state bureaucracy the first step towards politicizing ethnic differences and he means that this, in colonial societies often is performed in a way as in Uganda, when the British used Buganda and the Baganda living there as their primary area of entrance and their initial people to influence in the region, thus providing this ethnic group with the opportunity of gaining a disproportionate political advantage.⁷ This is the very essence of politicized ethnicity, the notion that politicians or other civil servants, when given a disproportionate advantage in a state, tend to favor people of the same ethnicity and from the same regions as themselves. Wimmer proposes that the concept of politicized ethnicity has such grave consequences for the political stability and the state of security in the state because the people in a ethnically fragmented state come to find themselves in competition for the resources in the state instead of viewing them as public benefits.⁸ Wimmer also makes the case that politicizing of ethnicity is more common in post-colonial societies since state bureaucracy in these states was developed before democratic institutions and the civil society were established. Wimmer means that politicians in post-colonial societies therefore would have to rely more extensively on ethnic ties in legitimizing their positions. He also points out that this kind of politics

⁵ Blanton, Robert, T. Mason, David and Athow, Brian, 2001, p. 480.

⁶ Ibid, p. 489.

⁷ Wimmer, Andreas, "Who owns the state? Understanding ethnic conflict in post-colonial societies", *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1997, p. 637-638.

⁸ Ibid, p. 643.

quickly transforms the population into groups of loyalty, thus complicating state building and adding to ethnic fragmentation.⁹

In colonial Uganda this kind of politicizing ethnicity is most obvious in the case of the British use of the Baganda as their preferred ethnicity of political co-operation in the early stages of colonization but also in the cases of the militarized, if you will, ethnicity of first the Nubians in the Uganda Rifles and then later of the Acholi when they came to be the dominant ethnic group in the military. Once again, it is of importance for the purpose of this paper that it was specifically the Acholi that became the *militarized* ethnic group, since it is through understanding Acholi marginalization in Uganda this paper attempt to understand post-colonial heritage to political instability and ethnic conflict.

The politicization of ethnicity, and also the militarization, both is part of the next concept to be explored for the purpose of this paper, *cycles of disproportionate ethnic rule*, which fuel internal conflict and political instability. As a society grows increasingly ethnically politicized it often, especially in post-colonial states, fuels aggressive politics since each ethnic group typically feel neglected or ill treated by the previous regimes and therefor creates cycles of fear, mistrust and vengeance, thus increasing internal conflict.¹⁰ This phenomenon has been present in Uganda since independence since all regime-changes has been conducted through military coups rather than peaceful political process. The concept of these cycles are explored by Zachary Lomo and Lucy Hovil as they attempt to expose the failure of the Ugandan government to address the concerns of the people affected by the conflict concerning the LRA in northern Uganda, a failure they attribute to the, since British colonialism, lingering north-south divide and the Ugandan legacy of political violence.¹¹ These cycles of violence are of value for the purpose of this paper as they illustrate the violence that the politicization of ethnicity generates as well as the way in which the cycles reinforce traditional ethnic lines and the intra-ethnic oppositions existing in the country, further complicating the notion of citizenship in Uganda.

One of the most integral parts of the Ugandan political and cultural landscape is the *north/south divide*. The division has existed ever since the British created the Uganda protectorate in 1894. The division between the north and the south in Uganda consists of a

⁹ Wimmer, Andreas, 1997, p. 643-644.

¹⁰ Lomo, Zachary & Hovil, Lucy, "Root Causes of the Conflict", *Behind the Violence: The War in Northern Uganda*, Monograph no. 99, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, 2004, p. 15.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 17.

general disharmony and lack of national sense of unity, which has its root in the British colonial rule and today is devastating cause of ethnic conflict. The creation of the north/south divide was initially caused by the British very forming of the Uganda protectorate as it incorporated traditionally independent regions into one single colony, which made for internal disharmony.

At the early stages of colonialism the British settled their colony through the kingdom of Buganda in the southern parts of today's Uganda. This gave Buganda and the people living there, the Baganda, a sort of preferential treatment compared to the rest of what would later become Uganda. This is, by Samwiri Lwanga-Lunyiigo, presented as one of the reasons as to why the division between different parts of the country came to exist. The British policy allowed economic investment primarily in the southern parts of the country, while the north was considered less valuable, thus dividing the country into "productive" and "non-productive" zones, which made for national inferiority and superiority complexes.¹² Lwanga-Lunyiigo further accentuates that the ethnic advantage that was given to the Baganda, and the use of the Baganda by the British to conquer neighboring regions, helped to create a colonial myth that said that Buganda traditionally had enjoyed a martial dominance over other tribes which in turn, he means, created a lasting hatred and resentment between Buganda and large parts of the rest of Uganda.¹³

Lwanga-Lunyiigo also shows that the portrayal of the northerners in Uganda as a different kind of people, due to their remoteness from western civilization, was a martial and violent people in nature, thus creating yet another colonial myth, that of the northerners as different from the central parts of the country.¹⁴ For the purpose of this paper, this colonial occurrence is vital since it even after independence continuously has existed in the minds of Ugandans and today lays at the base of many of the problems of political instability and ethnic fragmentation in Uganda. This is of specific importance to this paper since the Acholi people, whose ethnic marginalization will be attempted to be explored above, is one of the ethnic societies which have been disadvantaged in Uganda due to the lingering colonial myth that the northern parts of the country should be less important and less developable.

The many ways in which Uganda is still an extensively ethnically fragmented state, for example the north south divide, also creates difficulties in the every day life of many of the

¹² Lwanga-Lunyiigo, Samwiri, *The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict in Uganda*, Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University, Makerere, paper no: PAP/017, 1987, p. 30-31.

¹³ Ibid, p. 5-7.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 10-11.

people living in the peripheral parts of the country, what the British colonizers traditionally labeled the unproductive zones. For the purpose of this paper the differences in policy, law and above all intentions between the regime and the population are central, something which is examined by Megan Camm as she examines the situation of a ethnic minority in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Camm emphasizes the contradiction that occurs when traditional *customary law*, what often is recognized as legitimate by the respective parts of the population that it applies to, comes in conflict with *national law*.¹⁵ This is of interest to this paper since this contradiction is a direct result of the British policy of pasting together several traditionally separate regions in order to form a larger Ugandan protectorate and the fact that the very notion of a national, larger law, is a direct inheritance of the Ugandan state from the British colonial administration. This contradiction can often be a contributing factor to intra-ethnic conflicts, which in turn reinforces and fuels the ethnic fragmentation in the post-colonial state.

The concepts that have been explored above are central to the purpose of this paper. While the violence in northern Uganda is relatively well known, and effectively revealed by the HRW report that is examined and analyzed in a following section, the underlying structures to the violence, the roots to this ethnic fragmentation and the connection between these and the complexity of the situation remain shrouded. This paper attempts to utilize these concepts of colonial heritage, political instability in the post-colonial state and ethnic fragmentation in order to reveal the signs of Acholi marginalization in the HRW report. This means that I, while examining and analyzing the report, have bore these concepts in mind, thus being able to locate and expose the parts of Acholi marginalization that are made clear by HRW. An understanding of this theoretical framework is crucial since they are vital to understanding the connection between the marginalization of the Acholi people today and the colonial heritage of Britain but also, and primarily, because they *make us able* to even locate these connections.

2.3. Prior Studies of Variations of the Concept of Citizenship in Post-Colonial Africa

Alongside traditional theories of post-colonial ethnic fragmentation and conflict, it is for the purpose of this paper also important to gain an understanding of some ways to consider

¹⁵ Camm, Megan, "Conflict in Congo". *World Policy Journal*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2011, p. 72-76.

citizenship and rights in the post-colonial context. The status of citizenship is crucial to an individual identity since it is supposed to provide for the individual the privileges and protection that no other social institution can offer.¹⁶ As this paper will later attempt to lay bare the ways in which an ethnic group can come to be marginalized through the example of the Acholi people and the case study of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict and how this can come to affect conceptions of national unity and citizenship, these theories must first be investigated. This section of the paper shall therefore attempt to present views on the development of citizenship in post-colonial countries in order to understand in which ways these might have been affected by colonial rule.

Said Adejumobi poses in an article that underlying most conflicts and civil wars in Africa are the issues of citizenship and rights, simply since the colonial rule often institutionalized ethnic rights and privileges which in turn lead to different levels of citizenship.¹⁷ These are traits that are easily attached to the British colonial rule, as their conduct of ‘divide-and-rule’, which is explored above, was specifically aimed at differentiating between different ethnic groups and create fragmentation among the population of the protectorate. The *institutionalization of ethnicity*, in the case of Uganda, is also made clear by the disproportionate preferential treatment, which was given to the people of Buganda upon the beginning of British rule in Uganda.

Adejumobi explains the prevalence of politicized ethnicity in Africa as derivative from colonialism by claiming that the colonial restructuring of the colonized land’s political system *bastardized* the traditional political institutions. Adejumobi then continues to argue that this bastardization constructed and fermented ethnic identities in the colony thus creating the framework for the ethnically based political conflicts that would come to arise in the post-colonial era.¹⁸ He also emphasizes how the development of a sharp division of the *rural and the urban*, a division between the native and the settler, the citizen and the subject if you will, has fragmented the region into ethnic entities that has come to cripple the post-colonial governments since they have been shaped by the colonial rule.¹⁹

In the context of Uganda it is easy to see how the southern parts of the country, through the British preference of the people of Buganda, has come to be viewed as the “*citizens*” of

¹⁶ Adejumobi, Said. ”Citizenship, Rights and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars in Africa”, *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2001, p. 154.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 148.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 157-158.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 159-160.

Uganda, while the rural population, primarily located in the north, has come to be viewed through another lens, being viewed as *subjects* or second-class citizens.

In order to further understand the distinctions between being a citizen and being a subject we are, by Mahmood Mamdani, introduced to the concept of the *bifurcated state*. Mamdani poses that there were two answers to the question as to how the colonial settlers were to be able to rule the indigenous majority: direct and indirect rule.²⁰

Mamdani defines direct rule as the colonial method of administering colonies through implementing a “civilized” legal order in the colony, thus disregarding native institutions. While this is a very typical development in colonial societies, what Mamdani emphasizes is the fact that this system never was intended to allow natives to have access to these “civilized” laws, transforming the civil society into a civilized society in which the uncivilized had no rights.²¹ It is very obvious in which ways this system of direct rule contributed to the creation of internal divisions in the colony, thus contributing to the creation of a *centralized despotism* which excluded the peripheral parts of the country, in Uganda personified by the northern regions. Indirect rule, however, Mamdani means was the method of creating local leaderships, either through reinforcing or restructuring tribal leadership, thus creating a rural tribal authority, which was intended to incorporate the natives into a state-enforced order.²²

By a bifurcated state however, Mamdani means that these systems were almost never isolated from one another but came to be co-existent in most colonies, thus creating different systems.²³ This system created a differentiation between the rural and the urban, thus making the individuals who were covered by the tribal leadership, customary law, no citizens, but subjects. Mamdani further argues that the bifurcated state, through indirect rule, by its racial and ethnic nature reinforced ethnically bound institutions and caused them to revolt against the system they were in.²⁴ This may be seen as an explanation which is two-fold, on the one hand it explains the prevalence of ethnically rooted conflict in post-colonial African states, but on the other hand it also shows the process which caused the urban population to regard the rural population as subjects rather than citizens. This, of course, is of importance for the

²⁰ Mamdani, Mahmood, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1996, p. 16.

²¹ Ibid, p. 16.

²² Ibid, p. 17-18.

²³ Ibid, p. 18.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 24.

propose of this paper as it presents a most present problem in Uganda as regards to the Acholi as well as many other ethnic minority groups.

This two-fold section of the paper has attempted to provide the necessary theoretical framework that is required to be able to understand colonial heritage and its effect on post-colonial society. Firstly, concepts of the occurrence of ethnic fragmentation in post-colonial Africa were examined in order to understand the contribution of colonial rule to the situation in Uganda today. Secondly, some concepts concerning the complexities of post-colonial citizenship were examined in order to shed light on the prevalence of the marginalization from society of many ethnic groups in Uganda today. These concepts are of importance to this paper since they will later be used to argue for the huge influence that British colonial rule has had on post-colonial politics and conflict in Uganda. This will be made clear by applying these theories of post-colonial development on a report by HRW that show the marginalization of the Acholi people in northern Uganda. This paper thus attempts to show the contribution of colonial rule to ethnic marginalization in the post-colonial African state.

3. A Historical Background of the State of Uganda

The political history of Uganda in the post-colonial era after independence in 1962 has been a time dominated by regional internal conflict and ethnic tensions. Meanwhile, parts of the state and privileged parts of the population have risen to a prominent position in Eastern Africa through economic development and stability. As mentioned this has not enveloped any considerable national development or unity as many, and large, regions of the country have continuously been underdeveloped, conflicted and unstable. This section of the paper will be two-fold, firstly attempting to recount for the colonial British rule of their Ugandan colony, as well as explore the harms and complications that the colonial period brought upon the Ugandan population. Secondly, it shall try to explore the events and changes that have been the defining political factors of the Ugandan post-colonial era and thus have contributed to the positive, as well as negative, development of the independent Ugandan nation.

3.1. The British Colonization of Uganda (1894-1962)

As mentioned earlier, the region which today constitutes the state of Uganda was before British colonialism a much more fragmented region consisting of many more, smaller, traditionally or ethnically defined societies, the biggest of which was Buganda, through which the British would come to administer their colonization of the region.

The British motive behind attempting to control this region was, as so often in colonial history, economic, and the process of administering the land began as early as the 1860s, with the British East Africa Company assuming economic power of the region in 1888, but a treaty signed by the local rulers was not signed until 1891 when an agreement was reached with the ruler of Buganda. Following this agreement the British declared Buganda as a protectorate in 1894, which they later, in 1896, expanded to include neighboring regions as well.²⁵ The role of Buganda as the primary part to which Britain communicated and negotiated is of interest to this paper as the region formerly known as Buganda still today enjoy a sort of ‘metropolistic’ position in what today comprises the State of Uganda.

As is typical of European imperialism the Ugandan protectorate was not created in order to address the needs of or relations between the different regions and local communities that it

²⁵ African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, East Africa Living Encyclopedia, *Uganda - History*, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/uhistory.htm> Accessed: 2012-11-30.

encompassed. This, as it was the standard way of the European powers to divide the African continent among each other, expresses the way in which the imperialist powers viewed their colonies. The British never intended for Uganda to be an independent nation-state but viewed the colony primarily as an economic resource.²⁶ This is also made clear from the fact that the British during their time in Uganda by the fact that it was often a method of the British to ‘divide-and-rule’, i.e. the method of hindering intra-ethnic relations in order to quell potential political alliances and uprisings. It was effective for the purposes of the British to divide the Ugandan population in regions and tribal communities since this system prevented the educated Africans from taking place in the national political arena, which in turn suppressed any kind of imaginable supra-tribal political movements.²⁷

The British colonization of Uganda was at the outset, like many more colonial campaigns, a violent one, aimed at pacifying the local population and controlling the region, which by the early 1920s would constitute Uganda.²⁸ During this period of time the province of Buganda continuously developed into the more prosperous part of Uganda and as the British attempted to widen their reach in the region a divide was created and reinforced between the, by the British, premiered Buganda province and the rest of the protectorate.²⁹ This development is one of the first ways in which we can see the way in which Uganda came to be consisting of a productive and a non-productive zone.

One way in which the British colonial administration has further contributed to the complex situation concerning ethnicity, minorities and citizenship is by the import of alien soldiers when forming the Uganda Rifles in 1895. The British imported soldiers of Nubian descent, which allowed them to create a geographically detached and unscrupulous colonial army, which for the purpose of subduing the colony was efficient but for the purpose of forming a regional unity proved to be disastrous. The Nubians were used by British commanders to man forts in among others the Acholi region between the 1870s until around 1890 and during the following years up until the declaration of the Uganda Protectorate in 1894 the Nubians were used at first to subdue the Buganda region and second to control it, thus making it the epicenter of British colonial power in Uganda.³⁰ It can be argued that the deployment of Nubians in Uganda was a big part of the emergence of Buganda as the primary center of

²⁶ Lwanga-Lunyiigo, Samwiri, 1987, p. 2.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 20-21.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 6-7.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 3-4.

colonial power and furthermore that the brutal conduct of the colonial army created a bitter cultural memory within the Acholi community, thus adding to the ethnic fragmentation of the Protectorate.

The British colonial rule created a system of extensive ethnic fragmentation in Uganda resulting in a nation consisting of unranked groups and communities, the concept of which are explored above, living side by side, attempting to co-exist under the British colonial administration. This applies both to the indigenous ethnic communities in the region but also to the immigrating peoples, for example the Nubians, who were supposed to be incorporated into a region to which they were at the best alien and at the worst brutal mercenaries having exerted relentless conflict and violence on the indigenous population. The tensions that were created between the imported Nubian army and the different Uganda regions are one of the contributing factors to the complex perception of citizenship in Uganda today.

3.2. Post-Colonial Ugandan Political History

Uganda achieved its independence from their colonial masters, the British, on October 9 1962. Even though Uganda, since now sitting President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Army (the NRA) seized power in 1986, has experienced relative political stability, in the form of being a one-party state, the decades following independence in 1962 has been equally conflicted and unstable. Uganda has been one of many post-colonial states in which a system of violent politics and armed mobilizations have come to be recognized as legitimate ways of accessing political power.³¹ The relations between these violent cycles of revolutionary politics, ethnicity and colonial heritage will be examined further at a later point in this paper. This conception of violent politics as a legitimate means of obtaining state control has been the prior method used by government opposition since independence and this has had devastating effects on the trust of the population in democratic and political development in Uganda.

As mentioned earlier, Uganda received its independence from Britain in 1962, when Milton Obote was elected Prime Minister and, in an attempt to address the calls for federal status in the state of the pre-colonial kingdom and colonial productive province of Buganda, accepted a

³¹ Lomo, Zachary & Hovil, Lucy, 2004, p. 17.

constitution dividing the Ugandan territory in four provinces with Buganda being the most powerful.³² This was a necessary move by Obote since Buganda was the kingdom through which Britain channeled its colonization of Uganda. For the purpose of this paper the accentuation of the federal systems early existence in Uganda is essential since it provides an insight in how the Ugandan power and administration came to be focused in specific parts, the south, of the country. The king of Buganda, Mutesa, was in 1963 allowed by Obote to be elected for the most ceremonial role of President of Uganda. In 1966 Obote however, through a military coup led by army commander Idi Amin, forces Mutesa into exile and abolishes the federal system through a newly formed constitution while assuming the position of executive President while also remaining Prime Minister.³³ In 1971 however, the tables were turned and Major-General Amin, as Obote was abroad, assumed power of Uganda through a coup and he quickly established one of the severest dictatorships in Africa, resulting in the death of an, by Amnesty International, estimated 300 000 people before his removal in 1979 by a coalition army consisting of 18 Ugandan forces with different ethnic, cultural and ideological backgrounds coming together, adopting the name the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), under pressure from Tanzanian President Nyerere.³⁴ In 1980 there was national elections following which a returning Obote and his party the Uganda People's Congress (UPC) were able to regain power, even though some opposition was provided by the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM) which was led by a young radical who later came to play a large role in the political landscape of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni.³⁵ The army at this time was largely dominated by people of Acholi ethnicity, which an Acholi army General by the name of Tito Okello recognized and used to his advantage as he removed Obote from power through yet another coup in 1985.³⁶ Working in the background, however, was the NRA and Museveni, who during the years following the 1980 election had conducted a guerrilla war against the Obote regime and in 1986 the NRA was able to remove Okello from power and Museveni was installed as President of Uganda. Following his coup, Museveni embarked on a mission of national reconciliation through decentralization which appeared to be of the

³² African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, East Africa Living Encyclopedia, *Uganda - History*, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/uhistory.htm> Accessed: 2012-11-30.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

intention to involve the entire state in decision making processes and unite the nation but rather seems to have changed national-level conflict to local-level conflict.³⁷

This paper will make the connection between colonial rule and post-colonial ethnic conflict and marginalization in Uganda by locating marginalization of the Acholi people through a HRW report, *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*. The Acholi people and its place in Ugandan society is thus of additional importance to this paper.

Historically, the Acholi people has been a dominantly rural population in northern Uganda and in the colonial and post-colonial state been disadvantaged due to the north/south divide that has been explored above. Traditionally the Acholi, during and after colonization, have been utilized in the armed forces, thus attributing them a martial profile and subsequently placing them in opposition toward the rest of the country.³⁸ As has been shown above, the current government, led by Yoweri Museveni, achieved power in Uganda by overthrowing the previous regime, that of Acholi General Tito Okello and his Acholi-dominated armed forces.³⁹ It is therefore, in the light of the cycles of ethnic revenge that are explored above, plausible that the Acholi people today are in a position of submission in Uganda.

The plights of the Acholi people are made clear most effectively in the context of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict. Because of this, this paper uses a report by HRW on the situation in northern Uganda and the situation of the Acholi people in a following section to try to locate signs of Acholi marginalization from society.

Post-colonial Ugandan society appear as having been left by their imperial masters with a series of national issues which contribute to ethnical conflict and political instability and are attributable to the British way of rule. These problems can be formulated through three themes. Firstly it is easy to see how the British way of giving the Buganda region preferable treatment has contributed to polarizing the political landscape of Uganda by creating envy, resentment and bitterness in the rest of the region. This can in the post-colonial Uganda be seen through the extensive ethnicisation of politics. Similarly and secondly, the British policy of 'divide-and-rule' has also created a nation within which political governance and loyalty

³⁷ Green D. Elliott, "Decentralisation and Conflict in Uganda", *Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 8:4, 2008, p. 446.

³⁸ Lwanga-Lunyiigo, Samwiri, 1987, p. 11-12.

³⁹ African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, East Africa Living Encyclopedia, *Uganda - History*, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/uhistory.htm> Accessed: 2012-12-18.

has been formed along ethnic lines on a local scale, which of course has further contributed to the ethnicisation of Ugandan politics. The third way in which British colonial rule has contributed to a milieu in which ethnicity is one of the most important features of politics and everyday life is the import of alien groups of non-regional peoples which of course also helped to create fragmentation, often lined with ethnic loyalties.

However, even though the theoretical framework that this paper has presented in order to be able to locate the connection between Acholi marginalization in contemporary Uganda and the colonial heritage of Britain constitute an effective tool for this purpose, it is important to remember that the colonial rule certainly is not the only contributing factor to the devastating ethnic fragmentation that exists in Uganda today. As this is an important aspect to bear in mind, this paper solely attempts to reveal the connections between colonial rule and ethnic marginalization; it does not attempt to provide a complete explanation of this occurrence.

4. Analysis of Acholi marginalization in the context of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict

The Human Rights Watch (HRW) report *Uprooted and Forgotten*, created in 2005, attempts to direct the international community's conscience at the human rights violations which during the last few decades have been committed by both sides of a violent conflict, one between the government of Uganda and a rebel organization, the LRA. The report aims at promoting the situation of the mainly Acholi people in northern Uganda to the international community in order to bring an end to the suffering of the population as well as to the conflict. It firstly presents the abuses which have been performed by both the Ugandan military forces (the Ugandan Peoples' Defence Forces, the UPDF) as well as those committed by the LRA, continues to explore the lack of accountability and impunity which is present in Uganda for both sides of the conflict and the grave consequences that this situation poses for the population of northern Uganda. It then proceeds to present recommendations directed at the different actors that are able to affect the situation.⁴⁰ This analysis will focus on the signs I have found within this report that exhibits marginalization of the Acholi people from Ugandan society. This section of the paper is strictly intended to locate signs of Acholi marginalization in the HRW report. I will in the following section apply theories of post-colonial heritage to these signs of marginalization in order to discuss the ways in which colonialism has complicated the situation of the Acholi people.

For the purpose of this paper this report, which is mainly based on interviews with the Acholi population, provides the most information through the testimonies of discrimination and marginalization that are given by the Acholi people. The report thus provides a valuable insight on the Acholi perception of the state. The Acholi is a group that is seldom able to express its concerns and troubles on an international level. This report thus presents a view of the conflict other than, the more commonly promoted, view of the Ugandan government.

For the purpose of understanding the ethnic fragmentation and discrimination that Uganda inherited from their colonial masters the Acholi people is vital, since 90-95 percent of the Acholi sub-region population by mid-2005 had been internally displaced due to this conflict.⁴¹ This paper utilizes Uganda vs. LRA conflict as a case study to exhibit ethnic marginalization

⁴⁰ *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005, p. 71-76.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 13.

because the Acholi marginalization has been made painfully clear in the light of the violence committed in this context in northern Uganda. Additionally, this conflict is used to exhibit Acholi marginalization simply because the conflict has completely re-structured the region and the lives of its mainly Acholi population.

This paper does not, however, attempt to account for the Acholi narrative *per se* as it rather attempts to examine the Uganda vs. LRA conflict *as it is described in the HRW report*. This of course makes it important to realize that the signs of Acholi marginalization which are shown through this analysis are in no way the complete truth, but rather an image presented through one particular perspective of the conflict, that of the international NGO Human Rights Watch.

Through studying this report I have been able to identify a number of themes that are central to locating the marginalization of minority ethnic groups in Uganda, which in turn is central to understanding the ways in which the colonial rule of Britain has affected the increasingly disproportionate balance of power and intensified conflict between different ethnic groups in Uganda. These themes are a lingering perseverance of the north/south divide, a lack of acknowledgement for the Acholi people as citizens rather than subjects, the ethnicisation of the political arena in Uganda, a lack of interest in Acholi security from the government and perhaps most significantly the fact that the Acholi people is showed as having come to conceive the Ugandan government as enemies rather than protectors or allies. In the section below I will in turn present these themes by discussing the situation of the Acholi people as shown through the report. Through this analysis this paper attempts to show the ways in which the Acholi people has come to be one of the minority groups of Uganda in most dire need of relief and protection.

The most dominant expression through Acholi marginalization is expressed in the report is through the depiction of the north/south-divide, which is a traditional aspect of Ugandan national fragmentation. The bulk of Ugandan societal development has in the colonial and post-colonial era taken place in the south as a direct effect of the power traditionally being located there, which has made this division a natural part of the Ugandan sense of nationality. This north/south-divide lies at the root of many of the problems deriving from politics and ethnicity in Uganda and in the report this division comes to be clearly expressed in various ways.

One of the ways by which this is made clear in the report is historical and has been briefly expressed above. The coup performed by Museveni and the NRA in 1986 (see above) was a

classic post-colonial example of a way of seizing power from a disproportionately ethnic rule. It was, however, conducted against a primarily Acholi army led by an Acholi leader, Tito Okello. Following the coup the NRA chased the defeated Acholi army into the north while abusing the northern population, something that has fostered resentment in the north against the Museveni regime.⁴² Through the report it is easily understood that this development has contributed to the marginalization of the Acholi people. Many of the interviews conducted by HRW and presented in the report witness of continuing abuses by the UPDF on the northern population.⁴³

The division between, and the resentment inherent in it, the north and the south is probably the biggest reason to the marginalization of the Acholi. The north/south division and its effects on the Acholi people is two-fold; on the one hand it consists of the violence committed by the UPDF but on the other hand there is also a clear unwillingness within the state to protect the Acholi people and prevent such violence. While the report by HRW highlights the abuse by government forces against the population, which I consider classic acts of ethnic violence rooted in historical disadvantage, it is also important to consider the effects of this violence and this lack of government intervention since it fosters an image of the Acholi people as second-class citizens.

Many of the abuses performed by UPDF soldiers presented in the report takes place in Internally Displaced Camps (IDC's) which are another example presented by HRW in the report of how government action has come to marginalize the Acholi people. As has been noted earlier an overwhelming amount of the Acholi population has been internally displaced due to the Uganda vs. LRA conflict. The internal displacement of the Acholi population is a clear sign of portraying them as subjects rather than citizens. The report points out that the IDC's has been created for the wrong reasons, that they have been created in order to remove the social base within which the LRA might find food and support rather than in order to create security for the population.⁴⁴ The report also points out that the security in these camps is lacking.⁴⁵ This, once again, shows how the government both actively violates the Acholi people as well as it fails to protect them. It is obvious how this removal of Acholi agency and independence reduces them from the sphere of citizenship, which has been described by Said

⁴² *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005, p. 8.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 24-37.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 68-69.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 70-71.

Adejumobi as the right of the individual to the protection of life, liberty, poverty and welfare.⁴⁶ International humanitarian law places obligations of the Ugandan government to sufficiently provide the internally displaced persons with conditions of hygiene, health, nutrition and safety.⁴⁷ As protection for the Acholi population within the IDC's is weak and the government fails to provide for the people what they need, this further complements my conclusion that the forced internal displacement of the Acholi people has been an example of disproportionate ethnic rule over a stigmatized minority ethnic group in order to marginalize the Acholi people and damage the Acholi culture.

The report from HRW also shows how the Acholi people has come to be marginalized due to the ethnicisation of the political arena in Uganda in other ways. As mentioned above, the national agenda of persecuting and capturing the leaders of the LRA has been heavily criticized by large parts of the population. The report shows how especially the involvement of the International Criminal Court (the ICC) in the situation has been met with opposition by many northern leaders since the ICC investigation is feared to have an effect as rather complicating the peace process rather than accelerating it.⁴⁸ Since most of the people affected by the LRA attacks are Acholi, it is primarily Acholi leaders that have expressed opposition against the investigation by referring to traditional Acholi rituals of reconciliation as a means of achieving peace swiftly.⁴⁹ The report here, by expressing the lack of governmental attention to the pleads of the northern population, effectively provides an aspect of Acholi marginalization in Uganda which is rooted in the north/south division, the politicization of ethnicity and historical resentment between the Acholi people and the current Ugandan government.

It is also made obvious through the report that the priorities of the Ugandan government lie elsewhere than in the Acholi people's security. This is made clear partly through the already discussed lack of acknowledgement of need for more relief and protection of the Acholi people, as in this statement released by the government of Uganda to an HRW claim that security is lacking in the IDC's:

⁴⁶ Adejumobi, Said, 2001, p. 152-153.

⁴⁷ *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005, p. 68-69.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 55-56.

There is a well established function[ing] accountability structure in the IDPC (Internally displaced people camp) for any abuses by the government officials more especially the UPDF. Lt. Col Francis Achoka deputized by Capt Mzee Tutu are presidential appointees for IDPC Gulu for security monitoring and handling all cases of Human rights nature for subsequent action with either the UPDF courts and/or police in the civil courts.⁵⁰

Through such a statement the government makes it very clear that the northern parts and its population is not a priority of the state. The casual dismissing of HRW's claims testifies about a view on the greatest security crisis in Uganda as unimportant simply because it affects a people which the government arguably considers less of citizens than the population in the southern parts of the country. The lack of governmental interest in the conflict is made further clear through the limitations placed, by the government, on the Ugandan Human Rights Commission (UHRC). The report stresses that the UHRC is under-funded as well as under staffed to be able to address the situation in northern Uganda properly while expressing concern that the commissioners are nominated by President Museveni, which of course makes the agenda and purpose of the UHRC both affected by governmental interest as well as sensitive to government pressure.⁵¹ It is easily imaginable that the lack of funding and staffing of the UHRC is most devastating in the north and for the people who need it the most, and the report stresses that a greater UHRC presence is vital in northern Uganda.⁵²

The lack of national interest in protecting the Acholi people is of course a critical blow to the citizenship of the Acholi. This is one of the clearest signs through which it is possible to see the marginalization of the Acholi.

I find however, that the most crucial and pressing way in which the report shows the marginalization of the Acholi people is through the depiction of a general Acholi loss of faith in the Ugandan government and an Acholi tendency to view the people in charge of protecting them from attacks as an enemy rather than an ally. In the report this is made clear through numerous interviews in which the Acholi express a disturbing resignation as regards to their personal security. This is often shown in regards to the brutal conduct of the UPDF, here after having been abused for returning back to camp after the UPDF imposed curfew:

⁵⁰ *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005, p. 41.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 53-54.

⁵² *Ibid*, p. 55.

We did not complain to anyone about this. It is a normal thing when you come late and no one follows it up. We were late because we had gone far.⁵³

The report expresses concerns that the resignation of the Acholi people to a large part is due to the lack of accountability of UPDF soldiers in the north as well as to the lack of efficient mechanisms to pursue cases of UPDF abuse against the population:

People fear to report a case – they think it is better to keep quiet. They have felt that something terrible will happen if they report a case.⁵⁴

The report also expresses that this lack of trust in the government is not only shown by the civilian population, as even the councilors which *de facto* are a part of the political system in Uganda are cautious about opposing local army commanders in fear of retributions.⁵⁵

The lack of popular support of and trust in the national government among the Acholi people is especially worrisome since it is the state that is supposed to have the primary responsibility for the security of its people. As the Acholi people has come to consider the Ugandan government as an enemy and the efforts of the government enforces this conclusion rather than counterparts it, or at the very least attempt to mend this devastating division of the nation, the marginalization of the Acholi is made disturbingly clear through this report.

The signs of Acholi marginalization that I have located in the HRW-report *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda* can be formulated through two perspectives. First the Ugandan government's lack of interest in protecting the Acholi people, and second the Acholi people's lack of trust in its government. Placed in the context of the prevalent perception of the state as the primary and sovereign source of protection of its people it is vital that the relationship between the Ugandan government and the Acholi people are improved since the state is the primary protector of its citizens.

This section has for the purpose of this paper, however, tried to examine the report by Human Rights Watch in order to distinguish Acholi marginalization in Uganda for the

⁵³ *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005, p. 31.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 45.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 47.

purpose of understanding the peripheral position in which the Acholi people currently are. This peripheral status of the Acholi is by no means a unique situation for that particular ethnic group but is a devastating part the conditions of many more ethnic minority groups in Uganda. For the purpose of this paper, however, the focus of the report on the Acholi people provides precisely the insight in Acholi marginalization in terms of citizenship and rights that this paper attempts to attribute, in part, to the colonial heritage of Britain.

5. Discussion – Discovering the Contribution of Colonialism to the Ethnic Marginalization of the Acholi people

This section of this paper will attempt to connect the signs of Acholi marginalization in contemporary Uganda as made clear in the HRW report *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda* with the colonial rule of Britain. I intend to make this connection by discussing different approaches to post-colonial heritage as well as some theories about the distinction between being a citizen or a subject in post-colonial states. The purpose of this paper has been to expose the colonial structures and processes that have created and shaped the political landscape of Uganda today as well as be able to see the effect of the colonial rule on the situation for ethnic minorities and political instability in Uganda.

As has been shown above, Uganda has since independence been entangled in internal conflict in the form of often ethnically rooted rebellion and government resistance. The emergence of these conflicts might appear to be the direct effect of the exit of the colonial masters Britain. I, however, pose that this instability is rather, to a large extent, an effect of the very colonization of the area in the first place. As has been shown above, the colonization of Uganda, along the traditional methods of European imperialism, was performed in total absence of respect for traditionally recognized borders between tribes and societies. This is a classic failure of European imperialism as it created fragmented and illegitimate states. This section of the paper attempts to show the ways in which colonial rule has helped create a divided Ugandan population in which people of certain ethnicity, in this paper exemplified by the Acholi, appear to be considered less of state citizens.

The perhaps most prevalent factor in discussing flaws in the protection of citizenship in Uganda is that of the division of the country into a northern and a southern zone, which was attributed certain characteristics to the different zones and has been present in the Ugandan self-image ever since the British first made the distinction, however none the less after independence. The affect of the British on regional disharmony however goes even deeper than this as the European scramble for land, which was totally senseless to traditional African societies, contributed to this lack of national unity since it created borders within which traditionally independent peoples were supposed to be subjected to a greater state. This first example of British influence on inter-ethnic relations in Uganda is a clear contributing reason

to the ethnic fragmentation of Uganda and subsequently the lack of Ugandan government interest in protecting the northern population, among those the Acholi, which is shown through the analysis of the HRW report.

Another large effect of British colonial rule on the marginalization of the Acholi people which has been shown in this paper is the prevalence of politicized ethnicity and cycles of political revenge that has extensively and devastatingly been the method of regime change in Uganda in the post-colonial era. As has been shown in a previous section, the post-colonial political history of Uganda has been dominated by these cycles of revenge. These revenge cycles have their root in the extensive politicization of ethnicity. The connection with the British colonial heritage here is the fact that the British, by giving preferential treatment to the Baganda, by their method of ‘divide-and-rule’ and by their dividing Uganda into different “productivity-zones” fuelled ethnic differences thus attributing heritage and ethnicity the primary value as to where an individual should be in society. The politicization of ethnicity brought with it an ethnicisation of the military forces as well, and both these processes are attributable to the colonial policy of attributing certain characteristics to certain parts of the Ugandan population.

There has yet to be a shift of regime in post-colonial Uganda that takes place through democratic means rather through a military coup. This fact, more than most other, show the infected situation between different parts of the population and their ethnic loyalties. Furthermore, this lack of efficient democratic processes in Uganda is easily attributed in part to the weak state of administration in which the British left Uganda.

The marginalization of the Acholi people is, through the logic of ethnic revenge and politicized ethnicity, easily recognized since this paper has shown that the last army that was defeated and the last regime that was overthrown, by current President Museveni, was that of General Tito Okello who was Acholi himself and commander of an army heavily dominated by Acholi soldiers. Here, the logic of ethnic revenge offers a plausible reason as to why the Acholi people in many ways are marginalized from Ugandan society, but also as to why the UPDF exert such a brutal violence against the Acholi population. By this logic, the oppressive nature of the UPDF and the Ugandan government are also attributable in part to the colonial rule of Britain.

Connected to the colonial issue of imposing boundaries in conflict with those traditionally recognized by the people in the region, there is also a similar problem, however less concrete. The concept of imposing laws, which are attempted to unify the nation under one judicial

system and stabilize the state, is a classic example of colonial method. This paper has shown that this phenomenon more often than not creates local disappointment and hostility toward the state when the national law comes into conflict with locally traditional values and rules. This often alters relationships between ethnic groups on a small scale while it at the same time creates resentment towards the state. This problem is attributable to the rule of the British simply because it was during the colonial area that the state of Uganda first was formulated and since it was the lack of legitimate enforcement from the British helped fuel ethnic rivalries and conflict.

In the case studied in the previous section, the analysis of Acholi marginalization in the context of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict, the opposition between customary and national law, or rather the difference between customary and national *interests*, are best shown through the involvement of the ICC. The involvement of the ICC was the preferred action of the Ugandan government in order to capture and bring to justice a rebel leader, Joseph Kony, and bring to an end his organization, the LRA. On the other hand the Acholi people, which is the people most affected by LRA attacks, rather preferred to resolve the conflict through traditional Acholi methods of reconciliation and forgiveness.⁵⁶ The involvement of the ICC, arguably, has further complicated the situation by threatening the LRA leaders rather than contribute to the resolution of the conflict, which would drastically improve the situation of the Acholi people by increasing their access to freedom, security and prosperity. This development shows that the subjugation of the Acholi community, with inherent traditional values, to Uganda has created a dichotomy between not customary and national law, but between customary and national *interests*, arguably prolonging the conflict and thus adding to the plight of the Acholi people.

Furthermore, as has been shown in a previous section, post-colonial societies that have been subjected to indirect rule, the primarily British model of colonial rule, are more prone to suffer serious internal conflict and political instability. When considering the other aspects of British colonial rule in Uganda, such as ‘divide-and-rule’ and the politicization of ethnicity, it is also easy to see the prevalence of ethnicity as a major ground to these conflicts.

The indirect rule of Britain in Uganda allowed for traditional communities to persevere while it favored some of these groups. This was done in order to keep the Ugandan population from being able to form a coalition to overthrow the British rulers. In the post colonial era, the

⁵⁶ *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005, p. 55-56.

fact that ethnic communities and tribes had been incorporated under the same national rule came to fuel the political instability since political allegiances through the ethnicisation of politics often are ethnically aligned. It is understandable that few, in such an ethnically fragmented society, are inclined to take action on behalf of another ethnic group, as is the case in the Uganda vs. LRA conflict. The previous section of this paper showed a lack of interest on behalf of the Ugandan government to protect the northern population. Given the ethnic fragmentation of Uganda we have thus located another factor as to how the Acholi people's marginalization, as shown through the HRW report, studied in the previous section can plausibly be argued to derive, at least in part, from the colonial rule of Britain.

Closely related to the concepts of ethnic conflict and instability, which has been explored above, is the question of citizenship, as to who have come to be viewed as citizens in Uganda following the rule of Britain.

Through the analysis of the HRW report above I have shown that there are obvious reasons to express concern over the Acholi people's position in Uganda in regards to citizenship and access to rights. The report shows clear reasons to be concerned that the government expresses very little interest in protecting the Acholi people. Given the concepts of politicized ethnicity, cycles of revenge and ethnic fragmentation that this paper attempts to apply to the situation it is plausible that the distinctions between citizens and subjects, which have been explored above, the lack of national unity and interest in marginalized groups is, at least to some extent, also attributable to the rule of Britain in the colonial era. Since the British came to work more closely together with some ethnic groups in Uganda during the early parts of colonization, it came to be that there was created a division between them and the rest of the population of the region. This is to some extent also part of the north/south division, however this rather points to the shaping of roles within Uganda which were polarized in a way that only certain parts of the country came to be considered "real" citizens, while some were subjugated to solely being subjects of the state.

Bearing this in mind, the lack of effort on behalf of the Ugandan government in order to protect the Acholi people becomes less of a mystery. This paper has shown that the complex understanding of the division between citizens and subjects in post colonial Africa, which is a question at the heart of the plights and suffering of minority groups such as the Acholi, is to a large extent attributable to the style of colonial rule, which in the case of Uganda is the *unranked* system of ethnicity inherited from the British.

Surprisingly many of the problems that are present in post-colonial societies in the world today are attributable to the heritage that state has received from their colonial masters. The social and political structures that underlie a state are integral to that state in a way that they are almost impossible to uproot completely. This is a crucial problem in states in which political structures have been imposed on a people without the proper channels of democracy and civil society having been developed.

Through an analysis of the HRW report *Uprooted and Forgotten: impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, this paper has been able to locate some of the ways in which one Ugandan minority group, the Acholi, have been marginalized in the post colonial era due to structures that were created by the British colonial masters. Colonialism has obviously had enormous effects on most post-colonial societies and they are almost always impossible, or at least very difficult, to change or get rid of.

A positive change for the Acholi people, as well as other ethnic minorities in Uganda, is long over due but before these colonial structures are reformed the outlook is bleak. This paper does not offer, nor does it attempt to offer, a solution to this problem. It has, however, shown the enormous effects of colonialism on the post-colonial African state and the problems caused by it. Furthermore, it has shown the fact that the traditional approach of the West towards Africa is misguided and that the complexities of African societies and the structures and problems within are not rooted in “savageness” on behalf of the African population but rather in the brutality of colonial Western rule, an insight which might clarify and correct Western views on Africa.

The purpose of this paper has been to reveal the ways in which colonial rule in Uganda may plausibly have contributed to the marginalization of ethnic minorities, specifically the Acholi in northern Uganda. This paper has attempted to do so by examining a report concerning the Acholi people in the context of a brutal conflict in order to locate signs of marginalization and by applying theories of colonial heritage and its effect on post-colonial development.

Bearing this in mind, it is important to remember that the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report analyzed in the previous section in no way attempts to connect the plight of the Acholi people to colonial heritage. It is, however, very plausible that colonization *has* had grave consequences for the post-colonial Ugandan state and by applying the theoretical tools presented in a previous section to the situation as presented by HRW in the report, this paper has been able to reveal some of the most significant ways in which colonial rule has come to

affect the political instability and ethnic fragmentation that is a fact in contemporary Uganda. The theoretical framework presented above has thus been very useful to this paper, which in turn presents an often overlooked perspective on political instability and ethnic conflict.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been two-fold, consisting of one general and one context-specific purpose. The general purpose has been to provide an insight in the ways through which a colonial rule can affect and contribute to ethnic fragmentation and political instability within the post-colonial state. The context-specific purpose of this paper has been to examine in which ways the marginalization of the Acholi people in northern Uganda can be seen as an effect of the colonial rule of Britain. This paper has attempted to do so by creating a theoretical framework consisting of prior studies on post-colonial studies and notions of citizenship in post-colonial societies. This focus on post-colonial literature has promoted a certain perspective on the issues presented in this paper, namely the structures in Ugandan society which create Acholi marginalization, which are derivable from the colonial rule of Britain.

This paper has attempted to achieve these purposes by using a contextualizing approach by which theories of colonial heritage and post-colonial development have been used to understand Acholi marginalization in Uganda. The theories explored and utilized are concepts of differences in colonial style, politicizing ethnicity, concepts of cycles of disproportionate ethnic rule that feed inequalities and political instability and the contradiction between federal and customary law. Signs of Acholi marginalization discussed in this paper have been discovered in the context of the Uganda vs. LRA conflict, which has raged in northern Uganda for many years now, through the report *Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda*, released by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 2005. This HRW report presents a perspective on the situation of the Acholi people that lays bare the humanitarian crisis and lack of government protection that has had devastating effects on the Acholi people.

This paper has, by applying these theories of colonial heritage and post-colonial development on the situation of the Acholi people as presented in the HRW report, shown the contribution of colonial rule to the underlying structures which today complicate the national unity of Uganda.

By applying these theories of post-colonial heritage on the situation in northern Uganda this paper provides an insight in the underlying structures that create marginalization of ethnic minority groups in post-colonial societies. This is important since it is plausible to assume that the colonial effect on a society is often forgotten or minimalized in discussions of political

instability and ethnic fragmentation. This paper can thus provide an integral part of the complex understanding of the structures of weak post-colonial states that generates internal conflict, ethnic fragmentation and political instability. Understanding these structures is essential in order to be able to provide security for both minority groups in all post-colonial states, but also, and specifically, for the Acholi people in northern Uganda.

This paper has accentuated colonial rule as a contributing factor to ethnic fragmentation and marginalization in the post-colonial African state. This has, in the context of the Acholi people of Uganda, been showed through the perseverance of the north/south divide, the dichotomy of national vs. regional interests and the unwillingness of the Ugandan government to reform due to historical differences rooted in colonialism. This paper has shown that colonialism and its heritage is still entangled in almost every aspect of political instability and ethnic fragmentation in Uganda today and it thus provides an important aspect for the understanding of the complex situation within which the Acholi people, along with many other minority groups, currently find themselves. This connection between colonial rule and political instability is crucial for understanding and being able to remedy the structures that complicate the lives of ethnic minorities in the post-colonial African state in general and Uganda in particular.

7. References

Books

Lomo, Zachary & Hovil, Lucy, *Behind the Violence: The War in Northern Uganda*, Monograph no. 99, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, 2004.

Mamdani, Mahmood, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1996.

Internet

African Studies Center, University of Pennsylvania, East Africa Living Encyclopedia, *Uganda - History*, <http://www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/uhistory.htm> Accessed: 2012-11-30.

Journal Articles

Adejumobi, Said, "Citizenship, Rights and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars in Africa", *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2001, p. 148-170.

Blanton, Robert, T. Mason, David and Athow, Brian, "Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2001, p. 473-491.

Camm, Megan, "Conflict in Congo", *World Policy Journal*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2011, p. 70-80.

Green D. Elliott, "Decentralisation and Conflict in Uganda", *Conflict, Security and Development*, vol. 8:4, 2008, p. 427-450.

Wimmer, Andreas, "Who owns the state? Understanding ethnic conflict in post-colonial societies", *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1997, p. 631-665.

Papers

Lwanga-Lunyiigo, Samwiri, *The Colonial Roots of Internal Conflict in Uganda*, Makerere Institute of Social Research, Makerere University, Makerere, paper no: PAP/017, 1987.

Reports

Uprooted and Forgotten: Impunity and Human Rights Abuses in Northern Uganda, Human Rights Watch, September 20, 2005.