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The Use of Religion in Violent Conflict, Conflict Resolution, and Peacebuilding: Cases from Uganda and Sierra Leone

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

THE USE OF RELIGION IN VIOLENT CONFLICT, CONFLICT RESOLUTION,
AND PEACEBUILDING: CASES FROM UGANDA AND SIERRA LEONE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

by

Sedinam Akosua Kumah

2021

To: Dean John F. Stack
Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs

This thesis, written by Sedinam Akosua Kumah, and entitled The Use of Religion in Violent Conflict, Conflict Resolution, and Peacebuilding: Cases from Uganda and Sierra Leone, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.

Oren Stier

John Clark

Albert Wuaku, Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 23, 2021

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Florida International University, 2021

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I am thankful for my family and friends, whose love and support kept me strong throughout my studies here.

Most importantly, I am indebted to God, whose love and mercies have brought me thus far.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

THE USE OF RELIGION IN VIOLENT CONFLICT, CONFLICT RESOLUTION,
AND PEACEBUILDING: CASES FROM UGANDA AND SIERRA LEONE

by

Sedinam Akosua Kumah

Florida international University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor Albert Wuaku, major Professor

Noted as one of the most notorious rebels in Africa, The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been known to commit inexcusable atrocities in Uganda, raiding villages to kill, kidnap, and loot. Since 1989, Uganda has been in a state of constant conflict because of the activities of the LRA. In this study I identify the political milieu which fomented political unrest in Uganda leading to the emergence of the LRA. Additionally, I examine the operations of the LRA, while uncovering the spiritual order it professed and also weaponized in its campaign of violence.

After Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war, the country is attempting to reconstruct what was lost to the war through approaches such as Pentecostalism, reconciliation, and reparations. I delve into the antecedents of the war and the different types of peace attainable by a nation. I dwell on the use of religion in these approaches, and the efforts made by the many religious leaders and practitioners to promote peace.

In completing this case study, the dominant methodology used was library research, with information gathered from documentaries, books, and scholarly articles mainly from the fields of Political Science, African Studies, and Religious Studies.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AFRC- Armed Forces Revolutionary Council

APC- All people's Congress

ATR- African Traditional Religion

CAR- Central African Republic

CCSL – Council of Churches in Sierra Leone

CDF- Civil Defense Force

DRC – Democratic Republic of Congo

ECOMOG- Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Groups

HSM- Holy Spirit Movement

HSMF- Holy Spirit Mobile Force

ICC- International Criminal Court

IRCSL- Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone

LRA/M – Lord's Resistance Army/ Movement

UNLA- Uganda National Liberation Army

IRC- Inter-Religious Council

NGO- Nongovernmental Organization

NPFL- National Patriotic Front of Liberia

NRA- National Resistance Army

PFSL- Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone

RUF- Revolutionary United Front

SAF- Sudanese Armed Forces

SLA- Sierra Leone Army

SLPP- Sierra Leone People's party

Sobel- Soldier by day, rebel by night

SPLA/M- Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement

UPDA- Uganda People's Democratic Army

UPDF- Uganda People's Defense Force

WCRP -World Conference of Religion and Peace

TRC-Truth and Reconciliation Council/Courts

Key Terms

Civilians - People who are not members of a country's armed forces (including government officials, civil servants, and other citizens) but who may play various roles in a civil war, such as perpetrators, victims, peacemakers, and war-time capitalists.¹

Civil War- An armed confrontation between a state and one or more structured non-state actors in the state's territory.²

Charisma- Charm that one possesses, that makes him/her appear to be endowed with supernatural powers.

Conflict- A conflict is a struggle (mental or physical) between persons, institutions, or nations. In this thesis, I refer to violent physical struggles.

¹ George Klay Kieh, Jr, "Civilians and Civil Wars in Africa: The Cases of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote D'Ivoire," *Peace Research* 48, no. 1/2 (2016): 204, accessed February 10, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26382621>.

² Kristian S. Gleditsch, "Civil war." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, September 11, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/civil-war>.

Just War- one that avenges wrongs, when a nation or state has to be punished, for refusing to make amends for the wrongs inflicted by its subjects, or to restore what it has seized unjustly. Peace.³ OR Just war is war that strives to end some form of violence, in self-defense, or undertaken by authorities whose aim is to make peace.

Peace- Lack of open violence between and within states, and the aim of creating the conditions necessary for society to live without fear or poverty, within a broadly agreed political system⁴.

Peacemaking- Attempts made by individuals and societies to curb violence and end conflicts between and within states.

Rebel- One who takes up arms in order to oppose the government or leader

Violence- The use of physical force in order to threaten, harass, harm or kill

³ Richmond, *Peace: A Very*, 17.

⁴ Ibid, 8.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

All nations are plagued with religious conflicts which often have similar causes, including the need for the establishment of a theocracy. The influence of religion on politics, especially in African nations cannot be overemphasized. Tesfai reports that “religion becomes an explosive mix when it is tied to ethnicity,”⁵ and considering the numerous ethnic groups found in the various African countries, the devastation projected from the explosion Tesfai so clearly anticipates must be colossal. For countries bedeviled with tribal conflicts, the effects of religion may exacerbate the impact of atrocities committed. Religion has had some significant influence on the infamous north-south divide in Nigeria and Sudan, on Rwanda’s Hutu- Tutsi genocide, and in Somalia and Algeria’s civil wars. More often than not, guerilla groups arise from the maelstrom of politics; the LRA is no exception. With that being said, it is noteworthy to bring to light the positive influence of religion. We emphasize the negative and neglect the positive effects of religion. Religion, when in the right hands can help establish peace rather than chaos. The Truth and Reconciliation councils (hereafter referred to as TRCs) in Sierra Leone, in conjunction with the Inter-Religious Council, used religion in several ways to end the war and reconstruct their nation. This paper examines the use of religion as an instigator of violence as well as an advocate for peace. I present the case of the LRA in

⁵ Yacob Tesfai, *Holy Warriors, Infidels, and Peacemakers in Africa* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 46.

the first instance and the case of Sierra Leone in the second. Following this, I attempt to analyze both cases and find the roles of religion in each.

Research Questions

In this thesis, I seek to address the questions why, and in what ways is religion used in the two cases presented? What role does religion play in the Sierra Leone war and in the attacks waged by the LRA? Can religion be used to achieve their political goals, and is it indeed used? What role does religion play (through transitional justice systems and restorative approaches) in the post-war peacebuilding project in Sierra Leone? My argument in this study is that for political actors in Africa, religion is a form of capital that can be used in social and political projects because of its ability to bring communities together, generate appropriate moods, infuse mundane projects with an aura of sacrality and communicate meanings. To achieve his political ambitions Joseph Kony ingeniously frames his project in religious terms, building on discourses and rituals forms from Islam, Christianity, and African Religions. Likewise, in Post war Sierra leone Pentecostal narratives and practices are retooled to speak to the needs of a peace building project.

Objectives and Chapter Overview

My objective in this project is to research, analyze, and document the role religion plays in the unfolding of these two scenarios. This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction, where I offer a general overview of what the thesis entails, my research questions, aim, methodology and the significance of this research. Additionally, I review some relevant literature, pointing out the leads they offer and how they relate to

the cases being presented in the subsequent chapters. Chapter two presents the case of Joseph Kony and the LRA in East Africa, specifically Uganda, their operations, emergence, and use of religion in carrying out violent activities. Chapter three focuses on the advent of the Sierra Leone civil war and the use of religion during and in the aftermath of the war to facilitate peace and reconstruct the society. In chapter four, I attempt to make theoretical sense of the cases presented through a comparative analysis. I do this by using theories propounded by Durkheim, Juergensmeyer, and by examining scholarly work on the subjects of religion and peace. I also use some verses from the Qur'an and the Bible to bolster some arguments. The final chapter is my conclusion. I offer a summary of the study, tying the threads that run through the arguments presented into a coherent whole and reflecting generally the place of religion in contemporary African Politics, violence, and peace.

Relevant Literature on Religion and Violence

There is ample literature on the relationship between religion, violence, and peace considering the numerous religious conflicts and the attempts to reestablish communities that have occurred globally and historically. Violence exists in several forms. Scholars like Graf aver that violence is inherent to human behavior, either as a means to attack others or to protect oneself from attack. He notes, how, in most cases, violence is a product of religion.⁶ He further posits that religion could be used to foment violence and authorize violence using sacred rituals and other practices permissible under religious

⁶ Fritz Graf, "Violence," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Lindsay Jones (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 14:9595, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3424503271/GVRL?u=miam11506&sid=GVRL&xid=b2f4283d>.

auspices. Religion can also be used to restore peace and healing following violence. This research presents cases that demonstrate all three instances. The Uganda case presents material on the first and second instances, as Kony coerces and brainwashes his soldiers into committing atrocities using the guise of religious categories such as “divine injunctions: and the fulfilment of “prophesies: The Sierra Leone case presents material that demonstrate the second instance. Post-war Sierra Leone enlists Pentecostal discourse and praxis as a means of peacebuilding, peacemaking, and reconciliation.

The Oxford Handbook of Religion and violence edited by Juergensmeyer et al. furnishes readers with exhaustive information on the fields of religion and violence and offers novel insights into the nature of the relationship (between religion and violence) in the context of different religions. In other words, the experts in the field examine the major religions (Christianity Hinduism, Islam, African Traditional Religions) and their connection with violence. They look at how the theological and literary discourse within said religions justify warfare, through rituals and other religious practices. Additionally, they supply a variety of themes (14, precisely) related to religion and violence, including, martyrdom, sacrifice, and just war and carefully examine them across different religions. Furthermore, the scholars, who represent the disciplinary fields of sociology, anthropology, theology, psychology, and political science, engage the discourse on religiously inspired violence, and analyze the field using theoretical approaches of pioneering scholars such as Durkheim and Malinowski. Finally, they present “new directions” in theory related to religion and violence, which are presented by some of the most innovative contemporary scholars and provide novel insights into the understanding of this important field of studies. In its entirety, this volume forges new paths in the

analysis of religion (p. 2) and violence, anticipating the way that this field of studies will continue to evolve.

In *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*, the various contributors shed light on two major categories of violence; direct and structural, based on Galtung's original three categories (direct, cultural, and structural), in ways that enhance our understandings. They propose peace-making in the case of the former and peacebuilding in the case of the latter, intimating some difference between the two terms. They examine violence at the micro and macro level, ranging from "intimate" violence between two individuals, mass destruction as in genocide, nationalism and war, and social injustice or inequality especially toward specific groups. With regards to direct violence, the authors argue that structural violence has the potential to kill, albeit painstakingly. They note that whereas direct violence may be periodical, structural violence is perpetual. Christie et al. note, however, that the relationship between direct and structural violence is that of an "interlocking system of violence".⁷ They develop the authoritarian personality theory, the social identity theory, and the relative deprivation theory as the three main theories that explain direct violence (specifically interstate conflict). The last two are the most common amongst the three, and this study will build on these theories. It will demonstrate how the Acholi story falls within this framework. The prime mover of any kind of violence is, to the editors, social identity, and the concept is broad enough to encompass religious identity, ethnic identity, and several others. I build on theoretical insights from this book in the fourth chapter of this study,

⁷ Daniel J. Christie, Richard V. Wagner, and Deborah Du Nann Winter, eds., *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001).

where I analyze the two cases of the use of religion in promoting or justifying violence and in building peace, presented in the study.

In *Peace: A Very Short Introduction*, Oliver Richmond disputes the notion of war being ingrained in human behavior. In fact, he notes peace instead as being inherent to human nature, with many bouts of war disturbing the natural state of affairs.⁸ Peace could be naturally present or achieved following a state of upheaval. He asserts that the crucial part of peace- the “insignificant” mundane activities- is often ignored while priority is rather given to major tasks such as trying to end conflicts and eradicating acts of violence. Richmond also underscores the bearing religion has on the peace concept. In listing the theoretical approaches to peace, Richmond mentions Political realism, proposed by authors including Sun Tzo, Thucydides, and Augustine⁹, as the possession of military and economic power by states and the absence of direct violence (with all other forms of violence present). He argues that the concept of peace encompasses broader positive perspectives than the narrow and negative concept that once existed. Richmond also touches on the question of “just war” and “just peace”, raising questions regarding when the two concepts may be used. Finally, he mentions four processes involved in managing, resolving, and transforming conflicts: achieving negative peace through ceasefires; social reconciliation and positive peace; achieving liberal peace via

⁸ Oliver P. Richmond, "Introduction: The Multiple Dimensions of Peace," introduction to *Peace: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1.

⁹ Sun Tzu was the author of the popular book, *Art of War*. He was a Chinese philosopher and military strategist in the 6th Century BC.

Thucydides was an ancient Greek historian who in the 5th Century BC during the war between Athens and Sparta, proclaimed that power rather than morality was more important.

Augustine of Hippo was a Latin theologian and philosopher in the 5th Century AD who is known for his defense of the divinity of Christ.

peacekeeping, democratization, capitalism, and peacebuilding; achieving local and contextual peace which deals with justice in everyday issues. The author notes several types of peace, of which Hybrid Peace is one. Hybrid peace is a mixture of local and liberal peace geared toward democracy and stability. In this case, “contextual social, cultural, and historical norms, identities, and material resources” contribute to achieving this kind of peace.¹⁰ We will see in this study that this model fits the type of peace being fostered by Sierra Leone following its 11-year civil war.

Lawrence Cline’s *The Lord’s Resistance Army* delves into the antecedents of the formation of the LRA, stating its ideology, response, and the issues surrounding its operation in Uganda. This work offers valuable insights into the internal dynamics of the group. He acknowledges that although religion may not be considered the paramount factor in the crimes of the LRA, it was a “useful mobilizing mechanism” and a “common language” in executing the LRA’s beliefs.¹¹

In her essay *Displacing Violence: Making Pentecostal Memory in Postwar Sierra Leone*, Rosalind Shaw, an expert on the pre- and post-war era of Sierra Leone, demonstrates the use of Pentecostalism by the Sierra Leoneans as a means of post war reconstruction and peacebuilding.¹² She notes how post war communities in Sierra Leone are retooling the Pentecostal deliverance narrative to address the years of the war and its consequent

¹⁰ Oliver P. Richmond, *Peace: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (NY, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 108.

¹¹ Lawrence Cline, *The Lord's Resistance Army*, PSI Guides to Terrorists Insurgents, and Armed Groups (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013).

¹² Rosalind Shaw, "Displacing Violence: Making Pentecostal Memory in Postwar Sierra Leone," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 1 (February 2007): 69, accessed September 13, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4124729>.

devastation. She mentions that Pentecostals stress on forgiveness and forgetting as a way to deal with the atrocities. The war is, and overcoming it, is channeled into the spiritual realm, where there is a better chance of winning. Using texts, sermons, and stories, the people attempt restoration.¹³

Similarly, in Ruth Marshal's work *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria*, she describes Pentecostalism in Nigeria as a political spirituality. Describing how Nigerian worshippers posit Pentecostalism as "the answer to Nigeria's problems," Marshal explores how Pentecostalism presents the experience of being born again as a chance for Nigerians to realize the promises of political and religious salvation made during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Marshal's concept of political spirituality offers an analytical lead for anyone writing about religion in Africa and the African Diaspora communities in which religions is often weaponized as a political tool. I build on this idea in my study. I will argue that political spiritualities are possible in Africa and her extensions because in the religious imaginations of these communities, the lines between religion and politics are blurred. As a category, religion is an integral portion of other aspects of culture and not seen as an independent variable. This provides an understanding of how Kony easily engages religion in his political quests, and how seekers of peace in Sierra Leone use Pentecostal symbols to achieve their goals.

In her PhD thesis "Juju and Statecraft: Occult Rumors and Politics in Ghana" Comfort Max-Wirth (2016) directs our attention to a different side of the use of religion as a form of political capital in Africa. She demonstrates some of the ways in which Ghanaian political elites deploy occult rumors for political advantage. The value of her contribution lies

¹³ Ibid.

in her identification of the occult as part of African Religious landscapes. Building on the work of Max-Wirth, I explore how Kony exploits the hold of occult beliefs on the public to his advantage. Literature on Africa's extensions in the Caribbean and Latin America offer examples of the use of religion in advancing political agendas. Caribbean religions such as Vodou, Santeria, and Rastafari can be described as political spiritualities (Paton & Forde, 2012; Laguerre, 1989). Finally, I will explore similar themes demonstrated by authors Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Haar in their work and build on their analytical leads especially, in the chapters on Joseph Kony exploits (Ellis and Ter Haar, 2004; Ellis, 1999).

CHAPTER 2

Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda

Known to commit atrocities, the LRA has been at the forefront of conflict between the government and guerilla groups in Uganda and neighboring countries (Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic). Some scholars believe that they are an organized military group with special training, while others, including the Ugandan government, describe them as mad men. In the 1960s, following Britain's withdrawal from the African continent, and the country in particular in 1962, the leaders of Uganda, in discharging their duties, plunged the country into utter turmoil characterized by rape, public executions, torture, and looting.

In this chapter I delve into the political milieu that paved the way for the precursory Holy Spirit Movement and the Lord's Resistance Army, two prevalent guerilla groups that emerged during this period. I focus on how religion and religious symbols can be manipulated by political agents in their efforts to achieve political goals. I attempt to explain how Kony, in engaging spiritualities (both indigenous, Christian, and Islamic forms), pushes forward his political agenda. In doing so Kony emulates his predecessors, Alice Auma and Severino Okoya, ritual specialists, who pursued political and economic equality for the Acholi people, using religion as rallying tools. Kony builds on this tradition but departs somewhat with his use of religion to justify violence directed at his own people. I explore the subject of the LRA and its operations, as I attempt to identify its religious order and connection with violence. In a bid to do this, I introduce readers to the political, religious, and economic background of Uganda, and illustrate the trajectory of the LRA from its inception in 1987 to its "collapse" in 2017 when the

activities of the group halted. I then present the rituals, laws and so called “divine mandate” of the group. The chapter argues that many, if not all, African communities dwell on the assertion that God, deities, and other spiritual agents possess supernatural powers that influence every aspect of life, including the outcome of mundane projects, and these spiritual forces must always be pressed into service by human actors. Political agents harness this potential of religion to rally communities together and to explain, predict, and control situations to their advantage. The Kony story demonstrates this pattern. I demonstrate the relevance of religion in the realm of African politics, and the interplay of both concepts in the discourse of religiously -and politically- motivated violence. I present material that helps readers to know and understand Uganda as a nation, the problems they faced during the period within which they were under the British protectorate, and especially after gaining independence in 1962.

Section 1: Uganda before the LRA

Uganda, Violence, and Religion

Uganda is a country located in East-central Africa. It is bordered in the north by South Sudan, the west, by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the east by Kenya, and the south, by both Rwanda and Tanzania. The country was described as the “pearl of Africa” by Sir Winston Churchill in 1908 in his book “My African Journey” following his trip to Uganda.¹⁴ There are four main ethnic groups, with about 56 tribes in the

¹⁴ Omari H. Kokole et al., "Uganda," Britannica, last modified September 8, 2020, accessed January 3, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Uganda>.

country (other reports state that there are 56 ethnic groups).¹⁵ In this study I focus more on the Acholi, who make up about 4.4% of Uganda's population, and were the main victims of the brutalities I describe in the later chapters. The Acholi are believed to hail from the South Sudan province of Bahr-el-Ghazal, and are described as the Luo-speaking people, who, prior to the colonial era, settled in a portion of Northern Uganda.¹⁶ Although Lapwoch and Amone-P'Olak argue that social identity was present in precolonial Africa, they present paradoxical evidence, especially in the case of the Acholi of Uganda, stating that "traditionally, the Acholi tribes were viewed by the British colonialist as warriors and perceived to be strong, with 'fierce' looking characteristics." The Acholi were thus recruited into the army while their "intelligent, polite, and good mannered" counterparts, the men from ethnic Buganda, were chosen for civil service.¹⁷

Religion is a significant part of African culture. Educational, as well as political institutions are usually affiliated with religious institutions, beliefs and values. Uganda's religious culture, like most African countries, is tripartite, divided into Christianity, Islam, and Indigenous Religions. About 83% of the population is Christian, 13% is Muslim, and the remainder are nonreligious or practice other religions. About 1% of the population reportedly practice Indigenous religions. Although this number seems insignificant, indigenous religions are believed to be practiced alongside the other major

¹⁵ Grace Lapwoch and Kennedy Amone-P'Olak, "Social Identity and Conflict in Northern Uganda," in *Understanding Peace and Conflict through Social Identity Theory: Contemporary Global Perspectives*, ed. Shelly McKweon, Reeshma Haji, and Neil Ferguson, The Peace Psychology Book Series (Springer, 2016), 186, PDF e-book.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Lapwoch and Amone-P'Olak, "Social Identity", 186.

religions in the country.¹⁸ In the early 1860s, Islam was introduced into Uganda from the Eastern Coast and because of the migration of some Sudanese. In 1877, Anglican Christians entered the scene and there was a cordial relationship between the agents and followers of the two religions, to the point that they came together to overthrow the king of Buganda, a traditional kingdom in Uganda. In 1898 however, the Christians defeated the Muslims, who were almost successful in making Islam the state religion. Informed by prior experiences with the Nigerian Muslims in West Africa, the British discriminated greatly against the Muslims in Uganda.¹⁹

Inter-religious conflicts in Uganda are common and “appear to have shaped the basis on which political parties are formed.”²⁰ During Obote’s reign, religion was immersed in politics. Political candidates and their followers distinguished themselves by joining rival churches. Milton Obote’s party, the Uganda People’s Congress, was tagged as a protestant party while the rival democratic party was labelled a catholic party. Political tensions in Uganda existed in the early sixties, as the servicemen themselves were systematically participating in violence against civilians. In 1964, investigations were conducted on two occasions regarding such incidents, but like many of these cases, resolved nothing. Following the attempt on Obote’s life in 1969, the circumstances worsened significantly, and the army operated more indiscriminately. Considering the situation in the country, many church leaders and Muslims championed Idi Amin’s coup.

¹⁸ Kokole et al., "Uganda." <https://www.britannica.com/place/Uganda>.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰ Lapwoch and Amone-P’Olak, “Social Identity”, 189.

Amin had been masquerading as a highly religious man who constantly talked about God. With the help of Idi Amin in 1971, Islam established firmer roots in Uganda and became predominant, but Christianity regained dominance when Amin was overthrown by Museveni, the longest Ugandan president to accede to office. In fact, in 1973, while Amin was still in power, he attended a summit for Muslim states although the people were predominantly Christians. This spawned apprehension and an official publication was issued to that effect, stating that Uganda still held freedom of religion in high regard, and the country was not an Islamic state. Albeit relatively a peaceful country now, Uganda has experienced some political turmoil resembling what existed during Amin's reign. Museveni eliminated the multi-party system the country had been practicing until 2005, when a referendum to reinstate the practice was reached.²¹ Prior to the recently held elections (January 14, 2021), there were reported disappearances and killing of supporters of the opposition party who were shot during campaigns by security forces. The driver of the rival candidate, popularly known as "Bobi Wine," was allegedly shot by the police. Finally, the government shut down the internet 24 hours before the elections. After the elections, Bobi Wine has been unlawfully placed under house arrest although the court has ordered his release.²²

²¹ Kokole et al., "Uganda." <https://www.britannica.com/place/Uganda>.

²² Patience Atuhaire, "Uganda Ordered to End Bobi Wine's House Arrest," BBC News Africa, last modified January 25, 2021, accessed January 30, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55756838>;

Political Agents and their Use of Religion in Africa

Religion in Africa is almost present in all fields. In the educational fields, religious institutions fund schools, thus promoting religious education. The best elementary and even senior high schools in Ghana were those that were affiliated with religious institutions or denominations (Methodist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican). As reiterated throughout the study so far, there is a strong sense in many African communities that God, gods, deities, and other spiritual forces have total control of the spiritual as well as the physical world, and these spiritual forces need to be pressed into service. The authority of political agents and leaders often rests on their association with spiritual authority. And this is not only a modern phenomenon. Olupona avers that kings in traditional African communities are believed to command “mystical, life sustaining powers with their own well-being intimately entwined with the well-being of their people, lands, and institutions.”²³ The Ooni of Ife, who is the highest king of the Yoruba ethnic group, is regarded as the manifestation of the Orisa (spirit), thus, he does not perform normal activities and is not addressed directly by regular people, and his health or death cannot be openly discussed.²⁴ African religion is so prevalent and versatile that it is being appropriated and retooled in its diasporic extensions, old and new. Vodou was said to have featured in the Haitian revolution. Also, the political dictator François

²³ Jacob K. Olupona, *African Religions: A Very Short Introduction*, Ver Short Introductions (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 38.

²⁴ Ibid, 39.

Duvalier used the services of Vodou priests and priestesses and manipulated the vodou symbols for protection. Olupona emphasizes the relevance Duvalier placed on Vodou.²⁵

African traditional religions, unlike western religions, are accommodating and allow room for the practice of several religions. The Yoruba engaged the powers of those orisas who answered their prayers and brought them fortune. When one felt as though an orisa was not beneficial, one had the freedom to enlist the powers of another orisa.

Barber, for this reason, believes that African Gods are in fact made by their subjects and not vice versa and political power could be a motivation for the “making” of a god.²⁶

When Islam first entered sub-Saharan Africa, the chiefs engaged the power of the mallams or marabouts and always consulted them before making important decisions.

Likewise, the Ashanti kingdom consulted mallams prior to military confrontations.²⁷

Prior to the modern African states, traditional leaders based their political power on strongly held religious notions as well. The *Asantehene* (high king) was considered divine and as a mediator between the physical and spiritual worlds of the Asante land.

The golden stool upon which he sits existed long before his birth and was sat on by the other *Asantehene* before him. It is said that the stool is what links him to the ancestors.²⁸

This could be due to the many rituals that are performed when a chief is being enstooled.

The point of these examples is to show how the nexus of religion and politics is a

²⁵ Ibid, 111.

²⁶ Karin Barber, "How Man Makes God in West Africa: Yoruba Attitudes towards the 'Orisa,'" *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 51, no. 3 (1981): accessed February 4, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1159606?origin=JSTOR-pdf>.

²⁷ Wuaku, *Hindu Gods*, 13.

²⁸ The departed kings who are now ancestors.

perennial feature of communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. In the discussion that ensues, I will show that the Acholi are not exempted from this general African tradition and that they have a history of engaging spirituality in their political struggles. Kony thus inherited an Acholi tradition; but he did more than his predecessors in that he weaponized this tradition as an instrument of violence against his own people.

Idi Amin's Reign of Terror

Everyone in Uganda, members of the armed forces, police and the public, they are responsible for my security. And immediately they hear anybody making subversive activities or try to plan anything against me, they report that person straight to the police. This is what I am happy about because it seems that they love me and that is why they are doing this, which I am very happy, and I thank them very much.²⁹

Idi Amin, former president OF Uganda (1971-1979).

Uganda was invaded by the British who brought with them Asians to control the affairs of the country. These Asians remained even after independence in 1962 and still controlled the country's businesses. Idi Amin, the only Ugandan to attain the highest possible position in the army (sergeant) during the British rule, had become increasingly famous. After the departure of the British in 1962, he aligned himself closely with Milton Obote, then prime minister of the country. His loyalty to Obote earned him several promotions in the army, which he would subsequently gain absolute command of. While Obote could be described as an intellectual, Amin possessed charisma and military power. Obote's government was characterized by several corrupt deals overseen by

²⁹ PBS, "Idi Amin," video, 53:48, https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=169107&loid=541998&tScript=0.

Amin, which saw the two amass considerable fortunes.³⁰ Subsequently, rumors of Amin's plan to overthrow Obote surfaced and fearful of confronting Amin about the merit of these rumors, Obote ordered for Amin's arrest while away on a forum for heads of state in 1971. A member of the army who was loyal to Amin however alerted him prior to the arrest, causing Amin to stage a coup in Obote's absence. Forced into exile, Obote moved into neighboring Tanzania and Amin assumed the highest leadership position in the country. Initially, he aimed to return the country to democratic rule and safely transition to the next government, after Obote had turned it into an autocratic one-party state and made himself the sole leader. Amin's thirst for power, however led him to consolidate the autocracy he had inherited and embark on a bloody exercise aimed at silencing all opposition to his rule. His reign was characterized by public beheadings, maiming, shootings, and arrests. He installed new security personnel who reported and arrested anyone who openly or privately opposed his government, and by the end of his first year, at least 300,000 citizens had been murdered.³¹ Amin was finally defeated after he invaded Tanzania in hopes of defeating Obote who was supported by the Tanzanian government. On account of the atrocities attributed to him, his reign between 1971-1979 has been dubbed "the reign of terror".³²

Prior to his exile, Amin plunged the country into a state of economic distress when he expelled all Asian Ugandans, who at the time, ran virtually all the country's

³⁰ PBS, "Idi Amin," video.

³¹ *Human Rights Violations in Uganda* (Southampton, England: Amnesty International Secretariat, 1978), accessed December 3, 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/204000/afr590071978en.pdf>. ; Keatley, "Idi Amin"

³² PBS, "Idi Amin", video.

businesses, and handed over their businesses and assets to his inexperienced associates. Yoweri Museveni, who is currently the country's longest serving president, acceded power on 29 January 1986 and established relative peace. Even so, his government favored the south, to the neglect of the north, and are separated by the Nile river; the Nilotic ethnic groups inhabit the northern part while the Bantu tribes inhabit the southern part. "The northern region is dominated by the Acholi tribe and the closely related Langi, to which Obote belonged, and the southern region is dominated by the Buganda, Bunyoro and Anchole (not to be confused with Acholi), of which president Museveni is a member."³³ Museveni invited the Asian business owners back and returned to them their properties which had been seized by Amin, in hopes of reviving the country's economy.

The UPDA, Alice Lakwena, and the Holy Spirit Movement

Finnstrom categorized insurrections that were present in Uganda into politically motivated and spiritually motivated insurgencies.³⁴ The Acholi owned weapons used in raiding neighboring towns, kidnapping women and stealing cattle. The British, Amin's government, and Museveni's government resolved to disarm the group but resorted to using force and violence. The Uganda People's Democratic Army (hereafter, UPDA), a paramilitary group among the Acholi, emerged as a result, in an attempt to counter the

³³ Peter Eichstaedt, *First Kill Your Family: Child Soldiers of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army*. (Illinois, Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2009), 11.

³⁴ Finnstrom, *An African Hell*, 77

violent attempts to rid the Acholi of their weapons.³⁵ Subsequently, Alice Auma³⁶, a former tomato seller turned spirit medium, reportedly received divine revelation from the traditional *Lakwena* spirit to start a movement that would eventually redeem the Acholi people. In many sub-Saharan African communities, the use of rituals, spirits, and spirit mediums in warfare is common. Spirits can be consulted before warfare, and while some only provide spiritual reinforcement, others are believed to participate in the actual fight.³⁷ This is in keeping with a widely held discourse on war and spirituality among many African communities. Wuaku, in his book *Hindu Gods in West Africa* posits that war is chiefly considered to be a metaphysical affair in most indigenous Ghanaian communities, and that victory in war was largely seen to depend on the potency of an army's spiritual "backing" rather than on physical prowess.³⁸ Writing about the Asante of Ghana in the days before colonization, Akyeampong and Obeng bolster Wuaku's claim when they describe the ritual of "mmomomme" a "distinctly female form of Asante spiritual warfare," in the following words;

When Asante troops were at war, Asante women in the villages would perform daily ritual chants until the troops returned, processing in partial nudity from one end of the village to the other. This ritual protected the soldiers at war, and sometimes involved women

³⁵ Eichstaedt, *First Kill*, 15.

³⁶ She later adopted the spirit's name as her surname. Throughout the paper, I refer to her as Alice, Lakwena, and Alice Lakwena.

³⁷ Heike Behrend, "Power to Heal, Power to Kill: Spirit Possession & War in Northern Uganda (1986-1994)," in *Spirit Possession Modernity & Power in Africa*, ed. Heike Behrend and Ute Luig (Madison, USA: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 20, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015043411332>.

³⁸ Albert Kafui Wuaku, *Hindu Gods in West Africa: Ghanaian Devotees of Shiva and Krishna*, Studies of Religion in Africa (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 42:46.

pounding empty mortars with pestles as a form of spiritual torture of Asante's enemies.³⁹

Alice Auma's The Holy Spirit Movement (hereafter, HSM), which was later named the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces, was birthed in early January 1985. It comprised mainly fighters from the UPDA and it successfully waged war against Museveni's government. Professing themselves to be a spiritual army, the fighters engaged a repertoire of ritual forms in their skirmishes with the Uganda army; "her army entered the battlefield with holy water meant to deflect bullets, and hurled rocks that the soldiers were told would explode like bombs."⁴⁰ Alice was reportedly possessed by the Lakwena spirit, which was a combination of a Christian spirit and a traditional Acholi spirit.⁴¹ It is said that she initially practiced as a diviner and spiritual healer but was later instructed to mobilize an army when the government and soldiers from Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (hereafter, NRA) started terrorizing the citizens and sending the Acholi to politicization camps⁴², where they were tortured and killed. The Holy Spirit army was set to overthrow the government and restore and purify the society.⁴³ Alice later developed initiation and purification rites when several fighters joined the movement, and institutionalized certain rituals for her fighters. Author, Oloya, in his book, *Child to*

³⁹ Emmanuel Akyeampong and Pashington Obeng, "Spirituality, Gender, and Power in Asante History," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28:492, accessed February 16, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/221171>.

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Behrend, "Power to Heal," 20.

⁴² Behrend described these as similar to concentration camps.

⁴³ Ibid, 24.

Soldier, reported that “HSM soldiers smeared their bodies with shea-butter oil, believing it made them impervious to bullets.” Further, they sang hymns while advancing into battle.⁴⁴ The group, allegedly, could convert stones into explosives, transform snakes and bees into allies, and they were immunized against their adversaries’ bullets.⁴⁵ This was a widely held belief in Africa as also seen in the case of Sierra Leone, when the rebels and anti-rebel groups alike engaged in such activities.⁴⁶ Wuaku reinforces this by stating that local “medicines” were believed to render fighters powerful and invisible to their enemies.⁴⁷ In 1987 Alice Lakwena’s army was defeated, with most of the soldiers injured or dead, and Alice herself exiled in Kenya where she died in January 2007.⁴⁸

Following Alice Lakwena’s defeat, her father, Severino Okoya (Lukoya in other sources), succeeded her and took charge of what was left of her army. While Lakwena employed the spirits in warfare tactics, Okoya used it more for healing and deliverance. He established “yards”, ritual centers where prayer, purification, and healing took place. The army under Okoya was divided into three departments: religious, military and medical units. His main focus, however, was not on warfare, although he did perform some spiritual rites for his fighters and gave them spiritual “protection”. He performed more healing and exorcism for fighters and civilians alike, mainly due to the fact that the

⁴⁴ Olayo, *Child to Soldier*, 53.

⁴⁵ Ruddy Doom and Koen Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message: A New Koine? The Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda," *African Affairs* 98, no. 390 (1999): 18, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/723682>.

⁴⁶ Addressed in Chapter 3

⁴⁷ Wuaku, *Hindu Gods*, 42:46.

⁴⁸ "Alice Lakwena, Uganda Rebel, Dies.," *Africa, The New York Times* (New York City, NY), January 19, 2007, accessed December 1, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/19/world/africa/19lakwena.html>.

Ugandan economy and healthcare systems had been shut down by Museveni's government.⁴⁹ Okoya's charisma rested among other factors, on narratives floating around, celebrating his divinity. According to one of these narratives, he reportedly "visited" heaven, where he met Moses and was handed the tablets on which the ten commandments were inscribed.

The Holy Spirit Movement, under Okoya's leadership destroyed all indigenous religious shrines and punished all who opposed his preaching. He declared himself a god and asked that the Lord's prayer be changed to "Our Father who is here, allow thy will to be done on earth."⁵⁰ In 1995, Okoya succumbed to the government and was granted amnesty. Kony would build on this strongly held notion of the divine status of Acholi politically rebellious leaders, and bases most, if not his entire act of terrorism on this aura around his personality.

The Rise of Joseph Kony

To draw a connection between Joseph Kony's childhood and his demonstration of what many describe as magico-religious attributes at 12 years old, several authors have endeavored to ascribe some special power or "anointing" to him. Cline posits that his sister described him as a special baby because he "stood on his two feet" immediately after birth.⁵¹ Later, he grew up to be a Catholic mass server at 12 years old, and then became an apprentice to a traditional healer. It is difficult for some community members who knew him before his days as a rebel leader to imagine that the 12-year-old boy, who

⁴⁹Behrend, "Power to Heal", 28.

⁵⁰ Wilson Atine, "Okoya, Severino," Dictionary of African Christian Biography, last modified 2010, accessed October 18, 2020, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015043411332>.

⁵¹ Cline, *The Lord's*, 12.

loved to play soccer and to serve mass, had become such an exemplar of carnage. Some authors claim that the LRA was built by Kony while Lakwena still had her army, but several others posit that the LRA was formed after Lakwena's army had been defeated and that the surviving soldiers were recruited by Kony. He was often addressed as the cousin of Lakwena, and that bolstered his claim to the superior spirituality attributed to him. Kony adopted Lakwena's name, the Holy Spirit Movement, but later changed it to the United Holy Salvation Front, then to the Uganda People's Democratic Christian Army, then finally to the Lord's Resistance Army.⁵²

It is important to note that the Acholi had faced several stereotypes since colonial rule in Uganda. They were perceived as savages and statements made by Ugandan leaders on many occasions reported this perception. President Museveni and the commander of the Ugandan People's Defense Force (hereafter, UPDF) have been known to pass such stereotypical and derogatory comments.⁵³ Museveni's closest military henchman, Major General Kazini, in an interview, purported that the violence prevalent among the Acholi was genetic.⁵⁴ Although there has been relative peace during Museveni's reign, the Acholi have been excluded from economic progress. In fact, the Ugandan government has declared that the northern part of the country is the poorest and its inhabitants live below the country's poverty line.⁵⁵ In the face of the challenges the

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Lawrence Cline, *The Lord's Resistance Army*, PSI Guides to Terrorists Insurgents, and Armed Groups (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 6.

⁵⁴ Finnstrom, 114.

⁵⁵ Sverker Finnstrom, "Rebel Manifestoes in Context," in *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda*, Durham, US: Duke University Press, 2008, 104.

Acholis experienced, they had no choice but to defend their land or allow their borders to be invaded by the NRA,⁵⁶ who began to raid their villages, looting and assaulting them. The NRA soldiers raped both Acholi men and women publicly, and this period was characterized by an increase in the rate of HIV/AIDS infections.⁵⁷

Finnstrom, notes that the LRA, in its manifesto, stated its desire to expunge the use of sorcery and witchcraft while promoting the ten commandments. In fact, the LRA's deputy leader, Vincent Otti, in an interview noted that "I cannot deny that. These are the ten commandments of God. Which one of them is bad? The first commandment? The second commandment? The third commandment? It is the truth because it is God's truth. It is God's commandments."⁵⁸ Following this, several media reports amplified the group's ideology. A typical piece that was featured on the UN news online read "the LRA, a group whose beliefs are rooted in Christian fundamentalist doctrines and traditional religions, has been fighting President Yoweri Museveni's government since 1987, with the aim of establishing its own rule based on the Biblical Ten Commandments".⁵⁹ Finnstrom intimates to possessing the LRA's manifesto at a point during his field work in Uganda, but avers that all copies were confiscated from them, and those who possessed them were arrested and tortured. Kony, in projecting these

⁵⁶ The NRA, National Resistance Army, was Museveni's militia group that had ousted the former president

⁵⁷Opiyo Olayo, *Child to Soldier: Stories from Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 45.; This is noteworthy because it was reportedly one of the diseases that Alice Lakwena and her father cured. This lured many to join their movements, or just seek healing from them.

⁵⁸ Finnstrom, "Rebel Manifestoes," 108.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 109.

ideologies to the Acholi elders amassed some support from the elders, who only wanted peace to prevail and were unaware of the fate awaiting them.

LRA Operations

Spiritual practices by the Acholi were not unheard of in the country, and even on the African continent, for several groups such as the Mai Mai of Congo were known to have defeated the Zairean government, using witchcraft in warfare.⁶⁰ In its early days, a former officer in the UPDA, Odong Latek, reportedly trained the LRA combatants and this provided the military rigor the group exhibited. The leaders wore military uniforms and adopted the military ranking (colonel, lieutenant, major). Most Acholi elders and villagers backed Alice, because unlike Kony and her father, her army only waged war on the rival government forces. Since Kony's LRA was thought to have succeeded Lakwena's HSM, the group initially received support from the people who hoped that they would continue to fight for Lakwena's cause. Facing no backlash from the community, Kony contrived his own rituals and rites, veering sharply from those established by Alice Lawkena. Rearing and eating of pigs was prohibited and was punished by amputation. Working on Fridays, which was declared as the Sabbath, was prohibited, and the same punishments were meted out to disobedient followers. The connection of these two rules to Islam was not lost on some authors, which led to several notions that not only was Kony using the ten commandments to justify his actions, but

⁶⁰ Emma Wild, "Is It Witchcraft? Is It Satan? It Is a Miracle: Mai Mai Soldiers and Christian Concepts of Evil in North-East Congo," abstract, *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, no. 4 (1998): 450, accessed October 3, 2019, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1581560?origin=JSTOR-pdf>.

that he also used Islamic and traditional Acholi tenets. Any signs of dissent or disloyalty were met with grave consequences. In 1994, when the government approached the leaders of the LRA and elders of Acholi to foster peace negotiations against Kony's desires, the elders who met with the government behind his back were deemed traitors, and had their ears and lips chopped off for their disloyalty.⁶¹

Kony exploited the fear he had instilled in the fighters, civilians, and the government alike. When he no longer sensed that fear he honed, he created some. For instance, in November 2007 when his deputy, Vincent Otti, started gaining some respect among the fighters, he ordered for his (Otti's) execution, because the soldiers no longer implemented his orders without question, or without first seeking consent from Otti.⁶² From 1994 to 2002 the LRA advanced to South Sudan and was funded by the Sudanese government to fight the notorious Sudanese People's Liberation Army (hereafter, SPLA). Weapons, military training and military grounds were made available to the LRA. The LRA for a longtime, fought alongside the Sudanese Armed Forces (hereafter, SAF), gaining military experience. Christopher Ray posits that this period was pivotal in building the resilience of the army. He claims that the move from Uganda to Sudan accounted for the shift in LRA's recruitment tactics from voluntary membership to solely abduction. The new rank and file soldiers were between the ages of 12 and 25. With these new "recruits", Kony reassembled his army, strongly instilling spiritual beliefs in the members through initiation rituals. Kony, still preoccupied with establishing a theocracy in Uganda, still led some operations in the area. This often posed a conflict of interest,

⁶¹ Doom and Vlassenroot, "Kony's Message," 25.

⁶² Cline, *The Lord's*, 28.

which subsequently led to the termination of the group's sponsorship in 1995. While the group received military support, the fighters had to generally fend for themselves. It is at this time that the raiding of villages began. After operation Iron fist, the group retreated to Uganda in 2003 to launch some attacks on the Acholi people.⁶³ From 2003 to 2005, the group operated in both countries, making it difficult to trace them. Finally, by late 2005, they were discharged from Sudan when the war ended. The LRA separated into smaller groups, and advanced into the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic. The activities of the LRA halted in the year 2017, and international organizations have officially dropped the campaign for Kony's arrest. Till date, he remains at large, although rumors of a resurgence led by his sons, have surfaced.⁶⁴

Kony as a Charismatic Leader

Described and understood in many ways, charisma originates from the Greek word *Karis*, which means grace of favor. The extensive use of charisma makes it reasonable to suggest that there is a common, albeit tacit, understanding of the term. In certain circumstances, the charm one carries supersedes that of others and bestows on the one some sort of power that is otherwise unattainable. Joseph Kony was such a character who relied heavily on fear and charisma in committing the atrocities in Uganda. Idi Amin could also be described as possessing such charisma, albeit he exercised legitimate power. The term was propounded by Max Weber, who was a social scientist. I use Max

⁶³ Operation Iron fist was an operation championed by the Sudanese government in collaboration with the Ugandan government to launch several attack on the LRA in hopes of defeat the group. It involved about 15,000 troops. (Cline, 82).

⁶⁴ Christopher R. Day, "'Survival Mode': Rebel Resilience and the Lord's Resistance Army," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31, no. 5 (2019): 974-977, accessed June 3, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2017.1300580>.

Weber's theory of charisma to understand and explain Joseph Kony's charisma. People believed that his appearance and his personal qualities made him "special" or divine.

Weber defined charisma as "an exceptional quality in a person, by virtue of which he is considered to be endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." As he describes it, there are religious factors at play. Key to the concept is the perception of a divine gift by others. One's charismatic claim diminishes when one's mission is no longer recognized by those to whom he or she has been sent. Weber's category was inspired by people who have excited, inspired, and mesmerized the masses by the power of their personality. Most important is the question of whether or not one's exceptional qualities work charismatically. Additionally, the intensity with which one is perceived as charismatic varies. This indicates that there is interplay between those who experience the person as charismatic and the person in question. Consequently, charismatic effect is usually experienced in relation to people's needs, hopes, or wishes. Weber identified that leaders could exercise power in three legitimate capacities namely: legal authority, exercised in accordance with strict transparent procedures, traditional authority which mainly refers to leadership that has been passed on and bases its legitimacy on a communal understanding of its existence, and charismatic authority, which is based on the leader's personal authority and qualities backed by heroic deeds, supernatural powers, or prophecies. He wrote that "In the case of charismatic authority, it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in him and his revelation, his heroism or his exemplary qualities so far as they fall within the scope of the individual's belief in his charisma. (Weber 1997, 167)" The leader's charisma enables him to convince and enthuse others and to

influence them to follow him. This charisma expresses itself at gatherings enabling the leader to attract followers who support his message and his person. Several factors contribute to perpetuating the perceptions of charismatic leaders.

Turning back to Kony, not only was he seen to possess special or divine gifts of being able to communicate with the Lakwena spirit, it is said that he also possessed the appearance. Several scholars add that looks also contribute to this perception of charisma. Kony displayed his position as commander of the army by donning various kinds of military uniforms. When addressing his soldiers, in meetings with leaders or during interviews, he was spotted wearing said uniforms. This bestowed some form of additional power and complemented his charisma. The media, both local and international, contributed to spreading myths about him, which aided, rather than injured his charisma. The soldiers participated in whatever rituals he instituted, the villagers adhered to his new rules or risked being captured, maimed, and killed. Juergensmeyer referred to that as “theater of terror”, where one capitalizes on the attention garnered from inciting violence. Juergensmeyer asserts that some religious acts of violence are “symbolic, dramatic, and theatrical”⁶⁵, rendering the place, time, and manner in which violence is perpetrated relevant. He maintains that acts of violence are only fearful when they are noticed by an “audience”. The perpetrators feed into this to demonstrate their power, as well as intimidate their subjects and their adversaries.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Mark Juergensmeyer, "Theater of Terror," in *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 4th ed. (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 155.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 174.

Section 2: LRA's Use of Spirituality

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.⁶⁷

Ellis and Ter Haar posit that individuals' powers are demonstrated by having direct access to the invisible (spiritual) world and the ability to communicate with the supernatural.⁶⁸ The above Bible quotation is a fragment of a popular prayer from Psalms 23. It is evident that the Bible stresses the need for anointing. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Kony and his fighters, in professing a strong adherence to Christianity, practice the act of anointing. In this section, I analyze the various practices performed by the LRA, and their religious connotations.

Titeca states that the two main functions of the spiritual order of the LRA were "internal and external strategic functions". She avers that the strict adherence to spiritual rules among the LRA fostered group cohesion among the members, using fear, rationale, and most importantly, legitimization. The establishment of directives by the spirit, and not Kony, renders the punishments more potent. If rules are strictly adhered to, then the fighters receive divine ammunition and protection for the next combat. If they are disobeyed, then they will die in combat (if not physically punished by Kony himself).

⁶⁷ *The Lord's Prayer from the Bible*. Psalm 23:5-6 (New International Version).

⁶⁸ Stephen Ellis and Gerrie Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*, Contemporary History and World Affairs 1 (New York, NY: Oxford university Press, 2004), 92.

Additionally, the completion of the rites and rituals provided some structure in the lives of newly abducted soldiers who might have been unwilling to fight for the army that killed their families, as well as aid in settling them into the group. In the LRA, adherents relinquished all control to Kony and the spirits.⁶⁹ In performing external functions, the spiritual practices of the LRA served as parameters that separated the outsiders from the insiders, a classic case of an “us” versus “them” situation. Before one becomes a full-fledged member of the group, he or she had to undergo all initiation rites and accept all the spiritual rules to boot.⁷⁰ This point affirms Schwartz’s theory that stresses the need to highlight a separation between “us” and “others” in order to construct and foster a collective identity. This separation, she avers, presents an “other” upon whom all aggression can be vented. Schwartz links collective identity to monotheism and aligns with the school of thought that believes that Monotheism is violent as it sharpens the separation between “us and the others”.⁷¹

Rites and Rituals

Whenever they abduct someone, there is a magic that they do. There is an oil they apply. They cut their body and put it inside to change their brain. You see human being like an animal. They ask you what are you seeing? If you say a human being, they come again and cut your body.⁷²

⁶⁹ Kristof Titeca, "The Spiritual Order of the LRA," in *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality*, ed. Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot (London, UK: Zed Books, 2010), 62-63.

⁷⁰ Titeca, "The Spiritual," 66.

⁷¹ Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago, US: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 22.

⁷² *Witness: South Sudan*. Films on Demand. 2012. Accessed November 21, 2020. <https://fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=107350&xtid=115049>.

In many documentaries and reports found in books, such statements are common. The above was a statement made by one of the villagers in an interview. Although not a former soldier himself, he was aware of the said rites that were performed in the camps. In this section, I review certain rituals performed by the LRA, and how these rituals supposedly contributed to their success during warfare.

In the Old Testament, two brothers Cain and Abel were required by God to perform sacrifices. While Abel tended sheep, Cain grew crops, hence it came as no surprise when the former sacrificed an animal whereas the latter presented fruits from his farm. For some reason, one sacrifice was accepted and the other rejected, which caused the brother whose sacrifice was rejected to murder his brother, whose sacrifice was accepted. In this case, although this killing was not condoned, the initial killing of the animal to be sacrificed was condoned in the context of religion.⁷³ Rene Girard poses that religion, through sacrifice and rituals, especially, during the hunting and gathering era predisposed humans to increasing violence with every dissension. Like Durkheim, he believes that people's actions are largely influenced by others. He describes violence as "mimetic" and what draws people to more violence as "mimetic frenzy". Paradoxically, he conjectures that the only way to stop this violence is through sacrifice, which is another form of violence.⁷⁴ Walter Burkert adds that religion legitimizes sacrifice and rituals, making humans violent even outside of this practice. He also adds that the practice of hunting and

⁷³ *The Bible*. New International Version. BibleGateway.com classic.biblegateway.com

⁷⁴ Cat Rambo, "Violence and the Sacred by Rene Girard," in *Salem Press Encyclopedia of Literature* (2020), last modified 2020, <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ers&AN=119625920&site=eds-live>.

gathering in the past as the only means to feed contributed to this learned behavior.⁷⁵ Some rituals only involve prayers, incantations and perhaps dance. Others, however, require that some sacrifices be made, and yet some others involve self-mutilation. In *Blood for the Goddess*, Alejandro J. Cid reveals that in the 17th century, the worshippers of a mother goddess (unnamed) in Vajreshwari, a village in India, offer themselves as sacrifices by cutting off their tongues and in very rare cases, their heads. The devotees whose tongues were cut grew them back quickly, depending on how spiritual they were.⁷⁶ This practice became extinct in the 18th century when Hindu traditions started stressing non-violent acts. Nathalie Wlodarczyk argues that since spiritual power is easily assessable in African Traditional Religion, many individuals engage the powers for various reasons, including during violent conflict. She avers that some rituals can be violent, hence subjecting victims to violence when said rituals are performed against them. In warfare, some spiritual practices and rituals serve as means of amplifying “powers to fight, survive, and win.”⁷⁷ She further notes that the functional component of African Traditional Religion permits fighters to make requests from deities, priests, and other spiritual agents for protection and power. Within the LRA, the most common rites I have encountered in my readings are listed below in no particular order.

-Before combat, special herbs were mixed and splashed on the soldiers as they departed for battle.

⁷⁵ Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts, eds., *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 141-151

⁷⁶ Alejandro Jimenez Cid, "Blood for the Goddess: Self-mutilation Rituals at Vajreshwari, Kangra.," *Indialogs: Spanish Journal of India Studies* 3, no. 0 (April 1, 2016): 40-41, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://doi:10.5565/rev/indialogs.41>.

⁷⁷ Nathalie Wlodarczyk, "African Traditional Religion and Violence," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence*, ed. Michael Jerryson, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Margo Kitts (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), Electronic Resource.

- Women immersed their guns four times, and men, thrice, in the special mixture when approaching the enemy.
- The guns were raised to the heavens and certain recitations that ascribe all power and victory to God were made
- The soldiers sang as they advanced into battle.
- Before soldiers consumed anything during their raids (especially water), they had to first drink a spiritual drink called *moo ya*⁷⁸

The above-mentioned rituals were meant to strengthen the powers and cause them to be victorious over their enemies. The former LRA soldier who was interviewed further describes the fighting process after undergoing these rituals as supernatural. He recollected that “because we sing, we do not even hear gunshots! When you finish, you cannot believe what you have done. You say, “what has happened, how did I do all this?” It is as if you are not the one who did it...if you are going to the battle, you feel something is with you...everyone will feel strong”⁷⁹ This utterance by the former soldier relates to Durkheim’s theory of “religious effervescence”. Durkheim propounds that religion exists and thrives because humans live as communal beings. To him, all religions are the same and social effervescence serves as the central force from which all religions emanate.⁸⁰ He further explains how the group experience eventually forms its members’ identities and advocates that the effervescence does not only lead to a transfiguration in the physical milieu, but in the mental and spiritual realm. He avers that the individual “loses” himself in the process and becomes a new being, thus his actions would not be dependent on logic or “normal” individual values, but on the actions sanctioned by the novel subduing power. Consequently, the others in the group are under this same power

⁷⁸ Titeca, “The Spiritual”, 64-65.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 64

⁸⁰ Juergensmeyer and Kitts, 100

and their actions are exhibiting synergy.⁸¹ Durkheim purports that religious force may be initiated by one individual and then amplified within the group, hence a member of the group must not necessarily be inherently predisposed to certain behaviors such as violence. The rituals played an important role in creating the atmosphere, and effervescence that Durkheim proposes, transfiguring the individuals involved into new beings, making them perform actions without being fully conscious of them. This provides possible socio-anthropological explanations for why the LRA fighters acted the way they did.⁸²

The Use of Religion to Reinforce Social Sanctions

Once individuals subscribe to certain religious beliefs, their actions, values, and way of life are influenced by the religious myths, rituals, and doctrine. For instance, Catholics refrain from using birth control because it is against their doctrine.⁸³ In some African traditional religions, certain days are ascribed to the gods and there are restrictions regarding what may and may not be done on those days (this can be likened to the Sabbath in Judaism). For instance, in Ghana, fishing on Tuesdays is forbidden in most parts of the country. It is said that the sea goddess and her children need rest on that day. Breaking the taboo is met with several repercussions, including fines, arrests, curses

⁸¹ Ibid, 102.

⁸² "Emile Durkheim," in *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*, ed. Mark Juergensmeyer and Margo Kitts (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 101.

⁸³ Costa, Ingrid Gomes Dias da, and Angelita Alves Carvalho. "Use of Contraception by Women of Different Religious Groups: Differences or Similarities?" Abstract. *HORIZONTE- Journal of Studies in Theology and Religious Sciences* 12, no. 36 (2015): 1114-39. <https://doi.org/10.5752/P.2175-5841.2014v12n36p1114>.

form the gods, ailment, and in some cases, death.⁸⁴ While some of these may be myths, the populace adheres to them, fearing the consequences that may arise when these taboos are violated. Religion, in this and a multitude of other cases, is used as a “tool” to reinforce social sanctions, giving room for punishment when they are violated. This section merely cites some “rules” Kony establishes for his own people and the extent he goes into punishing them when said rules are flouted.

On Friday, the LRA found my parents working in the field. There was a law that nobody should work on Friday. They found my parents working and killed them because they were working.⁸⁵

Friday, in addition to Sunday, had been declared the Sabbath by the LRA, and anyone who worked on the Sabbath was disobeying God. For crimes of this nature, Kony instructed the culprits to either be killed or maimed via amputation of body parts directly used for the acts; in the above case, the limbs. Along with the rules that the fighters had to obey, there were several rules that the larger community had to obey. If one was caught stealing, his arms would be cut off, if one was caught telling lies, or making peace deals with the government, his lips, ears and nose would be cut off. For the fighters, if a single rule was broken prior to combat, they died in battle, because the spiritual ammunition would malfunction, exposing them to their enemies' weapons. The rules, again, differentiated the pure from the impure, the members from outsiders, the leaders

⁸⁴ Joseph Kingsley Adjei and Solomon Sika-Bright, "Traditional Beliefs and Sea Fishing in Selected Coastal Communities in the Western Region of Ghana," *Ghana Journal of Geography* 11, no. 1 (2019): 15, accessed January 8, 2021, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gjg.v11i1.1>.

⁸⁵ *Witness: South*, video.

from the followers, and most importantly, sanctioned the “punishments” meted out to defaulters, and the war waged against enemies.

Kony used the Bible to provide justification for these extreme forms of punishment. He argued that in the old testament, anyone who disobeyed the law was either struck dead by God Himself or subject to defeat (which usually meant death) at the hands of their enemies.⁸⁶ Often, the former soldiers who are interviewed make mention of several references made by Kony to the Bible. He likened Uganda to the city of Gomorrah which had to be destroyed due to its inhabitants’ disregard for God’s laws. Schwartz, in her construction of religion and violence, specifically stresses the charge and need for God’s people to adhere to the same ten commandments lest they incur His wrath which involves violence. Kony attempts to impose the old testament on the Acholi community and sees it as a lens through which they should see society and follow as the models for and of society.

Martyrs Fighting a Just War

Death is inevitable; dying for a religious cause is honorable. This notion is held by religious fanatics who hold that they have been summoned to fulfil duties as martyrs. Martyrdom is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the act of suffering on account of adherence to a cause and especially to one’s religious faith”.⁸⁷ In this regard, individuals attempt to grapple with the idea that dying for a good cause merits some

⁸⁶ Helen Nambalirwa Nkabala, "The Use of Violent Biblical Texts by the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda," *Transformation* 34, no. 2 (2017): 93, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378816680768>.

⁸⁷ *Merriam-Webster*, s.v. "martyrdom," accessed March 12, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/martyrdom>.

superior blessing or favor whereas dying an ordinary death merits nothing. Death is inescapable hence profiting from one's death is deemed as advantageous, noble and laudable. Just as secular soldiers die for the prosperity and posterity of their countries, religious martyrs are also believed to die for the posterity of their faith. Scholars, Parker and Stitter express that "the supreme martyrdom is only conferred on those who slay or are slain in the way of God".⁸⁸ In Abrahamic religions, it is quite common to come across texts that applaud such acts, therefore it comes as no surprise that Kony and his soldiers adopt this ethos. I write more about this in chapter 4, where I bolster my points with some texts from the Qur'an, the Bible, and the Torah that demonstrate this. As is presented below, Kony expressed this view on many occasions and the soldiers were well aware that they might be killed in battle-but for the sake of God.⁸⁹

"Joseph Kony said to us, 'I will overthrow the government of Uganda with only 50 people. The rest of you who are fighting with us will die on the way and I will win with only 50 people.'"

Many of the abducted children were unwilling to fight for Kony. After initiation, however, driven more by fear than anything else, they were willed into fighting Kony's war. Kony had established rule by the spirits in his camp. Several reports from former LRA members have attested to the group receiving directives via possession (of Kony). A former LRA soldier recollects past instances when Kony reminded them of the end goal; to establish God's rule, expunge the evil ways, and do away with a terrible government. Kony described visions of these "apocalyptic" times and the martyrs that

⁸⁸ Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains.," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 2 (December 17, 2015): 206.

⁸⁹ I return to this in chapter 4.

made it possible. One would think that such decrees would demoralize members of the group, rather it ennobled them, because now they were not fighting for an earthly cause, but a heavenly one, with all the “blessings” associated with the act. To the LRA, the enemies were all who opposed “God’s rule” as discharged by Kony, and war against such enemies was sanctioned by God. Juergensmeyer highlights that “acts of religious terror serve not only as tactics in a political strategy but also as evocations of a larger spiritual confrontation.”⁹⁰ Kony’s discourses built on biblical teachings and narratives even informed how the soldiers viewed themselves. For them, the project was something of a holy war they were committing to in order to establish a theocratic rule with Kony functioning in the role of God’s agent. LRA soldiers emphasized that they were not a bunch of rebels as portrayed by the government (the enemies), but God’s people who were only “trying to get rid of the nonsense, of the evil practices in the world.”⁹¹

Conclusion

In this chapter, I offered an overview of the political, religious, and economic nature of Uganda. I then presented a brief history of Uganda prior to and after independence, and the power play, corruption and violence that emerged after President Idi Amin acceded power. From 1971 to 1979, the violence that pervaded the country was beyond what the populace had anticipated, and it gained international attention. People who disagreed with Idi Amin’s governance, whether in a constructive or obstructive manner were killed. This, I argue led to the emergence of several militia, three of which I

⁹⁰ Mark Juergensmeyer, "Cosmic War," in *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 4th ed. (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 184.

⁹¹ Lost Children, video.

elucidated. I presented more material on the LRA, their operations and the use of religion in their camp and warfare. I mentioned that most of Kony's power stems from the charisma he possesses, which I further explained. Like Haynes, I realize that, although he strove to gain political control by controlling the spiritual, Kony lacked tangible political goals, and was unsuccessful in his struggle to govern the country using the Ten Commandments as his framework. That, however, did not stop him from raining atrocities on his people.⁹²

⁹² Jeffrey Haynes, "Religion, Ethnicity and Civil War in Africa: The Cases of Uganda and Sudan," *The Round Table* 96, no. 390 (2017): 311, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358530701463865>.

CHAPTER 3

Religion and Peace: Pentecostalism and African Traditional Religion in Sierra Leone

Over the last few years, the discussion on religion and peace is gaining relevance. Due to the plethora of ethnic groups, its continuous struggles with colonial legacies and other internal modern socio-political questions, Africa remains one of the most conflict-ridden regions of the world. In fact, Andrew Mack states in the *Human security Report* published in 2005, that “most of the world’s armed conflicts now take place in sub-Saharan Africa.”⁹³ Adebajo further indicates that West Africa is the most volatile zone of the continent.

Located in West Africa, Sierra Leone is bordered on the west by the Atlantic Ocean, on the east and north by Guinea, and on the south by Liberia. The Temne from the northwest and center, and Mende from the east and south, make up the largest portion of the ethnic groups (about 18 different groups) in the country.⁹⁴ The populace is predominantly Muslim, a significant percentage Christian, and a small percentage of African Traditional Religions, although in a sense, Islamic and Christian expressions here demonstrate an African religious flavor. In 2013, the *Index Mundi* report on religion in the country described Sierra Leone as 78.6% Muslim, 20.8% Christian, and 0.3% other religions.⁹⁵ According to the *2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Sierra*

⁹³ Andrew Mack, "Human Security Report 2005: War and Peace in the 21st Century," *Die Friedens-Warte* 80, nos. 1-2 (2005): 181, accessed November 14, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23773842>.

⁹⁴ Adekeye Adebajo, "Sierra Leone: A Feast for the Sobels," in *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, International Peace Academy (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

⁹⁵ "Sierra Leone Religions," *Index Mundi*, last modified November 27, 2020, accessed February 4, 2021, https://www.indexmundi.com/sierra_leone/religions.html.

Leone, the percentages were significantly different to include 60% Muslim, 30% Christians, and 10% African Traditional Religious practitioners.⁹⁶ The country, like many other African countries, is rich in natural resources. Among them are diamonds, bauxite, chromite, rutile, gold, platinum, and columbite.⁹⁷ Diamonds remain famous (or infamous) for being the main cause of the 11-year civil war the country faced from 1991 to 2001. It is said that the illegal mining and trading of these diamonds funded many of the militias.

This chapter delves into the antecedents of the civil war, the nature of the war, and the peace building that followed, especially the means by which religion and religious symbols are being used as a tool to rebuild the war-torn nation. It discusses themes such as the role of Pentecostalism and African Traditional Religion (ATR) in peacebuilding, the place of the truth and reconciliation courts in peace, and forgiveness and memory. I examine the difference(s) between peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping, carefully identifying the role that religion places in these concepts and their ensuing performances.

⁹⁶ "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom: Sierra Leone," U.S. Department of State, last modified 2019, accessed February 1, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/sierra-leone/>.

⁹⁷ Christopher Fyfe, Davidson S.H.W Nicol, and Sekou M. Sesay, "Sierra Leone," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified December 3, 2020, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Sierra-Leone>.

The Civil War

Following Sierra Leone's independence from the British on April 27, 1961, the country enjoyed relative stability up until 1967 under the leadership of the Sierra Leone People's Party (hereafter, SLPP).⁹⁸ Siaka Stevens of the All People's Congress (hereafter, APC) won the elections in 1967 but officially acceded to power in 1968 after a short interregnum of a coup and counter-coup. Stevens had roused the benighted people in the rural communities to oppose the incumbent "erudite" leadership because he claimed they were corrupt. He had assured the people of a better governance. Analogous, however, to many power-drunk leaders, he resorted to monopolizing state power and only employing his loyal subjects. His 17-year rule from 1968 to 1985 was said to have been characterized by corruption, looting of the country's diamond revenues and a total agricultural and economic decline. His successor, General Joseph Momoh, could do little to revive the economy and the nation as a whole. It is believed that he was chosen by Stevens to prevent prosecution for his corruption.⁹⁹ In 1971, Foday Saybana Sankoh attempted to oust Stevens. He was unsuccessful, however, arrested by General Momoh, and barely escaped a death penalty. Vowing revenge, Foday Saybana Sankoh traveled to Libya, where he was said to have trained with other militias.

⁹⁸ Adebajo calls this the Margai Brothers leadership. Sir Milton Margai was prime minister from independence on April 27, 1961 to April 28, 1964. His brother, Sir Albert Margai, took the reins from April 28, 1964 to March 21, 1967; Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, International Peace Academy (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 15.

⁹⁹ George Klay Kieh, Jr, "Civilians and Civil Wars in Africa: The Cases of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote D'Ivoire," *Peace Research* 48, no. 1/2 (2016): 214, accessed February 10, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26382621>.

On March 23, 1991, about a hundred members of the Revolutionary United Front (hereafter, RUF), entered Sierra Leone, and declared their motive to overthrow the one-party government and pave way for a multi-party system. The leader of the guerrilla unit, Foday Saybana Sankoh, was believed to have been influenced by the Liberian warlord, and de facto leader, Charles Taylor, and Muammar al-Qaddafi of Libya, respectively. The Sierra Leonean rebels had joined forces with the rebels of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (hereafter, NPFL) to fight the Sierra Leone Army (hereafter, SLA). Author George Kieh Jr describes the root cause of the civil war as “a multifaceted crises fashioned by British colonialism”, abject poverty, and total decline of infrastructure. He further notes the proximate cause of the war as RUF’s invasion and violence in a bid to achieve some stability.¹⁰⁰ Several scholars note that Sierra Leone’s civil war only materialized due to “conflict in neighboring Liberia spilling over the border into Sierra Leone”.¹⁰¹ Others describe it as an “invasion” by guerrilla groups.¹⁰² Charles Taylor is reported to have supported the RUF with his “special forces”. His primary motive for aiding the guerilla unit was to help transfer power to the RUF in order to benefit from the diamond business, and to terminate Sierra Leone’s involvement with ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Groups). The organization was established in response to Liberia’s civil war which lasted from 1989 to 1996. Charles Taylor and the NPFL had been in constant battle with ECOMOG, a peace

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Fyfe, Nicol, and Sesay, "Sierra Leone," n.p.

¹⁰² Adekeye Adebajo, "Sierra Leone: A Feast for the Sobels," in *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, International Peace Academy (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 80.

keeping armed force which included members from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and several other west African countries. Sankoh formed a close bond with Taylor over the course of the war as they traded in diamonds with estimated profits at 250 million dollars annually. This fomented the “sobel” denouement, which simply meant that the soldiers worked for the government by day and were rebels by night in order to also profit from the trade. The youth of Sierra Leone had taken up arms in protest of the government due to lack of employment, education, and the provision of basic needs. Like Uganda’s LRA, Sierra Leone’s RUF initially claimed that it simply wanted to challenge the corrupt government and provide better living conditions for the civilians. But soon, it would degenerate into a rebel army that instead waged violence through rape, murder, and abductions.¹⁰³

Ultimately, from 1991 to 2001, the Sierra Leone civil war took about 120,000 lives, and left thousands of civilians mutilated by the RUF rebels and the SLA.¹⁰⁴

Religion and Its Role in the War

Religious tolerance in Sierra Leone was laudable. In 1792, the Church of Sierra Leone was founded (although there are reports of the presence of Christian missionaries earlier). Later in 1808, when the nation came under the British protectorate, church and state supported schools were established. Most of Sierra Leone’s schools were funded and or were established by religious bodies, whether Muslim or Christian. Members of a family could well be practicing different religions. Parents could be Muslims, and their

¹⁰³, Kieh, "Civilians and Civil," 206

¹⁰⁴ Conteh, “The Role of Religion”, 60.

children Christian only because they attended a Christian school. Aside from educational work, the missionaries also participated in curative operations, agricultural and mercenary projects. By the 1980s, several independent churches had been established in the country, including the Pentecostal and charismatic churches. During that period, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Sierra Leone (hereafter, PFSL) was formed. There were scores of in-group fights among the churches in attempts to establish supremacy.¹⁰⁵

The Sierra Leone civil war had relevant religious components, especially because religious practices, concepts, and organizations played active roles prior to, during, and post war.

Conteh observes that the African takes his faith with him wherever he goes; to work, the farm, to school, even to the parliament house, and most importantly, to the battle grounds.¹⁰⁶ As is evident from the earlier chapters in this study, several other countries in West Africa also engaged magico-religious forces in their everyday lives and even more so during warfare. Thus, the practice of “magic” and other spiritual antics in Sierra Leone was not strange. Like the soldiers of the LRA, and Congo’s Mai Mai, the fighters in Sierra Leone’s civil war relied heavily on their indigenous religion for warfare. The sense was that rituals, and adherence to the rules that followed, prior to and after engaging in armed battle by the local fighters, determined whether one would survive or die in battle.

¹⁰⁵ Arnold C. Temple, "Christianity in Sierra Leone," in *Anthology of African Christianity*, ed. Isabel Apawo Phiri, et al. (1517 Media, Fortress Press, 2016), accessed January 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1ddcqc.102>.

¹⁰⁶ Prince Sorie Conteh, "The Role of Religion during and after the Civil War in Sierra Leone," *Journal for the Study of Religion* 24, no. 1 (2001): 56 accessed December 14, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24764229>.

¹⁰⁷ The RUF rebels developed their own rituals and worship traditions in their camps. They followed a strict daily routine which commenced at 6am with prayers. These were mandatory and truants were punished. The Lord's prayer as well as the Al-Fatiha¹⁰⁸ were said as closing prayers. During Ramadan (Muslims' fasting period), the rebels fasted. The main religion practiced among the soldiers in the camp and on the battlefield was African Traditional Religions (alongside Christianity and Islam). The rebels were seen donning cowries, beads, talismans, rosaries, crosses, and herbs on different body parts which supposedly were imbued with wonder- working magico-religious powers. They believed that these objects, backed by rituals, chants, and songs rendered their opponents' weapons inoperative, or them, impervious to the weapons (mainly bullets). This kind of belief and practice was not only characteristic of the rebels. In fact, many groups of "rebel hunters" were formed when the government called on all people to employ any traditional means to fight the rebels. The Kamajors, Tamaboro, and Kapra are some of the anti-rebel/pro-government groups that emerged. The leader of the Kamajors, in an interview, revealed that when he shows the cowries and herbs on his arms and waist, to his opponents, their guns do not fire, and he is able to cut off their heads. When further asked whether he knew for a fact that the magic worked, he attested to it, saying he had done it on several occasions and cut off many heads.¹⁰⁹ Although we cannot say for a fact

¹⁰⁷ Mariane C. Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, History, and the Everyday Life in Sierra Leone* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 8.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Fatiha is a seven-verse prayer found in the first chapter of the Qur'an. It a request for divine protection, guidance and mercy from Allah.

¹⁰⁹ "Sierra Leone: Soldiers of Fortune," video, 32:08, https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy.fiu.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=11553&luid=36366&tScript=0#.

that religion was one of the main drivers of the civil war in Sierra Leone, the religious councils and the government capitalized on it in an attempt to end the war and rebuild the nation. Following the post-war reconstruction of the country, religion played a significant role in peacebuilding and peacemaking through forgiveness and reconciliation.

Religion and Peace

The concept of peace is quite complex. Peace can mean several things; it can be described as a feeling, or refer to a situation, or both, as will be seen in this context. Several definitions of peace by the Merriam-Webster dictionary include “a state of tranquility or quiet: such as freedom from civil disturbance; a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom; harmony in personal relations”. These definitions, although distinct, are similar. The UN’s preoccupation with peace is evident in their numerous peacekeeping operations. Although the mandates of each peacekeeping mission may be unique, “observing ceasefires, protecting civilians and humanitarian relief supplies, supporting disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, ensuring public safety and supporting weak governments” are some basic mandates for the missions. In 1964, Johan Galtung, a renowned scholar and expert in peace studies introduced the concepts of negative and positive peace in the *Editorial* of the *Journal of Peace Research*. Additionally, in his book *Theories of Peace*, Galtung enumerated two categories of peace. In regard to peace thinking, Galtung enumerated three levels: personal, which focuses on intra-personal relations; national, which focuses on intra-national relations; global, which focuses on intra-global relations. How

individuals or states manage conflicts depend on the manner in which they think about peace.¹¹⁰

The idea of negative peace is represented by the “absence of organized collective violence between major human groups,” including ethnic groups and nations.¹¹¹ Negative peace can be attained by any means possible and Galtung reiterates that this model of peace is temporary as the focus is only on preventing the outbreak of violence, or controlling it, and not sustaining it. The concept of positive peace on the other hand, which is less definitive, is the presence of social cohesion, a sense of community and social harmony. Positive peace influences negative peace to a large extent and is longer lasting than negative peace, hence the prioritization of peace achieved through the reduction of violence and promotion of integration.

Contrary to popular belief, religion not only serves as motivation for violence, but can be used positively to promote good values and to make peace in the event or aftermath of violent conflicts. Durkheim notes that religion, through rites, enhances communal collectivity. He implies that not all rites are performed to invoke gods, rather, some are performed just to enhance social solidarity. These rites, he avers, must be performed frequently “to renew their effects”.¹¹² Building communities through religious practices enhances the sense of community shared by the members, which in effect,

¹¹⁰ Johan Galtung, *Theories of Peace: A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking* (Oslo, Norway: International Peace Research Institute, 1967), 55.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 12.

¹¹² Paul Richards, "An Accidental Sect: How War Made Belief in Sierra Leone," *Review of African Political Economy* 33, no. 110 (September 2006): 652, accessed November 20, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4007132>.

promotes positive peace. Given that religious leaders are respected and are perceived to wield power in both the spiritual and mundane worlds, many of them attempt to exert that power in restoring communities though these religious leaders have no formal training in the field of peace studies. They rely, however, on experimentation, their individual capabilities and several secular peace approaches embedded in their own indigenous traditions ¹¹³ In African communities, local religious practices and rituals are often adopted in conjunction with western, and even other non-western traditions such as Hinduism, in the peace processes. In fact, indigenous traditions that engage in spirit possession have created new expressions that emphasize communion with the Holy spirit, and some practitioners of ATR (African Traditional Religions) use the Bible and Christian prayers for divination. The recitation of the Catholic Hail Mary prayer by Vodou practitioners at the beginning of their worship service demonstrates this.¹¹⁴

Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding

Peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding are three terms often associated with the concept of peace. While I assumed them to denote the same thing, Richmond, Wagner, and other scholars identify differences in the meanings of the terms. This section seeks to define the three terms and identify the differences between them. Peacemaking, as Richard Wagner notes, is the mechanisms of handling direct, physical violence. He goes on to state that the aim for peacemaking is to set up processes that eliminate the

¹¹³ David Little, ed., *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9.

¹¹⁴ I witnessed this in one of my visits to the Vodou temple here in Miami. Additionally, see *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn, 1991* by Karyn McCarthy Brown. This style of worship permeates her book as she describes the various religious ceremonies held for the Vodou gods.

need for further conflict between warring parties, especially concerning the specific bone of contention.¹¹⁵ Williams explains it as “the process of engineering a negotiated settlement to end armed conflict.”¹¹⁶ The authors emphasize the importance of diplomacy in peace making. This could encompass mediation and the making of peace accords.

Peacekeeping, however, is a term that usually refers to operations involving security personnel and the international community. It could be described as the actions taken by the international community to pre-empt or avert conflicts. Militaries from many countries are often charged with peacekeeping duties in conflict afflicted regions. Protecting civilians, disarming and demobilizing combatants, restoring law and order and facilitating political operations embody the multifaceted nature of peacekeeping. In Sierra Leone, ECOMOG, the UN and other international institutions were markedly involved in peacekeeping. In fact, Adebajo asserts that the UN (at the time of publishing his book) maintained an unparalleled peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone.¹¹⁷

Peacebuilding attempts to reduce the likelihood of conflict recurrence by improving national conflict mediation capabilities at all levels and setting the groundwork for lasting peace and transformation. Peacebuilding is a long-term process, thus can be said to integrate peace mechanisms that seek to attain both positive and negative peace goals, centered on eliminating unpleasant situations (violence of any form) while instituting desired outcomes. The ultimate goal for peacekeeping is to

¹¹⁵ Richard V. Wagner, "Peacemaking," in *Peace, Conflict, and Violence: Peace Psychology for the 21st Century*, ed. Daniel J. Christie, Richard V. Wagner, and Deborah Du Nann Winter (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), 169.

¹¹⁶ Paul D. Williams, *War & Conflict in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016), 213.

¹¹⁷ Adebajo, "Building Peace", 15.

obviate sporadic bouts of violent conflicts, and to reverse said conflicts into sustainable peace acts.

While all three concepts aim at reducing, preventing, and/or transforming violence, it is apparent that different approaches are used. They may also target different types of violence; direct in the case of peacemaking and structural/cultural in peacebuilding. Peacekeeping targets both.

Religion in Post-war Sierra Leone

During the initial stages of the Sierra Leonian war, there was no presence of the SLA, leaving the civilians impuissant to RUF attack. With no apparent support from the government or the international community, the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (hereafter, CCSL) declared a period of fasting and prayer to end the war and protect the civilians.¹¹⁸ Prayers were performed in mosques for the same purposes. The CCSL, in cooperation with several religious organizations launched relief centers in less volatile areas. The World Conference of Religion and Peace (hereafter, WCRP), which was established in 1970 towards achieving peace, delegated a representative to Sierra Leone in 1997 to initiate an inter-faith deliberation on ways to end the war. On April 1, 1997, following several meetings between the religious leaders and organizations, a multi-faith national forum was summoned. Consequently, the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone (hereafter, IRCSL) was formed consisting of Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant representatives.¹¹⁹ The council presented played a huge role in convincing Sankoh to

¹¹⁸ Conteh, "The Role of Religion", 62.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 65.

meet with the facilitators of the peace accord in order to initiate discussions. They were subsequently named the moral guarantors of the deal that resulted from the accord. When the deal was finalized, the council urged the civilians and the rebels to adhere to the conditions of the deal in order to promote peace (attached in the appendix).¹²⁰

On May 25, 1997, few months after the IRCSL was formed, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (hereafter, AFRC) ousted the government through a military coup. ECOMOG succeeded in deposing the AFRC and reinstating the official government (SLPP) in 1998 and the IRCSL held a joint national thanksgiving service (mainly Muslim-Christian) that was highly patronized by the populace. After RUF attacked Freetown on January 6, 1999, the IRCSL was bent on attaining peace. They managed to get the government and the rebels to undertake to a peace agreement. This birthed the Lomé Peace Accord signed by RUF leader Sankoh, and Sierra Leone government on July 7, 1999.

Religion, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”
Matthew 6:12-13¹²¹

Often described as the precursor to reconciliation, the term ‘forgiveness’ has been widely used by scholars in discourse on the subject. Forgiveness is generally perceived as religious -or theological, and the sense is that ultimate forgiveness can only be granted by

¹²⁰ See appendix for the statement from Conteh’s *The Role of Religion*.

¹²¹ *The Bible*. New International Version. BibleGateway.com classic.biblegateway.com

God.¹²² Quinn maintains that there are two kinds of wrong; wrongs for which there can be reparation, and wrongs for which there can be none. Furthermore, she explains that for the former type of wrong, there is a greater propensity for forgiveness. For one to have been forgiven for a wrongdoing, one must express remorse. Although one expresses remorse or performs restorative acts for wrongs done, one is not entitled to forgiveness. Forgiveness solely depends on the victims.¹²³ During the planning stages of the Lomé Peace Accord to deal with the Sierra Leonian crisis, the leaders proposed granting the rebels amnesty and several political positions because they thought it would facilitate disarmament and peace. This did not sit well with many civilians who had suffered at the hands of the rebels. The Truth and Reconciliation Council (TRC) was then set up to commence within 90 days of signing the Lomé Peace Accord in order to give a chance to the perpetrators to confess and be vulnerable before the people in an attempt to foster perpetual healing and reconciliation.¹²⁴ By then, the practice of TRCs was common worldwide in countries such as South Africa and Uganda. Unlike the South African initiative, the Sierra Leonean initiative was not contingent on the perpetrators acknowledging their complicity in the war crimes. The government simply wanted to end the war through any means possible and thought that was the means to achieve that goal.

¹²² Trudy Govier, "A Dialectic of Acknowledgement," in *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*, ed. Joanna R. Quinn (Montreal, Ont.: McGill Queen's University Press, 2009), 36

¹²³ Joanna R. Quinn, ed., *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 30, http://ezproxy.fiu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000tna&AN=404821&site=ehost-live&scope=site&ebv=EB&ppid=pp_53.

¹²⁴ Lyn S. Graybill, "The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission," in *Religion, Tradition, and Restorative Justice in Sierra Leone* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 32, accessed September 13, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvpj7dnn>.

In *Sierra Leone: Soldiers of Fortune*, a government official, in an attempt to explain what amnesty meant to a former soldier, who had been disarmed, said “amnesty means that all, excuse me to say, the sins that you committed against the government of Sierra Leone, that is fighting alongside the RUF, killing, and doing all those things; he has forgiven you.”¹²⁵ Forgiveness was emphasized as a value of paramount importance, especially in the processes involving the TRC. The head of the TRC committee reportedly addressed a group, stating that he did not expect the victims to forget the crimes committed against them and their families, but he enjoined them to forgive the perpetrators. He commissioned the perpetrators in effect to confess and be remorseful to obtain forgiveness, because forgiveness was not an easy task.¹²⁶ In most cases, victims, and perpetrators, that is, offenders and sufferers, wanted to meet each other. For this reason, special reconciliation ceremonies were held by traditional and religious arbiters. These ceremonies were preceded by religious counseling on forgiveness and reconciliation, and incorporated cleansing rites performed in special ceremonies. This, Graybill reported, comported with the masses, rather than the trials, and fostered reintegration back into the communities.¹²⁷ The TRC collaborated with African traditional leaders in employing Sierra Leonian indigenous methods in reconciliation practices. This was especially likened to the traditional *gacaca* courts used in Rwanda following the genocide of the 90s. Just as with the TRC, perpetrators brought before the traditional courts were required to confess and seek forgiveness from the community. In

¹²⁵ “Sierra Leone”, video.

¹²⁶ Graybill, “The Sierra Leone”, 40.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 44-45.

most cases, the perpetrators were dealt “appropriate” punishments, and the victims, commensurate compensations, after which meals were shared to symbolize forgiveness and a return to normalcy.¹²⁸ In other cases, traditional healers called *curandeiros* performed special rituals that were geared toward cutting links with the past. Graybill narrates this ritual as follows:

Often this involved burning his military clothes and splashing the former fighter with water mixed with the leaves of the mululua tree. Having thus placated the spirits of those killed, the former warrior was able to return to the community, where he was accepted even by the victims’ relatives.¹²⁹

In the same vein, in Sierra Leone, victims of rape during the raids, as well as females captured as wives for the rebels had to undergo cleansing rituals that entailed ceremonial baths, supplemented by songs and anecdotes about healing. They are then dressed in custom-made clothing and are made to feast with the community. Graybill further cites the disparity in the TRC operations and the traditional truth-telling practices as observed by Rosalind Shaw. Shaw avers that while the former was sanctioned by the government, they were also legal. On the other hand, the latter were sanctioned only by religious bodies.¹³⁰ The point of the discussion here was to show how forgiveness, a moral value, informed by religious meanings is performed as part of post-war reconciliation projects in Sierra Leone. The underlying understanding of the actors

¹²⁸ Lyn S. Graybill, "Traditional Reconciliation Practices," in *Religion, Tradition, and Restorative Justice in Sierra Leone* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 128, accessed September 13, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvpj7dmn.12>

¹²⁹ Ibid, 130.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 138.

involved is that just as God—or gods—forgive, so must the people forgive to progress as a society.

Pentecostalism, African Traditional Religions, and Peace through Healing in Sierra Leone After the War

Since the introduction of Western religion in Sierra Leone, most people practice one, two or all three of the dominant religions in Sierra Leone because of the ethos of religious tolerance in the country. Pentecostals abhorred such practices when they emerged on the religious scene in the early 1980s and advocated for their adherents to only practice one religion—that is, their version of Christianity.

For some individual Sierra Leonian victims of the war, they would rather forget than be made to remember through the reconciliation projects, the crimes committed against them. For others, memory helps them cope with the pain. Shaw, in *Displacing Violence: Making Pentecostal Memory in Postwar Sierra Leone*, mentions how, unlike in the TRC, some Pentecostals actively choose to forget about the war. Through Pentecostal discourses on spiritual warfare and other activities, they indirectly retool the war memories.¹³¹ Shaw refers to this process as “directed forgetting”. She describes how, through rituals (non-verbal approaches) and revised narratives (verbally), memories of the horrific events that characterized the war are displaced. The goal of the project is to aid victims in overcoming the pain from these past events, foster community

¹³¹ Rosalind Shaw, "Displacing Violence: Making Pentecostal Memory in Postwar Sierra Leone," *Cultural Anthropology* 22, no. 1 (February 2007): 69, accessed September 13, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4124729>.

development, and facilitate reintegration.¹³² Shaw posits that African traditional religions are functional and used in the everyday lives of the adherents in Sierra Leone. In the same vein Pentecostalism, by emphasizing warfare that involves triumphing over evil brought against one with good through worship, engagement with the Holy Spirit, prayers, and rituals, also proves to be functional to the Sierra Leonian Christian. In Africa, Pentecostalism has been slightly modified from the Western practice. Local leadership, culture, and needs are necessitating this change. She writes:

This simultaneous homogenization and vernacularization is especially clear in the deliverance ministry within Africa, which has been retooled through sermons, broadcasts, pamphlets, and burgeoning "cassette cultures" (Bastian n.d.; Hackett 1 Oha 2000). Through it, deities and spirits from African cosmologies were incorporated into Pentecostal ideas and practice by recasting them as demons and waging spiritual warfare against them¹³³

Using placards or signboards placed outside buildings, Pentecostal Churches advertise solutions to problems to draw large crowds (Quite interestingly, traditional priests also advertise solutions to the same problems). In Pentecostal churches, these problems are attributed to the devil and evil people, who must be destroyed before one could prosper. The churches also offer menial jobs to the unemployed, shelter to the displaced, and food to the poor. Through deliverance, former victims of the war and soldiers, who join these churches, become "born again", a Pentecostal term that denotes newness or change from old ways of life to a new one, made possible by the Holy spirit. The pastors perform deliverance for these people who had, according to Pentecostal

¹³² Rosalind Shaw, "Afterword: Violence and the Generation of Memory," in *Remembering Violence*, ed. Nicolas Argenti and Katharina Schramm (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2010), 258, accessed September 13, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/j.ctt9qcs96.15>.

¹³³ Shaw, "Displacing Violence", 71.

discourse, been under the devil's influence during the time of the war. When Shaw inquired from a pastor how he healed the war-afflicted people, he highlighted prayers that helped them forget about the war and attributed memory of it to the devil's attempt to torment the people.¹³⁴ While many victims of the war sought justice and reparations, the majority of them preferred restorative approaches such as those offered by the TRC, traditional reconciliation courts, and religious institutions (churches and mosques). Graybill is fascinated by the relevance placed on such approaches in Sierra Leone and in other African countries. She reports that these approaches indeed work, in lieu of trials that sought to punish perpetrators. She bolsters her claims with a report from the Trauma Center for Victims of Violence and Torture in South Africa which presents evidence that "60% of witnesses felt worse after testifying because it brought back feelings of anger and sorrow."¹³⁵

Shaw also describes how war-displaced youth in a Pentecostal church in Sierra Leone write and perform plays that are silent on the subject of the war, but re-narrate it using the idiom of spiritual warfare against a subterranean demonic realm known as the "Underworld". These imaginaries of the Underworld, she argues, are part of the local retooling of the Pentecostal deliverance ministry to address Sierra Leone's years of war. Shaw argues that through performing their struggle against the forces of the Underworld, these Pentecostal youth are offered the opportunity to re-imagine the war and in the process, reshape experiences of violence that have shaped them. In the context of such Pentecostal practices "demonic memory" (memories of the war) is transformed into "Pentecostal memory."

¹³⁴ Ibid, 88.

¹³⁵ Graybill, "Religion, Tradition", 184.

Furthermore, Shaw argues that just as these youth are made to see their own physical displacement as not an entirely negative condition, their displacement of violent memory is empowering rather than repressive. This is because by "forgetting" the war as a direct realist account and re-imagining it through the lens of the Underworld discourse, "they use war itself to re-member their lives." Although they do not lose their memories of terror and violence completely, these youth learn to transform these memories in ways that allow them to create a moral life course in which they are much more than weak dependents or victims.¹³⁶

Other Approaches to Peacebuilding

Although the mandates for every UN peacekeeping mission may vary, "observing ceasefires, protecting civilians and providing humanitarian relief supplies, supporting disarmament, initiating demobilization and reintegration programs, ensuring public safety and supporting weak governments" are some basic mandates for the missions.¹³⁷ The UN engages in more peacekeeping, by sending troops from multiple countries to conflict-ridden areas in order to de-escalate the situation. In the Sierra Leonian context, the signing of the Lomé peace accord was not facilitated by the IRC alone, but through the joint action of the UN. ECOMOG, on several occasions, succeeded in ousting illegitimate governments prior to and during the war. For instance, in 1967 when the Sierra Leone People's Party (hereafter, SLPP) refused to transfer power to the APC, ECOMOG managed to return power to the APC after less than a year. Other approaches the international communities may adopt include trials, which, as mentioned earlier, stirred

¹³⁶ Shaw, "Displacing Violence", Abstract.

¹³⁷ Paul D. Williams, *War & Conflict in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016), 232.

more anger and jogged traumatic memories among the testifiers. Trials also affected the economy negatively as huge sums of money were involved in conducting them.¹³⁸

Although for some people, the only way to forget was to see the perpetrators pay for their actions, evidence points to the need (and in most cases, desire) for more restorative means.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This chapter opened with an overview of the nation of Sierra Leone, stating the religions practiced in the country and their influence on daily life. I then delved into the antecedents of the civil war, its trajectory, and the attempts at restoring peace, stating the role that religion played in both inciting, perpetuating, and ending the war. I mentioned that African Traditional religions suffuse the African continent-and culture and showed different ways in which religion was involved in the Sierra Leone conflict. I further presented an in-depth description of peace, the various types, and the different approaches involved in achieving them. I mentioned that there could well be an absence of physical violence, which did not automatically mean that there was general (or absolute) peace. I used Galtung's definitions of peace to explain the phenomenon of direct and structural peace, with the former characterized by the physical existence of violence and the latter characterized by social harmony, development, and a sense of community. Additionally, I identified the differences between peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping, and concluded that the more salient approach used in Sierra Leone is peacemaking, which is more focused on curtailing and preventing

¹³⁸ Conteh, The role of Religion.

violence through means such as negotiations and other transformative actions like the TRC, traditional truth courts (gacaca in Rwanda), and religious actions (cleansing rites, prayers, fasting, deliverance, forgiveness and forgetting, and Pentecostal performances). Finally, I mentioned how traditional and Pentecostal leaders in Sierra Leone employed more transformative methods than others in reconstructing their country. I argued that although it is evident that religion did contribute to the 11-years of upheaval in Sierra Leone, it is also contributing to establishing peace. Communities developed more trust by engaging religious symbols, literature and actions in their peace building projects. Assurance and a much-needed sense of newness, through deliverance, cleansing rites, and prayer fosters social cohesion and a sense of community as these usually ended in large communal events such as feasts. The impact of economic decline is lessened as religious institutions and the IRC has launched programs that feed, shelter, and provide other basic human needs to the needy. Forgiveness and forgetting are encouraged as both moral and religious values that promote a culture of peace.

CHAPTER 4

A Comparative Analysis of the Cases

The theme that links the two cases explored in this study is the notion that when it comes to the question of its role in politics in Africa, religion can be described as a double-edged sword in that its use can have both favorable and unfavorable consequences. As I have demonstrated with data from Uganda, On the one hand, Joseph Kony enlists religion in his political project. He uses religion to reinforce the use of violence in achieving his goals. On the other hand, in Sierra Leone, Pentecostal discourse and practices are used as a panacea in post conflict healing processes. What seems even more intriguing is that in the two cases presented, it is the same religion, that is, African Christianity, that the agents involved enlist to promote conflict on one hand, and healing, on the other. How to theorize the diametrically opposed uses of religion I have demonstrated in my thesis is one of the goals of the discussion below. Clifford Geertz's approach to religion as a cluster of meanings and Bourdieu's understanding of religion, first as a form of capital, and secondly, as a social field that can exist independently, or intersect with other social fields, can offer us profitable theoretical leads in our efforts to conceptualize the link between these opposite scenarios.

For Geertz, culture is a "historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols" and "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes

toward life.”¹³⁹ A symbol is “any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception – the conception is the symbol’s “meaning.” In other words, the symbol functions as a bearer of meanings. Religion, an aspect of culture is a repository of symbols, sacred symbols, to be more specific. Religious teachings, objects, rituals, places, personalities are embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longings, or beliefs.¹⁴⁰ Following Geertz, we can say that the African Christian traditions involved in these two cases are repositories of meanings.

Secondly, Geertz argues that sacred symbols establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in people. In other words, sacred symbols-- Religious teachings, objects, rituals, places, personalities -- are powerful because they not only invoke deep moral sentiments concerning how the world should be, they influence how human beings interpret reality, but they also shape human behavior.¹⁴¹ Geertz also shows how religious traditions clothe their conceptions in an “aura of factuality” by making these conceptions of reality to appear to be true. They do so by presenting these conceptions in an appealing and persuasive way. This explains why sacred symbols seem intensely real and factual to believers within the religious tradition although to non-believers or outsiders the symbols can appear to be mythological or even false. The

¹³⁹James Bishop, "Clifford Geertz- Religion as a 'System of Symbols,'" Bishop's Encyclopedia of Religion, Society and Philosophy: Thinking Religion and Philosophy, last modified February 8, 2020, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://jamesbishopblog.com/2020/02/08/clifford-geertz-religion-as-a-system-of-symbols/>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid

¹⁴¹ Ibid

religious believer's moods and motivations "seem uniquely realistic" in that she or he feels his or her feelings and commitments come from God or the ultimate reality.¹⁴²

Following Geertz's approach to religion we can say that the doctrines, creeds, mythologies, persons, images, spaces and rituals of Kony's Lord's Resistance army in Uganda and the Pentecostal churches in Sierra Leone make available to agents and followers a repertory of symbols—meanings-- they selectively adopt, adapt, and use the symbols in their respective projects. These two cases however teach us that meanings of symbols are not fixed, and the way people use them are not the same. Human beings are not passive recipients of symbolic meanings they are given or inherit. Sacred symbols are subject to the interpretations and re-interpretations or reconfigurations of the users involved. Kony inherits a religious movement with already established African and Christian teachings, creeds, and ritual practices. These were not intended to promote violence, but Kony retools these symbols by investing them with new meanings and transforming them into mechanisms of violence and suppression. The agency of religious people in manipulating the meanings of symbols is what is in play here. Similarly, in the Serra Leonian case, individual actors selectively use Pentecostal teachings on forgiveness, demonic activity, divine intervention in mundane affairs, and other meanings to help war victims come to terms with a brutal past and the consequent trauma, and to forge ahead in life. The symbols Pentecostalism furnishes them enables them to understand the war in Pentecostal terms and to deal with its malcontents using the resources Pentecostalism has offered them. Religious symbols are only meanings. They

¹⁴² Ibid

can be used constructively or destructively depending on the motivations and intentions of the users.

Furthermore, as a cluster of symbols whose meanings can be used in all kinds of projects, religion becomes something of a warehouse of cultural resources agents can pick and choose from. This is how religion can be a form of capital for political agents as the two cases demonstrate. This theme leads us to Bourdieu's understanding of capital as any resource social actors can use to achieve goals within their fields of activities. He identifies fields as the arenas in which social action is organized.¹⁴³ Fields are independent and have within them relevant forms of capital. But social fields can intersect and capital from one field can be used in other fields. In the two cases presented in this study, the actors involved see religion as a store of meanings they can use to achieve political goals. Religion then becomes capital in the political field. Kony's ambitions are clear; he seeks to rule Uganda by overthrowing the legitimate government. This is an illegitimate agenda. By framing this project as a religious one Kony seeks to legitimize it and rally support from his people. He also presents himself as a divine agent and claims that his mission is to establish the kingdom of God and to rule Uganda using the ten commandments.¹⁴⁴ Violence is the instrument he uses to keep order in his camp, but he sacralizes this violence by defining it as an enforcement of divine injunctions (the ten commandments). Other sacred symbols Kony uses includes the religious community

¹⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu, "What Makes Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32 (1987): 4, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41035356>.

¹⁴⁴ See chapter 2.

he describes as a resistance army, religious rituals that induce states of frenzy (moods), the aura around him as an individual with superior wonder-working magico-religious power and so on. In theoretical terms Kony is simply using religious currency in a political field, perhaps building on the Ugandan or Acholi worldview that does not see a clear-cut distinction between these two fields. This analysis also applies to the Sierra Leonean situation in which Pentecostal practices and discourses are used to achieve a political goal-healing a nation bleeding from years of factional armed conflict. It is the ease with which sacred symbols can be re-interpreted to fit in with specific mundane agendas that makes them valuable capital in the political field. The analytical value of Geertz's and Bourdieu's perspectives lie in the insights they offer into the ways in which the African Christian religious fields in Uganda and Sierra Leone produce meanings (sacred symbols) which political agents can adopt, adapt, and use in the pursuit of their agenda.

Is Religion Intrinsically Violent or Inherently Peaceful?

It is quite intriguing that most, if not all, religions proclaim peace, and yet religion, more often than not, has been tagged as inherently violent, rather than peaceful. I introduce my thesis by first acknowledging the copious religiously motivated conflicts that have been portrayed especially by the media in the past decade or so. It comes as no shock that the scholarly discourse on religion and violence far supersedes that on religion

and peace¹⁴⁵. The ubiquitous nature of religion makes it easy to be located in any praxis—political, sociological, psychological, and so on. De Vries describes violence as the fundamental element of religion. To him, there is “no violence without (some) religion; no religion without (some) violence.”¹⁴⁶ Another scholar, Thomas Block, in his book *Fatal Addiction* asserts that humans possess a proclivity for violence. He further compares the human species to rats, claiming that both species exhibit similar tendencies in seeking the destruction of their fellow species. These scholars are of the view that societies’ propensity for violence is what allows them to function efficiently.¹⁴⁷ Au contraire, Smock surmises that religion can be used to foster peace instead of violence and when used (in conjunction with other mechanisms), produces lasting results. He provides evidence for this by stating that religious institutions’ involvement in peace processes offer credibility and serve as moral checks. Ter Haar (as cited in Smock 2006, 2) asserts that including a spiritual dimension during a peacemaking process will give the parties insight into the deeper visceral roots of their behaviors, causing them to re-examine their choices and actions.¹⁴⁸ In fact, Brahm states that because the effects of religion and peace are not as “dramatic” as the effects of religion and violence, the former

¹⁴⁵ David R. Smock, ed., *Religious Contributions to Peacebuilding: When Religion Brings Peace*, publication no. 55 (Washington D.C, D.C: Peaceworks, 2006), 1, accessed March 20, 2021, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/01/religious-contributions-peacemaking-when-religion-brings-peace-not-war>.

¹⁴⁶ Hent de Vries, *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1.

¹⁴⁷ Thomas Block, *A Fatal Addiction: War in the Name of God* (Algora Publishing, 2012), 5.

¹⁴⁸ Smock, *Religious Contributions*, 2.

receives little attention while the latter receives all the attention.¹⁴⁹ These two differing views present evidence for their claims by demonstrating the instances where religion is used to incite violence or navigate peace. This, however, does not affirm whether or not religion is inherently violent or peaceful.

The Spiritual Controls the Worldly

Culture and religion bear a lot of semblance in many parts of the world, but more so in Africa to such an extent that it can be difficult to separate the two. Evans-Pritchard attested to this during his field work among the Azande of South Sudan. He maintained that the natives did not categorize what they practiced as “religion” but perceived it as part of their culture. Spirits play an important role in the African culture and in the religions present on the continent (especially in Pentecostalism and African Traditional Religions). There are two types of spirits; bad spirits and good spirits. Ellis and Ter Haar, note that, not only are these spirits seen to be present, but they are understood to control both the spiritual and physical worlds. This is portrayed in multiple Nigerian and Ghanaian movies that educate on the occult. In these movies, there is usually a small doll that represents an individual and any action performed on the doll manifests in the person’s life. In one of such instances, one seeking to physically harm (e.g., cause a fracture in a limb) an adversary needs only to fracture the doll’s limb.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Eric Brahm, "Religion and Peace," Beyond Intractability, last modified September 2005, accessed April 2, 2021, https://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/religion_and_peace.

¹⁵⁰ The innumerable local movies watched from infancy.

Many objects used in the physical world are often believed to originate from the underworld (dark spiritual world) and cause distress to those who use them.¹⁵¹ Several religious leaders capitalize on this and insist that deliverance, regular fasting and prayer are the only ways to conquer the spirits pervading these items. In fact, some churches prohibit certain items like earrings and some types of clothing, and place hair-style restrictions on their followers. Growing up in such a culture, I used to pray over any items purchased, to rid them of ungodly spirits that may attempt to alter my destiny. Special people upon whom special powers had been conferred can communicate with these spirits, ancestors, and gods. In many parts of Africa, traditional chiefs acted as the medium to the spiritual world. Some priests, traditional healers, and pastors had this “gift” as well. That being said, these authority figures were revered because they had the power to invoke both good and bad spirits. This explains the relevance placed on religion in war and peace. For the Acholi of Northern Uganda, Alice Auma, Severino, and Joseph Kony possessed the “gift” to communicate with the spirits. Thus, when they proclaimed their desire to liberate the people from their woes, they gained support from the masses, who saw them as operating with spiritual authority. Likewise, in Sierra Leone, forgiveness and forgetting in the spiritual world meant forgiveness here in the material world. Matthew 16:19 affirms this:

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you lose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Ellis and Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power*, 46.

¹⁵² *The Bible*. New International Version. BibleGateway.com classic.biblegateway.com

The pastors in Pentecostal churches as well as the leaders in charge of both the TRC and the traditional courts emphasized this. In African Traditional Religions, there is a similar ideology. One of the reasons why TRCs achieved more sustainable results than trials was because the participants who took oaths in the presence of a spiritual leader were terrified of committing perjury because they could be struck dead or severely punished by the spirits. In the case of trials, judges had no spiritual authority and could not even tell when they were lying. Graybill adds that cleansing ceremonies performed for and on the victims and perpetrators of violence signified newness and those spiritual acts purified them physically. A young girl who had returned from the LRA camp had to step on a raw egg in order to transfer all evil and impurity to the egg. The girl, upon completing this ritual (and several others) was fit to reenter the community and could be taken as a wife.¹⁵³

In the above-mentioned instances, the presence of the spiritual and its power over the mundane demonstrates how religion was used as a tool in both the Uganda and the Sierra Leone case. For the rebels and the counter rebel groups (including the Kamajors), spirits provided backing and power to conquer their victims. For the peace seekers in Sierra Leone, spirits provided the means to offset the evil committed during the war, via forgiveness, forgetting, and healing geared towards peacebuilding.

¹⁵³ Graybill, "Traditional Reconciliation", 130-131.

Durkheim and Juergensmeyer on Religion and Violence (effervescence, martyrdom, cosmic war, just war)

Durkheim's theory of religion attributes all religious activities to social behavior. He emphasizes the influence of group dynamics on religious activities. Durkheim purports that religion exists and thrives only because humans live as communal beings. For him, all religions are identical and spring from the same source, social effervescence. He further explains how the group experience eventually forms its members' identities and advocates that the effervescence does not only lead to a transfiguration in the physical milieu, but in the mental and spiritual realm as well. He propounds that the individual becomes a new being after "losing" himself in the process of communal worship, and actions performed by this new being no longer rest on logic, but on the actions permissible by the new subjugating power.¹⁵⁴ The whole group exhibits synergy because it is experiencing the same power which is controlling all the actions of the members. Durkheim purports that an individual must not necessarily be inherently predisposed to these new behaviors in order to perform them. He believes that a religious force could be initiated by one individual and then amplified within the group through social effervescence (excitement). Some acts that stir up this kind of excitement may include chanting, drumming, singing, clapping, and "even through mutual acts of self-harm or harm to others."¹⁵⁵ The LRA, RUF and pro-government militias all engaged in

¹⁵⁴ Juergensmeyer and Kitts, *Princeton Readings*, 100-102.

¹⁵⁵ Richards, "An accidental", 652.

spiritual practices during warfare. There were daily morning routines for the RUF and LRA rebels. Rituals involved singing, dancing, and chanting. Most times they advanced into battle while performing these actions. The former soldiers claim to be suddenly overcome by some sort of power which enables them to commit the murders. Most of them have confessed to not knowing how they killed the masses during raids, but only became conscious of their actions after the act.¹⁵⁶

Juergensmeyer groups religious violence under several themes. In this section, I examine the themes of Martyrdom, Just War, and Cosmic War in relation to violence in the both the Uganda and the Sierra Leone cases presented (among the LRA, RUF, and Kamajors). In explaining the LRA's spirituality in chapter 2, I introduced the concept of martyrdom and just war. To recapitulate, martyrdom is a term associated with Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Simply put, martyrs are those who die for the cause of God. Since death is inescapable, dying for a good cause that will be beneficial to the martyr is more profitable than dying a natural death. Christian martyrdom is usually characterized by one's refusal to denounce God, especially when it means being put to death for it. I have seen many of such situations, especially on social media with fellow Christians asking the world to pray for such people. The concept is prevalent in *jihad* with many volunteers offering to die for the cause of Allah. In ATR however, I do not observe this practice, being performed. Fighters may advance gallantly into battle, albeit with the assurance of prevailing over adversaries (which translates to not dying in battle, but rather killing the enemies). Martyrdom embodies the concept of sacrifice. The martyr, in

¹⁵⁶ See chapter 2

this case, is sacrificing him or herself (voluntarily) and others (involuntarily) for the good of the world (which is expanding his or her religion).

Cosmic wars are fought for purposes that are “higher than life”, geared toward a greater war in the near or distant future. In this case, present struggle is a part of a greater struggle and the final battle yet to be fought. Until that time the soldiers in this spiritual army must keep fighting.¹⁵⁷ In interviews with members of the LRA,¹⁵⁸ they attested to the fact that they knew most of them would not survive to see the end of the war. Kony had reiterated that on many occasions, and it did not seem to be one of the reasons why former soldiers escaped. They accepted their predicament because they had been taught and brainwashed into believing that God demanded them to fight for Him. They knew they could be killed in battle, yet advanced into it anyway. In their case, their martyrdom was not really voluntary because if they refused to fight, they risked amputation or even death by their own faction. In cosmic wars, fighters resorted to no other solutions than “war”. The only way out for them was to wipe out the enemy and emerge victors. This explains why Kony hardly attended peace negotiations with the government, and when he did, never signed any deals, and explains why the RUF violated their peace deal (the Lomé’ accord) few months after signing. Juergensmeyer further states that in this context, the perpetrators view themselves as victims, thus feel morally justified in their actions. Leaders and members of the militias always considered themselves victims of bad and evil leadership. Alice Auma and Kony started their army to fight for their people who

¹⁵⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 4th ed. (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 205.

¹⁵⁸ See *Martyrs Fighting a Just War* in chapter 2

were being mistreated by the government. RUF also sprung up as a response against corruption and to provide better living conditions for the youth. Religion herein presents people with a narrative that confers meaning and speak to their individual experiences.

Just wars, like cosmic wars, basically describe wars that are justified, or necessary. One of such instances is if they are waged to defend a group or a cause. The *Kamajors* and the other anti-rebel militias that had emerged to protect their communities from RUF and the government forces that attacked them saw their war as justifiable because they were only fighting to ensure survival and serve justice. We see in this section that the various groups deemed their actions to be justifiable and morally right for the reasons listed above.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Religion's role in fueling violence has received more global attention in the last decade. The need to study and incorporate religion into the analysis of different social fields is being stressed. The premiere of KONY 2012, a short documentary on the LRA by the Invisible Children, shook the western world after many years of vacillating attention to the warfare in Uganda. The documentary indeed championed the campaign for Kony's arrest and furnished the country with several investors wanting to rebuild the war-torn Uganda. The documentary, however, projects the LRA problem as a simple one, with a simple solution; the arrest of Kony.¹⁵⁹ This study has illustrated how complex the LRA problem is, by bringing to light the antecedents to the emergence of the group, its operations, and the role spirituality plays in its socio-political dynamics. Indeed, Kony manipulates several beliefs and practices, including Christianity, African traditional beliefs, and perhaps, Islam (as suggested by a few), in fulfilling his personal political ambitions. Cline notes that unlike typical religious, ethnic, or nationalist groups, whose framework is clearly identifiable, determining the galvanizing factor and ideology for the LRA is complicated. However, leaning towards Titeca's views,¹⁶⁰ I observe that the LRA demonstrates structure and organization in developing strict rules, and using religious belief and practice to bolster these and enforce them in governing both the soldiers and the village communities within which it operates. It must be acknowledged, however,

¹⁵⁹ "KONY 2012," video, 29:58, YouTube, posted by Invisible Children, March 5, 2012, accessed December 2, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4MnpzG5Sqc&t=682s>.

¹⁶⁰ Titeca, "The Spiritual," 66.

that the group in its later years, started to lose sight of its goals and committed random acts of terror, or began to see terror as an instrument in the achievement of its goals. In a full version of the laws that governed the precursory Holy Spirit Movement, the semblance to the ten commandments is uncanny. The same “thou shalt not” format is observed and supplemented with at least two Bible quotations.¹⁶¹

Kony’s army claims to be fighting to establish the rule of God and the spirits, by creating religious based regulations (or simply adapting what his predecessor, Alice Lakwena had created). Interestingly, in many cases, many fighters in self-proclaimed holy wars refuse to acknowledge how spurious the religious claims are, even in the face of clear defeat and contradictions. Most LRA soldiers after escaping, however, demonstrate being disillusioned by this putatively “religious” movement.

Sierra Leone, after dealing with its 11-year havoc engages religious practices that foster their peace. That is not to say that religion is solely responsible for their peace through healing. They do, in fact, receive a great deal of support from the international community. ECOMOG was closely involved in the country and even helped oust the SLPP when they refused to hand over power to the new government in 1967. To emphasize this, the UN delegated their highest number of troops to the country during the war.¹⁶² I have stated throughout the study that African traditional religions are imbedded within the African culture and it is oftentimes impossible to tell them apart. Individuals subscribe to these traditional religious beliefs because they offer practical answers to their

¹⁶¹ Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Lord's Resistance Army: Millennialism, Violence and the Timeless Dream," *Religious Studies and Theology* 28, no. 1 (2009): 101-104, accessed September 9, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1558/rsth.v28il.95>.

¹⁶² See Adebayo in chapter 3.

problems -and quickly. People in African communities are generally very religious and hold the view that everything that happens in the mundane (physical) world has already happened or is a reflection of a happening in the spiritual realm, hence the widely held belief that it is only by controlling the spiritual, that the physical world can be controlled. The Pentecostals capitalize on this and charge the populace to engage in spiritual counter warfare. They use narratives, songs, sermons, biblical texts, and prayer to invoke the positive things they want to see in their lives. Much emphasis is placed on forgiveness and reconciliation geared toward peacemaking and in the long run, peacebuilding. Traditional religions are also employed in peacemaking. As described in chapter 3, traditional leaders are present on TRC committees and the traditional courts are incorporated in the national approaches to peacemaking (alongside other means) in Sierra Leone. The churches and other religious bodies constantly promote peace, religious tolerance, and even contribute to satisfying the material needs of people by providing food, shelter, jobs, and many other basic amenities.

War Termination in Uganda and Sierra Leone following Conflict

The type of peace achieved and the manner in which it is achieved may predict the reoccurrence of violence. The likelihood of a resurgence of conflict is higher when the peace attained is negative and is less when the peace attained is positive. The “victor’s peace” is “peace that historically has rested on the argument that power can be exercised by the hegemon (meaning a state or empire that controls the most

resources).”¹⁶³ Richmond maintains that this kind of peace has been in existence for ages, “foreshadowing the Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest and implying war and violence was humanity’s natural condition.” He further notes that this sort of peace has several flaws. Among them is its inability to check rebellious subjects. In most cases, such powers are oftentimes waylaid by local opposition.¹⁶⁴ On the other hand, negotiated peace usually involves discussions between warring entities and occasionally, international institutions. According to Bogner and Neubert, peacemaking in this situation is more of a political and or diplomatic mechanism in lieu of an effort to achieve the ideal of a positive peace that allows for unity and transitional justice.¹⁶⁵ Consequently, those in charge of the peacebuilding process aim to accommodate the civilians’ interests while also considering the combatants interests. In such cases, facilitators might have to settle for substandard solutions of a peace agreement that will primarily benefit the combatants, including offering immunity to those who committed gross human rights abuses.¹⁶⁶

As reported in chapter 1, Uganda experienced prolonged years of political chaos following independence from the British. Idi Amin’s “reign of terror” was terminated by a coup led by Obote in 1979, who was then ousted by an Acholi officer, General Tito Okello, in 1985. In 1986, Okello’s rule was subsequently terminated by a coup led by

¹⁶³ Richmond, *A Very Short*, 52.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 58.

¹⁶⁵ Artur Bogner and Dieter Neubert, "Negotiated Peace, Denied Justice? The Case of West Nile (Northern Uganda)," *Africa Spectrum* 48, no. 3 (2013): 57, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.fiu.edu/stable/24589133>.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*.

Museveni, who remains in office till now. A pattern of the victor's peace described above is evident in Uganda. Thus, the rise of the local militias, according to Richmond, was to be expected. In fact, Cline reports about 20 resistance groups in the country during Museveni's regime¹⁶⁷ Several attempts made by the government to negotiate peace with Kony and the LRA failed as Kony refused to sign the peace deals.¹⁶⁸ Contrastingly, in Sierra Leone, several peace deals were signed in attempts to end the war including the Abidjan Accord (signed on 30 November, 1996) and the Lomé Peace Accord (signed on 7 July, 1999). Although Sankoh and the RUF violated deal after deal, the government of Sierra Leone amended these deals and renegotiated them with the RUF. In the Lomé Accord Sankoh and his combatants were granted full pardon and the former was permitted to contest in the next presidential elections (article 9). He was offered the position of vice president (article 4) and the RUF was granted 4 public offices, and few ministerial positions (article 4). The combatants were granted amnesty as well. This aptly reflects Bogner and Neubert's description of negotiated peace. In January 2002, however, the Sierra Leonean government declared the war over after defeating the rebels with help from the international community. In this case, a victor's peace was necessary, and long overdue considering the many times Sankoh flouted the peace deals.

In the first instance, where there was a plethora of victor's peace, discontented locals took up arms, with some using religion as tools, for rebellion. In the second instance, due to the government, religious bodies, and the international communities' concern toward the civilians and especially the RUF's interests, although the peace deals

¹⁶⁷ Cline, *The Lord's*, 79.

¹⁶⁸ Cline, *The Lord's*, 103.

were violated several times, the rise of other militias cannot be compared to the situation in Uganda. Religious leaders, and institutions rather played significant roles in the signing of the deals which resulted in a ceasefire for a couple of months prior to the end of the war. Immediately after signing the Lomé Peace Accord the religious leaders released a press statement, imploring Sierra Leoneans to end the violence and adhere to the peace terms. They communicated the fact that breaking the deal and the laws was commensurate to breaking God's laws. The religious leaders and heads of state served as moral guarantors to the Lomé accord. The circumstances of the peace achieved in both cases could be said to account for the conflicting outcomes presented above.

All world religions claim their traditions are peaceful and advocate for peace and reconciliation.¹⁶⁹ The use of religion in the forgiveness and reconciliation discourse and practice was present in both cases covered in this study. In Uganda, the runaway soldiers and brides (girls in the LRA), upon returning to their communities were hardly welcomed back even by their own families, who accused them of complicity in the killing of the other members of the family and other villagers (they were identified with their LRA capturers). Organizations in charge of reintegrating them back into the communities often accompanied them from the various rehabilitation camps to their homes. Upon arrival the volunteers would engage their families in conversation and inquire if they were willing to take the victims cum perpetrators back. A handful of them agreed to, on condition that they be cleansed from their sins. Jennifer, one of the girls whom I came to be familiar with just from watching the documentaries, was one of such victims.¹⁷⁰ Likewise, the

¹⁶⁹ Conteh, "The Role of Religion", 63.

¹⁷⁰ *Witness: South*, video.

victims and perpetrators in Sierra Leone's TRC partook in special cleansing ceremonies as one of the reconciliation processes which comprised of many rituals, to appease the spirits. The case of the LRA victims was especially unique, as they were once captured as victims and then trained to become "oppressors."

Whether religion is violent or peaceful is very subjective. Indeed, it is evident that some violence is implicit in religious discourse and practice (sacred texts, sermons, doctrines, and rituals). The US Institute of Peace presents reasons why religions may serve as a driver of extreme violence. It reports that religion provides an avenue for people to share a sense of collective identity and oneness. The authors explain that religion may aid in fomenting and organizing people to act violently. They report that in cases where people feel alienated (in several ways; economically, ethnically, and professionally), they tend to embrace religious identity more. This explains why, say, refugees take part in or support religiously motivated violence. In a documentary film on known ISIS refugee grounds, while most of the women desired to return to their home countries, others wanted to stay on because they "came to live here under Sharia laws"¹⁷¹ and their home countries were unwilling to take them back. Additionally, religion presents people with narratives that bestow meanings and speak to their individual experiences and idiosyncrasies. Here, they cite the example of Hindu nationalists who long for a "purer India for Hindus."¹⁷² RUF's message focused on exposing the corrupt

¹⁷¹ "CBS News Goes inside Syrian Refugee Camp Filled with ISIS Supporters," video, YouTube, posted by CBS Evening News, September 19, 2019, accessed November 30, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ki3DG_SVMgE.

¹⁷² Peter Mandaville and Melissa Nozell, *Engaging Religion and Religious Actors in Countering Violent Extremism* (US Institute of Peace, 2017), 4, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12243>.

leaders who hoarded and benefited from the nation's resources—mostly diamonds—and replacing them with leaders who were actually concerned about the development of the nation and the prosperity of its people. They tagged the system as the source of their own lack of education and self-worth. To many fighters, abductees, and voluntary fighters alike, the discourse began to resonate with them, and they gradually transitioned from “timid captives to willing stalwarts”.¹⁷³ In the same vein, Hayes purports that the Holy Spirit Movement of the Acholi flourished in its initial stages because it materialized from within the rural community, building on the material concerns of villagers.¹⁷⁴

Religion can be used for good and evil. The concept of witchcraft in African religions adequately reflects this. Regarded as a neutral power, it can be used for one's personal gain at the expense of others (evil) or for communal good. Traditional healers have the power to strike one with illness and heal another. Growing up in Accra, the capital of Ghana, I came across several signboards on the streets of the city, and posters on walls and bus stands that advertised these services provided by traditional priests/healers. The only such advertisement which I vividly remember was one that read “I offer money problems, sickness, travelling problems, job problems, marriage problem, court problems.” After reading that, I was left wondering whether he meant that he offered solutions to those problems, or whether his practices actually caused those problems. Upon reflection on the material presented thus far, I conclude by proffering

¹⁷³ Richards, “An Accidental”, 656.

¹⁷⁴ Jeffrey Haynes, “Religion, Ethnicity”, 310; Alice was a tomato seller in the village.

that indeed religion plays a marked role in violence in African communities. It, however, can be retooled, as the Pentecostals in Sierra Leone did, to advance peace.

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Appendix

Lomé Peace Accord Full Statement

Statement of Shared Moral Concerns Concerned for the physical and social reconstruction of Sierra Leone and for reconciliation among all peoples in our nation, the undersigned responsible representatives of the Christian Churches and the leaders of the Islamic Community have decided to issue the following common statement: 1. The people of Sierra Leone have undergone enormous suffering. But thanks be to God, the peace accords have been signed. Our task now is to establish a durable peace based on truth, justice and common living, and to collaborate with all people of good will in the healing tasks of reconciliation, reconstruction, and rehabilitation for Sierra Leone. 2. We, the responsible representatives of the Christian Churches and the Islamic Community in Sierra Leone recognize that our Religious Communities differ from each other, and that each of them feels called to live true to its own faith. At the same time, we recognize that our religious and spiritual traditions hold many values in common, and that these shared values can provide an authentic basis for mutual esteem, cooperation, and free common living in Sierra Leone. 3. Each of our Religious Communities recognizes that human dignity and human value is a gift of God. Our religions, each in its own way, call us to recognize the fundamental human rights of each person. Violence against persons or the violation of their basic rights are for us not only against man-made laws but also break God's law

4. We jointly in mutual respectful recognition of our religious differences, condemn all violence against innocent persons and any form of abuse or violation of fundamental human rights. Specifically, we condemn: (a) Acts of hatred based on political, ethnic or religious differences. We express our special concern at the burning of houses and property, and the destruction of religious buildings; (b) The obstruction of the free right of return; (c) Any acts of revenge; (d) The abuse of any media by any agency or entity with the aim of spreading hatred. 5. Further, we call for respect for the fundamental human rights of all persons, regardless of political, religious or ethnic affiliation, which must include: (a) The freedom of all responsible representatives or leaders of Religious Communities in Sierra Leone to fulfill their mission in every part of the country; (b) Opportunities for the free performance of religious services and all forms of pastoral care by all Christian ministers and priests, and by all Sheikhs and Imams of the Islamic community; (c) The right of every child to religious instruction in his or her own faith. 6. Finally, we call on people of good will to take responsibility for their own acts. Let us treat others as we would wish them to treat us. 7. With this statement we appeal to all believers of our Religious Communities, and to all citizens of Sierra Leone, and to H.E. Alhaji Dr. A.T. Kabbah, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. Signed

on 1 April 1997 by Al-Sheikh Ahmad Tejan Sillah, Islamic Community in Sierra Leone Rev. Moses Benson Khanu, Council of Churches in Sierra Leone Archbishop Joseph Ganda, Roman Catholic Community in Sierra Leone

Statement of Shared Values and Common Purpose

The following was the content of the Declaration of Shared Values and Common Purpose: WHEREAS, we believe in God, and in the revealed law of God, and WHEREAS, we believe in the natural law and the just law of man, and WHEREAS, we believe in the equality of all people before God and the Law, and WHEREAS, we recognize our common human destiny, and WHEREAS, we recognize our common history with religious and cultural diversity, and WHEREAS, we recognize our common benefit in unity with diversity, and WHEREAS, we commit ourselves to truth, justice and com mon living, and WHEREAS, we commit ourselves to the respect and protection of human rights, and WHEREAS, we commit ourselves to peace in Sierra Leone and the world, and WHEREAS, we trust the just Law of the land of Sierra Leone, and WHEREAS, we feel responsible for the future of our nation, and the religious communities of Sierra Leone and beyond. NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Legitimate heads of the following religious communities of Sierra Leone: The Islamic Community in Sierra Leone The Council of Churches in Sierra Leone, and The Roma Catholic Community in Sierra Leone have written their good will in the form of the Declaration for the establishment of an Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone.

Signed on 1 April 1997 by Al-Sheikh Ahmad Tejan Sillah, Islamic Community in Sierra Leone. Rev. Moses Benson Khanu, Council of Churches in Sierra Leone.

Archbishop Joseph Ganda, Roman Catholic Community in Sierra Leone.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Conteh, "The Role of Religion", 65-68.