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Ethnic conflict in Africa: a case study of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war in northern Uganda

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2012-02-16
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/11325

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Abstract:

This thesis explores the war in Northern Uganda between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) government. It specifically looks at Acholiland which has borne the brunt of the war by analyzing its causes and endurance despite the government's control of state machinery. The thesis focuses on the role of ethnicity in the war since the rise of the government of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in 1986. The study points out that while political turbulence and wars have been part of Uganda's politics since independence in 1962, the persistence of the LRA war is attributable to the mobilization and manipulation of ethnicity. In addition, the dominant reason for the continuation of the war is the perception among the Acholi people of exclusion and marginalization from meaningful political participation.

The study contributes to the existing literature that links ethnicity and violence by showing that ethnicity is often not the problem, but that ethnic violence emanates from manipulation and politicization of ethnicity by leaders for selfish interests. Successive Ugandan leaders have sown the seeds of resentment that has led to ethnic violence by discriminating against some ethnic groups while favouring others. The thesis concludes that Uganda will not achieve stability until it instills the ethos of national integration and fair distribution of political and economic resources.