

**Securing the Periphery:  
Political Violence, Center-Periphery Economic Relationships, and Ethnic Geography in  
African States**

DRAFT Dissertation Prospectus - Please do not cite or circulate

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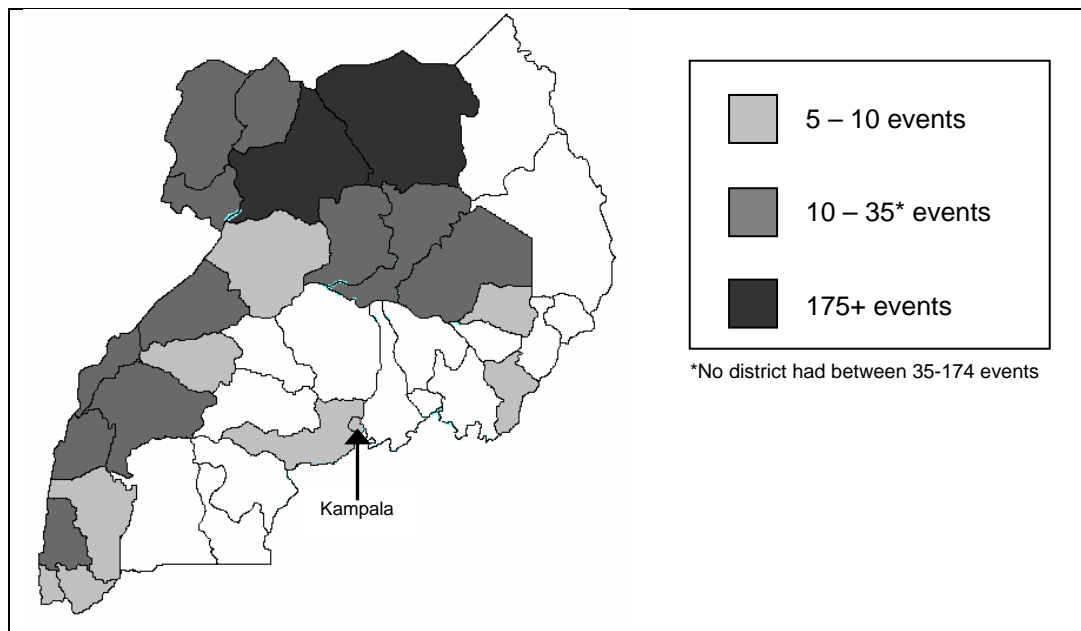
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## I. Project Motivation and Overview

While the 1990s was the decade with the fewest armed conflicts in recent history, Africa was a notable exception, experiencing a rising trend of civil war outbreak (Human Security Report 2005, Collier and Hoeffler 2002). Today, instability continues to threaten parts of Angola, Cameroon, Congo (DRC), Kenya, Nigeria, and Sudan, among others, and roughly 80 percent of people serving worldwide in U.N. stability operations are stationed in Africa.<sup>2</sup>

One notable feature of the recent history of political violence in African states is that it often occurs in areas that are remote from capital cities. In Uganda, for example, just 3.2 percent<sup>3</sup> of the conflict events in the country since 1990 occurred in Kampala or within a contiguous district.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the geographic dispersion of conflict events in Uganda (1990-2005), which are associated with at least five different insurgent groups:

**Figure 1. Map of Uganda: Frequency of conflict events per district, 1990-2005**



Source: Author's compilation using data from Raleigh and Hegre (2005)

<sup>2</sup> Author's calculation based on data at "UN Missions Summary of Military and Police,"

[http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2007/nov07\\_4.pdf](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/contributors/2007/nov07_4.pdf), accessed December 15, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> The high percentage of conflict events reported in the periphery is particularly striking given that the number of events reported in remote areas is likely to be biased downward, due to a relative lack of journalist presence.

<sup>4</sup> This analysis is based on a subset of the Armed Conflict Location Event Dataset (ACLED), Raleigh and Hegre (2005). It includes for Uganda 1990-2005 (using 1992 district boundaries): battles resulting in no change of territory; battles resulting in a transfer of territory to the rebel actor; battles resulting in government forces recapturing rebel held territory; and rebel activity that is not battle related, such as killing or abducting civilians.

This pattern of conflict incidence<sup>5</sup> concentrated in the periphery is present in the recent histories of numerous African states and beyond, notably Congo (DRC), Mali, Sudan, Afghanistan, India, and Nepal.<sup>6</sup> And yet, it is certainly not the case that all peripheral regions of African states have endured high levels of conflict incidence – for every outlying region of a given country that undergoes a great deal of political violence, there are typically many similar regions remaining relatively peaceful. Looking at the figure above for example, while the center-north of Uganda has experienced a particularly high prevalence of conflict, other regions have experienced only brief episodes of instability, and some none at all.

While civil conflict incidence can be explained by factors that influence rebel groups and factors that influence governments, this project seeks to isolate the latter. The primary theoretical outcome of interest is *the extent of state protection in different peripheral areas*. One of the most crucial attributes of an effective state is the successful projection of authority over territory up to one's borders. Yet there is little reason to believe that governments will be motivated and capable of securing all territories equally. What are the primary determinants of (1) a government's degree of effort in securing a peripheral area, and (2) the government's ability to successfully do so? I propose that both of these relationships vary based on local-level attributes of areas remote from the capital, or "the periphery."

My research design will allow me to empirically examine a fairly wide range of hypotheses about whether and how central governments mitigate conflict in their periphery. I also hope to develop theory on the importance of center-peripheral economic relationships and ethnic demography to state consolidation. I propose that regions with stronger economic ties to the center will enjoy a higher level of protection than those that do not, and that states will be better able to secure regions that are more ethnically heterogeneous. These center-periphery relationships, I think, can explain part of the spatial variation we observe in conflict incidence.

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this study, I follow Elbadawi and Sambanis (2002) and focus primarily on conflict "incidence" or "prevalence," which they define as the probability of observing onset *or* the continuation of conflict. Conflict event data for Uganda does not present any obvious breaks that suggest a dichotomous relationship (conflict or not). If in the course of the study I learn that mechanisms driving government to prevent conflict onset and to mitigate existing conflict appear to be different, I will adjust my strategy.

<sup>6</sup> Buhaug and Rød (2006) also find support for the pattern of violence concentrated in countries' peripheries in their spatial analysis of African civil wars from 1971 to 2001. These patterns also arguably follow from Alesina and Spolaore's 1997 model.

This dissertation will advance scholarship on state consolidation and political violence in two ways: First, it will develop theory on how center-periphery economic relationships and local demographic relationships impact conflict incidence, potentially elucidating factors that influence the likelihood of conflict but that are rarely considered in current scholarship. Second, it will focus primarily on the behavior of states in addressing conflict in their own peripheral territory – something that is arguably understudied today because of an emphasis on cases in which third parties, like the U.S., the U.N., or NATO are the chief providers of protection from insurgency. Understanding of the logic of conflict and protection in “brown areas,” in which the state has limited reach (O’Donnell 1999), and improving the precision of theories about state weakness can also potentially contribute to the policy community’s knowledge on these issues.<sup>7</sup>

The goal of this draft prospectus is to articulate my ideas and plans as they now stand, which are based on literature reviews, preliminary analyses, and observations and interviews from one month of fieldwork in Uganda in summer 2007. I will be traveling to Uganda for summer 2008 to further probe the propositions herein and the availability of data to test them. Based on that trip, I will revise the prospectus, defending it in fall 2008.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, at a February 2008 Brookings Institution event on state weakness, the Director of Foreign Policy Studies at Brookings stated “...(W)eak and failing states (present) a significant threat to the international community. Yet... we still have not developed a very clear understanding of what these states are...” The event transcript is available at [http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0226\\_weakstates.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2008/0226_weakstates.aspx). This comment reflects a fairly common characterization of “weak states” as a monolithic concept. I hope that my study will add texture to this discussion, providing insight on gradations of “state weakness.”

## **II. Background: Well-known and lesser-known conflicts in Uganda**

Uganda's most violent and enduring recent conflict, that between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), has gained international notoriety largely because of the tragedies it has incurred and because of the brutal and often bizarre behavior of the LRA leadership. Over the course of the conflict, the LRA has abducted thousands of youth – more than 66,000 by one estimate (Annan, Blattman and Horton 2006) – and forced them to commit gruesome atrocities against civilians, including their own families. Thousands more civilians have been displaced by the conflict. The violence has sputtered on in fits and starts for over two decades, with the government intermittently using interventions including heavy military force, forced resettlement of civilians into camps, and offers of amnesty to LRA soldiers.

Many observers of Uganda have, in light of certain frequently-cited facts about the origination of the LRA conflict, determined that the severity of the conflict derives from the severity of the ethnic grievances of the Acholi people who occupy the area most affected by the conflict, and the continued marginalization of these people at the hands of the government. These facts are, generally, as follows: While Uganda was a British protectorate from 1894 until independence in 1962, the ethnic groups residing in southern Uganda, particularly the Bagandan tribe who impressed the British with their centralized systems of rule, dominated the civil service and benefited from their proximity to the colonial administrative headquarters in Entebbe (34 km from Kampala). Meanwhile, the Acholi people that occupy the center-north of the country, the region most affected by LRA violence (the darkest shaded region on the map above), were largely marginalized from the economic and political spheres. One exception to their marginalization was that the British actively recruited them into the national military, due in part to the Acholis' alleged prowess at war-fighting, and also because of the colonists' desire to balance the power of the southern ethnic groups that dominated the bureaucracy (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999; Weinstein 2007). This Acholi-dominated national military, however, was later confronted and defeated in a civil war in the mid-1980s by an alliance led by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA). Museveni later became president of Uganda and remains president to this day. The coalition of ethnic groups originating from southern Uganda that comprised the NRA are still over-represented, relative to their share of the total Ugandan

population, in high-level government positions. There is also considerable evidence that the NRA committed atrocities against Acholi civilians in the late 1980s, and possibly into the 1990s (Otunnu 2002; Gersony 1997), which stoked resentment.

Based on this account, which captures with broad strokes key elements of how most scholars and observers I spoke with in Uganda view this conflict today, the conclusion one could reasonably draw is that historical animosity between ethno-regional groups is the primary determinant of conflict prevalence in the less privileged regions of African states. However, in a region called West Nile, just west of “Acholiland,” as the LRA-affected center-north of Uganda is called, a separate insurgency was sparked in the mid-1990s. This lesser-known conflict also has roots in post-colonial ethnic power struggles that have continued to be salient today. However, while the people of West Nile arguably had commensurate grievances against the government as did the Acholi people, this conflict was less protracted.

West Nile was the (self-described) birthplace of Idi Amin, a military officer from the Kakwa tribe who gained power in a 1971 coup and ruled until he was ousted by an alliance of Ugandan exiles and the Tanzanian army in 1979. The main insurgent groups that terrorized West Nile were also led by former members of the Ugandan national military that fled to their home region after Amin lost power. Various grievances against the government prompted these former military men to wage an insurgency. Like the LRA conflict, the conflict that ensued in West Nile resulted in widespread atrocities against civilians and abductions aimed at expanding the ranks of the insurgents (Lomo and Hovil 2004). Given this brutality, it is somewhat puzzling that this conflict did not receive international media attention. The most likely explanation is that this conflict was less intense and less enduring: the most reliable accounts indicate that this conflict resulted in fewer casualties than that of the LRA, and importantly, this conflict did not persist. Rather, it was ended by a concerted negotiation effort between the leaders, community elders, and the Government of Uganda in December 2002.

Beyond this variation of conflict incidence in north-central versus north-western Uganda, Figure 1 illustrates considerable richness in the variation in conflict incidence

throughout Uganda since the early 1990s. For example, central-western Uganda, a wealthy region of Uganda that is often thought to benefit from its proximity to President Museveni's home region in southwestern Uganda, experienced a great deal of violence. The Allied Democratic Front (ADF) rebel group was active throughout western Uganda from 1996 until 2002. Like the LRA, the ADF forcibly recruited soldiers and committed gruesome brutality; removal of a victim's trachea was a trademark of their executions (Hovil and Werker 2003, based on interviews). By one account, this insurgency displaced about 180,000 western Ugandans (RFPJ 2007). The impressions of western Ugandan residents, expatriates, and former military officers I spoke with were that compared to conflicts in the north, the Ugandan government demonstrated higher resolve and effectiveness at ending the ADF-related violence, which died out in 2003. The ADF insurgency also had links to southeastern Uganda: some ADF leaders were easterners, and the ADF violence occasionally affected Tororo district in the far south-eastern corner of Uganda between 1997 and 2000. However, compared to western or northern Uganda, southeastern Uganda -- a relatively poor and marginalized part of the country -- has experienced very little conflict.

This discussion sketches out a general pattern: in the past two decades, some areas of Uganda have been more easily stabilized than others. This basic variation in Uganda's recent history of peripheral conflict, and a lack of an evident correlation of between grievance and conflict, suggests that grievance intensity and ethnic discrimination cannot be the predominant force behind this variation.

### III. Hypotheses and observable implications

What accounts for this regional variation in conflict prevalence? Based on my fieldwork in Uganda last summer and preliminary data exploration I have developed the following propositions:

*(1) Governments will be more motivated to prevent and resolve conflicts in regions of the periphery that are of higher economic value to the central government.*

Extracting revenue from citizens is of course a necessity for all states, but poor infrastructure for capturing income taxes, among other reasons, has left many African countries disproportionately dependent on revenue from export taxes. The vast majority of Uganda's production is agricultural, and while most Ugandan farms are subsistence-based, Uganda also exports cash crops -- particularly coffee, cotton, tea, and tobacco.<sup>8</sup> These cash crops are often processed in factories located in the center of the country, employing many locals and providing potential further economic linkages between center and periphery. It stands to reason, then, that the central government would identify regions that are particularly profitable for the government, and invest more in maintaining stability in those regions. Observable implications of this hypothesis would be that the government has a stronger military presence, or exerts more military and diplomatic force in localities that produce cash crops that contribute significantly to the Ugandan government. Of course, even if one observed this general pattern, causal inference would be tenuous, due to a host of potential reverse causality and omitted variable bias issues. I discuss my strategy for dealing with these problems below, in the section on research design.

A very preliminary look at readily available historical information on Uganda's coffee and tobacco industries indicates the plausibility of this hypothesis. A 1988 Ugandan government document states that coffee was then the most important cash crop to the national economy, contributing over 95% of total export earnings between 1985 and 1987, and remaining at about 70% in 1995 (Republic of Uganda 1987-88, 1996). Roughly half of government revenue came from taxes on coffee in the late 1980s (Reinikka and Collier

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<sup>8</sup> Cash crops are often omitted from studies analyzing the economic value of a region to a government. See for example, Walter (2006), which creates a scale of regional economic value to central governments based on 31 "marketable resources," of which only one is a crop: wheat.

2001). Patterns of cash crop growth locations on the periphery appear to map onto regions that have suffered least from conflict: The bulk of Uganda's coffee is grown either in the area around Lake Victoria (near Kampala), or in the high altitude southeastern region on the slopes of Mount Elgon and southwestern regions – all of which experienced much lower levels of conflict than the other, non-coffee growing outlying regions of Uganda, particularly northern Uganda. Ugandans grow both Arabica and Robusta coffee varieties. Arabica coffee tends to fetch twice the price on the world market as the Robusta coffee. Southeastern districts have both the highest amount of Arabica coffee and the lowest rates of political violence.

A similar pattern is present with respect to the economic potential of northwestern Uganda and tobacco: As the late 1980s progressed, amidst the Museveni government's efforts to rebuild Uganda and the deterioration of international coffee prices, the government looked to diversify its economy. One of the cash crops it hoped to develop was tobacco. Tobacco was traditionally grown in north-western Uganda (the West Nile region, of which Arua is capital), but the industry suffered a great deal under Amin's rule – production fell from 5,000 tons in 1972 to 100 tons in 1981. Then, with the help of one of the world's largest tobacco companies, British-American Tobacco (BAT), which repossessed its former properties in the West Nile in 1984, production increased to 1,287 tons in 1987. Tobacco production then increased steadily throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s to 7,203 tons in 1993 (Ofcansky 1994). As its production has grown, tobacco has come to play a substantial role in the Ugandan economy. For example, in 2000, 96 percent of BAT Uganda's output was exported, and in the same year the company paid US\$4.5 million in excise, value-added and income taxes (Sejjaaka 2004). Little, if any, of this tobacco growth took place in Gulu, which borders West Nile, and has experienced much more severe political violence than West Nile. Of course, reverse causality may also be an important part of this story, since BAT may not have wanted to expand into Gulu because it was so afflicted by violence. However, BAT made the decision to reinvest in West Nile in the midst of Uganda's civil war, and it apparently continued to produce there during the late 1990s when West Nile experienced the worst of its violence.

(2) *Governments will have higher capacity to manage political violence in regions that are more ethnically diverse.*

The relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and conflict has been a long source of debate among scholars (e.g. Horowitz 1985; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Most accounts of why ethnic heterogeneity matters to issues of collective action apply logic about the importance of concentrated grievances in motivating collective action, or about improved information flows via denser social networks among co-ethnics that increase the likelihood of collective action, or reduce the likelihood of defection. For example, Gourevitch (1979) argues that peripheral nationalism is more likely (among other conditions) in “ethnically distinct regions” and Toft (2003) finds that local ethnic homogeneity (of a national minority) increases the likelihood of secessionist movements. In both cases, a mechanism of shared, concentrated grievances is an important component of the causal story. Habyarimana et al (2007) provide support for arguments about a co-ethnic advantage in information flows.

Either causal logic could plausibly drive the relationship I propose, although my reasoning is closer to that of the latter, information-based explanation. Rather than focusing on how homogeneity facilitates local actors’ violent mobilization against the government, I focus instead on how homogeneity reduces governments’ capacity to prevent and manage such mobilization. In order for the state to track and make gains against nascent or powerful insurgent groups, they must gain intelligence -- information about the location, strength, and strategy of the groups. I propose that government forces will be better able to build local allies and trust, improving the probability of receiving “tips” that can be crucial for combating insurgencies, in areas where they are higher levels of ethnic diversity. This is the case, I propose, because insurgent groups are typically closely allied with one or two local ethnic groups. Thus, the greater the heterogeneity, the greater likelihood that local groups who do not share ethnic ties with the insurgent groups will exist, and the less likely that those who are allied with insurgent groups will be able to identify and punish “defectors” who provide information to the government.

A simple bivariate OLS regression of the total number of conflict events (1990-2005) on ethnic homogeneity (measured as the percent of the total district population comprised by the largest ethnic group), yields a positive, statistically significant relationship. A look at

the conflicts in Acholiland and West Nile hints at why this relationship may exist. West Nile is a more diverse region: its denizens are both Christians and Muslims, and there are four primary ethnic groups: the Lugbara (74% of Arua's district population in 1991), the Madi (19%), the Alur (2%), and the Kakwa – which is less than 1% of the population, but holds a relatively central role in Aruan politics since it is Idi Amin's ethnic group. Acholiland, on the other hand, is more homogenous. It is predominantly Christian, with the largest group (Acholis) comprising 86% of the population in 1991, and the next largest group, the Langi, just 8%. There was no other group over 1% (Uganda Census 1991). Additionally, reports of the resolution of conflicts in West Nile stress the crucial nature of government links with the local population in order to gain information about insurgents. One analysis reports about the senior Ugandan army commander stationed in West Nile: "Instead of marginalizing those who had contact with the rebels, he used them as a vital source of intelligence" (RLP 2004). A lack of trust between the government and the Acholis, on the other hand, is often cited as the reason behind the continuation of conflict there, and is attributed to a long history of animosity between Acholis and Museveni's Banyankole group. My contention is that most regions of Uganda (save the one that Museveni is from and possibly a few others) have a deep suspicion of the central government and the national military, but the extent of ethnic heterogeneity varies a good deal across districts, and can make a significant difference in a government's ability to secure a region.

In a rather crude examination of four Ugandan districts, selected because they serve as my four proposed district case studies (details below in the section on research design), basic patterns support the two above hypotheses. Figure 2 below shows four districts in decreasing order of conflict prevalence: one in north-central Uganda, or Acholiland (Gulu), one in the center-west (Kasese), one in northwestern Uganda, or "West Nile" (Arua), and one in the east (Tororo). The general pattern that emerges is that conflict incidence (which I take, for now, as the best available quantifiable indicator of the extent of government security provision) is negatively associated with cash crop presence and ethnic homogeneity. For example, as Figure 2 shows, Kasese district has experienced significantly more conflict (32 events) than Tororo district (5 events). Yet ethnic grievances do not appear to account for this difference: neither Kasese nor Tororo district hosts ethnic groups with historical grievances against the government (column 6). Kasese, however, appears to grow fewer cash

crops (IV 1), and is more ethnically diverse (IV 2), than Tororo. Controls were included to proxy for what I take to be dominant explanations of variation in conflict incidence in Uganda (ethnic grievance), and to proxy for other dominant explanations for conflict prevalence (topography, the resource curse, population density, and unstable neighbors.) None of the included “controls” appear to be correlated with conflict incidence in these districts, with the possible exception of proximity to a border with a rival or unstable state (Salehyan 2007). This analysis will benefit a great deal from refinement as I gain more precise and continuous measures of many of these variables.

**Figure 2. Descriptive information for four Ugandan districts**

	-DV	IV 1	IV 2	← CONTROLS →					
				1) No. of conflict events, 1990-2005	2) Qty of cash crops	3) Ethnic homogeneity (% of total district pop that is largest ethnic group, 1992)	4) Is the ethnic group of a prior president in this region	5) Does the region have a history of conflictual relations with ruling ethnic group	6) Mountains present in the district, or a contiguous district
a) Gulu (north-central)	174	Low (cotton)	86%	Yes	Yes	No	No	18	Yes – Sudan
b) Kasese (central-western)	32	Medium (coffee and tea)	79%	No	No	Yes	No	110	Yes – DRC
c) Arua (north-western)	12	Medium (tobacco)	74%	Yes	Yes	No	No	48	Yes – Sudan and DRC
d) Tororo (eastern)	5	High (cotton and coffee)	53%	No	No	Yes	Some minerals	154	No
Entire country	690	-	73% (average of per-district heterogeneity)	-	-	-	-	71 (av. pop. density of entire country)	-

Sources: Various; Conflict incidence data comes from ACLED; population and ethnicity figures are from author’s calculations based on 1992 census data, Ugandan Bureau of Statistics.

#### IV. Contribution to Existing Literature

While there is a vast literature on the correlates of civil conflict,<sup>9</sup> the primary aim of this project is to examine the state's role in mitigating the prevalence of political violence in a given district. While there has been a great deal of research on factors that facilitate rebel organization and violence, this review focuses on works that have focused explicitly on the state.

##### *State capacity and center-periphery relations*

The general spatial patterns of violence concentrated in Uganda's periphery suggest support for theories about the importance of state strength at deterring rebellion (Fearon and Laitin 2003), and the elevated risk of chaos in "brown areas," where state capacity is weak (O'Donnell 1999). In Africa, these brown areas are those that are most remote from capital cities. The colonial-driven process of state border determination in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Africa was notoriously arbitrary – particularly in contrast to the lengthy, violent negotiation of territory and state formation that took place over centuries in Europe (Herbst 1995; Tilly 1985). Indeed, in Uganda, the area surrounding Kampala was dominated by the Buganda kingdom, which enjoyed great privilege from the British when Uganda was a protectorate, and continues to enjoy more infrastructure today than the rest of the country.

However, theories of state strength remain undeveloped, particularly with respect to explaining variation in state capacity to project power in different regions of the periphery. Additionally, we need to find ways to disentangle lack of state will, or *motivation*, to protect from lack of state *capacity* to protect. Arguably, the causal factors underlying each of these variables are different – motivation would likely be influenced by the strategic and economic value of different peripheral regions,<sup>10</sup> while capacity might be affected by the topography, demography, and the intensity of local grievances against the state felt in a given region. Of course, directly measuring motivation or intent is not possible – and yet scholars often too

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Humphreys (2003) or Sambanis (2002) for useful reviews of this literature.

<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the British were known for their "benign neglect" of certain peripheral regions of Uganda, sacrificing order in favor of limiting investment in development (Kasfir 1976, 100). Sovereign states today arguably continue to exhibit this behavior. For example, recent work on India has similarly suggested that certain areas may be intentionally neglected by the central government, leading to an increased risk for lengthy, low intensity conflict (Mukherjee 2007).

easily observe outcomes and impute intent. Finding ways to disentangle and measure state motivation and capacity will be a central part of this project.

Boone (2003) is the closest recent scholarship on variation in African state building on the periphery to this project. Boone argues that rural “class and communal structure” explains variation in center-periphery power relations and state building patterns in Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Senegal. This work thus indicates that the potential importance of local power structures for center-peripheral political relationships should be carefully considered for this study as an alternative argument to my own. However, because of my explicit focus on the security-provision component of state building, I do not expect that local government officials will play a central role in my analysis.<sup>11</sup> Rather, the national military, the rebel groups, and local civilians are the important actors in accounts I am aware of rebellion and counterinsurgency on the periphery. The one possible exception is chiefs. One credible report of government involvement in conflict mitigation in West Nile notes the importance of collaboration between Ugandan Army officials and local chiefs in persuading insurgents to come out of the bush and to demobilize (Lomo and Hovil 2004).

#### *Bargaining between the state and ethno-regional groups*

Another area of scholarship on center-periphery relations has noted a tendency in Africa for the ethnic group dominating the central government to favor the primary region populated by their co-ethnics, and to bargain with other peripheral groups over public resources and stability (Azam 2002 and 2001; Bates 1993 and 2008).<sup>12</sup> Most bargaining models of redistribution and conflict in African states rely on stylized versions of African states in which there are two ethnoregions – one rich and one poor. However, it should not be taken for granted, as most bargaining models do because of the two-group assumption, that central governments equally value all peripheral regions (other than those inhabited by its co-ethnics). While these models typically model a government production function that substitutes between military and redistributive expenses, the situation becomes decidedly

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<sup>11</sup> Locally-stationed military battalions – and not local police forces – have borne the responsibility for addressing insurgencies in Uganda. The relationship between these local battalions and local political leaders is an issue I plan to probe this summer.

<sup>12</sup> Note that recent empirical findings have cast doubt on this pattern; see Kasara (2007).

more interesting when we imagine the government managing a portfolio of regions, weighing the appropriate mix of investment in redistribution and military spending, to each.

An underlying assumption of the bargaining literature is that geographically-concentrated ethnic groups are motivated by disparities between them, often with respect to benefits accrued from the state – that is, inequality between ethnic groups, exacerbated by failures of state redistributive policies, drives conflict. Scholars have increasingly argued on behalf of the relevance of intergroup inequality. On the heels of findings that income inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient) is not correlated with civil war onset (Collier and Hoeffler 2002; Fearon and Laitin 2003), many scholars have argued that it is likely inequality between groups – not inequality between a country’s richest and poorest individuals – that matters most for stability (Azam 2002; Stewart 2002; Humphreys 2003). Subnational regions do typically coincide with ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa, and these scholars have noted a cluster of conflicts that have plagued a number of African states, such as Cote d’Ivoire and Sudan, which they view as resulting from competition between a privileged region and a poor, disenfranchised ethnoregion. However, the empirical record on this proposition is limited, and the evidence that does exist is mixed (Østby 2005). Problems of measurement error and the need for precision in the match between theory and empirics seem particularly important for probing this relationship. That is, there are many ways to measure inequality and to aggregate groups, but there is little theoretical agreement on which types of inequality matter most. This area of inquiry is thus ripe for subnational empirical research on mechanisms, which can help us better specify our models of redistribution, protection and conflict. I view ethnoregional inequality in wealth and in provision of public goods as an important factor to control for (Deininger 2003), but also as a factor to measure carefully and examine in its own right, possibly as an additional direction for inquiry.

## V. Research Design

### *Overview and approach*

The approach of this dissertation will be to examine existing and new hypotheses in the context of one state: Uganda. It seeks to gain analytic leverage on patterns of conflict by using detailed, subnational data.<sup>13</sup> The primary methods I plan to use are: (1) in-depth fieldwork in a matched set of two pairs of Ugandan districts and (2) development of a panel dataset of conflict events and district-level characteristics from 1990-2005. Finally, at a later stage of this project, I will (3) examine the external validity of the findings by developing either two shadow cases of states with regional variation in conflict incidence, or, depending on data availability, by conducting a statistical analysis of districts in a larger number of states.

My proposed approach of using multiple, complementary methods allows for both the theoretical and measurement-related insights offered by small-*n* analyses and the ability to assess the relative merit of rival hypotheses offered by larger-*n* analyses (Lieberman 2005).<sup>14</sup> Focusing primarily on one country (Uganda) can ensure a relatively high degree of unit homogeneity, limiting unobserved sources of variation between units (districts). This high degree of control over potential confounding factors in subnational studies is rarely offered in cross-national comparative research (Snyder 2001). Furthermore, subnational research offers the opportunity for more precise measurement of variables currently suggested by cross-national research, and improved measurement can improve the efficiency of our estimates.

### *Case Selection: Uganda, 1990-2005*

The choice to study Uganda is straightforward: Uganda's recent history has a great deal of variation in district-level occurrence of political violence, which I take to be an

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<sup>13</sup> Recent examples of such scholarship include, among many others, Varshney (2002) on ethnic riots in India's cities; Wood (2003) on El Salvador's civil war; Kalyvas (2006) on Greece's civil war; Weinstein (2007) on rebel movements in Uganda, Mozambique and Peru; Paluck (2008) on ethnic reconciliation in Rwanda; and the work of the MICROCON project. However, most of these works focus primarily on the experiences and actions of citizens and/or rebels, rather than states.

<sup>14</sup> While Lieberman seems to have countries in mind as the unit of analysis, for the initial components of this study (1 and 2), I will focus exclusively on Uganda, utilizing district-level data.

indicator of variation in state capacity for protection. The Museveni government has faced numerous insurgencies – by one UN account, roughly 20 armed rebellions have operated in Uganda since 1986. Most of these rebellions appear to have a similar character: They emerged and operated in different areas of the periphery, rarely directing attacks on Kampala, and while they cited grievances against the central government as the primary motive for rebellion, most reliable accounts state that each of these insurgent groups lacked coherent platforms and goals (Gersony 1997; Hovil and Werker 2003). In most cases I am aware of, numerous civilians were uprooted or killed at the hands of insurgents, and thus the extent of local support for these insurgencies remains highly contested.

Uganda can also arguably be understood as a “typical” case of an African state. It is largely rural, ethnically heterogeneous (56 ethnic groups according to the 2002 census), it has a relatively wealthy and urbanized south, and its colonial experience did not involve a substantial white settler group (unlike Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, which were arguably unusual in that respect). From a pragmatic standpoint, Uganda is also a good option: it is fairly data-rich because of its high-quality Bureau of Statistics, and it is safe for westerners to travel in most peripheral regions. Uganda is also a useful case to understand better since it plays a critical role in providing relative stability in a region that continues to suffer from a great deal of instability. Uganda borders DRC, Rwanda, Sudan, Kenya, and Tanzania, most of which have experienced significant instability in their past or present.

I have selected the period 1990 to 2005 because it captures an interesting period of Uganda’s history for which many scholars have noted its remarkably high success at state consolidation and recovery from decades of war and misrule (Reinikka and Collier 2001; Kasozi 1994; Weinstein 2007). Furthermore, from a methodological standpoint, it is convenient that the country was ruled by one President, Yoweri Museveni, and his National Resistance Movement (NRM) for the entire period. As a result, theoretically-important factors such as the home region of the president and the relationship of the president’s ethnic group to those of various peripheral regions will not vary during the period on which the study will focus. Museveni took control of the country in 1986, which could arguably be a starting point for the study. In the period from 1986 to 1990, Museveni’s army conducted a great deal of counterinsurgency campaigns against members of the former army and other

factions who had also been competing for the central government. However, records from this period are quite sparse, and it was arguably not until about 1990 that the NRM had a clear control and mandate to rule the country.

*Measuring the Dependent Variables: Central Government Effort at Providing Protection and Central Government Capacity at Providing Protection*

Acquiring reliable data and resolving measurement issues on central government effort and capacity in providing protection will be a central challenge of this project in the coming months. With respect to effort, the primary difficulty will be accessing appropriate data. One reasonable measure would be the number of Ugandan military battalions deployed in a given district per calendar year. A U.S. Department of Defense official who served as U.S. Defense Attaché to Uganda during my study period informed me that it will not likely be possible to capture this data systematically from documents, because it is unlikely that either the U.S. or the Ugandan governments systematically record this information -- and what *is* stored is likely classified. However, this official also said a good deal of qualitative information about where and when troops deployed should be accessible via interviews with officials in the Ugandan army (the Ugandan People's Defense Force, UPDF). He said that UPDF officers would likely be forthcoming about the subject of my inquiry, particularly because it focuses on historical events. A related type of information I seek to collect this summer is annual government financial investment in security of districts, likely with district budget documents. Interpretive work will also be necessary to understand the extent of the threat that each deployment or investment was responding to; these static measures of deployment and investment will need to be conditioned on the preexisting level of threat in each district.

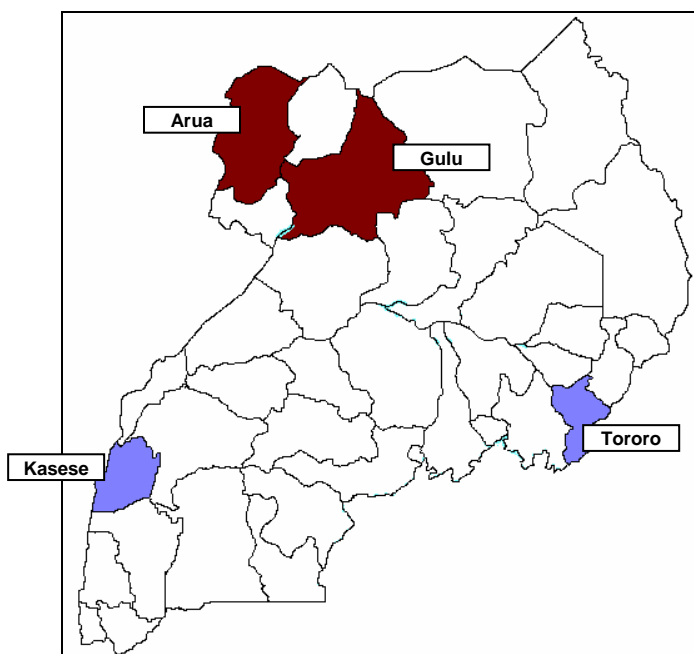
With respect to capacity to provide security, I plan to measure this concept using the number of conflict events per district per year. Presumably, the quantity of violent events in an area per year is a reasonable indicator of how well protected that region is. However, this measure will also be a function of rebel effort and effectiveness -- and presumably many of my explanatory variables will plausibly influence both rebel and government effort and effectiveness. A regression framework will be somewhat problematic for dealing with this

problem, but there is some precedent for qualitatively measuring the military strength of rebel groups on a scale of low, medium and high (Cunningham et al 2000), which will allow for some degree of leverage over this problem, depending on the quality of information I gather for the coding. Another good option will be including both measures of government effort and lagged measures of conflict incidence per district – that is, controlling for both the rebel’s “success” last year and the government’s effort this year. Information on the nature of the conflict incidence in the prior year, since ACLED codes whether rebels or the government gained territory in a battle, will also help me get traction on these issues. Still, given the difficulty of measuring military strength in such sharp focus (with district-year as the unit of observation), close examination of newspapers and accounts of military officials, civilians, NGOs and other observers such as missionaries will be critical to sorting out causal mechanisms.

*Approach 1: two pairs of case studies of Ugandan districts and conflict, 1990-2005*

This component of the research project will be aimed at improving the precision of my hypotheses, and tracing the processes through which variables appear to be impacting one another. It will employ the approach of a “structured, focused comparison” (George and Bennett 2005) of two pairs of Ugandan districts: Gulu and Arua (rows (a) and (c), respectively, in Figure 2 above), and Kasese and Tororo (rows (b) and (d) above). Figure 3 below shows the locations of these districts in Uganda. I selected these pairs of districts because, as Figure 2 above illustrates, they share many similarities on key characteristics that are commonly associated with conflict incidence. For example, with respect to topography, Gulu and Arua are both predominantly rolling hills (with no mountains nearby), while Kasese and Tororo have in common proximity to large mountains (Mount Elgon and the Rwenzoris, respectively). With respect to ethnic grievance, ethnic groups in Gulu and Arua both have had difficult political pasts with Museveni’s ethnic group, the Banyankole, whereas there is arguably a less strong history of animosity between the Banyankole and ethnic groups in Kasese and Tororo.

**Figure 3. Map of Uganda Showing Cases for Paired Comparisons**



My sources of information for these case studies will be a combination of interviews, news reports, and government documents. Given the fairly minimal reporting on some of the “smaller” conflicts on Uganda’s periphery – and particularly on the military response to them – I will be highly reliant on interviews. I plan to interview a sizable number of military officers who served in each of the districts I am studying, in order to develop a history of where the military deployed and when. These interviews will also serve as a valuable starting point for also probing more causal questions of why the military deployed where and when it did, given its limited resources, and why it was more effective in some regions than others. These accounts will of course be somewhat biased in favor of presenting the government’s effort in the most favorable light, however many of these officers will be retired by now, and these individuals may offer more candor. I will complement these military accounts with those of local citizens, officials, and expatriates such as missionaries who have lived in the district long enough to recall the conflicts. Finally, I will also interview former U.S. military and diplomatic officials, and possibly other “third-parties” who worked in Uganda during the period of my study, such as missionaries. These individuals typically traveled around Uganda on fact-finding missions about the conflict, and their impressions will be useful for triangulating accounts of Uganda military officials and citizens.

*Approach 2: Compiling and analyzing a panel of Ugandan districts, 1990-2005*

Arriving at the appropriate specifications for this portion of the analysis will be informed greatly by the small-*n* analysis discussed above. A critical test of the viability of my arguments will involve regression analysis of a panel data set of all districts in Uganda from 1990 to 2005. I plan to test my hypotheses in the following manner:

(1) *Center dependence on peripheral regions for revenue via export taxes on region-specific products.*

To test this hypothesis, following Dube and Vargas (2007) I will use exogenous variation in the world market price of relevant crops, along with district-level data on crop production and central government data on revenue derived from exporting these crops, to proxy for the “value” of districts to the center over time. I will then examine the relationship between these “district-values” and the number of Ugandan army battalions stationed in each district in a particular year in a given district of Uganda. Between publicly-available price data and other data I collected in Uganda last summer on government revenue, I have collected much of the data needed to conduct this analysis. During fieldwork in Uganda this summer I will collect data on agricultural production from Uganda’s Ministry of Agriculture.

Because of the exogeneity of international crop prices, this strategy should limit bias in the estimate of the relationship between variation in district “value” via export taxes and government effort to protect. However, it would take a conceptual leap to then attribute any significant relationships, if they emerge, solely to government intent to protect certain regions because of their value. It is possible, for example, that rebels would be drawn to regions that yield high-value crops, even if only to disrupt government revenue, which could drive an observed increase in government effort to protect. Finding a channel through which local-level attributes affect only the government will be difficult, but interview data should be instructive.

(2) *The impact of local ethnic geography on government effectiveness at protection*

While a great deal of conflict scholarship has sought to understand how the extent of ethnic diversity in a country affects that country’s prospects for violence, these studies largely focus on national-level measures of heterogeneity, such as the notorious index of Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalization (ELF). Buhaug et al (2006) come closest to arriving at

measures of local level ethnic heterogeneity using innovative GIS mapping techniques – however, their data source is the Atlas Narodov Mir, compiled by Soviet anthropologists in the 1960s. Such outdated data seems rather dubious for analyses of relatively recent events, especially in a country like Uganda, where the population has doubled since the late 1980s. This project will improve upon existing work on ethnic heterogeneity and conflict by examining, and fairly precisely measuring, local-level ethnic heterogeneity. Using Uganda’s 1991 and 2002 censuses, I have fairly precise measures of exactly how many individuals from each of 56 ethnic groups reside in each district and sub-district of Uganda. As with hypothesis 1, for this hypothesis I will need to carefully parse the effects of ethnic heterogeneity on rebels from the effects on governments. Furthermore, one problematic aspect of this inquiry is that that ethnic demography is still a rather slow-moving variable. This summer, I will seek cases of exogenous shocks to ethnic geography in Uganda that may facilitate testing of this hypothesis.

#### *Other Independent Variables, Controls*

A great deal of subnational data about Uganda is publicly available, enabling me to control for many “typical” background characteristics like average education attainment in each district over time. Importantly, these data will also allow me to examine the alternative hypotheses laid out above regarding ethnic grievance and marginalization. Much of these data are readily available from USAID-sponsored household Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), which were carried out in Uganda in 1988, 1995, 2000, and 2005. Additionally, while in Uganda last summer I collected household surveys conducted by the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics in 1992, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2002 and 2005-06. The quality of these surveys varies (with the earliest surveys being the least usable), but they should provide me with sufficient data, in combination with the USAID data, to estimate pre-conflict development and demographic differences between regions. I also plan to collect detailed data on topography and soil quality in order to control for geographic variables that plausibly impact conflict incidence. Fixed-effects will help me control for time invariant characteristics of each district, such as factors associated with locality-specific experiences with colonialism. Before embarking on this project, I will also need to more carefully consider and examine variation in domestic political (electoral) value and (non-economic) strategic value of different districts to the central government.

*Approach 3: Examining External Validity*

I plan to examine the external validity of relationships uncovered in the course of this analysis of Uganda. Depending on data availability, which I have not yet probed in much detail, I will either build a larger dataset of districts in East Africa, or I will investigate one or two additional “shadow cases.” These shadow cases would entail me repeating paired comparisons in these other countries, but without as significant an investment in field research; relying instead, perhaps, on newspaper accounts and a smaller quantity of interviews. In addition to providing a test of the generalizability of these findings, this portion of the project may also serve to probe extensions of the model developed from the Uganda research. For example, I could select cases that enable me to examine whether changes in leadership dramatically influence a state’s strategy and ability to protect different peripheral regions. I plan to determine the form and extent of this portion of the dissertation once I am further along with my analysis of Uganda.

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