

**STATES OF (IN)SECURITY:
VIOLENCE, LOCAL GOVERNANCE, AND INSTITUTIONALIZED
ARBITRARINESS IN NORTHERN UGANDA**

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Abstract

This dissertation theorizes uncertainty as a contemporary mode of rule in northern Uganda, focusing on how violence is institutionalized within and beyond the state's governing institutions through an in-depth study of the relationship between the state security apparatus and vigilante groups in and around Gulu Town, northern Uganda. The dissertation finds that in the area of security, the central Ugandan state is ever-present in citizens' imaginations. This is achieved through a strategy of rule that I have termed *institutionalized arbitrariness*, in which violence is institutionalized in the state's governing system, even though its use remains unpredictable from the perspective of ordinary citizens. The findings are based primarily on qualitative research, relying on approximately 300 interviews conducted over eight months of qualitative field research between February 2014 to February 2016. The qualitative findings are further supplemented with an analysis of a 1,551 household survey.

The dissertation shows how the Ugandan state unpredictably claims and denies its authority, while deploying potentially exceptional violence to quell resistance. This unpredictability fragments citizen resistance to and claim-making on the state. In this way, the ruling regime maintains control of this post-conflict frontier zone without expending the resources typically associated with direct rule, while also avoiding the principal-agent problems associated with indirect rule. Thus, institutionalized arbitrariness is an effective and efficient mode of governance, and contributes to our understanding of governance in post-colonial African states with militarized and statist regimes. These findings illustrate how current theory on the post-colonial sub-Saharan states relies on two faulty assumptions: that the division between public and private can be conceived of as stable, and that a mismatch between violence and governing institutions is a necessary feature of post-colonial sub-Saharan African states. Instead, institutionalized arbitrariness argues for a dynamic understanding of the relationship between violence and institutional form, observing that they can be opportunistically de-coupled and re-coupled according to a wider strategy of rule.

The theory of institutionalized arbitrariness contributes to debates on state formation and statecraft, neopatrimonialism, legal pluralism, and public authority. The findings suggest that "fragile" states may be stronger than they appear. Indeed, these states govern far more efficiently in terms of return on investment than a traditional welfare state. The theory also challenges a dichotomy between liberal and illiberal regimes, pointing out that successful governing strategies allow for spaces of liberalism to further broader goals of illiberal governance. Finally, it shows that institutional multiplicity cannot be viewed independently from the state, but instead must be understood in relation to the state's capacity for violence. While ordinary citizens may compete in a plural institutional environment, their competitions occur in relation to a larger power game between the ruling regime and the polity at large. An increasingly fluid and labile relationship between violence and governing institutions bodes poorly for many goals of international development and global security, including the future of liberal democracy, human welfare, and access to security and justice—and thus, it must not be ignored.

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Key Terms

ADF	Allied Democratic Front
DP	Democratic Party
DPC	District Police Commander
EC	Electoral Commission
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
GoU	Government of Uganda
IGP	Inspector General of Police
ISO	Internal Security Office (at the Parish, Gombolola, or District levels)
LC	Local Council
LDU	Local Defense Unit
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MP	Member of Parliament
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NCPF	National Crime Preventers Forum
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRM/A	National Resistance Movement/Army
RC	Resistance Council
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
SACCO	Savings and Credit Co-Operatives
SPC	Special Police Constable
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
UPC	Uganda People's Congress
UPDF	Uganda People's Defense Force
UPF	Uganda Police Force
UPM	Uganda Patriotic Movement
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
YLF	Youth Livelihood Fund

Image I: Effigy of Museveni at Gulu Main Market (2015)



Image 1: A statue of President Yoweri Museveni outside Gulu's new main market around November 2015. Museveni is wearing his signature cowboy hat to show that he is a cattle herder, as well as a yellow shirt, the color of his National Resistance Movement (NRM) party. With his right hand, he is making a "thumbs up" sign, which is also the chosen hand signal of his NRM party. In his left hand, he is holding a booklet entitled "NRM Principles". The statue was just smaller than life size, and was reportedly built by the NRM youth wing in Gulu (Ocungi 2015a). The arms were broken a few months after the statue was erected outside Gulu's new market, which Museveni commissioned in April 2015. The statue was later replaced with two statues of elephants, the animal symbolizing the Acholi people.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In June 2014, in a village outside of Gulu Town, an unarmed 37-year-old man named Jacob was shot in the back by a police officer in the middle of the night.¹ He died hours before he was found, lying face down in a compound a few hundred meters from his home. The following day, it was discovered that a resident of the village had made a report to the police that Jacob—who was working as a local vigilante and that night had been enforcing a curfew and roadblock with two colleagues—was armed, and robbing people on the road. Residents speculated that the resident had lied to the police in the hopes of having the men arrested as revenge for the times he had been beaten for breaking curfew. Instead, according to witness statements, the police opened fire immediately, without so much as asking the vigilantes to identify themselves.

Jacob's older brother, Richard, was devastated. After the burial, which cost the family approximately 1.5 million UGX² (approximately 507 USD), he resolved to seek justice. He opened a criminal investigation against the police officers who had shot his brother.

At the Central Police Station in Gulu, Richard was met with skepticism and delays. First, the District Police Commander (DPC) advised Richard to “solve the case from home.” Richard decided that this was impossible—it would have meant revenge killing, which was against the law. If he instigated this kind of violence, he feared he would have been arrested himself. Also, too much time had passed. Retaliation could only have taken place the very night of Jacob's death. Anyway, Richard blamed the police, not the community member who had made the false report.

¹ All names have been changed to protect the identity of respondents. Names of specific villages have been changed or generalized to reflect the municipality level or higher.

² Over the period of field research, the exchange rate fluctuated from a high of approximately 2,448 UGX to 1 USD in February 2014 to a low of approximately 3,696 UGX to 1 USD in October 2015. Throughout, I use a weighted yearly average exchange rate of 2,954 UGX to 1 USD.

While no police officers formally denied Richard's request, the officer in charge of criminal investigations avoided him for over a month. Richard explained:

The DPC was trying to tell us to go away from there, [that] we should not record our statements so the case would die like that. This was the intention...I knew [then that the DPC] could not solve the problem, so we decided to go to Kampala (Richard, phone interview, 6 March 2017).

In Kampala, Richard went to the office of the Inspector General of Police and succeeded in having a case opened by the Aswa Regional Criminal Investigation Department. The police took witness statements and shuffled them back and forth between Kampala and Gulu, getting authorizations and identifying various additional documents necessary for the file. At each step, they requested financial support from Richard. These contributions were extremely burdensome for Richard. Overall, they amounted to around 250,000 UGX (84 USD) and approximated the costs of fuel, transportation, accommodation, and feeding they were requested to cover.

As of this writing nearly three years later, the case file remains incomplete. I asked Richard why he had bothered trying to use the criminal justice system in the first place. Given the nature of his complaint, it seemed a hopeless endeavor to me. Richard replied,

There is a law in Uganda that whoever does wrong should be punished—so I followed [the case]...When you love your dear ones you might find a way like that. [Jacob's death] was not his fault. It came like someone did it intentionally. You don't just leave the matter like that. We wanted these people to be punished (Richard, phone interview, 3 March 2017).

Richard's story is a deeply painful one. In following it with him for nearly three years, what has surprised me most is that, in facing a monumental loss, Richard turned to the very system responsible for that loss with genuine hope that it might deliver justice. Indeed, as a mutual friend

explained, Richard's only alternative would have been to do nothing at all. He reflected on Richard's decision to go to the police instead of taking the DPC's advice to solve the matter at home:

Richard would not survive either choice [solving the matter at home or going to the criminal justice system]. If he had retaliated that very night, he would do it, fine—kill people, kill livestock, destroy property—to finish their own interests. But then the government would come in and say, 'We have the court of law, you should have brought it to us.' Richard, on the other hand, said, 'I cannot retaliate—let me take the right path of law. It is the government to do that [and] it is the government that did this. It is their job to protect and not destroy the community members.' Would the government really accept that? Never. The only possibility is to calm down Richard and at the end of the day they frustrate him: 'Your case file is lost, we don't know where it is.' They're just trying to confuse the case...So the man [who reported them to the police] is a free man now, he doesn't have anything to answer, and Richard does not have any right to retaliate. It has been three years. The government is frustrating Richard time and again. If the government accepted, the government would have to pay Richard (32-year-old male, phone interview, 5 March 2017).

Richard's experience points out the impunity of the police. But it also highlights two characteristics of the ruling regime in northern Uganda that hint at a novel and non-traditional governing strategy: first, Uganda's ruling regime is perceived to have significant regulatory control of lethal violence. If Richard had taken up the DPC's instructions and retaliated violently, he might have been arrested himself. Second and relatedly, citizens retain the belief that the criminal justice system might work to punish wrongdoers and problem-causers. Thus, Richard's narrative reveals that even with an under-resourced, corrupt, and fragile governing system, state security institutions still hold the potential promise of unbiased and just functionality for citizens. How is this possible?

In attempting to answer this question, this dissertation makes a case for unpredictability as a mode of modern day governance. The findings are based on a detailed examination of local

security initiatives and state³ security providers in and around Gulu Town, northern Uganda. Specifically, I investigate how the current regime, under President Yoweri Museveni and his National Resistance Movement (NRM), simultaneously limits its responsibility to govern ordinary people and prevents the emergence of other authorities that could challenge or even threaten the state's control. This inquiry is key to decipher the nature of Uganda's state-society contract—a concept that is foundational to contemporary governance and development interventions, and yet, remains enigmatic.⁴

I approach this question from a grounded study of how state authority operates to undermine societal political organization. I find that violent and seemingly arbitrary state interventions play an essential role, making citizens feel the potential presence of the state despite its general material absence in terms of daily security provision and law enforcement. This strategy is efficient and cost-effective: the state need not invest in material and symbolic forms of everyday governance associated with direct rule,⁵ nor must it grapple with the principal-agent problems associated with indirect rule. Instead, the ruling regime fosters a system in which state authorities alternatively intervene and refuse to intervene in ways that are difficult for ordinary citizens to predict. These potential state interventions are backed by (threat of) violence. In this way, they limit citizens' ability to make meaningful claims on state authorities and undermine organized opposition to state rule. This helps create docile populations that require relatively little government regulation and discipline to control.

³ In Uganda, the ruling regime has worked hard to make government, state, and party synonymous. Thus, here, the vernacular use of state and central state are akin to a ruling regime that encompasses government, the ruling party (the National Resistance Movement), and the administrative institutions of state. I provide a more complete definition farther on in this chapter.

⁴ For examples of key debates on civil society and the state in post-colonial sub-Saharan African countries, see David Lewis (2002) and Stephen Orvis (2001).

⁵ For example, the mundane practices and performances of stateness (Mitchell 1991).

The mode of governance that I detail in northern Uganda has its roots in the shared particularities of sub-Saharan post-colonial state formation and governance. This theoretical standpoint views decolonization as a moment of contradiction. While newly-independent African nations retained institutional forms of government inherited from colonial rulers, those same institutions became divorced from a matching organization of violence needed to translate them into effective rule (Englebert 2000; Mbembe 2001). According to some, post-colonial African states retained their form but not their function, becoming “vacuous and ineffectual...an empty shell” (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 14). Some posit that in the immediate post-colonial moment, the state’s governing institutions were captured by organizations with access to organized violence in the metropole, such as private security contractors, oil firms, and the like (Ferguson 2005; Mbembe 2001). Others examine how the forms of governance that emerged subverted, instrumentalized, or performed state institutions, while matching them to the patterns of violence that putative rulers themselves could muster (Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999; Jackson and Rosberg 1982). Still others posit a wholly dualist mode of governance, with post-colonial institutional forms existing alongside (and sometimes rubbing up against) evolving local forms of organized violence (Lombard 2013).

At the heart of this literature on post-colonial sub-Saharan governance is the idea of a mismatch between institutional form and organized violence, often resulting in hybrid, multiple, complex, and competing security and governance institutions. The corollary of a “mismatch” is the idea of a “match,” in which the form of the state is underpinned by a particular organization of violence—usually a Weberian “legitimate monopoly” (M. Weber 1965). In such a scenario, the organization of violence operates within the constraints of the state form. In general terms, there are two schools of thought on a mismatch. The first sees a mismatch as a “governance gap” in

which the absence of a sovereign authority allows numerous entrepreneurial individuals to make claims to power (Mukhopadhyay 2014; Reno 1999). The second explicitly eschews a teleology of form and violence, arguing that a mismatch can be an effective, functional, and perhaps desirable mode of governance. This might resemble a governance assemblage, in which various institutions co-exist to govern people's lives in a way that "works" (Chabal and Daloz 1999).

My research suggests a third possible option: that institutional multiplicity is not the product of a mismatch but instead reflects a specific and particular match between the highly-organized violence of a hegemonic power and its institutions of governance. I have called this "institutionalized arbitrariness," in which violence is institutionalized in the state's governing institutions, and yet governing institutions function in a way that is unpredictable for citizens (see the section in this chapter on defining key concepts for a discussion of the terms institutionalized and arbitrariness). In my case, the hegemonic power is Uganda's ruling NRM regime, which I argue has strategically tolerated—or in some cases even fostered—a certain level of local disorder to govern its citizens in northern Uganda. Further, I contextualize and historicize institutionalized arbitrariness, looking at how it is tailored to specific configurations of institutions and patterns of violence in Uganda.

I focus my analysis on two basic building-blocks of organized violence and institutional form: the relationships between exceptional and lawful violence, and between the public and private spheres. I understand "exceptional and lawful" as a matter of popular perception. Exceptional or sovereign violence is extra-legal, unbound by moral codes, and overwhelming. It refers to the state's capacity to suspend the law and define states of exception. It can be visible, as in cases when the police use live ammunition to disperse crowds, or it can be invisible, as in cases where individuals are "disappeared" or secretly poisoned (Epstein 2014a; Mazurana et al. 2014).

I understand lawful violence broadly to mean (threat of) symbolic and material force that underpins the law and is used to enforce the law. In the case of Uganda, I find that the ruling regime strategically allows exceptional violence and lawful violence to bleed into each other, such that the distinction between them is made fluid. This is done both by unpredictably deploying exceptional violence—like disappearances, extrajudicial killing, or arbitrary detention—and by using the law to justify violence in a way that makes it difficult to tell whether it is exceptional or lawful.

The second component is a fluid division between the public and private spheres. I use the term “public” jurisdictionally. At its most basic level, “public” refers to an actor, which might adopt any number of forms, such as state, religious, traditional, or firm. This actor asserts meaningful decision-making power over specific subject matter and/or people with respect to a specified polity. Decision-making power is made meaningful through access to violence, whether symbolic or material, such that the authority can make rules and enforce them. In the case of Uganda, I find that the ruling regime has access to sovereign violence that is superior to all other actors. Thus, the ruling regime’s determination of its “public” shapes the viability and meaningfulness of all other claims to jurisdiction.

I understand public and private spheres as socially produced. This is in line with several other inquiries into the form and nature of the post-colonial sub-Saharan African state, which pinpoint the sociological fluidity of notions of public and private. They are continually produced and negated through their mobilization, iteratively made and unmade through acts of domination and resistance (Kennedy 1981, 1349). Thus, even within the geographic territory of a state, alternative authorities retain power, such that traditional rulers continue to function as viable “forums” for justice, or clans act as meaningful “public authorities” in people’s lives (Meinzen-

Dick and Pradhan 2001; Merry 1988).⁶ In many (often western and “developed country”) contexts, the state’s jurisdiction is institutionalized and naturalized based on a series of iterative interactions, such that certain things are understood as intrinsically “public” or “private” (Olsen 1983; Mitchell 1991). These iterations might concretize the division of subject-matter into public and private issues, or divide jurisdiction over disputes in terms of the form or geographic spread of actors claiming it. Where and when the boundary between public and private is drawn has significant implications for distributions of power, responsibility, and accountability (Olsen 1983).

This division between public and private spheres does not appear to have concretized in Uganda. Instead, the NRM regime—which has by far and away the most control over violence as compared with other authorities in the country—makes jurisdiction meaningful through (threat of) force. Thus, I understand public and private not as a sociological reality, but as a series of political effects. To this end, I use the term private to include groups that one might imagine in sociological terms to be public—clans, churches, and the like. I deliberately use this dichotomy to capture two dimensions of what I observed in the security sector in northern Uganda. First, state actors’ deliberate, unpredictable, and often sudden withdrawal from governance over certain matters without prescribing an alternative authority to deal with the claim, and second, how these unpredictable assertions and withdrawals of authority are backed by meaningful threat of superior force—and as a result, circumscribe the viability of potential alternative authorities.

In northern Uganda’s security sector, the relationships between exceptional and lawful violence and between public and private spheres are subject to ongoing redefinition. The ruling

⁶ Indeed, the term “public authority” was developed to reflect how traditionally non-state actors mimic or parasitize on the performances of state institutions. The term breaks down the binary between “state” and “non-state” in recognition of the complex and multifaceted dimensions of governance in post-colonial and fragile state contexts, and recognizes how the “language of stateness” can contribute to produce authority (Hoffmann and Vlassenroot 2014; Lund 2006a; Raeymaekers, Menkaus, and Vlassenroot 2008). This understanding of public authority focuses on the nature of power, while defining “public” broadly to include essentially anything that happens in a non-secret forum (Lund 2006a, 678).

regime determines these dichotomies and their relative fluidity or rigidity. Understanding public as a political effect points to an ongoing process of how authorities both claim and deny their power over a given jurisdiction, thereby more accurately reflecting the contextual specificity of the circumstances in northern Uganda. Additionally, defining public to account for the state's changing jurisdiction helps illustrate how those with power can collapse or shift the boundaries between exceptional/lawful and public/private at some moments and reconstruct them as meaningful in others.

Research questions and motivation

This study began as a comparative inquiry into the role of vigilantes in modern governance—I originally planned to ask where vigilante groups exist and why, what form they take, and what determines their longevity. These questions were intended to isolate the micro-dynamics of violence and governance, and document the grass-roots process of state formation. In particular, I believed that the functioning of vigilante groups would reveal how violence was or was not institutionalized at a local level. I expected that, contrary to the aspiring rulers in Charles Tilly's model of European state formation (Tilly 1992), today's modern vigilantes would be savvy to the ideas and ideologies of state formation, thereby strategically adopting the symbols, rhetoric, and forms of a "modern" state to strengthen their position without moving along the presumed linear and sequential transition towards a formal and bureaucratized governance regime (Hagmann and Péclard 2010; Lund 2006b).

In this endeavor, northern Uganda—and more specifically, Gulu—constitutes an “extreme case”.⁷ Gulu was the epicenter of resistance rebel movements from 1986 to 2006. The war-torn northern region still faces the highest poverty rate in the country⁸ and has the lowest levels of infrastructure development, including limited access to markets and services (World Bank 2016). Moreover, the north—and Gulu in particular—has remained a stronghold of opposition to the NRM regime, although this has become less pronounced in recent years. Thus, within Uganda, when the NRM took power in 1986, this peripheral region presented a significant governance challenge, in which one might expect entrepreneurial individuals to make a grab for authority and the access to wealth, power, and violence that such authority accords (Zeller 2013). As such, I reasoned that tensions between the center and periphery that might otherwise be subsumed in subtle encounters should be close to the surface and easier to observe and document.

Uganda was additionally of interest as a case study for policy-related reasons. Located in East Africa, Uganda has been an ally of the west, in particular partnering with the United States in the fight against terrorism in east Africa (Branch 2009, 481–82; McCormick 2016). And yet, the country maintains a regime that many argue is increasingly illiberal, if nominally democratic (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016; Rubongoya 2007). With an aging president and militarized regime, Uganda’s future political stability and next transition in governing power is of practical concern, both regionally and internationally. Finally, my research period conveniently dovetailed with Uganda’s electoral calendar, allowing me to conduct two years of in-depth research and to conclude with observations of the 2016 Ugandan elections, when contests for control over people,

⁷ Extreme cases work well for exploratory studies and allow the researcher to probe possible causal relationships in an open-ended fashion (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

⁸ In 2013, the Northern Region had by far the highest poverty rate at 43.7%, compared with 24.5% in Eastern, 8.7% in Western and 4.7% in Central. The annual percentage reduction in the north was also the lowest of the four regions at 3.1% (World Bank 2016, 5).

space, and resources were at their height. Thus, northern Uganda represented an ideal location for my study.

During my first month in Uganda, I formally conducted 18 interviews with 23 respondents using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. I also discussed my research agenda with several anthropologists working in the area. My exploratory study showed that my original questions would be difficult to answer—and that those answers might tell me very little. The vigilante groups I found were hard to categorize in terms of their history, form, function, use of violence, and even participants. For instance, asking how long the group had existed elicited a different answer from each respondent. Upon further investigation, I discovered that most groups had been formed and dissolved repeatedly, such that respondents were not sure to which iteration they ought to refer. Indeed, the historic roots of these groups, and the long history of civilian militias during the war, meant that in many months of many years, a “new” group was formed. Their form, too, was fluid: they were “non-state” in that they derived none of the benefits afforded to formal state employees, and yet they reported to local councilors—the most local administrative position in Uganda, referred to as the LCI⁹—and did their bidding, at times receiving payment from informal systems of local taxation.

My original questions could not get to the heart of the relationship between violence and governance. In the field, it became apparent that any issue related to violence and the state—such as who can use violence to enforce laws, the level of violence that is acceptable in this endeavor, and which activities merit punishment—were both clear and obscure, present and absent, open and

⁹ The Local Council (LC) structure was established as a part of the National Resistance Movement’s early strategy to build grass-roots support across the country. Today, they have a tiered structure representing the village, parish, sub-county, municipality and district. They comprise a council of ten representatives, one of whom is the chairman. Today, LCs function as a kind of village-level leader. A full explanation of the local council system and its historic relationship with the NRM state is provided in chapter 3.

closed. Fundamentally, they encompassed multiple contradictory dimensions simultaneously, such that they could not be determined without obscuring their very nature. Cecilie Lanken Verma, a political anthropologist of violence and militarization in northern Uganda, describes this as “*lakite*”—or “somehow” (Lanken Verma 2012). Such contradictions frequently play a central role in ethnographies of vigilante groups, gangs, self-help groups, and the like. Scholars emphasize the twilight or boundary nature of such groups (Lund 2006b), and the fluidity of individual roles in the group and group roles in the community (Gopfert 2012; Shah 2008). These observations pushed me to ask new questions oriented around the “how” and “why” of governance. Instead of trying to explain away the uncertainty and ambiguity that permeated life in northern Uganda, I opted to make it the focus of my research. Why is the relationship between violence and governance ambiguous in northern Uganda? What does it tell us about how the Ugandan state governs the local? My endeavor became a theory building project on governance in northern Uganda.

Research methodology

My methodology includes both qualitative field research and quantitative survey analysis. The qualitative research took place as an iterative process of periods of field research interspersed with analysis and reading. In the field, I focused on three key themes: the form and function of local security initiatives, their relationship with state security and governance providers, and their role in the 2016 elections. I spent a total of eight months living in Uganda over four trips, two one-month trips and two three-month trips. My time was spent primarily in and around Gulu Town, with shorter trips to Lira, Pader, Nwoya, and approximately one month spent in Kampala. During

these field trips, I conducted 311 unstructured and semi-structured interviews with approximately 303 respondents.¹⁰ Interviews were on average an hour in length, although many were longer or shorter based on the topic of conversation and practical realities, ranging from the respondent’s comfort level to inclement weather. For many of my interviews, I worked with a research assistant, Raphael Kerali, who provided translation and helped locate potential respondents. Overall, my interview respondents represent a broad cross-section of Gulu’s population, weighted towards those involved in security provision—that is, young men.

Table 1.1 Interviewee characteristics

	Women	Men	Total	Percent
<i>Community security group member</i>	1	65	66	21.78%
<i>Crime Preventer</i> ¹¹	3	28	31	10.23%
<i>Local administration</i> ¹²	4	38	42	13.86%
<i>Subnational administration</i> ¹³	3	30	33	10.89%
<i>Civil society</i> ¹⁴	4	18	22	7.26%
<i>Community members</i> ¹⁵	24	48	72	23.76%
<i>Centrally appointed security officials</i> ¹⁶	0	11	11	3.63%
<i>Police</i>	1	17	18	5.94%
<i>Military</i>	0	4	4	1.32%
<i>Judiciary/traditional dispute resolution</i> ¹⁷	0	4	4	1.32%
Total	40	262	303	100.00%

¹⁰ Although I formally made notes of 302 interviews, these were supplemented with many informal conversations as well as observations of trainings, political events, dispute resolution (in court or at a local level), and the like.

¹¹ Many community security group members participated in Crime Preventer trainings, and as the election approached, some began working more regularly with the police, attending NRM rallies, and generally positioning themselves to benefit from the Crime Preventer program. It is thus difficult to uniquely categorize many individuals as either a community security group member or a Crime Preventer. My categorization is based on my best assessment of an individual’s primary institutional obligation. This is discussed further in chapter 10.

¹² This category includes administrators at the village and parish levels.

¹³ This category includes administrators at the sub-county, municipality, and district levels, as well as current and former members of Parliament.

¹⁴ This category includes journalists, employees in non-governmental organizations (primarily those concerned with human rights and security), and political party operatives.

¹⁵ This category includes a wide range of individuals, including teachers, *boda-boda* [motorcycle taxi] drivers, shop keepers, security guards, and other individuals selected because of their experience or concern with issues of local security.

¹⁶ This category includes internal security officers at the district, sub-county, and parish levels, as well as Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) a presidential appointee responsible for security at the district level.

¹⁷ This category includes judges and traditional authorities.

Women constitute 13% of my total sample, reflecting extremely low levels of female participation in security work. Women are better represented in the categories of civil society and community members than other categories, reflecting my efforts to incorporate a female perspective into the research.

To study the form and function of security groups, I focused my research in three villages, which I selected purposively based on a set of early interviews during which I found that members of these groups were actively attempting to make claims on state authorities. This allowed me to follow the process of claim-making from beginning to end, and to triangulate interviews with my own observations of the process. The security groups I selected were also located in villages of varying distance to police posts, thereby allowing me to examine the proposition that proximity to formal state security providers determines the ability of local security groups to institutionalize independently from the state. One village, herein called Centre Village was a fifteen-minute walk from the closest police post. The second, herein called Pakure was a nearly forty-minute walk from the closest police post; and the third, herein called Adagoni was about an hour's walk to the closest police post. I have used pseudonyms for the villages and respondents to help preserve anonymity. For respondents, I chose names that were appropriate for the ethnicity and gender of the respondent, but otherwise attempted to select common names that would not distract from the findings. For the villages, I have fabricated names that are similar to names of villages found in Acholi sub-region, but are not, to my knowledge, the names of any actual villages.

Together, these three villages represent much of the urban and peri-urban lifestyle in northern Uganda. In addition, I visited 39 other villages in Gulu, Pader, Lira, and Nwoya, selected on the recommendation of local authorities or because they were included in a quantitative survey

I analyzed (see chapter 4). These 39 other villages provided context for the three villages where I spent significantly more time. I purposively selected respondents, focusing first on members of security groups, and then using a referral process to identify and interview relevant members of their networks, including mothers and wives, friends and neighbors, and local government officials. I also interviewed community members who supported the groups, community members who opposed the groups, and community members who had no normative opinion to offer. I attended local security meetings and collected relevant documents, in particular local by-laws when they were written. By-laws were helpful to learn what rules were supposed to be enforced within the community and how infractions were supposed to be punished. By-laws were typically presented at local security meetings for approval from the community, and thus reflected some version of community norms. Finally, I also developed a short structured interview about the characteristics of members of local security groups, which was conducted by my research assistant, Raphael Kerali, with the members of four local security groups. This survey provided descriptive statistics about the characteristics of members of local security groups, which are presented in chapter 4.

To better understand how security groups relate to state security providers, I interviewed members of key security and governance institutions in Gulu, including police officers, politicians, lawyers, and employees at non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly those involved in human rights NGOs. I also followed cases in which members of security groups interacted with state security and governance personnel—specifically instances where security group members faced arrest, detention, or verbal reprimand from state security providers, whether police, military, or appointed officials. In these cases, I interviewed complainants and accused, attended court hearings, and reviewed witness statements where available. I attempted to talk to as many of the

involved parties as possible, recognizing that they would have very different perspectives on the same events. One of the most revealing aspects of this process was following the cases for over one year, as they moved from the village to police outpost to court to prison and back again. This also revealed how costly the justice system is in terms of time and resources. Following cases over time also allowed me to build personal relationships with key respondents, resulting in more detailed and contextualized research findings.

As the elections approached, I spent more time researching how members of informal security structures related to Ugandan politics. In particular, I studied the Crime Preventers, as most of my respondents had joined the program and participated in trainings. I conducted interviews about Crime Preventers in Gulu, Pader, and Kampala. I also attended both physical and theoretical trainings in numerous sub-counties, and observed Crime Preventers at rallies and during the elections. I attended political rallies for all three major presidential candidates (Museveni, Besigye, and Mbabazi), and went on the campaign trail with NRM and opposition candidates to observe village level politicking. On Election Day, I observed voting in four sub-counties in Gulu District and later, vote counting at a polling station and at the district headquarters to tally the final votes for Gulu District.

Throughout the research process, I took great care to ensure the highest ethical standards. The qualitative research was conducted with the support of the Justice and Security Research Programme (JSRP), and I benefited from working with experienced Ugandan researchers as well as scholars of Uganda on designing the study as well as data management. At regular intervals, with the assistance of my Ugandan colleagues and other JSRP researchers, I reassessed the safety and security of my respondents, my research assistant, and myself. Respondents were provided with my contact information as well as my research assistant's contact information and encouraged

to communicate any concerns at any time. Throughout the research process, despite our caution, there were no cases that gave us reason for concern for the safety of our respondents or ourselves. However, in line with this caution, I have extended anonymity to all respondents except those holding public office who gave me explicit permission to use the interview material. I have also anonymized study locations.

For my data analysis, I used the qualitative data coding software, MAXQDA. After typing my interviews, I organized them into different groups reflecting where they were conducted and the “category” of respondent (ordinary community member, member of a security group, locally elected official, police, government appointee, or professional, which included lawyers, judges, high-ranking NGO staff, and the like). After re-reading the interviews, I developed codes based on key themes, including gender, crime, discipline/punishment, motivations, and rumors. In conjunction with re-reading the interviews to construct detailed narratives of case studies, I used these codes and key-word searches to identify responses related to the various themes discussed throughout the dissertation.

The findings also rely on analysis of a 1,551 household survey conducted by the Secure Livelihood Research Consortium (SLRC), representative of Lango and Acholi sub-regions of northern Uganda. The panel survey contained nearly 200 questions, including a series of questions about the presence and helpfulness of key security providers, which included state actors (police, military, and local councils), as well as community security mechanisms (community presence, traditional authorities, local security groups, and “Crime Preventers”). I procured raw data from the SLRC, and conducted my own cleaning and analysis. This ensured that I understood the construction of all the variables that I used in regressions analysis (see chapter 4). I conducted both

statistical analysis of relevant questions, and also ordinary least squares regressions analysis to identify relationships between key variables of interest.

My research faces certain limits both theoretically and empirically. The vast majority of my research was conducted in urban and peri-urban areas. Although Uganda remains one of Africa's most rural countries, with approximately 85% of the population living in rural areas, urban population growth outpaced rural by an estimated 4.1% per year in comparison to the overall population growth of 3.2% per year between 1995 and 2009 (Dorosh and Thurlow 2014, 114). Second, northern Uganda—and Gulu Town where I did most of my research—is indisputably particular. The region is unusually war-torn having been the center of a twenty-year insurgency once referred to as the “world's biggest neglected crisis” due to significant (often forced) recruitment of child soldiers, massive civilian displacement, and deplorable conditions in government and NGO-run displacement camps (Associated Press 2004). The area in and around Gulu Town is also highly research saturated, a result of academic pressures to render legible the highly specific nature of conflict and post-conflict processes (Desai and Tapscott 2015). This has produced an environment where researchers—and the potential goodies they offer—are a known commodity. Many respondents revise their responses accordingly. While this can never be fully overcome, I employed a host of strategies to mitigate bias, including triangulating findings based on interviews with other respondents, the findings of other researchers, and when possible, my own observations. I was also transparent about what I could and could not offer respondents and applied a healthy level of skepticism to my data. Overall, I found that my questions were not a part of a familiar call and response interviewer/respondent script, and I believe this also mitigated respondents' ability to produce a story consistent with some imagined foreign research agenda.

My research selected on the dependent variable both in terms of location (northern Uganda) and who I interviewed (mainly young men involved in security). Ethnographic method intentionally selects on the dependent variable. It also inherently relies on human communication—which can be both a strength and a weakness. As Patricia Fernández-Kelly writes,

Fading memories, the imprecision of language, and the play of emotions diminish the self-evident character of spoken accounts. For that reason, the goal of in-depth interviews is not to take the statements of informants at face value, as if they revealed *truth*, but to identify *experiential patterns* in the testimonies of individuals sharing common characteristics (Fernández-Kelly 2015, 14, citations omitted, italics in original).

In this spirit, I focused on identifying experiential patterns to draw broader theoretical insights about the relationship between the Ugandan state and the institutionalization of violence in contemporary northern Uganda. Indeed, numerous other researchers of Uganda—as well as scholars of everyday experiences of security and justice in illiberal regimes—have documented findings that lend support to the theoretical findings advanced in this manuscript and suggest the theory has broad applicability to understand the governing of borderlands, frontier zones, and the margins of the state (see chapter 11). Finally, there are theoretical limitations. These are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Defining key concepts

Key concepts for this dissertation include the state, institutionalization, arbitrariness, violence, and

local security initiatives.¹⁸ Each of these concepts is debated and contested, and each is frequently stabilized in theory on governance to explore other complex ideas. Here, I provide brief clarifications of my own use of the terms. Importantly, I attempt to use these concepts to help illuminate observed relationships between rulers and ruled; thus, my definitions, as provided here, are based both on theory and inductive observation from the field.

The state: A growing literature argues that it is not possible, or not useful, to analytically or conceptually determine the state (Hoffmann and Kirk 2013, 10). Instead, authors increasingly focus on what the state does and how. They examine consolidation of (threat of) force, juridical sovereignty, symbolic and material production of the state's form (or "the state effect"), public authority, and the like. My inquiry is similarly concerned with strategies and tools of governance, with a specific focus on the institutionalization of violence, both in isolation and in relation to other strategies of governance. The notion of "the state" is fundamental to this story—the individuals, institutions, and ideas that comprise the state are typically closely aligned with levers of power. On the other hand, as illustrated in the statebuilding literature, the state is far from the only relevant actor. What is more, the state itself may be more appropriately conceived of as a diverse set of actors each with varying interests who can act alternately in a public or private capacity. In accordance with this, I prioritized my respondents' perceptions of the state as an assemblage of power, violence, resources, institutions, and intent. Throughout, I also focused on the observable material and symbolic effects of those factors.

I also recognize the turn to "public authority" in favor of "the state". Public authority is frequently defined as commanding a minimum of voluntary compliance based on mutual

¹⁸ Other important concepts are defined as they appear throughout the dissertation.

recognition of moral values and norms, and legitimacy of claims to power, while they define public parsimoniously as “impersonal administrative operations in a wide sense . . . [and] public (as in ‘not secret’) confrontations, discussions and action in concert” (Hoffmann and Kirk 2013, 9). However, in my endeavor, rejecting the notion of the state may create more problems than it solves. In Uganda, this concept does a lot of work in producing citizens’ understandings of themselves as subjects, describing the opaque workings of central power, citizens’ belief in the existence and importance of these levers of power, and citizens’ expectations that something akin to governing is happening from the Statehouse. Moreover, the ruling regime has worked hard to make government, state and party synonymous. Thus, in this study, the vernacular use of state and central state are akin to a ruling regime that encompasses government, the ruling party (the National Resistance Movement) and the administrative institutions of state. Therefore, rather than reject the concept, I use the terms “ruling regime” and “state” in a limited sense to refer to those individuals who control Uganda’s formal and public state institutions.

Institutions and institutionalization: Institutionalization is a key theme that runs throughout the dissertation, as I examine the assumption that interactions between ruler and ruled (and, in particular, the role of violence in these interactions) become regularized and increasingly predictable. Institutions and institutionalization are terms that have proved difficult to define; however, they are key elements determining whether the relationship between state forms and violence is stable or fluid, and are therefore essential for this study. The following definition provides a useful starting point:

...the concept of an institution can be thought of as those (more or less) enduring elements of social life that affect the behavior and beliefs of individuals and collective actors by providing templates for action, cognition, and emotion,

nonconformity with which is associated with some kind of costs (Lawrence, Suddaby, and Leca 2011, 53 citations omitted).

Thus, institutions are rule-bound social mechanisms of order and control, not limited to formalized organizations. It is important to recall that institutionalization does not imply any particular relationship to effectiveness, efficiency, or power—however, it does imply formalization and increased predictability (also see North 1990). In the case of northern Uganda, I find that violence is institutionalized in the sense that it is regulated and controlled. However, it is not institutionalized in the sense that the ruling regime still intervenes unpredictably. Thus, violence has become institutionalized but it does not result in the predictability that would be expected.

Arbitrariness: Arbitrariness has two basic meanings—the first focuses on capriciousness, as in an “unreasonable act of will”. The second emphasizes the role of individual preference or choice in decision-making, rather than “the intrinsic nature of something”. The legal definition of arbitrary further elaborates this second definition, defining arbitrary as “depending on individual discretion (as of a judge) and not fixed by standards, rules, or law,” “existing or coming about...as an unreasonable act of individual will without regard for facts or applicable law” and “not restrained or limited in the exercise of power” (“Arbitrary” 2017). Indeed, the second definition is closer to the origins of the word, which derives from the Latin *arbitrarius* “done by way of legal arbitration”. In English, the word arbitrary originally referred to decisions made by the expert determination of a judge rather than defined by law. Thus, arbitrary connotes the unpredictability inherent in individual choices or decisions in contrast to impersonal rule-based decision-making.

I have opted to use the word “arbitrary” in favor of uncertainty and unpredictability for the following three reasons. First, arbitrariness emphasizes the role of the arbitrator, thereby giving

agency to the producer of uncertainty. Indeed, it is the role of the arbitrator that introduces uncertainty. Second, while the concept of arbitrariness has at its heart unpredictability and capriciousness, it need not be without reason—it is simply that the reason or logic is not discernible or reliably foreseeable to those who are subjected to the arbitrator’s decision. Finally, unlike the concepts of uncertainty and unpredictability, which are defined in opposition to certainty and predictability, arbitrariness stands on its own. In this way, it does not imply the existence of a natural order in which certainty and predictability prevail (also see de Waal 2017). Thus, “institutionalized arbitrariness” emphasizes how the unpredictable and at times illegible realities of human decision-making can be regularized into a system of rule.

Violence: Violence is a key theme in this dissertation. Violence can take many forms—physical, symbolic, discursive, economic, and so on. In Gulu, in local experiences of the formal and informal security sector, I found that (threat of) physical violence was the most immediate and present form of violence underpinning law enforcement, whether formal or informal law. Thus, in this study, I conceive of violence as material experiences of coercion, and the threat thereof, whether spectacular, hidden, or technocratic.

The work of Hansen and Stepputat is helpful to understand why and how violence is necessarily intimately related to power. In their collected essays *Sovereign Bodies*, Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat conclude that post-colonial states use exceptional violence that is un-institutionalized, arbitrary and spectacular as a governing strategy. The editors elaborate:

We suggest that sovereignty of the state is an aspiration that seeks to create itself in the face of internally fragmented, unevenly distributed and unpredictable configurations of political authority that exercise more or less legitimate violence in a territory. Sovereign power, whether exercised by a state, in the name of the nation, or by a local despotic power or community court, is always a tentative and

unstable project whose efficiency and legitimacy depend on repeated performances of violence and a ‘will to rule.’ These performances can be spectacular and public, secret and menacing, and also can appear as scientific/technical rationalities of management and punishment of bodies. Although the meanings and forms of such performances of sovereignty always are historically specific, they are, however, always constructing their public authority through a capacity for visiting violence on human bodies (T. B. Hansen and Stepputat 2009, 3).

Violence underpins all acts of ruling and being ruled in two ways: the threat (and sometime reality) of exceptional violence, whether spectacular or hidden (Benjamin 1978; Schmitt 2005); and the unstable and more quotidian reality of governing violence, expressed through spectacular performances of lawful punishment as much as through technocratic methods of discipline.

Here, I conceive of violence as a resource for and a necessary ingredient of sovereign power. Because violence is not an exhaustible resource, its relative frequency and intensity—whether achieved through spectacle, technique, or brute force—determines its value. I concur with Hansen and Stepputat that violence requires subjects to give it meaning, and that its arbitrary use is powerful. However, I depart from them in emphasizing that, in and around Gulu Town, that there is no clear division between exceptional and everyday violence. Instead, the line between normalcy and exception remains fluid. In such a system, arbitrary violence can be potentially anywhere and everywhere, and this potentiality exerts its own governing power.

Local security group: Analyses of local security groups—often called “vigilantes”—can be disaggregated into two broad categories: first, formal efforts to differentiate vigilantism from other acts of retribution or punishment (Brown 1975; Johnston 1996; Rosenbaum and Sederberg 1974); and second, those that emphasize the vague, enigmatic, and fluid nature of the concept (Abrahams 1998; Pratten and Sen 2008). While the first approach helps develop measurable concepts with

analytic purchase, the second approach helps reveal a more nuanced and dynamic picture of these groups as “non-state” actors working under the mantle of security to provide a range of other services, including basic security, law enforcement, legal judgment, and criminal punishment, to taxation and provision of basic services (Pratten and Sen 2008).

In the following definition, I build on both categories, attempting to create a scaffolding that approximates the type of individuals and activities with which my research is concerned, while avoiding over-determination that might unnecessarily focus attention on the form or function of such actors at the expense of grasping the concept. The definition uses literature to identify and grapple with key debates—for example “whether or not it is essentially violent, conservative, extra-legal, organized, and directed only towards crime; whether it can be undertaken by agents acting on behalf of the state (such as the police) as well as by private citizens; and whether it is a genuine social movement or a mere social reaction” (Johnston 1996, 221, citations omitted). I then develop a definition inductively from my qualitative field work. I have opted to use the term “community security group” rather than “vigilante” as this more aptly describes the types of organizations, and their perceived relationship to their communities, that I encountered during research.

I define local security groups as an association of laypeople organized for the explicit and formally stated purpose of improving security for the members of a given community. This definition begs further examination. “Association” refers to a fixed relationship between members, such that some citizens are in the group and others are not. Moreover, an association represents non-ephemeral and substantive relations between multiple people, which oblige them to abide by whatever stated or unstated rules the association might have.

The “laypeople” in this definition are not employed in their capacity as security providers, meaning that they do not exchange (threat of) violence or coercion for any contractually determined benefit, whether verbal or written. Many citizens participate in a security group with the hope that it will lead to contractual employment. Thus, they do not work for pay; rather this is precisely an example of the distinction between laypeople as I have defined them and militias or paramilitary groups, as well as more formal security arrangements like the police and army. Thus, they are not engaged in a formal or informal contractual relationship. At least nominally, they work in the interests of a particular civilian community. As mentioned earlier, attempts to differentiate local security groups from the government are problematic, as the relationship between security groups and state actors is fluid. I accept this murkiness and attempt to further elucidate how it functions as a form of arbitrary governance or institutionalized arbitrariness throughout the dissertation.

By “formally stated purpose” I mean a public justification. This need not exclude the possibility that such groups have private or hidden interests. It simply specifies that the groups work under a public image. A variety of literatures suggest the importance of formal justifications, particularly literature on the symbolic and performative production of power. This literature focus attention on the symbolic and rhetoric strategies that members of local security groups adopt to make claims to authority, while recognizing that such practices may be strategic attempts to gain power, rather than reflecting a genuine interest in representing or protecting the community (Hagmann and Péclard 2010; Lund 2006b).

“Members of a given community” reflects both a shared imagination and a geographic dimension. Geographically, “community” refers to the understood area of the community, as defined by a commonly shared opinion on its borders among community members, such that

inhabitants of a given area police that area. In terms of shared imaginations, “community” reflects cultural or socially accepted notions of the “in” group (Varshney 2003) – or who counts as “belonging.” In Northern Uganda, for example, immigrants from South Sudan are viewed as outsiders, with significant suspicion and even hatred. A community security group might act to decrease, rather than increase, the security of South Sudanese, even those living in Ugandan villages. The shared imaginations dimension of the term is important because it circumscribes the community more concisely than the simple geographic dimension.

Similarly, “security” reflects shared imaginations of a given social, moral, or cosmic order that may be culturally, historically, religiously, or even politically particular. Those who challenge this order may be seen as threats to security, and treated accordingly (i.e., as “outside” the community)—which, in northern Uganda, may comprise homosexuals, prostitutes, or witches (Porter 2013, Allen 1999). Similarly, upholding the moral order may favor the security of some (e.g., older men) over the security of others (e.g., young men, women, or children). This being said, the groups that I looked at in and around Gulu Town were largely concerned with issues such as theft of livestock, drug use, or arresting men accused of incest, rape or defilement and delivering them to the police. The formally stated purpose to improve security distinguishes security groups from rebel groups or criminal groups, which primarily are formed with political or economic aspirations. Thus, local security groups might be equated with community organizations, gangs, community policing initiatives, or some other informal and local arrangement that intervenes in governance using the threat of force.

Two vignettes of local security and state intervention

As discussed in the introduction, I expected the form and function of security groups to fall into two main categories. In more remote villages—where I presumed a security vacuum in the absence of state security providers—I expected some form of local security arrangement to fill that vacuum. As a result, I thought these local security arrangements would be relatively institutionalized, with clear rules about the use of violence. I also expected them to be relatively independent from state security providers. In more urban or peri-urban areas—where I presumed something resembling a security assemblage—I expected local security groups to be enmeshed in existing and competing governance structures. Broadly speaking, these observations held.

However, they were further shaped by an overarching observation: distance from state security providers did not eliminate the possibility of seemingly arbitrary and potentially violent state intervention. To the contrary, in the few remote rural areas I visited, respondents described state interventions as sufficiently harsh to function as a meaningful mode of discipline, limiting the extent to which local leaders or security group members used organized violence to police their communities.

The following two vignettes provide a brief introduction to security concerns in two villages. The first vignette describes a village within Gulu Municipality, which had a well-organized security group that worked along with the locally elected village leader. The second vignette describes a remote rural village where the local system of governance dovetailed with a clan structure. Respondents in this village reported that the clan structure was the primary institution that adjudicated local crimes. The first case shows the degree of arbitrary state intervention, while the second case provides a counter-factual that reveals a consistency in the state's interests: controlling civilian access to tools of violence.

In my eight months in northern Uganda, I encountered many cases in which citizens had been arrested, detained, and fined—frequently at the hands of security groups, but also by the police or other public authorities. I was immediately struck that members of the very security groups I was studying often faced these sanctions. One day, I planned to arrange a follow-up interview with the Defense Secretary of a well-organized security group. This Defense Secretary had made laminated identification cards for the youths in his group, stamped by the local councilor to prevent fraud. The names and phone numbers of the group members were written on a placard that hung from a mango tree in the local councilor's compound so community members could reach them for assistance. They helped the police on nightly patrols, and had a schedule delineating their rotating shifts. They collected taxes. They had by-laws.

I had first interviewed the Defense Secretary, Michael Komaketch, a week earlier. He was in his late forties, and told me that he had previously worked as a security officer at the American Embassy in Kampala. During our interview in the local councilors' compound under the shade of the mango tree, Michael sat back in his plastic chair as he spoke. He explained how his security group supported the work of the police:

We go to CPS [Central Police Station]. They have a plan and divide people according [to their needs]—a number of soldiers, police, defense secretary—you lead them [the police] into the community. There are two patrol cars, and when we go out, they issue their phone numbers so you can call them for support. If you get someone, you call the patrol car to come and pick them. The other boys stay around until the trading centers are closed. If there is a problem or they are called, we send two of them to see what is going on and cool down the situation (Defense secretary, Gulu District, 18 October 2014).

Michael emphasized the importance of procedure and the group's relationship with the police. He spoke with great confidence about his skill with a police baton.

When there is a fight, I go with these people [the security group members]. This is for manpower and also to have a person to be a witness at all times... Sometimes we have batons which we get from the police. We also have other batons that we designed ourselves. We take them to the molder. I've worked with a baton for eight years; I know how to use it. If you have a *panga* [machete] and I have a baton, you cannot cut me. I know where to hit when I have that thing (Defense secretary, Gulu District, 18 October 2014).

Michael expressed pride in his group and their work, explaining that he expected the youth to be “exemplary” or else relinquish their right to volunteer with the group.

A few weeks later, I tried to schedule a follow-up interview with Michael. I was informed that it would not be possible: Michael was in jail.

Michael had been summoned to the police post to answer questions the night before. He assumed they would be regarding his work as Defense Secretary. Instead, he was arrested for assault of a man he had detained weeks earlier in what he viewed as a routine arrest. He was detained for several weeks until the community could raise enough money for bail.

As a part of my research agenda, I visited several villages included in SLRC's quantitative survey to triangulate my quantitative analysis with my own observations. The villages, having been randomly selected, were far flung. To make the journey possible, I rented a car, and Raphael, my research assistant, and I set off. One village on our list was particularly remote: after we pulled off

the Gulu-Kampala highway onto a dirt footpath, it took two more hours to find the village. Luckily, as we were driving through unkempt brush along a road no wider than a motorbike, we came across a man who offered to take us to the local council chairman. Along the way, we passed four or five homesteads, and he called a greeting to the inhabitants and asked if the chairman was there. He laughed as he explained that each homestead belonged to one of the LCI's wives. The LCI reportedly stayed with a different wife on each night, and as a result he could be difficult to locate. In the end, we found him in his own compound, swept clean with a dozen chickens pecking in the dust.

Except for a brief period of displacement during the conflict, the LCI told us that he had lived in this village—located on the administrative border between two sub-counties—for his entire life. He had served as the LCI for the past fifteen years. He reported that the major security problems were fighting, domestic violence, and stealing. But there was no security group. Instead, the community relied on a clan security structure:

There is no group of youths that provide security in the village. There is a clan security organ. If they hear that someone has committed a crime, they...bring them before the elders of the clan. If you are found in the wrong, you are taken to the LCIII or to the police outpost or sub-county chief. If you are not guilty, they leave you. If it is punishable within the clan, they will solve it from there. According to what they decide, you might be caned, while telling you not to do it again next time. Usually, [criminals] are not taken to the police unless it is very serious (LCI, Gulu District, 23 October 2014).

The LCI continued to explain that in this village, there was only one clan, so they used clan by-laws which have been reviewed to be in accordance with state law. In the case of a conflict, the LCI would summon the relevant parties and other elders to make a ruling. He described handling

cases of land conflict, domestic violence, and theft. The LCI explained that with the community present, the wrongdoers always accepted their punishment.

As the interview progressed, the LCI also explained that the police *had* come to the village recently to arrest a man suspected of having stolen a gun. Failing to find the suspect at home, they detained the suspect's sister instead. The LCI then raised his own question to us: what should he do when police officers from different outposts asserted jurisdiction, and different verdicts, over local conflicts in this border town?

These two anecdotes illustrate vastly different environments in Gulu District: the first case took place in an urban center, where a visibly organized security group liaised regularly with the police. The second case took place in a small and remote border village where there appeared to be little confusion about public authority and the hierarchies of power. In the first case, the arrest of the defense secretary appeared arbitrary—he was well-connected and knew the inner-workings of the police. His arrest was not due to a falling out with the regime, but rather the complaint of a man he had arrested weeks earlier. In the second case, the police intervened to curtail illegal gun ownership. Private gun ownership is an explicit instance of a citizen claiming access to violence, whatever the owner's purpose for procuring the weapon. This was one clear consistency across cases—although state intervention appeared arbitrary—and indeed more so in communities with closer proximity to the police—respondents accepted it, perceiving interventions as a component

of an underlying state logic—namely, to prevent citizens from accessing violence that could potentially be used to challenge the ruling regime.¹⁹

Organization of the manuscript

Chapter 2 presents the puzzle of the long-lasting Ugandan regime in a post-colonial state where in theory, governing institutions lack the sovereign violence necessary for stable rule. I first review canonical theory on sovereign violence, recognizing its limitations as a largely Euro-centric approach. I then apply this theory through an examination of neopatrimonialism, a key alternative explanation for what I observe in Uganda. The chapter also reviews theory on vigilantes and security assemblages, themes which recur throughout the manuscript. I then elaborate the theory of institutionalized arbitrariness, which I developed inductively from research in northern Uganda. The chapter argues that the power of Uganda's central government, as experienced in the north of the country, relies on a system in which competing and ill-defined authorities unpredictably claim and deny the authority to intervene in matters of concern to civilians (from domestic disputes to theft to murder), thereby creating an atmosphere of jurisdictional uncertainty in the security and justice sectors. This is made possible by four factors: the perception of state control of sovereign violence, non-institutionalization of the public/private division, the perception of potential presence of the state, and non-hierarchical and fragmented governance institutions. Together, these four factors produce an environment of seemingly arbitrary violence that makes the government

¹⁹ Lanken Verma's work further elucidates this point, discussing in detail the state's rhetoric of "demystifying the gun" as a tool to emphasize its mystique and power (see chapter 5) (Lanken Verma 2012).

ever-present in civilian imagination, despite its general material absence in terms of daily security provision or law enforcement.

Chapter 3 presents a history of northern Uganda. Like many others, I focus on the post-1986 period, when President Museveni took office and the infamous and bloody insurgency, later headed by Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), commenced. This war has shaped the relationship between the Acholi people and the NRM regime; simultaneously, the war was a time of abnormality when typical rules of engagement were suspended. To identify the role of key institutions as well as how Acholi civilians have experienced state power, violence, and citizenship, this chapter places the war within a broader narrative of Uganda's recent history. In this analysis, the military, along with ethnicity and regionalism—and the political and constructed nature of the two—emerge as paramount to Uganda's political processes. The chapter then turns to citizens' experiences with (in)security and governance, including the historical role of civilian militias in northern Uganda, within the broader context of a diverse set of security actors including the police, military, and rebel forces. Additionally, it provides important context for civilian experiences of insecurity during the conflict—including violence, property loss, and displacement—which shape contemporary civilian attitudes toward the government. The end of the chapter focuses on today's "post-conflict" Uganda, examining the evolution of the current government system, as well as how it regulates access to violence and resources. In sum, the chapter provides context for citizens' shared memories of violence and the state, and the institutional ecosystem within which these expectations exist.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth description of local security initiatives as they relate to lived experiences of security in northern Uganda. The chapter draws on the notion of "security assemblages" (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010) to highlight how citizens fit into the broader

ecosystem of security and governance providers. The chapter analyzes data from the SLRC to show how perceptions of security in Gulu relate to those in other districts. I find that Gulu resembles other districts in Acholi sub-region, but not in Langi, thereby concluding that while my findings in Gulu may help understand dynamics in other part of Acholi, they should not be directly extrapolated to Langi or other regions of the country. I then elaborate on the form and function of security groups based on qualitative findings, highlighting how security groups fit into local expectations for security. I then examine specific relationships that I expected based on the ethnographic research. Importantly, the findings show that security groups are viewed as more helpful when they exist in proximity to state security providers, providing evidence against a simple “security vacuum” story. I also attempt to disentangle whether security groups derive legitimacy from state security actors or vice versa, concluding on the basis of both the qualitative and quantitative data that there is more evidence for the former. The chapter concludes with an examination of how local values, in particular those against idleness, might shape youth engagement in informal security provision.

Chapters 5-8 each examine elements of institutionalized arbitrariness (the perception of the state’s control of sovereign violence; a fluid public/private divide; the potential presence of the state; and a fragmented institutional environment). In each chapter, I engage with relevant theory and analyze a case from my research that is particularly illustrative of the theoretical element at hand. In chapter 5, I examine the common perception amongst my respondents that the NRM state has control of sovereign violence, showing how the regime has made fluid the distinction between times of exception and times of normalcy. I use masculinity as an analytical lens to understand how and why citizens understand the state as extremely powerful and violent, even in the absence of personal experiences of state violence. In chapter 6, I examine the state’s production of public

and private spheres, and how they are transgressed, drawing on theory on neopatrimonial rule and law. I explore how state authorities—and as a result other public authorities—variously claim *and deny* their authority. This muddies the division between public and private, thereby contributing to uncertainty. In chapter 7, I engage with theory on surveillance to understand how and why citizens believe that the regime is always potentially present. The perception of potential presence causes citizens understand state action and inaction as intentional. Finally, in chapter 8, I engage with theory on legal pluralism to explore how institutional fragmentation of the security and governance sectors in Uganda prevent citizens from developing expectations of security and justice providers—a key component to allow effective “forum shopping”. This limits the ability of authorities to consolidate power. The cases in each chapter are analyzed to elucidate each theoretical element of institutionalized arbitrariness. Together, the four chapters build an empirical and a theoretical case for potentially violent and seemingly arbitrary governance as a contemporary mode of rule in Uganda’s illiberal democratic state.

Chapter 9 builds on the previous four chapters by examining how unpredictable state violence limits the formation of constituencies at a sub-national level. I argue that the potential for exceptional state violence against constituents or entrepreneurial public authorities makes citizens skeptical of those who claim to represent their interests to (or against) the state. I focus on two cases involving political authorities, one in Pader and the other in Amuru, two districts in Acholi sub-region, northern Uganda. These cases reveal how the institutional structure paired with violent state interventions stymie the efforts of entrepreneurial public authorities to consolidate loyal constituencies. I argue that by making direct, arbitrary, and violent interventions against civilians, the central state shows that political authorities are unable to protect their constituents, thereby weakening their support base and undermining their power.

Chapter 10 examines the case of the Crime Preventer program in relation to the 2016 Ugandan elections, showing how arbitrary governance works in action to directly engage individual young men in the NRM state machinery. The case shows how the ruling regime co-opted unemployed young men—an otherwise potentially volatile segment of the population that has generally been sympathetic to the opposition—by tapping into youths’ aspirations for future success and cynicism about local and national level politics. I conclude that the regime used the program successfully, maximizing their control while minimizing their responsibility to deliver on promises made to program recruits. This was achieved in large part by designing the program as indeterminate, such that it could be alternately framed as having a political, economic, or social purpose. The uncertainty surrounding the program and its participants made it difficult for Crime Preventers, citizens, opposition politicians and the international community to organize around a common understanding of the program, thereby precluding an effective response.

The final chapter concludes with an analysis of the theoretical and empirical contributions of the manuscript. The chapter highlights the implications of the findings for literature on postcolonial state formation and governance, as well as literatures on legal pluralism and public authority. I then turn to other scholars who have documented similar strategies of rule in other sub-Saharan African countries with statist and militarized regimes, including Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Zimbabwe. The dissertation makes a case for understanding the relationship between violence and institutional form dynamically, as something that can be opportunistically de-coupled and re-coupled according to a wider strategy of rule. It attempts to make sense of a governing strategy that incorporates seemingly contradictory approaches, and the unpredictability that injects into everyday life for ordinary citizens.

Chapter 2²⁰

The long arms of the law

In Acholi, there is a saying *gamente cing'e bor*—the government has a long arm. The saying is in many ways akin to the English phrase “the long arms of the law”. In an interview on 5 March 2015, my research assistant, Raphael, discussed the saying with a 50-year-old male community member²¹:

Okello: The truth is that the government has a long arm. This is because even if a criminal tries to run to a safe place, the government would still reach there, find him, and bring him to book. This is because wherever an offender goes, he is still going to be under some authority or where the government has an influence.

Raphael: What kind of authority do you mean?

Okello: The law. The law does not have any boundary; everybody is subject to the law. It does not matter who and what a person is—all are bound by the law. This is why I am saying that everywhere one goes there is the law which governs how things are done, meaning that if a person does something which is contrary to the law and tries to go into hiding, he would still be found since every member of society recognizes the law and would not wish to harbor a criminal; otherwise they would become criminals as well.

Raphael: In your understanding, what is this government which the people say has a long arm? Is it the central government based in Kampala or it is also including those at the most local levels like the LCI, the *rwot kweri* [traditional chief] and the rest?

Okello: You see, the government starts with me and you who are seated right here—provided we talk what is consistent with what the government has laid down in the

²⁰ The argument in this chapter draws on and further develops an earlier publication (Tapscott 2017).

²¹ Raphael conducted several interviews independently, which were recorded and transcribed. This is one such interview.

laws. This is what makes us the government. The LCI structure and the rest of the other leadership structures are part of the one bigger government. In short, the government is government because of the consolidation of all these other small structures in a hierarchical order. The strength of the government depends on us who are here at the grass roots. Without us there is no government.

Okello's sentiment is perhaps surprising in the context of northern Uganda, an area of Africa frequently described as fragile and war-torn. Yet Okello describes the government as omnipresent—even embodied—in law-abiding citizens. Indeed, the Ugandan case represents an unusually stable regime: President Museveni has maintained power for over three decades. He is the eighth longest serving head of state in the world, and the fifth longest serving in Africa, behind Paul Biya of Cameroon, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, José Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe. In comparison to its neighbors, Ugandans enjoy relative economic and political stability, and although elections have been marred with irregularities, the international community has stopped short of condemning the results.

Since Museveni took power in 1986, Uganda's political system has been explained with an array of theories. These studies, conducted in different areas of the country and in reference to various actors and conflicts, describe the Ugandan state as pathologically weak (Reinikka and Svensson 2005), wilfully absent (Jones 2009), overrun or marginalized by international intervention and aid (Branch 2011; Allen 2006), early in the process of state consolidation (Björkman and Svensson 2009; Batley and Mcloughlin 2010), semi-authoritarian (Goodfellow 2014), ruling through patronage (Freeland 2015) or a system of corrupt neopatrimonialism (Mwenda and Tangri 2005), or employing indirect rule (Mamdani 1996; Finnström 2008). Each category posits a different relationship between violence, governance, and citizen/subject. Recently, some scholars have taken to describing Uganda as having a "hybrid" governance structure that combines formal and informal institutions and is thus difficult to decisively

categorize (Perrot, Lafargue, and Makara 2014; Tripp 2010; also see Goodfellow and Lindemann 2013 for a critique of hybridity and analytic turn to “multiplicity”).²²

It is little surprise that strategies of governance and academic interpretations of these strategies have changed—even substantially—over the past three decades. Yet it is striking that no clear narrative has emerged about the relationship between violence and the NRM regime’s strategy of governance. The sheer diversity and breadth of these categories, and the fact that they have been applied interchangeably over decades, presents a puzzle of sorts. How could violence be organized such that the state could plausibly be described by these different categories? Moreover, given the threats to Ugandan statehood—insurgencies in the North, West, and East; ethnic and regional fragmentation; and a confident military—how has the regime managed to persist and even extend its control to the imaginations and material experience of citizens in the conflict-affected borderlands of the country?

The question at hand is not just important for Uganda, but also provides an opportunity to further theorize about contemporary governance in post-colonial sub-Saharan African states based on an in-depth examination of the institutionalization of violence. To this end, we must turn to the moment of decolonization, when colonial powers left newly-independent sub-Saharan African states with control of governing institutions but lacking access to sufficient violence to enforce their rule (Englebert 2000; Mbembe 2001).

This chapter elaborates the theory of institutionalized arbitrariness as a possible explanation for a seemingly illegible relationship between the state’s governing institutions and sovereign violence. To this end, I show how the institutional environment in Uganda has been

²² Goodfellow and Lindemann (2013) differentiate between hybridity (the melding of informal and formal institutions) and multiplicity (the coexistence of multiple institutional forms, which in their analysis can be either discordant or concordant with the state and state institutions).

intentionally and strategically structured by key players, among them President Museveni himself, to produce a specific outcome of ambiguity and uncertainty. This ambiguity, in turn, makes government intervention appear arbitrary to the population, thereby functioning as an intentional, and institutionalized, mode of governance. At the same time, the government avoids the costs associated with strategies of direct rule, and the principal-agent problems associated with indirect rule.

The chapter first turns to canonical theory on how violence is institutionalized in constitutional moments to structure the relationship between violence and rule. Although Eurocentric, I find this a useful starting point to conceptualize the relationship among violence, power, and governing institutions. According to this theoretical tradition, relationships among violence, power, and governing institutions define the organization of the polity from the perspective of the ruler, determining what falls under state law (the public sphere) and what does not (the private sphere).²³ Here, I also discuss the production of public and private spheres and how this relates to governing power.

I then turn to neopatrimonialism as a leading theory and key counterfactual on the configuration of the relationship between violence and governing power in post-colonial states in general, and in sub-Saharan Africa in particular. I show that while neopatrimonialism is a helpful analytic to understand the Ugandan state, it is unable to fully theorize how violence is institutionalized therein. Thus, neopatrimonialism is unable to adequately explain the fragile and at times fluid relationship between the public and private spheres. I then present two analytic approaches that help theorize how violence is institutionalized: Rita Abrahamsen and Michael William's "security assemblages" which theorizes how violence is institutionalized in the

²³ For example, in rent-seeking behaviors of the police (Sanchez de la Sierra and Titeca forthcoming) or by government employees (Smith 2003).

interrelationships amongst actors and institutions; and vigilantism, which focuses on violence and its institutionalization in relation to state institutions.

Finally, I elaborate institutionalized arbitrariness, a theory that helps clarify the relationship between sovereign violence and the regime's strategy of governance. Contrary to common wisdom, I argue that the Ugandan state has successfully institutionalized violence into its governing institutions, enabling the long-term rule of President Museveni and his NRM party. Uganda's ruling regime retains the power to intervene at any time and place, or concomitantly, to refuse to intervene, thereby momentarily redefining a matter as public (through intervention) or private (through refusal to intervene). Thus, the division between public and private spheres is fragile and fluid—and yet the designations retain meaning. This produces an environment of seemingly arbitrary intervention that makes the government ever-present in civilian imagination, despite its general material absence in terms of daily security provision and law enforcement. In turn, this contributes to fragmentation of alternative sources of authority, increasing the relative power of the ruling regime. I identify four factors that produce institutionalized arbitrariness in Uganda, and may be indicative of other contexts where institutionalized arbitrariness contributes to or constitutes a strategy of rule. Finally, I address three types of counter-arguments—first, that this observed unpredictability is no more than the sum of its parts; second, that it is not actually unpredictable, but rather illegible to outsiders; and finally, that disorder is not actually intentional, but simply happen-stance.

Sovereign violence and strategies of governance

What is the theoretical relationship between violence and governance in post-colonial sub-Saharan

African states? Despite its Euro-centricity, I start with canonical literature theorizing the relationship between violence and governance drawing on Carl Schmitt,²⁴ Walter Benjamin, and Giorgio Agamben. The insights of these scholars provide a framework to examine these same relationships in the Ugandan context. Schmitt (2005) famously defined the sovereign as he who can determine the state and place of exception. This theory was later developed in a Foucauldian vein by Agamben (2005). Importantly in this formulation, sovereignty rests on violence—the mobilization of vast and arbitrary violence in a moment of exception, capable of suspending or overturning the legal frameworks governing its use.

According to both Schmitt (2003) and Benjamin (1978), governance is the institutionalization of violence. That is, a sovereign (Schmitt 2003), or sovereign violence (Benjamin 1978), is transformed into a system of governance through a particular organization of violence. The institutionalization of violence is a dialectic process between “law-constituting” violence in which violence is used to create law, and “law-constituted” violence, where said laws are used to regulate or legitimate the use of violence (Benjamin 1978). These can also be conceptualized as the institutionalization of violence (“law-constituting violence”) and governing institutions (“law-constituted violence”). Institutionalizing violence in governing institutions fragments sovereign violence and relocates it in institutions and individuals, which litigate matters during times of normalcy.

This process of institutionalization necessitates the production of a distinction between public and private spheres. Moments of exception transcend private domains such that violence

²⁴ As noted in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, “Carl Schmitt is often considered to be one of the most important critics of liberalism, parliamentary democracy, and liberal cosmopolitanism. But the value and significance of Schmitt's work is subject to controversy, mainly due to his intellectual support for and active involvement with National Socialism” (Vinx 2010). I thus examine his theory here while strongly condemning many of the viewpoints it has been used to support.

can be exercised in any place and at any time. By contrast, in times of normalcy, the lawful exercise of state violence is confined to the public sphere, thereby shielding the private sphere from state violence. Nonetheless, those operating in the private sphere can make claims on state violence²⁵—for instance, requesting public enforcement of private agreements, or public sanction of domestic violence. As I use them in the dissertation, the terms “public” and “private” must thus be understood as a description of a specific set of social effects that result from the ways in which sovereign violence is institutionalized and placed in relationship to (or in a mismatch with) the state’s form.

In times of normalcy, sovereign violence can be fragmented and hidden or remain in the foreground, constantly reminding subjects that their very survival lies at the sovereign’s whim and mercy. The relationships between law-constituting and law-constituted violence are dynamic and ever-evolving, such that law continues to adapt to changing realities. However, in moments of disaster or emergency, Schmitt argues, no legal norm can produce logical or satisfactory results (Schmitt 2005). At these moments, the sovereign must (re)exert sovereign power to suspend the law and determine how to end the emergency.

This general process of developing, modifying, and implementing law-constituting violence so as to live in a world of law-constituted violence is fundamental to contemporary understandings of a modern bureaucratic state.²⁶ Any theory of governance—outside of arbitrary and charismatic rule or a pure state of exception—assumes a mutually recognized and legible relationship between authorities and their subjects such that both parties understand how violence is institutionalized and how this relates to governing structures. This understanding is the

²⁵ Schmitt comments on this in his study of friends and enemies, an enemy defined as a public and political phenomenon (Schmitt 2008).

²⁶ For critical analyses of this approach that understand sovereignty as a dynamic concept and a socially constructed practice, see work by Hansen and Stepputat (2009); Cynthia Weber (1995); and Biersteker and Weber (1996).

foundation of popular theories of good governance and state-society relations, which conceive of the state-society contract as emerging from iterative acts of exchange (Tilly 1992). The ruler exerts power through a combination of patronage (material rewards and jobs) and repression (violence and threat thereof), and the subjects accord allegiance to whoever can give them the best deal.²⁷ The iterative process of contestation, negotiation, deal-making, deal-keeping or breaking, and the enforcement of subsequent rewards or punishments, within historically particular social and economic constraints, contributes to robust expectations that can be used to generate future deals. Popular theories dictate that the logic of these relationships—whether personalized rule or impersonal bureaucracy—determines the type of governing system that emerges (Boix 2007; Tilly 1992; Wintrobe 1990).

Thus, the division between public and private spheres is constructed, continually made and unmade through the dynamic relationship between the institutionalization of violence and governing institutions (also see Olsen 1983 and chapter 6). Where and how the line between public and private is drawn has significant implications for the distribution of power, responsibility, and accountability. When “public” and “private” are used consistently to refer to the same situations and activities, people, and places, the public/private boundary can become entrenched and even naturalized such that people view certain issues as intrinsically public or private. However, the division between public and private can always be reconstituted, both through the dynamic interactions between law-constituting and law-constituted violence, and in moments of exception when sovereign violence can wholly reconfigure these relationships.

Over time, expectations built on the iterative process of law constituting and law constituted violence, transform power-holders into warlords, patrons, “Big Men”, and governors;

²⁷ Hansen (2013) notes that the people with the most resources are typically already in charge, as they have the advantage of access to more money and more violence than most of their challengers.

subjects into tribesmen, clients, subjects—and maybe even citizens; and the messy ecosystem that surrounds them into a set of institutions, frequently (aspirationally) termed “state and society”. This logic underpins theories of “good enough” governance, which asks “what is there to build upon?” in terms of pre-existing (and often rather path-dependent) domestic governance institutions and relationships (Grindle 2011, S208).

Neopatrimonialism and state power in post-colonial states

Schmitt’s theory of sovereignty rests on an intrinsic relationship between violence and governing power. However, studies of post-colonial states note that sovereign violence defined as such does not reside conclusively with state institutions or actors. Pierre Englebert summarizes the observation:

Leaders of historically non-legitimate, incongruent, or mismatched states are indeed faced with a peculiar challenge and are limited in the options available to them to address it... From colonialism, they inherited the instruments of statehood but not the power that came with it in colonial days (Englebert 2000, 11).

Thus, state institutions possess an institutional form that requires an underlying organization of violence (usually a Weberian monopoly on legitimate use) that is simply not present within the post-colonial sub-Saharan African state. In theory, at the critical moment of decolonization, the new sovereign could have established a new order, matching the violence at his disposal with the governance arrangements at hand (i.e., by reconfiguring violence, institutions, territorial claims, or all of the above). Instead, violence and state form remain mismatched. Some argue that resultant sub-Saharan African states rely on indirect rule, such that organized violence remains in the

metropole, in the hands of an assemblage of powerful corporate interests, international institutions, and former colonial governments (Ferguson 2005; Mamdani 1996; Mbembe 2001). Others argue that state forms are more or less surface shell-games alongside evolving forms of local violence which are the real sites of governance (Lombard 2013; Mukhopadhyay 2014; Reno 1999).

A third group, where my work contributes, argue that this mismatch produces multiple alternative forms of authority that compete with state institutions, resulting in a fragmented and hybrid, multiple, and/or complex institutional environment. One possible explanation for this is that people continued to draw on (and at the same time manipulate) pre-existing ideas about the division between public and private spaces in the immediate post-colonial moment because they represented agreed upon modes of exchange, in which private exchange was based on reciprocity and public exchange was based on bureaucracy. Indeed, many argue that a combination of the advantage of incumbency, a kind of path dependency, and the resultant widespread opportunities for rent seeking have mired post-colonial states in the situation Englebert describes (Bayart 1993; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Jackson and Rosberg 1982).

In this line of thinking, many authors propose that African states are not *en route* to a rational-bureaucratic state form. Instead, neopatrimonial logics dominate: African elites infiltrate public institutions with logics of private exchange, including patron-client networks, nepotism, and forms of corruption. In the most extreme scenarios, this results in privatizing the state and reducing formal state institutions to empty shells (see, for example “strategies of tension” in Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999). More frequently, logics of private exchange and reciprocity co-exist with bureaucratic logics of the state, creating new opportunities for rent seeking amongst elites. Importantly, in neopatrimonialism, although there is no clear division between the public and private spheres, public and private logics are distinct and distinguishable from each other.

Indeed, elites can exploit this gap for personal profit. Chabal and Daloz refer to this as the “political instrumentalization of (dis)order”, where “(dis)order” refers to “weak institutionalization of political practices” (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 13–14). For Chabal and Daloz, disorder implies a hybrid governing logic that combines personalist logics with bureaucratic rationales.

In neopatrimonialism, representatives of the state and citizens are mutually imbricated in ways that challenge the Western ideal-type of the contractual obligation between “state” and “society”. However, neopatrimonialism nonetheless retains a specific logic, and a clear institutionalization of violence that allows for the mixing of public and private spheres. For example, when elites put state institutions to the service of developing personal constituencies, they employ logics such as patronage, nepotism, clientelism, regionalism, tribalism, or combinations thereof to strategically divide communities into winners and losers and rule with a minimum winning coalition. However, using a private logic means that claims must be made based on reciprocity, rather than through impersonal and rule-based mechanisms. Thus, by definition exchange is also heterogeneous and potentially arbitrary (Erdmann and Engel 2007). Such a system can only be legible from the inside, where citizens have personal knowledge of the strongmen who distribute resources in their own locale, and thus an understanding of the idiosyncratic “rules of the game”. This has led some to argue that even though such systems appear unpredictable and disorderly from the outside, from the inside they are functional and legible systems that rulers and the ruled mutually and voluntarily engage in and thus reproduce—indeed, that “Africa works” (Chabal and Daloz 1999).

However, despite the cautious optimism of authors like Chabal and Daloz, as well as more recent calls to “go with the grain” and support “good enough governance”, these accounts foreclose

the possibility that disorder and arbitrary violence are not just the means, but also the ends, of governing.

Indeed, I find that citizens do not experience state agents as partners in a series of increasingly predictable and voluntary exchanges—even if “partners” are generously defined as fundamentally particular, disproportionately powerful, and having heterodox preferences. Particularly with respect to the use of violence, “the state” can be *unpredictably* present and absent, at times intervening in matters and disputes to determine an outcome, at other times abjuring responsibility and refusing to enforce decisions. This points to an embedded—and I argue unsubstantiated—assumption in theories of state consolidation that institutionalization of violence is inextricably linked to the establishment of a *meaningful* and *stable* division between public and private. Unpredictable intervention is particularly salient in the security and justice sectors, which themselves are defined by use of violence, whether demonstrated through performative or materially violent actions or speech. The state’s arrhythmic assertions and withdrawals, backed by threat of force, continually redefine the state’s role; specifically, whether and when the state holds responsibility and authority to intervene.

In a scenario where citizens cannot discern a predictable pattern or regularity to how and when state actors claim or deny authority, they cannot establish shared expectations for state behavior. Instead, citizens are left to navigate a system of authorities whose roles and responsibilities are constantly shifting, and are thus difficult to predict. The absence of shared expectations means that when a state authority uses his or her power to redefine responsibility, there is no stable precedent upon which citizens can demand accountability. Thus, the state’s unpredictable and harsh interventions form a strategy that allows civilians to use violence to solve security and justice issues at a local level, while simultaneously preventing them from using their

access to violence to consolidate scalable alternatives to state power.²⁸ Citizens' claims on state actors are circumscribed, and at the same time, they are unable to produce alternative sources of authority that might reliably shield them from state intervention. In this view, hopes for the emergence of a state-society contract are aspirational at best. At worst, they are a red herring that directs attention toward citizens' use of state services and away from questions of legitimate claim-making or demands to be heard.

Of course, much of what occurs in Uganda's security and justice sectors resembles familiar logics of governance—patrimonialism, nepotism, kleptocracy, bureaucracy, and so on. However, these logics become unpredictable, destabilized with the knowledge that the state could redirect, subordinate, or override them at any moment. This is akin to theoretical propositions about zones of exception (Agamben 2005; Hagmann and Korf 2012); however, it differs in that the state *unpredictably* deploys exceptionality (justifying the use of arbitrary violence to govern a matter), making any situation potentially exceptional in the minds of citizens and destabilizing existing governing logics. This unpredictability is not a by-product of disorganization, ineptitude, poverty, or other shortcomings stereotypically characteristic of “fragile” states—it is an essential component of regime longevity, key to governing disparate and unruly populations—and it is, I argue, an important strategy to further explore to understand governance in today's post-colonial illiberal regimes.

²⁸ As noted by Bruce Baker, “The NRM government has never insisted that policing must be a state monopoly. Instead, it has sought security partners who will work *within the law and under its supervision*” (Baker 2005, 30 italics added). Yet, as I have noted elsewhere, security partners that fit this designation—as well as the meaning of “law” and “supervision”—are fluid, and at times, ambiguous. This has profound implications for the way Ugandan citizens experience day-to-day security, and asks us to question approaches that prize “hybrid” security arrangements, and “going with the grain” (Baker and Scheye 2007).

Table 2.1: Examples of modes of governance and institutionalization of violence

	De-institutionalized	←-----→	Institutionalized	
Private	Hobbesian chaos	Hybrid/fragile	Institutionalized arbitrariness	Patrimonial
				Neopatrimonial
Public				Weberian bureaucracy

Table 2.1 illustrates a few key modes of governance on a trajectory from de-institutionalized use of violence to institutionalized use of violence. The modes of governance can be thought of as dependent variables, which are arrived at through some combination of independent variables such as (but not limited to) geography, military technology, incentives for resource extraction, presence of markets, and investment in long-term prosperity. The mode of governance represents an efficient way of using violence given the values of and interactions among the various independent variables. In theory, this efficient way of using violence would then be an equilibrium or stable point, all else equal. This equilibrium would entail a given relationship between public and private—which would shift, to be sure, as and when the equilibrium shifts. Because the public/private division is established and maintained through regular use of violence, public and private can theoretically only be meaningful when violence is institutionalized (at the far right-hand side of the table). As depicted, institutionalized arbitrariness is a mode of governance in which use of violence is institutionalized, but the division between public and private is not. Instead, in addition to allowing for a melding of public and private logics, any matter can be made public or private at any moment in time. This fluidity—when enforced by threat of violence—serves to bolster impunity and undermine claim-making on public authorities, as elaborated throughout this dissertation.

As a counter-argument, consider the following possibility: the “unpredictability” I describe is actually some form of patrimonial system.²⁹ In such a scenario, abiding by rules of the system would result in predictable rewards, and *breaking* the rules of the system must also result in predictable costs. However, this is not the case—while the system looks similar to a neopatrimonial regime in the rules, it does not abide by this logic in the exception. For example, in northern Uganda, the police often fail to intervene in issues of security—indeed, youth security groups frequently make arrests within the village and take the suspect to the police post. At that time, as is often reported, exchanges take place—bribes are paid, favors called in, deals cut. However, at times, the police do intervene, arriving on the scene to arrest, detain, and bring criminal charges against community members, auxiliary forces, and the like. Citizens experience these interventions as arbitrary and unpredictable.

Importantly, this analysis suggests that to understand contemporary strategies of governance in post-colonial states, we must turn our attention to where violence resides and how it is institutionalized. Theory on vigilantes and security assemblages helps identify key areas for further inquiry.

Where violence resides: security assemblages and vigilantes

Although local security actors are typically framed as ephemeral local phenomena, it is helpful to examine their role in part of a complex network of security and justice providers that shape both local, national, and global security. To this end, the work of Rita Abrahamsen and Michael

²⁹ Williams (2016, 69) helpfully notes that neopatrimonialism combines elements of clientelism and patronage, the distinction being that clientelism is directed to individuals while patronage is directed to groups (frequently ethnic groups) (also see Erdmann and Engel 2007).

Williams is instructive. Abrahamsen and Williams theorize “security assemblages”: “new security structures and practices that are simultaneously public and private, global and local” (2010, 3). Their approach draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of capital to conceive of a “field of power” in which holders of capital—whether physical, cultural, or symbolic—struggle for power over the state. They write, “The question becomes not whether the state is gaining or losing sovereignty..., but how its place and relationship to other actors in a field of power is shifting and how, in the process state power itself is reconfigured” (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010, 9).³⁰ By destabilizing the categories of state, non-state, local, global, public, private, and territory simultaneously, security assemblages emphasize that community approaches to security both shape and are shaped by the state.

Seeing security as an assemblage draws attention to both horizontal and vertical networks of violence. In the case of Uganda, examining horizontal networks of security providers—including local councilors, police, and traditional authorities—reveals that local security groups function as part of a broader “assemblage” rather than filling a gap or displacing other security providers (see chapter 4 for findings in support of this hypothesis). Thus, local security groups complement other security providers—providing muscle for local councilors to enforce their edicts, or detaining suspects and delivering them to the police, who rarely travel outside of the town center to make arrests. A lens focused on vertical security networks draws attention to the NRM government’s broader security connections—in particular, the United States’ system of counter-terrorism and military trainings for the Ugandan state,³¹ which enhances the security sector

³⁰ While Abrahamsen and Williams focus their inquiry on private security (e.g., for profit enterprises) their work provides a useful analytic for this inquiry into civilian security engagement by problematizing the assumed teleology in which violence is gradually removed from the private sphere into the “public” or political sphere (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010, 7).

³¹ The United States gives about US\$ 170 million per year in military cooperation and assistance, and has trained more troops in Uganda in the past 10 years than any other country in sub-Saharan Africa aside from Burundi (McCormick 2016). As of November 2014, Uganda had nearly 25,000 US trained peacekeepers, and was a member of the African

as a channel for resources to the regime and a path of social mobility for Ugandans who join state security institutions (see chapter 10 on Crime Preventers, which elaborates the importance of the security sector as a means of resource distribution). Together, horizontal and vertical security networks allow for a more robust, proximate, and community-specific approach to security, and also create a formidable mechanism for resource distribution that is closely linked to state authority. In these ways, the security assemblage is an important element of regime survival strategies.

Gangs and vigilantes have a lot to tell us about the micro-dynamics of consolidating power and institutionalizing violence.³² Many authors argue that vigilantes and gangs emerge to fill an institutional vacuum, inserting themselves into judicial, economic, political and social strategies, influencing and being influenced by cultural norms and expectations. Indeed, a number of authors posit that gangs form both the theoretical and the historical basis for states (Olson 2000; Tilly 1992). The local nature of their activities can reveal a nuanced picture of struggles over access to violence and resources, in particular, which institutional forms—whether public, private, or hybrids—are available and effective. These forms of organized, non-state violence also represent a challenge to the state’s system of resource distribution, whether intrinsically (resource distribution should be done differently) or functionally (the state isn’t enforcing resource distribution satisfactorily). Thus, as these groups strive to consolidate power, they frequently must

Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership created by the U.S. in August 2014 to build rapid deployment capabilities; and the Africa Contingency Operations Training Assistance Program, established in 2004 to train and equip African peacekeepers (P. D. Williams 2015).

³² Although many other forms of localized violence exist, they are out of the scope of this study. For example, because rebel groups and insurgents directly attack the state, they tell us less about the ongoing negotiation between the center and periphery. Similarly, while bandits provide some useful insights about access to violence and even potentially as a potential challenge to existing social and economic orders, they frequently act as individual criminals. In the case that they are working as a syndicate, we can think of them as gangs for the purposes of this analysis.

contend with state actors, thereby also revealing both the key concerns and strategies dictating how state actors govern.

Vigilantes and gangs are often framed as “boundary” institutions, a term used to describe “the ambiguous, shadowy quality of institutions and individual motivations that populate the political landscape” (Pratten 2006). They often exist at the poorly- or un-governed “frontier” of the state, whether geographic (at the periphery or a “no go” area such as an urban slum), cultural³³, temporal³⁴, or a combination thereof (Abrahams 1998). While authors differ on how contested or complex the vacuum at the frontier is, in literature on vigilantes, it is identifiable “in state systems where official forces prove unable to satisfy local demands for law and order” (Abrahams 1998, 52). It is a contextual factor to which citizens respond in the form of vigilance to re-establish “civilized values of life, property, and law and order” (Brown 1975, 97).³⁵

This lens helps reveal a more nuanced and dynamic picture of both the institutional environment (challenging the “institutional vacuum” thesis) and the nature of these non-state actors working under the mantle of security to provide a range of other services, from basic security, law enforcement, legal judgment, and criminal punishment to taxation and provision of basic services (Pratten and Sen 2008). Participants in such groups are frequently equally and simultaneously community members and security providers, and indeed this is both a source of their effectiveness and a factor that can limit their power (Gopfert 2012). To consolidate power

³³ For example, as documented by Heald (1986), Abrahams (1987), Allen and Reid (2015) among others, citizens may hold cultural beliefs that witchcraft is a criminal offense that the state is unable to prosecute.

³⁴ Melbin (1978) describes night as a temporal frontier, which is becoming increasingly inhabited as humans use technological advances. For Melbin, nighttime, like geographic frontiers, is a space of both increased danger and increased cooperation. Both aspects apply to Gulu’s security groups, which patrol at night and wait until morning to judge people in the light. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

³⁵ Brown (1975) highlights how the “frontier elite” often helped define the mandate of vigilantes and sometimes worked directly with vigilantes to further personal interests. In the case of Uganda, we see that both local elites and their subordinates are subject to intervention by the state, while top-level elites decline to define the mandate of vigilantes, as vagueness allows elites to engage with—or alternately, to disown—vigilantes.

beyond the status of a community member, such organizations adopt symbols, rhetoric and institutional forms of public authority, for example, uniforms or ID cards, rules of procedure, or formal titles. However, vigilantism and gangs are clearly not a replacement for liberal governance: Caughey (1960) writes, “vigilantism picks on the weak, the lowly, the unpopular, the people least able to resist or retaliate” (cited in Little and Sheffield 1983, 801); others note that these groups can shift dynamically between different types of activities, at times providing security, at other times preying on their own communities (Rodgers 2008). Such organizations must negotiate their relationship with state actors, who may feel that their mere existence challenges state authority (Abrahams 1987, 1998; Grätz and Kirsch 2010). Some groups endure because they provide security, a service the state would otherwise be obliged to provide (Brown 1975; Rodgers 2008); others because they carry out unsavoury tasks that other power-brokers sanction (Abrahams 1987; Fourchard 2008); others because they maintain a mutually beneficial relationship with the state (Shah 2008; Debos 2011); still others because their access to violence rivals state authorities (Goldstein 2003; Harnischfeger 2003); or because they effectively monopolize the role of middleman or broker (Blok 1975).

Scholars of vigilantes worldwide have noted aspects of unpredictability or indeterminacy around vigilante groups, particularly characterizing their relationship with the state. These authors provide various explanations for such inconsistencies. For example, Suzette Heald (2006) examines how Tanzania’s vigilantes were simultaneously approved and penalized due to divergent interests of different branches of the government. This resulted in contradictory treatment of vigilantes by different state authorities. Other authors discuss contexts in which state security agents (police or military) play multiple roles (private security, vigilante activities, etc.), such that at times the actions of an individual carry the authority of the state and at other times, they may

not (Debos 2011; Gopfert 2012). The works of these authors emphasize that uncertainty plays a key role in determining how vigilante groups interact with the community, and whether they constitute constructive or corrosive forces in society (Meagher 2012). Despite these insightful observations, an exploration of the role of uncertainty has yet to be fully theorized as a strategy of sub-national governance.

Factors necessary for institutionalized arbitrariness

We are accustomed to see uncertainty as an aberration—as something that is not meant to be there. Inconsistencies are just that—snags in the institutional fabric, to be tugged smooth. For things to remain uncertain, they must refuse to follow a pattern. Uncertainty only matters if its ramifications cannot be easily corrected—for example, because there is a supervening force that might unpredictably quash an individual's efforts to exert control. Thus, there is a direct link between the importance of uncertainty and the proximity of threat of violent force—or concomitantly, promise of reward.

Deductively, four factors are necessary for institutionalized arbitrariness: a non-institutionalized public/private division; the perception of sovereign violence; the perception that the state might be present; and a non-hierarchical and fragmented security sector. Each of these factors is a continuous variable. However, we can think of them as binary, in the sense that there is a minimum level at which they must each be present for institutionalized arbitrariness to function.

Perception of sovereign violence: The first key factor enabling institutionalized arbitrariness is the perception that the central government has sovereign violence, manifest both in civilian memories of the use of violence and the current and ongoing actions of state agencies. As discussed, for Schmitt (2005), sovereign violence refers to the state's capacity to suspend the law and use extra-legal violence to define states of exception. This is done with impunity and a will to govern. Where for Schmitt, sovereign violence is characterized by the power to define the exception, here I focus on the ability to *continually redefine* the exception, such that sovereign violence does not simply underpin notions of public and private, but rather continually redraws them. Thus, institutionalized arbitrariness rests on citizens' beliefs that any moment can potentially be made exceptional at any time. This is essential: the state's unpredictable interventions makes threats meaningful; memories of the use of violence make society cognizant of this.

Fluid public/private division: For institutionalized arbitrariness to function, it is essential that citizens' shared expectations about the boundary between public (where the state has the right and obligation to intervene) and private (where it does not) are weak enough that changing the boundary does not result in collective action or entrenched resistance. Thus, the ruling regime continually reproduces the division between public and private strategically, backing redefinitions with (threat of) force. As a result, the regime retains its ability to manipulate public and private to enforce its right to intervene or not. However, because the spheres are wholly inconsistent, citizens cannot use them to make claims on the ruling regime. The division between public and private is thus fragile; however, the spheres retain their meaning such that at any time the regime can determine that a person, place, or event falls into the state's public sphere—or concomitantly,

exclude a person, place, or event and relegate them to the private sphere from whence they cannot make claims on the state.

Potential presence of the state: For institutionalized arbitrariness to function, it is necessary that citizens believe the state *could* be present at any moment. Otherwise, it would be possible to establish alternative sources of authority that could remain unchallenged by the central state. One way potential state presence can be achieved is through the perception or reality of state surveillance.

Non-hierarchical and fragmented governance institutions: Fragmented governance actors with ill-defined mandates are essential for institutionalized arbitrariness. The existence of multiple and competing providers for any given service (security, justice, administration) mean that while each provider may employ a consistent logic, their combined efforts lead to unpredictable outcomes. This is particularly true given that actors have ill-defined mandates, allowing them to both claim and deny authority unpredictably.

Applying institutionalized arbitrariness to northern Uganda

Numerous authors have examined the Ugandan state as an example of a country where services and infrastructure are relatively underdeveloped, and yet, the ruling regime has endured since 1986. The only sign that its end may be nearing is the mortality of its leader, the septuagenarian President Museveni, who rounded out his thirtieth year in office in 2016. In its early years, the NRM government was characterized as revolutionary—today, it is more frequently described as

patrimonial, militarized, and semi-authoritarian. Decades of research on the Ugandan state have produced theories that could explain the presence of multiple, diverse, and incoherent security actors, as well as the unpredictability that accompanies them, under this apparently stable regime. As discussed in the introduction, these studies, conducted in different areas of the country and in reference to various actors and conflicts, describe the Ugandan state as anywhere from pathologically weak (Reinikka and Svensson 2005) and wilfully absent (Jones 2009) to semi-authoritarian (Goodfellow 2014) and militarized (Kagoro 2015) (see Table 2.2). These theories understand the state as either consolidated or unconsolidated; and centralized or decentralized.

Table 2.2: Different arguments about modes of governance and institutionalization of violence in Uganda

	De-institutionalized	←-----→	Institutionalized	
Private	Pathologically weak (Reinikka and Svensson 2005) Willfully absent (Jones 2009)	Hybrid/fragile (Tripp 2010)	Institutionalized arbitrariness (Tapscott 2017)	Patronage state (Freeland 2015)
				Neopatrimonialism (Tangri and Mwenda 2003)
Public	Military autocracy (Kagoro 2015)			

Of course, to reject these theories because none perfectly describes the Ugandan state would be foolish—theory is never a perfect descriptor of reality. Indeed, in isolation, each theory accurately describes some aspects of the Ugandan state. Other authors have tried to address apparent inconsistencies by describing the Ugandan state as “hybrid” (Tripp 2010) or “informal” (Khisa 2013). However, these complex, or multi-part, descriptors tell us little about how the various logics are used together, and nothing about the dynamics of how the nature of these logics changes when

they are combined. The theory of institutionalized arbitrariness addresses both these concerns, explaining how the state might appear to be absent (pathologically weak or willfully absent) *and* present (neopatrimonial); public (military state) *and* private (patron-based), while retaining the meaning of these distinct categories.

All four factors necessary for institutionalized arbitrariness are present in the context of northern Uganda:

Perception of sovereign violence: It is generally accepted that the NRM state is a militarized semi-authoritarian regime that has increasingly militarized government institutions and society to strengthen its power (Branch 2009; Freeland 2015; Brett 1995; Mudoola 1991; Goodfellow 2014). Kagoro (2015, 87) writes that “the military and the ruling party, the NRM, function as one” and goes on to note that under President Museveni, the Uganda Police Force has been increasingly militarized to the extent that the police force and the military seem functionally fused. Militarization of the Ugandan state is apparent in other ways: for example, the Ugandan government provides free military training to civilians (see chapter 5 on sovereign violence and chapter 10 on Crime Preventers). These programs instill military skills and values in recruits. Graduates are auxiliary forces of the state’s security apparatuses, and can be called up to support the government at any time.

For Gulu’s population, state violence is proximate and real—today’s young adults grew up during the conflict between rebel groups—primarily the LRA—and the Government of Uganda, which took place from 1986 through 2006, and witnessed extreme acts of violence by government soldiers and rebels (Branch 2011). Moreover, many Acholis believe the conflict was created by, and for the benefit of, the NRM regime, which was able to leverage the conflict to increase donor

support and consolidate power in the rest of the country while crippling the north. Numerous authors have detailed the extreme social, economic, political, and cultural destruction wrought by two decades of violent conflict in northern Uganda (e.g., Finnström 2008; Branch 2011; Dolan 2009, also see chapter 3). One district level politician reflected on how this history has infiltrated the imaginations of the population, focusing on how people understood the politics of the 2016 election season:

[The break-up of The Democratic Alliance³⁶ is] being engineered by the NRM. So Museveni in his own ways of doing things, the time he has been around, the war he fought in this country and so on... he has infiltrated the minds of the people here such that you cannot start a system which will avoid him completely for now (District level politician, 17 September 2015).

Even elites feel that the NRM government holds all the power. One Deputy Resident District Commissioner who had previously been a member of the opposition and participated in the 2011 walk to work protests reflected on his decision to join the NRM:

I am new to the NRM... I was tortured in the walk to work—they broke my hands, and I stood alone in court like a chicken thief. No one from the opposition came to see me. I was 33 with four daughters—and I was losing because of being an orphan who has no godfather to support me.... I felt then, why should I continue being in the opposition? We are subjugated. Where is the power? It is in the government (Deputy RDC, 4 November 2014).

Additionally, the current “post-conflict” status of the north allows the government to justify intervention as necessary to keep the peace. The state’s militarization, institutionalization of violence, and history of violent intervention against civilians, reinforces the image of the state as

³⁶ The Democratic Alliance was created in anticipation of the 2016 elections with the goal of uniting opposition parties against the NRM to improve chances of winning elected office, but particularly the presidency.

a force that, while generally absent, has the potential to intervene with overwhelming force to define whether, when, how, and for whom law will apply. Thus, there is a commonly held perception that the regime has the capacity to create extra-legal spaces, which it can either pacify through intervention or ignore.

Fluid public/private division: In northern Uganda, the notions of “public” and “private” are relatively fluid and undergoing continual recreation. However, Acholis do express certain ideas about jurisdiction, responsibility, and power, which relate to concepts of public and private spheres. In northern Uganda, Holly Porter writes about how sexual crimes are typically addressed *gang gang* or “down home,” by relatives like respected elders or kinship-based authorities (Porter 2015, 309–34). Similarly, Okot p’Bitek writes about another popular saying, *agoro pe camo kato kulu* (“termites do not cross a stream to feed on the other side”) meaning “each person, whatever his status, has a jurisdiction beyond which his powers become ineffective” (p’Bitek 1985, 1; Porter 2013, 280). These sayings encompass a notion of “private”—a jurisdiction that cannot be governed by another—although they do not explicitly incorporate the term.

Despite references to a boundary between public and private spheres, these concepts and the distinction between them remains fluid. Colonialism and post-colonialism, and conflict and post-conflict have offered opportunities to (re)shape the public and private spheres. The violence wrought on northerners during the Amin-regime and the GoU-LRA conflict, as well as earlier colonial administration and the creation of “administrative chiefs” to help the British govern the north took their toll on cultural and traditional institutions³⁷ as well as familial and community

³⁷ Many respondents lamented that specific traditions, such as music, dances, and the *wang’o*—a gathering during which elders would share stories and advice with youngers—were no longer practiced, in their mind, because of the war.

cohesion (Branch 2011; Finnström 2008; Mamdani 1996). During the conflict in particular, the nearly universal displacement of Acholis into euphemistically-named “protected” camps, loss of material assets, and reconfigurations of social orders may be at least partially responsible for the current fluidity of public and private spheres.³⁸ For example, the authority of clans, which are frequently thought of as a traditional authority with autonomy to make decisions for clan members independently from the state, have lost power over recent decades in Acholi sub-region:

Modernity (cash economies, industrialization, Western education) have eroded the role of traditional leaders, which was already weak, and the succession of armed conflicts speeded the pace. Youngsters, especially through increased mobility, no longer respect the authority of chiefs, nor even that of a family head. In a certain sense, the generational conflict has been stoked by the overall atmosphere of violence (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 11).

However, traditional authorities have attempted to re-constitute their political power and authority in recent years, with the establishment of the *Ker kal Kwaro Acholi*, “a traditional cultural institution...[and] an ambiguous entity that functions as a new power base in the political landscape of Acholiland” (Paine 2014, summary).³⁹ Others have elaborated how “traditional” practices have been produced in pursuit of political ends that benefit the NRM state and international interests as a part of post-conflict reconstruction interventions (Allen 2010; Branch 2014; Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). The weakening and fracturing of pre-existing systems of authority and notions of public and private in northern Uganda meant that few elites remained in place to insist on (re)establishing a public/private division that could work to their benefit (see the history chapter for a fuller treatment of how the conflict weakened social institutions).

³⁸ Although the government called these camps “protected”, many scholars dispute this, noting the severe conditions in the camps. See chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion.

³⁹ Finnström notes that “chiefly offices are titular only, without any administrative, legislative, or executive powers” (2008, 45). However, they are “public” in the sense that they participate in the political landscape of northern Uganda.

The fluidity of the public/private division facilitates jurisdictional ambiguity—a lack of clarity about which authorities and institutions are responsible for any given infraction. For example, it is not unusual for a police officer to send a complainant home, explaining that the matter at hand would be better handled by a local authority or within the family. Such cases range from petty theft through to rape and murder. Another police officer might refer the complainant to a traditional leader, still another to his boss, the Officer in Charge. Jurisdictional uncertainty destabilizes and fragments civilian claims on the state. If those who have superior access to material and symbolic power can continually redefine their responsibilities and use their access to violence and resources to enforce that assertion, there is very little the average citizen can do to stop them. This extends to social elites as well as more powerful actors in the political arena, for example those who are in opposition or NRM politicians who fall out of favor with the regime (also see chapter 9). Moreover, if assertions and denials of authority are irregular, citizens cannot easily organize around a given set of expectations. This precludes the threat of organized resistance.

Potential presence of the state: The central government is further strengthened through its potential presence, bolstered by the common perception of an omnipresent security apparatus, and its legacy as a no-party state. Respondents describe a sprawling security apparatus, with secret operatives “deep down” in the villages, working as the eyes and ears of the state, reporting directly to the President (Lanken Verma 2012, 87; Zeller 2013, 210). Still others refer to the LC structure as state informants (Jones 2009, 65, 85; also see Branch 2011, 69; Finnström 2008, 94–97; Mamdani 1995). This perception is reinforced by the history of LCs as organizations to “secure efficient civilian support” of the NRA during the NRM’s bush war (Tidemand 1994, 139). The fears of an

extensive spy network may be warranted: in September 2015, Privacy International published a series of documents confirming that the government purchased an intrusion malware in 2011 to facilitate spying on opposition politicians, media, and establishment insiders in hotels, key government institutions, people's homes, and other meeting spaces with the explicit goal of blackmailing targets (Privacy International 2015). Several politicians reported instances when they were followed and arrested; journalists described anonymous phone calls threatening them for covering certain stories, despite publishing without a by-line.

Uganda's legacy as a no-party state has contributed to a perception among civilians that everyone is a part of the state. One LC councillor elaborated, highlighting his perception that the Ugandan state is locally consolidated,

Nowadays we are all part and parcel of government... whether central or local government. Whenever there is something going on wrong, we at the grass root leadership try our best to report to the responsible authority [so they can] respond and rescue the situation. It has become easier [now] that we do not have to move very long distance to report cases of crime since there nearby police post. The state has consolidated its authority up to the grass roots (LCI Chairman, Gulu District, 5 March 2015).

There is circumstantial evidence that LCs function at the will of the central government: elections for the local council system last occurred in 2001, when the no-party system was still in effect, and have been subsequently delayed each election cycle, nominally due to lack of resources to hold elections.⁴⁰ More cynical respondents noted that the cessation of local elections occurred just before official multiparty elections began, such that no new membership has been elected under a multi-party system. Moreover, "political interference in council affairs by RDCs (district-level

⁴⁰ In 2015, the NRM held primary elections for the LCI position. No other political parties held primaries, and the election was continually delayed due to lack of funds.

presidential appointees) across the country is common,” including unilateral decisions to replace ineffective council members in lieu of local elections (Lambright 2011, 26).⁴¹ Museveni himself has made many comments describing Ugandans as either a part of the NRM government or traitors. Indeed, members of the opposition have frequently been subject to tear gassing, arrests, detention, and verbal threats, all the more so around election times (Perrot 2014). The perception that the state is potentially always present contributes to feeling among citizens that the state’s actions (and non-actions) are intentional.

Non-hierarchical and fragmented governance institutions (security sector): Uganda’s security and justice sectors have long been fragmented, all the more so under Museveni’s leadership. Moses Khisa (2013) notes the many parallel security agencies—by his count, fourteen different security agencies and thirteen discrete auxiliary forces. These do not include the recently established Police Field Force, an elite unit within the police force intended to “enhance the overall defence capabilities of Uganda” (The Statehouse of Uganda 2014) or the Crime Preventers, a community policing initiative a “Police Reserve Force” (The Statehouse of Uganda 2016). Despite the numerous names of security agencies and auxiliary forces, in practice they have similar roles and responsibilities, and their personnel are frequently reshuffled. Many have commented that it is impossible to distinguish among various security actors. One local politician who worked closely with the community policing program in Gulu explained,

The government has brought all these [auxiliary forces] to confuse the community. Sometimes these people [Crime Preventers, police, etc.] work in parallel. You don’t understand who is who (Local politician, Gulu Town, 16 September 2015).

⁴¹ This echoes how the precursor to the LCs—the RCs—were aggressively stacked with pro-NRM members, such that in 1987, one critic declared that RCs “are almost entirely organs of the NRM’s/state’s local expression and not of the people” (Branch 2011, 69).

Under the NRM regime, Uganda's administration has been increasingly fragmented through a process of decentralization. Since 1986, when Museveni took power, the number of districts in Uganda has tripled from 33 to 111 in 2016. Redistricting has been an important tool to strengthen the central state's patronage system, allowing distribution of newly created government jobs. It has also allowed fragmentation of historical units of political organization (such as the Toro Kingdom and the Acholi people) (E. Green 2008b). It has also divided potential opposition to the NRM regime by bolstering ethnic divisions and local conflict, with smaller ethnic groups requesting and in some cases receiving their own districts. Additionally, bottlenecking of resources at the district level has increased competition over those positions (E. Green 2008b).

Moreover, the hierarchy among various security and administrative systems is unclear. Instead, these public authorities lack clearly defined mandates, as they are all subject to the constantly shifting public/private divide. Thus, they must compete among each other for limited resources, striving to define their role and build legitimacy with the community, while constantly facing the active possibility that the central state will intervene in their nascent zone of authority.

Institutionalized arbitrariness is extremely effective to preclude the establishment of shared goals and expectations, thereby preventing opposition and civilian organization. It similarly limits the costs of the government, which does not have to expend resources necessary for direct rule (for example, through military occupation), nor cede power as in indirect rule (for example, to subnational authorities).

Counter arguments

There are several alternative explanations for what I have just described as institutionalized arbitrariness. These fall into three related but distinct categories: corruption, illegibility, and happenstance. Although elements of each counter-argument are present, I argue that they are marginal to the central phenomenon of institutionalized arbitrariness. Additionally, insofar as they do occur, they are compatible with—and even contribute to—a strategy of arbitrary governance.

It's just corruption: Corruption is a logical explanation for inconsistencies and apparent unpredictability of state intervention. The Ugandan Police Force is known for corruption—Transparency International ranked it as the “most bribery prone institution” in East Africa two years running, with almost 50% of respondents reporting paying a bribe during interactions with the police, and 55% reporting that the bribe was necessary to receive services (Transparency International 2014). In my research, respondents young and old, male and female, educated and lay agreed that one could not go to the police and leave without paying for it. Additionally, local norms encourage facilitating security and justice actors with a small payment (often called “motivation”) for using (or colloquially, “wasting”) their time with a given matter. This argument can also extend to include other types of self-interested behavior. For example, people acting to strengthen their own power base might not follow a predictable set of rules—instead, they assess each situation and claim or deny their authority strategically simply out of self-interest.

Surely, both corruption specifically, and self-interested parties more broadly, contribute to unpredictability in the governance system. However, this counter-argument should not detract from the overall argument for two reasons. First, corruption focuses critique on individual behavior, thereby distracting from the overall effect of unpredictability in the security and justice

sectors and precluding an interpretation of arbitrary state interventions as a systemic exercise of power. Interpreting arbitrary interventions as individualized acts masks systemic intent, thereby benefiting the central state. Whether corruption plays a role in citizens' experiences of arbitrary intervention or not, it does not change the fact that countless discrete and seemingly random interventions produce a continually shifting boundary that functions to destabilize and fragment the establishment of alternative sources of authority.

Second, the central government has shown its capacity to crack down on corruption, instituting several reforms including an ombudsman (the Inspector General of Government) in 1988, creation of an anti-corruption department, and a "zero tolerance on corruption" policy in 2006. William Muhumuza (2016) argues that the NRM became less committed to fighting corruption when the country became multi-party, and thus more reliant on corruption to build support. Moreover, he notes that "corruption tends to be institutionalized and used as a tool to consolidate and retain political power" (2016, 65), thereby suggesting that we must think about corruption systemically.⁴² It is reasonable to conclude that the ruling regime tolerates a certain level of corruption in certain types of interactions. It follows that it is tolerated because it serves the interests of the ruling regime.

It's just illegible: As discussed, many authors propose that what looks like chaos actually has an underlying order that is simply unfamiliar and illegible to western academics, who too often

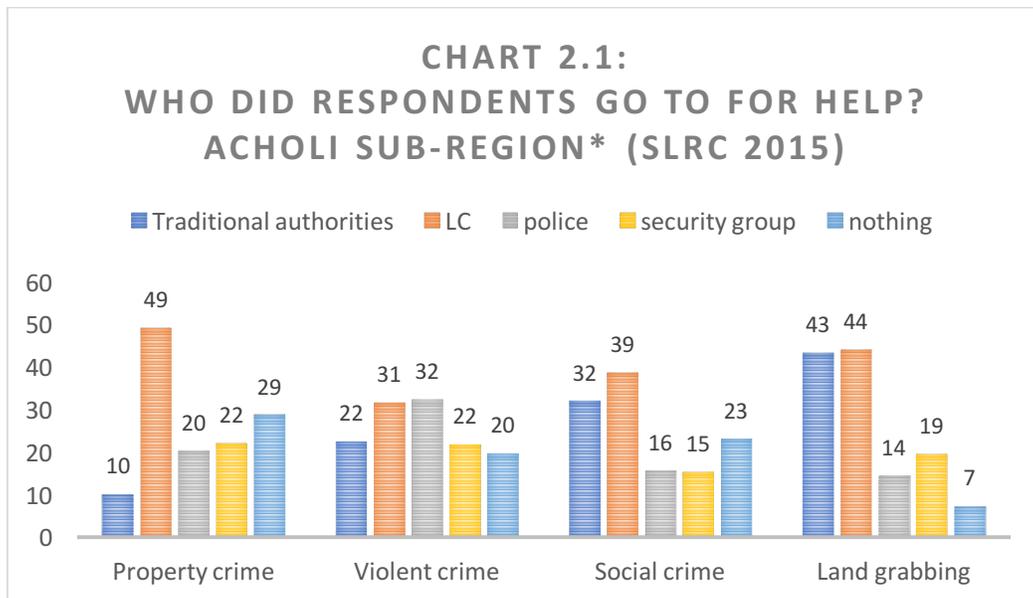
⁴² Muhumuza further notes that one way the government has undermined the efficiency of anti-corruption measures is through "the duplication of mandates between anti-corruption institutions...For example, the IG, the CIID and the DPP have all the same roles to investigate and prosecute corrupt public officials. Similarly the role of the District PAC is duplicated and watered down by the existence of the Parliamentary LGPAC, which has the same functions as that of the District PAC...[They] take actions which are sometimes contradictory and/or conflicting. This creates confusion, especially where the affected person is cleared by the District PAC but queried by the Parliamentary LGPAC. Such duplications waste resources and breed institutional conflict as regards the relationship and boundary of the mandates of the two committees" (2016, 70). In sum, as in the security sector, the government uses fragmentation and non-hierarchical arrangements to produce uncertainty that itself has a strategic end.

determine foreign governing orders as “deviant” or “failed.” They suggest that instead, there is a logic at play that accounts for what I view as unpredictability—the problem is that the underlying logic is too complicated or hidden for an outsider to discern. A significant literature draws attention to the overwhelmingly complex nature of local governance in particular highlighting institutional plurality (Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan 2001; Merry 1988), hybridity (Kyed 2014; Lombard 2013), multiplicity (Goodfellow and Lindemann 2013; Hesselbein, Golooba-Mutebi, and Putzel 2006), and in political science, a growing focus on informal institutions (Bratton 2007; Helmke and Levitsky 2004). These literatures examine how formal state institutions and pre-colonial, “customary” institutions coexist, share authority and capacity, and mutually adapt and transform to result in governance arrangements that are unfamiliar to western eyes. Findings consciously focus on the blurring of the public and private spheres. This literature has very rightly concluded that the dichotomous categorization of state versus non-state or other customary orders is a far cry from the complex reality on the ground (Kyed 2014, 426).

To address the reality of institutional complexity, these authors prescribe paying more attention to the diverse forms that authority takes in practice. Some opt to use the terminology of “public authority” to describe those who dominate in spaces that code neither as purely public nor purely private in a western sense. In northern Uganda, such an approach would draw our attention to familial and traditional structures, like kinship networks and clans, religious authorities, neighbors, heads of households, and NGOs, in addition to formal state institutions like police, courts, and local councilors. These authorities are each important in their own right.

For the sake of argument, I consider how clan structures might inform our understanding of governing authority in northern Uganda. Clans undeniably play an important role in providing justice outside the formal state structure. In Acholi sub-region, citizens frequent clan authorities

more than other authorities for issues related to land, witchcraft, and poisoning (SLRC 2015 data, specific to Acholi sub-region). Secondary data and my qualitative findings show that Acholis also turn to clan elders for issues associated with lineage and land (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin 2014). However, for all crimes experienced between 2013 and 2015, except for witchcraft and poisoning, more respondents in the SLRC survey reported going to the LCI than to clan authorities (SLRC 2015, see Chart 2.1).



* The chart categorizes theft, burglary, and theft of livestock as property crimes; sexual assault, physical assault, abduction, murder, and serious harm to a child as violent crimes; verbal threats, witchcraft and poisoning as social crimes; and leaves land grabbing as its own category to illustrate how important traditional authorities are in managing land claims as compared with other claims. Chapter 4 provides a more in-depth analysis of the SLRC data as well as these categorizations.

Clans or lineages were historically the foundations of socio-political order of Acholi’s patrilineal and exogamous society (Atkinson 2010). Julian Hopwood describes clans in Acholi as lineages that are “fluid and complex... [a] notion [that] overlapped with, but was not identical to that of a village (*gang*), a physical, geographical entity” (Hopwood 2015, 392–93). Given the spatial nature

of clans and their rootedness to specific geographic territories, the war and massive displacement took a toll on clan authority. Erin Baines and Lara Rosenoff Gauvin write that the war eroded “the extended lineage’s moral and physical authority” and resulted in new social orders that did not rely on clan authority (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin 2014, 289). Rules around courtship became lax; reliance on food aid from NGOs and not on the land “lessened people’s loyalty to, respect for, and compliance with extended lineage structures” (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin 2014, 289).

The vast majority of land in northern Uganda is held under customary tenure—clans allocate land within a family including those related by birth, marriage, or another form of acceptance into the family (Doss, Meitzen-Dick, and Bomuhangi 2013). Thus, as Acholis returned to their land after the war, clan structures have begun to reassert social control over access to land, and also slowly over courtship and related rituals (Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin 2014, 290). Nonetheless, there is still a long way to go: as Hopwood notes “today [clan inclusion or exclusion is] often deeply unclear to younger clan members and outsiders” (Hopwood 2015, 393). Moreover, while clans retain importance particularly around issues of land and lineage (marriage, separation, and inter-household problems) and can have authority in the absence of state intervention, they have little recourse against the ruling regime should interests collide (see chapter 9 for an example of how the regime has intervened to claim land in Adjumani District, sidelining traditional claims to land). Additionally, as shown in Chart 2.1, respondents go to local councilors as or more often than they go to traditional authorities (including clan elders) for all categories of claims. The chart illustrates the fragmented governance environment in northern Uganda, and shows that although clan authorities are important, as of 2015, they did not have consolidated authority over any type of claim—including land claims. Thus, while clans are important in Acholi, they are one of many competing and fragmented authorities as they have been since colonial intervention.

This, of course, does not disprove the existence of an underlying order to governance. Indeed, many who use the frameworks of hybridity, multiplicity and complexity contend that there is an underlying order to the functioning of governance—that the assemblage of these actors results in authorities that cannot be categorized as state or non-state, and yet who function as governors asserting their authority over a given jurisdiction, whether defined by subject matter and/or polity. For example, Louisa Lombard writes about roadblock workers in the Central African Republic (CAR). The roadblock workers invoke the all-powerful state to establish the authority to “fine” travelers, violently asserting their authority over even functionaries from the Ministry of Justice (Lombard 2013). Similarly, Dipali Mukhopadhyay writes about warlord governors in Afghanistan, who engage in negotiations with the center to solidify their position ruling the periphery (Mukhopadhyay 2014). Will Reno examines warfare in independent Africa, arguing that rebels fighting for control of the state compensated for their relative weakness in part by gaining local acceptance and “out-governing” the state (Reno 2011, 2). In these examples, violence is fragmented such that hybrid authorities can exercise control over a given territory with relative autonomy and scalability. However, as the studies by Lombard, Mukhopadhyay and Reno illustrate, it is impossible to understand the nature of complex institutional arrangements without examining how violence underpins governing authority.

In her study on vigilantes and the police in Mozambique, Helene Kyed notes that “[b]y focusing too intensely on the intersections and diffusion of power, one can easily lose sight of the simultaneous enacting of divisions, hierarchies and claims to superior authority in which violence often plays a significant role” (Kyed 2014, 426). She observes that in Mozambique, police officers drew on assistance from traditional authorities, but “also set themselves apart as superior state representatives, at times by violently punishing the chiefs who competed with them” (Kyed 2014,

439). The Ugandan state, as illustrated throughout this manuscript, has successfully cultivated the perception that it can deploy sovereign violence, thereby illustrating a more extreme version of Kyed's argument. Thus, while authorities in northern Uganda may be able to exercise their power over a given jurisdiction in a theoretical security or governance vacuum, they cannot do so reliably given that the state retains sovereign authority. Therefore, while still recognizing the importance of a multitude of actors for determining local security and justice outcomes, I focus my inquiry on the governing authority of the Ugandan state.

It is important to make two additional rebuttals to the critique of an order hidden in complexity. The first is a limitation on the claims I am making: I am not suggesting the absence of any governing logic. Rather, I argue that the main governing logic employed by the Ugandan state relies on unpredictable and arbitrary state intervention. This strategy of governance can and does incorporate other modes of governance and other governance actors, including, but not limited to, neopatrimonialism on the one hand and clan authorities on the other. However, because of arbitrary intervention, these governing logics lose their ability to catalyze a predictable relationship between rulers and the ruled.

The second is a clarification of the claims I am making: I am arguing that the Ugandan government has deliberately undermined alternative governing institutions and authorities, as much as possible making them unviable and unscalable. Thus, they exist, but in fragmented and weak forms. I develop this argument in chapter 9, where I argue that the regime has done so by using seemingly arbitrary intervention, backed by (threat of) violence, in combination with the political machinery it has built on that very violence.

As further evidence that citizens indeed find the governing environment illegible, I turn to my qualitative findings. Many ordinary civilians purported in interviews that they have difficulty

navigating the state's governing system. Common refrains among my respondents included "government things have to be complicated" or "with government policy, nothing should be straight forward." One NRM district level politician explained that the NRM had infiltrated opposition parties: "If you get three [members of an opposition party], one is NRM. He's just confusing them" (District level politician, 17 September 2015). Another NRM political operative reflecting on the Crime Preventer program described it as "confused." One Crime Preventer further described a training held by the Uganda Police in which he and other Crime Preventers were instructed to confuse voters on election day:

When someone has come [to the polling station] and maybe you don't get his name, send him to another polling station—[tell him] 'you first go and check there in a good manner, don't be rude. Maybe your name is not here, because there is some mistake from the Headquarter. For us, we don't know. We are just guarding.' That one is going to make a lot of confusion. People will be very many. You will be confused. They are going to stop [voting] at 4pm exactly. They will confuse you till four. And we [Crime Preventers] will say 'sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry' (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 9 February 2016).

If, as many have suggested, a logic of neopatrimonialism truly determined interactions, confusion should not be so commonly experienced. Thus, these examples, and others which will be elaborated throughout this manuscript, suggest that uncertainty and confusion are fundamental to citizen experiences of the NRM state. Alternative logics (such as neopatrimonialism) may still determine individual experiences or even dictate most interactions with a given authority—however, the nature of neopatrimonialism is fundamentally altered given that it can be overturned unexpectedly at any time.

It's just happenstance: This critique questions the intentionality of the observed system, suggesting that while citizens may experience the state as arbitrary and unpredictable, it is at most an institutional effect rather than an intentional mode of governance. Indeed, intention is difficult to determine. However, it is helpful to note that Ugandans themselves adamantly expressed their opinions that such actions were intentional on the part of the ruling regime. Many respondents argued that the highest levels of state authority produce ambiguity for the purposes of controlling the population without taking on responsibility for their actions or welfare. One NRM politician explained:

I think all these [policies and interventions] are intentional—the government has political interest over these people here. But the extent to which this country is handling the issue of security, it makes everybody feel...[that the] government understands what it's doing. Museveni has convinced people that he's still in charge of security and he understands it all (District-level politician, Gulu District, 17 September 2015).

Elites in Gulu, including international NGO workers and lawyers, concurred that vagaries in policy and enforcement were intentional. A female lawyer working at an internationally-funded human rights organization explained:

Nothing happens without the permission and approval of the government. The state does not do anything without planning, whether the resources are there or not...If the state can make IDs for everyone above 16, why can't they make IDs for Crime Preventers? Nothing is an act of God. [The government] sits down and plans everything (Female lawyer, Gulu District, 21 September 2015).

Respondents from various levels of the government, both in the ruling party and in opposition, suggest that the highest levels of government have intentionally developed a flexible system that allows the government to justify select and unpredictable presence.

Conclusion

This project is an inductive theory building exercise, and as such, it does not test the proposed theory. Nonetheless, this theory is a contribution to existing literature in that it describes a relationship among the “hybrid” aspects of governance, and also shows how disorder can function as an efficient mode of governance. Thus, the NRM state is in neither centralized nor decentralized, and rules neither directly nor indirectly—instead, it has maintained control of the peripheral areas of the country primarily by injecting layers of uncertainty into civilian interactions with state authorities. This allows the state to legitimate inconsistent behavior, specifically with regards to its (non-)intervention. At times the state intervenes, for example to determine the outcome of a disagreement; at other times, it declines to do so, for example, refusing to use its power to enforce an edict.

This theory helps to explain observations made by a host of academics and practitioners of Uganda, who have described the Ugandan state as using “arbitrariness and unpredictability” to restrict media workers (Tripp 2004, 12); as striking a “delicate balance between formal and informal” by fragmenting “political power at the centre...[,] ceding [...power] to unviable local units, [and] the creation of occasional fear and insecurity” (Khisa 221); as akin to “the dry season rains—something occasional and potentially destructive” (Jones 2009, 3); as creating “seemingly deliberate confusion” around civil militias (Janmyr 212); as “produc[ing] ‘security’ and ‘insecurity’ simultaneously in a constant aporetic relationship” and as having “ambiguity or

double-faced meaning of things” (Lanken Verma 2012, 57);⁴³ as well as the president’s “tendency to keep things around him as disorganized as possible to avoid the formation of any ordered arrangement that might possibly be turned against his own, personal raw power” (Carbone 2008, 29; also see Bayart 1993). Despite the emphasis these scholars place on fragmentation, arbitrary and unpredictable intervention, and resultant uncertainty, they stop short of recognizing and seeking to understand these tools as part of a broader system of governance.

Institutionalized arbitrariness suggests a system in which fragmented and competing authorities and vague or contradictory rules about their jurisdictions and powers ensure that citizens can experience the states (non-)interventions as arbitrary. This is a way of governing through disorder—although in contrast to Chabal and Daloz (1999), disorder here connotes uncertainty, unpredictability, and arbitrariness, rather than a latent order based on personal relations that is simply unintelligible to western eyes. Discrete authorities may be acting in accordance with a given logic, but because authorities can (and do) both claim and deny authority in various jurisdictions without accountability, the result is a system in which one logic can be replaced for another at a moment’s notice. Despite the likelihood that no individual authority is strategizing arbitrary behavior, the system is structured to foster arbitrary outcomes. Indeed, this strategy of unpredictable intervention prevents citizens from developing stable and enforceable expectations for security and justice actors. This structure benefits the central state, and is intentionally reinforced through formal and informal policy actions.

⁴³ Lanken Verma addresses this uncertainty through the emic notion of *lakite*, or ‘somehow’. She writes, “*Lakite* was a notion I only gradually came to notice, due to its modest translation into the adverb ‘somehow’ in English, but, as it turned out, when used in Acholi in the form of an adjective, it carried a much profounder meaning as the expression of uncertainty, even to the extent of the extreme. *Lakite* indicated everything considered ‘tricky’, often dangerous, and which would cease understanding. It was related to secrecy in the way that it was seen to contain something hidden, something not to be grasped, an ambiguity or double-faced meaning of things, expressed as the way in which the government or certain people would ‘show different faces all the time’ or hide their true intentions ‘behind the face’...” (2012, 10–11).

Chapter 3

Power, violence, and civilian militias in northern Uganda (1986-2016)

The history of northern Uganda is frequently narrated from 1986—the year that President Yoweri Museveni overcame the Obote/Okello regimes after five years of insurgency; the same year that opposition to Museveni and southern rule inspired numerous rebel groups in the north. The year 1986 is a seemingly logical year to start the historical clock: it ushered in a period of instability, when 29 documented rebellions originating in different areas of the country challenged the new regime (Day and Reno 2014). None of the rebellions were successful. However, the rebellion in the north primarily led by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was particularly drawn out and intense, wreaking havoc on the civilian Acholi population for over twenty years. This was a period of immense suffering, social and political fragmentation, and economic deterioration.

To understand the nature of governance in Uganda's "post-conflict"⁴⁴ north it is necessary to nest the conflict and first two decades of Museveni's rule within a broader historical narrative. Colonial governance highlights a history of violent intervention to structure society for economic gain. Post-colonial governance was also violent and turbulent. In particular, both Idi Amin (1971-1979) and Milton Obote in his second term (1980-1985) used massive violence to terrorize political opposition (Straus 2015, 109). The year 1986 marked a transition for the Acholi civilian population from mostly northern rule to a period of southern rule. Acholis, who previously had access to the levels of state power in comparison with other regions of the country, experienced

⁴⁴ The designation "post-conflict" is useful to understand the vast difference between lived experiences in Gulu today, versus a decade ago. However, conflict is clearly not binary, nor (as the following history illustrates) is it something that can definitively become past-tense.

relative exclusion under Museveni and the NRM government (Branch 2011; Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). Northern Ugandans—and Acholi people in particular—narrate the Museveni regime as a time of northern exclusion and marginalization, viewing conflict between LRA rebels and the NRM government as a war of southern retribution. In contrast, southerners view the conflict as the result of bellicose northerners, who could not make peace amongst themselves. A third view of this history places the decades of conflict within the broader context of political struggles in Uganda and east Africa—a context which highlights many heterogeneous pressures shaping the actions of the NRM regime, including regional security threats, economic instability, and a ravenous patronage system. From this third perspective, the NRM regime has made significant progress in Uganda, fostering economic development, security, and a basic level of freedom of expression, movement, and self-determination for some areas of the country, particularly in comparison with past regimes.

However, objectively, the north of the country has suffered immensely under the Museveni regime. Initially, the NRA's⁴⁵ violence in the north was intended to weed out former supporters of the Obote regime (Branch 2011, 63). As the GoU-LRA war continued, the civilian population experienced violence for several reasons related to the war and rebel-led violence, including government neglect and forced displacement (Branch 2009), government suspicions that Acholi civilians were supporting the LRA (Branch 2011, 62–65), wartime commercial opportunism which directed military efforts toward commercial profit and away from protecting the civilian population (Branch 2009; Vlassenroot, Perrot, and Cuvelier 2012), cattle raiding by the Karamojong of eastern Uganda, and acts of *ad hoc* violence that often accompany wartime.

In this chapter, I briefly trace key aspects of governance and violence from colonial times

⁴⁵ Museveni's National Resistance Army became the Uganda People's Defense Forces in 1995. Throughout, I use the name for the given time period, or if the time period spans 1995, the abbreviation NRA/UPDF.

to frame how public life, lived experiences of insecurity, and expectations for the state and society have been produced and embedded in civilian imaginations and institutional memories. After all, as of 2016, approximately 75% of Ugandans were born and raised during the rule of Museveni and his NRM, while approximately 4% were old enough to remember when Uganda became an independent nation in 1962 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2012, 18). I develop a picture of the institutional context of northern Uganda, examining the importance of insecurity and destabilization in local and national governance through secondary sources supplemented with in-person interviews from my qualitative research. An image emerges of an ethnically fragmented country, with a history of political and electoral violence and ongoing contestation over state power. President Museveni has maintained power through a combination of carefully orchestrated strategies to bolster his own personal power, strengthen the NRM regime, and fragment opposition. These strategies include producing a network of administrative power loyal to the regime from the grassroots to the center, continuing the process of militarizing the state and society, and—in relation to northern Uganda—the two-decades long conflict between the NRM state and various rebel groups including the LRA, which plagued the north from 1986 to 2006.⁴⁶

The NRM's governance strategies have successfully destabilized and precluded large-scale opposition to its rule. However, these same strategies include inherent risks to the regime by creating potential opportunities for citizens to negotiate the terms of their subjectivity and to contest state authority. For example, delegating authority to administrators creates opportunities for the emergence of subnational power-brokers or political authorities, a large and well-trained military can be diverted to create a military coup, militarized civilians can be recruited to rebel

⁴⁶ A number of authors suggest that the war in northern Uganda strategically benefited the NRM regime by weakening social cohesion, depressing the economy, and fragmenting opposition of northerners, and particularly the Acholi (see Branch 2011; Dolan 2009; Finnström 2008). This dynamic, and related narrative biases, are discussed in more detail in the rest of the chapter.

groups, and war or marginalization can catalyze political opposition. Thus, this historical analysis highlights some of the tradeoffs that the NRM regime has made over the decades, and how these tradeoffs have shaped civilian experiences of and expectations for local and central government actors, including the police and the military, as well as the historical context for today's local security initiatives.

Independence - 1986: Politics and violence intertwined

Uganda was a British protectorate from 1894 until 1962, governed through indirect rule. In the south, the British co-opted pre-existing kingdoms to extract resources, and at the same time provided them with more political and economic power than other ethnic groups. In the north, where existing authorities were relatively weak and controlled small geographic areas (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999), the colonists appointed administrative chiefs after a violent campaign of “pacification” (Branch 2011, 48). The colonially-appointed administrative chiefs were granted unlimited judicial, legislative, and executive powers over their subjects provided their work did not offend the British colonial officers. The chiefs ruled by fear: “government in Acholiland thus became virtually synonymous with police” (Branch 2011, 48 citing Sathyamurthy (1986; 343)). Mamdani has described this as a system of indirect rule designed “to create a dependent but autonomous system of rule, one that combined accountability to superiors with a flexible response to the subject population, a capacity to implement central directives with one to absorb local shocks” (Mamdani 1996, 60).

While the south of the country was used for cash-crop economy, the north was reserved as a reservoir of unskilled labor. Acholis were also recruited into the colonial army, the King's

African Rifles. They eventually constituted the majority of the colonial military, which the British used to combat southern rebellions (Branch 2011, 50). Doom and Vlassenroot argue that the Acholi “were transformed into a military ethnocracy” during this period, gaining a reputation as an innately martial ethnicity (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 8). Through the military, the Acholi benefited from access to state power and resources throughout Obote’s rule. Ethnic and cultural divisions contributed to a staunch divide between the north and the south. Religious divisions between Catholics and Protestants, which overlapped with administrative and geographic zones, further exacerbated these factions (Alava and Ssentongo 2016, 680).⁴⁷

Post-colonial Uganda has been continually militarized, ethnicized, and centralized, with ongoing battles over state power and violent purges of civilians from the government, military, and business community at each political transition. In the early post-colonial years, the Acholi did relatively well. As Branch argues, “the exclusion of the Acholi in recent decades has to be seen in the context of the degree of privilege that they formerly enjoyed” (Branch 2011, 50). Shortly after Ugandan Independence from the British, a power-sharing arrangement was established between Prime Minister Milton Obote—a northerner—and the southern kingdoms. Obote planned to balance the power of the southern kingdoms in the government by appointing large numbers of Acholi and Langi of northern Uganda to the civil service and armed forces. However, because selected representatives derived local power from ethnic affiliation, this strategy reinforced the importance of ethnicity in the central government, further entrenching the north/south divide (Branch 2011, 53–56). Rather than balancing powers, Obote’s strategy effectively shifted control

⁴⁷ Alava and Ssentongo elaborate: “By the time of independence in 1962, the newly founded Democratic Party (DP) was popularly known as *Diini ya Papa* (religion of the Pope), and the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) as the United Protestants of Canterbury. Religious rivalries have, however always been cut across by ethnic and regional divisions. For instance, although the DP was largely a Catholic initiative, it was also strongly identified with Baganda interests, while the Protestant UPC was dominated by Northern Ugandan politicians” (Alava and Ssentongo 2016, 680).

from the south to the north (Branch 2011, 53–56).

In 1966, with the help of the military under then Deputy Commander of the Army, Colonel Idi Amin, Obote forcibly removed the southern kingdoms from the government, and placed Buganda—the most prominent kingdom—under martial law. Despite his ongoing use of detribalizing rhetoric, Obote continued to funnel support to the north through patronage networks, and recruit northerners—particularly Langi and Acholi—to the military, which grew from 700 troops to 9,000 in a decade (Branch 2011, 56). Obote increasingly relied on the military to control the country, leveraging ethnic divisions within the government and army to maintain his power. As Hugh Dinwiddy observed, Obote used “political manipulation to balance one tribe and one department against another within the precariously poised whole and to keep it... ‘Obote’s army’” (Dinwiddy 1983, 56).

The strategy was short lived. In 1971, Amin leveraged the loyalty of soldiers from his home region of West Nile to stage a coup. Amin’s subsequent nine-year military dictatorship is known for extreme and unpredictable violence against suspected political opponents and the obliteration of Uganda’s national institutions. Amin purged 66% of Obote’s army in mass killings which took place inside the army barracks, targeting the Acholi in particular (Ravenhill 1974, 241; Kagoro 2015, 50). Amin replaced the dead with soldiers from West Nile as well as mercenaries from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (then Zaire) to build an army of an estimated 10,000 men (Ravenhill 1974, 241). In 1972, Amin expelled tens of thousands of Asians, expropriating their property and making them scape-goats for Uganda’s economic troubles. By the time Amin was ousted in 1979, not less than 50,000 Ugandans had been killed as a result of his regime.⁴⁸ Respondents who could remember Amin’s rule recalled it as a time of deep uncertainty

⁴⁸ Estimates vary between 50,000 and 500,000; many contend that the smaller end of the scale is probably more accurate (Carbone 2008, 18).

and fear, when arbitrary violence and an undisciplined military prevailed.

In 1979, Amin was ousted by Tanzanian forces in conjunction with former members of the Obote regime, including a young Yoweri Museveni, leading the Front for National Salvation (FRONASA). After a year of political infighting, Obote once again became president through an election fraught with political violence and electoral manipulation (Carbone 2008, 19). Museveni harshly critiqued the second Obote regime and the elections that preceded it, writing that Obote was “so narrow-minded and so tribally inclined that he could not conceive of a national, detribalized, liberation movement” (Museveni 1997, 103). Museveni further espoused the opinion that multi-party political competition would only nourish sectarian divisions:

We who had belonged to Fronasa did not see how the political parties could have brought peace in Uganda. They had been sectarian right from their very foundation. The UPC had been used by the Protestant elite to consolidate the dominant position which they had attained by collaborating with the colonialists. Among their other machinations, the DP, on the other hand, represented the Catholic elite trying to gain advantage over the Protestants. Neither of these two groups thought of the welfare of the country as the motivating force behind politics: they were simply out to manipulate the population (Museveni 1997, 116).

Museveni participated in the 1980 presidential elections with a new party called the Uganda Patriotic Movement (UPM), while continuing to argue for a politically inclusive “broad-based” platform to reform the country. When Obote won the election amidst critiques of electoral fraud, Museveni took to the bush and launched his “liberation struggle” from the Luwero Triangle, north of Kampala (Museveni 1997, 121–73). Because Museveni (an ethnic Banyakole from the southwest) did not have ethnic ties in Luwero, he instead built popular support around a southern identity based on removing Obote and his northern government from power (Branch 2011, 56; Mamdani 1996, 208–9). Mamdani notes that this unifying approach “built an alliance

between...two nationalities that had been at odds with each other since colonial power” (Mamdani 1996, 209).

Obote responded to Museveni’s insurgency with extreme violence. During his second presidency, Obote had repopulated the military with ethnic Acholi and Langi. Obote used the military to rein “uncontrolled terror” on civilians in Luwero Triangle and the southwest for supporting Museveni and his rebels; in the northwest for having supported Amin (Carbone 2008, 20). Straus describes this as “mass categorical violence” intended to “weaken the military power of the rebels and to impose heavy costs on the insurgents and their supporters” (Straus 2015, 111). Doom and Vlassenroot write, “The Acholi were (and still are) widely held responsible for the mass killing [because they comprised the majority of Obote’s military]. Luwero is the ghost that haunts the Acholi” (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 9). In contrast, Museveni’s rebel group, later called the National Resistance Army (NRA) “made discipline the very foundation of its pursuit of popular legitimacy and backing... [and] were able to establish embryonic forms of civilian participation and to restore some degree of order in the areas they came to control” (Carbone 2008, 20).

After a coup backed by the Acholi faction of the military and brief presidency of the Acholi General Tito Okello Lutwa, Museveni’s NRA captured Kampala. The NRA pursued Acholi-dominated government forces as they fled north to regroup in Sudan (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 9–10). When government troops arrived in Gulu, they took the town easily. The NRA launched what Adam Branch refers to as a “counterinsurgency without an insurgency” (Branch 2011, 63), terrorizing, torturing and disappearing those suspected of supporting Okello or Obote’s regimes, and looting and destroying villages. In this way, Branch argues, the government catalyzed the very resistance it had feared (Branch 2011, 63). Museveni blamed violations on “bad apples” within the military. Thus, as Museveni’s rule began, the north entered into what would be two decades of

civil conflict.

As president, Museveni replaced Obote's national army with forces from his rebel movement, the NRA (renamed the Uganda People's Defense Force in 1995), many of whom were southerners or Tutsi foreigners from neighboring Rwanda (Dolan 2009, 40). From the outset, Museveni faced insurgencies across the country, including the Allied Democratic Front in the southwest Uganda, and the West Nile Bank Front and the Ugandan National Rescue Front II in West Nile. In the early years of his rule, Museveni integrated rebels and opposition into the NRA, weakening their ranks and rebalancing ethnic composition among the NRA's foot-soldiers. By 1990, the military had reached an unsustainable size of 120,000 troops, which was gradually downsized to reach its estimated 40,000 troops in 2015 (Prunier 2004, 374). A smaller military was necessary to balance costs and to produce a disciplined and professional force. The downsizing of the military coincided with increased recruitment and deployment of irregular security forces (Janmyr 2014, 210). Museveni adopted similar techniques for managing the military as his predecessors, placing members of his ethnic group (Banyakole) in key positions, offering promotions based on trustworthiness and loyalty to him as a leader, and informally shuffling officers to maintain his authority (Carbone 2008, 44–47). Museveni also continued the long-running tradition of an alliance between “the brains of Uganda and the guns of Uganda” (Dinwiddy 1983, 57), maintaining a close relationship with the military throughout his rule. Museveni himself served as an active military officer until 2004 (Ross 2004) and as of 2016 still stayed at the army barracks when he visited Gulu Town.

While much of Museveni's writings decry ethnic divisions, he has also leveraged ethnic stereotypes for political expediency, for example writing that Obote relied on the “tribally biased” army, which favored northerners because they were “supposedly more ‘martial’ and ‘warlike’”

(Museveni 1997, 39). In his autobiography, Museveni opines on Obote's reliance on northerners in the military: "[Obote] based his rule on an Acholi-Langi army with a scattering of other northern peoples. They had monopolized all access to the instruments of force and thus ensured his undemocratic hold on power" (Museveni 1997, 103). Several researchers also report searing ethnic remarks. One commonly cited statement was made at Acholi Inn in Gulu Town in 1986 to a group of Acholi elders, when Museveni reportedly compared Acholis to grasshoppers, which he had trapped together in a jar with no choice but to eat each other for survival (Whitmore 2010, 22, also see chapter 9).

Violent conflict—much of it ethnic and regional in nature—defines Uganda's political history. While the Nilotic groups of the north remained fragmented, the Bantu groups of the south gained coordination and cohesion under the umbrella of "southerners" during Museveni's guerilla war and in the early years of his rule. Patronage through ethnic groups and the military are long-standing traditions, as is strongman rule. These structural dimensions of governance in Uganda, along with regular ethnic purges coinciding with transitions in political power, have left a country deeply fragmented, wary of nationalist political rhetoric, and sympathetic to the notion that military strength begets state power.

Museveni's "Movement" and the institutionalization of political power

Museveni's new government inherited a country devastated by decades of tyrannical and repressive rule, and faced the early challenge of consolidating power in an ethnically and regionally fragmented country. The NRA/M came to power with rhetoric of revolution, proclaiming a new era of equality, democracy, and security for all. Museveni promised to form a

broad-based government that would address decades of exclusionary and violent politics—indeed, this was largely achieved, with the notable exception of the north. In his inauguration speech, Museveni declared:

No one should think that what is happening today is a mere change of guard: it is a fundamental change in the politics of our country. In Africa, we have seen so many changes that change, as such, is nothing short of mere turmoil. We have had one group getting rid of another one, only for it to turn out to be worse than the group it displaced. Please do not count us in that group of people (President Yoweri Museveni, 1986 inauguration speech as cited in Lindemann 2011, 387).

Museveni's vision was grounded in a commitment to Pan-Africanism and vanguardist approaches to liberation, based on theories of Leninism and his personal experience in the unified political-military command of liberation warfare, going back to his days in Mozambique when he was head of the University of Dar es Salaam revolutionary students group (Museveni 1997, 23–33).⁴⁹ These early experiences shaped Museveni in the mold of leftist leaders, with acumen built on ruthless pragmatism and talent for using power, both openly and covertly. To this end, the NRM employed numerous strategies to control Uganda's ethnically divided population, establishing a system of local government loyal to the regime and redistricting to fragment organization across larger ethnic groupings. The NRM also built loyalty with a massive patrimonial distribution system and a political system that relied on nearly two-decades of a no-party political system to fuse the NRM party with state institutions. These strategies, while similar to those of Museveni's predecessors, have effectively melded state institutions with the NRM party, and with Museveni himself, such that opposition to the regime or party became synonymous with opposition to the state itself.

⁴⁹ In his autobiography, Museveni explains that his involvement in the student movement “radicalized and deepened the ideological content of our thinking; it made us quite well known on the African scene, especially in liberation movement circles; and it reinforced our pan-Africanist views and enabled us to make pan-Africanist contacts such as President Nyerere” (Museveni 1997, 31).

During his guerilla war, Museveni established a system of local government in Luwero Triangle called Resistance Councils (RCs). The democratically elected RCs served several purposes. First, they replaced chiefs, who had previously had unchecked power. This both fragmented and challenged local powerholders, and eased economic pressure on the peasantry thereby garnering support for the NRA/M in Luwero (Mamdani 1996, 208). Second, they based participation and rights on residence rather than descent, thereby creating an alliance between the peasants indigenous to the area and migrant laborers (Mamdani 1996, 208).⁵⁰ Third, the RCs helped provide information and resources to the NRA during the bush war (Branch 2011, 59). In conjunction with the RCs, the NRM established “Local Defense Units” (LDUs) as civilian auxiliary forces to help provide information, security, and logistical support during the insurgency.

After Museveni took Kampala in 1986, he implemented RCs—renamed Local Councils (LCs) in 1995—across the country in a tiered system of governance. Originally part of Museveni’s political organization, RCs/LCs became the backbone of Uganda’s government structure, representing the village (LCI), parish (LCII), sub-county (LCIII), municipality (LCIV) and district (LCV). In much of the north, RCs/LCs were viewed as tools of the government, particularly as they were frequently established without consultation and supported the NRA during its occupation of the north (Branch 2011, 64, 69). At the same time, the international community lauded Uganda for its ambitious policy of decentralization (E. Green 2008b).

Uganda’s decentralization policy is structured to reinforce the power of the central state. Decentralization encompasses the economic, judicial, administrative and political spheres, and excludes “security matters, national planning, defence, immigration, foreign affairs and national

⁵⁰ Mamdani notes, “the shift in the basis of rights from an exclusive and localized (descent) principle to an inclusive and generalizable (labor) one was of enormous significance in a land with substantial immigrant minorities” (Mamdani 1996, 208).

projects,” which remain highly centralized (E. Green 2008b, 4). Each district has a Resident District Commissioner (RDC) who is a direct appointee of the president tasked with security in the district, among other key functions. A system of internal security officers (ISOs) appointed by the central government mirrors the LC structure, such that there is an ISO at the village, parish, sub-county, district and regional level. The police follow a similar structure. During his rule, Museveni has continually created new districts, more than tripling the total number from when he took office in 1986 (E. Green 2008b). New districts create new jobs, many of which are appointed centrally as a part of the regime’s patronage system. They also allowed the NRM to fragment “large, homogenous communities... by internal administrative divisions” thereby disincentivizing coordination among potential interest groups (Carbone 2008, 34). Additionally, multiple security structures can provide checks and balances, such that no one security institution has the power to challenge the central state (Khisa 2013; Mwenda 2007).

The NRM has also used patrimonial systems of distribution and militarization of the state and society to further strengthen its hold across the country. As Tangri and Mwenda note, state security agencies are not subject to the same level of accountability or scrutiny: “Through lucrative deals involving massive overpayments, military procurement has provided the financial wherewithal needed to fund the NRM’s political patronage system (such as raising money for the president’s election campaign) as well as for high ranking army officers and government officials to be awarded personally for their loyalty to the incumbent regime” (Tangri and Mwenda 2003, 551). The Ugandan state has long used its military network to distribute resources to its constituents, for example, establishing the National Enterprises Corporation (NEC) in 1989, a “parastatal body set up by the Ministry of Defence principally to organise defence personnel for productive functions” (Owana 2014). The NEC prioritizes recruitment of soldiers, and in its early

days, engaged in activities as wide ranging as pharmaceuticals, textiles, and baking, and won various contracts with the government including to fence and clean the airport, to fumigate government offices, and to construct “unipots” for the Ministry of Finance (Owana 2014). The NRM government continues to channel employment opportunities to the military through the NEC (Katongana 2016).

Additionally, the war in northern Uganda presented significant opportunities to orient government spending around the military. Branch documents reports that the Ugandan government received additional US military aid to ensure smooth delivery of humanitarian aid during the GoU-LRA war.

As a result, the [NRM] government [was] provided with an internationally-grounded humanitarian justification for the militarization of the north and for the orientation of [the government’s] budget towards counterinsurgency infrastructure (Branch 2009, 487).

Individual officers also used the war as an opportunity to enrich themselves, something that the government tacitly allowed (Mwenda 2010). For example, aid groups reportedly had to pay military officers to provide protection and ensure that aid was delivered to displacement camps in the north (Branch 2009, 487). Others “allied with civilian business people to inflate prices of supplies (if they supplied any logistics at all) and [made] huge profits. Other officers did not report the dead and missing in their units, and instead continued to receive salaries of these ‘ghost soldiers’ for their personal enrichment” (Mwenda 2010, 48). Mwenda notes that by 2003, this problem was so severe that between one-third and two-thirds of military officers were actually “ghost soldiers” (Mwenda 2010, 52). Museveni’s younger brother, Major General Caleb Akandwanaho—better known as Salim Saleh—was implicated in several such corruption scandals, including plundering Congo’s resources, purchasing “junk” helicopters and defrauding

the Ministry of Defense, mismanaging Uganda Airlines, involvement in the fraudulent acquisition of Uganda Commercial Bank (UCB) (Asiimwe 2013, 135–36).

As another example, in June 2014, Museveni disbanded the program structures of the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), deploying the military in its place under General Saleh, in an initiative referred to as “Operation Wealth Creation” (Atibuni 2015). Museveni argued that NAADS had been corrupt under civilian management,⁵¹ and further, that military oversight would provide support for veterans (Musisi 2014). The first phase of NAADS, from 2001 to 2010, had an estimated budget of 108 million USD, while the second phase, which started in 2010 and is ongoing, had an estimated budget of 450 million USD at the beginning of the project cycle (Nassaka 2014). In January 2016, during a campaign stump speech, the President stated that funding for the NAADS sector would be increased from 203 billion UGX annually (68.7 million USD) to 1 trillion UGX (338.5 million USD) (F. Mugerwa 2016). The use of the military in agricultural services is often viewed as a strategy to channel public resources to the military, particularly given that most soldiers do not have the requisite technical background in agriculture. Thus, the Ugandan government under the NRM is both militarized and patrimonial, using the military structure to deliver patronage.

During the first 19 years of his presidency, Museveni implemented a “no party” system in Uganda, declaring that all Ugandans were a part of the Movement.⁵² Mobilizing pseudo-Marxist

⁵¹ An external evaluation by Brookings suggests that although Museveni’s assessment may be accurate, it does not tell the whole story. In practice, it appears that NAADS was used more as a vehicle for “well-to-do farmers” to gain access to credit, rather than to increase yields—thus, it is hardly surprising that it failed on the metrics that Museveni used to condemn it. “Regarding access to credit, the results clearly indicate that a significantly higher share of households participating in NAADS had access to credit compared with non-NAADS households. The notable increase—albeit starting from a low percentage—in the share of NAADS participants accessing credit may be due to the fact that farmers participating in NAADS are encouraged and supported to form and operate SACCOs at the sub-county level, then linked to microfinance institutions and commercial banks for access to credit products either as individuals or in groups” (Okoboi, Kuteesa, and Barungi 2013, 16).

⁵² Carbone notes that Uganda has been a one-party state for the majority of its history as an independent country, with two brief exceptions in the early 1960s and first half of the 1980s, both of which “had been associated with the

logic, Museveni argued that Uganda was a peasant society with no class basis for party competition, and thus that multipartyism would “exacerbate clientelism in civil society and extend it to the countryside, thereby also activating and reorganizing democratic politics around interethnic tensions” (Mamdani 1996, 293). Nonetheless, he allowed party offices to remain open, though they were prohibited from holding delegates’ conferences or sponsoring candidates for elections (Makara, Rakner, and Svåsand 2009, 187). With the addition of the NRM, many of the same political parties exist in Uganda today as before Museveni’s presidency.⁵³ Rhetorically, political competition occurred on the basis of individual merit, rather than party affiliation. The Movement functioned like a party, but without the restrictions placed on other political parties. Until multipartyism was reintroduced in 2003, the NRM had no party structure and there was no legal distinction between the state and the NRM as an organization. Until 2006, the Ugandan state formally and directly funded the Movement (Makara, Rakner, and Svåsand 2009, 187).

Fusing the state institution to the NRM and prohibiting other political parties worked well in the early years of Museveni’s rule, by the early 2000s, the NRM was bloated. Makara, Rakner, and Svåsand (2009) observe that under a “no-party” system, it was structurally impossible to ban recalcitrant members (for example, Kizza Besigye, who first challenged Museveni in the 2001 presidential elections). Also, the large number of patrons to the NRM party had stretched thin the state’s resources. Despite virulently defending the no-party system for over a decade, in 2003, the NRM’s National Executive Committee reversed its position and recommended transitioning back to multipartyism. Multipartyism would allow the NRM to purify the party of individuals who

politicization of profound cleavages... elections ushered in exclusion by opening the way to one-partyism and electoral fraud, and violence inevitably followed” (Carbone 2008, 21).

⁵³ The restrictions placed on party activity acted as a barrier to the creation of new parties, creating an artificial protection for Uganda’s political parties. As a result, Mamdani argues that Uganda’s political parties are “weak structures with shallow roots, at best a collection of factions organized around individuals” (Cited in Twaddle 1996).

opposed Museveni's rule or whose corruption weakened the party's reputation (Makara, Rakner, and Svåsand 2009). The transition to multipartyism was also linked to the elimination of term limits, allowing Museveni to remain in office. Elections for LCI (village level representation) have not been held since 2001, nominally due to budget constraints. This is only partially convincing, and many posit that the NRM preferred to retain stalwarts at a local level.

Despite this relatively autocratic system of governance, the Museveni regime long maintained a sterling reputation with the international community, particularly western donors who dubbed Uganda a "donor darling." Carbone highlights two reasons for this: first, Uganda was seen as a strategic ally of the west, helping to destabilize Islamic Sudan through a proxy war. In December 2001, the United States added the Lord's Resistance Army and the Allied Democratic Forces (another rebel group functioning primarily in western Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo) to its Terrorist Exclusion List (IRIN News 2001). Additionally, Uganda was an early joiner of the United States' "coalition of the willing" in the War on Terror (Schiffers 2003). Second, Uganda provided a rare success story for the adoption of neo-liberal reforms (Carbone 2008, 61). Investments that came with the return of Ugandan Asians in the early years of Museveni's rule—as well as support from international donors which came later—were key to the NRM's ability to solidify and stabilize power. These resources allowed the state to rebuild institutions that had been destroyed through decades of political violence, and to finance a significant patronage machine which secured support for the regime while implementing the structural reforms recommended by the International Monetary Fund (Carbone 2008, 62). Museveni has proven to be a savvy politician, leveraging international norms and rhetoric to further strengthen his position.⁵⁴ This path dependency remains, despite a general recognition that

⁵⁴ For example, Valerie Freeland notes how Museveni made a self-referral of Uganda to the International Criminal Court for an investigation of its conflict with the LRA, "a conflict within which it, too, committed large-scale human

Uganda is effectively a military autocracy. That being said, the regime has come under increasing critique for human rights abuses and anti-democratic tendencies (Tripp 2004; Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016).

Geopolitical constraints and opportunities: The LRA war in regional perspective

In response to the new Museveni regime, a series of rebel movements sprung up across the country. In the north, these included remnants of the UNLA (Obote's military) and Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement. The NRA unleashed significant violence against civilians in the areas that these groups came from or operated within, eventually defeating the various factions except for the nascent Lord's Resistance Army, which integrated the remaining resistance fighters (de Waal 2004, 198). The LRA has received significant international attention as a ruthless and radical terrorist group, a narrative to which the Ugandan government has readily contributed. Nationally, interpretations of the war are mired in ethnic tensions between northerners and southerners. In Kampala, Ugandans blame the bellicose Acholi people who could not make peace among themselves; in Gulu, lay and educated alike recite a powerful narrative of abandonment and marginalization by President Museveni and the NRM. Although the LRA—and its infamous leader, Joseph Kony—espoused elements of mysticism, spiritualism, purification, and religion, the group also asserted various political goals over the two-decade long insurgency, including demands for increased political representation for Acholi (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 23).

rights violations. By inviting external scrutiny and manipulating the investigative process, the Ugandan government received an internal seal of approval for practices the ICC would normally punish." Freeland also notes that bringing in the ICC reshaped "Sudan's incentives in dealing with the [LRA] insurgents" (Freeland 2015).

In addition to the northern insurgencies, Museveni's regime has faced opposition groups throughout the country, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the west, the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) and the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF II) in the northwest, the Uganda People's Army (UPA) in the east (Lindemann 2011, 388). The early years of the NRM rule were consumed trying to contain these insurgencies and consolidate power. The regime was generally successful—although the ADF and LRA still operate in neighboring countries and have displaced hundreds of thousands (IRIN News 2010), other insurgencies have successfully been quelled.

The NRM regime also faced external threats, in particular, from Sudan, which waged a proxy war against the Ugandan government for nearly two decades. Ostensibly, the war began when Museveni took power in Uganda because Khartoum was concerned that Museveni would align with John Garang, a leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) who had attended university in Dar es Salaam where he had been a member of Museveni's revolutionary students group.⁵⁵ Indeed, in May 1987, 14,000 NRA troops entered Sudan to fight with the SPLA against Khartoum. The NRA withdrew two years later, after having helped the SPLA gain control of Equatoria (de Waal 2004, 185). In response, Khartoum supported the LRA, providing financial support, resources, and a safe-haven across Uganda's border. Thus, the government of Sudan supported the LRA to inflict instability in Uganda and to fight the SPLA, while the NRM supported the SPLA. Sudan's external support prevented the NRA/UPDF from quashing the LRA quickly. Over time, it appeared that the war in the north also had political expediencies for the Museveni regime, attracting international aid and weakening northern opposition.

⁵⁵ Museveni notes in his autobiography "John Garang from Sudan, who came [to Dar es Salaam] in 1968 to do some postgraduate work, was also a very active member [of the University Students' African Revolutionary Front]. He was always telling us about their problems in southern Sudan" (Museveni 1997, 26).

Uganda's proxy war with Sudan also spread to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and created new war economies predicated on illicit trade and ghost soldiers, as discussed above. Although this was relatively low-scale during the UPDF's first intervention into Congo in 1996 and 1997, a second intervention in 1998 was more explicitly about profiteering. According to some, this plunder economy was embedded in the political and military power of the NRM regime, was intimately connected with state structure and administration, and served a "functional" role for the political center (Vlassenroot, Perrot, and Cuvelier 2012). Others suggest that the war economy was at least partially privatized such that Museveni had to negotiate with the military, which was conducting the looting, rather than fully command it (Clark 2001). In either case, the wealth extracted from Congo contributed to finance the regime and mitigate its costs, particularly supporting the military and patrimonial networks. The legacies of this plunder may still shape political allegiances and resources in Uganda—military officers have been known to distribute money to entice constituents to support the NRM regime.

The conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government came in waves over a twenty-year period. Both internal and regional dynamics were fundamental to the war: in particular, the ongoing proxy war between Kampala and Khartoum prolonged the war and changed the dimensions of what was possible. In 1991, the Ugandan government launched Operation North, which it hoped would provide a decisive victory for the NRA. The operation imposed a media blackout in the north, initiated massive "screening operations" to identify rebel collaborators and terrorize the population, and called for the arrest (or worse, the summary execution or disappearance) of anyone who opposed the government. Branch describes an Acholi population still traumatized by this period, when "killings, torture, looting, and rapes" targeting family members and even entire villages were meted out by the NRA (Branch 2011, 72). Intensity in

violence and fighting reduced in 1992 and 1993, giving civilians hope that the conflict between the LRA and the NRA was coming to an end.

In 1994, the government attempted peace negotiations with the LRA. Although initially hopeful, the negotiations collapsed when Kony asked for a delay of three to six months. Museveni refused the request and issued an ultimatum that the rebels leave the bush within seven days, or face renewed military force. At the same time, the LRA had established close links with the Sudanese government, which provided material and technical support for the LRA rebels to destabilize Uganda in a proxy war (de Waal 198), as well as bases in southern Sudan where the LRA could train those who they forcibly recruited. Sudanese military intelligence set up training camps for the LRA in Sudan (coordinated by Riek Machar) and infiltrated them across the border (de Waal 2004, 200–201). Violence ensued, again with Acholi civilians bearing the brunt of the conflict.

In response to increased civilian cooperation with the government, the LRA's direct attacks on Acholi civilians escalated, with a number of brutal massacres between 1994 and 1997. Doom and Vlassenroot (1999, 25–26) compared this period of the war to an “auto-genocide” of the Acholi. The rebel's new tactics were designed to terrorize the population and spread fear among those who considered supporting the government. In particular, the rebels sought revenge for civilian participation in government-recruited militias like Arrow Boys and Home Guard, some of which were deployed to fight the LRA (discussed in detail in the section on civilian militias). Conspicuous atrocities included amputating lips, limbs, and ears to punish civilians they believed had betrayed the LRA.⁵⁶ Rebels used rape to humiliate men and “ruin” women, destroying social

⁵⁶ Joseph Kony is quoted as saying: “If you pick up an arrow against us and we ended up cutting off the hand you used, who is to blame? You report us with your mouth, and we cut off your lips? Who is to blame? It is you! The Bible says that if your hand, eye or mouth is at fault, it should be cut off” (Lacey 2005).

bonds within families and communities (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 25–26). As the LRA’s forces dwindled and civilian support deteriorated, the LRA relied more heavily on abduction as a mode of recruitment, targeting youth because they were easier to kidnap and indoctrinate.⁵⁷ Abducted youth were often forced to engage in extremely violent initiations, structured to ostracize them from their communities and prevent any desire to return home.

From 1997 onwards the dynamic of the conflict changed. The military threat posed by the LRA was much reduced with the border area largely stabilized. Additionally, the second Congo war changed the dynamics both in the region and also within the UPDF, which had become much more focused on looting natural resources as discussed above. A comprehensive peace agreement was reached in 2006. Joseph Kony, distrustful of Museveni and the peace process, refused to sign the final agreement, and remained at large as of 2017. Regardless, the peace agreement followed the withdrawal of the LRA from Uganda, and ushered in a new period of relative peace in the north, which has lasted throughout the time of this writing in April 2017.

The Acholi narrative: Enduring costs of war

Despite the importance of regional dynamics for a geo-political understanding of the conflict, the majority of the Acholi population experienced the conflict as a localized event—notwithstanding displacement to southern Sudan and forced recruitment that took many across international borders to Sudan and to a lesser extent DRC. While Uganda’s history shows that violence has always been integral to civilian experiences of the post-colonial state, the extent and duration of physical and

⁵⁷ Research has shown that the LRA abducted youth nearly randomly. Although the LRA targeted by age, their abduction strategy showed no preference for other prewar household characteristics, including indicators of wealth, parent’s education and occupation (Annan et al. 2011, 885).

psychological suffering caused by the LRA insurgency and the NRM's counterinsurgency was new for the Acholi people. Chris Dolan has described the war in northern Uganda as "a form of mass torture, whose principal victims are the population within the 'war zone', and whose ultimate function is the subordinate inclusion of the population in northern Uganda [into the Ugandan state]". He calls this "social torture," and examines "widespread violation, dread, disorientation, dependency, debilitation and humiliation" as evidence of torture "perpetrated on a mass rather than individual scale" (Dolan 2009, 1). Indeed, the war and forced displacement devastated infrastructure and the economy and destroyed communities and social cohesion. The SLRC found that in Lango and Acholi sub-regions, 14% of households had members violently killed during the war by parties to the conflict, while 13% of households had members who were abducted and never returned. In Acholi sub-region, 55% of households reported having experienced serious crimes during the war. In 2013, the survey found that 3% suffered from physical injuries, and 4% from emotional distress (Mazurana et al. 2014, 39–41).

In addition to insecurity and violence, citizens experienced massive forced displacement, as a result of a government policy in 1996. An estimated 90-95% of the population was forcibly relocated to 220 registered "protected camps" (Bozzoli, Brück, and Muhumuza 2012, 8). Branch explains that the camps are better conceived of as

internment or concentration camps, given their origins in forced displacement and the continued government violence used to keep civilians from leaving... People in the camps were left stranded, without means of acquiring food or supplies, and told to build their own shelters within demarcated areas (Branch 2009 480, 482).

The government argued that these camps were necessary to defend the population from the rebels, and enlisted the help of international humanitarian aid organizations, including the World Food Programme to provide the minimum necessary requirements for people to survive in the camps,

but not enough to prevent the massive humanitarian emergency that ensued (Branch 2009, 485). Excess mortality levels of 1,000 per week were projected for January to June 2005 (World Health Organization 2005, 45). These abhorrent conditions precluded the type of political organization that would have been necessary for civilians to hold UPDF accountable for violations (Branch 2011, 77).

With civilians sequestered to camps, the government embraced “total war”, labeling those found outside the camp as rebels to be exterminated (Branch 2011, 76). The government implemented increased screening operations called *panda gari* (Swahili for “climb into the truck”), which subjected citizens to arbitrary detention and arrest (Dolan 2009, 47). The camps themselves were poorly protected: a study of 32 camps in Pader and Lira in 2005 found that there were approximately 60 UPDF soldiers deployed per camp to protect an average of nearly 20,000 residents occupying 0.55 square miles (Lehrer 2009, 9). Typically, civilian huts surrounded the army detach, such that when rebels attacked, civilians would be the first line of fire. Although soldiers were present, they often did not respond to rebel attacks (Branch 2011, 77). Instead, the government relied on Home Guards to provide security, even though they remained under-trained and under-resourced (Branch 2011, 77).

Displacement has had a profound effect on Acholi society in regards to livelihoods, gender, and political organization. Many camps were rural, located on average 13 miles from the nearest market and 27 miles from the nearest town center (Lehrer 2009, 9). These “rural prisons” with unsanitary conditions, immobility, and close living quarters made it virtually impossible for men and women to nurture respectable Acholi families (Allen and Vlassenroot 2010, 14; also see Mergelsberg 2012; Anderson 2009; Dolan 2009). Within the camps, there were practically no opportunities for employment. Some civilians continued to make daily trips to their farms while

the majority rented from those who had land nearby. However, traveling outside the camps made one vulnerable to attacks from both rebels and government soldiers. In the camps, the male as provider was curtailed as work opportunities were limited and aid organizations gave rations directly to women, hoping to prevent resell of foodstuffs.

During the war, civilians lost the majority of their belongings, including lifelong investments in land and livestock. When the NRA/M first occupied the north starting in 1986, they began a massive disarmament campaign, levying significant punishments on civilians caught with weapons. As a result, Acholi were left relatively defenseless against the Karamojong of northeastern Uganda,⁵⁸ who swept across Gulu raiding cattle in the late 1980s through the 1990s. One estimate suggests that Gulu District's cattle were depleted by 98% between 1987 and 1997. This represented a capital loss of as much as 25 million USD (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 12). The loss of cattle is a particularly sore memory for Acholi—cattle represent both material and symbolic capital, conferring authority and respect within the community. Branch writes that “the NRA allowed Karamojong cattle raiders to loot with impunity as far west as Gulu Town, sometimes participating in the looting themselves, thus destroying one of the bases of Acholi livelihood” (Branch 2011, 65). Indeed, many Acholis share this interpretation of events, believing that the NRA intentionally left them vulnerable to Karamojong raiders.

Over the course of the war, Gulu Town grew substantially. Forced displacement in 1996 nearly doubled the population of the town (Branch 2013, 3155). Humanitarian organizations—which delivered basic supplies and food to the camps—also supported Gulu's population in another, perhaps more significant way. In establishing their headquarters in Gulu Town, the

⁵⁸ “Karamojong” refers to “a cluster of different tribal and ethnic groups engaged in shifting alliances” located in northeastern Uganda. The Karamojong are largely pastoral and agro-pastoral peoples. The region is under-developed compared to the rest of Uganda—even the war-torn north central region (Stites, Mazurana, and Carlson 2006, 6–8).

agencies created a market for goods and services and provided employment opportunities for locals as administrators, guards, office assistants, cleaners, and drivers (Branch 2013, 3156). Research work also took off, with many locals employed to be enumerators, translators, and fixers. “By 2003, over 100 relief organisations were working in northern Uganda and, by 2007, US\$200 million was being spent annually on the camps (citation omitted)” (Branch 2013, 3156). After the conflict subsided in 2006, many humanitarian organizations closed their projects and left Gulu Town, resulting in renewed feelings of abandonment, particularly for those who had been employed at these international organizations. Various development NGOs and social enterprises remain, along with a healthy contingent of missionaries and researchers, who continue to provide occasional opportunities for employment.

Civilian militias in Gulu during the NRA/LRA war

During the conflict, the government and local communities experimented with a variety of forms of citizen militias, including Local Defense Units (LDUs), a generic name for auxiliary forces, Home Guards, and “arrow” brigades. The NRM formed LDUs across the country in conjunction with the Resistance Councils to help solidify the NRM’s hold on state power. LDUs played different roles across the country depending on the needs of the NRA:

...if the situation were violent, the LDUs would act usually as a rear force, but sometimes in front line combat. If it were relatively peaceful, the LDUs would support development programmes, keeping law and order, and still gather intelligence for the security organizations. When the NRA was involved in national combat or other operations, the LDUs would be helpful in capturing deserters, recruit for NRA, and check illegal recruitment of rebel groups from villages as well as deny establishment of rebel groups in areas of their control (Rukooko 2005, 217).

Starting as early as 1988, LDUs were formed in the north to help combat rebel groups, particularly the LRA (Branch 2011, 69). In this way, RCs and LDUs became an integral component of the state's military apparatus in its efforts to pacify the north. In 1991, as the NRA launched its four month Operation North anti-insurgency campaign, the government began recruiting civilian forces named for their region of origin, including the Arrow Brigades in Teso, *Amuka* ("rhinoceros") in Lango, and the Elephant Brigade in Acholi (Branch 2011, 73). These animals are associated with Langis and Acholis respectively, and thus, the names serve as an ethnic marker. These were the first massive mobilization of civilians into the anti-insurgency effort (Branch 2011, 73). After the conflict subsided in the north, the government released an estimate that the number of civilian militias in the country had been at its highest at 38,135; Janmyr estimates there may have been as many as 30,000 auxiliary forces in northern Uganda during the conflict years (Janmyr 2014, 213). These groups received little training and often used primitive weapons, such as bow and arrow. Members of these "arrow groups" were often recruited into Home Guards, who received light military training and supported the military in defending the camps. Many Home Guards were recruited into LDUs. One man who had served in the military and in LDUs explained:

The LDUs were more trained than the Home Guards. They were trained by the military and strong hearted. But the Home Guards were just recruited, given guns and monitored. They were fearful, because they didn't get enough training, and only knew how to shoot a gun. If you joined an LDU you were more likely to get incorporated into the military. They had a maroon color uniform. The LDUs were light green, almost like a soldier. You get promoted like that, from a maroon uniform to light green. Many got integrated (Interview with former LDU, Gulu District, 30 September 2015).

Although most respondents affirm this loose hierarchy of irregular civilian militias, others describe Arrow Brigades, Home Guards, and LDUs as indistinguishable in form and function. Janmyr reflects “government authorities deliberately created a climate of confusion when it came to the management and supervision of these forces” (Janmyr 2014, 219).

The civilian militias were generally framed as initiatives to defend their own communities, which would enable the NRA/UPDF to engage in more active combat with the LRA. In practice, these civilian forces were sent into active combat, at times in neighboring countries. Some argue that this provoked increased violence against the civilian population, as the LRA wanted to punish civilians for turning against them (Branch 2011, 75–78). On various occasions during the conflict, the military abandoned civilian militias at the moment of confrontation, such that these poorly trained and poorly armed groups were left to defend themselves and their communities (Branch 2011, 72–74). Government officials who had spearheaded the formation of Arrow Groups rejected responsibility, arguing that it was now the people’s responsibility to fight the remaining rebels; the NRA could “relax” (Branch 2011, 73). Indeed, the NRM government largely viewed the LRA as an Acholi rebel group, and some asserted that the best way to fight rebels would be to use the local people. Civilian militias were often taken to other regions, as far ranging as DRC and southern Sudan, rather than protecting their home areas (Janmyr 2014, 209–10).

Positions in Arrow Groups and Home Guards were often unpaid and offered few direct benefits; however, over the course of the conflict, many members of such groups were absorbed into the military where they could expect a more regular salary, a uniform, and their own gun. Others continued to work informally on and off, as they were called up. Former members of such groups, even when inactive, continued to constitute a pool of men ready to join the action in the

case of continued violent conflict. One colonel explained that these auxiliary forces existed mostly due to the central government's financial constraints:

The president can raise any other force apart from regular force when he sees the situation dictates. Such a person is subject to military law. You can call them volunteers. In our case, they were Home Guards... But then the state must arm them, so they can protect people. Also, they are supposed to operate under the command of the army; they are not uncontrolled. There were challenges that arose from the Home Guards—for example, they were not transferrable... [Home Guards] feed themselves at home. When they need to provide security at a zonal level, the terrain is different, there may not be local knowledge... That's when LDUs come in... They are supposed to provide zonal security and operate in larger areas. They get better and longer training. They are composed of ex-service men, people who had the know-how. [The government] did not have the budget to treat them as the army. But within the budgetary constraint, you can still provide security under those arrangements. Arrow, *Amuka*, Elephant... Those were names just to appreciate them (UPDF Colonel, Gulu District, 29 September 2015).

Although participation was formally voluntary, many youth faced political and economic pressures to join LDUs, including accusations of rebel affiliation if they returned (Janmyr 2014, 211).

Civilian militias received irregular wages, and were paid at times by the Ministry of Interior through the Ministry of Defense, at other times directly by the Ministry of Defense. This had an added effect of making it difficult to determine Uganda's total military expenditure and the total number of civilian militias (Janmyr 2014, 212). In 2008, the Minister of Defense called recruitment of civilian militias “not so organized or easy,” explaining that the government “just called up people to fight” and did not keep records of their activities, nor did it keep a registry of weapons distributed to civil militias (Janmyr 2014, 213). Civilian militias were also accused of contributing to crime and violence as much as peace and security—a theme that continues to repeat itself with Uganda's auxiliary forces today. “Indeed, the human rights problems associated with the militia forces were so widespread that the Africa Centre for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture

Victims pointed to Local Defense Units as the worst abusers of human rights in its reports of 2000 and 2002, ahead of UPDF, Uganda Police Force and Prison Services” (Janmyr 2014, 215–16).

Civilian militias were also reportedly used for political ends, for example, beating political opponents after the elections in 2001 (Janmyr 2014, 215). Other, more explicitly political groups, including the Kalangala Action Plan, the Kiboko Squad, and the Black Mambas were formed to use violence and intimidate voters and opposition in elections from 2001 on (Freedom House 2008; Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2003). One citizen described the work of the Kiboko Squad in Kampala: “Plain clothed operatives armed with clubs, batons and canes descended... and unleashed terror beating up people indiscriminately... It was a pathetic spectre watching Dr Besigye get beaten in broad-day light by stick-wielding goons as the police stood on watch” (Gyezaho 2010). The police claimed no knowledge of the Kiboko Squad, while respondents reported observing police and militia members walking and conversing together. These groups are also often subsumed under the same category as LDUs—indeed, the lines between these various groups of civilians engaged in (in)security are fuzzy at best.

Conclusion

This brief history of Uganda depicts a country torn by cycles of political violence, undergirded by ethnicized and regionalized tensions, and, in some regions, reinvigorated by the promise of development and unity under Museveni’s NRM. Political transitions have been broadly marked by mass killings, state leaders have regularly demonstrated their willingness to enforce edicts with extreme and unrelenting violence, and the military has been an important element of executive power since independence. Violent state intervention, a personalized system of rule, and the

executive's close hold on the judiciary and the legislative branches of government have long characterized the Ugandan state, as with many other neopatrimonial military regimes.

Despite critiques of the Museveni regime, he has also often been credited with rescuing Uganda from the brink of collapse. By the mid-1980s, Uganda was broadly classified as a failed state. The political class was discredited due to sectarianism and infighting from the fall of Amin in 1979 to the fall of Obote II in 1986. When Museveni took office, he proclaimed a fundamental change for a new Uganda—and indeed, under Museveni's leadership, the economy has grown steadily, with the country's GDP climbing from 3.9 billion USD in 1986 to 26.4 billion USD in 2015 (“World Bank Country Data - Uganda” 2016). Crawford Young reflected, “After the terrible destruction of the terror-ridden, capricious tyranny of Amin and the calamitous performance of Obote in his second coming (1980-85), the restoration of a functioning state and revival of a shattered economy are remarkable by any standard” (Young 2001, 207).

The new regime faced insurgencies across the country in the 1980s, most of which were integrated into the NRA/M through a combination of political and economic settlements. The LRA in the north was a singular exception—emboldened and continually revived by Sudanese support in an ongoing proxy war with Kampala, the LRA at first proved a difficult enemy to extinguish. In the later years, it seems that Museveni saw strategic value in a northern insurgency that brought in aid dollars and military support, while lending legitimacy to his rule and further weakening an area of the country that had long opposed southern rule. Indeed, the ruling regime under Museveni has been characterized by a cold pragmatism, strategically calculating human suffering as a rational cost in the endeavor of governing. This pragmatism has allowed Museveni to build a nation in which he is paramount and indispensable. Over the past three decades, amongst other things, he has invested in the military and auxiliary forces, emphasizing discipline and patriotism as national

values. At the same time, the creation of multiple and parallel security and governance structures has created an environment in which it is difficult to attribute authority or responsibility to any individual or institution. Civilian security actors continue to operate at the boundary between state and society, carrying the burden of local security without attendant benefits accorded to formal state security actors.

Uganda remains a divided country. Despite the years of no-party rule, and the inclusive rhetoric of the NRM party, ethnicity and regionalism continue to shape the popularity of political candidates, as well as the policies adopted at national and regional levels. The NRM has worked hard to leverage these ethnic divisions in its favor, and has thus far largely succeeded through shaping a national narrative of north against south and through administrative redistricting. The regime also weakened opposition political parties without eliminating them. Instead, many of the same political parties and politicians make up Uganda's political landscape. Although weakened—injured and impaired—they are still powerful enough to deter the entrance of younger, more dynamic opposition. Indeed, many note President Museveni's acumen at permitting political, social and economic activity so long as it does not threaten the regime. Throughout, Museveni and his NRM have artfully built a state where party, government, and state security institutions both exist as functional institutions and are, for all purposes, indistinguishable from each other. This has produced an environment sympathetic to confusion, where it is difficult to decipher who is working for whom, and the actions of state authorities appear arbitrary and unpredictable.

Today, Northern Uganda is a region rife with grievances, having lost control of the political apparatus in 1986, and suffered a long and devastating war. Acholis are deeply distrustful of the government; and Gulu remains an opposition stronghold.⁵⁹ Youth are increasingly impatient for

⁵⁹ In 2011, 29.04% of the electorate voted for Museveni's re-election; in 2016, 32.74% did so (Uganda Election Commission 2011 & 2016).

change, having grown up under the NRM, in a time of war and poverty. Museveni has resisted democratic transition for thirty years. To do so for another five (which would mean winning again in 2021 and completing forty years as president) would require a constitutional amendment to raise the age limit on the office of the president. While some believe this is likely, others point to the swift rise of Museveni's son, Muhoozi Kainerugaba,⁶⁰ as evidence that he is being primed for the presidency. Regardless, any transition in power is likely to be contentious, reviving regional and ethnic tensions that have government and opposition alike have nurtured to prop up the current political pact.

⁶⁰ Kainerugaba was promoted to the rank of Major-General in May 2016 from his position as a brigadier in 2012 (Gaffey 2016b).

Chapter 4

Local Security Groups and the Security Ecosystem in northern Uganda

On 25 February 2014, a few hours before dawn, a community security group patrolled the dusty streets outside Gulu Town. They had been busy: the night began by breaking up an after-hours dance party, beating the palms and emptying the pockets of the attendees, and caning a girl and her brothers in the family compound for the girl's indecent dress. The group was escorting a suspected thief to a nearby police post when they stopped a driver in an NGO vehicle. Someone threw a rock through the windshield; the driver himself reports being roughed up and robbed. The next day, four members of the security group, as well as a sub-county politician who was instrumental in the creation of the group, were arrested. A week earlier, the village leader had discussed the group in a community meeting,

I would like to say clearly that these boys of ours have made us proud because they do their patrol right from here to [the neighboring villages]...To me if I'm to compare the good and bad of these boys then I would give them on the good aspect 80% (LCI Chairman, Gulu District, 1 March 2014).⁶¹

Other community members reported sleeping more easily at night owing to the patrol; a friend confided to me: "People are glad that there is a security group—stealing was a big problem before—but they are not happy with some of the behavior" (38-year-old female community member, Gulu District, 27 February 2014).

⁶¹ The Chairman of the local council at the village level works as a schoolteacher during the day—he later reduced his evaluation to 70%.

The relationship between local security groups and state security institutions is complicated. At times it appears constructive, at other times corrosive (Meagher 2012). It is poorly defined, and thus open to continual redefinition. In this chapter, I analyze the relationship between the security institutions of the ruling regime (primarily the police) and local security groups. Specifically, I look at whether or not security groups fill a security gap, thereby providing insight into the state's ability to project its control of violence over space and time. I also look at security groups' access to violence, and more broadly their sources of economic, social, and political power. Examining security groups' sources of power helps understand the strategies that such groups use to consolidate power beyond the status of ordinary community members, as well as the barriers they face in doing so. Finally, I explore whether the state relies on security groups for authority or vice versa, thereby telling us something about the extent to which non-state security actors can take meaningful form. Together, these strands of inquiry help describe a landscape of violence that I analyze further in subsequent chapters that in turn provides a necessary foundation from which to understand which organizations have institutionalized violence; how they have done so; and how, where, and over whom they can assert authority.

This chapter examines the role that security groups play in what Rita Abrahamsen and Michael Williams have termed "security assemblages": "new security structures and practices that are simultaneously public and private, global and local" (2010, 3). Abrahamsen and Williams draw on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of capital to conceive of a "field of power" in which holders of capital—whether physical, cultural, or symbolic—struggle with the state for power. They write, "The question becomes not whether the state is gaining or losing sovereignty..., but how its place

and relationship to other actors in a field of power is shifting and how, in the process state power itself is reconfigured” (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010, 9).⁶²

The chapter tackles Abrahamsen and Williams’ question through a detailed empirical description of the form and function of local security groups in relation to official state security actors. In Gulu, the police are the primary state security actors, as the military has drawn down after the armed conflict subsided in the north in 2006. I analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data is from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (survey and data are described below). Quantitative analyses of vigilante groups are rare, and pairing this analysis with qualitative research allows for important triangulation on both the quantitative and qualitative findings. The chapter provides context and lends support for the subsequent qualitative findings by showing the magnitude of key relationships in a larger sample as well as correlations between key variables. In part, I use the quantitative analysis to place Gulu Town and District within regional context. I find that security provision is fragmented in northern Uganda, with a host of relevant players. I also find that while respondents within Acholi sub-region report similar experiences and perceptions of security and welfare, there is significant variation between Acholi and Lango sub-regions (Lango borders Acholi to the south). This suggests that while my qualitative findings based on research in Gulu and Pader may have broader relevance for Acholi sub-region, they should not be extrapolated to Lango sub-region or other areas of the country without further study. I focus the remainder of my analysis on Acholi sub-region.

I then elaborate with a detailed qualitative description that illustrates some of the ways in which local security groups draw authority from state security actors, including adopting symbols

⁶² While Abrahamsen and Williams focus their inquiry on private security (e.g., for profit enterprises) their work provides a useful analytic for this inquiry into civilian security engagement by problematizing the assumed teleology in which violence is gradually removed from the private sphere into the “public” or political sphere (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010, 7).

of state authority and aligning themselves with state security actors, like the police or military. At the same time, their work in the security group remains subject to approval from their local communities. Local security groups are part of the Ugandan state's broader "security assemblage," embedded in a complex network of security actors. Security groups both extend the regime's security apparatus into local communities, and further expand a system of resource distribution that is linked to state authority. Although resources rarely flow through to the most local levels of the structure, simply having an apparatus in place to make distribution feasible is powerful both for its material and imagined potential (for an illustration of how material potential is realized, see chapter 10 on Crime Preventers). This apparatus forms the scaffolding on which the ruling regime has built an effective and efficient governing operation.

I then use the quantitative data to examine some key relationships between local security groups, state security actors, and perceptions of security provision. My analysis shows that security groups, though widespread, do not appear to have a homogenous form or function, and citizens express mixed perceptions of their ability to provide the security that a household needs. The chapter then interrogates the notion that security groups are primarily a response to a security gap, deriving authority from providing security where the state has failed (Adinkrah 2005; Goldstein 2003; Baker 2002). Instead, the quantitative analysis shows that security groups are viewed as more helpful when functioning in proximity to state security actors, in particular the police. The chapter explores two possible explanations for this, and shows that there is more evidence to support the explanation that security groups derive authority from state security actors, than vice versa.

Quantitative analysis: Placing local security initiatives in the security assemblage

In northern Uganda, a host of security actors address security and justice concerns with diverse and frequently contradictory mandates. Relevant authorities include LCs, traditional leaders, religious leaders, as well as the police, courts, and the government's internal security system (from Parish Internal Security Officer (PISO) to Regional Internal Security Officer (RISO)). Layered on top of these are a set of more fluid and undefined security actors, including security group members, secret operatives (discussed in chapter 8), Crime Preventers (discussed in chapter 10), and the community itself.

Local security initiatives are common in northern Uganda, and are referred to in various ways. In Acholi, they are often referred to as “the young people who keep security,” “peace keepers” (*ogwa kuc*), “youth vigilantes,” or simply as “youth” (*bulu*). Sometimes they are also called “Crime Preventers,” without a clear distinction between civilians working within the local community who report to the LCI and the government's community policing program (see chapter 10). These terms are consistent with those used in other areas of eastern Africa. In Tanzania, local security groups are called *Busalama*, literally “person of peace”; in eastern Uganda, *Banalukoosi*, “the people of peace, order and respect” (Abrahams 1998). Throughout, I refer to them as local security groups or local security initiatives, because they are geographically localized, organized at least nominally around the function of providing security, and they typically have multiple members, thereby forming a group (see chapter 1 for a full definition).⁶³

Existing quantitative studies on vigilante groups are relatively small (Adinkrah 2005) or focus on perceptions of vigilantism rather than prevalence (Haas, Keijser, and Bruinsma 2014).

⁶³ I use the terms “local security group” or “local security initiative” interchangeably. Later in the chapter I discuss the wording and translation of the SLRC survey questions that I analyze.

Both the challenges of gathering data in insecure environments as well as the “unstable” and “labile” nature of such local security initiatives contribute to the paucity of quantitative studies (Abrahams 2008, 421). Indeed, in Uganda, the categories of LDUs, Home Guards, security groups, and Crime Preventers are fluid, and people at times use the terms interchangeably. Many individuals have participated in a variety of such groups. At times, these groups work together in various configurations, also supporting the work of the police and the military. Their pay is irregular, and originates from a variety of actors, whether the patronage of government officials, as with the Crime Preventers in the 2016 elections, community donations, or “appreciation” from individual complainants. However, quantitative analysis can identify patterns in both the form and function of security groups, and thus is greatly needed to develop a full picture of the role these groups play within their communities and in relation to the state.

Data: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)’s Uganda survey was designed to explore livelihoods trajectories, basic services, and governance among conflict-affected populations in northern Uganda. In 2013 and 2015 the SLRC implemented a panel survey of 1,551 households in 90 villages across Lango and Acholi sub-regions. These two sub-regions of Uganda were most affected by the conflict between the LRA and the GoU, and are home to approximately 3.63 million people (Mazurana et al. 2014, viii). The survey contained nearly 200 questions and was representative of the villages and the two sub-regions it was carried out in. In 2015, an extra module was added to ask about the presence and helpfulness of key security actors, including state

actors (police, military, and local councilor), as well as local security mechanisms (community presence, traditional authorities, local security groups, and Crime Preventers).

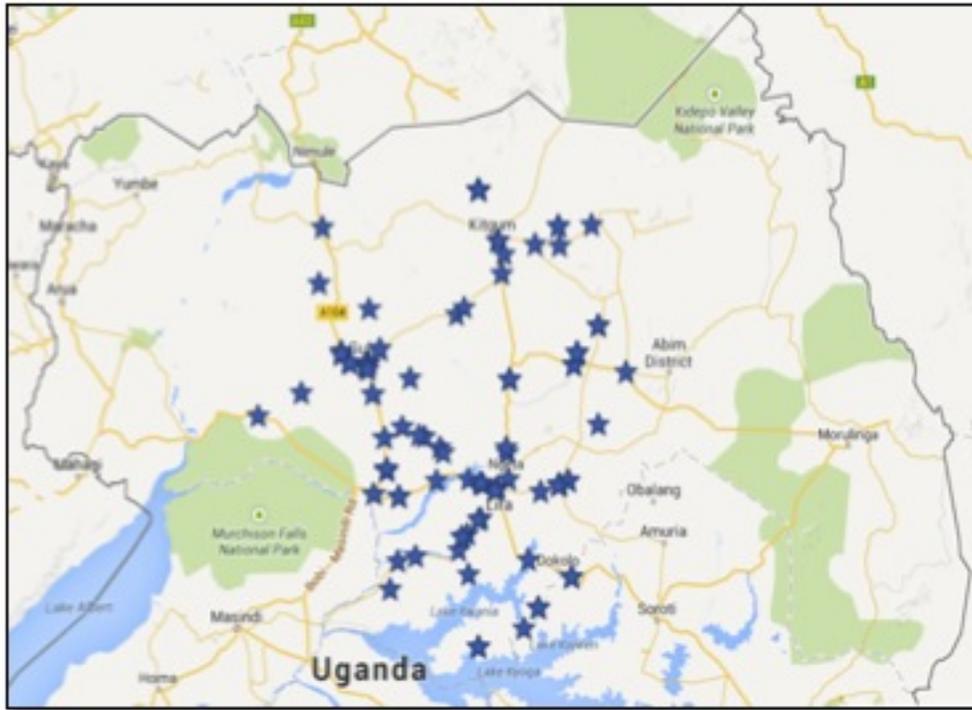


Figure 4.1: Map of villages sampled in SLRC 2013 and 2015. Image courtesy of SLRC.

I procured raw data from the SLRC and cleaned it myself.⁶⁴ Overall, sources of bias appear limited. In the second round of data collection, enumerators used tablets to record responses, which help decrease human error in capturing responses. Although there was an 82% retention rate between the first and second rounds of the survey, attrition is random on observable measures and the sample remains representative. Because of the potential sensitivity of questions related to security, I also looked at non-response rates to see if respondents refused to answer certain questions in a way that might have introduced bias. The highest non-response rate for questions

⁶⁴ Decisions made during the cleaning process and/or construction of relevant variables may result in some statistical differences from SLRC findings.

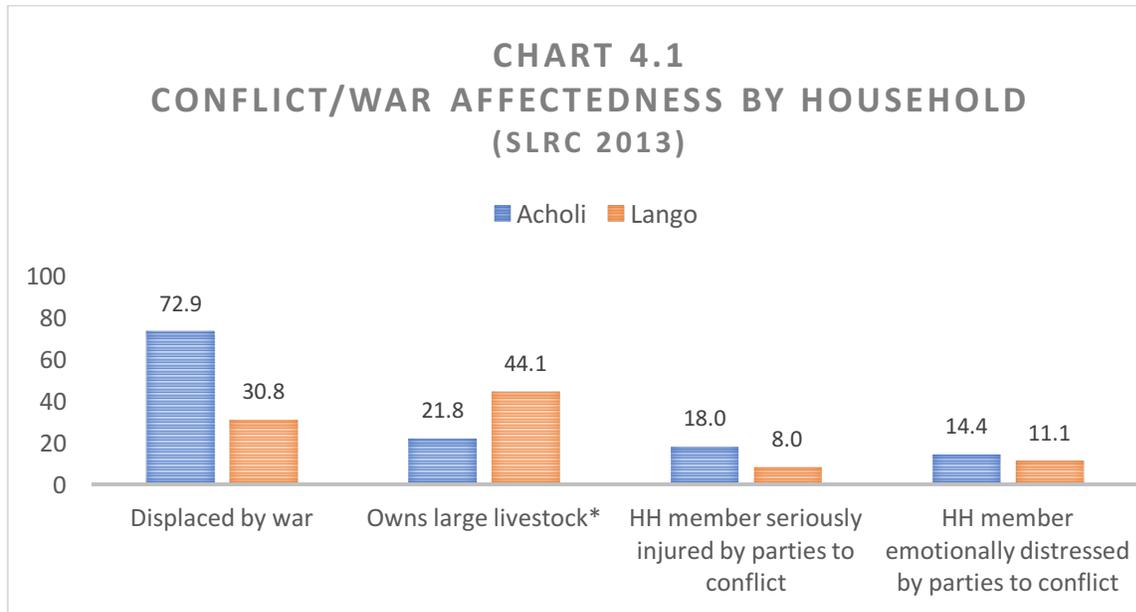
about the presence of security actors was for “local security groups” (7.63% in Acholi and 4.6% in Lango) and “Crime Preventers” (7.08% in Acholi and 6.09% in Lango), suggesting that at least some respondents were not sure of how to respond or did not want to respond. Non-response rates for other security actors ranged between 5% and 1%. These were lower than some other questions that might be particularly sensitive. For instance, a question prompting: “the central government cares about me and my opinions” had a non-response rate of 11.85% in Acholi and 7.95% in Lango. If non-response was due to respondents’ discomfort in evaluating certain security and justice actors, it would likely bias results in favor of these providers (that is, people who fear or dislike the provider are less likely to respond to the question, thereby resulting in an artificially positive average evaluation).

The security landscape in northern Uganda

There are significant differences between respondents in Acholi and Lango sub-regions.⁶⁵ Respondents in Acholi reported higher levels of conflict-affectedness based on several measures, including displacement due to war, having a household member injured seriously by parties to the conflict, and having a household member who experienced emotional distress at the hands of parties to the conflict (see Chart 4.1). Additionally, ownership of large livestock remains low in Acholi, which is likely the legacy of cattle raiding that occurred prior to and throughout the conflict (see chapter 3). These results reflect the fact that Acholi sub-region was the geographic epicenter

⁶⁵ Sub-region is practically coterminous with ethnicity—96% of respondents in Acholi sub-region were Acholis, while 99% of respondents in Lango were Langi.

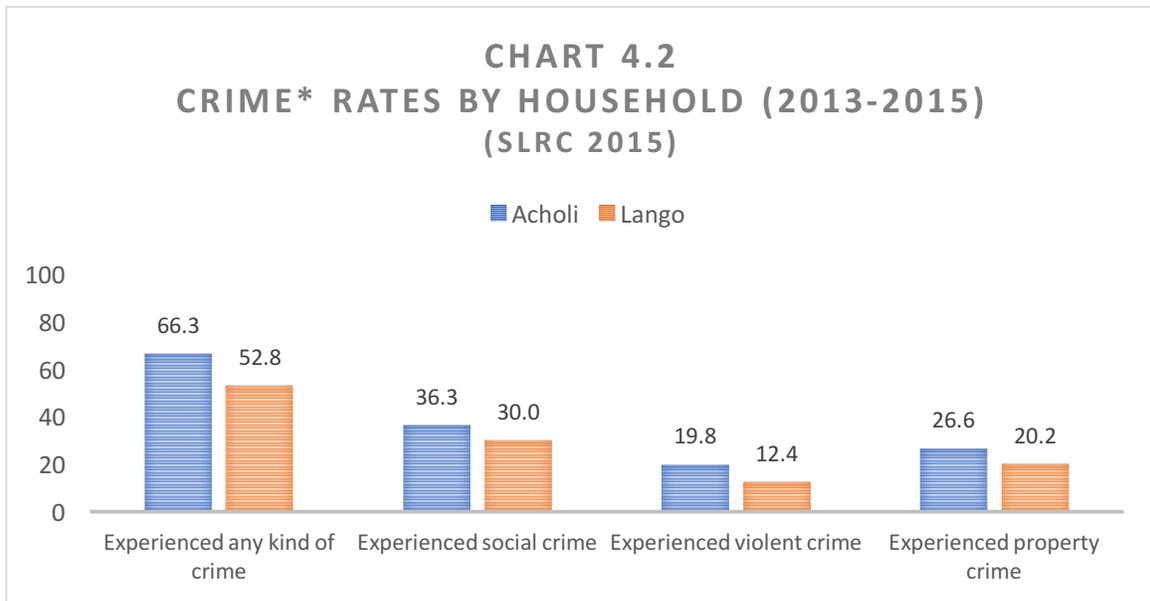
of the conflict and experienced violence for the duration of the war. Although Lango sub-region was directly affected, violence arrived later and affected districts heterogeneously.⁶⁶



* As discussed in chapter 3, cattle stock were depleted during the conflict, mainly due to raiding (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 12). Thus, I use ownership of large livestock as a measure of conflict affectedness.

Similarly, Acholi reported higher crime rates than Lango between 2013 and 2015 in all categories of crime, reporting approximately six percentage points higher rates of social crimes, violent crimes, and property crimes (see Chart 4.2).

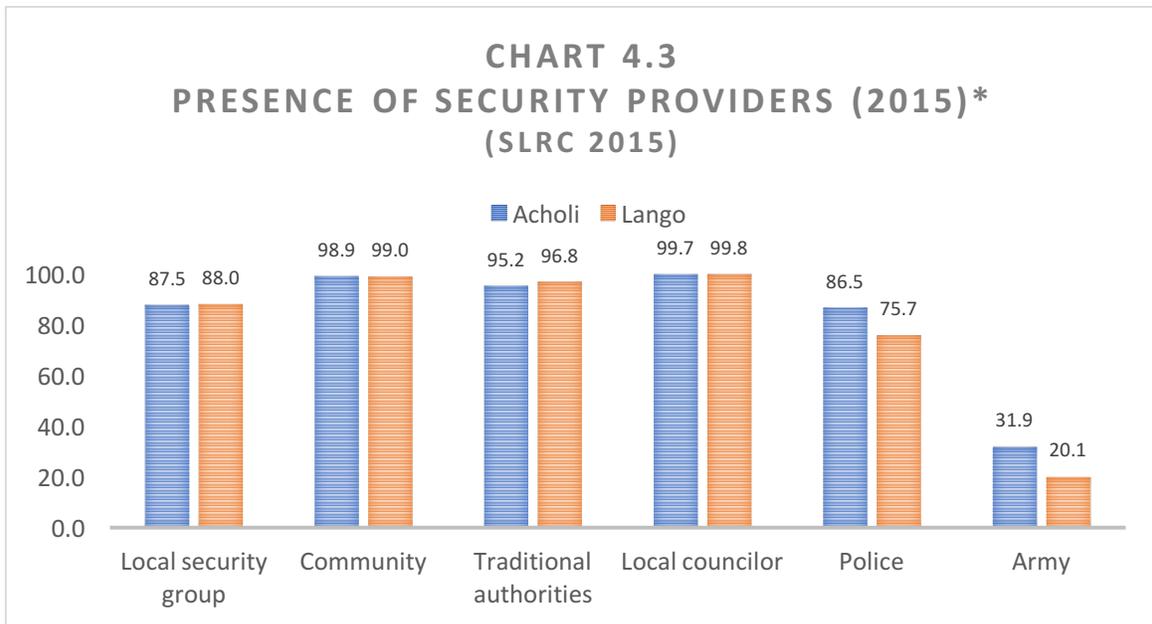
⁶⁶ The SLRC finds that 55% of households in Acholi experienced war crimes as compared with 28% of households in Lango (Mazurana et al. 2014, 29).



* All statistics for crimes are derived from the SLRC survey, which asked about 12 distinct types of crimes. For ease of data interpretation, I have grouped these 12 types of crimes into three categories: *social crimes*, *violent crimes*, and *property crimes*. ***Social crimes*** include verbal threats, witchcraft and poisoning. I have categorized these together because they all carry significant cosmological weight. Verbal threats can often be interpreted as a kind of curse, which might be fulfilled by acts of witchcraft and poisoning (Stewart and Strathen 2004). I categorize poisoning as a social crime, because it frequently refers to events akin to witchcraft—e.g., a person can be “poisoned” by a cursed object placed in his or her home, or even by a touch (Allen and Reid 2015, 112–13). Poisoning is often used to describe a sudden and unexpected death of a seemingly healthy person (also see Mergelsberg 2012). Although I distinguish witchcraft and poisoning from violent crimes this is not meant to suggest they are not experienced as violent. However, it is helpful to distinguish between violations that rely more heavily on the spiritual world and social order versus those that originate from a physically violent act, because—as a broad generalization—they fall under the jurisdiction of different security and justice providers. ***Violent crimes*** include physical assault, sexual assault, harm to children, abduction and murder. ***Property crimes*** include theft, theft of livestock, burglary, and land grabbing.

While my findings show that local security actors are called on to respond to more material security concerns (like property crimes), the high rate of social crimes is an important indication of the social fragmentation that respondents reported in qualitative interviews as motivating the formation of local security groups.

Despite these high levels of crime, respondents in both Acholi and Lango reported the presence of numerous security actors (chart 4.3).

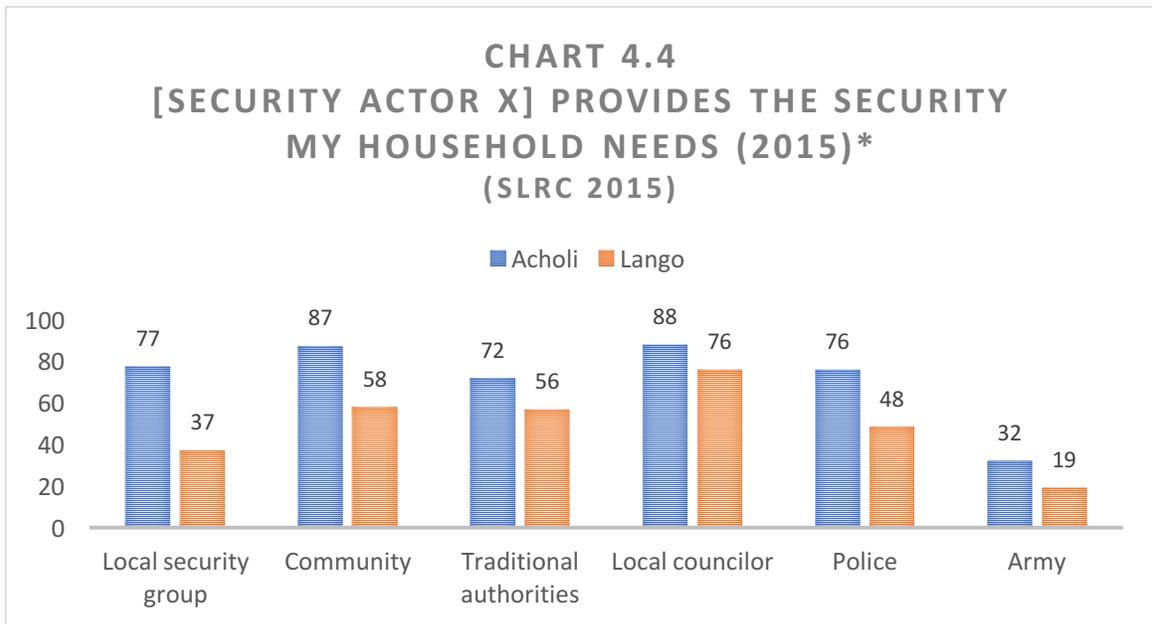


* Respondents were asked “Does [security actor X] provide you with the security services your household needs?” with possible responses ranging from “Always” to “No, never [they are present but not helpful]” and “Not present in my village”. Chart 4.3 shows all responses except “not present in my village.”

Chart 4.3 illustrates that respondents perceive the presence of all five categories of security actors that they were asked about. Langis and Acholis reported a nearly identical presence of local security groups, the community, LCs, and traditional authorities.⁶⁷ Acholis reported a higher presence of state security actors (police and the military) by 10%. Gulu is home to the Fourth Division Barracks, and may also have a higher state security presence as a result of legacies from the GoU-LRA war as well as the instability of the border with Sudan and later South Sudan.

Even though respondents in both sub-regions generally reported that security actors were present at the same rates, Acholis reported that security actors more frequently provided them and their households with the security their household needed as compared with Langis (compare chart 4.3 and 4.4).

⁶⁷ The research question asked “*Lo dito kaka nyo lo tela me ker kwaro pa Acholi miyo kony me gwoko kuc ma dano igangi mito?*” specifically referring to the Ker Kal Kwaro Acholi and thus encompassing clan leaders within the broader umbrella of traditional leaders.



* Respondents were asked “Does [security actor X] provide you with the security services your household needs?” with possible responses ranging from “Always” to “No, never [they are present but not helpful]” and “Not present in my village”. Chart 4.4 re-weights responses to include only those who said the actor was present, and shows those who said the actor provides security “Yes, sometimes” or “Yes, always”.

Given that the question asked if security actors provided the security needed, there is no reason to think households with lower security needs would have given worse evaluations of security actors or vice versa. To the contrary, it should be easier for security actors to provide the security needed to those with fewer security needs. Additionally, people who experienced crimes reported lower satisfaction with security and governance providers across the board, except for traditional authorities where the correlation is positive. This suggests that those who needed the help of authorities to resolve conflicts or violations judged those authorities more harshly. Thus, while respondents in both sub-regions reported similar material experiences in terms of the presence of security actors in their communities, Langis reported lower satisfaction with those same actors.

The pattern between Lango and Acholi holds for the perceived helpfulness of both official state security actors (police, military, and local councilors) and non-state security actors

(traditional authorities, the community, and local security groups), all of whom were perceived as more helpful in Acholi sub-region as compared to Lango. However, my qualitative research in Lira District revealed similar local security arrangements to those in Gulu, in which young men assisted the LC in making arrests and, at times, conducted patrols. The clear discrepancies in perception between Lango and Acholi sub-regions may suggest that Langis have higher expectations for security actors than Acholi. One explanation for this is that the cumulative effects of decades of displacement and conflict have shaped civilian perspectives on security, such that Acholis have unusually low expectations for security actors and thus find them effective as compared to the recent past. Another complementary explanation is that Acholi, as the epicenter of the conflict, has received the bulk of international humanitarian and reconstruction aid. Thus, Acholis may be relatively more satisfied with their current situation than Langis, who feel in comparison that their needs have been neglected. The discrepancies in perception between Lango and Acholi sub-region suggest that my findings are valid in Acholi sub-region, but merit further investigation in other areas of the country. As a result, I focus the remainder of my analysis and findings on the Acholi sub-region.

Security landscape in Acholi sub-region

Within Acholi sub-region, rural and urban areas revealed different security assemblages, particularly regarding the role of state security actors as compared with traditional security actors. In rural locales, respondents surveyed by the SLRC reported that traditional authorities were almost universally present (97.46%), while in urban areas only 83.62% of respondents report their presence. Traditional authorities were also viewed as more helpful, with 74.48% of interviewees

in rural areas reporting that traditional authorities sometimes or always provided the security their household needed, as compared with 54.64% of respondents living in urban and peri-urban areas. This is to be expected: traditional authorities are frequently clan leaders or *rwot*, whose authority is often based on claims to land as well as familial relations (Atkinson 2010, also see chapter 2 for a discussion of clan authority).

In contrast, police outposts are frequently located at the sub-county headquarters, where there is usually a small trading center, other government buildings, and often a health center. The reported presence of the police (96% in urban areas and 84.46% in rural areas) is impressive given that the Ugandan Police Force consistently reports being understaffed and under-resourced. Still, police were statistically more likely to be perceived as present in urban areas at a 99% confidence level, although not statistically more likely to be perceived as helpful. While these differences in magnitude may seem large, they are still smaller than the overall differences between Lango and Acholi sub-regions.

Local security actors, however, were reported to be nearly ubiquitous in both rural and urban areas, and were perceived to be more helpful than the police in rural areas (77.21% rated local security actors as helpful, as compared to 74.6% for police) and nearly as helpful as the police in urban areas (78.30% rated local security actors as helpful as compared with 80% for police). Indeed, the differences between police and local security actors were statistically significant at a 99% confidence level in rural areas, but were not statistically significant in urban areas. That is, in urban areas, local security actors were statistically just as likely to be perceived of as helpful as police officers, and in rural areas, they were more likely to be perceived of as helpful. Moreover, local security actors are neither a rural nor an urban phenomenon.

This analysis shows that far from facing a security and governance gap, citizens in Acholi sub-region perceive the presence of multiple security and justice actors. While these authorities are not uniformly perceived of as helpful, in Acholi they are perceived as helpful more often than not. Local security groups were perceived of as providing the security that households needed more than traditional, the police, and the military. The perceived helpfulness of local security groups further points out that they are a significant factor in the landscape of local security provision, and should not be overlooked. Thus, the following section provides an in-depth qualitative look at local security groups, including their role in the community, the internal dynamics of the groups, and the identities of the individuals who participate in them.

Understanding local security groups in and around Gulu Town

This section builds on the initial quantitative analysis, discussing the role of local security groups in the community, as well as some of the internal dynamics of such groups and the individuals that participate in them. It shows that while the form and function of local security groups remains fluid, they are typically interconnected to the local community as well as with other security and justice providers. At the same time, their position is fragile. While authorities at times champion them as providers of local security, at other times these same authorities disown them and disavow their activities.

The form and function of security groups in the community

In and around Gulu Town, community security initiatives take a variety of forms, from organizations that extract communal resources for private benefit to more bureaucratic organizations that intervene in a range of governance issues and uphold commonly agreed-upon community rules. Some local security initiatives are highly institutionalized, with procedures for detention, trial, and judgment; others mobilize in seemingly spontaneously acts that resemble mob justice, compared in my interviews to “natural disasters” in their degree of unpredictability. A given group can oscillate between the two, becoming more active and organized when their services are needed and lapsing when the security situation improves.

Respondents often narrated contemporary security groups as a response to insecurities resulting from the conflict and long stays in internally displaced people’s camps, into which many citizens were forcibly moved during the conflict. One government security officer explained:

When we moved from the camp back home, there were a lot of challenges regarding security. When people were in camp, some youth never had time to attain education. The majority of those youth became jobless; many were sitting redundant, doing no work. They need a lot of things in life: phones, go for this disco, some even smoke and drink, running girls up and down. Movement on *boda boda* [motorcycle taxi]... Even going to saloon [for haircuts], playing cards, those things need money. But where do you get the money from? Many don’t go through proper channels. So they became security problems. Of course there should be an answer to it. The answer is the youth group, the Crime Preventers, and the rest of it (GISO, Gulu District, 18 November 2014).

The emphasis on loss of moral order due to camp life and subsequent need to police wrong doers and idlers stands out in this account. Many people also emphasized that the communities they returned to are not the communities they left, explaining that governing a heterogeneous

community presents challenges. One 63-year-old woman reflected on this change, echoing other respondents:

[During the war] cultural practices went into limbo. It [cultural practice] was the only way we, the elders had to discipline the children...the children do not listen to us the elders. If they did, some of the situation [crime and moral decay] would have been contained by today (63-year-old woman, Gulu District, 11 November 2014).

Another respondent, a 28-year-old male, explained the motivation for the formation of their security group:

In the community, we had people of all different kinds. Near the barracks there were prostitutes looking for money, soldiers who were murdered when people hit them on the head with bottles... The LCI said, 'What can we do?' (28-year-old male security group member, Gulu District, 27 February 2014).

These comments highlight the perceived need to manage, discipline, and control behavior to establish a good living environment. Porter (2016) has described this as “social harmony,” while Sverker Finnström (2008) writes about “good surroundings” or *piny maber*. Both concur that for Acholi, peace and security are communal in nature, requiring the protection of a hierarchal, patriarchal, and gerontocratic society, in which spiritual order is paramount.

Many respondents explained that local security groups were meant to foster a good environment in which to raise children. For example, the main argument articulated against domestic violence⁶⁸ was its negative effects on children: “Domestic violence results in separation of the wife and husband, and then the children become street children, they have no home, and

⁶⁸ In northern Uganda, the term “domestic violence” is used to encompass any sort of conflict between husband and wife that mars the surface of good relations. For example, if a wife is disrespectful to her husband or delays at the market, this can be called “domestic violence.” It also encompasses more Western notions of wife beating and instances of violence that women initiate against men.

they become criminals” (Community Policing Forum Chairman, Gulu District, 6 October 2014).

A 28-year-old member of a local security group explained:

We patrol also to enforce other laws related to health, sanitation, education...because we believe that there is both nature and nurture. If children are brought up in an environment that is dirty, where people are fighting, where they do not have to attend school, they will think this is the way things are. We bring parents to justice. Because of this, we are really trying to emphasize [getting rid of] domestic violence—when the husband drinks and beats his wife, the problem is now with children (28-year-old male security group member, Gulu District, 27 February 2014).

Despite the narrative of local security groups as a response to post-war social chaos, such groups were almost certainly in existence long before the war and displacement. Indeed, many other respondents cited the origins of local security groups to the times of Resistance Councils or even earlier. As described above, Uganda has a long history of local militias. However, the fact that people understand local security as a part of post-war reconstruction is significant—the groups are framed as necessary to reinstate the correct social or moral order that existed “before”.

One dimension of the groups’ role is to enforce by-laws created at a village level. These laws, whether written or unwritten, are typically determined by the local council and approved at a community meeting. By-laws emphasize proper behavior and moral order within the community. For example, they stipulate that women should not engage in sex work.⁶⁹ They also frequently require that children attend school and be prohibited from entering dance halls. Many by-laws also outlaw witchcraft and wizardry, and outlaw fighting and theft. They also impose social regulations, for example, limiting hours for selling alcohol and banning drugs and gambling. Some by-laws

⁶⁹ I did not come across any by-laws that stipulated that men should not pay for sex. This may be in part because gift-giving is a common and accepted aspect of courtship (also see Hunter 2002).

also specify punishments, such as a specific fine or number of cane strokes. An LCI narrated a set of rules that similarly express desired social order:

I had a copy of the by-laws, but I lost the sheet of paper. They included community roads—if you don't show up to dig, then we take a chicken from your house, sell it, and share the proceeds among those who did the work. Also, you must pay 5,000 shillings if you don't send your children to school; there is no walking after 10pm until morning; no playing music loudly; no unnecessary fighting of housewives; and no over drinking or shouting. Also, under my leadership, I decided everyone must have one full garden for cassava, because that is our staple food. There is no playing of cards, and no sitting around in the morning drinking [alcohol] (LCI Chairman, Lira District, 7 November 2014).

By-laws are supposed to be approved at the sub-county level, where they can be checked for accordance with Uganda's Constitution and other relevant laws, and be stamped by the LCIII. In practice, by-laws are often not formally recorded, and can be difficult to access.⁷⁰

Although security groups frequently prosecute infractions that concern the community (e.g., gambling or overdrinking) while neglecting those that do not (e.g., marital disputes), this pattern does not always hold. Just like the police, security groups at times intervene in matters that are considered outside their jurisdiction (see chapter 6 for a discussion of a group that intervened in a domestic dispute). Security groups frequently function as a deterrent to unwanted activities, particularly theft of livestock. One community member narrated an example of what the local security group does in his area.

⁷⁰ In several cases when I requested to see a community's local by-laws, respondents either informed me that they were unwritten, or showed me a book of minutes from the local council with a haphazard and annotated list of by-laws noted down in ballpoint pen. It seems unlikely that the specifics of these rules are known throughout the community. Their relative informality indicates a level of flexibility in their application, as well as that they reflect community norms to the extent that although people may not know the exact wording of a by-law, they share expectations for appropriate behavior.

I can remember in October 2013 around 11:00 in the night when the security group arrested three people moving with herds of cattle towards Gulu Town. When the security group asked the people for a permission letter from their area of origin, they couldn't produce it...[t]he security group detained the cattle and told the people to come for the animals the following day. The three people reported [in the morning], but the real owner of the cattle was already informed so when he came he was ordered to wait for the [others]. As the three people reached the LCI, the security group and the few community members were there. It was ruled that the three people were thieves and they were forwarded to the police. I don't know what transpired from there (Community member, Gulu District, 31 October 2014).

The detention of the animals (or stolen property) and deciding the case the following morning are common themes in such retellings. Additionally, the anecdote highlights how security groups function as both security and justice actors—indeed, in practice investigation, arrest, detention, charge, hearing, judgment, sentencing, and punishment frequently blend together.⁷¹

Central state officials and locals alike expect communities to handle some problems at a village level. Common examples include petty theft, fighting, and witchcraft. A lawyer explained:

You know, there are also those events you can handle on your own, not everything has to be forwarded to the police. You can provide instant justice, immediately. Especially for juveniles, because they are never treated by the police (Lawyer, Gulu District, 1 March 2014).

Negotiating the discrepancies between community norms and state norms are a difficult part of local security work (as further elaborated in chapter 6). Community strategies for managing infractions reveal a particular understanding of offense and recourse that are justified both for

⁷¹ For more on the theoretical relationship among these components of the “criminal justice chain,” see Domingo and Denney (2013).

moral and practical reasons. For example, in Gulu the punishments for witchcraft and theft are exile from the community or mob violence.⁷²

Although community members are generally supportive of security groups, they also have many complaints, accusing security group members of excessive violence, pursuit of personal enrichment, or engagement in the very activities they are meant to police. During my research, one group in particular faced serious complaints from the outset: within a few months of commencing operation, the group was implicated in an act of mob violence in which a thief, infamous in the community, was caught and killed. The group faced numerous other accusations of wrong-doing, including harassment, theft, and corruption which were generally attributed to bad leadership (see Chapter 8 for more details on this group). Other respondents told me that security group members use their right to patrol at night to seduce women. These sorts of complaints illustrate some of the ways in which security groups are “ambiguous, shadowy...institutions” (Pratten 2006). Fluidity in form and function can work to the benefit of participants, allowing them to consolidate enough to extract resources, but remain fluid enough that criticisms can be shifted onto the shoulders of individual offenders, thereby deterring citizens from categorizing the entire group as an extractive or corrosive entity.

To enforce by-laws and prevent crime, security groups frequently conduct night patrols, detaining and punishing those they deem to be suspects or criminals. Various respondents described how security group members would require (male) “suspects” to remove their shirt and shoes and sit by the side of the road. While some security groups marched suspects to the nearest police post for detention, others locked them in a hut or at the home of the LCI overnight to determine their guilt or innocence in the morning. Still others required detainees to patrol with the

⁷² Also see Suzette Heald’s research (1986) on how Gisu of eastern Uganda understood witchcraft and theft as similarly deviant.

security group until morning, when they would be taken to the home of the LCI for judgment.⁷³ Many explained that judgment was better done “in the light” and in front of the community to protect the security group from suspicion of wrongdoing. Although the legality of detaining a fellow civilian is questionable, one local authority explained:

In some places farther away, the groups do sometimes detain people—but in a way this is good for the police too. How can the police go 50km in one night? So as long as they are delivered in the morning, it is a favor to the police as well (Community Policing Forum Chairman, Gulu District, 6 October 2014).



Image 4.2: Two batons used during night patrols (photo by Rebecca Tapscott, Gulu District, 2015).

Many security groups patrol with the police or military at least sometimes. In this capacity, they help state security forces identify wrongdoers, bolster the police’s numbers, and identify “blackspots” where wrongdoers reside. Security group members explain that patrolling with police has the benefit of providing them with access to firearms. Without the police, security group night patrols are armed with sticks, batons or ropes, and less often, with bow and arrow or machetes (see image 4.2).

Members of security groups expressed apprehension about run-ins with wrongdoers, who might have lethal weapons on hand. One LCI colorfully described the risks faced by the group in his village:

⁷³ Those who were detained at night often did not have a proper coat or shoes to patrol at night, and thus spent an uncomfortable night walking around in the dark as a captive. In this way, detention could serve as its own type of punishment.

[T]he [two] night[s] when the police were patrolling with the group, there were a number of people going by on motorcycles who would not stop [for the roadblock]—they almost knocked the police. If people going by don't even fear the police with guns, what chance do we have against them? At that time, I told the youths not to patrol anymore... A person who comes from far away to kill without a gun might be having something different, or be a trained person. They might have different kinds of weapons like a 'spring knife.' What would the government do? You'll just die alone (LCI Chairman, Gulu District, 8 October 2014).

Patrolling *with* the police has the added benefit of not getting arrested or hassled *by* the police: many security group members explained that without identification cards or other credentials they were at risk of being categorized as wrong-doers. Indeed, to avoid this problem, one group even made its own laminated identification cards, while others carried letters from the LCI. This resembles the behavior of vigilante groups in other studies who make claims to authority, adopting symbols, rhetoric and institutional forms of public authority, for example, uniforms or ID cards, rules of procedure, or formal titles (Lund 2006a). Another perspective offered by several respondents and supported by the quantitative analysis later in this chapter, suggests that when patrols are conducted jointly, police and security group members serve as checks on each other, each preventing the other from exercising excessive force and extorting civilians.

Thus, local security initiatives play a variety of roles, responding to crimes that are defined with respect to an overall holistic moral order, even though their work is generally defined in more conventional security terms. They also support police patrols in the community upon request and at times act out of personal interest, thereby creating another form of insecurity in the community.

Internal dynamics of community security groups

Nominally, members of security groups are nominated by the LCI and approved at community meetings with a show of hands. Many respondents explained that the community can identify upstanding citizens qualified to perform security duties. Additionally, community members who attend the meetings will know who is in the security group and who is not. In practice, I found that interested individuals were able to join groups outside of community meetings. Although most groups attempted to identify upstanding community members, some took the opposite approach, intentionally selecting wrong-doers hoping to reform them and use their networks to identify other criminals:

We selected those who are very stubborn—those who smoke—because they know who is doing bad things. An example was a boy who was arrested—those who were in the group turned him in. He was selling marijuana. The boy denied his involvement. But the policeman was smelling it, and then he saw it on top of the latrine. They then took the boy to the police. Later, he was released. He is still continuing that [security] work up until now (LCI Chairman, Gulu District, 17 October 2014).

Thomas Kirsch (2010) identifies a related phenomenon in South Africa's Community Policing Forums, in which the democratic ideals of participation and transparency permit anyone, including criminals, to join. According to Kirsch, this undermines the morality, effectiveness and legitimacy of the Community Policing Forums. Thus, incorporation of wrongdoers can serve contradictory purposes: keeping a closer watch over problem causers, or simply providing them with new opportunities to commit crimes in the community. However, in Gulu, individual members of local security groups are dependent on their communities. Moreover, community members can easily

take complaints to the LCI or the participant's family, thereby holding security group members accountable for their actions.

Perhaps to manage challenges arising from a young, diverse, and at times, unpredictable membership, security groups typically establish rules for their own internal functioning. One group elaborated their unwritten rules:

- Show maximum respect to the community and the Office [of the LCI].
- No theft.
- No overdrinking.
- No bribery.
- No gambling.
- No smoking.

These rules, which often dictate both the group's form and function, show that the moral behavior of the group members is an important dimension of their perceived authority to enforce rules on the community. Of course, as will be further elaborated, members of security groups frequently disobey these rules. Security groups also often have designated roles in the group, although they are by no means uniform across different security groups. The two-man security team of an LCI in Lira District consisted of the "corporal" and the "brigadier"; another group had a designated "whip master"⁷⁴; while many more have a president, vice-president, secretary, and treasurer. Positions are often determined internally, formally by vote of the group after members have been selected.

Security groups have high turnover, both because it is difficult to motivate participants, and because they find themselves on the wrong side of the law. Members of security groups are

⁷⁴ The "whip master" was formally tasked with caning suspects, the logic being that this would help regulate use of violence. However, the position was vacant at the time of interview. The man had been removed from the group after being accused of engaging in incest.

loath to discuss this topic—I learned about it more from observations than interviews. For example, in one security group, the LCI Defense Secretary and a security group member were arrested for assaulting a suspect. The community took up a collection to pay their bail; however, the secretary of the security group absconded with the funds.

Respondents almost universally noted that the work of security group members was unpaid, and thus it was very difficult to motivate them to work—and also difficult to prevent them from turning to theft themselves. Some communities attempted to ameliorate this situation by collecting a donation from each household, usually between 500 and 1,000 UGX per month (0.17-0.34 USD). However, I only came across one community where this collection lasted more than one or two collection cycles; often security group members recalled with resentment unfulfilled promises from the community to provide some small support. One security group member elaborated another challenge of receiving financial support from community members:

We don't accept [money] from the community [anymore]. We [found that] people who contributed also made mistakes—so when we would come to arrest them, they would start abusing us, saying that ‘What are you doing trying to arrest me when I am supporting you?’ This happened about four times. Instead, we get appreciation from people who are taken before the LC—there is a 5,000 shilling tax, and we save it. We use the savings as a ROSCA, with a 10% interest rate. The loan must be returned within a month. This is good, because before, our wives were complaining, saying, ‘You're not being paid, why don't you stay home?’ But the wives can use the money for small loans and make some income (28-year-old male security group member, Gulu District, 10 October 2014).

In many cases, the complainant is expected to provide a donation to the individuals who intervened in the case, typically ranging from 2,000-3,000 UGX—or 0.68-1 USD. The donation shows appreciation and can be used for airtime or to hire a motorcycle taxi to transport a suspect to the police. One secretary in a local security group explained that it was difficult to keep youth

participating in the group because of its voluntary nature. He explained:

Most members are not very happy because there is no motivation. To keep them in the group, I tell them, ‘If you leave, who will do security? You never know, you might be promoted, and become someone different’ (Male community security group member, Gulu District, 14 October 2014).

Although community members are frequently unwilling to provide for the groups themselves, they also lament the lack of support, and propose that it might be found through other venues, including NGOs, government training programs, and donations from as-yet unidentified western patrons.

As often as community members praise security group members, they criticize them, using the terms “crime preventer” and “crime promoter” almost interchangeably. Nonetheless, security groups are comprised of locals—although at times the police ask them to help with patrols outside the community, left to their own devices they are generally a very local enterprise. This makes them somewhat accountable to community members who can take complaints about security group behavior to the LCI or even to the family of the participant.

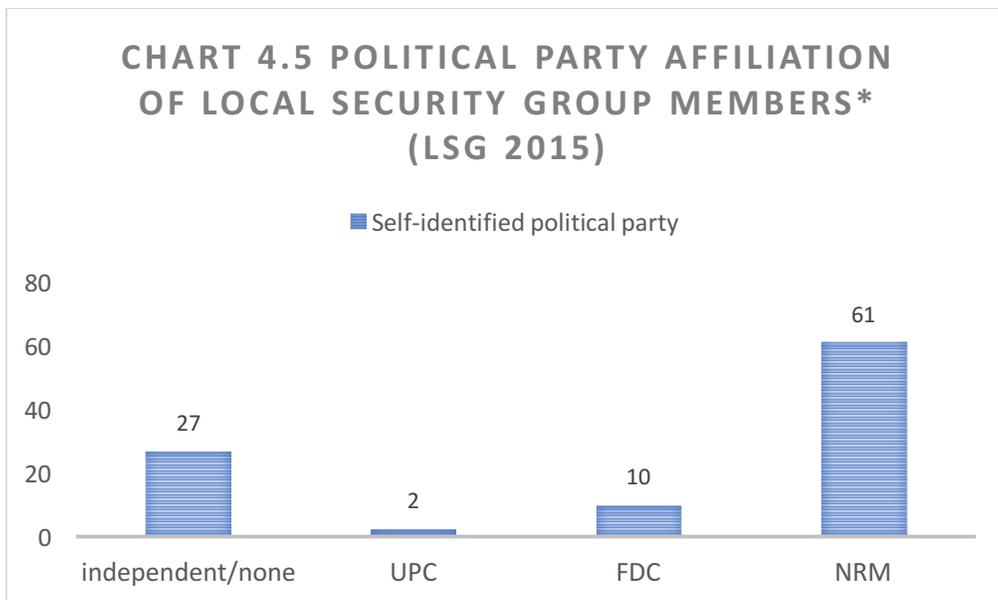
Individual level characteristics of security group membership

In the following section I draw on qualitative research as well as a survey of four security groups drawn from the four divisions of Gulu Municipality. The survey was conducted in Acholi by my research assistant. The four security groups surveyed were selected based on our knowledge of currently functioning and cohesive security groups, and includes all members of the four groups, including four individuals who had left their groups, for a total of 41 respondents. Although the survey may not have external validity such that it is representative of all security groups in Gulu

Town, it provides descriptive statistics for four seemingly typical security groups. I refer to it as “LSG 2015” to distinguish it from the SLRC data.

Opportunities and obstacles related to politics and security

My qualitative research showed no evidence that local security groups are associated with any given political party or broader political agenda. Although I found one case where a local security group worked with an elected politician, he appeared to be using them to bolster his personal reputation rather than in association with a specific political party (see chapter 8). Even though security groups appear to exist for non-political reasons and engage in largely apolitical activities, members of local security groups identified disproportionately as NRM (see Chart 4.5).

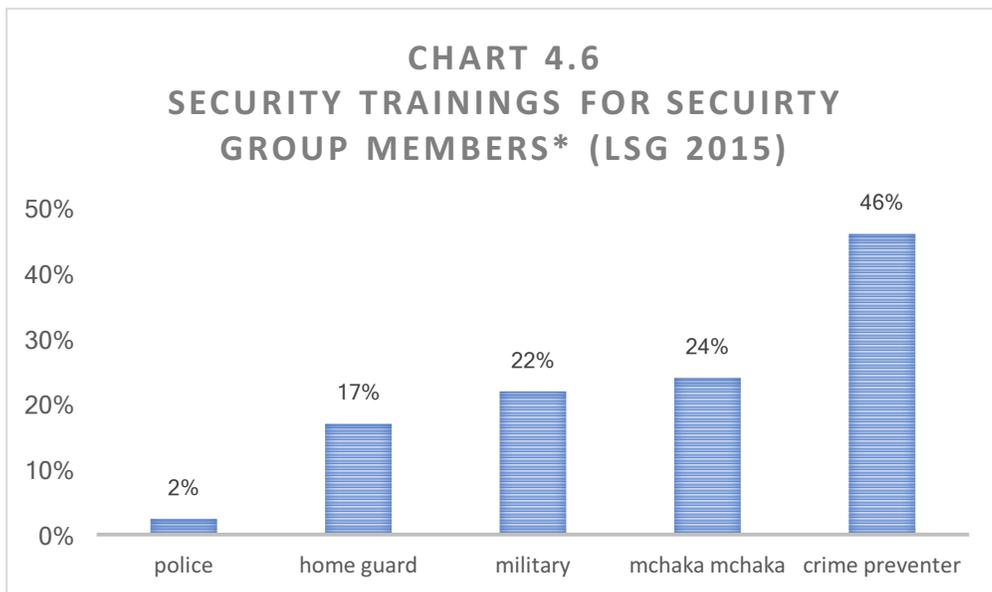


* The survey question asked, “What is your political party?” The answer was left open-ended.

This might be expected for a few reasons. The first two explanations are related to the timing of the survey, which was conducted in November 2015, two months before the February 2016

elections. The second two explanations are related to the structure of security and governance systems in northern Uganda. Thus, the first possible explanation is that the question of political affiliation may have been viewed as sensitive at this time, causing respondents to report that they support the NRM, even if they did not. Additionally, many who reported being “independent” likely supported the FDC and simply did not feel comfortable responding to the question. Second, as I elaborate below, members of local security groups are often opportunistic. Around election time, there were new opportunities for making extra money, typically around supporting the NRM whether by joining Crime Preventers (see chapter 10) or simply attending rallies. Third, the security services are widely believed to support the NRM, and thus, respondents who engage in security work and security trainings may be more amenable to the NRM than those who do not. Finally, as mentioned, many security groups work closely with the LCI. As discussed in chapter 2, elections for LCI have not been held since 2001, when Uganda was still under a no party political system. Many LCIs still identify as supporters or members of the NRM.

Although the membership of local security groups does not have direct continuity with the numerous other civilian militias that were active throughout the conflict, most of those who participate in these groups have some training or experience in security work. Indeed, 80% of security group members surveyed had participated in some security training, whether *mchaka mchaka*, the government’s Crime Preventer program, or military training (see Chart 4.6).



* Respondents were asked, “Have you participated in any security trainings?” They were prompted with options including police, *mchaka mchaka*, and Crime Preventers, and given the option to provide other responses. Respondents could give as many answers as they wanted.

The average age of participants in local security groups was 32-years-old; thus, their childhood and adolescence were during the height of the conflict, and the only government they have known is the current NRM regime. Although this is somewhat older than typically associated with vigilante activities, this discrepancy can be attributed to the work of security groups, which is generally associated with responsible young adults upholding the social order. The young men who work in security groups are considered “adults” in that have their own huts and usually a live-in girlfriend, although they are typically not formally married and do not have full-time or formal employment. Thus, they are “youth” in the sense that they have not achieved necessary elements of “manhood,” despite being in their late 20s and early 30s. Additionally, reported membership of security groups typically includes the LCI Defense Secretary, and other older members who guide the activities of younger group members.

In my sample, 27% of respondents were ever abducted by the LRA. Of those, 18% were abducted for one to two days, 37% for between three days and one month, and 45% remained in captivity for more than one month. This number is lower than findings by Annan et al., who found that 26% of female youth and 47% of male youth were ever abducted (2011, 883).⁷⁵ There are a few explanations for this discrepancy. The first explanation is methodological. Annan et al. constructed their sample to represent the entire population, including those who never returned from abduction. In contrast, my sample only includes members of security groups, and thus individuals who returned from captivity. Controlling for this difference brings Annan et al.'s estimates of ever-abducted to 37.6% of respondents. The second explanation relies on my qualitative research, which suggests that former abductees may either avoid security work or leverage their experience to find paid security work (whether with the state or a private security actor).

While many security group members have previous exposure to security related activities, in large part they remain amateurs. As a point of contrast, Marielle Debos (2011) writes about “men in arms” during the “interwar” in Chad—men whose “métier” or profession is to provide violence where and when needed. Violence as a *métier* means that both those who perpetrate and experience violence may not want to or be able to distinguish between rebel-motivated, state-motivated, and citizen-motivated violence. Instead, the same individuals engage in similarly extractive activities under these different titles; all categories are a means to personal enrichment through violence. Although these concepts might seem salient for the role of security actors during and after the recent conflict in northern Uganda, they do not reflect the nature of participation in

⁷⁵ Although Annan et al.'s data (the Survey of War Affected Youth or SWAY) was collected in Pader and Kitgum districts, the authors argue that the findings are likely representative of the conflict-affected north more broadly. Nonetheless, this may also contribute to differences between their findings and mine.

contemporary local security initiatives. In and around Gulu, a confluence of factors regulates violence as a means of resource extraction. Factors contributing to regulation of violence for local security groups include extremely limited access to weapons, a high level of dependence on the local community, and arbitrary intervention by state actors, all of which will be discussed more in the following chapters.

Opportunities and obstacles related to social and economic pressures

Members of local security initiatives are almost universally male, and as such, face social and economic pressures that are particularly difficult to achieve in conflict-affected northern Uganda. Out of the four groups surveyed, only one member was a woman—a 31-year-old mother of three, and according to the men in the group, a reformed prostitute—whose husband was in the same security group. The director of a community policing forum explained:

It is not proper for a woman to knock on the door and ask the person inside to open. In Uganda, there is a saying that women are the weaker sex and they can be lured to have sex during the time of work. There is some concern too that the men they work with would take advantage of them (Community Policing Forum Chairman, Gulu District, 6 October 2014).

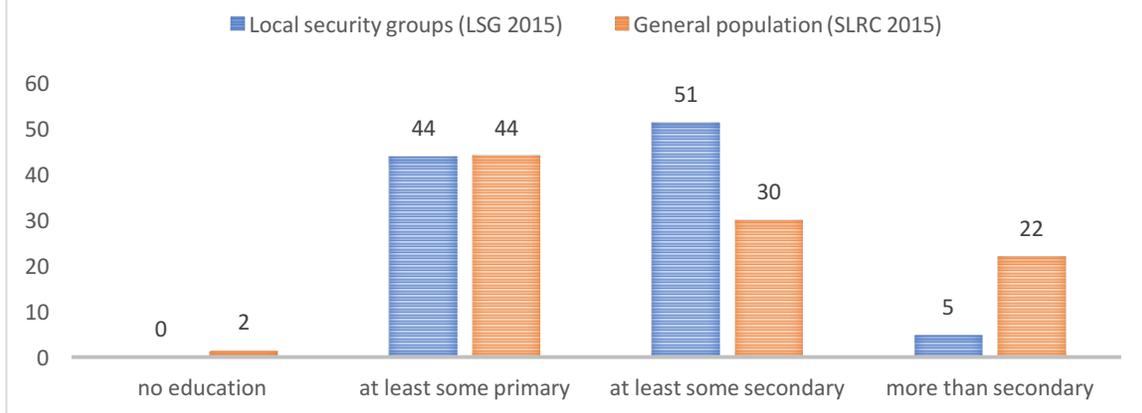
Most men in security groups have families to support. On average, they have three children, and 71% live with a partner to whom they are not formally married. Nearly all the men I interviewed wanted to “get a woman in the house” or to formalize their current relationship. Formalizing relationships can be expensive. It is necessary to pay *luk*, a payment made after a man and woman start a sexual relationship, as well as *lim akumu*, or bride price, to the woman’s family or patrilineal

kin (Porter 2012, 191–92). Together, this often costs as much as 4 million UGX (1,354 USD).⁷⁶ Bride price is often paid in installments; the woman’s family frequently exerts pressure on the man to make good on his debt by bringing their daughter back home (at times forcibly). This tactic can also be used to renegotiate the original settlement. Additionally, if unmarried, the couple’s children traditionally fall under the custody of their maternal grandfather. For the father of the children to raise them at his home, he must pay a fee to the family of the maternal grandfather. The threat of one’s parents-in-law re-appropriating one’s wife or children causes anxiety for men, who are publically shamed by being unable to keep their own family. They also are at risk of losing investments made in their wife, and of course experience emotional stress. Over the course of my research, many men brought these problems to my attention, requesting financial assistance to bring their wives back home.

Approximately half of the security group members surveyed had at least some primary level education; the other half had attended at least some secondary school (see chart 4.7).

⁷⁶ Bride price often is determined based on a combination of how much the family feels it has invested in their daughter, particularly in terms of education, as well as their perception of the suitor’s means. In one case, a family demanded 11 million UGX (3,723 USD) from a soldier recently returned from Somalia, where it is commonly believed soldiers receive a hardship allowance (Hopwood, personal correspondence, 9 May 2016). Additionally, Hopwood (2015, 402) notes poverty seems to have an inflationary effect on demands for bride price.

CHART 4.7
EDUCATION OF LOCAL SECURITY GROUPS
COMPARED TO GENERAL POPULATION*
(LSG 2015, SLRC 2015)



* Respondents were asked, “What is the highest level of education you have completed?”

This reflects a slightly lower academic achievement as compared with all men in Acholi and Lango sub-regions between the ages 21 and 35, where 1.5% had no education; 44% had at least some primary level education; 30% had secondary level education and the remaining 22% had university or technical school training (SLRC 2015 survey data).

Survey respondents universally reported that all their school age children were in school, although often “with difficulties” paying school fees and requirements.⁷⁷ School fees and requirements range substantially in cost. Government primary schools can have fees as low as 35,000 UGX per term (11.80 USD), while the best private schools can cost as much as 600,000 UGX per term (203 USD) (Personal correspondence with northern Uganda education consultant Jody Unterrheiner, 21 May 2016). A recent study by Robert Levine found that most households

⁷⁷ In addition to school fees, students have “requirements” including uniforms and school supplies, as well as contributing materials to teachers and the school.

were spending between 100 and 200 USD per year on school fees, which amounted to the entire cash accumulation households raised in as much time (Levine 2016, 13). One 51-year-old man highlighted the importance of sending children to school as one of the three key things a “good man” should do:

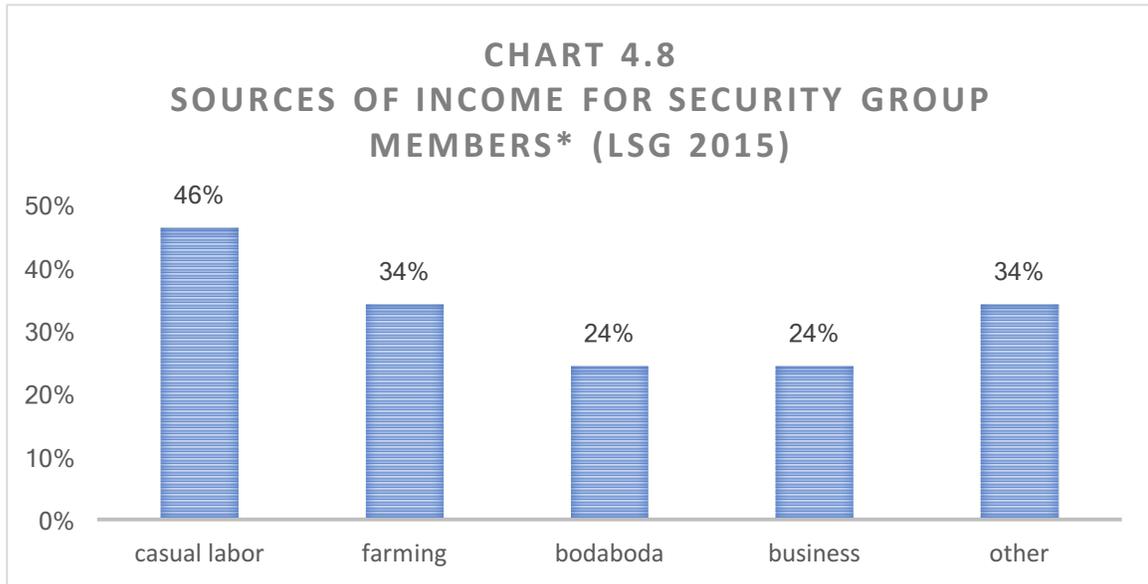
[A good man should be] a responsible person first of all. When you’re not responsible, your focus will come to your toes. You don’t look at where you’re heading to...you may have kids. If you’re not a good man, you don’t think of taking them to school, you become a very good drunkard, and domestic violence is there (51-year-old male community member, Gulu District, 23 September 2015).

He further elaborated the importance of raising children well and being a provider more generally:

The person I really admire someone called [Okot]—the way he brought up his children...The guy had 11 children. All of them are educated. Because he had money, he paid his school fees for all of them. All of them are working; none are staying at home. As per now, since all the kids have studied and have a job, the guy still has money. He’s the one still paying, buying small things for the kids. And he doesn’t want any money from any of the kids. That’s why I was like—if I would be like this guy, I would be happy (51-year-old male community member, Gulu District, 23 September 2015).

Moreover, many report that a major stumbling block in their own lives was a lack of education. Respondents described patching schooling together over time, with support from one sponsor for a few years, then time out of school struggling to find work, until attaining another sponsor and returning to school. Respondents expressed a view that education is intrinsically and instrumentally important. While certain levels of education are required to apply for most NGO or government jobs (including the police and military), sending children to school is also viewed as the right thing to do, and is seen as demonstrating one’s ability to support and provide for family.

All respondents had alternative sources of income, primarily in seasonal work, such as brick laying, farming, or other casual labor (see Chart 4.8). On average, respondents brought in 45,500 UGX per week—or 15.40 USD.



* The survey question asked respondents to name any sources of income for their immediate household. Respondents could give multiple answers.

The “other” activities respondents engaged in ranged from local arts, renting property or motorcycles, and small income earned through holding the position of LCI Chairman.⁷⁸ Thus, members of local security initiatives, like many Ugandan youth, lack access to formal employment. Statistics are telling: approximately 18% of Ugandans are not in education, employment, or training; 66% of the workforce is in agriculture, while 28% are in services and 7% are in the industrial sector. A mere 24% of employed youth receive wages for their work (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). The SLRC data indicates that 94% of respondents in Acholi sub-region have a household member engaged in farming. Only 6% of respondents have a household member who works for a private business or an NGO, while 9% of respondents have a household member who

⁷⁸ LCI Chairman, or the Secretary for Defense on the Local Council, frequently are members of the security group.

works for the government. Work for the local government is not necessarily paid—local councillors at the village and parish levels do not receive a salary. Thus, salaried jobs are scarce, making government jobs in civil or security services highly coveted.

Except for “motivation” from community members or complainants, local security work is generally unpaid. Many youth participate because they believe they might acquire skills—or more likely, connections—that could help them get a job in the future. Another key reason for participation is being “active”—engaging in security work prevents idleness. As many say, “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop”. Community members identify idlers as drunkards, gamblers, thieves, debtors, and even rapists, who are lazy and deviant. Idling is illegal under a colonial-era law. Respondents in Gulu Town were uniformly positive about this law, even though in practice it appears to be used to conduct arbitrary arrests and large-scale “clean ups” or sweeps of youth.⁷⁹

According to many, idleness occurs because of poor parenting and bad peer groups. One 21-year-old male explained that the law against being idle and disorderly is good because it makes people “conduct him or herself with good morals”:

[The law]... help[s] people develop into good citizens and be well behaved to their family and [to other] community members. You can be self-motivated. If you don’t get a job, you’ll be searching for a job. As a youth, you’ll develop a good character and know how to conduct yourself at the right place and right time, and you’ll be respectful to your parents. It’s a good law because there will be development in the community. All people will be engaged with working, and all crimes will be reduced (21-year-old male community member, Gulu District, 10 November 2015).

⁷⁹ During campaigns for the 2016 presidential election, Museveni publically recognized the instrumentalization of the law, saying “I hear they arrest my people in Kampala on ‘idle and disorderly charges’. I don’t want to hear it anymore. Stop arresting my people...My people write it down and remind me, I am going to cancel that instrument” (Y. Mugerwa 2016).

Rather than be idle, respondents said youths should engage in any activity—whether immediately productive or not—with enthusiasm. A 30-year-old male explained:

If you don't have work, you should engage yourself in farming activities like poultry keeping, digging in the garden... Once you feel you're idle, come back home and start doing domestic work... You can also visit new friends, relatives, and so on so that you are not idle. You can also attend court session so you can learn more. In court session, they don't stop anyone from attending so long as you abide by the rules. One can go and listen to the court (30-year-old male community member, Gulu District, 29 October 2015).

There is an Acholi saying “*bedo kacel miyo okolok lak iteri*”, which roughly translates as “If you sit in one position for too long, a centipede will crawl into your bottom”. Okot p'Bitek explains the proverb, “centipedes make their homes in damp, dark and quiet corners, and may easily mistake stationary buttocks for an immobile object where it is safe to breed. No man should remain in one place too long” (p'Bitek 1985, 26).⁸⁰ Thus, the prohibition against idleness is linked to morality and social norms. The result is a widely-held expectation that youth should not question why they are asked to engage in a certain activity or how it will benefit them.

The combination of these factors—moral condemnation for idleness and widespread lack of employment—produces an environment in which youth are willing to accept unpaid “work” to stay busy and meet social expectations. Such activities include volunteering for local security work. The experience of one former member of a local security group, who was kicked out of his family's compound because he could not find work, shows that these expectations may be unrealistic for some.

What is hindering me, of which I would be the happiest person, is saving money. But problems keep on piling on me. I have to spend money on things that are

⁸⁰ Thank you to Julian Hopwood for referring me to this proverb.

different from my own plans...In my own life, I feel I have become worthless, because all my plans are not working. I decided to join security group to be among the youth. I thought, if I go out to the community and join a small group, I would be relieved. I wanted to forget my stresses. But the security group caused more problems, because we were not paid, and then I did not have time to work (23-year-old male former security group member, Gulu District, 22 September 2015).

Participating in security work highlights a complicated relationship between Acholi notions of masculinity and duty. Male youth, particularly those who have lost one or both parents, face expectations to provide for their siblings and new families. If they can't find other work, they are expected to volunteer to stay busy (see chapter 6 for a more in-depth discussion of how masculinity functions to motivate and discipline young Acholi males, particularly in the security sector). But this in turn can limit their ability to seek paid work.

Desperation serves as a resource for state officials, allowing for easy fragmentation and pacification of youth, a group that might otherwise actively support the political opposition and demand more and better opportunities (for more on this, see chapter 10 on Crime Preventers). Some see limited opportunities for education and employment in the north as a governing strategy to make the population dependent on the ruling regime. For example, a mid-tier elected official explained:

... the government of Uganda does not want to create jobs for youth, so they can easily be brought into the Crime Preventers and the Local Defense Units.

[Do you think it is intentional?] Yes—it is intentional. Every president of Uganda is not sure of himself. He needs a shield. The shield of the government is these youths. Museveni says, 'We want to recruit 5,000 soldiers.' He can run and get forces from these youths who are idle, yet they have papers [educational qualifications].

[What is the evidence for intentionality?] You know, I've been in this government. All these youths were idlers. When you tell them there will be a recruitment, these

are the ones who will run. There is no more creation of any other job for youth... How many factories do we have? All the facilities are given to private institutions... The government doesn't want the youth to know their intention of giving all things to private and foreign companies. But they let investors come and take it (Mid-tier elected official, Gulu District, 5 February 2016).

In contrast, however, most people I interviewed placed responsibility for idleness—and relatedly, poverty—with individual families, communities, and with youths themselves, thereby further stigmatizing and isolating “idlers”. The regime supports this perspective by creating tokenistic opportunities that have benefited individual youths rather than youth as a category. For instance, the government has regularly offered loan schemes targeting youth, including the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) in the 1990s, to today's Youth Livelihood Fund (YLF). These programs are intended to promote “a culture of ‘self-employment’ through microfinance” (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). They are popularly viewed as vehicles for neopatrimonial and party-based payoffs and have generally failed to reduce unemployment (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). Additionally, the LC structure and parliament include quotas for youth representatives. However, as with women's representatives, youth representatives have largely used elected office to further personal interests and—for the very ambitious—to become brokers within their communities. As Ragnhild Muriaas and Vibeke Wang (2012) argue, the quota system is designed not to empower the represented groups and increase plurality, but to solidify support for the NRM. These programs and policies contribute to a narrative in which idle or unemployed male youth are personally responsible for their situation. As a result, male youth are frequently opportunistic, helping explain why some willingly volunteer in unpaid and informal security work, despite the apparent costs and limited rewards. This also relates to gendered norms stipulating that men should provide for the members of their households.

Placing local security initiatives in the security assemblage: Quantitative evidence

The previous sections have illustrated both that the plural and complex nature of the security sector in Acholi sub-region, northern Uganda with both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Here, I use the SLRC data to further validate key insights from my qualitative work: first, that citizens view local security groups as less authoritative than the police; second, that this relates to their comparative lack of access to violence; third, that security groups are generally auxiliary security actors working in tandem with other already existing authorities; and finally, that local security groups draw authority from state security actors.

Concept and measurement

Given the indefinite nature of local security initiatives, they are difficult to incorporate into a quantitative household survey. To capture the concept of such groups, the survey question asked: “do the community peacekeepers [local security groups] provide the protection that people in your home need?” (*Lo gwok kuc me kin gang miyo kony me gwoko kuc ma dano igangi mito?*) As discussed earlier, this phrasing captures locally-held understandings of community members who volunteer to help keep the peace, while encouraging respondents to err on the side of inclusion in that “peacekeepers” can refer to consolidated security groups as well as more diffuse groups of individuals who generally help respond to insecurity in the community.

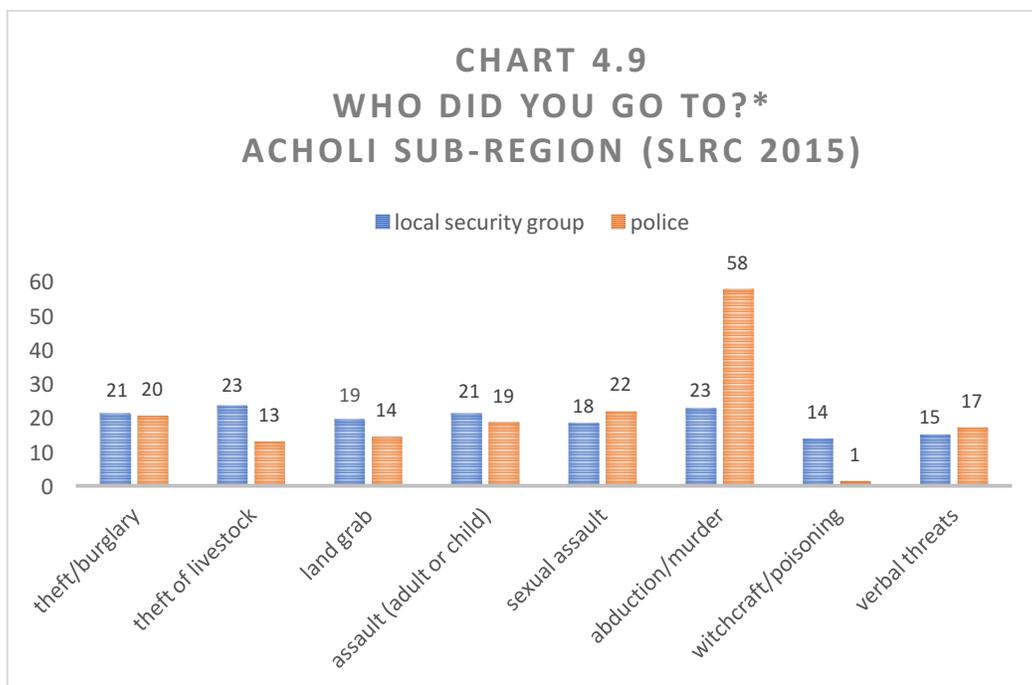
Responses to the question of the presence and effectiveness of local security actors varied significantly, even within the same village. In 20 villages, 100% of respondents said that local security actors were present. In the remaining 70 villages, somewhere between 53% and 95% of respondents reported that local security actors were present in the community (see Graph 4.1,

Appendix A). Some variation is to be expected. Given that no fewer than 53% of people surveyed in any given village reported that local security actors were present suggests that a positive response was broadly inclusive of civilian security actors, such as cadres (graduates of *mchaka mchaka*), members of Local Defense Units (where still functioning), and members of Crime Preventers (even though Crime Preventers were asked about in a discrete question where they were concretely linked to the police).

Responses to the question of whether local security groups provided the security that households needed aggregated to a village level have a regular distribution, with a mean of 0.55 and a standard deviation of 0.26, showing that on average, local security groups do not appear to be perceived by community members as predictably helpful or unhelpful (see Graph 4.2, Appendix A). Indeed, in many surveyed villages, responses were split, with approximately half of respondents finding local security groups helpful always or sometimes, and the other half finding them helpful never or rarely. This variation suggests that the work of local security groups is ad hoc and unpredictable. It also lends support to the work of other scholars who note that vigilante groups favor some community members while marginalizing others (as described by Tim Allen, Suzette Heald and elaborated later in this chapter). For example, Allen describes how violence can be therapeutic, contributing to interpersonal accountability and social cohesion, whether as a release of tension or by removing undesirable elements from the community (Allen 1997). Security groups engage in both these dimensions of “healing” (Allen 1997): they provide an organized and controlled way of meting out violence (for example through a certain number of cane strokes determined by a local authority), and in more extreme cases, they enforce exclusion from the community whether by threatening or implementing more severe violence.

In comparison to local security groups, communities report greater variation in police presence, with a low of 35% of respondents in any given village reporting police presence (see Graph 4.3, Appendix A). However, of those who report that the police are present, there is a more consistent view of their helpfulness, which has a mean of 0.62 and a standard deviation of 0.21 (see Graph 4.4, Appendix A). This suggests that the police are less reliably present, but more reliably helpful than community security groups.

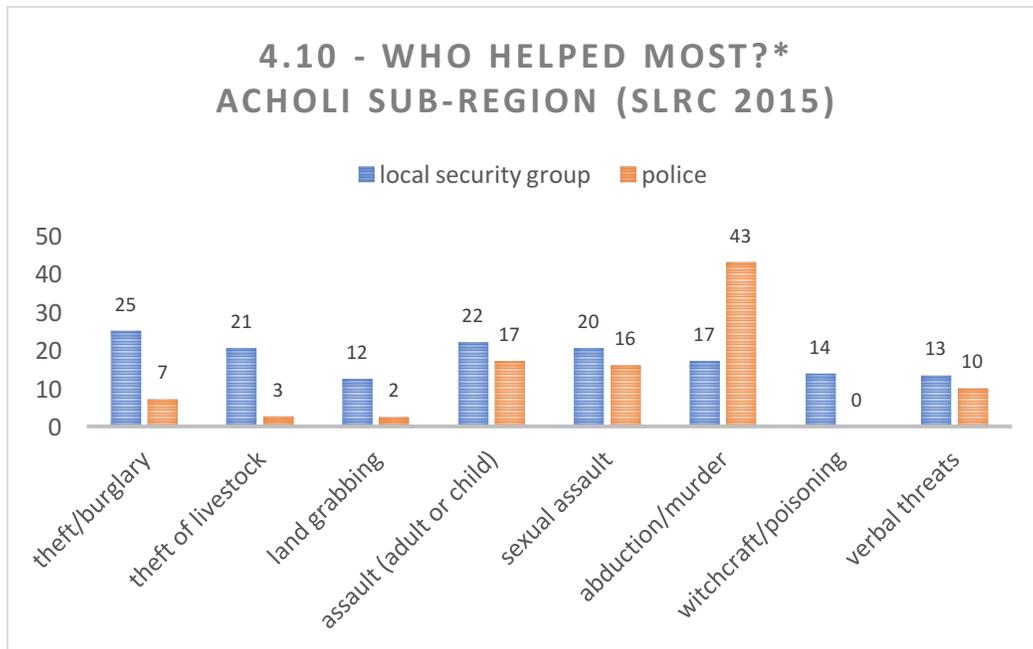
However, when respondents report their actual experiences (charts 4.9 and 4.10)—rather than their perceptions of helpfulness (chart 4.4)—local security groups emerge as important actors, even compared to the police. Chart 4.9, which shows results only for Acholi sub-region and reports on household-level experiences of crimes experienced between 2013 and 2015, shows that community members go to local security groups as often or more often than they go to police for property crimes (theft, theft of livestock, burglary, land grabbing), some violent crimes (physical assault), and almost as often for sexual assault. They also go to local security groups more often than police for crimes of witchcraft and poisoning—this is unsurprising as these crimes typically fall outside the purview of the formal state. Violent crimes are most often taken to the police and the LC—this reflects formal jurisdiction as well as the seriousness of the crimes. It is illegal for non-state authorities to handle criminal matters, including sexual assault. Although respondents go to local security groups more often than police for these crimes, they are much more likely to go to LCs or traditional authorities for all crimes measured in the survey (see Appendix B).



* The question asked, “How did your family deal with this [crime]?” and prompted respondents with nine potential security actors including police and local security groups. There was also an option for respondents to provide their own response under “other.”

Many respondents also reported that they did nothing in response to crimes—in Acholi sub-region, nearly 20% of those who reported experiencing any given crime (except for serious crimes like murder, abduction, and land-grabbing) did nothing. These findings are compatible with other security and justice research in Uganda showing that often complainants do nothing in response to crime, mainly because they believe action will not have a positive result. For example, the Hague Institute for Global Justice found that 38% of Ugandans who had “justice problems” took no action to seek resolution (Piest et al. 2016, 8).

A starker pattern emerges when respondents report who helped them most, based on their experience of a specific crime (see Chart 4.10):



* Respondents were asked “Which one [of the security actors you went to] was best able to help you?”

Here we see that respondents, reporting their actual experience with security actors, found local security groups more helpful than police for all crimes except for abduction and murder. Thus, overall respondents perceive police as more capable of security provision than local security groups, even though empirically they find local security groups more helpful. These findings hint at the dynamic relationship citizens have with non-state law enforcement: while local security groups may lack authority, their actions are sometimes viewed as helpful.

Perceptions of local security groups

Given that local security groups were reported present in every surveyed village, it is important to understand what do they do, who do they help, and how. I tested several hypotheses derived from

my qualitative research. The results show that there is little consensus within Acholi sub-region on whether local security groups are helpful or not.

Individual-level characteristics and perceived helpfulness of local security groups

Given that local security groups uphold community by-laws that favor men over women and elderly over youth, I hypothesized that women and youth would feel less favorable toward security groups than men and the elderly. However, I also expected respondents to be equally likely to report the presence of local security groups, because knowledge of such groups should not vary by individual-level characteristics.

$$(1) \text{ helpful_LSG} = a + b(\text{sex}) + c(\text{age}) + d(\text{education}) + \text{controls}^{81}$$

As expected, individual-level characteristics, including age, gender, and education, do not impact the probability that a respondent will report the *presence* of local security groups (see Appendix C, Output Table 1, column 1). These results also suggest that there is no bias in reporting related to characteristics of individual respondents.

Contrary to my expectations, the gender of the respondent does not influence his or her likelihood of perceiving members of local security groups helpful or actually finding them more helpful than other security providers (see Appendix C, Output Table 1, columns 2 and 6). Perhaps this reflects the notion that civilians support the cosmological moral order of their community, even if it disadvantages them as individuals (Porter 2016). Age has a consistent positive

⁸¹ Although I ran several controls, none resulted in statistically significant results. Thus, I report only results controlling for sub-region and urban/rural as I have identified these as important predictors of security actors' presence.

relationship with perceiving local security groups as helpful, such that for each additional year in age of the respondent, he or she has a statistically significant chance of being 0.2 percentage points more likely to perceive members of local security groups as able to provide the security their household needed sometimes or always (see Appendix C, Output Table 1, columns 2-5). This is not a large correlation, although it is statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. This may be because the local notions of justice that members of local security groups enforce tend to favor the authority of the elderly in this patriarchal and gerontocratic society. Additionally, on an individual level, older community members may have more power relative to the young men who work in local security groups, and thus have more control over their interactions. Nonetheless, for those who reported experiencing a crime between 2013 and 2015, age was negatively correlated with actual experience of local security groups compared to other security actors, such that for each additional year, a respondent was 0.1 percentage points less likely to report that local security groups helped more than all other security providers with any given crime (see Appendix C, Output Table 1, column 6). This again could be attributed to the fact that older community members have better access to all security providers, not just local security groups, so they perceive local security groups as less helpful compared to other actors.

Education has a small and negative value for both perceptions and experiences of local security groups. For both primary and secondary education, the confidence interval spans 0, and thus it is impossible to assess whether the correlation is positive or negative. This reflects my interviews, in which there appeared to be no pattern of opinion about whether local security groups were good or bad based on the respondent's education or level of employment income as inferred from the nature of their employment (e.g., lawyers, district politicians, or MPs versus casual laborers or subsistence farmers).

Property ownership and perceived helpfulness of local security groups

Similarly, I hypothesized that property ownership would make respondents more favorable toward local security groups, because those with material belongings may want more security to prevent theft. I further hypothesized that if security groups reliably help protect assets, owning livestock and moveable assets should increase approval for local security groups, while owning immovable assets should have no impact on perceived helpfulness of local security groups. To test this hypothesis, I developed indices for movable and immovable assets, as well as livestock. Livestock ownership is a scalar variable, including small, medium, and large livestock. Owning moveable property is also a scalar variable, including a mattress, phone, radio, bicycle, motorcycle or solar panel. Immovable assets is a binary variable, measured as 1 if the household reported owning land and their home, and 0 if not.

$$(1) \quad \text{helpful_LSG} = a + b(\text{property ownership}) + \text{controls}$$

The results show that, even with this variety of indicators, property ownership—whether movable or immovable—does not have a significant impact on perception of local security groups as helpful or not helpful (see Appendix C, Regression Output 1, Columns 3-5). This supports the earlier finding that local security groups are not perceived as reliably protecting property.

Experience of crime and perceived helpfulness of local security groups

Theoretically, respondents who have experienced a crime should be less satisfied with local security groups. The worse the infraction, the more aggrieved respondents would be with local security groups for failing to protect them. I hypothesized that this negative relationship would be stronger for traditional security concerns, like theft, burglary, theft of livestock, and physical assault, which could be prevented by increased vigilance such as local patrols, and less strong for social crimes like verbal threats, witchcraft and poisoning which are generally harder to observe. Thus, I tested the following:

$$(2) \quad \text{helpful_LSG} = a + b(\text{crime}^{82}) + \text{controls}$$

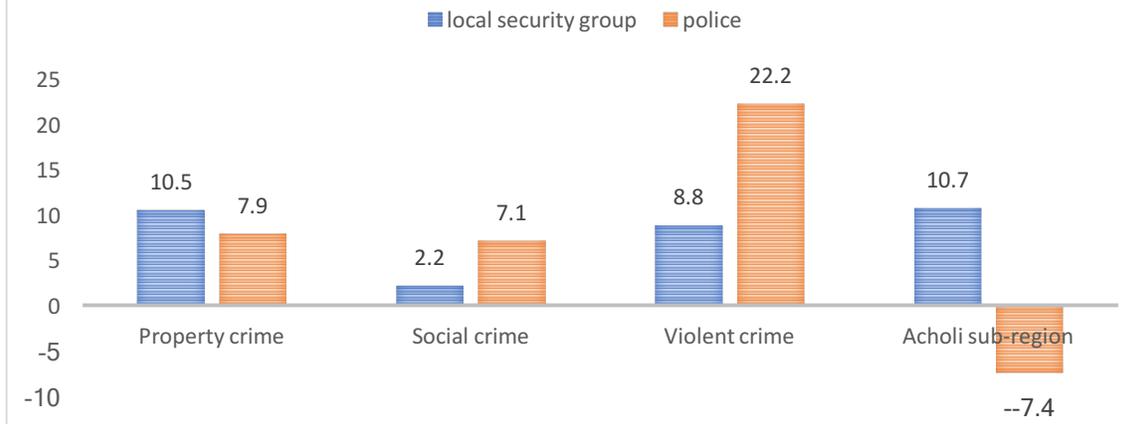
Experience of crime at an aggregated level has no statistically significant impact on a respondents' likelihood to report helpful local security groups or police (Appendix C, Output Table 2, columns 1 and 3). However, when crimes are aggregated into categories, there is a negative and statistically significant impact: those who experience property crimes are 7.16 percentage points less likely to report that local security groups provide the security their household needs, while those who experience violent crimes are 9.14 percentage points less likely to report that the police provide the security that their household needs (see Appendix C, Output Table 1, columns 2 and 4). It is intuitive that households that experience crime would be more likely to report that local security groups (and security actors more broadly) do not provide the security that their household needs. This discrepancy supports the supposition that citizens view local security groups as responsible for preventing or mitigating property crimes, and police for preventing or mitigating violent

⁸² I also tested each crime individually; none were statistically significant.

crimes. In very general terms, this reflects the findings of my qualitative research. Experiencing a “social crime” does not have a statistically significant correlation with an individual’s evaluation of local security groups or police—likely because these are the jurisdiction of religious authorities, *ajwaki* (witchdoctors or traditional healers), and sometimes clan elders.

However, when looking at actual experiences of the helpfulness of local security groups and police, a slightly different picture emerges (see chart 4.11 and Appendix C, Output Table 2, columns 5 and 6). Respondents who reported experiencing a property crime between 2013 and 2015 were 10.5 percentage points more likely to say that a local security group helped them most for any crime they experienced, while those who experienced a violent crime in the same time period were 8.7 percentage points more likely to say that a local security group helped them most for any crime they experienced, both at a 99% confidence level. Respondents who experience property crimes, social crimes, or violent crimes were all more likely to report that the police helped them most at higher magnitudes than local security groups for social crimes and violent crimes, but not property crimes, at a 99% confidence level. As another indication of the importance of sub-region, respondents in Acholi sub-region were 10.7 percentage points more likely to say that a local security group helped them most for any crime and 7.4 percentage points less likely to say that the police helped them for any crime than respondents in Lango sub-region. Age does not appear to have any relation to which security actor was found most helpful—it has a very small negative correlation, and is not statistically significant.

**CHART 4.11 MAGNITUDE OF CORRELATIONS
BETWEEN EXPERIENCES OF CRIME AND
EXPERIENCES OF LSG/POLICE*
(SLRC 2015)**



* Chart 4.11 shows the magnitudes of the regression analysis run (also see Appendix C, Output Table 2, columns 5 and 6). The table reports the correlation between respondents' experiences of a given type of crime between 2013 and 2015, and their likelihood to report that local security groups or police helped them more than any other security actor. All values are significant at a 99% confidence level except those who said local security groups helped them most with social crimes.

This suggests first, that security groups are empirically significantly more helpful in Acholi sub-region than in Lango. Second, it provides additional evidence to show that security groups are more helpful for resolving property crimes than any other type of crime.

The absence of a trend in *perceptions* about or *experiences* of local security groups based on gender, education, or property ownership supports the finding that citizens view local security initiatives as fluid and difficult to predict in terms of helpfulness. In Acholi sub-region, more respondents view local security groups as providing the security their household needs than do not. However, respondents also report that local security groups help more than any other security actors between 10 and 20% of the time. This may be in part because they work as auxiliary security providers, supporting the work of other more established authorities. I explore this further in the

following section. The fact that respondents view local security groups as more responsible for property crimes than for violent crimes provides additional support for the argument that local security groups have limited access to violence, particularly when compared with the police. Overall, this section has provided further evidence for the fragmented nature of the security landscape, as experienced by ordinary citizens.

Institutional-level characteristics and perceptions of local security groups

Theory on vigilante groups would suggest that local security groups are more likely to be present and to consolidate power in the absence of other authorities. However, this analysis shows that in Acholi sub-region, local security groups are more often found in conjunction with other authorities, and they are perceived as more helpful in this environment. I analyze this with the following regression:

$$(3) \quad \text{perception of LSG} = a + b(\text{presence/helpfulness of other security providers}) + \text{controls}$$

The regressions show that respondents who report the presence of police, military, and traditional authorities are more likely to report the presence of local security groups (Appendix C, Output Table 3, column 1). For example, if a respondent reports that the police are present in their community, there is an 5.1 percentage point increase in the probability that they will report the presence of a local security group (Appendix C, Output Table 3, Column 1). The same positive and significant relationship holds for the presence of the army (12.5%) and traditional authorities (25.9%) (see Appendix C, Output Table 3, Column 1). I did not test LCs and the community

because they were reported present all communities. The regressions also show that the presence of additional security actors (rather than their perceived helpfulness) account for respondents' increased likelihood to report the presence of local security groups (Appendix C, Output Table 3, Column 2).

This provides additional evidence for the argument that rather than filling a security vacuum, local security groups are more common in situations where state security actors, traditional authorities, or the community have called upon them to serve. An alternative explanation is that some respondents are simply more aware of security actors than others, or they are misattributing security services from one security actor to others. However, if this were the case, we might expect an individual's level of information to vary based on gender, education, or wealth, which it does not (Appendix C, Output Table 1, columns 1 and 2). Additionally, my qualitative research suggests that local security groups frequently work as auxiliary forces to another existing authority. These different security actors thus provide a check on each other. One GISO commented:

The police allow citizens to raise complaints against the groups to the police. The police hold all the power—if there are complaints against you, as a security group member, you will be held responsible (GISO, Gulu District, 29 October 2014).

Additionally, a Defense Secretary on the Local Council also explained that mob violence is tempered by police presence:

As much as they like mob justice, they also remember the police. While they are beating you, they are also dragging them to the police. Of course, if you are caught stealing, you can't be handled as a gentleman (Defense secretary, Gulu District, 16 October 2014).

Thus, an explanation for the positive relationship amongst the perception of helpful security actors and the perception of helpful local security groups is that local security groups often play an auxiliary role to other security actors. When authorities are active and engaged (e.g., helpful), they can more readily discipline and control local security groups than when they are lax and absent. Helpful security actors beget helpful security groups.

Exploring sources of authority

I also tested the relationship between perceptions of government responsiveness and the perceived helpfulness of security actors, with the expectation that people who believed that security actors provided the security that their household needed would find the government more responsive to their priorities.

$$(4) \quad \text{gov_responsiveness} = a + b(\text{helpfulness of other security providers}) + \text{controls}$$

The results show that respondents who reported that the police or the local councilor provided the security that their household needed were more likely to report that the local government cared about them and their opinions. The magnitude of the effect decreases and loses statistical significance at the central level of government (see Appendix C, Output Table 4, Columns 1-3).⁸³

Respondents who reported that the local security group provided the security their household needed were more likely to find the local government helpful. This raises the question of whether

⁸³ For these analyses, I used the following questions: “To what extent do you feel that the decisions of those in the central government in Kampala reflect your own priorities?” and “To what extent do you feel that the decisions of the Government in the District and sub-country reflect your own priorities?”

the local government gained authority from security actors that were perceived as helpful, if security actors were perceived as more helpful because the local government was more responsive, or if the relationship is spurious. Although the causal nature of this question cannot be answered from the quantitative data, other findings from SLRC and my qualitative research are informative. A recent report by the SLRC analyzing the 2013 panel data found that access to and satisfaction with health, education, and water services (although admittedly not security services) is not correlated with more favorable perceptions of the government at local or central levels. However, when the basic service was provided by the government—for example, water in the case of Uganda—citizens’ perceptions of the local government were more positive (Mallett et al. 2015, 45). The report also found that the more problems people experience with basic services, the worse their perception of the government at local, but especially central, levels. The authors concluded that the relationship between service provision and perceptions of legitimacy is weak (Mallett et al. 2015, 43–45). Thus, the positive association between security providers and local government may be in part due to the common perception that security providers work at in conjunction with the local government. Admittedly, the relationship remains weak and inconsistent, as found in by SLRC.

Based on my qualitative research, I suggest that the positive association may be a two-way street. That is, while security actors derive authority from their relationships with the police and the concomitant access to material and symbolic forms of violence and power, local authorities also leverage security groups to improve their standing in the community. One example from my qualitative research is instructive: in one village, a particularly violent security group faced criticism from within the community and from the police. One local politician and community member, Lapeta, critiqued the group, explaining that they were thugs who abused people’s human

rights. The local politician who led the group, Ochora, countered that Lapeta did not want to see good things (i.e., improved security) in the community, because people would credit Ochora thereby threatening Lapeta's elected position. Lapeta adamantly denied this explanation. However, the story is illustrative in that it shows that politicians view local security initiatives as a resource to develop their authority. Additionally, authorities sometimes build popularity by being "hard on crime". Several of my respondents explained that initiating security groups and giving them verbal permission to use corporal punishment against criminals can bolster this reputation.⁸⁴

Conclusion

This chapter provides a ground-level picture of security assemblages in Acholi sub-region, putting them in local and regional context and providing some indicative descriptive statistics on the identities of participants. Local security groups are a foundational component of the security assemblage in northern Uganda: they are ubiquitous and provide a first-order response. They are accessible compared with other providers and they are grounded in local values and norms. However, compared with the police, they have low enforcement capacity, limited access to violence, and their perceived helpfulness varies substantially.

The quantitative data reveals at least three findings that contribute to literature on local experiences of security. First, the data reveals surprisingly positive views of the police, particularly given that respondents rarely report that the police were most helpful in solving a problem. I have argued that this positive reputation is at least in part because the police have superior access to

⁸⁴ For example, the current Mayor of Gulu has a reputation for extra-judicial killings carried out during the conflict. Many believe this is the basis for his popularity, and even suggest that he will become increasingly less influential as Gulu continues to become more peaceful.

force, which is viewed as an important component of authority.⁸⁵ Second, the quantitative data shows that far from a security and justice vacuum, citizens in northern Uganda are aware of the presence of many security and governance actors; however, these authorities are often viewed as ineffective. In chapter 5, I show that this is in part because the police are perceived as having superior access to (threat of) force. In chapters 6 and 9, I further explore how the unpredictable use of this force precludes other public authorities from consolidating power. Third, the quantitative analysis shows that the presence of more security actors—and the presence of more *helpful* security actors—is correlated with a higher likelihood that respondents will find the local security groups helpful. Informed by qualitative research, I interpret this to mean that the presence of numerous security actors function as a check on each other, such that civilians can take complaints to different authorities, be they police, traditional authorities, or the military, to discipline poorly behaving security groups. Additionally, local security groups often act at the behest of local authorities, and so citizens perceive local security groups' helpfulness to be a product of the authorities' effectiveness.

The qualitative findings develop a picture of local security initiatives as fluid and constantly reconfigurable, comprised almost exclusively of poor young men striving to make a living. This chapter has provided a partial answer to the question of where local security groups emerge and how they relate to Uganda's security assemblage and state power. In contrast to orthodox literature on "boundary" institutions, vigilantism, and everyday policing, which generally argues that community security initiatives or vigilante groups fill an institutional vacuum

⁸⁵ A recent study of corruption of the courts and police in northern Uganda finds that while people do not trust these institutions—and indeed, feel disempowered, fearful, and anxious about them—they still find them "legitimate" meaning that citizens believe the courts and police have "the right to enforce the rule of law" (Scharbatke-Church and Chigas 2016, 41). I argue that the reason that citizens accept the right of these institutions to enforce law despite their many weaknesses is the cumulative result of institutionalized arbitrariness and in particular citizens' perceptions that the state has access to sovereign violence. I discuss the perception of sovereign violence in chapter 5.

or emerge on the “frontier” of state control (Abrahams 1998), the findings suggest that in northern Uganda, security groups play an auxiliary role to existing social and political institutions. They can draw authority from these actors, but are also highly constrained by their presence and oversight. As such, local security groups can thrive in an environment of multiple, competing, and fragmented security and justice providers. Uganda’s ruling regime benefits from outsourcing security provision to civilians who it has no responsibility to train, pay, or maintain; and who can be disowned as bandits, criminals or opportunists if they step out of line.

Chapter 5

“This government can liquidate you”⁸⁶

Perceptions of Sovereign Violence in and around Gulu Town

Museveni’s Uganda is a militarized state. The state’s security institutions are politicized, the governing institutions are fused with military personnel and culture, and violence is used to solve problems and defend political power (Kagoro 2015, 1). In the north, the NRM regime has consistently used material and symbolic violence as one of its key strategies to frame itself as a potential source of insecurity and simultaneously, as a necessary source of order. Throughout the years of the LRA war, the NRM regime subjected citizens to violence and coercion, through physical violence imposed by government security agents, as well as through displacement, property loss, and disruption of normal life (Branch 2011; Dolan 2009). In the years following the never-completed 2008 peace agreement, demilitarization policies have led to the replacement of military outposts with police stations, a new emphasis on community policing, and reportedly, a drawdown of small arms within communities.

Yet, while the war has increasingly become a thing of the past, the regime has maintained a threatening and all-powerful veneer. In some ways, this is puzzling. Indeed, it directly contradicts the image of a fragile post-colonial state in which sovereign violence has been decoupled from governing institutions. For instance, although the Uganda Police are viewed as exceptionally corrupt and rarely help solve people’s problems, the vast majority of people report that the police

⁸⁶ This comment was made to me casually during a visit to Gulu’s municipality headquarters by an LCIV councilor on 6 October 2015. As an example of “liquidation,” the LCIV councilor discussed the recent passing of General Aronda, who the government announced died of heart failure. Many speculated that his unexpected death was in fact a poisoning ordered and executed from within the NRM regime (also see chapter 9).

are present in their communities (see SLRC data in chapter 4). More striking still, citizens believe that the state's security actors have the capacity to intervene anywhere, anytime. As a Ugandan friend and colleague explained, "[The government] can do anything against any individual in the country" (32-year-old male community member, phone interview, 5 March 2017). How is it possible that the state's security actors can simultaneously be mostly absent and unhelpful, and also form a significant part of citizen's imaginations of the state? Relatedly, how can citizens perceive the state as sovereign in a context where state intervention is episodic and arbitrary?

In this chapter, I examine why citizens perceive the state as having access to sovereign violence and how this has been internalized at an individual level. The sovereign sphere "is the sphere in which it is permitted to kill without committing homicide and without celebrating sacrifice" (Agamben 1998, 83). Sharon Hutchinson provides a useful illustration in her study of the Nuer of south Sudan, writing that governing violence is simply "the demonstrated power to kill with impunity [and] to declare such acts void of all social, moral, and spiritual consequences for their perpetrators" (Hutchinson 1998, 58). Her work shows how the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) claimed the violent privileges afforded to the government, which enabled killing outside the moral realm of civil relations. This process was further facilitated by the anonymous killing power of automatic weapons. These changes sped the long-standing and contentious process through which sovereignty shifted from Nuer spiritual orders to the state.

Thus, in simple terms, sovereign violence describes the governing authority's capacity to declare a state of exception—"a conceptual and ethical zero point from where 'The Law' can be given" (T. B. Hansen 2005, 170). In giving "The Law", the sovereign has the ability to fundamentally reconfigure the relationship between law and violence (Schmitt 2005). The process of reconfiguration is a dialectic: violence is used to produce the law, and the law in turn regulates

the future use of violence. This configuration can be conceived of as a set of meta-rules on the legitimate use of violence during times of normalcy. Only with a new declaration of exception—defined by the sovereign and created by deploying sovereign violence—can these meta-rules be once again disregarded and reconfigured. In Schmitt’s conception, there is a clear division between normalcy and exception (Schmitt 2005). Importantly for my inquiry, this theory means that in zones of normalcy—whether temporal, spatial, or identity-based—killing has a particular ethical and legal meaning; in zones designated as exceptional, killing occurs outside of law—it is unaccountable and cannot be held to popular norms or notions of injustice.

In Uganda, the relationship between normalcy and exception is not dialectical. Instead, the settlement determining the relationship between sovereign violence and law is fragile. My respondents regularly expressed the view that the state could intervene with overwhelming, violent, and unaccountable force at any moment—and state representatives also referred to this possibility particularly as the 2016 elections approached (see chapter 10). Although acts of sovereign violence do not occur frequently—and indeed less so since the end of the war—the sheer magnitude of force involved and lack of predictability as to deployment made the possibility meaningful. Thus, citizens expressed the perspective that the state’s violent intervention was sufficiently plausible such that any moment could potentially be made exceptional.

In this chapter, I make two interrelated arguments. The first examines the belief, commonly held by residents of Gulu Town, that the state has the capacity to intervene with sovereign violence that is extra-legal and seemingly arbitrary. I argue that this belief makes the state’s threats meaningful even if intervention is sporadic. The second applies gendered lenses—specifically military and civilian masculinities—to understand how citizens internalize the possibility of exceptional and sovereign state intervention. This reveals how citizens can experience state

violence in both public life and in the most intimate and private of spaces, thereby producing and reinforcing perceptions of state violence as omnipresent.⁸⁷ The findings of this chapter are all the more meaningful when read in historical context, recalling that from Independence until the Museveni regime, northerners—and particularly the Acholi—were relatively well-represented by the central state and in the military. Thus, with the rise to power of Museveni and the NRM, the Acholi lost access to violence and resources they had previously enjoyed, further accentuating contemporary feelings of exclusion and marginalization.

The chapter first discusses core aspects of Acholi masculinity and how these were challenged and changed throughout the GoU-LRA war, particularly due to civilian experiences of displacement. I focus on how the political, economic, and social upheaval of the GoU-LRA war, and the NRM's militarized masculinity have impacted and undermined the ability of Acholi males to achieve a traditional masculine ideal type. I show that under wartime conditions, citizens experienced the line between states of normalcy and states of exception as fluid. Fluidity between normalcy and exception has kept the possibility of sovereign intervention at the forefront of citizens' imaginations and rendered fragile the oft-assumed dialectic between normalcy and exception.

The chapter then discusses how individual citizens have internalized the possibility of the state's potential to deploy sovereign violence. I ground this argument in theory on the relationship among the state, the military, and masculinity, and examine how the ruling regime's policies have continually produced the regime and state as militarized and masculinized in juxtaposition to an emasculated—and, I argue, in some ways feminized—society. Because masculinity is part of

⁸⁷ Recognizing that gender is heterogeneous and that the experiences of males and females are both constituted by and produce both masculinities and femininities, I nonetheless focus this chapter on masculine ideal-types and the experiences of young civilian males, as they represent the focus of my research as well as a key constituency that the ruling regime must manage to maintain control of the country.

individuals' daily and lived experiences, this allows perceptions of state power to become personal and immediate. Moreover, I show how these experiences occur both in the ruling regime's self-proclaimed jurisdiction, and in spaces that would typically be ungoverned by state law: the home, and intimate and familial relationships. In this way, state violence comes to be perceived of as potentially omnipresent.

To illustrate these two points, the chapter examines a case study of a conflict between a local community and government soldiers. The case study shows how soldiers mobilize the threat of violence to strengthen their negotiating position, thereby (advertently or inadvertently) reminding the civilian population of the state's access to sovereign violence. I also examine how expectations for masculinity give these threats meaning, further emphasizing the supremacy of the state's military masculinity in relation to "feminized" civilians. I conclude that citizens' perception that the state can exercise sovereign violence injects fear and skepticism into the relationship between state and society, making citizens vulnerable to a governing strategy of institutionalized arbitrariness.

Acholi masculinity and state violence in context: 1986-today

Acholi society is traditionally patrilocal and exogamous: men are counseled that they must "go far" to find a wife—a tradition based on a prohibition against intra-clan marriage. A host of other traditions surround courtship and marriage, including paying bride wealth and establishing a respectable home. A respectable home, among other things, requires that a male figure protect and provide for his wife and children. A 30-year-old man reflected:

A real man should be responsible. He should have his own family [*obed ki gange*] such that people should know that that is the home of Mr. So-and-So. A man should also be able to take care of all the needs of his family... Take it this way: if a man decides to have children and then he fails to take care of the children well, what do you think will happen in that kind of situation? Such a man would be *laco ki nyinge nono* [a man by name only] (4 October 2015, Gulu District, 30-year-old man).

A 41-year-old man further emphasized this point when he explained that a wife can insult her husband by questioning his commitment to improving wellbeing in their household:

The woman would simply say: '*In gang wu ni obedo gang ming mo ata!*' ['This, what you call your home, is a place full of stupidity!']... She would say that the man is helpless [*konye peke*]. She would also say that what she has as a husband is actually not a husband but some kind of a wild dog [*ogwang*] who is not developmental at all. In this situation, the best thing a man can do is to remain silent and not respond to what she had said so that peace could continue to prevail at home (29 September 2015, Gulu District, 41-year-old man).

Acholi women are expected to maintain peace and order in the household in a subordinate role:

A good woman takes care of the home and respects her husband's people. For example, I have never gotten into a disagreement with my husband's people, so I am a good woman. I do all the work [in the house] and I dig [in the garden] (30 October 2015, Gulu District, 46-year-old woman).

These norms remain as ideals today, despite changes in the political, social, and economic landscape that have reconfigured pathways to achieving manhood and womanhood (also see Carlson and Mazurana 2006 for how patriarchal norms shaped women's experiences in forced displacement camps during the conflict).

During colonial and early post-colonial times, the Acholi enjoyed comparative access to the government's resources. Acholi were disproportionately recruited into the colonial army, gaining a reputation as innately martial (Branch 2011; Doom and Vlassenroot 1999). Through the

military, Acholi benefited from access to state power and resources largely until Yoweri Museveni forcibly took power in 1986, ending two decades of northern rule.⁸⁸ As Branch argues, “the exclusion of the Acholi in recent decades [from the government] has to be seen in the context of the degree of privilege that they formerly enjoyed” (Branch 2011, 50). This exclusion continues to shape gendered identities, particularly due to the Ugandan state’s neopatrimonial system of resource distribution, which means that those outside of the government’s favor have limited economic, political, and social power (Tangri and Mwenda 2003).

As a part of the government’s counter-insurgency campaign against the LRA, they began a program of forced displacement, moving civilians into euphemistically-called “protected camps” (also see chapter 3). Branch documents how the camps initially lacked food, water, shelter, and sanitation facilities, such that people initially refused to stay at them, simply returning home to a place where they could find food. It was only with the help of the international community that the camps provided the minimum necessary to keep people in the camps (Branch 2009). In the context of displacement, it became difficult for Acholi men and women to fulfill traditional gender roles. Porter notes that the Acholi concept of a home so central to Acholi notions of masculinity and femininity—including spatial, spiritual, and temporal elements—was thrown into disarray in the crowded camp environment.⁸⁹ In the camps, work opportunities were rare, and men found it increasingly difficult to amass resources for traditional exchanges of bride wealth, preventing many from formalizing unions (Finnström 2008; Dolan 2009; Lanken Verma 2012). Without the exchange of bride wealth, partnerships remained informal and thus fragile: a woman’s family

⁸⁸ The story is of course more complicated: Acholis were relatively well represented immediately after colonialism and during the first Obote regime (1966-1971), and then were purged in great numbers from the military and government during the rule of Amin (1971-1979). While they were reincorporated into the military and government during Obote’s second regime (1980-1985) it never reached the same levels as before.

⁸⁹ Research presented at the African Studies Association of the UK in Cambridge, September 2016.

could reclaim her and her children at any time; husbands' families remained suspicious of co-habiting partners. Aid organizations, hoping to limit resale of goods, further sidelined men as providers by giving food rations directly to women.

Some men, hoping to provide for their families, opted to join the military. One member of a local security group describes his struggle to protect and provide for his family during the conflict:

I thought it was better to be in the army so that I could face the LRA like a man; not just to keep running around in fear of a fellow man. I thought it was the best way to revenge the death of my brother, who the LRA murdered in Sudan. It was such a treacherous murder! It was a hopeless situation to keep watching the LRA slaying all the people who were close to me. It seemed as if my entire life was going to be fleeing the LRA and surviving on relief food from the NGOs... The relief food and services were not sustainable at all. It would have been better for me to cultivate my own food which would be more sustainable than [sitting] around and wait[ing for food] from NGOs and government (39-year-old security group member, Gulu District, 7 October 2015).

The ongoing conflict also inhibited civilian men from protecting their families. Camps were subject to rebel attacks, during which food and other supplies were pillaged and sometimes children and adults were abducted. Civilian men were regularly humiliated by soldiers, beaten in front of their children and wives or required to engage traditionally female tasks, like collecting firewood or water for soldiers' wives (Onyango 2012, 5). Soldiers' superior income attracted civilian women and girls (and their families) to the chagrin of civilian men. Thus, the conflict undermined the ability of Acholi males to achieve masculinity, and established the state's masculine soldiers as superior to civilian males.

While much of life was governed by a state of exception in which citizens could be subjected to LRA attacks or unpredictable violence or humiliation from soldiers, other aspects of life in the camps were governed with clear regularity:

In addition to providing relief aid, the humanitarian agencies increasingly provided an entire rudimentary civil administration in the camps, rendering them increasingly permanent. This culminated in the mid-2000s, when the aid agencies launched a ‘camp management’ strategy and parcelled out Acholiland sub-county by sub-county between themselves, all in the name of rendering the camps more sustainable (Branch 2009, 484).

However, camp management did not preclude arbitrary state violence:

Once the camps were formed, the government stepped up political repression against the newly concentrated population and employed the Homeguard, the UPDF, and other paramilitary forces to that end. Those in the camps who protest[ed] their continued internment, government abuse, or the lack of security face[d] violent repression by state security services (Branch 2009, 486).

Thus, camps formally had legal orders managing behavior—in particular, Branch notes that aid agencies focused on disciplining the displaced so they would be docile and cooperative (Branch 2009, 488). At the same time, as elucidated in the remainder of this section, daily life was filled with instances of exceptional violence. Acholi citizens experienced camp life alternately as a space where violence was governed by law and as a space of exception. The camps are one illustration of how the line between these two spheres has been made fluid in northern Uganda.

Perceptions of sovereign violence in a context of a militarized regime

In the foreword to Paul Higate's collected volume on military masculinities, Jeff Hearn summarizes two key concepts that form the nexus of military masculinities—that on the military and the state, and that on the military and identity:

The modern state has become a major controller of violence, as well as a major producer of violence, injury, fear, torture, and death. The large scale of human-engineered death, often organized quite specifically by states, parastates, and counterstates, is difficult to appreciate. Men have dominated these individual and collective actions.

...[T]he making of what might be called military gender is a practical, continuous, social accomplishment...Military organizations provide social and psychological resources for the reproduction and changing of individual psychologies, often around violence, sometimes not. These include the process of rationalization, distancing, following an organizational role, obeying orders, and trivializing through humor (Hearn 2008, xii–xiii).

In linking these two themes, Hearn draws our attention to how individual identities are shaped and constructed for the purposes of bolstering the state's control of violence. As Cynthia Enloe elaborates, the “coercive arms of the state” work for specific ends—usually to ensure that resource distribution favors the current ethnic-political stratification (Enloe 1977, 138). While Hearn notes the extreme and large-scale violence associated with state power, we could further specify that militarism is constructed by and contributes to the state's capacity for *exceptional* violence—violence that is outside the law. Indeed, for a state of exception to be backed by (threat of) force, there must be human labor at the ready to carry out the task. This helps explain how militarism is often conceived of as unbounded by the confines of social morals and values (Hutchinson 1998), and how this becomes naturalized into a system of rule (Mama 1998).

While militarization—and its related economic, social, and physical violence—has touched the lives of all Ugandans, individuals living in and around Gulu Town have vastly different experiences of perpetrating, observing, or experiencing state violence. Yet many of my respondents expressed a perception of the current Ugandan state as arbitrarily violent, able and willing to act with impunity outside the constraints of law.⁹⁰ These included individuals with diverse material experiences of state violence, for example, those who fought in the war with the rebels or the regime; lost family members and friends; were abducted or witnessed extreme violence by the rebels or the regime; as well as those unemployed youth whose conscious memories could not extend much further than the informal end of the war; members of the upper class who lived in Kampala or abroad during the conflict; or rural farmers who continued farming even during years of displacement and encampment. Jude Kagoro, a scholar of militarism in Uganda, similarly notes that “Even the young generation that was not yet born during the reign of Idi Amin, Milton Obote and the NRA/M guerrilla war, seems to be conscious of the violent political history” (Kagoro 2015, 94). This shared narrative of violence can be attributed, in part, to a common experience of economic, political, and social institutions through which the regime’s power and violence are regularly expressed. This section interweaves theory on how norms of military masculinity are constituted through state institutions, specifically state security institutions including the military and the police, and as a result, how this shapes civilian (male) experiences of the state. While recognizing that the relationships between men and masculinities are plural and complex, I focus this analysis on the dominant construction of the NRM’s military masculinity in relation to an Acholi male civilian masculinity.

⁹⁰ Citizens also viewed past regimes as arbitrarily violent; however, my research focused on contemporary experiences, so this is where I focus my analysis and claims (see chapter 3 for a discussion of past regimes).

As Enloe notes, militarism succeeds as a strategy when it successfully “portrays soldiering as a ‘naturally’ manly activity, [but] in reality socialization requires explicit and artificial construction, sometimes backed by coercion” (Enloe 1998, 109). She notes military advertising budgets and high costs for draft dodgers among other strategies. Similarly, Marcia Kovitz (2003) explains that equating warriorhood with manhood and contrasting it with the feminized civilian in need of protection is a strategy to induce combativeness in troops and entice men to risk their lives in service of the state. As a result, society becomes a social and symbolic foil against which solidarity and combativeness within military forces are produced, thereby “masculinizing” the military and “feminizing” society (Kovitz 2003; Enloe 1998). In northern Uganda, in conjunction with the NRM regime’s material and symbolic displays of force (elaborated throughout this manuscript), these gendered dynamics shape citizen perspectives on the state’s sovereign violence.

In the militarized NRM regime, the relationships among the state, militarism, and masculinity are complex and mutually reinforcing, shaping resource distribution and access to violence. Salaried work is scarce in northern Uganda (both during the war and today) and the regime has captured neopatrimonial systems of distribution, much of which is funneled through the security sector (see chapters 3 and 4). In this context, civilian male youth, striving to become men, are in a bind: in addition to building a home, paying bride price and participating in a traditional marriage, “real men” need to earn an income that can support a wife and children, and contribute to family costs such as funerals. For many young men working in the informal security sector, one viable option is to work with one of the formal or informal institutions of the militarized NRM regime, and thus accepting—or in some cases even embodying—the regime’s military masculinity.

While Acholi civilian males experienced symbolic and social emasculation during the conflict, the NRM regime laid claim to symbolism of a disciplined military masculinity, including the paternal role of provider. The phenomenon has been observed more widely in central Africa where Michael Schatzberg has argued that political legitimacy rests on the “tacit normative idea that government stands in the same relationship to its citizens that a father does to his children” (Schatzberg 2001, 1). Schatzberg details the many ways that paternal and familial metaphors and imagery pervade politics across central Africa. Indeed, in Uganda, Museveni is commonly referred to as “mzee” or “old man”. He has publically been honored as “Father of the Nation” on multiple occasions (Giles 2014; Limu 2015; Nahamya 2015). Moreover, the military also has access to non-military government programs, for example implementing NAADS and other government programs, bolstering the narrative of security work as a promising livelihood strategy. Similar dynamics have been observed in other countries with strong military rule, for example in Nigeria, where military regimes have used ideas of women’s development to normalize military rule (Mama 1998).

Military trainings designed for civilians seek to indoctrinate recruits to value and emulate a militarized masculinity. One such example is *mchaka mchaka* a “civil politico-military indoctrination closely linked to the NRM” (Perrot, Lafargue, and Makara 2014, 19), which is designed to instill military values into the population, and attach “high symbolic capital to the military” (Kagoro 2015, 201). The training, which derives its name from an onomatopoeia of marching soldiers, ranges from weeks to months in duration. It teaches citizens technical military skills (like gun stripping, parading, and battle tactics), political rhetoric of the NRM state, and military culture. The vast majority of those who participate in *mchaka mchaka* are male, although it is open to both males and females (Lanken Verma 2012). Within these security institutions, both

male and female participants are required to perform the military masculinity of the NRM state, which establishes them as superior to “feminized” civilians. One man who had gone through various training programs explained:

During the trainings, there is every struggle to ensure that one is rid of all civilian attitudes; somewhat it does not matter whether one is a man or a woman. There are times when people are asked to wake up at 4am when people are still enjoying their beds... What I know is that a woman who goes and does this training is bound to be unable to settle down in the house with a husband... [H]er attitude and way of doing things would really be manly... [it] would make her develop some kind of a man’s attitude (55-year-old man, Gulu District, 16 October 2015).

In her study on *mchaka mchaka* and the NRM state, Lanken Verma notes that the state’s military trainings can be understood as a ritual designed to transform civilian participants “from ‘boys into men’, ‘women into men’, ‘civilians into soldiers’ and ‘ignorant peasants into knowledgeable politicians’” (Lanken Verma 2012, 17). She writes that “civilian needs, desires, or physical and emotional particularities, and even to some extent their languages, ethnicity and genders, were sought to be eradicated or transformed [through the training]” such that the “women should become ‘like men’ and the men should become ‘like *real* men’” (Lanken Verma 2012, 17, 119). My research revealed similar processes in trainings for Crime Preventers (see chapter 10).

This process of militarization is particularly salient in Acholi society, where ideals of masculinity prize authority and respect over violence. Dolan (2011) has written that “there is relatively little within the model [of Acholi masculinity] which explicitly encourages or celebrates the use of violence. Rather there is a kind of loud silence on the issue” (Dolan 2002, 78–79).⁹¹ Indeed, my respondents expressed that a real Acholi man should not use violence—and I

⁹¹ Also see work by Nancy Rydberg on the concept of *woro*—connoting discipline, respect, humility, and obedience—as the Acholi template for ideal adult and child male behavior.

interpreted this to mean he should not need to use violence. A real man should be honest, hardworking, and good—and logically, no one would fight with such a man. If, however, a “good man” faced a challenge that he could not outsmart, it would be necessary and even right to use violence. Thus, physical acts of violence should be understood as a means to an end rather than a fundamental dimension of masculinity.

The NRM regime’s militarized version of masculinity, on the other hand, clearly prizes access to violence as a key indication of power and thus, manliness. This is revealed through both symbolic and material rhetoric and actions. For example, in a gender sensitivity training run by United Nations Human Rights (UNHR) training for the Uganda police, an imposing middle-aged woman spoke animatedly about the need to modify police behavior in the name of “gender sensitivity,” particularly when handling cases of gender based violence. In response, the police raised several protestations, insisting that “discipline is paramount” in the force, and thus, individual officers had no flexibility. One argued that issues complicated by gender could not receive special attention at a local level because of police procedure,

There is what we call discipline in the force. The DPC [District Police Commander] is in charge in the district. If there is a problem [at the district], it must be forwarded to the region. It means it has been handled (Police officer, Gulu District, 12 February 2016).

A facilitator question about how officers could better communicate with female victims and encourage them to “open up” about their problems instigated a sexualized response: “Open up? How?” and an outburst of snickers, illustrating one way a militarized masculinity engages with women. Similarly, the facilitator asked whether the police prepared for health needs in tandem with riot control: “If you teargas a rally and many people fall down, do you have the capacity to take them to the hospital?” This question resulted in uproariously laughter. For the Ugandan police,

violence—or threat thereof—remains a key tool of enforcement; relatedly, there is little flexibility for the expression of variations on this militarized masculine gender identity, let alone, expression of “gender sensitivity”.

Young Acholi men who have gone through security trainings like those elaborated above comment on the disjuncture between the state’s military masculinity and the Acholi masculine ideal-type:

When a man trains as a military officer, he becomes aggressive and would really be hard on other people. I remember we did our training to become Crime Preventers...and we were being trained by soldiers. All the things which were happening during the trainings were really not cool because everything was being handled with a lot of military style which I really did not like at all. But to me, that does not really [make] someone a man. Well. It would make one a man, but at the end of it, if one is trained to be in charge of security how then would one be able to provide that security if he is always just aggressive? It would not be really easy...to do that (27-year-old security group member, Gulu District, 6 October 2015).

The respondent seems undecided as to whether aggression bolsters or undermines masculinity—and indeed, this may be because for Acholis, violence is evaluated contextually. In this quote, the respondent is grappling with two distinct notions of masculinity (civilian and military) in the same context, and finds that he cannot reconcile them with a stable norm on use of violence.

By infusing society with military values while denying civilians access to the symbolic and material elements of militarism, the regime has highlighted the power of the military in contrast to a (relatively) demilitarized society. As a result, society also becomes “feminized” in relation to the state, as it is framed as an entity that must be provided for and protected. Thus, military trainings and indoctrination can be viewed as a tool of social discipline, actively informing citizens about the violence and resources that rest on the other side of the civil-military divide. Lanken Verma

explains how *mchaka mchaka*'s stated goal to “demystify the gun” actually works as a strategy to produce a perception of the state's monopoly on use of armed force:

As such, the gun was ‘demystified’ and ‘democratized’ in language, but in practice it was definitely still not for everybody to use, just as its alleged mystery might not be equally mysterious to all... [G]un in hand (and with *us*), you may be ‘inside’, you may be safe from fear. A move towards the right end of the gun barrel so as to not remain ‘target’ (Lanken Verma 2012, 117).

Government spokespeople also suggested in general terms that *mchaka mchaka* training would make civilians more employable, giving them access to government jobs or political currency (Lanken Verma 2012, 5; Kagoro 2015, 203), further contributing to the symbolic and material value placed on militarism. *Mchaka mchaka* originally targeted secondary-school heads, influential civil servants, and later, university students in the late 80s and early 90s, before opening up to ordinary civilians (Lanken Verma 2012, 63).

Evidence of how militarism is linked to authority and power can be seen in policy, everyday behavior (e.g., marching performances by elementary school children and teachers at celebration events⁹²), as well as in public opinion. In 1996, the interim electoral commission suspended *mchaka mchaka* in response to international concerns that the program was a tool to indoctrinate civilians to support the NRM. However, in the late 1990s Museveni reinstated the program as a part of a strategy to “consolidate stability” in Uganda. It took on an “increasingly compulsory character” and was used to help mobilize support for the NRM before the 2001 elections, particularly in the southern and western parts of the country (Lanken Verma 2012, 63–64). In July 2007, after members of Parliament went on a five-day retreat where they donned military fatigues

⁹² Military organization, success, pageantry and rituals (e.g., “passing out”) represent the public endorsement of such values and their institutionalization in national culture (Higate and Hopton 2005, 433).

and participated in military drills, a law was proposed to make military training compulsory for all able-bodied civilians (The Monitor 2007).⁹³ Today, the perceived link between the military and the state is strong enough that wearing military uniform signals allegiance with the government and the NRM regime.

In my interviews, opposition politicians spoke positively about military trainings for civilians and politicians, explaining that it instills discipline and order in society. Civilian respondents also expressed support for a militarized political system, arguing that only a soldier can retain control of the country. This has further contributed to a shared perspective among civilians that political power is fused with militarism, something Kagoro has called a “warriorised field of power” (2015, 123).⁹⁴ One young man, a former contracted soldier who had reportedly served as a contractor with Americans in Iraq, elaborated this viewpoint, which was widely shared amongst those I interviewed:

To lead Ugandans, you must be a soldier. People are traumatized. They need a military to defend the government and maintain order... Obama was an ex-soldier. Obote—he wasn’t a soldier. How can you control someone who can control you?... It is important to have ambition and be focused—if you’re too relaxed, then I can now be the president. In order to control the whole nation, it is not easy. It is not easy to punish law-breakers. Soldiers were holding the law in their hands before Museveni (Young man, Anaka, 24 September 2015).

⁹³ The retreat was held at the National Leadership Institute Kyankwanzi. In 2012, Museveni ordered that the Institute be turned into a directorate under the State House, reportedly reasoning that “given the central role of Kyankwanzi in inculcating values of patriotism and nationalism in the country, it was prudent that the institute be taken to his office.” The move sparked debate about whether the taxpayer supported institute was being co-opted by the NRM (Y. Mugerwa 2012).

⁹⁴ By “warriorised,” Kagoro means that Ugandans are “accustomed to military figures in politics and to military means as a medium to political power...there seems to be a deeply entrenched shared perception that attaches a high sociopolitical value to the military...[and] the military and its associated ethos such as uniform, gun, rank, training, and participation in war appear to have become a source of symbolic capital” (Kagoro 2015, 123). Militarization is a key dimension of how the ruling regime controls material and symbolic access to violence.

The narrative connecting militarism to power is so strong for this young man that he is certain Obama must have held this qualification to have been President of the United States. An opposition MP expressed a similar view:

What I'm seeing is, in case this man [President Museveni] goes away—with this attitude of so many army around, the generals, those who think they're from the bush, they fought and brought security—I'm thinking Uganda might not be well secured in terms of controlling the army, so that the army are properly in line. Unless someone comes who is very tough. If not we may have some problems of insecurity (Opposition MP, Gulu District, 23 November 2015).

The NRM fosters this view, warning Ugandans that conflict “could easily re-unfold” (Kagoro 2015, 94) if Museveni is forced from power. One man, in his mid-40s, explained his support for the NRM:

I joined the NRM a long time ago... In 1987, people were dying a lot. Many people were dragged to Luzero [Prison]... They took me and many people very far into the bush, but I didn't die. I became mentally disturbed due to being hit on the head. I stayed long without help from the government. So I say, let this government not be changed while we're still alive. When Amin was chased, so many people were killed—if you came from Madi, then they just killed you. It's retaliation. I don't want anything [change in government] until I die. I don't want my child to pay for my funeral (Mid-40-year-old male community member, Gulu District, 28 September 2015).

According to Afrobarometer's 2015 survey, nearly 40% of respondents in the north agree or strongly agree that there should be no constitutional limit on how long the president should serve,

illustrating a relatively high level of acceptance for the regime in a region known as an opposition stronghold.⁹⁵

Thus, the regime is closely associated with the military. While a variety of strategies have helped establish support for militarism and military values amongst the population, gender is a key way these views have become internalized. Civilians live their gender identities constantly, experiencing them in both the public sphere and within their communities and homes. Thus, the regime's emphasis on an autocratic and hegemonic form of military masculinity contributes to individual's perceptions of the state as arbitrary, extra-legal and hegemonic—and a holder of sovereign violence.

The following case study provides a detailed example of how contesting gender norms continue to reproduce Acholi masculinity as subordinate to the state's military masculinity. The case also provides some hints as to how a common narrative of the conflict continues to shape the terrain of possibility for the use of violence. The case shows how, faced with material manifestations of state violence, the community rearticulates an external threat emanating from the presence of soldiers in the community as a disease embodied in a female community member, thereby allowing them to discipline and control the threat by exiling her from the community. The meeting takes place in two parts: an encounter between community members and government soldiers, followed by a meeting amongst the community.

⁹⁵ This compares with about 20% in Central, 42% in West (where Museveni is from), 16% in Kampala, and 25% in the East (Afrobarometer 2015).

Part I: Military and civilian masculinities face off

One evening in November 2015, a soldier and a civilian came to blows over a woman. Each man claimed that the woman was his wife. Soldiers and civilians joined in on each side. In the melee, another soldier—herein called Ronald—was badly beaten. Ronald, furious that he had been beaten over another man’s indiscretions, returned to the barracks and declared that he would hold a grudge until the woman’s civilian husband and brother-in-law were dead and buried. A few days later, the community held an emergency security meeting to address the possibility that the soldier would return with a gun to take revenge on the woman’s husband and brother-in-law. The meeting took place in affected family’s compound, which abutted a small vegetable market, itself neighboring the Fourth Division Barracks.

The barracks sit on more than 200 hectares of land (0.77 square miles) next to the Gulu Airfield. The land was purportedly sold to the military during Amin’s presidency in the 1980s. Since then, soldiers and civilians have lived in close proximity. Although the land is fenced, civilians have been permitted to continue farming within the barracks. The vegetable market, several bars, and music establishments cater to the soldiers, whose monthly salary generates a significant influx of cash for this poor peri-urban community. This area is known as “Box Market”—or simply “Box”—so called because of the prostitutes, who keep their earnings in small boxes. Box has a sordid reputation: it is a place where nighttime drinking gets out of control, women prostitute themselves, and brawls break out. The community has long tried to control this

⁹⁶ The excerpts from this meeting are summarized to reflect the spirit of what was said, using as many of the same words as possible, as they were translated to me. In some cases, I have combined the comments of respondents in the same “category” (e.g., male soldiers or adult female civilians) to express points raised by different individuals.

area, implementing by-laws requiring bars to close at 10pm, prohibiting prostitution with threat of exile from the community, and stipulating that “ladies sharing houses⁹⁷ should be disciplined by the Committee and expelled [and] [a]ny land lord/lady who encourages the above acts shall be disciplined and fined as much as the community decides” (Box area community by-laws, on file with author).

At the security meeting, approximately 30 women sat shoulder-to-shoulder on reed mats under a mango tree, while fifteen or so men sat around the perimeter of the clearing on wooden benches. The soldiers—some in uniform, others in civilian dress—sat on chairs facing the women. After the local leader opened the meeting, the soldiers spoke:

Soldier 1⁹⁸: We have come today to keep the peace. We are not peacekeepers, but we should try as neighbors...As a civilian, how can you pick a stick to bring to a soldier? You think that you’re the only one with *kero* [energy]? If he [the soldier] goes into the barracks with energy, what will happen?

...There’s a woman here causing death to the community. We should eliminate...[people] who cause problems between civilians and soldiers. [If the conflict isn’t solved] we’ll block the road to your garden[s] because if [the problem causers] don’t want a good relationship, why should they survive? We should act before a soldier or a civilian dies. Go tell your husbands.

Soldiers do not fight civilians; they follow their own law. The community is trying to cause problems among them. Ronald was hit instead of the person concerned; there are bees behind him. The higher authorities are concerned if a soldier beats and steals from a civilian. So don’t take the law into your own hands. If I steal your [groundnuts], don’t fight—go and report it.

The soldiers established that they were agents of violence with access to guns and “energy” for fighting—violence is in their nature. For “energy”, the soldier used the word *kero*, which translates to power as well as energy, and is also used as an expression of masculinity during sex (see Porter

⁹⁷ It is commonly believed that “ladies sharing houses” are prostitutes.

⁹⁸ Some of the soldiers spoke in Swahili, which was translated to Acholi for the civilian audience. Swahili is spoken by the police and military, but is not commonly spoken by civilians in the north.

2013, 227–28 on *kero ma nok*). Thus, a man’s “energy” alludes to notions of masculine sexuality as well as power. The simultaneous references to peace emphasized that the community must make sacrifices to placate the soldiers, lest the soldiers respond with violence, which was presented as an intrinsic characteristic of a soldier’s masculinity. Moreover, the soldier claimed that soldiers do not fight with civilians, thereby asserting a narrative in which the civilians caused the conflict. This echoes wartime narratives placing blame for the war with Acholis and framing soldiers as protectors, despite the common knowledge that soldiers frequently meted out violence on the civilian population. A friend reiterated this sentiment in a conversation we had about this part of the meeting. He lamented: “The husband to that lady has no power. He cannot go kill Ronald, but Ronald can go get a gun. Soldiers are slippery; they do what they want. I truly believe that.”

The soldier also asserted that the civilian brother-in-law should have beaten the adulterous woman rather than fight with the soldiers. However, by fighting with the soldiers, the civilians opened the possibility that Ronald would return to exact revenge by killing the husband and brother-in-law. Thus, the soldier claimed the woman would “cause death” in the community if the problem was not resolved to restore Ronald’s pride. None of the authorities present, including the LCI and the higher-ranking soldiers, challenged the assertions that soldiers could use their access to violence for personal vengeance, thereby reinforcing the belief amongst the community members in attendance. Indeed, when the soldier suggested that civilians should report crimes rather than take matters into their own hands, he was essentially demanding that civilians subordinate themselves to the soldiers. The soldiers also immediately raised the issue of blocking civilian access to their land if issues regarding “love relations” don’t improve. This was framed as a direct threat to cut off access to a key local livelihood—subsistence farming. By making the

conflict about land as well as women, the soldiers asserted their dominance over civilians in both economic and social spheres.

Several community members responded, generally agreeing that married civilian women who have sexual relations with soldiers “cause death” in the community because the “soldiers will get annoyed and pick their guns.” They further agreed that because of this, such women should be gotten rid of (exiled from the community). One man used the opportunity to call for a revival of community by-laws, which received applause.

Woman 1: The soldiers are our children. Why do they do such things? If a soldier dies, we also feel it... If you have a husband and deceive others that you don't, that's wrong. We should get rid of that person. Otherwise, it will cause death. The soldiers will get annoyed and pick their gun.

Woman 2: So many civilian women go to the barracks to have sex... The soldiers should stop civilian women to go inside. The soldiers are causing problems. Other small-scale sellers, they go [to the barracks] for sex, not [for] digging. The soldiers want this, they know [it is happening]. The soldiers know all the housewives in this area. They are doing it deliberately. They are encouraging it.

Soldier 2: The soldiers are passed out—they know they can kill a mother, a child—soldiers are bad. If they change their color, they can kill. Intruders who come in [to the barracks] should be faithful—they should not be wrong doers. The LCI should be informed. He has the sole responsibility of punishing. No one is above the law.

In response to the soldiers' emphasis on the unpredictability and violence of a soldier's masculinity, the woman reframed soldiers as “children” of the community. In this way, she suggested that as for Acholi civilian men, good relations with the community should be important to the soldiers. The woman also said that soldiers should attempt to monitor their interactions with married women by refusing to let them into the barracks. She suggested they are intentionally behaving poorly, thereby asking the soldiers to hold themselves to the same norms that apply to

Acholi civilian men. The soldier replied that soldiers can kill a mother or a child, thereby challenging the woman's claim that soldiers are "sons" of the community. Instead, he emphasized that soldiers are not like civilian men: their sexuality cannot be restrained through social or cultural norms, and thus, they will inevitably dominate civilians.

Man 1: I am born of [this area]... We used to be in total darkness, we all know. People would leave children in the house and run during the insurgency.

I have my children, we dig in the garden. I am praising Museveni. He has given civilians access to [use the] land [within the barracks]. The source of water that our grandfathers have been drinking is in the barracks.

My own children were fighting soldiers. I sat them down and taught them that it is shameful when a civilian fights a soldier. A soldier believes in his energy and the energy is the gun. What will you do? It does not look good when children are fighting.

I am cautioning the bar operators. If you are selling for education of a child... an educated family is strong, and you should give a helping hand by training those who are wrong. We should not call her *Malaya* [prostitute]. Maybe she is looking for a place to sleep or eat. If you have a worker in your bar, register her name with the LCI.

Male youth: As a youth, I am seeing problems. There is no energy to solve them. Had I been a leader, and had laws in my hand, I would solve them myself. I started seeing problems of love as we were growing. In the past, you try to deceive the soldiers, to eat his money, and he would just shoot you. But in these days, the soldiers are more organized. Some women are not respectful to themselves. This can make problems and cause diseases. You find a mother loving a young man, and then that young boy will love her daughter—you'll give HIV to your own daughter. Most soldiers in Uganda have been in Airfield. They have the mentality, if you come to this detach, you'll have another wife. The soldiers have lots of money—even women who are already married see the money and they change their behavior. Soldiers should take care.

LCI: The major problem is love relations and prostitution. There are those without husbands and no business. They wait until the soldiers get their salary and [then they] start causing problems. When the soldiers get paid, the women start rioting.

The man emphasized the importance of access to the gardens within the barracks, and made claims as to why the soldiers should protect this right, first invoking the President's edict, and second a natural or historical right to access the land. In contrast, the soldiers asserted their ability to use brute force to foreclose farming on barrack land. This looming threat was further emphasized when the man referred to the "darkness" of the recent conflict, and how it destroyed families and Acholi culture. The unspoken implication was that the soldiers provided security essential for peace; without them, war could break out again. This is something that Museveni and NRM politicians also refer to. The youth also referred to the conflict and described the social chaos it created, in which incest contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The reference to HIV has strong historical resonances with the conflict, when it was believed that relationships among soldiers and civilians helped spread HIV amongst the civilian population (Dolan 2009, 178–84).

Although the men attempted to disentangle sex work from other economic activities, they recognized that the community relied on the soldiers' business, however unsavory, to finance education and other socially positive needs. The LCI isolated sex work from the other economic activities that take place at Box Market by circumscribing it as an activity that occurs only once a month, around the soldiers' payday. In this way, he condemned prostitution while endorsing the market and other small businesses. These economic engagements are literally feminized: the women of the community interact directly with the soldiers in the market and at their farms in the barracks. Thus, civilian men are repeatedly subordinated to military men: military men can produce threats to the community and protect women from them; they have the resources to woo civilian women, even those who are already married; and they are untethered to the land as a means of economic production and therefore disembedded from the local community. Thus, they are

unrestrained by the social and familial networks that dictate behavior for civilian men. Instead, their first loyalty is to the Ugandan state.

Part II: Transforming an external material threat to an internal embodied threat

The soldiers stood to leave, and the LC agreed with the community members to hold another meeting on the following Sunday, where the wrong-doers would be present and the issue would be fully resolved. When the soldiers had departed, two women spoke out, expressing their concern that the issue had not been sufficiently resolved:

Woman 3: If there is a fight between the soldiers and the youth, the soldiers will kill the youth of the community. The person should be brought before the community. As a mother, I am not happy with what the soldiers have been saying.

Woman 2: The problem causer will be kept informed. There will be resolution. The [responsible] woman should go sit alone.

A young woman, who had been sitting amongst the others throughout the meeting, moved to the front of the group. As if physically repelled, the women around her receded, leaving her sitting alone on a reed mat.

LCI: Are you the one called Cindy?⁹⁹

Woman 2: This is the wife to my son. She had been getting information. What Cindy is doing is not good. She is being called late at night. The soldier comes here to meet Cindy, and they speak together....Different people gave me the report and I was given advice that Cindy could cause a death in the family. Now, I am tired of Cindy. I am requesting advice from the other women. I decided to chase Cindy from

⁹⁹ Names have been changed to preserve anonymity.

home. The soldiers came and sat—Cindy was conning a married woman to those soldiers. The resolution we make is what we'll go forward with.

Cindy hung her head, and mumbled a denial to the accusations. For the next hour, women stood alternately to give their testimony that Cindy had “conned”¹⁰⁰ women in the community to soldiers—including her own sister-in-law who had been the subject of the first half of the meeting—and even prostituted herself. The sister-in-law was not present that day, as she had fled to Kampala before the community meeting (Cindy, Gulu District, 22 January 2017). It appears that Cindy was singled out in the absence of the adulterous woman.

Cindy wept silently while the women rattled off the names of women who Cindy had connected to soldiers, pointed at Cindy, and jeered. A few sounded mildly sympathetic to Cindy, framing themselves and the community as her parents, concerned for her future welfare:

Woman 4: I am an orphan—I grew up in a stupid way. You've tarnished your name. It will go with you everywhere. Your name is like a scar on your body. Instead of listening to other men, you should return to your husband, who you are separated with. Now, you are behaving like a prostitute. Why don't you behave like a housewife and a mother?

Woman 2: At one point, there was another woman who did the same thing as Cindy. The other was sent away. Cindy should be sent away. If Cindy can learn, then let her learn somewhere else, because she is bringing problems here.

Woman 5: Cindy has been keeping secrets for many years. She is trying to buy tomatoes, but having sex with all these people. She blindfolded that woman. Cindy is the most prostitute. People have changed—now when they go to the barracks it is to sleep with men. This is because of Cindy. Today is the last day. [Addressing Cindy] You'll never go to the market. Collect your things. Whoever wants Cindy in the market, raise up your hands. All the women have tried to give you advise. Much as your biological mother failed, we're your parents.

¹⁰⁰ Colloquially, “conning” means to seduce or fool, and is frequently used with sexual connotations.

LCI: We have heard of Cindy. Issues of her have reached me twice. I am glad to meet her today.

Woman 2: The chairperson of the market vendor's association will make the final resolution Let Box have a tarnished name, let the market be separate. Cindy should leave. Cindy has killed all her family members, relatives—they are living dead [HIV+].

Woman 3: Cindy should be happy when she leaves. She should not hate anybody. She should leave with a tarnished name, but on Sunday she should be here because the soldiers are coming [back].

The LCI, who appeared to be growing tired of the meeting, which had carried on for over two hours, stood and issued his ultimatum:

LCI: Cindy should bring money for lunch. You have talked and discussed and resolved, so I can't really reverse your decision. Cindy should leave the market today for her security. If she stays at the market, the soldiers might beat or kill her. She should go and keep away from all these people. And if you delay and try to escape, you'll be deceiving yourself. On Sunday, the other woman [who slept with the soldier] should also be present. So Cindy, there is nothing we can do. We'll sit and wait for Sunday to come. We cannot reverse what the market vendors have decided.

Man 2: I've heard everything against Cindy—it's not good for a young woman to do those things. Cindy should be here [with her brother] on Sunday. She can ask forgiveness on Sunday, maybe they will grant it.

The community members then demanded Cindy produce 10,000 UGX (3.38 USD); in the end, the market vendors confiscated her phone, exchanging it for 10,000 UGX which was then taken to purchase snacks for all those in attendance. As we left the meeting, the LC told me he had no

choice in to change the outcome of the meeting—that the community had spoken and it was out of his hands.¹⁰¹

During the second part of the meeting, after the soldiers left, the community approached the same issue completely differently. In the first half of the meeting, they tentatively discussed possibilities for soldiers to moderate their behavior and placed blame on the adulterous woman. In the second half of the meeting, the community focused on how this conflict could be solved, and similar problems avoided, by changing behavior within the community without involving the soldiers. In this endeavor, they transformed Ronald's external and material threat of violent retribution into an internal and pathological threat physically embodied by Cindy, a former co-wife of the adulterous woman. In this way, the threat could be contained and disciplined in a female body and removed from the community. The discrepancy between an armed soldier and an HIV+ woman is stark. Indeed, the community could only deal with the threat by medicalizing it. The subsequent meeting was never held. The following Sunday, the LC was out of town for a funeral, and the soldiers did not return. The airing of grievances and threats may have been the purpose of the meeting. However, by scheduling a future meeting, indefinitely delayed, the conflict endured as a part of the ongoing relationship between civilians and soldiers, always potentially on the horizon.

¹⁰¹ Follow-up interviews in January 2017 revealed that Cindy had indeed left Box Market, but had married a soldier in the barracks whom she had met years earlier in Kampala when she was working as a waitress. She no longer worked in Box Market, but instead sold goods in Kitgum, using her husband's family home as a base.

Regime hegemony, sovereign violence, and impunity

While many scholars trace shifts in the locus of sovereign violence, and examine the impunity and spiritually dis-embedded nature of the sovereign violence (Hutchinson 1998; T. B. Hansen and Stepputat 2009), I have focused on the state's capacity to *continually redefine* the exception. This fluidity is illustrated throughout the dissertation, particularly in the case studies presented here and in the following chapters, when state authorities casually threaten to suspend law without consequence—for example, when the soldiers threatened that it is easy for a soldier to kill civilians. Implicitly, and as expressed by my research assistant, there is a strong civilian perception that this means killing extra-legally with impunity. Relatedly, the soldiers' decisions to deny civilians access to their small subsistence farms (or “gardens”)—and the threat to do so in the future—illustrates the power of the soldiers to act arbitrarily and without accountability. The citizens responded to threats of unaccountable violence by turning inward and addressing their concerns by implementing restrictions on the civilian community.

Relatedly, numerous authors examine zones of exception as another important theoretical construct to understand state intervention. Governing through exception describes determining that certain places, people, or actions as outside normalcy, thereby justifying government interventions of any magnitude at any time (Agamben 2005; Hagmann and Korf 2012; Rodgers 2006). For example, Abdel Salam describes Sudan since independence as under a state of emergency, arguing that exceptional powers have become “Sudan's de facto constitution” (Salam 2001, 2). Similarly, Alex de Waal describes Sudan's war zones in the 1980s as an “ethics free zone” in which the key contributor to atrocities committed during the counterinsurgency was an instruction given to army and militia commanders *not* to report back (de Waal 1994). Tobias Hagmann and Benedict Korf examine Ethiopia's south-eastern frontier through a lens of exception, arguing that exceptional

strategies of political violence have become normalized, such that “successive emergency measures must thus be seen as emanations of state sovereignty rather than as results of local disorder, state failure or anomy” (Hagmann and Korf 2012, 206). Hagmann and Korf argue that taming and controlling the periphery of the state is used to constitute power over the center, just as Schmitt wrote that exception was necessary to constitute law. Governing through a state of exception emphasizes making state presence felt “periodically” and “resolutely” to integrate the periphery into the state, internalizing disorder into the body of the Ethiopian sovereign, and disciplining anyone designated an enemy of the state (Hagmann and Korf 2012, 210).

In northern Uganda’s security sector, we observe something similar; however, in contrast to a zone of exception, we see how the state often asserts normalcy, during which law and its concomitant sanctions formally apply. For example, in the case study, the soldiers tell the civilians to report their problems to the higher authorities, asserting that “no one is above the law” and that soldiers are “concerned if a soldier beats and steals from a civilian.” During the meeting, one woman gave testimony that she had reported a problem military personnel and the matter had been solved amicably. Thus, the system is neither fully personalized and arbitrary, nor fully depersonalized and predictable. This deters civilians from organizing at any level—and significantly limits the bargaining power of sub-national units.

The state retains the sole power to shift the narrative between domination and exclusion through asserting norms of violence to quash dissent from the community. Norms asserted by formal state-employed security actors are backed by superior force and the continual threat of potentially exceptional and sovereign state violence. Therefore, they take precedence over the norms of other public authorities. In the case of direct confrontations, such as the fight between Ronald and the community members, state-employed security actors’ superior access to violence

and resources cements militarized masculinity as the dominant gendered logic of power distribution. This is particularly interesting in northern Uganda, a context where the rebel-led violence was perpetrated mainly by ethnic Acholis. This history points to a non-materialized opportunity for a counter-narrative in which the LRA rebels challenged the NRM state's superior access to violence. Instead, the government has successfully used militarization to create a hierarchy of masculinities where civilians are feminized and made subordinate to the regime's militarized actors.

While narrative is both fluid and political, a dominant narrative has emerged in Acholi that emphasizes the militarized and masculine state's access to sovereign violence, such that the state can act extra-legally, with arbitrariness and impunity at any moment. Such a narrative is particularly important in an environment where the state does not hold a *de facto* monopoly on the use of violence in a traditional Weberian sense. Instead, the state has established itself as using violence as both protector *and* perpetrator—a position which emphasizes the state's superior access to force, whether producing a state of normalcy or exception. This common perception permeates daily life, with most citizens collapsing resentment and appreciation into a public expression of subservience. Together, these elements help explain how the Ugandan state maintains control of violence in northern Uganda, despite its limited presence.

This chapter also tries to explain how individual citizens can internalize a perception of the state as exercising sovereign violence. Lived experiences of masculinity are one such way that this is achieved—civilian men are acutely aware of their inability to achieve masculine ideal-types, and this is further exacerbated in juxtaposition to men earning money in the security sector and performing ideals of a military masculinity. Military masculinity is intrinsically linked to the state's sovereign violence—its ability to act with impunity, from outside, unaccountable to civilian

spiritual and moral notions of order. Understanding how the state's violence is experienced as a part of individual's self-identity as a gendered person—a foundational element of life in any culture, and particularly so in Acholi society—helps reveal how it is possible that sovereign violence constitutes an element of citizen's imaginaries of the Ugandan state, even if they themselves have not experienced or personally witnessed a materially or symbolically exceptional moment. It also helps illustrate how sovereign violence can structure individuals' perceptions of both public spaces—like the market, political competition, and civil society; and also private spaces—like interpersonal and familial relations, parenting, and household finances.

Dolan argues that this process of emasculation experienced by Acholi males in the north is part of a broader governance strategy of the NRM regime:

[T]he hegemonic model [of masculinity of the NRM regime] creates incentives for armed forces to exercise violence on the civilian population in ways which actively undermine civilian men's sense of self. This may contribute to the state's sense of control over both civilians *and* army, both of which are necessary for national and geo-strategic purposes (Dolan 2002, 57).

Dolan's work shows that frustrated masculinity plays into the hands of the militarized NRM regime. As I have argued here, frustrated Acholi masculinity in juxtaposition to the state's militarized masculinity also causes citizens to internalize the idea that the state has access to sovereign violence. In particular, the findings show that gender plays an important role in shaping expectations about access to resources, violence, and power. In this way, citizens have come to perceive the regime as sovereign and hegemonic despite its frequent material absence. The manipulation of gender roles and gendered institutions cast the GoU-LRA conflict as deeply destructive to Acholi life, and continues to produce Acholi citizens—particularly males—as subjects of the militarized Ugandan state over a decade after the war has ended.

Conclusion: The possibility of exceptionality internalized

This chapter has focused on two key points: first, in Uganda, the state has created a level of fluidity between normalcy and exception by exercising exceptional violence—and threat thereof—unpredictably. This is done both by unpredictably deploying exceptional violence—like disappearances, extrajudicial killing, or arbitrary detention—and by using the law to justify violence in a way that makes it difficult to tell whether it is exceptional or lawful. As a result, the oft-assumed dialectic between normalcy and exception is made fragile. The resultant fluidity keeps the possibility of sovereign intervention at the forefront of citizens’ imaginations. People experienced state violence in various ways: through past experiences during the war and displacement, through current experiences of the state’s symbolic and material claims to violence, for example militarized trainings like *mchaka mchaka* as well as arbitrary arrests and detentions, and through rumors or threats of violence, such as those levied by the soldiers in the case of Box Market. Moreover, the possible deployment of sovereign violence is made unpredictable through veneers of legality and competing narratives, for example having police officers make arbitrary arrests.

Second, examining young men’s experiences through the lens of masculinity sheds light on how these processes unfold. In northern Uganda, violence is closely associated with the NRM regime’s militarized masculinity. This is juxtaposed to an Acholi civilian masculinity that leaves the relationship between masculinity and violence undetermined. In addition to violence, the regime deploys several strategies to establish the NRM’s militarized masculinity as superior to Acholi civilian masculinity. These include symbolic means, for example, demonstrating superior appeal to Acholi civilian females, as well as economic means, such as empowering Acholi civilian females over Acholi civilian males as in the case where the soldiers allow women and not men to

access farms in the barracks. By using these strategies interchangeably, the environment is structured to predictably produce hegemony, even if the means of doing so are not fully consistent or predictable. Using violence consistently to enforce the hegemony of militarized masculinity would be costly, requiring regular deployment of violence to punish infractions. This mixed approach is thus less predictable for civilians and more cost effective for the regime.

The fluidity between normalcy and exception has important implications for the state's capacity to govern. Importantly, although the Ugandan Constitution allows for the declaration of a state of emergency, the regime never did so throughout all the internal rebellions it faced (Odyek and Musoke 2007).¹⁰² Nonetheless, the government has consistently exercised its ability to act as if there were a state of emergency. The constant possibility of a reformulation of the relationship between governing institutions and violence means that the rules that govern behavior in the public sphere could always potentially be disregarded, or even fundamentally undone. Yet, in the absence of sovereign intervention, the rules hold. This helps explain how, in a context of multiple and competing institutional orders, the state's laws can both matter at some moments and be disregarded at others. Although Uganda's state institutions do not retain a monopoly on the use of force in a Weberian sense, central state authorities benefit from the perception that they have access to sovereign violence that can be deployed arbitrarily and at any moment. The looming threat of exceptional state violence paradoxically bolsters acceptance of the ruling regime, as the state appears to be the only potential bulwark against its own threat of sovereign intervention.

As a result, citizens develop an attitude of skepticism and quiescence toward the state. While they may attempt to make claims on the state or organize constituencies, they are acutely aware that it is possible for the state to intervene to use violence with impunity to suspend and/or

¹⁰² The first state of exception was declared in the north and east of the country in 2007 in response to flooding (Odyek and Musoke 2007).

change the rules of the game (also see chapter 9). Ordinary citizens of northern Uganda live in an uncertain space, where various institutional logics compete to dictate outcomes. At the same time, the possibility of sovereign violence constantly hovers in citizen's minds and foregrounds citizens' interactions with central state authorities.

Chapter 6

“Government things have to be confusing”:

Non-institutionalized Public/Private Division

In the early days of my fieldwork, I noticed a frequent occurrence: members of the local security groups that I was researching frequently got into trouble with state security providers. They were detained, arrested, fined, and in one case, shot. I asked a locally elected official why this happens, and if it could happen to the security group in his village. He responded:

Yes, certainly [local security can be arrested as wrongdoers]! [Those working in our area] said, ‘What if this happened in our place, we have no appointment letter?’ They will be disowned if there is a problem. This annoyed me so much. These people were mandated by the office of the RDC to be vigilant to protect their area.

[Why didn’t you provide them with a letter, then?]

If something goes wrong, I would be liable! It would be as if I was responsible for everything they do. So the groups are still functioning under silent right now (Sub-county elected official, Gulu District, 27 October 2014).

This is a common observation of local vigilante groups worldwide—because they are usually not a formalized part of the state’s governing system, they are constantly subject to redefinition as illegal or illegitimate entities. In and around Gulu Town, I found that the ruling regime used multiple strategies of redefinition. First, government actors changed their claims over what fell under their jurisdiction. Second, they changed the rules that they applied in different cases. These processes of unpredictable redefinitions made it difficult for local security groups to assert their

authority over their own jurisdiction. Instead, their claims were undermined by unpredictable state interventions.

In this chapter, I analyze these dynamics through the lens of the production of “public” and “private” spheres to understand first, how Uganda’s ruling regime maintains control over local security groups even with limited oversight, and second, why security groups are largely unable to consolidate power independently from the ruling regime. I use the term “public” jurisdictionally to refer to an actor in some form—whether, for example, state, religious, traditional, or firm—asserting meaningful decision-making power over a specific subject matter and/or polity with respect to a specified audience. The authority’s power is made meaningful through access to violence, whether symbolic or material, such that he or she can make rules and enforce them. In the case of Uganda, I find that the ruling regime has access to sovereign violence that is superior to all other actors. Thus, the ruling regime’s determination of its public shapes the viability and meaningfulness of all other claims to jurisdiction.

I understand public and private spheres as socially produced. This is in line with other inquiries into the form and nature of the post-colonial sub-Saharan African state that pinpoint the sociological fluidity of notions of public and private, such that traditional rules are viable “forums” for justice, or clans are meaningful “public authorities” in people’s lives.¹⁰³ In many contexts, frequently in “developed” countries that resemble Weberian rational-legal bureaucratic states, the state’s jurisdiction is institutionalized and naturalized based on a series of iterative interactions, such that certain things are understood as intrinsically public or private. These iterations might

¹⁰³ Indeed, the term “public authority” was developed to reflect how traditionally non-state actors mimic or parasitize on the performances of state institutions. The term breaks down the binary between “state” and “non-state” in recognition of the complex and multifaceted dimensions of governance in post-colonial and fragile state contexts, and recognizes how the “language of stateness” can contribute to produce authority (Hoffmann and Vlassenroot 2014; Lund 2006a; Raeymaekers, Menkaas, and Vlassenroot 2008).

concretize the division of subject matter into public and private issues, or determine jurisdiction over disputes by the form or geographic locations of those concerned. This type of predictable pattern discerning public from private does not appear to have emerged in northern Uganda. Furthermore, the fluidity between public and private spheres appears to be the result of the organization of access to violence by the actor with by far and away the most control over it—the NRM regime. Thus, I understand public and private not as a sociological reality, but as a series of political effects.

As discussed in chapter 2, in my conception, the private space includes groups that one might imagine in sociological terms to be public—clans, churches, and the like. I deliberately use this dichotomy to capture two dimensions of governance in northern Uganda. The first dimension is state actors’ deliberate, unpredictable, and often sudden withdrawal from governance over certain matters without prescribing an alternative authority to deal with the claim. The second dimension is that these unpredictable assertions and withdrawals of authority are backed by meaningful threat of superior force—and as a result, they circumscribe the viability of potential alternative authorities.

Understanding the division between public and private as fluid and constantly renegotiable contrasts with the assumptions of most political science theory on state formation and subnational governance. Instead, this literature focuses on ordering—how rulers organize the ruled to maximize control and extraction. A key theoretical component of ordering is the division of the world into public and private spaces. A related consequence is the establishment of predictable terms of exchange, which allow citizens to maximize returns under given constraints and also to make claims on the state just as the state extracts from them (Herbst 2000; Mukhopadhyay 2014; Tilly 1992). However, in practice, the boundary between public and private spheres in Uganda is

fluid. As a result, citizens are often unable to develop expectations needed to accurately predict the terms of exchange between citizens and state authorities. The fluidity between public and private spheres also prevents citizens in Gulu from independently determining which authorities in the security sector will evaluate their claim.

This chapter explores how a fluid division between public and private spheres contributes to an environment of uncertainty. Specifically, it illustrates that the production of authority is comprised of a dynamic process of both claiming *and denying* authority. In Gulu, this process is often ad hoc, thereby preventing citizens from establishing clear expectations of authorities. For example, an LCI might refer the same case of domestic violence to the police as a public criminal case, to a clan elder as a private familial concern, or handle it him or herself. In this way, authorities strategically claim the right to intervene in situations that offer potential benefits. At the same time, they reject cases that seem hopeless or burdensome, thereby conceding authority to another actor. In the moment of denying authority, authorities shift claims amongst different jurisdictions and make claims “more public” or “more private”. This means that the state’s authority and perceived responsibility to intervene on a person, place, or event remains flexible and open to the possibility of redefinition. Because in the case of Uganda, those with access to state institutions have superior access to material and symbolic forms of violence and also superior resources, state actors can almost always reassert the boundary in a place that works to their advantage, whether that redefinition relies on claiming or denying authority. Thus, in Gulu, fluidity between public and private spheres functions to reinforce the power of the ruling regime.

Second, this chapter explores how state authorities can use this dynamic process to undermine potential alternative authorities. For example, as I explore in this chapter, state authorities unpredictably assert their authority over assault, thereby weakening the authority of

local security groups who might use violence to handle a given issue. By intervening unpredictably both in terms of when and how, state authorities can shift and destabilize the public/private boundary. This strategy is most effective for actors who have relatively superior access to violence and resources to enforce their assertion or denial of authority. Thus, state authorities maintain power over other claimants to public authority (in this case, security group members) by intervening at unpredictable moments. This undermines the very basis of the security group's claim to power, thereby keeping them subordinate to state authorities. In this way, state actors enforce their position as the dominant authority in a plural and fragmented governance environment. Although all kinds of authorities may use this strategy, in northern Uganda those who have access to the state's tools of detention, violence, and sanction are inevitably more effective, as they can impose decisions to intervene with overwhelming force. Together, these two phenomena function as a mode of governance and help explain the non-emergence of a Tillyean compact between authority/ies and society in northern Uganda (Tilly 1992).¹⁰⁴ In addition to rulers deriving power from the contest for and consolidation of voluntary compliance (Bayart 1993; Boone 1998), I argue that a key aspect of the state's power is limiting and fragmenting civilians' ability to make claims.

To illustrate these points, I first discuss theory on the production of public and private spheres. Second, I discuss notions of public and private based on the Acholi context. I then present a case study that illustrates how state actors and other public authorities make these concepts fluid, in large part by iteratively granting and rescinding the authority of a security group, and alternately determining different places, such as the home and the village, as public or private. The case

¹⁰⁴ Following Tilly, we would expect a social contract to gradually develop between the state and society, such that citizens voluntarily contribute sons to the military and taxes to the state in exchange for protection and services, thereby decreasing the costs of resource extraction.

illustrates how public authorities claim and deny authority to consolidate power, as well as how state security actors, particularly police and central state actors, manipulate the boundary between public and private to strengthen their position in respect to other authorities.

Conceptualizing public and private in the periphery

As discussed in chapter 2, neopatrimonialism is perhaps the most popular theory of governance applied to sub-Saharan African countries, and particularly Uganda.

Neopatrimonial regimes are hybrid, uncertain, unstable and usually authoritarian systems of governance. They are a hybrid mix of legal-rational bureaucracy and personalized systems of power involving clientelism and patronage. They produce a significant degree of uncertainty over which of these two systems will dictate the decision-making process in any given situation (P. Williams 2016, 68).

In this view, there are two competing orders—at one extreme, the rational-legal state bureaucracy is merely a public façade and patrimonialism, in the form of informal political relations, reigns. At the other extreme, the two logics co-exist and can be manipulated, whether by those in power who abide by rational-legal systems when it serves their interests, or by the population which can use some of these norms to counter the power of state authorities.¹⁰⁵ Williams provides the example of several African countries in which a president tried to change the constitution to extend term limits and was unable to do so. He argues that their compunction to change the law illustrates its importance; their inability further shows that patrimonialism is at times limited by rational-legal orders (2016, 70).

¹⁰⁵ Erdmann and Engel (2007, 108) emphasize that elites can use official legal rational rules to manage competing clientelistic demands.

To a large extent, Museveni's Uganda fits this model. Indeed, the regime has masterfully manipulated state resources and international aid to further its patrimonial machine (Mwenda and Tangri 2005). At the same time, Museveni and elites in his government have taken care to reform the constitution and other state laws to defend these actions.¹⁰⁶ Examples abound, from constitutional amendments to eliminate the presidential term limit in 2005, to the President's acquiescence to the court's repeal of the homosexuality bill in 2014. Additionally, the regime relies on secrecy justified by a narrative of national security concerns (e.g., military spending), as well as vague and open-ended legislation to formally legalize otherwise dubious activities. In particular, when it comes to civilian engagement in security provision, a loose patchwork of legal provisions protects potentially questionable activities. These include the 1994 Police Act, which provides for auxiliary forces, Article 17 of the 1995 Ugandan Constitution, which requires able bodied citizens to undergo military trainings and render national service when necessary, and the 2005 UPDF Act, providing for "auxiliary forces, state security organizations, and such other citizens of Uganda as have undergone military training under article 17(2) of the Constitution", thus including "Home Guards, LDFs and vigilantes" (Janmyr 2014, 208, 217). Those who I interviewed in government positions and in the police often referred to these provisions to justify the activities of civilian security initiatives. Such vague laws facilitate the regime's strategic use of auxiliary forces, while limiting the regime's accountability for the actions of civilian militias and responsibility for their upkeep. Indeed, payment is often determined through informal and personal channels. This is a clear illustration of the importance of rational-legal orders to the regime's strategy of rule.

¹⁰⁶ Abrahamsen and Bareebe examined the 2016 Ugandan election, arguing that "[The] National Resistance Movement (NRM) went through the numerous and cumbersome rituals of elections, [however] the rules were broken so frequently and so blatantly that even 'faking democracy' seems a generous description" (2016, 752). They note the many arrests of opposition candidates, violence, and the like—however, most of these actions are indeed justified by law, even if the laws are draconian and/or authoritarian.

This is not to suggest that the regime is fully restrained by a rational-legal order—to the contrary, the Museveni regime has engaged in illegal tactics to maintain power and maximize personal gain, likely including extra-judicial killings (in particular, poisonings of potential political opponents, see chapters 5 and 9), and illicit marks (for example, war profiteering off natural resources from DRC). However, the regime has been largely successful at hiding such activities within a web of legal justifications and misinformation, precluding the public and the international community from confident condemnation of the regime.¹⁰⁷

While the notions of public and private have a murky relationship in a Ugandan context, local notions of jurisdiction, responsibility, and power reveal that they are distinct concepts. Particularly in interpersonal relationships, there is an evident dialogue between notions of public and private. Porter writes about Acholi courting rituals, and the importance of public and private places. Her work points out that sociologically private moments are rare—limited to bathing, defecating, and having sex; and yet, distinct spheres exist in which different moral orders are believed to prevail, and where different rules apply. As discussed in chapter 2, Porter also describes how sexual crimes are typically addressed *gang gang* or “down home,” by relatives like respected elders or kinship-based authorities, as well as the importance of public and private spaces to the structure of Acholi society (Porter 2016). Similarly, Okot p’Bitek writes about another popular saying, *agoro pe camo kato kulu* (“termites do not cross a stream to feed on the other side”) meaning “each person, whatever his status, has a jurisdiction beyond which his powers become ineffective” (p’Bitek 1985, 1; Porter 2013, 280). These sayings encompass a notion of private, a jurisdiction that cannot be governed by another, although they do not explicitly incorporate the term.

¹⁰⁷ One key exception includes the United Nation’s condemnation of Uganda’s role in looting in the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNSC 2001).

While the mechanisms through which public and private are manipulated in Gulu may be particular, the fluid nature of the public/private divide as it pertains to security appears to have broader relevance for the exercise of authority. For example, in their collection on vigilante groups worldwide, Pratten and Sen (2008) argue that the dichotomy between public and private is collapsing because governments have outsourced security provision to communities while emphasizing the import of law, thereby creating an “elision of the law and lawlessness” (Pratten and Sen 2008, 5). They raise questions such as “Is it ‘private’ or ‘public’ policing when a government legislates to authorize village defense forces or to sponsor vigilante groups; is it ‘private policing’ or ‘local government’ when communities grasp opportunities within the law to organize their own protection even though they are not explicitly authorized to do so?” (Pratten and Sen 2008, 2–3). Abrahams points out that vigilantes can only exist alongside—and typically on the frontiers of—state power. Functioning at the boundary is an ongoing process in definition and redefinition: “...all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins” (Mary Douglas 2002, quoted in Pratten and Sen 2008, 8). In this assessment, vigilantism always exists in an environment where the relationship between public and private is relatively fluidly defined.

Relatedly, scholars of vigilantes globally note that state actors take advantage of this ambiguity, at times supporting vigilantes and at other times penalizing them. These authors provide various explanations for such inconsistencies. For example, Heald (2006) examines how Tanzania’s political and administrative wings favored vigilantes as a way to outsource security provision, while the judiciary and police felt that vigilantes threatened their role as justice and/or security providers, resulting in different branches of the government treating vigilantes differently (also see Abrahams and Bukurura 1993). Others discuss contexts in which state security agents

(police or military) play multiple security roles (private security, vigilante activities, etc.), such that at times the actions of an individual carry the authority of the state and at other times, they may not (Debos 2011; Galeotti 2008; Shah 2008). In their study of the blurring and “entanglements” of community policing initiatives and private security providers in Swaziland and South Africa, Tessa Diphorn and Helene Maria Kyed show how both sets of actors strategically use logics of commercial and community security to effectively position themselves in a competitive security landscape (Diphorn and Kyed 2016). However, these authors stop short of examining how fluidity and uncertainty function as part of a broader system of governance.

Producing the public/private distinction in theory

In addition to the positive production of authority, this chapter highlights two negative dimensions that *unmake* authority. The first is an actor’s or institution’s ability to strengthen its position as an authority by refusing responsibility to handle a complaint. The second is an actor’s or an institution’s ability to redefine public, using administrative-legal power as well as force, thereby undermining the basis on which others exercise their authority over a given public. Such acts are present in diverse sectors, for example when the state expropriates land or property, issues a search warrant, or suggests that cases of a criminal nature should be solved “at home”. Here, the chapter draws attention to the terrain on which state and local security providers make and unmake authority in northern Uganda’s Gulu District.

Most literature on governing authority focuses on the production and assertion of authority over a given jurisdiction—and perhaps for good reason. The nascent literature on public authority is illustrative—indeed, the term has been used to provide an analytic framework to examine

governance that is more labile than “the state” (Hoffmann and Kirk 2013). Public authority literature examines how actors repurpose and manipulate international symbols, rhetoric, and forms, along with multiple political, social, economic, and/or legal orders, to derive their public authority. This is frequently achieved through adopting symbols of the state, for example appropriation of deeds, stamps, personal identification, uniforms, by-laws, and so on. Through this process, new hierarchies can ossify such that they seem “traditional” or longstanding. Although the public symbols are historically contingent, imaginations and practices of the “state” today define many of its key characteristics. This implies that even authority that appears legitimate and organic has been constructed, and close enough scrutiny can uncover its roots.

Consider the work of Pierre Englebert (2009), who writes on the reproduction of the state in sub-Saharan Africa. He notes that despite the complete absence of the state, non-state actors reproduce state authority at a local level, for example, by requiring state issued documentation at checkpoints. Specifically, he describes how the RCD (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie, a rebel group in Northeast Congo) failed to innovate legally or institutionally, despite the leadership’s “avowed intentions to reform the state” (Englebert 2009, 134). Englebert interprets the rebel group’s behavior as a move to reiterate and reinforce the juridical authority of the Congolese state, which they hoped to take over after the war. The same observations, however, could be understood differently: in the absence of state regulation, the rebels strategically repurpose government symbols to bolster their authority over a given public in the immediate term; they have no intention to ever take over or adopt wholesale the state’s institutions. Thus, they have adopted and repurposed state symbols of authority not to reinforce the state, but rather to project the legitimacy and authority that these symbols imply onto the rebel organization.

Similarly, Nora Stel writes about public authority in Palestinian refugee camps in south

Lebanon, concluding that by reproducing state symbols of authority, non-state authorities reinforce the power of the state. Stel observes in her research that non-state authorities “mimic” the state, casting themselves as “municipality-like” and “public and national representatives” (Stel 2016, 449). She argues that “public authority ...[is] ontologically beholden to stateness despite the physical absence of a state” and indeed that this is not detrimental to the “real” state but constitutive of it (Stel 2016, 449). Christian Lund has also showed how citizens in Indonesia voluntarily pay taxes on land so they can use the receipts to make ownership claims, thereby showing how citizens themselves reproduce and reinforce the significance of state symbols (conference at the World Bank, 2016). Indeed, literature on the production of public authority is vast, illustrating how in many different sectors and contexts, individuals adopt symbolic repertoires or forms of statehood to legitimate their claims to power.

As discussed, many scholars of vigilantism recognize that the boundary between public and private is fluid, and they use this as a starting point to explore how non-state security actors—including vigilante groups, community police and civilian militias—produce their authority, highlighting their “ambiguous” relationship with the state (Pratten and Sen 2008), their ability to be simultaneously public goods providers and private citizens (Abrahams 1987; Gopfert 2012), as well as how they contest and repurpose symbolic repertoires of public authorities (Lund 2006c). Lars Buur’s work on the *Amadlozi* in South Africa notes that “the ideal constitutive separation between the two domains [civil society and state] is, on closer scrutiny, a zone of ongoing contestation [over what belongs in each]” (Buur 2006, 741). David Pratten discusses the “tactics of the weak” as a way that *Annang* youth in southern Nigeria negotiate the state (Pratten 2006, 710). Lund explores how home-town associations, chieftaincies, and vigilante groups continually contest amongst themselves to adopt and retain the mantle of public authority in favor of “what

they consider to be their antithesis, the ‘State’” in Niger (Lund 2001).

These and many other works illustrate the diverse situations in which individuals attempt to assert themselves as authorities over a given jurisdiction, whether out of altruism or self-interest. They also examine ongoing contestation among authorities—particularly over use of violence, access to resources, and use of state symbols—to control claims to authority. Much of my research illustrates similar efforts on the part of local security groups and dynamics amongst these groups and state actors. The findings also illustrate a second point much less examined in the literature, which is the strategic denial of authority. This is achieved both by refusing to hear a complaint, and also by re-framing events, issues, and people as private (and thus, non-intervenable upon). The following case study illustrates claims to authority over a given jurisdiction as well as the dynamics of denying authority through an examination of a domestic dispute that occurred within Gulu Town. In the case, citizens, security group members, police, and state authorities struggle over whether the home and the village constitute public or private spaces, and concomitantly, the level of responsibility they hold in determining how the dispute should be resolved, and who should be held accountable.

*Arrest or assault? Crossing the line in Centre Village*¹⁰⁸

Centre Village is located within Gulu Town. All neighboring villages had functioning security groups, linked to a community policing intervention from 2013. Many members of this particular group had recently participated in a police-led Crime Preventers training. The LCI Defense

¹⁰⁸ A version of this case study was published in *African Affairs* in 2016 (Tapscott 2016a).

Secretary had printed and laminated identification cards for each group member, with the holder's name, photograph, and position on the security group, such as "defense scout". The cards were stamped and signed by the office of the LCI to prevent fraud. The LCI explained that the group was first formed in the village in 1986, when Museveni came to power, but that it had only recently been reactivated. The LCI explained, "The group was relaunched because many security members had left for work, school, or other opportunities. It's hard to say when the group started because we constantly adjust and change to meet needs of the community" (LCI Chairman, Centre Village, 14 October 2014).

The group raised funds through a tax on the business community. The LCI Defense Secretary explained:

Every business point gives 2,000 shillings/month to the group. As for factories and casinos, they give 10,000 shillings/month. We distribute this equally among the members. We also sometimes deliver summons for arrest, which costs [the complainant] 1,000 for writing, 1,000 for delivery. The total comes to usually between 300,000 and 500,000 shillings/month. If they don't contribute, we type their name. If you don't pay four times, then you are summoned and you must pay 40,000 shillings. The factories always respond. We started this collection around 2005 (LCI Defense Secretary, Centre Village, 18 October 2014).

The group also has established procedures for punishments, where certain crimes receive a certain number of "sticks". One group member explained, "We usually tell you to pay 1,000 shillings per stick. We usually give the punishment of five strokes. If you want to pay money [instead of being beaten] you have to pay 5,000 shillings for the five strokes" (Security group member, Centre Village, 15 November 2014). If the perpetrator is elderly or weak, they are required to pay the sticks.

On top of sticks, perpetrators are often required to pay an additional fine to cover the cost of stolen goods or compensate authorities for the time spent on the case. For those who cannot pay the sticks or the fine, they are given “bond,” where the security group takes an object of equal value from the perpetrators home, and he or she is required to report back to the group on a weekly basis. In addition to corporal punishment and fines, the local council and security group also use formal letters to exile community members who break local rules. The Defense Secretary of the security group explained to me:

For a petty thief, we (1) give a good stroke; (2) tell them that next time we will forward the case; and (3) assert that we have the right to write a letter that will send you away from this place. Even myself, on June 5, I sent a woman away from here. She was selling stolen goods from her place. We warned her three times. On the fourth time we wrote a letter and told her to leave our place (LCI Defense Secretary, Centre Village, 18 October 2014).

In October 2014, the Defense Secretary and a member of the security group were arrested and accused of trespass and assault related to a domestic conflict.¹⁰⁹ Intervention in a domestic conflict is unusual—many have explained to me that when a problem starts in the home, it is impossible to know the true origin of the conflict. In this case, a landlady called the Defense Secretary and informed him of a fight taking place between a husband and wife on her compound. The wife was pregnant and had previously miscarried, the landlady believed due to domestic violence. The member of the local security group who accompanied the Defense Secretary described the incident:

¹⁰⁹ The Domestic Violence Act of 2010 criminalizes domestic violence, making it punishable with a fine of up to 960,000 UGX (325 USD) and up to two years of imprisonment. The LCI court can also hear cases of domestic violence and can forward cases to the police or court. See Jamil Ddamulira Mujuzi, ‘The Ugandan Domestic Violence Act: The drafting history and challenges to its implementation,’ *International Journal of Law, Policy and The Family* 28 (2014), pp. 257–73. Thus, in this case, the intervention of the LCI and security group was lawful.

When we arrived at the scene, we found it was hard to perform our duty of preventing crime since the incident was taking place from behind closed door... The neighbors were saying that it could be that he had already killed his wife... They said they had tried calling this man in vain to stop beating the wife but he could not and at some point the wife ceased to cry (Security group member, Centre Village, 8 December 2014).

They eventually broke the door down on the orders of the landlady and the LCI, who by that time had arrived on the scene. The husband tried to flee, leaving the wife in the house. According to the two local security men, he was beaten severely by community members who had gathered as the incident was taking place. The two local security men left the wife behind and took the husband, bloody and bedraggled, to the police post where he spent the night, and was subsequently transferred to the hospital.

The local security group seemed to think little of this incident until the two men were called to the police post two weeks later. It was alleged that they had targeted a member of the Bagisu community—an ethnic group from eastern Uganda—breaking into his home, beating him with iron bars until he was “over bleeding,” and depositing him at the police station. According to a Bagisu community representative, who translated for the complainant¹¹⁰, the wife denied that she had been beaten.

They were in their play [having sex]... you cannot play theater without a song. The wife told the police, ‘My husband was playing theater and I was singing. We did not fight’ (Bagisu community representative, Gulu District, 21 November 2014).¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ The complainant did not speak Acholi or English, although he had lived in Gulu for nearly ten years. The representative explained that he felt moved to intervene, because if the complainant died from the beating he would be the eighth Bagisu killed in Gulu District.

¹¹¹ One stereotype of Bagisu people is that they have loud sex. My Acholi research assistant expressed doubt, saying, “You cannot scream like that unless there is something the matter.”

Further, the complainant claimed that during his detention the accused men had stolen his cell phone and 5 million UGX (1,692 USD). The Bagisu community leader had also raised the issue with Human Rights Focus, a prominent Ugandan NGO. The accused security group members claim that the case against them was due to collusion between the police officer on duty, who was also Bagisu, and the husband. Further, they had heard that the Bagisu community in Gulu had taken up a collection to bribe the police in favor of the Bagisu man.

Both men reached out to their connections for support. The Defense Secretary went to the RDC, who reportedly told him that she would handle the situation. The other security group member called a contact in the police, who told him not to abscond lest he be framed as guilty. Shortly thereafter, both men were arrested and put on remand, where they stayed for one month. The security group collected donations from the community to pay bail for the two men, set at 600,000 UGX (203 USD). The target was never met since the secretary for the local security group disappeared with the collection. The group has continued to function, and the Defense Secretary was back in office the week he was released on statutory bail. Commenting on his future, one of the accused said:

The future is invisible. That is why I said it is difficult to ascertain what is before the courts of law. I do not know what the court is thinking and what they will write and which ones they will use. As a human being, it is impossible to reverse the decision of the court; one just has to accept the court ruling the way it comes. Whether someone has been sentenced to jail rightly or falsely, one has to serve the sentence (Security group member, Gulu District, 8 December 2014).

One year later in 2015, when I was attending court for a different case, I saw the Bagisu man in court with his wife, holding a new-born baby. His case had yet to be heard.

Manipulating the public/private divide to produce strategic authority

This case highlights the claims that local security and state actors continually make to authority and over a given jurisdiction, their denial of that same authority, as well as their attempts to reshape their jurisdictional claims. Their ability to do so is shaped in large part by the claims that the ruling regime makes over a given jurisdiction, thereby shaping and reshaping the state's public sphere. Local security actors—be they youth groups, police, local administrators, or politicians—recognize the fluidity between public and private: payments to the police are simultaneously fair and a bribe; IDs are legitimate and counterfeit; murder is the most serious criminal offence as well as a matter for the village to deal with. The police hold authority over a given jurisdiction in a formalized, documented, and stable way; the local security in an informal, undocumented, and fluid way. Thus, government issued IDs, uniforms, and certificates not only bolster claims to authority, they also help stabilize the group's jurisdiction—they cannot be revoked as easily as a verbal go-ahead. In this case, the group's best efforts to make claims to authority and over a given jurisdiction through the adoption of symbolic and material representations of the state still were insufficient in the face of the “long hands” of the government.

The case of Centre Village reveals multiple layers of destabilization of the boundary between public/private, in which different state actors variously redefined the boundary in relation to their personal goals. Specifically, the case highlights how the home and the village are both at times defined as “private” spaces outside the purview of the state, and at other times, defined as “public” spaces where the state can intervene and regulate behavior. Typically, domestic violence is considered a matter to be addressed “gang gang” (Porter 2015). However, the LCI—perhaps due to overwhelming concern, or perhaps ethnic biases against the Bagisu man—ordered the security group to break down the door of the Bagisu man, thereby transforming the private marital

altercation into a village issue. By contrast, the Bagisu plaintiffs claimed that the event fell outside the security group's jurisdiction. They argued that the group misconstrued the subject matter, misinterpreting an intimate moment between husband and wife as physical assault. As such, the plaintiffs argued that the group should not have intervened; however, they viewed the subsequent beating of the Bagisu man as a public concern that should be moderated by the state.

For their part, the security group arrested the Bagisu man and left him with the police, essentially determining that the issue should fall under the jurisdiction of the police, and attempting to divest themselves of any further responsibility to intervene. When the police arrested the implicated security group members, despite frequently working with the security group in Centre Village, they undermined the security group's power and re-established the state's primacy as a public authority.

Respondents in my study were clearly aware of how authorities change the rules of the game, noting that they were obliged to support state security personnel when called, while recognizing that no government official or police would formally recognize groups they could not monitor or control. Indeed, some government officials framed security groups as a local response to local problems, something so informal that it could not come to the attention of a researcher such as myself (Community Development Officer, Lira District, 5 November 2014). In this way, sub-county and district officials also construct the local as a private space. This places local security groups in a precarious situation. Security groups are established under the aegis of the government to handle the village domain. In this capacity, they strive to gather threads of authority in a delimited space (the village). But then, at uncertain times, the police or military intervene, thereby making the village a public space subject to state sanction. Members of the security group

are arrested, humiliated, and receive extremely burdensome fines, thereby stripping them of any authority they may have accrued.

In an environment where the state simultaneously asserts and denies its authority and thereby destabilizes the public/private distinction, it becomes extremely difficult for citizens to make claims on the state or other authorities, as they can simply shift the terrain to legitimate intervening on behalf of the complainant or the accused, or to justify ignoring the claim. There is an ever-present possibility that the government can redefine the private as public or vice versa at any point in time—often with costly ramifications.

Conclusion: Claiming and denying “public” authority

Research on non-state armed groups, vigilantes, and other “boundary” institutions should account for the dynamic and contested construction of the public/private boundary, and not limit analysis to the production of public authority. This chapter examines the case of an arrest in Gulu to paint a picture of a public space continually re-shaped to allow just enough hearing of grievances, just enough threat of state violence, and just enough destabilization of expectations of authorities to prevent meaningful political or social organization that could potentially challenge the central state. In turn, this maintains the state’s position as the most powerful of authorities. Placing this work in the context of broader research on civilian security providers and vigilantes, as well as theoretical research on the production of public and private spaces, shows that although the mechanism through which public and private are made fluid in Gulu may be unique, manipulating the divide between public and private can be a key tool in the production of state power.

This finding provides a useful corrective to the literature on public authority, which focuses instead on how actors attempt to constitute public authority and consolidate political power (Lund 2008, 7). This article highlights both how denying authority is equally a component of governing, and how destabilizing expectations fragments resistance and undermines civilians' ability to make claims on authorities. Without accounting for the shifting division between public and private, calls to "clarif[y] rather than blur[] the relationship between local order and local legitimacy" cannot be realized (Meagher 2012, 1074).

This is poignant in Gulu, where the population has suffered through decades of war that make threats of arbitrary and unrestrained violence all the more credible, and possibilities for redress all the less probable. Thus, we see that limiting public claims can reinforce state power without a concomitant increase in human or technical capacity. Moreover, it helps explain why there is a weak state-society compact: it is unrealistic to ask civilians to "hold the state accountable" under these circumstances (Orvis 2001, 28). This process seems to be particularly pertinent in Uganda, where state institutions, government, and party have been fused for nearly thirty years. It remains worthy of examination in a host of countries with similarly authoritarian leaders relying on institutions produced to support their rule.

Chapter 7

“Even at this moment he is hearing us”:

Perception of state presence

In his study of governance in rural eastern Uganda, Ben Jones writes that the Ugandan government is both absent and like “the dry season rains—something occasional and potentially destructive” (Jones 2009, 3). Indeed, although the NRM state is materially absent in many ways, it looms large in the imaginations of the population. The potential presence of the state is further bolstered through a shared belief in an effective and efficient state surveillance system, which results in a belief that state authorities could appear at any moment. At times, this belief manifests as “routinized” fear (Green 1996). Citizen perceptions of state presence result in a self-policing of sorts, where citizens avoid actions or words that they think might draw the attention of the higher authorities. These observations resonate with other studies of governing borderlands or areas that do not meet the geographic and demographic requirements to motivate the state’s extension of control, resulting in “brown areas” (Boone 2012; Rodgers 2006; Zeller 2013) where the state’s presence is “intermittent, selective, and contradictory” and often helps produce the violence it is thought to prevent (Auyero, Burbano de Lara, and Berti 2014, 95).

This chapter examines how the perception of state presence—in combination with a common perception that the state has access to sovereign violence (see chapter 5)—produces an environment of fear and makes the actions and inactions of state actors appear informed and intentional. After all, if state authorities are informed of injustices and have the technical capacity to act, then inaction can be interpreted as equally purposeful to action. Equally so, if state authorities opt to intervene, the perception of potential state presence leads citizens to attribute a

logic to the intervention. Thus, citizens interpret state actions as intentional and targeted, incentivizing citizens to modify their behavior to approximate what they believe state authorities want. Additionally, the perception of surveillance helps explain how the state's sporadic presence and the episodic nature of sovereign violence have been smoothed out such that they contribute to the daily governance of citizens' lives largely in the form of self-policing.

This chapter focuses on citizens' perceptions of a state surveillance system, one of the main factors contributing to the perception of a potentially present state in and around Gulu Town. The chapter first provides relevant context, including the perceived presence of "secret operatives" and government spies, the role of the local council system in historical perspective, and state capacity for surveillance based on recent reports that the Ugandan state uses spyware and other sophisticated technical approaches to surveillance. The chapter then discusses theory on surveillance and arbitrary state presence. I distinguish the Ugandan case from states of exception and police states. I also discuss theory on the routinization of fear, and how this shapes citizens' perspectives of the NRM state. I then present a case in which the state's presence was unpredictable and harsh, specifically failing to offer protection against a spate of serial murders, and then appearing at a moment's notice only to shoot at the members of the local security group. Although the case does not specifically elucidate surveillance, it helps illustrate how beliefs about the state's capacity to appear at any moment cause citizens to interpret the actions of state authorities as informed and intentional. I then analyze the case in relation to theory on surveillance and fear. I focus on a case that illustrates the potential for state presence rather than surveillance more specifically because surveillance is by nature difficult to observe and research. Much of my data on surveillance is unverified and unverifiable—references made here and there—rather than cases that revolve around surveillance specifically. Nonetheless, potential state presence—achieved both

through the perception of surveillance and unpredicted interventions—is a fundamental component of the state’s governing power in and around Gulu Town. I conclude with two observations. First, an examination of how perceived state presence allows episodic state violence to consistently influence daily lived experiences, and second, how it makes the possibility of unpredictable state intervention meaningful.

Potential state presence: surveillance and intervention

In addition to the other factors of institutionalized arbitrariness, the central government is further strengthened through its presence in people’s imaginations. In Uganda, one main way that civilians have come to perceive the state as potentially present is through a pervasive belief—bolstered by rumors, individual experiences, and high profile stories—that the ruling regime has an effective and efficient large-scale surveillance program. In these and other writings, surveillance can be understood as “purposeful, routine, systematic and focused attention paid to personal details, for the sake of control, entitlement, management, influence, or protection” (Ball and Wood 2006, 4). Indeed, by this definition, it would be hard to understand Uganda as an ideal-typical surveillance state—though the regime might like to be perceived as such. However, commonly held perceptions of surveillance comprise an important dimension of the state’s power.

My respondents described a sprawling security apparatus, with secret operatives “deep down” in the villages, reporting directly to the President. Many people discussed the role of “secret operatives” in their communities as the eyes and ears of the state (also see Zeller 2013, 210). While some denied specific knowledge of secret operatives and their activities, other respondents, such as this male member of a local security group, presented a stronger opinion:

In most cases [secret operatives] are not identifiable...[But] the one who is informed finds it very easy to identify [them]...Now that the time of election is nearing, those people will be deployed to monitor campaigns and people...The unfortunate thing is that the presence of the secret operatives [makes people] fear to speak in public because they are afraid that there are spies in the crowd who would take the information back to their sender (Security group member and veteran, Gulu District, 19 November 2014).

Another LCII councilor described them as “special” operatives:

There are also special operatives who work with the army and the police, but the police will deny working with them. Maybe because the methods they use are very rough. They provide intelligence mostly to the RDC. They are all thieves (LCII Councilor, Gulu District, 27 February 2014).

Undercover intelligence agents provide checks on the various security actors as well as on civilians. This is particularly effective as there is no way to distinguish between an intelligence agent and a civilian. Kagoro cites an intelligence officer explaining:

Even a senior intelligence officer will not tell you definitively where the security starts and where it ends, who a security personnel is and who a security personnel is not... in Uganda everybody can be a security operative if he so wishes. The structure only exists on paper, but in the field we have no [fixed] structure... (Kagoro 2015, 163).

Many of my respondents expressed similar views, highlighting the fluidity and omnipresence of the state’s security systems.

Crime Preventers and cadres also reportedly informed the government about events in the most remote corners of the country (Lanken Verma 2012 and my own interviews). For example, “cadres” (program graduates) of *mchaka mchaka* were asked to be the eyes and ears of the party to help mobilize support for the NRM. Lanken Verma writes:

[The cadres] were mobilised to be on duty throughout the campaigns, having been given or promised different subsidies or salaries, and some had been told to prepare for the more radical measures of harassing the opposition, obstructing political rallies, and preparing for possible fighting during and after election day. The ‘political education’ of the young population in the period before and during the elections was thus a crucial tool in the campaigning, and the cadres became crucial instruments in the NRM’s attempts to secure its position post-elections (Lanken Verma 2012, 86).

A representative of veteran’s affairs described community police as akin to government operatives, and noted that they are ubiquitous:

For the youth volunteers, normally they train them to work in collaboration with the police. They work like operatives... Anyone can be an operative [for the government]; it is just about providing information. There are people who have been planted in the community to observe movements and identify suspicious people. I am very careful [with] what I do and who I talk to. It could be that people are spying on me (Veteran’s Affairs Representative, Gulu District, 2 March 2014).

When I asked one sub-county official whether secret operatives actually exist, he exclaimed, “Of course! They report to me!” He further elaborated:

There are many people involved in security—there are the soldiers, the GISO, the RDC, the police, the Crime Preventers, the CMI, the DISO... so many organs in the security line. They might send me to come get to know you, see what you are doing. And you will talk to me, and then I report back. And they will send someone behind me to watch me and make sure I am also not going with you. And someone behind him... it’s a chain all the way up to him. Up to the President. We might be talking now, and even at this moment he is hearing it in his office (Sub-county elected official, Pader District, 17 September 2015).

Respondents—ranging from members of local security groups all the way to district level officials—nearly unanimously confirmed the existence of secret operatives. Several politicians

recited instances when they were tracked, intercepted, and arrested; journalists described stories cut before going to print and unidentified phone calls threatening them for covering certain stories, despite publishing anonymously. Another district-level official provided an anecdote about a woman he personally knew to be a secret operative. The woman was arrested along with a group of protesters. He concluded that she was providing intelligence during the rally and her arrest was meant to protect her cover. He went on to exclaim, “Can you see the extent government has infiltrated?” (District-level official, Pader District, 17 September 2015).

Whether secret, special, or security operatives, the identity of these individuals may be suspected, but respondents report that it is rarely known. One LCIII Chairman emphasized that, like members of local security groups, secret operatives exist at the boundary between licit and illicit; legitimate and illegitimate. He described pestering the operatives and the RDC’s office for more information about operatives’ authority and responsibility, but to no avail:

There are also security operatives who work under the RDC and the DISO, but sometimes they are disowned—when they do things that no one wants to support... They work for the arms of the government that are in power, and they act in the interests of the government, but not the community. For example, they arrest without warrant... We asked them [the operatives], ‘What if you are beaten up? What would show you’re on duty?’ We asked the RDC’s office, ‘Are these people on payrolls?’ (Chairman LCIII, Gulu District, 27 October 2014).

Still others refer to the LC structure as informers for the state, writing about LC chairmen as political operatives for the NRM. As discussed in chapter 3, the LCs have political origins. As Branch writes “The RCs and the LDUs effectively localized the state down to the village level, and this diffuse security apparatus became, in the eyes of some, the tool of the state, the NRM, the NRA, and the south, all at once” (Branch 2011, 69). Many others have described LCs as the eyes and ears of the regime, which have helped centralize state power, despite sweeping

decentralization (Jones 2009, 65, 85; Finnström 2008, 94–97). For example, many speculate that the NRM intentionally has repeatedly delayed and canceled LCI and LCII elections since multipartyism was reintroduced to prevent the election opposition politicians at a local level. The electoral commission, largely believed to be in the pocket of the ruling regime, has repeatedly cited lack of resources to explain the cessation of local elections—a difficult explanation to take at face value given a variety of low-cost modes of voting.¹¹² This also means that when an LCI is not performing, the RDC at times intervenes to replace the office holder (Lambright 2011).¹¹³ In practice, this means that a number of today’s LCI and LCII members were handpicked by direct representatives of the president. RDCs monitor all activities within the district and report directly to the president. They are appointed and transferred by the president, and thus can be dismissed or moved to an undesirable post without explanation, which is one strategy the government employs to keep RDCs loyal to the regime and prevent them from developing local connections (E. Green 2008a). RDC positions are often given to NRM politicians who failed in local elections; thus, the regime uses an appointed position to appease loyalists who may not be popular enough to win elections.

Political elites, such as those at the division, municipality and district level, as well as political strategists for both NRM and opposition parties, also noted their fear of covert state power. Those who I interviewed often suggested that their survival under the NRM regime was made possible by their own astuteness. One member of the political elite, who had defected from

¹¹² As of this writing, the LCI elections have been repeatedly scheduled and delayed with various explanations, including lack of funding, the need to pass amendments to the Local Government Act, and the need for more time to organize candidates and elections at the grassroots (Y. Mugerwa 2017).

¹¹³ This occurred in one of my cases. Reportedly, the RDC was holding a community security meeting and when he discovered the LCI (who was a notorious drunk) was absent, he immediately held a popular vote for a new LCI Chairman. In another case, the community petitioned the RDC to replace their LCI Chairman, but the RDC encouraged the community to wait a few months for the planned 2016 elections, which as of this writing in March 2017, have not occurred.

the inner circles of the NRM's intelligence agency and today works as a self-described political activist, said he is constantly on alert. For example, he explained that he avoids being poisoned by monitoring the behavior those around him, particularly in restaurants. He described calculating the amount of time it takes his server to bring his food or drink in comparison with past experiences, only drinking from straws that arrived in a paper wrapper, and following his intuition, occasionally leaving his food or drink untouched. Another aspiring politician told me that during campaigns, he slept in different locations on different nights to prevent assassination. When citizens observe the central government using coercion and force against political elites, such as members of Parliament and district leaders, it has a ripple effect, reminding citizens of the state's unbridled power. The state's occasional use of excessive violence even against elites, for example in the 2011 Walk-to-Work protests or rumored poisonings of key political challengers, makes this even more effective (see chapter 9).

There are also indications that the regime has technical capacity for surveillance and targeted intervention. In September 2015, Privacy International published a series of documents confirming that the government purchased an intrusion malware in 2011 to facilitate spying on opposition politicians, media, and establishment insiders in hotels, key government institutions, people's homes, and other meeting spaces with the explicit goal of blackmailing targets (Privacy International 2015). According to the leaked documents, the spyware could "covertly be deployed in buildings, vehicles, computers, mobile phones, cameras and any other equipment deemed worthy for information extraction or surveillance" and had already been used to curtail the walk-to-work riots by gathering "hordes of information revealing secret plans, especially of FDC, even before they [the opposition] act on them" (Bakahumura 2012, 3). Three of the four goals of the

operation, as listed in the memo, center on suppressing opposition and using blackmail if necessary (Bakahumura 2012, 4).

The Ugandan government and the selling firm both denied the operation. The GoU alleged that the documents were fabricated and a spokesperson for the GoU told the BBC: “President Museveni does not use criminal blackmail as a political tool to win over or deal with opponents... it does not add any value as (the) government enjoys broad political legitimacy and support” (Hopkins and Morris 2015). In this case, the pervasive environment of uncertainty contributes to a situation in which it is difficult to evaluate the likelihood that Privacy International’s claims are authentic. Indeed, at times, it seemed to me that citizens over-attributed intention to surveil to the government. For example, at one opposition political rally, a district-level official informed me that the government had sent a white man to record the event; I later discovered that the cameraman was a journalist for a western news media outlet.

While it is difficult to assess the capacity of the government to process information, particularly for non-target populations, ordinary citizens believe they are being surveilled and monitored. One small business owner in Pader explained that he believes the government taps phones at will, and gave the example of a man who was arrested and spent one year in prison:

When you speak something contrary to government expectation you will definitely be arrested. One person... was arrested from here. He worked for *Rupiny* [an Acholi language newspaper]... He was detained for over a year... He was the kind of man who could not keep quiet. When something is happening badly on the side of the government he has to criticize and argue. Maybe it reached the level where they were documenting... When you talk to your friend, you cannot speak the detail. If you speak reality you can be arrested for taking against the government. With MTN, the government may have a big share in it. They almost control it... Over the radio [the director of military intelligence] was saying they were using the spy network using the phone. That can make me confirm that it is true... That fear is there (Small business owner, Pader Town, 20 October 2015).

The respondent mentions that the critical commentary of this journalist may have drawn attention from the higher authorities, reaching a certain “level” where they were surveilling his behavior. He further notes how cases like this shape his own behavior and that of his friends, who monitor what they say, lest they be arrested. The public announcement of this on the radio suggests that it is meant as much to discipline citizens’ conversations as to ensnare wrongdoers.

Surveillance and investigative capacity are often deployed in high profile cases. For example, in Gulu in June 2014, the police deployed significant resources to investigate the murder of a lecturer at Gulu University. The police pursued the suspects to South Sudan to retrieve guns and a stolen vehicle, reportedly by tracing cell phone signals. A journalist wrote:

[A]lthough several suspects have been arrested, [the police] will not stop investigating the matter until the mystery of the murder is resolved...the police will now take the bullet shells for analysis to see if they match the guns recovered (Otto 2014).

Of course, the police may have received payments from the victim’s family to motivate them to pursue the case. Regardless, cases like that of the lecturer in Gulu, the journalist in Pader, and many others reinforce the perception that the government has the capacity both to spy on the population and to target specific individuals. Thus, while it is tempting to view many aspects of surveillance and intermittent presence of state actors as a decentralized and almost grass-root effort to support the NRM, citizens see these and other cases as evidence of centralized, sophisticated, and ongoing surveillance. This helps build a case, in the minds of the population, for a state that is strategically and intentionally intervening (or failing to intervene) in their lives.

Theories of surveillance, fear, and unpredictable intervention

Scholars from diverse disciplines have written on the role of surveillance and unpredictable state intervention, particularly as they relate to strategies of governance. Michel Foucault (1977) is perhaps best known for his theory of surveillance as a mode of governance, arguing that an effective system of surveillance (for him, the Panopticon) could create a consciousness of visibility among a population, thereby ensuring the automatic functioning of power. In turn, surveillance would have long-lasting effects such that individuals begin to police themselves and each other, making continued surveillance unnecessary. Indeed, as discussed, the perceived possibility of surveillance causes citizens to evaluate their own actions in relation to the NRM state. While this may not result in self-policing as such, it contributes to the imagined presence of the state even in a situation of material absence. Several theoretical contributions on the issue of surveillance help illuminate patterns of control and resistance in northern Uganda. Two such theories include police states and zones of exception. While police states rely on effective surveillance networks to punish even minor offenses to the state's authority, zones of exception rely more heavily on arbitrary and harsh intervention. Both strategies rely on fear as a source of power.

David Bozzini (2011, 2015) writes about surveillance in contemporary Eritrea—a country that is far more authoritarian, militarized, and despotic than Uganda. Bozzini examines how the Eritrean state attempts to extend significant and repressive control over the population through military and bureaucratic surveillance. He finds that these surveillance systems contribute “almost on a daily basis to (re)producing various uncertainties, fears, beliefs and expectations that are the core of relative coercion” (Bozzini 2011, 94). Thus, citizens develop the perception of an omniscient authoritarian police state, despite their experiences of low-tech surveillance that might not qualify, in a technical sense, as surveillance. In another article, Bozzini explores how citizens

struggle to make sense of arbitrary and unpredictable state enforcement of laws, particularly those calling for the arrest of the parents of those who desert mandatory civil service (Bozzini 2015). He finds that citizens concoct complicated and nuanced rationales that they attribute to the state, thereby producing the state as an intentional, powerful, and informed actor. Thus, even in instances of low-tech surveillance, surveillance paired with unpredictability can cause citizens to develop their own explanation and rationale for the state's control, which can further contribute to their governance—all without any direct efforts on the part of the ruling regime.

Thus, the Ugandan state uses a hybrid of surveillance and exception to produce an environment where citizens feel they are being watched and yet there is no clear logic of discipline nor a clear source of security or insecurity. Indeed, as Bozzini writes, this can cause citizens to develop their own interpretation of state power so as to strategize personal interactions with state authorities—however unfounded these rationales may be. This produces fear in citizens. The power of fear is an important component of how this functions to govern citizens. Linda Green explains that “Fear destabilizes social relations by driving a wedge of distrust within families, between neighbors, among friends... Fear thrives on ambiguities...No one can be sure who is who” (L. Green 1994, 227).

The following case study provides a few examples of unpredictable state presence and how this contributes to citizens' perceptions of state intent. It also shows how insecurity and fear contribute to suspicion amongst community members and thus social fragmentation.

*Secret operatives, police and vigilantes in Adagoni*¹¹⁴

The security group in Adagoni, a rural village 30-minutes by car from Gulu, was formed in response to a spate of serial murders that occurred within the parish. In December 2013, the RDC visited the community along with other officials, and according to many, suggested the formation of the group and granted them authority to work. They began night patrols immediately. Their primary purpose was to catch the murderers and prevent additional killings. They began enforcing curfew and closing time for local drinking joints, as well as working to deter theft of livestock. They regularly staged a roadblock to inspect those who passed through the village at night, positing that the murderers must be from outside the community. One group member described their work:

We got the order to do the work from the RDC. During that time, we set the group members on all different routes that we felt were unsafe. From the 8pm curfew, we would arrest people and take them to the LCI or to the sub-county. From there, they are released after clearance. ... Our work was quite different [from the police]. We just did patrol at night, and handed people over to the police, who find out if you're a suspect or not. The tools we had [sticks and ropes] were not like the police—that made a big difference... When we arrest many people we would tie their waists together and parade them to the police. This was agreed with by the RDC as the way we would arrest. We would arrest 10-15 people maximum per night (Former member of local security group, Adagoni, 15 November 2014).

The group also had a set of rules that governed their internal behavior, which they described as a “para/verbal contract.” They included:

- Don't drink when coming to work.¹¹⁵
- Be time conscious.
- Wear dark clothing and gumboots.
- Show self-respect and respect for others.

¹¹⁴ A version of this case study was published in *African Affairs* in 2016 (Tapscott 2016a).

¹¹⁵ From subsequent interviews, it is clear that this rule was imperfectly enforced.

- Keep all conversations confidential (“there are many secrets that must not leak out”).
- Don’t enter a person’s house without permission.
- Don’t search people; instead, people who are stopped must empty their own pockets and purses to prevent accusations of theft.
- Enforce an 8pm curfew.¹¹⁶

The community also took up a collection of 500 UGX per household per month (about 17 cents) to support the group, although it is unclear how much money was raised. At one point, the LCI made receipt of NGO-donated mosquito nets conditional on contributing to the collection.

In early January 2014 at 1a.m. the security group stopped an unknown man on the road. Indignant, he reportedly asked who gave them the authority to patrol and further cautioned, “You people are very stupid; do you know I can kill all of you right now? The government doesn’t know [you]. Who will be responsible if you got any problem?” The man asked the LCI to come to the RDC’s office the following day; instead, the youth leader went to represent the group. The man allegedly said, “Why are you patrolling without the police or the army? You, the RDC, should delegate the police or army to go with them. They should also be provided with self-defense training.” The RDC told them that if they wanted to continue to patrol, they must have one military or police patrol with them or else disband.

Further, the group noted that when they patrolled, they caught no one, and on the nights they rested, the murders and theft continued. They worried that there was a spy among the group members, and that they were losing support from the community: “[The community] say we are not serious and ask funny questions like: how can someone be killed when the security group is present?” (Security group member, Adagoni, 21 May 2014). A young man who had worked with

¹¹⁶ Group interview, LCI Chairman and four security group members, Adagoni, 24 February 2014.

the security group, but who had not been present during the shooting, reflected that the government should have used its surveillance capacity to investigate him and his colleagues: “I feel among us, all our phones should have been tapped because there could be someone wrong among us” (Security group member, Adagoni, 14 November 2015).

The group waited in vain for training or a letter of approval from the RDC. Despite their proclamations that they had stopped patrolling, some members felt that they could not stop patrolling entirely, lest another community member be murdered. Thus, a few members of the group continued to monitor people passing on the road. In April, another man in the community was found murdered in his hut. The following day, the newly appointed RDC reportedly came to the village and verbally encouraged the youth to reinstate patrol. The community resolved again that the youths should provide security for the area to stop the killings.

In May, two group members explained their position, highlighting the confusion about the group’s status:

We as the security group are silently patrolling without the consent of the office of the RDC because what is happening here is very painful and we cannot just sit and watch because the RDC has said. Anytime we should be ready to work... We have defied the order of the RDC since these killings are still continuing. We can’t just wait to mourn. We even had the last operation yesterday and today we shall also operate (Local security group member, Adagoni, May 2014).

With no clear plan for protection in place, community members changed their behavior, drinking less (since all those murdered were believed to be drunkards), returning to their homes before dark, and sleeping together in the same huts.¹¹⁷ When the murders continued, community members took

¹¹⁷ Sleeping in huts with neighbors, rather than in one’s home, is reminiscent of wartime, when entire communities were relocated to camps and others commuted to either the city or the bush to avoid abduction, theft, or murder.

matters into their own hands, destroying the property of the main suspect and chasing him out of town.

Then, one night in June, two frequent victims of overnight detention and caning retaliated. They phoned the local police post and the Central Police Station to report armed robbers on the road, poised to murder passers-by. The police responded. Two armed officers arrived an hour later and immediately opened fire on the youth security, killing one, maiming a second, and arresting the third.¹¹⁸ The brother of the deceased reported:

The next morning, I went to report to the LC of this area—before we exchanged two words, we heard screaming. They had found the body of my brother. We called the police. They came in vehicles armed and with tear gas. They thought that the people of [Adagoni] might riot. People wanted to throw stones, but no one did anything... (Brother of deceased, Adagoni, 18 October 2014).

In his view, the police arrived with a show of force to prevent citizens from holding the police accountable for the shooting.

The day after the shooting, the local radio station ran a story titled: “Gulu Police Guns Down Suspected Robbers, Injures 1 and Detains Another.” The following day, after preliminary investigations, the radio ran a correction:

Gulu RDC warned Crime Preventers against working in isolation after two Crime Preventers were shot mistaken for thieves. The RDC said it is ‘unfortunate that life was lost,’ but she defended the police saying nothing could have been done because the police were not informed that they were patrolling in the area (Text from Radio Mega, Gulu District, collected in November 2014).

¹¹⁸ Later, the police officers were identified as a traffic police officer and a defense secretary from another village.

The sub-county security officer, along with other representatives for the police, further defended the actions of the police:

People were claiming that these boys were vigilantes,¹¹⁹ but they weren't; they were disguised. This was occurring without the instruction of the RDC. The LCI should send the list... [to] vet them and forward to the RDC for more instructions. There was no list... It was just a robber who was shot. They could even have been the people doing the killing. Up to now, there have been no other murders (Sub-county security officer, Adagoni, 29 October 2014).

The LCI recused himself, claiming he had no knowledge that the group was patrolling despite the group's contentions that they continued reporting to both the LCI and the sub-county. The RDC allegedly said that the misunderstanding lay with the police rather than her office. The police declined to open an investigation of the case, suggesting that the miscommunication came from residents of the community, and therefore should be solved within the community. A family member of one of the deceased lamented that for Acholi this would mean revenge killing.

Since then, the group has ceased to function and the murders stopped. Those who supported the youth security credited this to the exile of the prime suspect from the community; those who supported the accused man credited it to the disintegration of the security group.

Producing the possibility of state presence to make threats plausible

This case illustrates several aspects of potential state presence. Most obviously, the case literally shows state actors appearing at unpredictable moments. This occurs first with the appearance of

¹¹⁹ In northern Uganda, "vigilante" is positively associated with "vigilance" and those who protect security.

the unidentified man, who was mysteriously associated with “higher authorities”. After the meeting with the RDC, he then disappeared, never to be seen again. Later, the police arrived and opened fire on the security group members, and then again withdrew from the community and rejected responsibility for the resulting casualties. In both instances, the state authorities redefined the boundary between public and private, and enforced their new definition with violence, in the process trumping other public authorities. An important dimension of this significance was that government actors appeared at unexpected moments. This in turn contributed to the notion that state actors could be present at any moment, even though they remained absent in terms of helping the community respond to the serial murders that took place. Additionally, one member of the security group calls on the government to use its surveillance capacity to protect group members from a wrong-doer in their midst. He is confident that the government has such a capacity, he only doubts their willingness to deploy it to protect the community.

The perception of pervasive surveillance paired with unpredictability causes citizens to have low expectations for security services. If government actors—and the highest of authorities—are informed about everything but do not intervene in most cases, then there is little to do but handle the matter from home while holding out hope that it might be dealt with elsewhere. Moreover, citizens adapt their own behavior to conform to what they think the government wants. This view seems to have permeated to rural areas, even if state actors are not visibly present. For example, in a rural village an hour’s motorcycle ride from Lira, an LCI Chairman confided that a security group would be of great help in their village. I asked why they didn’t form one, under those circumstances. He looked at me quizzically—the higher authorities had not approved it and therefore it was impossible.

At the same time, many respondents were open to talking with me, even as they expressed concern that they were being watched. They generally preferred meeting in private places, and did not like to speak on the phone. When I asked members of local security initiatives and Crime Preventers why they do not demand payment or recognition collectively, they were at a loss for words. One respondent exclaimed, “Aiy yi yi, *mami*. [The police] would throw me in jail” (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 18 November 2015). Their decisions to talk to me may also reflect a key dimension of their experience: why they are being monitored (if they are) is not clear. Additionally, as security actors, these young men were well-versed in the value of information. Indeed, after I had spent a few months in Uganda, my informants started to call me with bits of news they thought might be of interest. As an international researcher, I represented an opportunity to promote an agenda: to get trainings, uniforms, payment, or jobs for members of local security groups. These possible benefits outweighed the conceivable negatives, which were difficult to accurately calculate.

Conclusion: From episodic violence to plausible intervention

The perception of state presence has two important outcomes. First, it gives meaning to the “long arm of the government.” Indeed, for the government to be able to intervene in any place at any moment, it must have the potential to be present. Potential state presence means that any place, person, or event can be made “public” at any time and intervened upon with the potential for overwhelming force. Thus, the perception of surveillance in combination with a fluid public/private boundary and a fragile relationship between exceptional violence and times of normalcy together produce a mode of governance in which the possibility of unpredictable and

potentially violent intervention looms large in civilian imaginations. Additionally, the perceived capacity to be present in a fragmented governance environment helps foster the belief that even if there is significant misinformation amongst the populace and competing institutions, the central state can maintain a broad and informed perspective on the movement of resources and people.

Second, citizens' perception of potential state presence bolters the perception that unpredictable intervention and confusion are intentional strategies on the part of the ruling regime. After all, if the ruling regime is well-informed and has capacity to act, its inactions can logically be interpreted as equally intentional to its actions. Thus, residents in Adagoni view the police's decision to return the case to the community as an intentional decision to turn a blind eye to what might result in deadly violence. Relatedly, they viewed reporting on the matter by the RDC and other officials as a blatant cover-up of a poorly executed operation. While respondents did not believe the police intentionally arrived on the scene to shoot the security group members, they expressed a clear disappointment in the degree of negligence, noting that the police did not even so much as ask the security group members to identify themselves before opening fire.

Finally, the potential for state presence helps illuminate how sovereign violence, which is episodic in nature, can function to govern citizens' daily lives. Indeed, it is the perception that state intervention could occur at any moment that allows sovereign violence to permeate time and space in this conflict-affected border region of Uganda. Thus, the perspective that the government knows all and is in control of security in the region is a key component to the successful functioning of institutionalized arbitrariness.

Chapter 8

“A veritable alphabet soup”:

Institutional fragmentation of the security sector

Institutional fragmentation creates an environment in which citizens cannot predict which institution, if any, will hear their claim, nor what the outcome will be. One helpful illustration from my research, written about in detail by anthropologist Tim Allen (2015), is the case of a man accused of committing murder by witchcraft. These accusations resulted in acts of mob violence, in which the man’s property was destroyed, he fled his home, and he was threatened with death if he returned. With such high stakes, the man, locally known as “Mr. Red” because of his penchant for wearing the color, brought his claim to multiple providers, including the following:

- The community and government authorities, who held a meeting and voted on who they believed was responsible for the crime. Although the vote count was never formally made public, community members and police repeated a rumor that 100% of the votes were for Mr. Red, and cited this as evidence of Mr. Red’s guilt;
- The LCI Chairman, who said he would help Mr. Red, but then did nothing;
- The police, who conducted a cursory investigation, destroyed and confiscated many items in Mr. Red’s house, arrested and then released him, and in the meantime told members of the community that they would not investigate mob violence against Mr. Red;
- The *Ker Kal Kwaro Acholi*, an institution for clan leaders in northern Uganda, which held a meeting between the two clans (that of Mr. Red and that of the men who had been killed), told Mr. Red he should admit his guilt, and then abjured until an undetermined future date;

- Various churches in Gulu Town, where Mr. Red declared his innocence publicly, fostered rumors that he converted to Evangelism to be “saved”, and attempted to build a new reputation for himself;
- International researchers (of which I am one of at least three¹²⁰), to whom he has told his story and asked for assistance.

Mr. Red, who remained an avowed Catholic when I interviewed him in October 2014, said he did not believe in witchcraft because of his faith. From his perspective, he was the victim of property destruction, arbitrary detention, and verbal threats. And yet, he has been unsuccessful at having his claim resolved in any of the aforementioned institutions.

This chapter shows that Uganda’s security and justice sectors are comprised of non-hierarchized and fragmented institutions, while further illustrating how this facilitates the state’s strategy of rule. It draws on literature on plural legal environments and forum shopping, as well as primary data collected during field work to show that in the case of northern Uganda, fragmentation supports state rule rather than empowering citizens or marginalized populations. In this environment, it is difficult for citizens to predict with confidence which authority, if any, will take responsibility for their claim. Indeed, authorities can, and often do, move citizens’ claims among various jurisdictions that apply discrete logics, making outcomes all the more unpredictable from the complainant’s perspective.

Complainants—particularly those who face high stakes and are thus committed to resolving their dispute, such as Mr. Red—take their issues to a variety of actors, including their local councilor, the police, local NGOs, and traditional authorities to bolster their chances of satisfactory resolution. This is distinct from traditional models of forum shopping—rather than

¹²⁰ Others include Allen’s detailed account of the rumors surrounding Mr. Red’s experiences (Allen 2015), and Sophie Seebach’s research on death and belonging (Seebach 2016).

choosing the system with the best outcome, complainants approach multiple potential authorities, unsure of what any individual institution or person might provide. Thus, fragmentation benefits the ruling regime both by limiting citizens' abilities to organize and make claims on the state and by pitting would-be challengers against each other, thereby undermining emergent public authorities. In this way, although institutional fragmentation provides opportunities to make claims based on different justifications, it is powerful actors—particularly those with access to the symbolic and material resources of the state—that benefit by limiting citizen claims and maximizing their own extractive capacity.

This chapter proceeds as follows. First, I present context on the fragmented institutional environment. Next, I examine relevant literature on legal pluralism, forum shopping, and institutional fragmentation. I then present a case study about a security group in Gulu Town that was unable to consolidate power, and was eventually dissolved, in large part due to the fragmented and non-hierarchized governance environment, which allowed for multiple actors, including the police, the RDC, the LCI, and a local politician, to place incompatible demands on the security group. Each of these authorities used their institutional power to make demands on the security group and reject claims from the security group. When the security group itself became the subject of criticism, its members were unable to effectively negotiate this tangled web of authorities. I then analyze the case study and how it shows a fragmented institutional environment. I conclude with a discussion of the implications of fragmentation as a strategy of rule; in particular, how it contributes to unpredictability in security and justice sectors.

Context of a fragmented institutional environment

Uganda's administration is comprised of a number of layered systems, and is fragmented at central and local levels (Mwenda 2007). Layered systems include the local council system, a tiered structure of locally elected representatives from the village level (LCI) to the district (LCV); the resident district commissioner (RDC), a presidentially appointed official who oversees all matters within the district, particularly those related to security; members of Parliament (MP) who represent the district at the national level; and internal security officers (ISOs), who have offices paralleling the positions of the LCs, starting from the parish level (PISO), to the *gombolola* or sub-county (GISO), the district (DISO), and the region (RISO). Additionally, traditional or local authorities in Acholi like *rwot kweri* or *rwot mo*¹²¹, clans, and religious leaders represent alternative governance structures that draw authority from historic legacies of local, national, and international orders.¹²² These overlapping systems inject unpredictability into the governance environment, as many different authorities could potentially try to claim authority over a person, place, or event, thereby asserting different logics to dictate process or outcome.

Although many of these government and security systems are based on pre-existing structures, they have multiplied under the NRM regime even while they become less powerful. Today, Uganda is comprised of 112 districts, nearly a 300% increase from 1986 (E. Green 2015, 503). The majority of these new districts were created after 2000, when Uganda had its first

¹²¹ *Rwot kweri* is often translated as “chief of the hoe,” and is a male leader of a farmer’s group; *rwot mo* is an anointed chief of lineage in Acholi (Paine 2014). There are a variety of other *rwots* (or “kings”) in Acholi; however, these were the most commonly cited in my interviews.

¹²² Competition amongst religious denominations has a long political history in Uganda, with political parties aligning with different (primarily Christian) denominations such that it became difficult to distinguish “organizing principles of ethnicity, sub-region, religion and politics,” contributing to political fragmentation from as early as Independence (Dolan 2009, 42). Also see the work of Henni Alava for a contemporary study of the relationship between religion and politics in northern Uganda. According to 2015 SLRC data, 98.2% of respondents reported they identify as Christian; 0.8% as Muslim, and 1% as mixed or other.

referendum to reintroduce a multi-party political system. Redistricting has helped the NRM regime establish institutional control of the country by contributing new political positions that have frequently been distributed as a part of the patronage system; balkanizing constituencies and fostering local level conflict that draws attention away from the central state; and splitting constituencies that otherwise might prove powerful at a national level (E. Green 2010, 2015; Awortwi and Helmsing 2014). New district creation in conjunction with the LC system has led to a vast number of elected positions. One estimate placed the number of political positions contested in 2016 at 1.7 million, five times the size of the civil service, including the military (Izama 2015).

Fragmentation is particularly evident in the security sector. Andrew Mwenda details a “veritable alphabet soup” of security organizations that are intended to fragment the security sector and prevent coherence among armed men, listing over a dozen formal security organizations, including a host of non-statutory units (Mwenda 2007, 32). Mwenda notes:

By instigating the emergence of many hostile informal factions in the military, and by promoting the proliferation of both formal and informal security outfits, Museveni has turned the strategy of fragmentation to his own purposes in this sector of the state as well as in its more sedate organs....Moreover, [proliferating armed units] allow him to sap the power of the formal security organizations even as he boosts his capacity to use deniable force against his opponents without having to worry about official state sanction (Mwenda 2007, 32–33).

While the police and military have professionalized over the past few decades, the relationship between them has also become increasingly fluid, as senior officers are regularly transferred between the police and the military, and back again (Kagoro 2015).

Also relevant are informal security actors like Home Guards, Local Defense Units, Crime Preventers, “secret operatives”¹²³ and the local security groups that are the focus of this manuscript. The NRM regime has long provided a variety of trainings to engage citizens in security provision. During the two-decades of conflict, police were virtually absent from the north, and most daily security needs were handled by the military or civilians. Though community policing was officially initiated in Uganda in 1989, the program did not reach Gulu until much later. One of my respondents who ran the community policing project in one of Gulu’s divisions dated the intervention to 2013 (Community police program director, Gulu District, 6 March 2014).

Instead, in and around Gulu Town during the war, the regime invested in training “Home Guards”—civilians tasked with reporting on and fighting rebels (Mwenda 2007, 32). Home Guards were typically trained in the civil politico-military program, *mchaka mchaka* (discussed at length in chapter 5). “Crime Preventers” have also long been a part of the government’s community policing program, although they took on a new character before the 2016 elections (see chapter 10). Additionally, Local Defense Units and auxiliary forces contribute to institutional fragmentation in the security sector. According to many of my respondents, many of these groups were never formally disbanded, instead existing as inactive auxiliary forces that the state could re-activate in times of need. These groups, and their indefinite and fluid nature, contribute to the notion that representatives of the state could be anywhere at any time (see chapter 7).

Overlapping personnel, training, and responsibilities result in unclear mandates within and amongst these various security groups. The Museveni regime has spent decades fostering this confusion, creating a complex network that incorporates the military, the police, the executive, and citizen volunteers. Kagoro has described the military and the police as “functionally fused”

¹²³ See chapter 7 on potential presence of the state for more information about “secret operatives”.

(Kagoro 2015, 171), noting that military personnel are frequently reassigned to leadership positions in the police force and vice versa, and both institutions receive a similar military training (Kagoro 2015, 170–82). One woman working in an NGO in Gulu stated that it is impossible to tell the difference between police officers and soldiers, asserting that they don each other’s uniforms interchangeably. There is little pretense of independent decision-making between the security sector and the executive. The current Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kale Kayihura, is an active military general who joined the NRA’s bush war in 1982 and is close to Museveni. A political analyst in Kampala explained that it is difficult to know whether policy decisions come from the IGP or the President because “the line between [them] is too thin” (Political analyst, Kampala, 11 March 2015). Kagoro, writing about militarization in Uganda, notes that Kayihura has been described as Museveni’s “blue-eyed boy” (2015, 172). Similarly, civilian volunteers are often described as an important part of the Ugandan state’s internal security system. As such, they are mandated by the constitution, told state secrets, and forbidden to speak with the press, despite lacking any formal recognition of employment (also see chapter 10 on Crime Preventers). The fuzzy relationships amongst security sector institutions makes it difficult to establish a clear hierarchy among security sector actors.

Theory on plural legal environments, forum shopping and institutional fragmentation

Institutional fragmentation is often described in literature on plural legal environments, detailing contexts in which multiple legal orders—including “state law, religious law, customary law, donor law, and local law”, not to mention multiple orders within each of these categories—coexist and

interact within a social setting (Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan 2001, 11). Citing the work of von Benda-Beckmann, Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan explain:

[I]n such situations individuals can make use of more than one law to rationalize and legitimize their claims, decisions or behavior. The claimants or disputants use different normative repertoires in different contexts or forums depending on which law or interpretation of law they believe is most likely to support their claims, a process known as forum shopping (Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan 2001, 11).

A system of constantly negotiable rules inherently produces uncertainty: actors can bring claims based on different legal orders or logics, and in doing so, manipulate and shape outcomes in unforeseen ways. Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan argue that legal pluralism prevents any individual actor from holding a monopoly on knowledge. They note that to prevent the powerful from exploiting the system, it is necessary to level the playing field for negotiation whether by empowering the marginalized or adding new legal orders that citizens can call on (e.g., establishing women's rights in statutory law). Additionally, Meinzen-Dick and Pradhan argue that while these legal orders appear discrete from an outsider's perspective, an insider would see that they have merged together into a locally legible code of conduct, in what other authors have referred to as "hybrid" regimes (also see chapter 2 for a discussion of hybridity). These local orders remain fluid and adaptive, such that formal and informal orders are mutually constitutive. In this interpretation, plural legal orders are flexible and fluid, while also sufficiently predictable such that citizens can negotiate them based on expectations of each system.

However, in practice, it is apparent that citizens have little ability to determine which system will hear their claim. Instead, in northern Uganda, state actors, who have much to lose if predictably held accountable to citizens, redefine certain claims as outside the scope of their authority. As I have argued, this constant redefinition precludes citizens in northern Uganda from

developing meaningful expectations, thereby undermining the ability to “shop” for the subjectively best forum. Instead, citizens are left with the least-worst options of “doing nothing” or doing many things.

Institutional fragmentation can affect horizontal organization, breaking up potential social, political, or economic coalitions. It can also affect vertical organization, breaking up chains of authority, for example between subnational leaders and their constituents, or national authorities and subnational leaders. Horizontal fragmentation can also be thought of as a divide-and-rule strategy, for example, offering select incentives and punishments to forestall collective action (Acemoglu, Robinson, and Verdier 2004). In Uganda, Mwenda (2007) and Moses Khisa (2013) have argued that the strategy of institutional fragmentation prevents the emergence of any alternative power centers to President Museveni, noting that this strategy has been implemented from the elite to the grass-roots. Additionally, horizontal fragmentation introduces new opportunities to entrepreneurial individuals to rally support around newly formed constituencies. For example, the ongoing process of redistricting in Uganda has led to the identification—and some even argue the reification—of new ethnic identities that can be leveraged for political support (E. Green 2008a). To prevent these groups from gaining power, rulers can either balkanize them further, or pursue a strategy of vertical fragmentation, driving a wedge between leaders and their constituents.

Numerous strategies contribute to vertical fragmentation: for example, casting an individual as socially or politically deviant (e.g., corrupted by power, a thief, a rapist, etc.); as politically feeble (e.g., unable to defend oneself against the violence of the state); or economically weak (e.g., unable to provide for constituents); and so on. For example, in Karen Barkey’s classic historical account, Ottoman rulers frequently transferred local elites to prevent them from

developing independent support bases. The Ugandan government similarly undermines vertical organization at all levels, producing an environment of unpredictability that permeates from national-level policy to daily lived experiences at the grass-roots. A key strategy of institutional fragmentation is shifting government appointees among districts. This approach is also reminiscent of a strategy that Jean-François Bayart described in Mobutu's Zimbabwe, in which elites were arbitrarily included and excluded from state power thereby keeping those outside the system in anticipation of joining and those inside in fear of being cast out (Bayart 1993). The strategy fostered the performance of loyalty and fragmented elite organization by pitting them against one another in competition for access to state resources.

Fragmentation—whether vertical or horizontal—is also closely linked to the shifting of the public/private divide, which makes it difficult for authorities to cultivate trust and legitimacy with constituents (see chapter 9). Thus, Uganda's ruling regime uses such strategies to fragment organization outside state institutions. These findings contribute to a wider literature on how some states govern through strategic insecurity (Barkey 1994) or “fractured presence” in which the state law enforcement's intermittent and unpredictable interventions contribute to an environment of violence (Auyero, Burbano de Lara, and Berti 2014).

The following case study highlights elements of horizontal fragmentation, illustrating an environment of plural and competing security and justice actors, as well as the ongoing process of vertical fragmentation, in which emergent authorities—in this case, the local security group in Pakure—was arrested and thus lost legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents—e.g., the community. Specifically, multiple governance and security actors acted without a clear mandate or line of authority. The RDC, various police officers, a local politician and the LCI all contributed to an environment of confusion. These various authorities gave individually and collectively

inconsistent and contradictory instructions to the community about forming a security group and the activities the group should undertake. At the same time, in the midst of this fragmented security and justice environment, the security group was able to establish itself, at least for a short time, as a relevant authority that would provide security at a village level. Finally, the security group's vertical power base was fragmented when it was accused of wrongdoing and members arrested, undermining the very basis on which it had made claims to public authority. Thus, the case shows how both horizontal and vertical fragmentation function to reinforce the position of the powerful and to fragment other emergent public authorities. The case also further contributes to the development of the theory of institutionalized arbitrariness, particularly highlighting a fluid public/private divide, the state's superior access to violence, and the state's potential presence, as discussed in the previous chapters.

*Crime preventer or crime promoter? Committing grievous harm in Pakure*¹²⁴

The security group in Pakure, a peri-urban village within Gulu Municipality, was formed in October 2013 to address what members of the community describe as an upswing in crime when civilians returned to their homes from the IDP camps around 2008. Local leaders described a high demand for security services and a low supply, emphasizing that the police were unreliable because they were under-resourced, understaffed, and corrupt. Indeed, the police had been relatively absent from the north during the conflict, and were re-establishing activities. The RDC held a meeting

¹²⁴ A version of this case study was published in *African Affairs* in 2016 (Tapscott 2016a).

with this village and those neighboring it, and concurred with the community that there was need for supplementary security. One LCI Chairman in attendance recalled:

The RDC came to [our] village and said, ‘I know you can protect yourselves by yourselves. Local people know the bad boys and the good among themselves. If the community can accept it, I would ask for 10 boys to volunteer [to form a security group].’ The RDC then could give authority for the patrol and to enforce the by-laws (LCI Chairman, village neighboring Pakure, 4 March 2014).

Another security group member described the meeting more colorfully:

The RDC said, just kill two or three thieves and then it will be calm. It will give them fear. It was that night that we started formally with the approval of the RDC (Security group member, village neighboring Pakure, 14 February 2014).

Thus, the security group was established to help meet local demand for security.¹²⁵ Ten male group members were nominated by the LCI and approved by the community at a village security meeting. They worked under the guidance of a local politician. The LCI explained that they selected youth with good moral character who were known by the community. The youth themselves linked their purpose and mandate to the community.

...we started the process of community wellbeing in this village of ours and it was the community that had put trust in me who is talking right now. We have come with an idea that we as youths of this village should give a helping hand to the community of the village as we work according to the by-laws that we have written down (Chairman of local security group at a community meeting, Pakure, 15 February 2014).

¹²⁵ The origins of the security group are disputed. A number of those interviewed, including the community members, the LCI, and the RDC claimed credit for initiating the group as a means to fight crime.

They began to patrol at night, at times with the police. Like the group in Centre Village (see chapter 6), the group enforced local by-laws. A local political leader reported that these by-laws were approved at the sub-county and reviewed by lawyers for accordance with the Ugandan Constitution.

Also like the group in Centre Village, the security group in Pakure was eager to collect symbols of authority. They used code words to keep secrets within the group, and had formalized positions, including president, vice-president, secretary, and “whip-master,” an individual who was tasked with doling out corporal punishments, even though corporal punishment is officially illegal in Uganda. The group requested funding for boots, rain jackets, and the like; however, they had no material form of identification or uniforms. According to those in attendance, when the RDC announced his support for the security group’s work at a community meeting in November 2013, he also promised training; however, it was delayed due to lack of funds. The absence of uniforms, training and formal authorization were a sore point with the LCI, who described waiting on unfulfilled promises.

Although community members generally concur that the idea for the security group was a good one, this group had problems almost immediately. Within a few months of commencing operation, the security group was implicated in an act of mob violence in which a thief, infamous in the community, was killed. Some saw this as an initiation of the group into the community, a way of communicating their access to violence, power, and ability to act with impunity. The group also enforced social norms about women’s appearance, beating a girl and her brothers for the girl’s revealing clothing. The group faced numerous other accusations of wrongdoing, including harassment, theft, and corruption. Below are a series of complaints posed during a public community meeting in February 2014:

I would like to talk on an issue that concerns a report I received from one of the boys...who was beaten by some of the security boys from this village. He has a fractured arm, which happened if not yesterday then the day before. I advise the security organ from the village that they should look for another house whereby they can detain a wrong doer for a few hours. In the morning, they will see what to do. Not everyone who moves at night is a wrong doer (Unidentified community member 1 at village security meeting, Pakure, 15 February 2014).

Another complained that group members were using their positions to carry out personal vendettas. The quote concludes with meaningful ambiguity: whether the security personnel or the enemy might take revenge on the other, the speaker cautioned that one malicious act can spawn others:

I stand firm to say that beating people doesn't solve any problem because you might cause a permanent injury to someone and later you stand to be blamed... More so, it could be that the security personnel could have had quarrels with someone. Security should not take advantage of being in control of the night. On meeting the enemy, he might want to take revenge (Unidentified community member 2 at village security meeting, Pakure, 15 February 2014).

Another community member presented tentative evidence that the group lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the community:

The money that is contributed from about 600 households [to support the group's work] should have been about 600,000 shillings, but the money contributed is only about 100,000 shillings. Therefore, there is something wrong somewhere and somehow. It could be that the community members are looking at something wrong that they can't talk about, so they resort by not paying the money (Unidentified community member 3 at village security meeting, Pakure, 15 February 2014).

During this time, a local leader who worked closely with the group estimated they had made at least 80 "arrests" in relation to various crimes (Local leader, Pakure, 10 November 2014). Around

the same time, on 7 February 2014, the Police Spokesperson for Aswa Region, which includes Gulu, wrote a memo to Gulu's LCIII councilors requesting them to sensitize communities on community policing programs. The letter explains:

The UPF is now a pro-active force unlike those days where you would find police officers waiting for cases to be brought to them. Now it's the opposite we are so much engaged in community policing where we talk to the public, sensitize and let them know that fighting crimes is a collective responsibility, it should not be left to police alone since wrong doers live/stay within our communities hence we should make them aware that their involvement into crime reductions is one way of weeding out such people such that peace harmony and security prevails in your division (Letter from Aswa Regional Police Spokesperson to LCIII Chairman dated 7 February 2014; on file with author).

The letter encourages action on the part of community members and also requests citizens "to move with the Police during...sensitization programs." However, it does not note any limits on this "collective responsibility" (Letter from Aswa Regional Police Spokesperson to LCIII Chairman dated 7 February 2014, on file with author).

One local politician who criticized the security group suggested that the group was intimidating community members in preparation for the 2016 electoral cycle. The politician argued that the group was preventing political hopefuls from competing, while at the same time gaining popularity with the community for being tough on crime:

[They] start[ed] a project [to] create a situation where people see that you have come to protect them, and yet you are planning for your game. You are bringing people on board [for the campaign]... telling people, 'We are protecting you. So you have to hurry behind us. It is so-and-so who is not with us—who is frustrating the effort we have brought.' They incite people against leaders. In the meantime, they want to achieve their goal of 2016 (Community member and local politician, Pakure, 18 September 2014).

He recounted that the group's instigator—another local politician and at that time also a member of the opposition—intended to switch his political affiliation to join the NRM. The respondent suggested that the switch to NRM would be made in the hopes of leveraging the RDC, presumably for political support:

The RDC is being used. The councilors, those who have ambition to stand in 2016, they want to use the state organ to intimidate people (Community member and local politician, Pakure, 18 September 2014).

However, in this case, political party affiliation seemed to be a strategy to undermine or leverage other people, rather than as a factor that itself motivated violence. For instance, another respondent recalled that when he tried to lodge a complaint against the security group at the Central Police Station, the accused security group members claimed to be members of an opposition party, and leveraged this as a defense:

[S]ome politicians came [including] the vice chairman of the [sub-county] and other opposition politicians... They were quarrelling that I might be bought. [They said that] maybe [I had been hired] to attack opposition. But I said, there is nothing political in that thing (Community member, Pakure, 25 November 2014).

The security group, and its supporters, countered the community's complaints about their behavior with anecdotes of their recent successes in fighting crime, and with accusations that those who opposed their work were themselves wrongdoers whose activities had been disrupted due to the tightening of security. On other occasions, citizens report that group members invoked go-ahead from the office of the RDC to justify corporal punishment, linking their work and mandate to the President's office.

Shortly after the community meeting, the police arrested and detained four members of the security group, including the chairman and the secretary, on counts of malicious damage and grievous harm. Accounts of the group's violence are quite graphic. One victim described being pinned down by two or more security men and beaten with chains until he could not walk the 20 meters to his house. A resident of the village explained that he witnessed group members detaining and beating a man; he felt compelled to watch so that he could report the case if the man died. One complainant reported violent intimidation, death threats, and the looting of his workplace; as a result, he decided to leave Gulu. A journalist commented:

[T]he group in [Pakure] has turned from being a security group more to being organized criminals. If they arrest someone they don't know, they are supposed to hold them or ask them questions, or turn them over to the police. Now, instead, they are actually doing the work of the police, deciding on the punishment, fining, beating, etc. (Journalist, Gulu Town, 29 February 2014).

The LCI returned to the lack of training and the government's deferred responsibilities, stating:

In my view, the RDC started the program without a plan. The group needs training and identification, like raincoats with reflectors... Not giving training or support is like making these boys commit suicide—they did not know the law, which is why they are in prison now (LCI Chairman, Pakure, 4 March 2014).

In each case, the complainant describes the security group members as crossing the line, at times acting out of greed, at others for political ends. The members of the security group maintain that they were acting to prevent crime:

You know this program has obstructed [the complainants] from stealing, over drinking, smoking opiums, or beating or raping young people on the way... What I think, those who reported those cases... want us to be there in prison. They want

us to suffer and to let them continue with what they were doing (Former member of security group, Pakure, 30 November 2014).

Others claimed that the accusations were politically motivated, arguing that those who opposed the group wanted to undermine a successful program so certain politicians could not claim credit for improving welfare and security in the community.

Despite their protestations, the four security group members were arrested, charged, and held for one month on remand. The politician who had been directing them fled the area, only to return six months later after two out of three charges had been dismissed. The accused group members paid their own bail of nearly US\$ 500 each. Several community members went to the RDC to argue in favor of the security group members, to no avail. Otherwise, the accused were left to manage detention and arrest on their own. The LCI responded by distancing himself from the group, saying:

In the process of executing their duties as the security group, they went astray and they had to face the law as individuals. The by-law is very clear on the roles of the security group... All along they did this without the knowledge of the LCI of the area. The police, who should have been the better guide for them, sometimes also took them to other areas above their jurisdiction... The arrest of these people reduced the morale and trust of the community members (LCI Chairman, Pakure, 11 November 2014).

According to a 28-year-old male community member, who had multiple altercations with the group, the RDC also disowned the security group:

[T]he RDC himself was called and he denied it and said that he didn't know that group. Some people called him, even those radio stations and the big people in the district, even the LCV called the RDC... The RDC had to deny it. There was no proof even to show that he was working with them. But he was working with them.

There was no evidence, like an ID he had given them, and so on (Community member, Pakure, 25 November 2014).

It was rumored that the officer in charge at the nearby police post had told the group to work independently of the police on numerous occasions. He was reportedly transferred around this time.

As of October 2015, two of the cases against the group had been dismissed due to the absence of the state prosecutor and complainants in court. The remaining case was referred back to the community in September 2014, to be resolved by the LCI. The LCI failed to mobilize the relevant parties, and as a result, the arbitration was unsuccessful. According to former members of the security group, a newly appointed RDC subsequently returned to this village to encourage the training of local security as Crime Preventers, even though one of the cases against them remained open. One of the accused elaborated that the RDC had summoned them to her office where she apologized for their arrest and detention, and invited them to join the Crime Preventers training. Several community members explained that while the security group used to have problems, they had become “more organized.” Indeed, anecdotally, the punishments they administered post-arrest became less severe.

Those who were arrested declined Crime Preventers training and stopped patrolling. The politician leading the group temporarily lost his political position due to absenteeism and did not run in the 2016 elections. But other security groups continued to work in the community, for example delivering corporal punishment on behalf of the LCI; additionally, residents of this village continued to work with security groups in neighboring villages.

A plural security sector under a dominant ruling regime

This case illustrates how a highly fragmented institutional environment shapes prospects for consolidation of authority, and how this in turn allows authorities to shuffle claims among jurisdictions. It shows both how fragmentation can create opportunities to assert oneself as an emergent authority in a sea of competing authorities, but also how it limits the consolidation of horizontal alliances, as well as vertical cooperation. Put in conversation with a fluid public/private divide, it becomes clear that institutional fragmentation creates significant hurdles to developing any consolidated form of authority and to making claims on existing authorities. Thus, local security initiatives can claim authority under a set of limited circumstances: within the village, when their actions are amenable to village and sub-national authorities, as well as members of the security sector including police and secret operatives.

Numerous competing and uncoordinated authorities preclude horizontal consolidation of power, while attacks on the group's legitimacy undermine attempts to consolidate power vertically. At the village level, provision of security is highly fragmented: individuals protect their own homesteads; security group members patrol at night; the police, military officers, and secret operatives are occasionally present; and government authorities like the LCV and the RDC also make proclamations about security provision. These actors are clearly poorly coordinated, and fail to communicate about the proper role of the security group, which itself further contributes to institutional fragmentation. The different responsibilities and expectations placed on the group members by sub-national authorities including local councilors, the RDC, and the police, illustrates a horizontally fragmented institutional environment where it is unclear which actors are meant to do what with whom, where, and under what circumstances. Additionally, the horizontal organization of the group was somewhat artificially limited, as it was initiated as a village security

group. Since their legitimacy is based on the approval of the local community, it is further difficult for the group to consolidate power horizontally.

Examining the experience of the security group also reveals the role of vertical fragmentation. For example, the police, the RDC, the local politician, and the community all established different expectations for the security group, and then held the group to a different set of expectations. The RDC encouraged the formation of the group, tasking locals with their own security and allegedly suggesting murder as a tool of discipline.¹²⁶ The police also patrolled with and delegated responsibilities to the group, establishing a fuzzy boundary between state and non-state security providers. Working with the police further convinced the group members that they had authority to arrest, judge, and discipline community members. Throughout the case, higher authorities exercise power over the group recognizing them at times and denying their authority at other times. The group continually attempted to gain authority by linking themselves to the RDC and President Museveni by claiming that their mandate derived from these offices; and to the police by helping them conduct night patrols.

The community's response—which was simultaneously appreciative and critical of the group—illustrates that efforts to consolidate power in relation to the community is also ongoing (also see chapter 6). The community contests the group's power through public verbal critiques, holding back contributions, and at times, defying the group members. In one case, documented in police witness statements, a *boda boda* driver refused to obey the group members' commands to follow curfew and pay a fine, instead hurling insults at the group members, and later filing charges against them for the physical assault that followed.

¹²⁶ In March 2017, Museveni came under criticism for similarly implying that citizens should take the law into their own hands if they came across “suspicious” elements, specifically responding to a recent murder carried out by a man posing as a *boda-boda* driver (Allison 2017).

The arrest of the security group by the local police further undermined the authority of its members both materially and symbolically. Materially, group members were physically detained and unable to continue work. Moreover, they endured economic costs associated with their arrests that left them in no position to continue volunteering time in the community. Symbolically, the group lost support from local and subnational authorities. The LCI, the local politician, and the RDC all rescinded support for the group, isolating them and allowing their new identities as wrongdoers to spread within the community. This case shows both how the security system is fragmented, how the various logics inconsistently applied by numerous actors makes the system particularly difficult to negotiate, and how fragmentation produces opportunities for consolidation in the form of new constituencies. In this case, the local politician leveraged the fragmented security environment to cater to the unmet security needs of the population.

Thus, both the community and sub-national authorities alternately supported and undermined the group, thereby limiting group members' efforts to consolidate vertical power and stabilize their claims to authority. This kept the group fluid and unconsolidated, such that they contributed further to horizontal fragmentation of security and justice actors in the community. Institutional fragmentation and weak consolidation of vertical power creates an environment where authorities and complainants can easily shift claims amongst institutions with competing logics. In the context of a fluid public/private division, the perception of the state's sovereign violence, a fragmented institutional environment, and the potential presence of the state contribute to an unpredictable security and justice environment, in which citizens cannot develop meaningful expectations of any given institution.

Conclusion: Plural and fragmented governance confined

Gulu is an environment of multiple and competing security and justice actors. Those that are officially non-state—including clans, traditional healers, religious authorities, and NGOs—were weakened significantly during the conflict and resulting displacement, and have yet to regain their authority. Those that are officially state actors—including LCs, members of the Internal Security Office (PISO, GISO and DISO), police, and courts—are increasingly fragmented through various strategies including redistricting and establishing new units. Those that fall in the middle—such as Crime Preventers, cadres, secret operatives, and local security groups—are undermined by being alternately claimed and rejected by various other authorities.

Additionally, I have argued that in this complex and fragmented institutional environment, those security actors that are officially part of the Ugandan state have access to sovereign violence that allows them to enforce claims or denials of their own jurisdiction. Thus, the security and justice sectors in northern Uganda resemble models of hybrid and plural governance. However, the “private” space is fundamentally shaped by what the regime claims as its own jurisdiction. In this confined space outside the state’s jurisdiction, the presence of multiple fragile authorities works to the benefit of the ruling regime. In addition to making it difficult for citizens to negotiate the institutional environment, institutional fragmentation keeps potential alternative authorities and security actors competing amongst each other, rather than organizing to make claims on the state.

While a fluid public/private division allows continual re-definition of what falls within the state’s jurisdiction as governable by state law and institutions, fragmentation means that numerous institutions operating within the public or private sphere can be relevant or irrelevant to process and outcome. Authorities can manipulate jurisdictions to reinforce their own power and undermine

others; authorities can also negotiate a fragmented institutional environment to continually reorder the public and private space. Similarly, citizens can strategically select the institutions they engage with to benefit from a fragmented system. However, the constant possibility that the claim will be re-categorized outside any given authority's jurisdiction and thus, delegitimized, limits the power of this manipulation, such that forum shopping in the sense of strategically selecting a forum, is not often viable.¹²⁷ This is distinct from traditional models of forum shopping—rather than choosing the system with the best predicted outcome, citizens facing serious problems turn to multiple security and justice actors. In this environment, citizens have little capacity to determine which system will apply to them, or indeed to *make* any given system apply. Thus, although individual security or justice providers may adhere to predictable logics or rules of exchange, it is still difficult for citizens to anticipate what will happen in their case.

¹²⁷ This strategy of manipulating the public/private divide in a fragmented institutional environment is not unique to Uganda: indeed, in the west, lawyers use frivolous lawsuits (*de minimis non curat lex*, or literally, “the law does not concern itself with trifling matters”) to reject legal claims. However, this process is institutionalized, resting on decades of precedent. In such a situation, the public/private divide moves by a matter of small degrees. In Uganda, the shifting of the public/private divide is non-institutionalized, unpredictable, and violent.

Chapter 9

State violence, institutional fragmentation and the perception of a grand strategy

Uganda's NRM regime has formally decentralized power while centralizing and consolidating its control. I have argued that the way in which this happens can be understood as a strategy of institutionalized arbitrariness, by which the regime fosters the perception that it can intervene directly at any time, despite its frequent absence in the security and justice sectors. While chapters 5 through 8 focused on how institutionalized arbitrariness works to govern individual citizens in and around Gulu Town, this chapter tackles the question of how the regime precludes the emergence of cohesive constituencies that might provide a viable and scalable alternative authority to the state.

Uganda is highly decentralized by contemporary standards, primarily through the local council system. Additionally, electoral quotas for women and other marginalized groups appear to ensure representation of different sectors of society (Ahikire 2003). In theory, this system should bring power closer to constituents, resulting in improved service delivery, increased accountability, and better representation. Such an environment would be fertile ground for entrepreneurial public authorities to establish power bases independent from the ruling regime. I use the term "entrepreneurial public authority" to refer to actors seeking to develop their claims to public authority.¹²⁸ In Uganda, multiple platforms exist upon which to claim authority (for

¹²⁸ As defined in chapter 1, "Public authority" has been offered as a term to understand governing authority without relying on a predetermined conception of "the state". Many scholars of public authority view authority as commanding a minimum of voluntary compliance based on mutual recognition of moral values and norms, and legitimacy of claims to power, while they define public parsimoniously as "impersonal administrative operations in a wide sense . . . [and]

example, religious, ethno-linguistic, regional, traditional or clan-based). I call these “alternative public authorities”, as they offer the promise of a pre-existing constituency outside of the state’s control, on the basis of which authority might be exercised. However, as I show in this chapter, the NRM’s hegemonic state structure has successfully marginalized these alternative public authorities. Entrepreneurial public authorities, as I define the term, instead seek to exercise their authority *from within the NRM-state’s structures*. They use (usually political) entrepreneurship to build a constituency that might give their exercise of authority some degree of scale and autonomy from the NRM state (also see Tilly 1977).

In this chapter, I examine two cases in which local populations share immediate and high-stakes interests—indeed, matters of life and death. One case relates to an individual’s death in police custody and the other centers on community claims to land. I use the cases to analyze the micro-dynamics of constituency organization and destabilization, specifically focusing on how entrepreneurial public authorities negotiate a fragmented and complex institutional environment, claiming and denying their authority. In doing so, I focus on how the threat of state’s exercise of sovereign violence raises the stakes of organizing constituencies and contributes to citizens’ skepticism of the political process.

The analysis has two levels. First, I examine how harsh and seemingly arbitrary state violence against citizens—whether lawful or exceptional violence—causes those same citizens to doubt the ability of other public authorities to protect them. It does so by illustrating that the state has the ultimate power to create security and insecurity, such that citizens perceive the state as guarantor and dismantler of order. Any rhetoric that non-NRM-affiliated leaders—whether appointees or party stalwarts—use about defending their people is thus unconvincing. Indeed,

public (as in ‘not secret’) confrontations, discussions and action in concert” (Hoffmann and Kirk 2013, 9). An in-depth analysis of the term and its relevance to institutionalized arbitrariness is presented in chapter 5.

citizens can reasonably interpret such claims as self-serving and strategic, designed to attract voter support. While this does not always destroy constituencies, it renders them fragile. Second, I analyze how the imagined possibility of exceptional state violence levied against (potential) constituency leaders—namely, extrajudicial killing and arbitrary detention—limits the ambition of constituency leaders, thereby defanging organization before it gets started. In this environment, entrepreneurial public authorities both claim and deny authority to maximize their power while minimizing their responsibility and potential risk.

Before presenting the case studies, I review relevant context on existing constituencies in northern Uganda, largely drawn from secondary literature on the enduring strength of the NRM party. I then present the argument, providing a few key examples of the state's use of lawful and exceptional violence against alternative leaders. These stories—whether empirically true or not—reflect citizens' and potential entrepreneurs' risk-reward calculus when it comes to mobilizing citizens in support of specific demands on the regime. I then present the case studies, in which I focus on how the possibility and actuality of state violence shapes prospects for forming and maintaining cohesive constituencies. The cases and their analysis contribute to existing explanations by focusing on the various mechanisms by which (threat of) state-initiated violence undermines constituencies within a fragmented institutional environment.

While both cases illustrate a fragmented institutional environment that is both complex and competitive, they contribute different insights to how (threat of) state-initiated violence impacts the relationship between leaders and their constituents. The first case—a conflict over the cause of death of a civilian man in Pader Town—focuses on the coercive violence of the police. It clearly reveals the complex dynamics between a democratically elected LCV and a presidentially appointed RDC, and their different sources of authority. The second case—a land conflict

involving the government, foreign investors, and residents in Apaa Town—more clearly highlights the fragmented and complex nature of the state’s security forces. The case illustrates many of the strategies the ruling regime uses to undermine constituency leaders, including bribery, intimidation, arrest and detention, and protracted legal battles. It also illustrates the proximity of sovereign violence, and the state’s willingness to deploy extreme measures to reassert control.

Together, the cases illustrate that in diverse circumstances, the ruling regime quickly resorts to brute force to thwart claim-making. In turn, I argue that this demonstrates to civilians that their alternative leaders have a limited capacity to protect them, or to effectively represent their interests in a policy space. These strategies ensure that civilians view the central state as more powerful than other potential leaders within the formal state structure. Relatedly, a belief in a hegemonic central state limits the success leaders can have in leveraging moments of tension for political capital. Instead of gaining credibility, such acts can increase skepticism among constituents, who recognize such futile acts cannot have been made in good faith.

Opportunities and obstacles for political organization

As discussed in chapter 3, the GoU-LRA war weakened many previously existing forms of local organization in Gulu via large-scale displacement and destruction of property, leaving civilians dependent on aid agencies and state sponsored interventions. Subsequently, the ruling regime has used redistricting to balkanize ethnic groups (E. Green 2008a), in combination with a national rhetoric that forcefully condemns ethnic and religious politicking (Museveni 1997).¹²⁹ Perhaps one

¹²⁹ Also see Alava and Ssentongo (2016), who argue that religious organization is stymied by patronage, intimidation and ethnicity, and that during the 2016 elections “...by performing public debate that remained vague on crucial issues,

of the strongest existing divisions with political relevance is a regional divide between the north and the south of the country (Branch 2011, 58–61). This long-standing division was reinforced by the ruling NRM regime as a part of its strategy to unite the southern tribes. Branch further explains that “the war against the Obote II regime was re-interpreted as a war of south against north, which was distilled into a war against the Acholi as the embodiment of northern state power” (Branch 2011, 61).¹³⁰ While Museveni and the NRM are viewed as representing southern Bantu power (a narrative that Museveni later veiled with his rhetoric of the no-party Movement and “individual merit” (Carbone 2003)), the northern populations remain comparatively fragmented.

At the same time, in northern Uganda, several elected officials have developed small but loyal constituencies. These individuals fill diverse positions of authority, sometimes in ways that appear to be contradictory or inconsistent. Like appointed officials, elected officials manipulate an uncertain environment to limit their accountability and maximize their authority. They act strategically whether publicizing or hiding alliances; accepting or rejecting promotions and payments from the ruling regime; and claiming or rejecting revolutionary ideals. Some are more successful than others. Characters like Betty Ocan Aol (Woman MP for Gulu District), Norbert Mao (president of the Democratic Party), Martin Mapenduzi (Chairman LCV of Gulu), Ronald Reagan Okumu (MP for Aswa County, Gulu District), Odonga Otto (MP for Aruu County, Pader District), and Olara Otunnu (former president of Uganda People’s Congress, as well as a former ambassador to the United Nations and senior UN official) have long played leading roles in the political narrative of the north. These politicians use various strategies to rally their bases and build

and by promoting a religious narrative of peace, religious leaders participated in the enactment of a façade of political debate, in so doing legitimising the autocratic facets of Museveni’s hybrid regime.”

¹³⁰ Branch explains that in the 1980s, the NRA built support in Luwero, and then throughout the south of Uganda, by framing the revolution in regional terms, as a struggle to throw out the north in favor of the south.” Branch elaborates how “a northern ethnic enemy resonated” with the southern peasantry, based on their experiences during the Obote II’s counterinsurgency, when Acholi comprised the majority of the armed forces, particularly “the rank-and-file troops sent to fight in Luwero” (Branch 2011, 60). Also see chapter 3.

constituencies, including employing personal appeal, drawing on ethno-linguistic cleavages, making autochthonous claims, giving cash hand-outs and promising future development projects, and reminding citizens of the GoU-LRA conflict.

Given the high level of decentralization and underlying societal factions, Uganda ought to be fertile ground for entrepreneurial public authorities to deploy such strategies. In other contexts, scholars have pointed out that if the central state does not have the technical capacity to oversee decentralized authorities, political entrepreneurs have the opportunity to appropriate control of state resources and direct them within their own patronage networks (Mukhopadhyay 2014; Reno 1999). However, Uganda's highly dominant central power structure leaves little space for such strategies to go unnoticed for long (Rubongoya 2007). When they are noticed, the regime uses a combination of carrots and sticks to deter their political ambitions (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey 2017; Rubongoya 2007; Vokes and Wilkins 2016). Violence plays a key role, including arrests and detention, freezing assets, and—in a few highly publicized cases—rumored poisoning (Abrahamsen and Bareebe 2016; Khisa 2016). The regime also shuffles key political appointees to further limit constituency building (Lambright 2011).

Horizontal fragmentation has been observed as a strategy of governance in vastly different historical and cultural contexts. Karen Barkey (1994) notes that the Ottoman empire employed strategies of fragmentation and competition among elites, making it practically impossible for them to organize opposition (Barkey 1994, 56). Biniam Bedasso (2015) has argued that fragmentation of elite blocs intensifies structural uncertainty of intra-elite pacts, thereby accounting for the recent rule-based transitions in power in Kenya. These strategies are effective because they preclude alignment of interests that are necessary to build coalitions.

Relatedly, the balkanization of districts, as discussed in chapter 8, pits members of the same ethno-linguist groups against each other. For example, in 2011, Norbert Mao and Olara Otunnu both ran for president, splitting the Acholi vote for less than 2% of the national vote each.¹³¹ One of my informants who worked for Gulu District explained that this strategy extends to appointed officials:

Another thing that might help is the president carefully appoints locals to be RDC. More often than not you'll find RDC has close ethnic ties to the people—at least for Acholi sub-region. It minimizes their potential for conflict between the two leaderships [LCV and RDC] and the people also (District-level employee, Gulu District, 4 December 2015).

This approach undermines ethno-linguistic identity as an organizing principle for elected officials. Thus, while individual politicians have cultivated strong coalitions, they are far too small to challenge the regime.

Additionally, a highly fragmented institutional environment both increases the costs of organizing as well as competitive pressures to do so. Because the NRM controls resource distribution in much of the country, opposition candidates are at a disadvantage. As discussed in chapter 2, patronage is an important component of Uganda's monetized political system. Politicians provide direct cash payments, gifts, and feasts for constituents during election time (de Torrenté 2014), and citizens believe that “eating” a politician's money creates a reciprocal obligation. Perhaps the most significant implication of limited access to resources in a context of competitive and monetized politics is that politicians are driven to finance their own campaigns. Having become mired in debt, politicians face pressure to use their position to recoup expenses

¹³¹ Mao carried Gulu, Amuru and Nwoya, but received only 1.86% of the national electorate; Otunnu failed to surpass Museveni's vote share even in his home district of Kitgum, where he received 35.35% of the vote compared with Museveni's 38.82% (Uganda Election Commission, 2011).

(Wilkins 2016). They seek resources from the central state (represented for example in the bloated salary of members of Parliament¹³²) and the international community. This decreases autonomy from the state and fosters a state and political institutions that are “turned upwards and outwards” (Jones 2009, 9). This contributes to “unevenness of stateness” (O’Donnell 1993), as political authorities develop constituencies strategically. In addition to geographic unevenness, the presence of political authorities is temporally uneven, emerging in force in the months before the election and subsiding for the years in between. Respondents frequently complained that politicians, particularly MPs, appeared every five years to woo the electorate, and then disappeared into their government vehicles, unwilling to even lower their tinted windows to greet the community.

Other politicians attempt to find alternative approaches to cash hand-outs. For example, during campaigns for the 2016 elections, a well-known NRM personality, Brigadier Otema, reportedly distributed large amounts of cash at rallies in exchange for promised votes. He is alleged to have said that if any other politician came to give money, he would return and give ten times the sum. Norbert Mao, much-beloved in the Gulu area, responded to Otema’s proposal at a rally in Gulu’s Buspark, reportedly giving the crowd 500,000 UGX (170 USD) and declaring, “I am shaking Otema’s tree.” At previous rallies, Mao encouraged voters to “eat” the NRM’s money and vote for the opposition. Such witticisms form a significant part of Mao’s popularity in the north.

Museveni takes political opposition seriously: he directly engages with politicians and keeps tabs on their activities, hearing their complaints, and luring them to join the NRM (Golooba-Mutebi and Hickey 2017). He also attempts to directly undermine individual politicians, for example, splitting constituencies to create new districts¹³³ and directly campaigning against them

¹³² While the LCV position is paid in gross 2 million UGX per month (677 USD), MPs are paid 30 million UGX per month (10,155 USD).

¹³³ Elliot Green (2008a) shows that in addition to creating new jobs that can be distributed to patrons, citizens in new districts are more likely to vote for Museveni than opposition candidates.

(also see Khisa 2016 on managing elite defection). For example, at a rally in Gulu Town in 2010, Museveni reportedly named key members of the opposition and blamed them for instability in the north:

I hear the opposition saying that if you vote Museveni next year, Kony will come back again. It is me with your support that defeated Kony, not Reagan Okumu, Norbert Mao, Olara Otunnu or Besigye (Ocowun 2010).

This direct attack illustrates a strategy to project the NRM as provider of security and—in its imagined absence—of insecurity; the opposition provides the inverse.

Lawful and exceptional violence: Governing a fragmented institutional environment

When the ruling regime is unable to incorporate challengers, it uses hard power, whether lawful or exceptional. This ever-looming possibility underpins the relationship between constituents and their representatives. Violent and direct state intervention weakens trust, as citizens are made to understand that their representatives are unable to protect them or gain access to state resources unless they toe the NRM party line. While these interventions create obstacles, they also create circumscribed opportunities for elected officials to frame themselves in opposition to the state, as a protector of the people. However, this approach is easily sidelined as political strategizing, especially because citizens believe the regime can and does exercise violence directly upon them, lawful or no. With this as a constant possibility, challenges to the state are revealed as futile. Violence appears to be directed at entrepreneurial public authorities more frequently than ordinary civilians. They include arbitrary detention and extra-judicial killings and are instances of *potentially* exceptional violence. They occupy an ambiguous position in a typology of violence,

imbued with the possibility of lawfulness and exceptionality, both because there is insufficient evidence for citizens to confirm their exceptionality, and because the actions are often presented with various legal justifications, however unconvincing.

Elite murders are framed in popular discourse as examples of the state's capacity to reach citizens anywhere, and kill them secretly with no accountability. Well-known examples include suspected poisonings of high-ranking government officials. For example, the Woman MP, Cerinah Nebanda, who died suddenly at the age of 24 after repeatedly critiquing the NRM government and the President himself (Epstein 2014a). General Aronda Nyakairima died on an overnight flight from South Korea to Dubai and was rumored to have opposed a secret plan, dubbed the "Muhoozi Project" to instate Museveni's son as his successor (Butagira and Tumwine 2015). Another General, David Sejusa (also known as Tinyefuza), who played an instrumental role fighting for the government in the LRA conflict, fled to the UK in 2013, allegedly because he learned of his planned assassination as a part of the Muhoozi Project (Epstein 2014b). Other untimely deaths that have raised suspicion include Colonel Jet Mwebaze who was found dead in 1998—apparently shot, even though he had been a passenger on an airplane that had crashed in DRC; Noble Mayombo, formerly the Permanent Secretary in the Defense Ministry who died in a Nairobi hospital in 2007; Brian Bukenya, son of the then vice-President who died in a car accident in 2009; and James Kazini, formerly the UPDF army commander who was beaten to death in 2009 (Kalinaki 2015b; Mwenda 2009).

In an interview with Helen Epstein, Sejusa reported that Ugandan operatives trailed him to the UK, while in Uganda four members of his staff and hundreds of villagers from his home area were arrested and charged with treason. Sejusa's son and wife reportedly faced attempts on their lives, and Sejusa's brother was found dead at the base of a dam. Epstein writes, "Sejusa is

convinced that all of these incidents were orchestrated by the government, as was the death of Nebanda” (Epstein 2014b), continuing:

Rumors of assassination and other crimes by the government soon began circulating. More than a dozen of Museveni’s critics had perished in mysterious car crashes or after sudden unexplained illnesses in recent years. They included senior army officers whom he suspected of plotting a coup, opposition party agents, and an attorney general who was trying to block Museveni’s campaign to eliminate presidential term limits. In Kampala, terrified MPs told me that they avoided driving after dark and establishing routines like going to a certain bar after work. In restaurants, they ate only from buffets, and never ordered from the kitchen (Epstein 2014b).

District and national-level politicians who I interviewed expressed similar perspectives, as detailed in chapter 8.

Violent state intervention against elites is frequently dramatic and public. For example, the government at times uses arbitrary detention—famously when a paramilitary force dubbed the “Black Mambas” waited outside the High Court in Kampala in 2005 to detain 14 co-accused of Kizza Besigye who had just received bail (Ross 2005). The head of the high court, Judge James Ogoola, said, “The court witnessed the most naked and grotesque violation of the twin doctrines of the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary” (Vasagar 2005). The identity of the men—who wore black T-shirts—was unclear. While the army claimed they were part of the anti-terrorism unit, the same men were reportedly seen the following day at court wearing police uniforms (Ross 2005). Besigye, who has challenged Museveni in the 2005, 2011 and 2016 presidential elections, has been charged with treason and rape, teargassed, beaten, and held under house arrest. By using police uniforms and legal doctrine to justify these interventions, the regime has stretched the law to disguise exceptional violence.

Relatedly, in the 2016 Presidential elections, Museveni faced a challenger from within his own party: former Prime Minister and long-time NRM loyalist, Jean Patrick Amama Mbabazi. Khisa argues that “Mbabazi became the centre of police and security focus”—he was detained and charged with “disobeying lawful orders” and warned that because his party (the NRM) had not endorsed him, his consultations would be “deemed illegal meetings” (Khisa 2016, 737).

Meanwhile, in Mbale town where Mbabazi was due to address a series of consultative meetings on 10 July, there was massive police and military deployment. There were reports of intimidation and threats against those involved in organizing the meetings and owners of booked meeting-venues, including hotels. For example, the manager of Mbale Resort Hotel, Isaiah Weboya, told the Daily Monitor newspaper that ‘he would not host Mr. Mbabazi because he feared for both his own security and that of his job’ (Khisa 2016, 737).

Key supporters were allegedly harassed and arrested across the country; Mbabazi’s financial resources were reportedly frozen and his potential funders in the business community were intimidated (Khisa 2016, 738).

These examples show how both lawful and exceptional violence permeate the political environment, and necessarily structure risk-reward calculations by both entrepreneurial public authorities and their potential constituents. Moreover, the regime manipulates existing laws to legitimate harsh interventions. As a result, it is difficult to determine such actions as empirically lawful or exceptional. The resultant ambiguity creates the perception that arbitrary and unpredictable state violence is tangibly proximate and potentially imminent.

To survive, entrepreneurial public authorities necessarily self-police, and make conservative calculations in their challenges of the regime. The obvious reality that the central state’s access to violence dwarfs that of any other potential public authority illustrates that

entrepreneurs could not defend citizens against arbitrary and violent state intervention. Citizens observe this, and as such are both skeptical and generally untrusting of entrepreneurial claims.

Thus, the relationship between citizens and public authorities within the NRM system is shaped by the looming threat of violence against anyone who can pose a meaningful challenge to the ruling regime, including its own members. A fragmented and competitive institutional environment with high risks creates some opportunities for savvy politicians; however, it overwhelmingly creates obstacles by undermining trust and making constituency and coalition building a zero-sum game. This helps explain why decentralization in Uganda has not resulted in accountability and service delivery. Rather, institutionalized arbitrariness functions to undermine the formation of constituencies at a sub-national level as well as within local communities.

Death in Pader: The LCV and RDC Square Off

The following case examines the coercive power of the police in relation to political jockeying of an LCV and an RDC. It reveals the complex dynamics between a democratically elected LCV and a presidentially appointed RDC and how their different sources of authority are shaped by (potential) state violence. The events in question took place in Pader Town on 1 June 2015. Around 8:30pm in the town center, a 21-year-old male market vendor lost control of a vehicle and crashed into a house. Both the vehicle and building were damaged, but the man appeared to be unscathed. The proprietor called the police, who impounded the truck and arrested the driver. Although the proprietor retrieved his vehicle the following day, the young man remained in custody. Reportedly, the District Police Commander had demanded 300,000 UGX (101 USD) for the driver's release, which his family viewed as a bribe and refused to pay. The detained man complained persistently,

becoming belligerent in his cell. His family expressed concern that he may have sustained internal injuries from the accident. The man was not permitted to go to the hospital for treatment, although it was rumored that a nurse visited him in his cell and gave him some medication. He died in the early hours of the following morning.

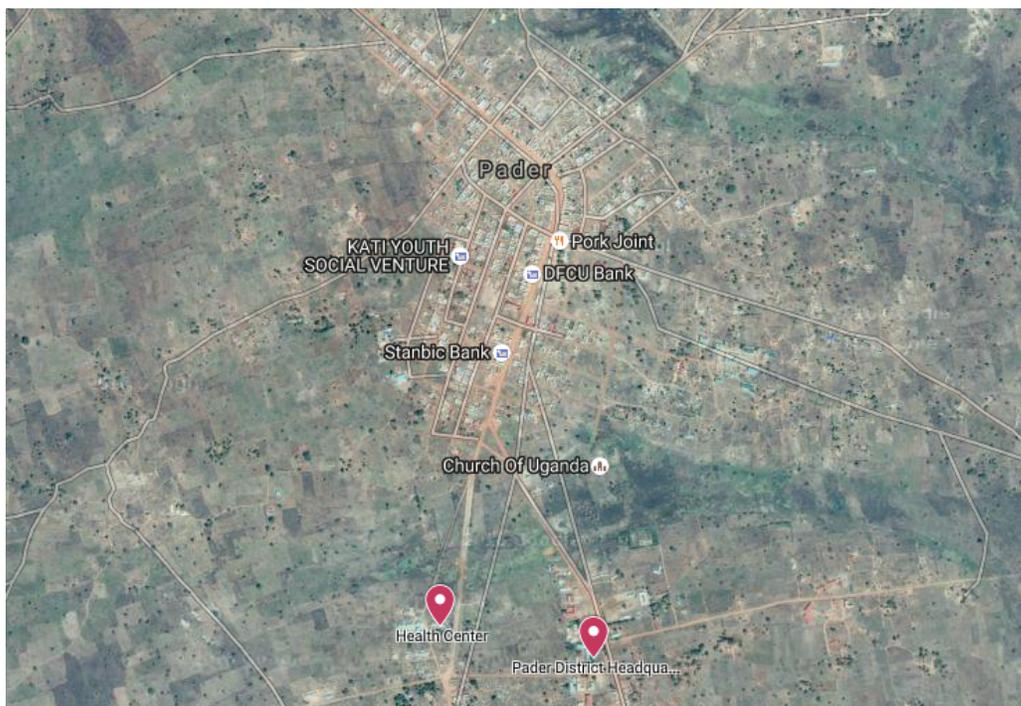
Early the following morning, community members learned of the man's death and gathered at the police station. The police, hoping to avoid responsibility for the man's death, reported that the man had been taken to the health center hours before he died, as his condition was deteriorating. At the health center, an on-duty nurse allegedly contradicted this report, instead explaining that the police had arrived with a corpse and demanded a falsified post-mortem report. As news of the death spread, community members continued to gather at the health post. Led by the chairwoman of the market vendors' association, the community members decided to take the case to the Chairman LCV to ask what could be done for the family of the deceased. The chairwoman explained, "We had wanted the police to cover the cost of burying this boy, feeding at the funeral and other costs that might occur. That is what we were after" (Market vendor, Pader, 20 October 2015).

Arriving at district headquarters, the community members found the LCV in a meeting with the RDC and the DPC. The three district authorities gathered the community members in the district council hall. The chairwoman raised the first question, "LCV, we have not come here to cause grudge. We have not come to claim for anything, but we just want a simple explanation. From where did this boy die?"

Image 9.1: Main Road of Pader Town (Photo courtesy of M. White and White 2014, <https://markandmaryinuganda.wordpress.com/2014/02/24/workshops-why-some-people-really-really-want-to-go-to-them-and-another-bigger-rat/>)



Image 9.2: Map of Pader Town, Health Center, and Pader District Headquarters



The LCV deferred to the DPC and the RDC, who reiterated the claim that the man had died in the hospital. The chairwoman described how the exchange escalated:

What really annoyed us was that the RDC ...[responded] with a lot of vulgar language... ‘You people of Pader, you are killing yourselves, because you do not want people from other districts or other parts of the country to come in and work in Pader...’ Then he picked his book and he left (Market vendor, Pader, 20 October 2015).

The LCV accompanied the enraged community members back to the health center, and called for the RDC to join them to “solve the matter amicably” (Market vendor, Pader, 20 October 2015).

The chairwoman described the scene at the health center:

The body was laid down. The RDC was on one side near the feet, LCV was on the other side. The leaders of the market stood just beside. The DPC was between the RDC and the Chairman LCV. The very language the RDC used from the district council, he again mentioned the very word [‘the people of Pader are killing themselves because you don’t want help from outsiders’]. That is what really triggered...the LCV to come and hold the RDC by the shirt. The RDC was now trying to take off his coat [to] fight... After that, people were really very annoyed. They had big stones, and they had wanted to hit the RDC with them, because of the chaos he caused. He was being protected through the orders from above. The police were deployed with tear gas, each and every thing (Market vendor, Pader, 20 October, 2015).

In Acholi culture, failure to properly bury a deceased person or to pay the requisite compensation to the aggrieved can result in long-term spiritual harms.¹³⁴ Although no one specifically mentioned these fears, several respondents commented on the physical altercation between the RDC and the LCV. It is taboo to fight near a corpse—let alone over it. Those who described the event physically recoiled in the retelling.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Julian Hopwood (2011) notes that Acholi cultural beliefs mean that the dead are present and interact with people in their daily lives, rewarding and punishing people to settle past scores.

¹³⁵ Sophie Seebach, in her study of death and burials in northern Uganda, also documents a story in which a spirit rejects a sacrifice because those who were to sacrifice the goat argued on their way to the grave site (Seebach 2016, 254–56).

Reportedly, after the confrontation, the police surrounded the RDC to protect him from the community members as he left the health center. The LCV, along with the community, decided to carry the body in a gurney back to the police station, less than 500 meters away to pressure the police to provide an explanation (see Image 9.2).¹³⁶ One witness recalled around 200 community members facing 15 or 20 police officers wearing full riot gear (Community member, Pader, 20 October 2015). Upon leaving the health center, the civilians discovered they were isolated on the road—behind them, the health center had locked its gates to prevent the police from returning the body; in front, the police, armed with teargas and ammunition, advanced. A journalist described the scene:

[Shockingly], when the angry residents and leaders move[d] a few meters away they found police had block[ed the] way, armed with teargas canisters, rubber and live bullets in AK-47, and they [deployed] teargas, [and] rubber bullets forcing people [to] flee away including district chairman leaving the deceased body on street (Journalist, unpublished news report, on file with author).

The RDC presented a different narrative of the day's events, reflecting that "sometimes there are role conflicts [between the LCV and the RDC]. You might step on someone's toe and get into serious problems." He explained that the police used "minimum force" to restrain the population when they tried to bring the body back to the police station.

Community members recalled that the police retrieved the body from where it was abandoned on the road and drove it to the health post in the nearby town of Pajule. Although the police reportedly promised to provide material for the funeral, including a coffin, transportation

¹³⁶ When I asked why the people would want to take the body back to the police station, my respondent said dismissively, "Other people are ignorant. They think when they take the body back to the police station, when the case goes up to the court they will find the body in the police station [and place the blame on the police]. They have that idea" (Community member, Pader, 20 October, 2015).

and refreshments, the family maintains that they never did. Instead, the market vendors' association in conjunction with the community and family members raised money locally. The deceased was eventually laid to rest in his ancestral home.

Despite the presence of a journalist from a mainstream newspaper and multiple radio journalists, media coverage of the event was limited. Only one story aired on the local radio and none appeared in print. One print journalist explained that his editor rejected the story on the grounds that he had posted about it on social media. She said this contravened the newspaper's policies. The journalist speculated that his editor and fellow journalists may have strategically avoided the story:

Sometimes if such a story happens [journalists] say 'ah ah, something which involves security'—they fear. Today you may do a story, but after it is published, you may not know what is going to happen tomorrow next... Today you are in a crowd, but when you are followed you are alone (Journalist, Pader, 20 October 2015).

Similarly, the radio station hesitated before sharing the story with me, explaining that this issue was "very sensitive."

Several respondents viewed the LCV's actions as opportunistic, calibrated to bolster his popularity with the community. One elite in Gulu reasoned:

Knowing the Chairman of Pader, he wanted to contest [for MP in the upcoming elections]... It was in his interest to stand up and make a point in favor of the people. Ordinarily, I think if he wasn't going to contest, they [he and the RDC] would have sat down and resolved the issue (District-level employee, Gulu District, 4 December 2015).

A community member in Pader reflected that the LCV Chairman could have more effectively helped the aggrieved family if he had reported the situation to the Regional Police Commander, or

called in an independent doctor to conduct the post-mortem. Instead, the LCV took advantage of “people who do not know the law”. When asked about why the RDC and the LCV handled the matter so differently, community members concentrated on their differing sources of authority:

I’ve been thinking, because the RDC has been appointed by the government. So, he comes to protect the side of police because they are workmates. They are all on the government side. The LCV is the political wing, elected by the people (Community member, Pader, 20 October 2015).

During this interview, another young man responded that both the LCV Chairman and the RDC were members of the NRM:

I feel they are all NRM, NRM, fine. But you find that one side of the coin, it is that they are being elected. The other is appointed. The LCV is elected. The RDC is appointed by the President of the Republic of Uganda. The RDC has much more power than LCV. The LCV can control other areas of the district. It’s maybe 55%, 45%. As I told you before, the RDC was appointed by the president to make security in the district. So, he is the one who is in charge, and the police officer is also a security organ. So he’s protecting the security organ rather than someone who was elected (32-year-old male, Pader, 21 October 2015).

As with many conflicts in northern Uganda, there was no clear resolution to this case—it appears that although both men attempted to reinforce their authority, both were viewed as acting in politically expedient ways. Although the LCV did run for MP in 2016, he lost to the incumbent, Honorable Odonga Otto. The case shows how both NRM appointees and elected officials can benefit from dynamically shifting their position to assert their authority at certain times, and to reject their own authority at other times.

Dispossession in Apaa: Politics and coercion

The following case demonstrates how the regime uses a variety of interventions to limit the formation of constituencies, as well as how entrepreneurial public authorities may try to leverage these interventions to earn political capital. In the following case, an opposition MP made himself the mouthpiece of a community movement protesting the government's efforts to alienate their land. While the protesters struggled to maintain traditional norms around land ownership, the government used violence to place the negotiations in the public sphere, thereby making them subject to state intervention. Additionally, by engaging multiple authorities—religious authorities, NGOs, district authorities, MPs, government ministers, and members of the justice sector and the security sector—the government fostered multiple narratives about the land and those opposing intervention, thereby fragmenting organized resistance. The state deployed the military and police on multiple occasions, forcibly removing people from the land, and used intelligence to stymie the actions of the MP.

The case takes place in Apaa, a small town in northern Uganda, which is at the heart of an ongoing land conflict involving citizens of Adjumani and Amuru Districts, private investors, and the government. As early as 1996, Apaa's inhabitants were displaced to camps in Pabbo and Amuru sub-counties due to the ongoing insurgency between the LRA and the Government of Uganda. Shortly thereafter, the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) proposed establishing a wildlife reserve in Apaa, noting that the land was abandoned because of insecurity, and therefore, "limited encumbrances would be encountered during the process of establishing a game reserve" (Serwajja 2014, 179). Local administration rejected the UWA's proposal arguing that the land was communally owned and that the ongoing conflict should take priority. Nonetheless, in 2009 the government signed a management concession with the South African owned Lake Albert Safaris

for approximately 40 square kilometers of land (Journalist, Gulu District, 20 November 2015). The government later claimed that a game reserve had been created in this area in 2002 by an Act of Parliament, but was unable to provide documentation of such (Serwajja 2014, 180). Lake Albert Safaris established a game reserve for sport hunting on part of the land and reportedly planned to start a cotton plantation.

Gilbert Olanya, formerly a member of the district local government, and later an area MP, recalled:

We [the District Council] told that man [owner of Lake Albert Safaris], ‘The land given to you belongs to the people.’ We told him, ‘The people who gave you the land gave it illegally when Acholi people were in camps. Now they’re back to their homeland. It’s wrong for government to give this land to you.’ We told him, ‘If you want to use this land it’s better if you negotiate with the people. The Constitution of Uganda is very clear. Land belongs to individuals. Any investor needs to go and negotiate directly with the individual.’ When we advised him the man kept quiet. So the man continued using some small portion of land. He had already set up his farm, his airfield.... The man got silent for some time... In 2012...the government decided to evict people forcefully (Olanya, Gulu District, 23 November 2015).

The government implemented waves of evictions to alienate the community land to Lake Albert Safaris (Serwajja 2014, 176). As early as 2007, the UWA blocked approximately 1,500 citizens from returning to the land from camps in Pabbo and Amuru sub-counties (Serwajja 2014, 176–77). Lenhart (2013) notes the government’s progressive use of violence to force community members to comply with government orders to leave the land. Between 2010 and 2012, the UWA, the Uganda Police Force and the UPDF evicted an estimated 10,000 residents, razed hundreds of homes, and destroyed property and crops. A journalist recalled the events of 2012, when the government conducted mass evictions through the UWA:

Over 200 people were injured and one died. It was done under the guise of UWA—the military—violently started moving people, taking them physically and throwing them into the truck to move them. They dumped everyone in Pabbo [IDP camp]. Human rights organizations and MPs came and started condemning (Journalist, Gulu District, 20 November 2015).

Olanya continued his involvement in the conflict as a self-described advocate for the Acholi people in Apaa, referring to his own provenance from a village less than ten kilometers away. In 2012, Olanya and others received a court injunction on the land to prevent further evictions and require community dialogue (Lenhart 2013). Olanya went with a delegation to meet the President and demand the people retain rights to their land:

We met the president in his home. I told him clearly... ‘Now that the war is over, I am not happy to see my people go back into suffering. I’m taking people back to their land... if you don’t want to see people there, kill all of them, bury them and take their land. This time we’re not going to allow our people to suffer.’ The president thought we were joking. I had a lorry, I took people back to their land, those who were evicted... That was the first time when I really started deviating from the government position (Olanya, Gulu District, 23 November 2015).

Olanya said that NRM representatives bribed other political leaders, from the grassroots to district level, to convince them to abandon the protest. He noted that many leaders changed their convictions abruptly after visits to the statehouse. Olanya says that when he was offered bribes, he refused them publically to show people the corruption of the regime as well as his own genuine commitment to the cause.

Both government actors and an international NGO (which was providing technical assistance to determine the location of the boundary) attributed the conflict to ethnic tensions between the Madi of Adjumani and the Acholi of Amuru (Saferworld 2015). To determine the

location of the border, the NGO referred to the 1962 Gazette. An NGO employee familiar with the process explained:

The gazette made it very clear that the land belonged to Adjumani. The MP of Kilak [Olanya] did not like that. The facts were coming from a technical person—but... according to him, the information was not correct (NGO employee, Kampala, 2 November 2015).

The government, along with NGO, planned to raise awareness—mainly through community dialogues with community and religious leaders, as well as district- and national-level representatives—before completing the border demarcation; however, they were unable to convince Olanya and many of the community members to participate. A journalist argued that the government was intentionally using a false ethnic narrative to “engineer” conflict and legitimate state intervention:

They [the central government] are the people behind [the conflict]. It’s an obvious fact. Everyone knows. From Museveni speaking about ‘Please give us land! Acholi people you don’t like development. You should give us land.’ The government could stop it. For instance, the way the evictions were done—the way people were ‘calmed down’ is not good. The MPs utilized the situation. MPs don’t have power. Power comes from the government. There is only one person [the President] who is listened to in the entirety of this conflict (Journalist, Gulu District, 20 November, 2015).

On 16 April 2015, key government ministers visited the community for a consultation. When the ministers arrived in Apaa, they were met by some 2,500 civilian protesters holding placards declaring that they would fight for their land. Upon opening the meeting, approximately five elderly women stripped naked in front of the ministers, chanting “traditional slogans condemning the boundary demarcations” (Ocungi and Okello 2015). In Acholi, female public nudity is believed

to invoke a curse on enemies, and thus this was viewed as an act of aggression.¹³⁷ The ministers briefly addressed the community, and delayed the planned border demarcation.

President Museveni responded, critiquing Olanya's leadership: "As we tried to take factories to Amuru district, Mr Olanya, was busy chasing away the wealth, he seemed comfortable with the poverty of the people in the area and never wanted development" (Acholi Times 2015). Subsequently, the government deployed armed troops and vehicles to facilitate the forcible demarcation of the border. Olanya and his colleagues decided to go to Apaa themselves to delay the border demarcation and insist on consultations. However, Olanya was arrested en route. A journalist, traveling with the MPs, believed that the police had tracked Olanya's movements to catch him before he reached Apaa.

The police detained Olanya for three days, during which time the government embarked on another episode of violent displacement in Apaa. A Crime Preventer reported being taken to Apaa to provide extra manpower for the police:

I went [to Apaa] with five other Crime Preventers in uniforms without numbers. There was tear gas everywhere, even me, I cried!... The community in Apaa was crying and complaining so much. There was an elder who was concerned with the land. He said that he would not go anywhere. The commander said he should be beaten but the police refused, [saying] 'No, this man is at his home.' Then the commander asked a Crime Preventer, who said, 'If my superior refused, how can I?'... People were beaten seriously (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 23 October 2015).

Another Crime Preventer explained that the defense forces had been given a clear set of instructions for how to deal with uncooperative locals. He reported a rumor that had been

¹³⁷ General Aronda was one of the ministers present. His mysterious death occurred five months later. While some speculated he was poisoned by the NRM regime, as discussed earlier in this chapter, others blamed his untimely death on the curse in Apaa (Kalinaki 2015a).

circulating in Gulu Town that the government had used excessive violence on the population and then attempted to cover it up:

[My aunt, a principal nursing officer in the division] said that the soldiers sent to Apaa had one standing order, first gun fired up in the air, then down to the ground, then find the leader and hit to kill. People were shot, others were not buried here but taken to different districts and their bodies have not been found. Police connived with army to give it a nice cover up that they were just missing persons (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 25 November 2015).

A journalist elaborated on the allegations against the police, expressing skepticism about interests on both sides of the conflict:

There were allegations that people were shot at [with live bullets], tear gas, etc.... I found out that over 21 people were injured seriously—some of them claim they had gun wounds. Many people reportedly slept in the bush because in the center there was deployment. They blocked roads coming in and going out, and I heard they weren't even letting sick people be transported out. After that chaos, people say, three days of chaos, shooting, beating, tear gassing.... [When we went there]..., the demarcation was done yesterday. There was nothing to stop now...

[People alleged that] missing persons [had died]... But there was no concrete report or evidence on that. Some 70 people [were] arrested from Amuru, Apaa and Pabbo... Some claim they sat on dead bodies in the truck. We confirmed that most missing people were in jail. To me, I have to believe no one was actually killed. There is misrepresentation from some of the community members (Journalist, Gulu District, 20 November 2015).

In newspaper articles, Olanya reported that he was treated well while in detention (Otto 2016); in an interview, he complained that he had to sleep on the ground and was held for 86 hours, while legally he should not have been held longer than 48 hours without being charged (Olanya, Gulu District, 23 November 2015). Olanya was brought to Gulu and accused on three counts: inciting violence and threatening violence between March and April 2015 in Apaa village trading center;

and threatening violence against the district and sub-county officials involved in the case (Otto 2016). The court granted a cash bail for Olanya of 1.5 million UGX (Otto 2016). Although Olanya denies the government's accusations, he has unquestionably used aggressive language, encouraging citizens to resort to violence rather than accept displacement.

Olanya's case was called several times before being dismissed for want of prosecution (Lawyer, personal communication, 16 February 2017). Olanya has future political aspirations. Like the LCV and RDC, he seems to have successfully leveraged this conflict to bolster his relationship with his constituency, winning four times the vote share of his closest rival in the 2016 parliamentary elections (Okot 2016). The case illustrates the regime's strategies of fragmentation, bribery, and violence, above all demonstrating that the regime is willing to deploy significant violence against civilians to undermine local organization. It also shows how multiple contradictory narratives about the cause of the conflict and the government's intentions make organization more difficult, such that citizens do not know who to follow. Direct intervention against civilians demonstrated the emptiness of Olanya's promises—he could not defend his constituents' physical security, let alone their economic and social interests.

Persistently circumscribed constituencies and weak public authorities

These case studies illustrate the obstacles to forming broad-based constituencies and strong public authorities independent of the NRM's ruling regime. In both cases, entrepreneurial public authorities attempted to negotiate a fragmented institutional environment. To this end, they attempted to use their roles as representatives to bolster their popularity and secure a power base independent from the ruling regime. In both cases, the state's security sector responded with threats

of impressive violence. These acts of state violence—which were arguably exceptional violence cloaked in the symbols of legality—revealed to constituents that their representatives were incapable of defending the community’s interests. This had two results. First, state violence fostered skepticism amongst citizens about the intentions of their potential representatives. Second, state violence raised the risk calculation of entrepreneurial public authorities, thereby causing them to self-police. In this environment, public authorities strategically claimed and rejected their authority. I examine each of these elements in more detail in this section.

The cases illustrate how the ever-looming possibility of state violence underpins the relationship between constituents and their representatives. In both cases, the regime’s security sector (primarily the police) used direct violence against citizens to undermine entrepreneurial public authorities. In Pader, the RDC—a government appointed representative—and the police under the command of the DPC, used teargas and rubber bullets to disperse protesters. In Akaa, the government has repeatedly deployed the military and the police, fully armed and ready to use violence to physically remove people from the land. They also arrested and detained Olanya. In both cases, violence was carried out by the state’s formal security sector, on official orders (whether from the district in the case of Pader, or likely the executive in the case of Akaa). These are clear illustrations of *potentially* exceptional violence—with the form of legality and yet apparently unaccountable to law such that police can use teargas and bullets to disperse the population without subsequent acknowledgement, let alone reprimand, as well as arrest, detain and charge an MP on trumped up charges later dismissed without explanation.

References to past experiences of state violence further contribute to the perception of impunity. For example, in the Pader case, the RDC’s suggestion that the people of Pader were

“killing themselves” was interpreted by many to harken back to the conflict. The statement recalls an oft-cited comment that Museveni purportedly made in the early years of the war:

In [Museveni’s] first address to Acholi elders in a gathering at the Acholi Inn, a hotel in Gulu, in 1986, a number of the participants report him as saying in reference to the Acholi people, ‘We will put them in a calabash like *nseene* (grasshoppers) and let them bite themselves to death. In this way we will rid Uganda of *gasiya* (nuisance) once and for all.’ He is reported also to have made similar such statements referring to the Acholi as grasshoppers in addresses at Kaunda Grounds in Gulu in 1987 and 1988 (Whitmore 2010, 22).

Finnström notes that people “frequently referred to this statement” when lamenting the government’s abdication of responsibility for the conflict (Finnström 2008, 106). Thus, the RDC’s statement alluded to the ability of the state to create insecurity with impunity.

The cases also illustrate how entrepreneurial public authorities attempt to turn their disadvantages into opportunities: they narrate personal experiences of state-sponsored violence as evidence that they constitute a real threat to the regime, and thus a powerful representative of the people. However, the state’s harsh interventions make it all too apparent that these representatives have no chance of mounting a meaningful challenge to the state, thereby making their constituents skeptical of their efforts. Of course, the division between political strategizing and representing constituents is not clear cut, as one particularly candid analysis points out:

[Olanya] knows that if he stands in defense of the land, he’s campaigning and he’ll win the elections. He’s already succeeded in that. He sets his line [risk-reward calculus] up high...You set your individual line in terms of how far you want to stick out and what you can gain out of it (Gulu District employee, Gulu District, 4 December 2015).

Reflecting on Apaa, the journalist clearly expressed that the reporting on the case has been shaped by political interests on both sides. In Pader, numerous respondents expressed their skepticism of the LCV. This is further illustrated in his relatively weak performance in the 2016 race for MP of Aruu County, where he received a mere 34% of the vote compared with opposition MP Odonga Otto's 61% win (*New Vision* 2016). In both cases, politicians who claimed to represent their constituents were accused of acting out of political expediency.

In both cases, entrepreneurial public authorities attempted to navigate this fragmented and potentially violent environment in part by attempting to define which jurisdiction should apply to the conflict at hand, as described in chapter 5. Negotiations over jurisdiction with state authorities illustrate a lingering belief amongst entrepreneurial public authorities that the law actually might apply, thereby showing the fluidity between exception and normalcy. As a result, alternative and entrepreneurial public authorities cannot be certain that the system is rigged. Rather, they continue to participate in and legitimate the system because of the sufficiently plausible possibility that it is not. This was particularly clear in the Apaa case, where central state actors asserted their right to intervene as early as 1996. The regime tried to solidify its claim to the land, both by selling the land to an investor and by claiming that the decision had been legally approved by Parliament. The local council attempted to reinforce the community's jurisdiction over the land when residents returned from the camps; the government responded by forcefully evicting returnees and destroying their property. This pattern continued, as political powerbrokers, like MP Olanya, attempted to frame land ownership as a space of traditional and communal rights, outside of the state's jurisdiction. Olanya repeatedly rallied community members to return to the land and disrupt investors. The regime repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to use violence to enforce its ability to redefine its jurisdiction, using material force and a framing of ethnic conflict to justify

intervention. Pader represented a simpler illustration of how the DPC and the RDC used violence to forcefully define a case of death as a private issue and not a public one, thereby divesting themselves and their offices of responsibility. The LCV made a feeble attempt to redefine the issue as public, but abandoned the effort when he failed in the face of violence. Thus, entrepreneurial public authorities vary in their skill as well as individual risk calculations.

The cases, though quite different in terms of scope and publicity, illustrate a similar point. They show how the constant possibility that the security sector will deploy violence—whether lawful and unaccountable or exceptional—shapes the possibility of constituency formation. As I have argued, the evident futility of challenging the state makes citizens skeptical of potential representatives, rendering constituencies fragile. This occurs in a fragmented institutional environment that pits public authorities against each other and effectively limits the development of broad-based and loyal constituencies. In this environment, authorities claim and deny their authority, thereby further weakening trust in the political sphere.

Conclusion: High costs and low returns for organizing the opposition

Operating under a governance strategy of institutionalized arbitrariness limits the potential for entrepreneurial public authorities to build committed constituencies that can represent citizens' interests at a district- or national-level. Moreover, to gain access to state resources, it is essential to work within the interests of the NRM state. Thus, entrepreneurial public authorities are conflicted between representing their constituencies and being successful in the NRM system. The regime faces the constant threat that leaders will consolidate power independently from the regime, such that they can effectively challenge the central state.

In combination with strategies of incorporation, the NRM uses violence—both against constituents and their potential representatives—to demonstrate that organization outside the NRM has little material import. Citizens realize that their representatives cannot prevent or in some cases even condemn the state’s violent interventions. In combination with the fragmented institutional environment, the ever-looming possibility for exceptional violence causes citizens to become skeptical of the ambitions and abilities of their representatives, as voiced by citizens reflecting on both cases. While this does not always destroy constituencies, it renders them fragile. Moreover, the potential for violence does in fact change leaders’ risk-reward calculus, oftentimes limiting their willingness to challenge the state.

Importantly, the possibility of exceptional violence is balanced by the possibility of lawful violence. Indeed, Olanya’s willingness to negotiate over the correct jurisdiction within which to decide the Apaa land conflict likely reflects one of two possibilities. Either Olanya believes there is a possibility—however slim—that the state would respect the logic of a traditional jurisdiction, or he believes that performing this possibility is convincing to his constituents and helps overcome their skepticism of him as an entrepreneurial public authority. In either case, the act produces uncertainty in the minds of ordinary citizens, who see the state using violence that cannot easily be categorized as lawful or exceptional.

Entrepreneurial public authorities must grapple with this fluidity on a daily basis. Thus, although the same factors contribute to the ruling regime’s ability to govern political authorities, they function differently. Overall, this reveals a system where unpredictability and high threat of violent intervention shape prospects for organizing coalitions, as well as support for an individual political authority. Thus, the NRM’s longevity may have more to do with preventing others from

gaining a stable foothold from which to launch opposition than with providing positive governance.

Chapter 10

Crime Preventers and the NRM Regime¹³⁸

In the months before Uganda's February 2016 elections, tensions were high. During the week before the election the police detained the main opposition candidate five times (Marima 2016). President Museveni's NRM party ran election ads featuring skulls from their 1986 battle against the Obote regime to remind the "country that [a] poor choice in the coming election can take the country back to war" (Wandera and Kolyangha 2016). The NRM secretary general reportedly threatened that protesters would be shot (Wesonga 2016).

Against this backdrop, the government undertook a massive expansion of its "Crime Preventer" program, nominally a community policing initiative intended to curb crime in local communities and supplement security during the election. Both the NRM and opposition mobilized Crime Preventers in pugnacious political rhetoric, pigeonholing them as tools of the ruling regime and "militias" serving political ends. Rumors suggested that five Crime Preventers would stand guard at each polling station to arrest anyone who caused "chaos". At the same time, Crime Preventers were portrayed as "crime promoters" who used their positions to extract resources for personal gain. By December 2015, the government reported over one million recruits—this number was surely significantly inflated, and no accurate calculations were circulated. The program raised red flags for international observers and domestic civil society, many of whom believe that the regime has increasingly relied on intimidation and violence to maintain its rule. Among other indicators, they cite increased expenditure on the military (Carbone 2008, 40–47), militarization of the police (Kagoro 2015), arrest and detention of opposition candidates on

¹³⁸ A substantial portion of this chapter draws on an earlier publication on Crime Preventers (Tapscott 2016b).

trumped up charges of terrorism, sedition, and treason; intimidation of the judiciary by state security agents (the “Black Mambas”); and suppression of journalistic freedom (Carbone 2008, 83–87).

But despite the alarming rhetoric, the elections were overall peaceful. In Gulu, Election Day itself was eerily calm. Although it was the middle of dry season, voters awoke to an overcast and stormy sky. At polling stations across Gulu Town, voters huddled under trees or the overhang of nearby buildings, seeking shelter from the rain and waiting up to four hours after the scheduled time for voting to start. At the polling stations I visited, plain-clothed Crime Preventers milled about with voters,¹³⁹ along with an unarmed Special Election Constable, trained on election procedure and contracted to preside over elections. Some optimistic members of opposition parties suggested the change in weather was an omen for a change in leadership. They were wrong. Although contested, the results returned Museveni to his thirtieth year and fifth term in office with 60% of the vote (Kron 2016). Crime Preventers remained unarmed; they did not systemically intimidate voters or manipulate votes.

This chapter uses the Crime Preventer program as an illustration of how the ruling regime governed a young male population through a sensitive period—the presidential elections—when they could have threatened the regime’s power whether through violence or voting. It shows that the ruling regime solidified its power base by absorbing tens of thousands of young, unemployed men—traditionally the bedrock of Uganda’s political opposition—into the state’s security apparatus. The chapter links local level experiences of institutionalized arbitrariness to the broader political economy. It shows the delicate balance that the Ugandan state maintained in drawing

¹³⁹ A report by Citizens Election Observer Network Uganda stated that Crime Preventers were present in 13% of polling stations (Tapscott 2016a, 2016b), although given the absence of identifiable markers, it may have been more or less.

primarily male youth into the state's security sector while limiting the claims they could make on the ruling regime. This defanged youth as potential political opposition, limiting costs associated with developing youth as a direct constituency as well as principal-agent problems associated with developing youth as a political militia. Crime Preventers thus reflects an ongoing pattern of militarization in an environment of unpredictability that functions to govern Uganda's young male population.

The uncertainty and fluidity surrounding the Crime Preventer program is akin to the “grey zone” described by Anne Mette Kjær in land law in Uganda—where the regime keeps implementation of legal reforms flexible enough to be open to interpretation (Kjær 2017). Similarly, Thomas Goodfellow describes how the informal transportation sector remains unregulated in Kampala, largely for the ruling regime to garner political support from unregistered motorcycle taxis (Goodfellow 2015). Alisha Holland similarly describes “forbearance” in Latin America as “the intentional and revocable nonenforcement of law” (Holland 2016, 232), and how this can be used to change distributional outcomes in particular for political ends. Her work shows the need to examine enforcement and non-enforcement as political and non-trivial choices. While the case of Crime Preventers differs in that there was no clear law governing them to begin with, the conclusions are similar: intentional vagueness allows those with power to make space for political manipulation.

This chapter proceeds as follows: first, it presents the argument in relation to the literatures discussed throughout this dissertation. Second, it discusses the origins of the Crime Preventer program, highlighting how the program was produced with multiple contradictions—simultaneously state and non-state, organized and fragmented. Third, I further develop the discussion of securitized livelihoods in northern Uganda that I introduced in chapters 3 and 4, and

show how livelihoods become politically salient, including popular narratives about how the government has strategically limited employment options such that working in security sector is seen as the most viable option, particularly for northerners and those who have a low level of education, as well as examples of how the government uses public resources to finance the security sector, including the Crime Preventer program. Fourth, I explore the various benefits, material and non-material, that motivated Crime Preventers to participate in activities about which many expressed significant reservations. Fifth, I examine three cases that highlight how this allows the state to use Crime Preventers while simultaneously limiting their ability to make claims on the state. Sixth, I explore specific ways in which the state controlled Crime Preventers, including use of punishments, indoctrination and unpredictability, and thus, how the sum of these parts produced a unified voter block in support of the NRM government, helping Museveni retain power through the 2016 elections. Finally, I conclude with an exploration of how individuals and communities contribute to the dynamics described, thereby reinforcing the effectiveness of this governance strategy.

Crime Preventers: An example of the production and functioning of institutionalized arbitrariness

This chapter provides additional evidence for arguments made throughout the manuscript. As such, it intervenes in literature on the four areas that constitute the elements of institutionalized arbitrariness: the institutionalization of violence in governing institutions resulting in fluidity between lawful and exceptional violence, the state's unpredictable assertions and denials of its

own authority resulting in a fluid public/private division, a common of potential state presence, and institutional fragmentation. The chapter shows how Crime Preventers both contributed to these dynamics at a politically sensitive time, and also how these dynamics contributed to the state's ability to govern them. Moreover the chapter questions prevailing explanations for the emergence of auxiliary groups and militias that focus on the organization of violence to seize control of political institutions (Raleigh 2016). Instead, an examination of the Crime Preventer's structure and implementation illustrates that their emergence in advance of Uganda's 2016 national elections was as much a result of Uganda's militarized neopatrimonial system as a response to political contestation.

The findings suggest that the Ugandan state intentionally created Crime Preventers as a diffuse and unthreatening militarized organization to strengthen control of the population through economic or social avenues. In addition, militarization was used to teach discipline and obedience, which was leveraged as support for the ruling regime. Thus, military training for civilians benefited the state even in the absence of establishing full-fledged militias. Considering the details of the Crime Preventer program, I argue that Uganda's Crime Preventers were never intended primarily to intimidate voters through violence. Rather, from the outset, the program fed into the system of institutionalized arbitrariness. The Crime Preventers made the state's capacity for sovereign violence proximate to citizens through material and symbolic acts, such as threatening to arm Crime Preventers, using them to bolster crowd sizes, and showing them in large numbers marching to Swahili commands.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Crime Preventers instilled hope in youth (who might otherwise support the opposition) that they could be incorporated into the state's neopatrimonial system of resource distribution and thus make claims on the state. The Crime Preventers further

¹⁴⁰ Swahili is the language of the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF), and rarely spoken in northern Uganda.

contributed to the notion that the regime could be present at any moment, by working surreptitiously as the “eyes and ears” of the NRM party and the police within their local communities. Finally, the program contributed to further fragment the security sector.

These same factors also helped control and manipulate Crime Preventers. First, Crime Preventers were governed by their own fear of the state’s capacity for violence, typically in the form of fear of retribution in the form of arrest, detention, or violence prevented Crime Preventers from organizing independently from the regime. At the same time, the Crime Preventer program relied on the perception that the state had access to overwhelming force and resources; thereby motivating young men to participate in the program with the hope of future reward. In the style of military training, the Crime Preventer program established roles and hierarchies (such as rank and file, military discipline, patriotism, and so on), and punished deviations (with corporal punishment, shaming, fines, arrest and detention). Second the regime denied its authority over Crime Preventers when it came to delivering on the many promises made to Crime Preventers. Crime Preventers faced the constant possibility of re-categorization (from civilian to state agent and back again), as well as ongoing competition among numerous state security institutions, which produces uncertainty about which rules will apply when and how. This tilted the political playing field to further favour those already in power. Third, Crime Preventers feared the same surveillance network they helped create. And finally, institutional fragmentation in the security sector made it difficult for Crime Preventers to determine which institution should be responsible for them, and who they could or should make claims to.

Uganda’s Crime Preventer program represents a broader balancing act on the part of the regime, in which it distributes just-enough resources to just-enough citizens to produce a just-enough convincing image of opportunity—to produce and maintain hope. In turn, hope fosters a

willingness to accept the system and wait for change. This balancing act is made possible by unpredictably framing Crime Preventers as state security forces who are part of a well-organized community policing institution, and at other times, as civilians who are simply volunteering their time. Thus, participation in Crime Preventers demonstrates a willingness to support the regime, while the state is simultaneously protected from any obligation to set clear expectations, let alone make good on promises. Similarly, the structure of Crime Preventers both facilitated the ruling party's ability to woo them efficiently through rhetoric, training, and material rewards, while concurrently retaining individual agency in key positions such that the delivery of these rewards as well as potential punishments remained unpredictable. Crime Preventers compete for the few real or imagined opportunities, thereby limiting the extent to which they attempt to coordinate with each other to further shared interests. Together, these inconsistencies undermined the ability of Crime Preventers to make claims on the state.

Context for the Crime Preventer program

Crime Preventers have long been a part of the government's community policing strategy. Bruce Baker (2005) writes about crime prevention panels that started as early as 1993,¹⁴¹ which reportedly trained tens of thousands of participants in:

[T]he nature of community policing and crime prevention; the differences between criminal and civil cases; the importance of preserving evidence at the scene of a crime; the institution of criminal proceedings; the LC judicial structure and the cases that they should and should not handle; summons and warrants; road safety; community service; bomb threats; sexual offences; human rights; constitutional

¹⁴¹ A Ugandan journalist dates the first pass out of Crime Preventers to 1994 (Bagala 2015a).

rights; domestic violence; laws as they relate to children; marriage and divorce; and mob justice (Baker 2005, 30).

Community policing was not implemented in the north until after the tentative peace agreement was reached in 2006 (Chairman of Community Policing Forum, Gulu District, 6 October 2014). At the beginning of my field research in 2014, many civilians were not particularly aware of the presence of Crime Preventers, nor any difference between Crime Preventers and local security groups. One GISO told me in an interview in late 2014 that all community security groups had been transformed into Crime Preventers. Although this was not the case, his statement reflects the reality that many were unclear on the differences between Crime Preventers and security groups, viewing differences as purely semantic.

While the community policing program described by Baker had no apparent political role, this had changed by 2011, when Crime Preventers were recruited to help provide security for the presidential elections. In some locations, they received three months of trainings and were provided with uniforms and batons and asked to patrol. One former Crime Preventer explained:

We also helped a lot with the voting—escorting the votes. We would take the Presiding Officer with the ballot box up to the polling station. We would make sure the votes aren't stolen, by opening the box before voting started to show everyone it was empty. Then we would make sure people vote only once, by marking their finger with ink when they leave the polling station. Then we would take the ballots up to the sub-county and they would be counted from there (Former Crime Preventer, Lira District, 7 November 2014).

Some of those who helped with the elections received a one-time payment of approximately 300,000 UGX (101 USD) for their work and received additional training to become Special Police Constables (police officers on contract). Reportedly, some Crime Preventers were able to climb

the ranks and become fully incorporated into the Police Force, while others were retrenched often without notice or explanation.

In January 2014, in response to the rape of a female student at Makerere University, a small group of students called for self-defense training and a greater awareness on campus to prevent such crimes (Bagala 2015a). According to the students, the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Kale Kayihura, “picked interest” and supported their cause, offering trainings at the Police Training School at Kabalye for 700 students (Bagala 2015a).¹⁴² Kayihura, who fought in Museveni’s bush war since 1982 (Kwiringira 2016) and whom respondents describe as “too close” to the President (also see Kagoro and Biecker 2014, 6), is often credited with initiating the Crime Preventer program in its current form.

Over the next year, this group of students became the leadership of the newly-established National Crime Preventers Forum (NCPF), an institution that appeared to be closely associated with the President and the IGP. The program’s leadership was young (mostly early 20s), and many came from elite families—some had their own iPads and cars, have travelled internationally, and were university-educated. One member of the executive leadership was female, the rest were male.

¹⁴² Although the police spokesperson, Fred Enanga, stated in a press release “The public is also invited at any stage to come and witness these programs at the Police Training School to help appreciate its value to all” (Enanga 2014), I did not find this to be the case. When I visited the Training School, I was turned away since I did not have a letter from the Office of the IGP approving my research.



Image 10.2: A photo posted to Facebook of National Crime Preventer Forum leadership with the IGP Kayihura (far left) and President Museveni (wearing a yellow shirt).

Rumours suggested that the individuals holding top leadership positions in the NCPF were the son and daughter of the IGP.¹⁴³ In the months before the election, the leadership of Crime Preventers publically acknowledged their support for the President and the NRM (*AFP* 2016), explaining that Kayihura was their patron and Museveni provided for the program (NCPF Leadership, Gulu District, 4 February 2016).¹⁴⁴ Indeed, Image 1 above shows the leadership of the NCPF with the IGP and President Museveni. When I visited the Crime Preventer’s offices in Wandegaya, Kampala in December 2015, it appeared they were in the midst of moving in. New laptop computers were stacked on a table in the front room, and photographs of Museveni, inscribed with “The Father of Our Country” adorned the walls.

¹⁴³ In my interviews, this rumour was both denied and affirmed by people with first hand knowledge of the IGP’s family. While lower-level Crime Preventers unanimously believed the rumour, higher-level Crime Preventers denied it, and said it was merely a reflection of the close relationship between the IGP and this “brilliant” young leader.

¹⁴⁴ Although the respondent, a leader within the NCPF, claimed that Crime Preventers were non-partisan, he also explained, “We are mostly being facilitated by the sitting government. We cannot do work without them,” highlighting the complicated nature of the endeavour.

The NCPF developed an institutional structure resembling the police, with coordinators at the village, parish, sub-county, district, and sub-regional levels—and the number of citizens trained as Crime Preventers surged. The government announced a plan to recruit 30 Crime Preventers in each of Uganda’s 56,000 villages (Gaffey 2016a), and claimed they had recruited 1.5 million in November 2015 (Uganda Police Force 2015). Many argue that these statistics were inflated to intimidate political opposition; however, more accurate numbers are difficult to glean because Crime Preventer coordinators dutifully filled rosters with names whether those listed were active participants or not. Crime Preventers were often trained by police or former military officers, and asked to support the work of the police.

The Crime Preventer trainings formalized the affiliation of Crime Preventers and the police, and thus, bolstered Crime Preventers’ commitments to formal state law as well as the NRM regime. In turn, this weakened the Crime Preventers’ accountability to their communities. They learned that their role was to support the state and protect the peace, for example by disbanding protests. In Uganda, where state, government and party are synonymous, it was difficult for even the most thoughtful participants to disaggregate which activities might be partisan and which activities served the public interest.

Moreover, simply being incorporated into an institution affiliated with the police was sufficient to win the rhetorical support of many Crime Preventers, even though, for most, material rewards were minimal. Respondents explained that Crime Preventers would vote for their benefactor and they would bring their wives, sisters, and mothers with them. One member of the NCPF explained that this was because Crime Preventers felt the government was “the only one looking out for them” (NCPF leadership, Gulu District, 4 February 2016). Many respondents also commented that the armed forces (police and military) always vote for their “boss,” Museveni,

and one even suggested that the military has been responsible for voting fraud in the past.¹⁴⁵ One potential explanation for loyalty to Museveni within the security sector is the emphasis on military values including discipline, obedience, and respect for state authorities. One Regional Police Commissioner explained:

We teach [Crime Preventers] discipline—for example, when I say, ‘Stand easy,’ you don’t ask ‘Why?’; when I say ‘Turn right’ you don’t ask, ‘Why?’ And we teach them rudimentary military skills, especially parade. You know us security people like parade. And how to greet and pay compliments to authorities. Basically, respect for the forces (Regional Police Commissioner, Kampala, 6 November 2015).

This kind of training developed acceptance of a hierarchy of command, teaching recruits to do as they are told and to ask questions later, if at all. It also cemented the relationship between the state and recruits, as one Crime Preventer explained:

With the force, once you join, they tell you that the first priority is to keep secrets and be disciplined. With the force, it is command. That is the most important thing. When the government gives you that knowledge, they will never leave you. You cannot leave the army, because they have given you all the government secrets (NCPF, Gulu District, 2 February 2016).

On the other hand, because Crime Preventers worked on a voluntary basis, commanders could not be too tough on them, lest they quit. Moreover, although trainings were generally modelled off other police and military trainings, there were no formal instructions for what should be taught or how, leaving each individual trainer to determine his own curriculum. Indeed, trainings at village

¹⁴⁵ For example, one respondent explained to me: “You go the basin and tick. At the station in the presence of people, no—they don’t benefit one party or another. Upstairs where these boxes are taken now, you don’t know what happens. Normally things happen. In the barracks here, all these soldiers, they lie on one side, their boss of course” (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 25 November 2015). Another rumour accused soldiers of transporting feces from the barracks to the planned location for an opposition candidate’s political rally to disorganize his campaign.

and sub-county levels emphasized marching, but also included other military drills, along with military culture, such as songs, Swahili commands, and saluting, as well as *ad hoc* lessons in patriotism, law and enforcement and so on. The structure of the NCPF is hierarchical and it remains unclear the extent to which the NCPF coordinated with the Uganda Police Force. Crime Preventer coordinators—or “commanders” as they were sometimes called—explained that they frequently received instructions directly from headquarters, which may not have been shared with local police.

The Crime Preventer program provides a rare illustration of how the NRM regime creates and deploys institutionalized arbitrariness as a mode of governance. The program provides particular insights for how the regime has managed to retain power through electoral cycles. In the following sections, I aim to set out a series of explanations for how the NRM regime walks the fine line between mobilizing youth for political ends and limiting their ability to make meaningful claims on the state. To mobilize Crime Preventers in both leadership positions and broader membership, the NRM regime used promises of access to resources, and threats of humiliation, arrest, fines, and expulsion from the program. The regime further used a series of strategies to maintain the power imbalance between Crime Preventers and state authorities, including injecting unpredictability into a system based on rewards and punishments, along with training in discipline and ideology, and finally, fostering a pervasive sense of surveillance. Moreover, the ruling regime attempted to retain control over Crime Preventers by keeping their young leadership close and placating their ambitions.

Securitized Livelihoods: Security work as the only work

As discussed in chapter 4, underemployment and low salaries are defining characteristics of the Ugandan workforce. The government has “promoted a culture of ‘self-employment’ through microfinance” in place of more institutional policies (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). These programs, popularly viewed as vehicles for neopatrimonial and party-based payoffs, have been wildly unsuccessful at recouping loans as well as at reducing unemployment (Ahaibwe and Mbowa 2014). Salaries in the informal sector in Gulu Town are abysmal. A survey I conducted with 41 members of youth security groups found that they make on average 45,400 UGX (15.36 USD) per week, and work at a variety of odd jobs, many of them seasonal, including brick laying, construction work, and subsistence farming. The subset of youth security group members who were also Crime Preventers made on average slightly less, at 43,400 UGX (14.69 USD) per week. The lowest paid police officer makes approximately twice this, at about 350,000 UGX per month (118.43 USD).

In this environment, employment in state security services is one of the more viable options, particularly for those with a low level of education. As elaborated in chapters 3 and 5, Acholis have a long and complicated relationship with the military, and commonly narrate themselves as innately disposed to security work. The military and reserve forces are estimated around 50,000 each (Pike 2015). The Uganda Police Force is one of the faster growing sectors in the country, having tripled in size since 2005, to its current size of approximately 40,000 officers (Kagoro and Biecker 2014). Thus, while a relatively low percentage of Ugandans work in the security sector, it is one of the few viable employment opportunities in a country that reportedly has one of the highest unemployment rates in Africa (Mwesigwa 2014) and the second youngest population in the world (Brinkhoff 2015).

Thus, given the rarity of paid work and the nature of Acholi meta narratives, it is not surprising that in Gulu District, there is a strong sense among youth that one of the few viable job options is to join the police or the military. One Crime Preventer reflected this notion when I asked him if joining the army might have downsides: “If you fear to join the army it will be hard to get a job. You should be with a strong heart and go join the army” (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 18 November 2015). This narrative dominates in Gulu District, where elites argue that the same logic remains in place today. For example, a locally elected politician in Gulu explained:

Every president of Uganda is not sure of himself. He needs a shield. The shield of the government is these youths. Museveni says, ‘We want to recruit 5000 soldiers.’ He can run and get forces from these youth who are idle, yet they have papers [educational qualifications]...When you tell them there will be a recruitment [to the forces], these are the ones who will run. There [are] no other job[s] for youth (Locally elected politician, Gulu District, 5 February 2016).

Many of the Crime Preventers I spoke with explained that their primary reason for joining the program was to find employment. They unanimously stated that if they were offered a paid alternative, they would accept it and leave Crime Preventers.

Limiting access to work also helps the government control the population. Doom and Vlassenroot (1999) note an “asymmetric relationship between economic underdevelopment and dominance in the military sector” which they call “the key to the political kingdom” (Doom and Vlassenroot 1999, 8). A director of a prominent human rights organization explained that poverty favours the monetization of loyalty:

Control of resources is just in the hands of the government. Once you have a very poor population, if you give them 1,000 shillings, they thank you for months. [Now, we] can’t even tell them what their rights are unless [we give them] money (Director of human rights organization, Gulu District, 10 February 2016).

This is the most obvious explanation for why youth join the Crime Preventer program. They are hoping to be incorporated into the security sector, whether through the police or the military. This is a reasonable goal for a few reasons. First, as discussed, there is precedent: in the 2011 election cycle, the government also recruited Crime Preventers (although on a much smaller scale), and trained them to be Special Election Constables. From there, a subset were incorporated into the Uganda Police Force, and allowed to climb the ranks. Second, authorities regularly hinted that incorporation was possible, or even inevitable. One officer in Kampala’s Central Police Station explained to me, although being a Crime Preventer does not get you a job,

...those with qualifications have the upper hand to join the police or military. Your CV is improved if you volunteer...we already know you. Even in the UN that is what they do—take volunteers and that helps them get jobs (Police Officer, Kampala, 5 November 2015).

Other local leaders asserted that all Crime Preventers would be incorporated into the police, military, or other auxiliary forces.

Supporting the Troops: Uganda’s militarized neopatrimonial structure

There is a huge unemployed population here [in Uganda]. Crime Preventers was to keep the youth busy so they don’t cause problems during the election. They were being reorganized into savings and loan groups as a strategy to deal with young people, and get them closer to [the President] (NRM political operative, Gulu District, 18 February 2016).

Channelling state resources to and through the military has been an explicit strategy of the government under the NRM since Museveni took power. As detailed in the chapter 3, the Ugandan

government has used existing and new institutions, such as the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) and the National Enterprises Corporation (NEC) to channel resources from the regime to the security sector as a part of the neopatrimonial government structure. This same logic of repurposing public resources to reward service is used to bolster the Crime Preventer program. A member of the NCPF explained to me that the program has recently finalized Memorandums of Understanding with Operation Wealth Creation, NAADS, and the Youth Livelihood Program to “give priority to Crime Preventers.” One member of NCPF explained to me:

When there is any government project targeting a section of people, we bring them to the Crime Preventers to take them up [so they can improve their lives]. Like NAADS is the best known. We bring them in to give information to these people. The whole idea is to link them up and to help them. There is also microfinance. And health—these people must be healthy. At the end of the training they all go for HIV screening—it is not mandatory, but they have the option. We help them access services (NCPF, Kampala, 6 November 2015).

Another Crime Preventer also working at the NCPF in Kampala explained:

We are developing partners at the ministries, the prime minister’s office, KCCA [Kampala Central City Authority]... We are all in touch, and all agree to help provide for Crime Preventers. We are all in partnership. They give us projects, and we run them and then benefit. [*Can you give me an example?*] The Ministry of Health had an immunization campaign. The Crime Preventers will monitor the program. The Ministry will facilitate transport, airtime and with any extra funds they can give a simple allowance (NCPF, Kampala, 5 November 2015).

Recently, another leader within the NCPF announced on Facebook that he acquired a factory that will employ “thousands” of Crime Preventers in the production of “cakes, b[e]ans, rice, maize flo[u]r, bread, animal feeds, poultry...to feed the entire country” (Kamugisha 2016). Thus, one strategy for attracting youths to Crime Preventers is giving them priority access to state resources

and public programming.

Another economic perk for Crime Preventers is access to Savings and Credit Co-Operatives (SACCO).¹⁴⁶ Both the Police Force and the military have SACCOs: the Police Force's SACCO, called Exodus, has a membership of 21,000 and is valued at 7 billion UGX (2.4 million USD) (Nakabugo 2014), while the military's SACCO, *Wazalendo*¹⁴⁷, has a membership of 72,800 and was valued at 67.4 billion UGX (22.8 million USD) (Wazalendo SACCO 2014). In the months before the 2016 election, the Crime Preventers began *Mwangaza*¹⁴⁸ SACCO, which reported 5,672 members in October 2015, with thousands more reportedly joining in November 2015 through February 2016. Participants contribute 17,000 UGX (5.75 USD) to join, and some Crime Preventers believed they would be able to take out loans with an interest rate as low as 2% (Crime Preventers, Gulu District, 11 February 2016).¹⁴⁹

There is limited information on how Mwangaza SACCO will function, and misinformation bred expectations that all participants would get access to free loans. One Crime Preventer, coordinating at the sub-county, explained:

We have...Mwangaza SACCO, where Crime Preventers can get loans and start business... We don't know what SACCO or mwangaza really means. We have been hearing those questions from there. The lecturers tell us that when you have saved money they will give you some small money based on what you have saved (NCPF, Kampala, 18 November 2015).

¹⁴⁶ Titeca describes how in the 2011 Ugandan elections, the NRM regime used SACCOs as a political strategy to distribute resources and gain support (Titeca 2014).

¹⁴⁷ *Wazalendo* is the Swahili word for "patriots".

¹⁴⁸ *Mwangaza* is a Swahili word meaning "solution" or "ray of light".

¹⁴⁹ This may be a flat interest rate per month. For example, Exodus offered a flat monthly interest rate of 1% (12% per annum) (Mabonga, n.d.).

Moreover, in the 2011 election, NRM politicians gave large donations to SACCOs across the country, perhaps further raising hopes of Crime Preventers that their SACCO would give them access to large loans (Titeca 2014).

Leaders of the Crime Preventers further justified the Crime Preventer program with rhetoric of income generation and empowerment, describing the program as a way to instill economic skills in participants through in-person trainings, capacity building, and so on. One member of the NCPF leadership explained that he thinks of youth as “enslaved” because they are poor and disempowered:

Youth are slaves, being over utilized because [they] cannot make [their] own income and be independent. So we bring them financial activities. I want to put Crime Preventers to the next level. We want to bring the whole country in [to the Crime Preventer program and income generation]. Thirty-five million should be Crime Preventers. We mobilize people into a visible cause (NCPF, Gulu District, 10 February 2016).

Of course, from the perspective of Crime Preventers, economic empowerment is part of a quid pro quo. One Crime Preventer explained a sentiment that was widely expressed:

All I want is the loan they promise to give us, that’s why I keep hanging on. If I can invest into a good business, I start pulling out [of Crime Preventers] after returning all the loan. I have been doing graphic designs. I want to open a music studio with my younger brother’s son...Then a gym of course....There are very many things I can do for a living, it’s just [lack of] capital [that limits me] (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 4 February 2016).

Juxtaposing the views of the NCPF leadership with a Crime Preventer emphasizes that the Crime Preventer program leveraged the very economic marginalization its leaders condemned. The perception that the only jobs available are in the security sector combined with funnelling state

funding to the Crime Preventer program, as has been done in other election cycles and for other organizations, incentivized youth to join Crime Preventers.

For those in the NCPF, similar dynamics are play. Some members of the NCPF explained that they wanted to continue working with Crime Preventers going forward, while others readily shared their political ambitions, reasoning that leadership within the NCPF provided exposure to the masses and opportunities to network with elites. While older politicians are frustrated with Museveni's refusal to leave power, leadership of the NCPF is young enough that they are almost guaranteed to see transition within their lifetimes—unlike their predecessors, they have the flexibility to bide their time and wait for the right moment to enter politics.

Material and non-material incentives

By organizing Crime Preventers into a system, training them in discipline, and establishing their accountability to the police and the state rather than their communities, the NRM regime established an identifiable voter block to which they could give small rewards in exchange for significant returns. Crime Preventers obtained both material and immaterial benefits for their participation. Some saw these benefits as blatant corruption and an attempt to buy votes, while others narrated them as payment for work well done, or an investment in the future productivity of Crime Preventers.

One such reward included motorcycles, purchased for Crime Preventer coordinators at the district and sub-county levels, while Crime Preventer coordinators at the village level were promised manual bicycles. Reportedly, the police gave US\$ 2 million to the NCPF from the Community Affairs budget to procure the motorcycles. At a market rate of approximately US\$

1,000, this would mean around 2,000 motorcycles were purchased. Unsurprisingly, many Crime Preventers used the motorcycles for motorcycle taxi business, providing an alternative source of revenue even while Crime Preventers remained formally unpaid (Kolyangha 2016). A Kampala-based police officer said that this was okay, as long as the motorcycles were not damaged to the extent that they could not be used for official business. In Gulu Town, Crime Preventers received neither log-books for the bikes, which determine ownership, nor helmets, which are legally required for motorcycle riders. These are significant in a context where even the police are often without motorized means of transport (Bagala 2015b).

Another benefit was the short-term employment that many Crime Preventers gained through working as SPCs, polling agents, and polling assistants. According to some respondents, sub-county coordinators were asked to recruit five Crime Preventers for each polling station in their area. The Crime Preventers were told they would be paid for their work. They were then required to fill out a “bio data” form for the NCPF, which requested a photograph, identifying information including name, national ID number, contact, and next of kin, and finally, a section titled “political background.” Most respondents, whether Crime Preventers or not, agreed that this phrasing “political background” referred to political party affiliation. Many who filled the form believed that the “correct” answer was the NRM. Except for one such form I saw filled, all respondents reported their political background as “National Resistance Movement”. One Crime Preventer who was distributing the forms described this process as performative:

They must [fill the form correctly] if they want the job...Their hearts stay with them. I'm not forcing them to change their mind to vote someone. They are supposed to vote anyone they choose. [If they want to put] “FDC” I say, ‘that one will not be accepted, that one is a failure of interview. If you are rich, stay there [in FDC]. We need ones who are poor to fill this form, so they fill this form correctly.’ You get something afterward (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 9 February 2016).

Other Crime Preventers denied the existence of this form, or suggested it was not asking for party affiliation. When I posed the question to two Crime Preventer coordinators who I interviewed together, they looked at each other uncomfortably, laughed, and then explained that this prompt referred to previous political positions one had held. Others, including politicians, journalists, and one political operative for the NRM simply did not believe that such a form could exist, saying that the government would never be so careless as to document party favouritism. A member of the president's campaign team explained:

I would not be surprised if declaring loyalty is part of the system; I would be surprised to see it on paper. [To do that would] drive a deep wedge, dividing people...When Mbabazi said, 'I have my people in the system,' those were scaring words. It made the President wonder, 'which people?' (NRM political operative, Gulu District, 18 February 2016).

In any case, the Crime Preventers I interviewed who had applied to work at polling stations in Gulu Municipality were not offered the position. Instead, it appears that hiring for polling agents and polling assistants was done through the Electoral Commission, as the rules dictate. Although it is unclear why Crime Preventers were encouraged to fill out the "bio data" form, it seems likely that this was another attempt to channel state resources, this time from the Electoral Commission, to Crime Preventers.

Small material rewards were allocated to Crime Preventers. Many received T-shirts either for Crime Preventers or for the NRM party. Crime Preventers also receive small payments, at times from the Crime Preventer system for completing duties, as in the task to check the voter registration list, at other times from complainants who give 2,000 to 3,000 UGX (0.68 to 1 USD) to show appreciation. Perhaps a greater inducement than small material incentives, were immaterial

incentives, which included gaining political power and self-worth. In a context where arrest is common and standards for evidence are low to non-existent, having connections with the police is valuable. During one of my interviews, a respondent's phone rang, and he explained it was a friend whose brother had been arrested. He went on to lament that although his friends no longer wanted to socialize with him because of his work as a Crime Preventer, they were always calling him when they had problems with the police. Indeed, police encouraged Crime Preventers to see themselves as distinct from the community and also to use their position as ordinary citizens to be more effective spies.

Other youth opted to participate in Crime Preventers because it bolstered their sense of self-worth, allowing them to engage in what they viewed as productive activities, to build social networks, and to gain recognition in the community. Many Crime Preventers expressed enthusiasm for the daily activity that the Crime Preventer training offered, reporting that the training helped keep them active, busy, and healthy. Some elaborated that unlike football, a popular pastime with Ugandan youth, marching is a useful skill. Others expressed that almost any activity was preferable to being idle—a quality that is both highly stigmatized by the community and can be grounds for arrest, as discussed in chapter 4. In observing trainings, it was apparent that participants relished the camaraderie, teasing each other when misinterpretation of Swahili commands led to near collisions and glowing with pride when drills were completed successfully. One group held weekly social events, watching music videos of local artists, drinking, and chatting. Others explained to me that one of the major benefits of being in Crime Preventers was traveling around the country and meeting youth from all different regions. Participants seemed to view this both as a professional networking tool, but also as an enjoyable activity. To some extent, the unreliable and poor treatment that Crime Preventers experienced—for example, being bussed to Kampala for

rallies without reliable provision of food or return transport—seemed to bolster their commitment to each other and develop solidarity.¹⁵⁰

Maximizing loyalty and limiting accountability: How the government enforces a one-sided bargain

The following three cases illustrate how Crime Preventers existed in a space between the state and the community, which was deliberately constructed to foster uncertainty. This allowed state actors to leverage divergent expectations, as well as the vulnerable position of youth to use Crime Preventers for overtly political ends while avoiding responsibility for the actions and welfare of Crime Preventers. These included using Crime Preventers to bolster crowds at rallies, to police the elections, and to create rumors about the manipulation of the voter registration list.

Case Study 1: Demonstration at Karuma Bridge

The following case study provides an example of the ruling regime leveraged a poorly defined mandate for Crime Preventers in an environment of institutionalized arbitrariness to allow authorities to manipulate Crime Preventers for political ends while at the same time making it difficult to attribute blame or hold authorities accountable for promises made or poor behaviour of Crime Preventers. The case describes a protest where Crime Preventers were used to undermine one of Museveni's competitors for president. However, because of vagueness surrounding the

¹⁵⁰ Hazing and other unpleasant experiences have been shown to develop solidarity and assimilate soldiers (see Dornbusch 1955, 318–19).

program and the regime's access to overwhelming violence, authorities were able to deny their responsibility for Crime Preventers' activities, while simultaneously contributing to the notion of Crime Preventers as a fluid and undefined institution.

On 10 July 2015, opposition MP Odongo Otto organized a rally to protest the presidential nomination of John Patrick Amama Mbabazi. Otto mobilized 400 youth to block Mbabazi from entering the northern region, uniting around accusations that Mbabazi had stolen 1.4 billion UGX from the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) during his tenure as Prime Minister. The funds had been designated to reconstruct the north after the LRA conflict (Ocungi and Okaba 2015). Local and national news media covered the demonstration; however, there was no confrontation as Mbabazi delayed his consultations seemingly for unrelated reasons (Etukuri and Semakula 2015).

The following day, Crime Preventers from Gulu raised a complaint: they had been "tricked" into joining the rally. They said that police officers had notified them that there would be a three-month training at the Police Training School in Masindi. Instead, the Crime Preventers were driven 65 kilometres from Gulu, told to disembark and don T-shirts with a red "x" through Mbabazi's initials (JPAM) and the slogan "Why buy a Benz of 600 million with PRDP money?"



Image 10.3: Front and back of T-shirt distributed to crime preventers and others who attended the rally. Photo courtesy of Holly Porter (2015).

They were then instructed to march with the other protesters. The demonstration was well-documented by local and national media, although there was no confrontation as Mbabazi delayed his consultations, seemingly for a different reason altogether (Etukuri and Semakula 2015). Some of the Crime Preventers, disgruntled at having been misinformed on the purpose of their travel, coerced to march in the heat without water or food, abandoned with no means of transport to return to Gulu Town, and finally, angry about the lack of payment, brought complaints to the District and Regional Police Commanders, who responded that they were similarly misinformed.

Because Crime Preventers had a loose and undefined mandate, politicians were able to mobilize them for overtly political activities and then claim the Crime Preventers were acting of their own volition. In turn, the Crime Preventers are willing to obey orders even when there is significant evidence to suggest that they are being manipulated. For example, the Crime Preventers I interviewed mentioned that they were first put on a lorry, which was in such bad shape they doubted it would make the trip to Kabalye. Then, when they were given the T-shirts, they dutifully donned them, without asking questions, despite not knowing what “JPAM” meant. Similarly, they continued to follow orders to descend from the bus, join the rally, and march to Karuma Bridge. They only challenged these orders in retrospect, when it became clear that they had gotten a bad deal—no remuneration would be offered and the police rejected the Crime Preventers’ rights to make claims.

A variety of evidence suggests that the police who informed the Crime Preventers about the sham training would have known that they would really be taken to demonstrate. One retired police officer reflected that someone within the police must have given permission:

Because you can’t come from nowhere and pick someone who I’m looking after [as a member of the police force], and take [him] away (Retired Police Officer, Gulu District, 16 October 2015).

Others speculate that the police offered up Crime Preventers to please NRM party leadership, whether directly commanded or not, because “That is how you get promoted—do something to please the President” (Locally elected politician, Gulu District, 21 September 15). One Crime Preventer who facilitates trainings explained that he suspected foul play and refused to go:

I refused to go to Karuma—the CID [Criminal Investigations Director] came to talk to me, and said to me ‘Let me take these people, and then I’ll provide transport for you to come back.’ The police knew that if I did not go the others also would not. [In this way] I was forced to go to Karuma (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 29 September 2015).

One district level politician further asserted that there was evidence that the NRM paid the organizing MP, Otto, to stir up resentment against Mbabazi in northern Uganda (District-level politician, Gulu District, 19 February 2016).

[After Mbabazi announced his candidacy] the Movement got in touch with some individuals in the opposition in northern Uganda—one is honourable Odonga Otto. Otto was given money [by the NRM]... Where did he get money to hire six buses from, trucks for carrying people? He took over 400 youth. He fed them. He gave them over 20,000 [shillings] each to return on. Where does he get over four million to spend?... The people he took were Crime Preventers. The police lied to Crime Preventers that they were taken for further training in Masindi. They [the Crime Preventers] went on radio; they were very bitter... The most disturbing part is, how do the police mobilize such people, don’t tell them the truth and allow a political leader to use them in a wrong way? (Elected official, Gulu District, 25 September 2015).

He posited that this why Otto—an opposition politician—was willing to meddle in internal NRM party politics, despite facing discipline from his own party for doing so (*The Insider* 2015). Thus, he viewed the protest as political manoeuvring by the NRM and Otto, in which Crime Preventers

were collateral damage, instrumentalized for political ends.

The Crime Preventers continued to seek redress: they threatened to march up to Gulu's Central Police Station in protest, but were told if they did, they would be tear-gassed. Instead, the disgruntled Crime Preventers went to journalists from the major newspapers, who ran a number of articles with headlines such as "We Were Tricked to Join Anti-Mbabazi Demo - Crime Preventers" (Otto 2015), and "Gulu Crime Preventers hoodwinked into joining anti-Mbabazi demos" (Ocungi 2015b), as well as Human Rights Focus, who advised they go to the Department of Labour to complain about unpaid work. Reflecting on this, another Crime Preventer said: "But they are not government employees, so they were left hanging."

The police, who had previously been unresponsive, contacted the complainants and threatened them with jail time for going to the press. When asked why Crime Preventers are not allowed to talk to the press, the Police Public Relations Officer for the sub-region explained that it was for their own protection, saying:

It's risky [to talk to the media]! If you report on your friend who has committed a crime, what will stop him from doing something bad on you? So, it's like you're an intelligence officer and you need to be protected (Police Public Relations Officer, Gulu District, 23 November 2015).

Seven months after the protest, in February 2016, one Crime Preventer opted not to participate in training to be a Special Election Constable because he feared retribution for having spoken to the press about the Karuma Bridge demonstration. Although the above-mentioned newspaper articles discuss 40 disgruntled Crime Preventers, my interviews suggest that in fact, Crime Preventers were bussed from various districts in northern Uganda, including Pader and Nwoya. Others may not have complained because they were satisfied with the amount they were paid (reportedly between 5,000 and 20,000 UGX). Or perhaps they realized the potentially high costs of making their

situation public.

Crime Preventers were used for rallies on other occasions to control crowds or to fill them out. For example, the day of the president's nomination, buses full of youth dressed in yellow whooping and yelling filled the streets in Kampala. One Crime Preventer explained:

We went to Kololo for the president's nomination. We went as supporters, and we all put yellow. The DPC said the president wants to talk to the Crime Preventers. I thought, 'The president needs to tell us something important.' They provided transport from and to. [We were told] those who went will get 500,000 shillings each. Then we were told to stand for the rally and listen to the speech. He was for nomination. They told us, 'you should be happy, you will be paid for it. Sing, dance and wave—you're 500,000 [shillings] is coming' (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 20 November 2015).

This strategy, although blatant, still produces the appearance of massive support. Because there is no transparency about who is there to get paid and who is there out of genuine support for the candidate—and indeed, sometimes there is no substantive difference—the ploy appears to be effective at making a candidate look popular. An employee in the Political Commissariat in Kampala, who had followed the activities surrounding Crime Preventers via social media, explained the significance of these events from his perspective, as well as the constraints he faces when discussing such issues:

We've been saying that Crime Preventers are not political—they don't choose them by their party. Now, if they are picked and brought to Kampala, does that mean the party in power is trying to use the opportunity? I also have the same questions you do—but I cannot answer. Whoever comes to power will be my boss. Some play politics, others do not (Police, Kampala, 5 November 2015).

This case illustrates both how the ruling regime claims and denies its authority over Crime Preventers to meet its tactical needs at the moment. While many potential rewards and punishments

motivate engagement with Crime Preventers, the case also shows how at the end of the day, the police reinforce their determinations with (threat of) meaningful force, in the form of arrest and detention. This allows the continual redefinition of the Crime Preventer program, thereby undermining Crime Preventers' abilities to make claims on the ruling regime or political aspirants like Odonga Otto.

Case Study 2: Special election constable and the elections

The following example shows how Crime Preventers existed in a grey area not fully incorporated into the NRM system nor fully excluded from it. The case illustrates the fusion between the NRM, the state's security services, and a neopatrimonial system of wealth distribution. Together, these worked as a system that dangled a possibility of incorporation in front of Crime Preventers. Access would be gained through a process of militarized training, discipline, and displays of loyalty. While Crime Preventers' training helped define them as obedient and subservient to the ruling regime, it also repeatedly exposed them to the military and economic strength behind the NRM complex. As a result, the regime was understood as providing stability in the post-conflict north through its presence, and promising chaos in its imagined absence. The case shows how Crime Preventers were both brought into and pushed outside the state's militarized and neopatrimonial system of resource distribution, and how this helped create a feeling that it would be futile to oppose the regime.

One of the few publically stated rationales for recruiting Crime Preventers, aside from combatting crime in a general sense, was to help police the 2016 presidential elections. Indeed, a few weeks before the elections, 36,000 Crime Preventers were recruited to be Special Election Constables (Kato 2016). Although the selection process was not transparent, respondents believed

that they were recommended by the sub-county coordinators and selected based on the loyalty and commitment they had showed to the Crime Preventer program over the previous months. Reportedly, in Gulu District, nearly one-fifth of recruits were dropped after initial selection without explanation—this appears to have occurred in other districts as well. According to police officials in Masaka District in the Central Region, this was because some failed interviews, were physically weak or did not have the minimum educational requirements (Ssenkabirwa and Kisekka 2016). In Gulu, one Crime Preventer speculated others did not make it through security checks, which were conducted in Kampala after the recruits submitted their fingerprints. Another guessed it was because of the government’s limited resources.

Those who were selected participated in a one-week training in Gulu Town. A significant part of the training appears to have been dedicated to further instilling discipline in new recruits. One recent recruit explained to me some of the tactics used to train recruits in discipline and authority:

Say you are sitting with a colleague after hours. An instructor comes and looks at you. ‘Get up, come. Go back. Come. I told you to come. Go back and sit. Come!’ He’s seeing how you are responding. It will be put in your notes, you’re someone who can follow command, which is needed in the force.

There’s a lot of lies in training. They call them ‘sweet nothings.’ They even brought a very big fat cow. They say, today, it’s for you guys. They took it behind the kitchen and hid the cow. Guys were happy...Guys started washing their dishes, looking for pepper... When it came to lunch time, the whistle was blown, and everyone started fighting to get into line. They dish beans and *posho* [a staple food]. So when you come and you get you are expected to say ‘thank you.’ When you don’t say ‘thank you’ [that’s indiscipline]. In the force, you are not supposed to initiate anyone to support you... There’s no riot in the force. [If there is a problem] go alone and say, ‘please, this was not good.’ So, you can also be handled alone (Newly recruited Special Election Constable, Gulu District, 13 February 2016).

In addition to instructions on their duties, Crime Preventers were provided a list of prohibited activities on Election Day and trained on the institutional organization of the Police Force, including the role of SPCs, as well as given a long list of “uniform rules”. The duties of the Special Election Constables included:

- (1) Know we are the SPCs, not election constables;
- (2) Support the police in patrol during night and day;
- (3) Manage violence and enforce the law;
- (4) Be ready to do duties of emergency in case of a bad situation arising;
- (5) We should be ready to work with the army security agency, including prisons, army and intelligence agents.
- (6) Discipline: we should not put on party shirts, or flash any [party] slogan. Anyone who does that will be charged with the Police Act.¹⁵¹ That person will be sent to prison.

The uniform rules focused on how Special Police Constables should present themselves now that they are officially part of the Force, and no longer mere Crime Preventers. In the training, Special Police Constables are told that they must not be partisan; however, the overarching theme of the training is that SPCs should become a part of the system and follow commands unquestioningly. A few days before the election, I asked one recent recruit what he would do if he saw any violations on polling day, and he explained:

I don't want to be part of the [NRM] system. As a polling constable, there are certain limits—my hands are tied. If anything happens, I have to note it down. So when you [the victim of injustice] go to your candidate to make a complaint and they call me, then I can give the information in court. Or, if I cannot go to court [because of my own security] I can give the report. With the government having a larger arm, people want to be on the safe side. I'll take note. I'm not going to court to be on the safe side (Special Police Constable, Gulu District, 19 February 2016).

¹⁵¹ The Police Act specifies that any “member of a security organisation placed under the command of the inspector general for the performance of police duties” is subject to the police disciplinary code of conduct (“The Police Act” 1994, pt. VI, Section 44).

Thus, he argued that he could help improve the system through participation, although he feared that making public statements in court about voter intimidation, fraud or other irregularities might put him at risk. He also explained that although SPCs are clearly instructed to keep partisan attitudes to themselves,

At the end of the day, all the big people will come [to the training]. What they do is say you have to vote wisely if you don't want to go back to the bush or back to the IDP camps. Of course, what they mean is to vote for Museveni. It influences a lot of guys, but not all (Special Police Constable, Gulu District, 19 February 2016).

Such partisanship has been noted by other researchers, including a recent Human Rights Watch report that noted a Crime Preventer training manual that stated "Every good thing you are seeing around is as a result of good NRM governance" (Human Rights Watch 2016).

On Election Day, SPCs were hardly distinguishable from long-serving police officers. In one case, an officer's pink furry boots tipped me off; outside the tallying station, a colleague whispered in my ear that the officers with white lapels were Crime Preventers. The degree to which they blended in, however, reflects a comment made to me by a female employee at a human rights NGO:

When the [Special Police Constables] came back from six months of training they were uniformed and you could not tell who was who... When circumstances call for it, they just change the uniforms around... Unless someone tells me who is behind the uniform, we can't know (Human rights NGO, Gulu District, 29 September 2015).

The Crime Preventers who worked as SPCs were told they would be paid 11,000 UGX (3.72 USD) each day for 14 days of work, starting with the presidential elections on 18 February 2016.

Reportedly, the police asked some Crime Preventers to return their uniforms before paying them, which resulted in riots, quelled only when the police, “explained to them the police procedures and they understood our position and their response to our order is now good” (Bagala 2016).

Thus, young men who joined Crime Preventers were introduced to the NRM system (however cursorily) through a process of training and the potential access to employment. This both served the regime’s needs of bolstering its perceived military capacity to citizens, without substantially increasing their costs or training youth to the extent that they could themselves possibly threaten the regime. The program had the added benefit of regularly exposing Crime Preventers to the military and economic strength of the NRM regime, in this way, contributing to the perspective that the regime has access to sovereign violence that these young men, if they play their cards right, could potentially be a part of.

Case Study 3: Rumors and suspicious activities

This case study illustrates how the Crime Preventer program was constructed to create uncertainty about whether Crime Preventers were agents of the NRM or not. To this end, it highlights some of the many rumors circulating around the Crime Preventer program, and how these rumors helped construct the program as potentially threatening while at the same time it remained fluid and undefined in citizens’ imaginations.

A host of rumors surround the activities of Crime Preventers. For example, in December 2015, Crime Preventers were reportedly deployed across the country to check the voter registration list. This deployment, including Mbabazi’s call for an investigation, was reported in various newspapers (*NTV* 2015; Musinguzi 2015; Mugume 2015; Segawa 2015; Sserunjogi 2015). Several Crime Preventers and civilians explained to me that Crime Preventer coordinators for each village

were given the voter registration list and asked to verify it door-to-door, checking off individuals who were correctly registered, marking “D” for any deceased individuals and “DR” for any who had moved. Some did so; others feared that if they checked the lists openly, community members would be suspicious of their motivations and beat them.

Crime Preventers had conflicting interpretations of this activity. Some argued it was intended to bias the election in favour of the NRM. One Crime Preventer explained that they were supposed to eliminate known members of the opposition. Others suggested that checking the list was an attempt to intimidate voters; still others that the NRM would use the information to vote for the deceased. Another Crime Preventer pointed out that this task put him in a difficult position:

Should I do anything stupid with [the voter registration list], it will backfire on me. [The community members] know me from my childhood. It’s very risky to do anything (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 4 February 2016).

Others insisted that the exercise was intended to make the list more accurate, or prevent the opposition from rigging. A police officer in Gulu Central Police Station gave a possible explanation:

The voter registrar of the Electoral Commission is the EC’s responsibility. Each presidential candidate is given the voter registration to cross check if it’s okay. He can use any method. The Crime Preventers are members of the community...Some presidential candidate [might have] decided to use them to check [if the voters are existing or dead] because they are many [Crime Preventers]...This helps you know the number of people who are registered. The ones who are alive, you can know the number, and then you can know if the number of votes given is more or less. When they add the votes up, it should be slightly less than the overall list. This helps them to know there was no rigging (Police, Gulu District, 13 February 2016).

Another explanation suggested that the opposition was planning to rig votes by manipulating an inflated voter registry. Still others said they did not know or flatly denied that it had happened at all, despite the above-mentioned reports in media, by community members and by Crime Preventers at varying levels. Some respondents became worried or angry when I asked them about this, telling me to be careful about the questions I asked.

Reportedly, each village coordinator was paid 5,000 UGX (1.69 USD) to verify the list, while the sub-county coordinator was paid 150,000 UGX (50.77 USD). One sub-county coordinator explained to me that although the village coordinators were supposed to do the work, he held responsibility for completing the task:

I leave it with village coordinator. If it becomes difficult for them, I fill it. Me as a commander, I have to do the work to make sure the form is full. If they say, go and plant for me the maize, I cannot say, 'I'm tired.' I have to finish the work...For them they know [which community members are alive, dead, opposition, etc.]. If they don't know, you have to ask someone who knows, so that he helps you to mark those people. But secretly. When people know [what we are doing], that is another problem again. That is why they are talking on us every day (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 3 February 2016).

A member of Crime Preventer leadership told me that the list had been checked on two occasions—the first time, in late October the exercise resulted in a suggested 100,000 changes to the list. He elaborated, “We gave the first round to the police. They were not convinced. We needed to do another verification” (NCPF, Gulu District, 4 February 2016). In mid-December, they reportedly went to check the lists again, this time against photographs of the voters. The second round resulted in a recommended 40,000 modifications. Despite the hundreds of individuals involved in checking the list across the country, the overall goal of the exercise remains unclear. A leader within the

National Crime Preventers Forum said he did not know what happened with the lists, but implied that they made their way all the way to the Office of the President.

I don't know what [the President] did with it [the updated voter registration list]. I don't know where they took them. We came back to do our work (NCPF, Gulu District, 4 February 2016).

Respondents, including politicians both in and out of power, journalists, and Crime Preventers generally seemed unconcerned about this activity. Upon further questioning, I interpreted this to reflect their belief that the entire system was rigged, and thus, they saw little value—and lots of risk—in investigating what they saw as the minutiae of how.

This case describes some of the rumors surrounding the Crime Preventer program, and shows that their nature cast Crime Preventers in an uncertain light—possibly as agents of the NRM, while at the same time possibly ordinary citizens simply pursuing a potential livelihood option. Together, the three examples illustrate how Crime Preventers were leveraged for political ends throughout their recruitment, training, and deployment. Both the police and politicians continually redefined their relationship to Crime Preventers, asking them to engage in various activities and then denying their relationship when Crime Preventers attempted to make claims on these authorities. Moreover, the examples highlight the conflation of party and state in Uganda, and thus, how youth engaged in political activities while purportedly understanding their activities as following legitimate orders from the police.

Solidifying Support: Punishment, Indoctrination, and Unpredictability

Despite the many and varied rewards offered to Crime Preventers, it is important to note that there is limited predictability, and an opaque system of granting benefits. Rather, recruits were asked to show that their loyalty was unwavering by sticking with Crime Preventers despite numerous disappointments, broken promises, and wasted time.¹⁵² Even then, only some participants were rewarded with promotions, payments, or praise. Punishments, also, are unpredictably distributed. Consider, for example, those Crime Preventers that were dropped from SPC training after the week-long training commenced. Another Crime Preventer explained to me that he applied to join the military during a routine recruitment, only to learn that they would only consider applicants who had graduated from Senior 4 (equivalent of Ordinary Level) in 2013 or 2014, while he had graduated in 2012. He guessed that this had to do with the age group they wanted to recruit, but was unable to get clearer information. This process culled Crime Preventers to include only those who were patient and committed, while conditioning them to have high hopes and low expectations. This, in turn, maintained a level of competition among recruits, which helped balance the camaraderie developed in training such that recruits' strongest commitments were to the state, not to each other. Thus, Crime Preventers remained fragmented, protecting the state from an organized interest group that could otherwise have made meaningful claims for representation or remuneration.

Many of the promises made to Crime Preventers were based on the future success of the regime. For example, police promised Crime Preventers that they would get their reward after “the big man” won re-election. Even payment for the SPCs would occur after the election results were

¹⁵² For example, respondents told me that on numerous occasions they were asked to mobilize to travel to Kololo. Crime Preventers travelled from various districts to the Central Police Station in Gulu Town, hoping they would be taken for training. Upon arrival, they were told to leave and return at a later time, then asked to wait for hours on end with no food, water or shelter. On one occasion, limited transportation meant that many who came were sent home with nothing. Those who remained were bussed to rallies in Kampala.

announced—if anyone other than Museveni had been elected, it is unlikely that Crime Preventers would have received payment for that work. Moreover, their decision to get involved with Crime Preventers at all was based on a wager that the NRM government and its militarized neopatrimonial system would remain the enduring scaffolding of the Ugandan state. Thus, they did their best to get incorporated into the system, hoping to reap some of the rewards.

Support for the NRM within Crime Preventers (and other auxiliary forces) was further bolstered through direct efforts at indoctrination. One LCI Chairman, born in the 1950s and a long-time supporter of the NRM, explained to me his views on party indoctrination through *mchaka mchaka*, a military training course designed for civilians (see chapters 3 and 5 for more on *mchaka mchaka*, including its history and programming).

In the cadre course, they teach what they call patriotism. They have a lecture given by experienced politicians. They start way back with the history of Uganda, before colonization. They talk of the good and the bad things that the government does and then you are given the freedom to discuss...Then you try to compare the past and the present...It's like a debate. The government in power will always praise itself more. They explain that before [the NRM was] there, things were like this or that, but now, we have UPE [Universal Primary Education], USE [Universal Secondary Education], better security, roads, and so on. During the lectures, they are also very tricky. The lecturer will tell you the good things. Then there will be another one to tell the bad things. That's when you'll hear a lot of questions. Then you will know who to focus on and how to convince them. That's how you can learn how to really support the party. I think that the Crime Preventers are also getting these lessons (LCI Chairman, Gulu District, 9 February 2016).

Patriotism and nationalism are common elements in training. Lancken Verma (2012) discusses these in her research on *mchaka mchaka*, explaining that “political education” or “ideology” is a key part of the training, in which recruits were urged to become “transformation agents” of Uganda. As such, they should participate “active[ly] in economic and productive development

and...act[...] as the instigators and promoters of government programs in their communities” (Lanken Verma 2012, 104). In my interviews, people discussed patriotism as defending and serving the country out of love rather than a desire for personal gain, although many also understand the patriotism as a necessary prerequisite for personal gain. The LCI explained,

The training on patriotism is a way of giving recruits the wisdom of the good of the government and how to convince people that the government in power is the best (LCI Chairman, Gulu District, 9 February 2016).

Moreover, he and other respondents were convinced that, on the whole, the indoctrination works: it convinces recruits that the government is responsible for the good developments they see in society. At the time of research, there was no formal training for Crime Preventers at a village or sub-county level. Decisions on training content appeared to be relatively *ad hoc* and individualized. However, sessions for “patriotism” and “nationalism” are regularly included in the trainings conducted at the Police Training School at Kabalye, where many recruits were taken for more advanced training.

Moreover, as youth participated in the Crime Preventer program, they were asked to engage in activities that distanced them from the community and demonstrated their allegiance to the state without decreasing their dependence on the community. For example, Crime Preventers were often tasked with arresting gamblers. Gambling is an illegal, but popular, pastime. One Crime Preventer lamented that he no longer felt safe in his community because of the work he is doing for the police.

Even my friends, they don't like me [anymore] because they say for us we are capturing people, gamblers. Whether I am doing it or not, they say I am the commander, I am instructing them [the Crime Preventers] to go and do the work. I am not happy every day. The work which I've entered in is not good at all. My life

is not safe...I have [moved] from the place where I used to sit always because when I go there they are just saying ‘ah, this one is not a good guy’ (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 3 February 2016).

Despite these experiences, many Crime Preventers decided to stick with the program, reasoning that they had already committed, and that the community would understand that they were working with the hope of making money, something to which everyone is sympathetic. Somewhat paradoxically, leaders of the Crime Preventers motivated youth to participate by telling them they should be patriotic and work for no payment, but Crime Preventers themselves justified their activities to the community as a way of seeking employment.

Another factor that kept Crime Preventers obedient was fear, as touched on in the cases above. Notably, most of my respondents preferred to refer to President Museveni as “mzee” or “big man” rather than by name. One Crime Preventer explained,

Nowadays [with the elections coming up] there must be intelligence everywhere. If they hear you calling ‘President Who, President Who’ [*shakes head*]*—*you can call him ‘mzee’ or ‘that man’*—*it means the current one. And you can call the other candidates by name (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 7 February 2016).

Another Crime Preventer told me that even among his colleagues—who were defined primarily by their responsibility to give information to the authorities—there were spies who reported on any disobedient Crime Preventers. Those who refused to follow commands faced retribution or replacement, as one commander explained to me:

If you say you don’t like [the command]*—*immediately, I have to replace you. Because an order is an order. But not by force. Not even putting that person in too much pressure. Saying, ‘You just go out.’ I have replaced them but not reported them (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 3 February 2016).

Although the respondent emphasizes not using violent coercion, excluding people from the program cuts them off from potential access to resources, for which they have presumably already made sacrifices. Additionally, paired with comments referring to fears of arrests and detention, and the rumors about arming Crime Preventers and shooting citizens who “caused chaos”, this statement seems only partially accurate.

Moreover, Crime Preventers were used to being ignored. Many community members and elites—lawyers, NGO workers, and politicians—described Crime Preventers as uneducated, ex-rebels and contemporary criminals—youth who have no option but to be used as tools of the ruling regime. At best, this elicits sympathy, but more frequently, dismissal. This is effective for the government: when the community rejects Crime Preventers as allies of the government, it makes the division a reality. This, in turn, produces the Crime Preventers as a group both distinct from their community and from the state. The IGP and the ruling regime reinforced this narrative, suggesting in rallies and public speeches that Crime Preventers would be armed and should be prepared to fight with the government if the peace was disturbed (*The Insider* 2016). Although the IGP denied stating that Crime Preventers would be armed, one Crime Preventer told me he was expecting to receive a gun in the days before the election; another told me that he had a gun on his person, clarifying that it was obtained legally. Rumours of armed Crime Preventers making arrests in Gulu and other districts were in constant circulation. In response to such rumours, citizens assumed that Crime Preventers would be instrumental in enforcing the President’s electoral success, whether with veiled or overt violence.

Conclusion

The Crime Preventer program was opportunistic on the part of the ruling regime, repurposing an existing community policing program to extend the party's patronage system and earn the support of tens of thousands of unemployed and desperate youth. The regime kept rules around Crime Preventers vague, such that there was sufficient space for powerful politicians to manipulate the program to serve political ends. The regime and the police used a combination of promises and threats to keep recruits in a precarious situation, in which they allied with the regime and not with each other. Additionally, the Crime Preventer program, like much of the rest of the Ugandan government, is neopatrimonial, premised on personal relationships intertwined with formally state institutions such that it was constantly unpredictable whether state authorities would act in their personal or formal capacity. Importantly, the decision—whether personal or formal—was backed by the dual threats of exclusion from the state's neopatrimonial system of resource distribution as well as symbolic and material coercion, such as threats of arrest and detention. The resultant unpredictability undermined the ability of citizens to act strategically or to hold state actors to account.

Perhaps surprisingly, individuals and their communities contributed to an environment in which citizens' claims were fragmented. This fragmentation inhibited collective political action outside of the NRM, thereby preventing citizens from making effective claims on state authorities. From the vantage point of an individual citizen, they had to accept work that came their way—their families were in need of food, shelter, education, and the like—and as young men, it was their designated social role to be providers (Dolan 2011). To complain about the terms of work would have been risky, and young men felt they could not afford to take this individual risk for potential group gain. Moreover, few other safety nets were available. One Crime Preventer coordinator explained his conundrum:

The opposition doesn't care about us. We need the money of the government because we are the jobless people. [The government] say[s] they care about us, but [I think] what we're doing is not good. But we went [to be Crime Preventers] because of the money.

[What do you think about that?]

Their point is not bad. But when you support [the government], there is nothing we shall gain from them. Their word is always very sweet like that. But there is nothing to gain. You have to pray to God to help you... but not these politicians. They're all the same. Whether they send them there, they will talk like they will give you something. But when they go for Parliament, you will see them after five years... (Crime Preventer, Gulu District, 18 November 2015).

The community also intensified these dynamics, viewing Crime Preventers as unemployed, uneducated, former-rebels, who were using the title and access that came with being a “Crime Preventer” to become “crime promoters”. In this way, they wrote off Crime Preventers and ignored many of their activities. Moreover, because the community saw Crime Preventers as an NRM program, those who were in the opposition—which, historically, was the vast majority of the north—remained uninterested in the program, in some ways abandoning those who signed up. In a culture that values the giving and receiving of advice from friends and family, this ignorance of activities is divisive, and served to distance Crime Preventers from their communities and strengthen their allegiance to the state.

This chapter has provided additional evidence for the theory of institutionalized arbitrariness, examining the experience of young men recruited into the Crime Preventer program. It shows both how they contributed to the governing strategy of institutionalized arbitrariness, and how they themselves were governed by it. This relates to literature on the strategic creation of a “grey zone” where regulations are strategically unenforced to allow for political manipulation

(Kjær 2017). Of course, there was no clarity on what legal provisions regulated Crime Preventers, and this was a significant contributing factor to the uncertainty that surrounded them. Indeed, there were no clear regulations to not enforce—thereby rendering the program fluid and undefined.

Thus, the NRM regime transformed Crime Preventers from an apparently innocuous community policing intervention into an effective tool to govern a potentially troublesome segment of the population—underemployed, marginalized youth, who might otherwise be strong supporters of the opposition. This allowed for the efficient and effective extension of existing systems of resource distribution within Uganda’s militarized neopatrimonial state. Overall, the Crime Preventer program appears to have been a successful strategy to win votes and placate the Ugandan population during what might otherwise have been an extremely contentious and potentially violent election cycle. Although quite distinct from the practice of encouraging local security initiatives, the Crime Preventer program was successful on largely the same logic: by keeping the purpose of the program fluid and undefined, the regime maximized its benefits from the program while limiting responsibility for Crime Preventers activities and needs.

Chapter 11

Conclusion

In their 1984 study of personal rule in sub-Saharan post-colonial African states, Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg juxtapose the arbitrary rule of the sovereign to the institutionalized rule of bureaucratic states:

Personal rule is a dynamic world...of uncertainty, suspicion, rumor, agitation, intrigue, and sometimes fear, as well as of stratagem, diplomacy, conspiracy, dependency, reward, and threat. In other words, personal rule is a distinctive type of political system in which the rivalries and struggles of powerful and wilful (sic) men, rather than impersonal institutions, ideologies, public policies, or class interests, are fundamental in shaping political life...Whereas these features are usually seen as merely the defects of an otherwise established political order—whether capitalist, socialist, military, civilian, or whatever—we are inclined to regard them much more as the integral elements of a distinctive political system to which we have given the term ‘personal rule’ (Jackson and Rosberg 1984, 421).

Jackson and Rosberg argued that in sub-Saharan Africa, political institutions are abstract, such that leaders are not bound by them, nor do citizens abide by them. Instead people act with expediency and respect obligations to family, friends, allies, clansmen, tribesmen, and so on. The authors emphasize that African states have been arbitrary since colonialism in two ways. First, colonial governance was imposed from outside and above, even while using indirect rule. Second, states’ borders were drawn arbitrarily with no consideration for existing political or social organizations (Jackson and Rosberg 1984, 437). Thus, Jackson and Rosberg see the personalist and arbitrary nature of post-colonial rule in sub-Saharan Africa as a continuation of colonial intervention—indeed, a moment when for them, legitimacy (and for me, sovereign violence) was torn asunder from governing institutions. For Jackson and Rosberg, the success of personal rule is a story of

weak state institutions. While they emphasize the importance of regulating violence to achieve political stability, they neglect the role of violence in achieving that end.

Institutionalized arbitrariness both recognizes the arbitrary and personalized nature of state intervention, while reintroducing the importance of the relationship between sovereign violence and the institutional order. I find that in Uganda, the state has access to sovereign violence and indeed has used this to build meaningful governing institutions. Thus, state institutions are not empty shells—to some extent, they structure actions. At the same time, state institutions are structured in such a way that citizens experience the state as unpredictable, in terms of whether it will intervene, and if so what rules it will apply.

Jackson and Rosberg further offer several metaphors for theorizing personal rule, one of which is navigation. In Jackson and Rosberg's telling, the ruler guides the government toward some (typically developmental) goal but also keeps it "afloat, steady, and on an even keel" (Jackson and Rosberg 1984, 428). The authors argue that in sub-Saharan African countries, rulers are not steering. Instead, they are practicing seamanship—trying to survive and keep afloat "in a political world of great uncertainty and often turbulence" (Jackson and Rosberg 1984, 429). This metaphor helps conceptualize movement within a constantly moving environment, focusing analysis on the interactivity between changes in the social, political, economic landscape over time and the way individuals move within these changing landscapes (Vigh 2009, 420).

Alex de Waal picks up on the metaphor of navigation in a recent analysis of the intersection of governance and disorder. De Waal typologizes three ways rulers can engage with disorder: governing *amidst* disorder, governing *despite* disorder (managing disorder), and governing *through* disorder (whether producing or manipulating disorder to support the goal of governance) (de Waal 2017). In a model of institutionalized arbitrariness, the regime performs all three

categories, moving amongst them opportunistically. Thus, it is difficult for citizens to assess whether they are experiencing order or disorder even while they retain a notion of what order and disorder look like. Institutionalized arbitrariness is a strategy that relies on disorder and unpredictability to fragment opposition, to confuse opponents, and to limit claims.

The metaphor of navigation helps raise key questions about how institutionalized arbitrariness might differ from existing theories of governance, helping to clarify two analytic points. First, the metaphor conceives of the state as a ship, providing little opportunity to conceptualize the dynamics amongst competing state institutions. Jackson and Rosberg suggest that the military might be understood as a submarine lurking somewhere in the depths (Jackson and Rosberg 1984, 429)—and yet, in the Ugandan case, the military is closely aligned with the state, indeed apparently reinforcing it. Relatedly, “the ship” then could be understood as synonymous with the NRM party. Yet if the ship is the party, then usurping the role of captain risks fragmenting the entire organization of the ship, breaking it apart and sinking everyone on board or requiring the new captain and his crew to make repairs while at sea. Second, the metaphor stabilizes the ship as a material and physical object that one can be either inside or outside—but not both simultaneously. Yet many northern Ugandans express uncertainty as to whether they are living under the governing institutions of the Ugandan state or in their absence. While violating state law is a likely way to gain the state’s attention and be brought on board for discipline, abiding by state law is no guarantee of access to state authorities or the rule of law they purport to support. Moreover, in Uganda, the cleavages and factions amongst the passengers are fundamental to the very construction of the vessel.

Institutionalized arbitrariness attempts to provide analytic tools to understand one type of in-between, complicated, and confusing non-traditional governance strategy of Uganda’s

contemporary illiberal regime. The power of Uganda's central government, as experienced in the north of the country, relies on a system in which competing and ill-defined authorities unpredictably claim and deny the authority to intervene in matters of concern to civilians (from domestic disputes to theft to murder), thereby creating an atmosphere of jurisdictional uncertainty in the security and justice sectors. Citizens are uncertain of whether state actors will intervene, and if they do, what rules they will apply. This is a strategy of governing *through* disorder, such that ordinary citizens find the tactical choices made by the state unpredictable and the logic behind any given choice illegible. While in retrospect, state interventions and non-interventions may be relatively legible, uncertainty remains as to whether the state will persevere with this instrument or for how long.

Contributions to key literatures

The theory of institutionalized arbitrariness contributes to literatures on state formation, statecraft and governance, as well as more minor contributions to literature on legal pluralism and public authority.

Theories of the modern bureaucratic state rests on the same basic formulation: an iterative contest for control of resources over a large geographical area between those who have power and the “rest” creates the state as a (by)product—a bureaucratic behemoth used to manage issues like taxation and services (Tilly 1992). Applied to non-western cases, theorists frequently hone in on obstacles that have derailed this teleology, such as a changing international environment, whether political (Jackson and Rosberg 1982) or economic (Amsden 2003; Bates 2008; Wade 2004); fall-

out from colonial intervention (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Mamdani 1996; Nunn 2008); or political and economic legacies from before independence (Migdal 1988; Young 1998).

For these theorists, state formation is fundamentally a process of the institutionalization of violence in the state's governing institutions. As a result, the divisions between public and private spheres, and lawful and exceptional violence become stabilized—the world of chaos is left behind for a more ordered and predictable reality. Where states take a non-western form it is because the state has failed—for one reason or another—to institutionalize violence in the state's governing institutions. Instead, in the case of neopatrimonialism, negotiations are conducted using a personalized and non-institutionalized logic. In contrast, institutionalized arbitrariness suggests that the Ugandan state can take a non-western form, where the divisions between public and private spheres, and lawful and exceptional violence remain fluid, *and yet* have successfully institutionalized violence in governing institutions. Indeed, the case of Uganda shows that contrary to typical assumptions of state formation literature, governance is possible in the absence of a stable public/private division. In fact, when paired with sufficient access to violence, absence of a stable public/private divide can even facilitate the state's control.

Institutionalized arbitrariness also contributes to literature on statecraft and governance. This literature gravitates toward certain paradigms and variants thereof—direct and indirect rule, or centralized or decentralized. Institutionalized arbitrariness provides a new lens to understand a mode of governance is neither direct nor indirect, centralized nor decentralized. Unlike in models of direct rule, the regime does not attempt to monopolize the use of (threat of) violence. Instead, as Bruce Baker observed, “The NRM government has never insisted that policing must be a state monopoly. Instead, it has sought security partners who will work within the law and under its supervision” (Baker, 2005: 30, emphasis added). This is akin to de Waal's conception of a

monopoly as having sufficient domination to control the contours of the political, economic, or social sphere, in something of a cartel-like arrangement (de Waal 2017). This model also conjures the idea of a security assemblage, in which a networked group of actors provide security *under* the auspices of the ruling regime. Thus, Uganda resembles hybrid, multiple, plural, and complex governing environments, and yet this complex institutional environment is constantly shaped and reshaped by the unpredictable interventions of the ruling regime. As a result, alternative authorities to central state power are rendered fragile, their power always already determined by the state.

Unlike in models of indirect rule, institutionalized arbitrariness allows the ruling regime to foreclose the emergence of alternative authorities that might govern autonomously from the ruling regime and bolster the governing power of otherwise weak states, especially in a post-conflict context. This avoids challenges to central state power associated with principal-agent problems. Handicapping alternative authorities also contributes to a fragile state-society relationship. The state governs sub-national areas on a spectrum between direct and decentralized rule; its strategy is often based on the balance of powers among actors as well as material interests in the area under question (Boone 2003). As Mukhopadhyay (2014) points out, in a post-conflict context, the stakes are high due to weapons proliferation, trained militias seeking work, and new social norms about violence that emerge out of conflict. As a result, those who have access to violence are generally well-placed to become power-brokers. Indeed, an examination of local security initiatives in Gulu reveals that contests to consolidate power are ongoing.

Additionally, institutionalized arbitrariness further develops our understanding of neopatrimonial rule. While many authors attribute a neopatrimonial governing logic to sub-Saharan African nations, it is unable to adequately explain the fragile and at times fluid relationship between the public and private spheres. In a traditional reading of neopatrimonialism,

representatives of the state and ordinary citizens are mutually engaged in ways that challenge the Western ideal-type of the contractual obligation between “state” and “society”. Nonetheless, neopatrimonialism retains a clear institutionalization of violence that allows for the mixing of public and private spheres. While such systems may appear unpredictable and disorderly from the outside, they are internally legible. Rather than *disorderly*, they might better be described as *differently* ordered. However, as I have argued, this fails to account for the possibility that disorder and arbitrary violence are not just the means, but also the ends, of governing. In contrast, institutionalized arbitrariness contends that citizens do not experience interactions with state agents as part of an increasingly predictable and voluntary exchange. Instead, “the state” can be *unpredictably* present and absent, at times intervening in matters and disputes to determine an outcome, at other times abjuring responsibility and refusing to enforce decisions. The state’s arrhythmic assertions and withdrawals, backed by threat of force, continually redefine the state’s role—whether and when it holds responsibility and authority to intervene.

Theories on sub-national governance also suggest that, along with modes of indirect rule and clientelist politics, the state can obstruct or control sub-national power brokers with strategies of direct rule, such as military occupation (Kalyvas 2000), pervasive surveillance (Bozzini 2011; Di Nunzio 2014b), or zones of exception (Hagmann and Korf 2012; Rodgers 2006). I have argued that these models cannot sufficiently explain the contemporary Ugandan state. Instead, the Ugandan state maintains a dynamic equilibrium along the spectrum of direct and decentralized rule, thereby maintaining just enough consolidated control without expending the resources typically associated with direct rule. Institutionalized arbitrariness allows just enough hearing of grievances, just enough threat of state violence, and just enough destabilization of expectations to prevent meaningful political or social organization that could potentially challenge the central

state. In turn, this maintains the state's position as the most powerful of public authorities. Arbitrariness is institutionalized in the sense that it defines citizen interactions with state authorities. There is no certainty about how or if any given security actor will engage with a complaint. For example, state security personnel can alternately frame criminal behaviour of a parasitic security group—one that intimidates and steals from its own community—as either an insignificant local problem that requires a local solution; or a threat to national security that merits a heavy-handed intervention by police or military.

This leads to insights for our understanding of governance. The possibility of an extremely burdensome cost—be it time, money, or physical injury—make civilians ever-aware of the possibility that the state will intervene. And yet, state interventions are haphazard, non-uniform, and unpredictable. In Uganda, this manifests through unpredictable intervention, wherein any behaviour or institution can be defined post hoc as illegal or illegitimate by invoking broad and undefined rules, such as those against “being idle,” “corrupt,” or “disrespectful.” Continually redefining these boundaries enables a mode of governance in which state actors can strategically shape and limit civilian attempts to claim legitimacy or to call for accountability. As a mode of governance, institutionalized arbitrariness is efficient, and relatively inexpensive—it limits public claims without requiring a concomitant increase in the state's human or technical capacity. Moreover, it helps explain why there is a weak state–society compact. It is simply unrealistic to ask civilians to “hold the state accountable” (Orvis 2001, 28) under conditions of potential violence, and unstable and constantly changing public and private spaces. In this way, these harsh and seemingly arbitrary interventions function as a low-cost mode of governance for the central state, fragmenting resistance without requiring ongoing physical presence of outlying territories.

The findings also contribute to literature on legal pluralism by showing that the state can leverage institutional plurality to inject uncertainty into the daily lives of citizens, thereby making fragmenting citizens' ability to organize and make claims on the state. Literature on legal pluralism suggests that to prevent the powerful from exploiting a complex system, it is necessary to level the playing field for negotiation whether by empowering the marginalized or adding new legal orders that citizens can call on (e.g., establishing women's rights in statutory law). In this interpretation, plural legal orders are flexible and fluid, while also sufficiently predictable such that citizens can negotiate them based on expectations of each system. However, my findings show that ordinary citizens have little ability to determine which system will hear their claim. Instead, authorities claim and deny their authority, shifting complainants amongst institutions each employing discrete logics. This precludes citizens in northern Uganda from developing meaningful expectations of individual authorities, thereby undermining the ability to "shop" for the subjectively best forum. Instead, citizens are left with the least-worst option of "doing nothing" or doing many things. Thus, while ordinary citizens may be competing to win or lose in a plural institutional environment, their competitions occur in relation to a larger power game between the ruling regime and the polity at large.

Finally, the findings contribute to the nascent literature on public authorities—where here, "public" refers to "impersonal administrative operations in a wide sense . . . [and] public (as in 'not secret') confrontations, discussions and action in concert" (Hoffmann and Kirk 2013, 9). While literature on public authorities often uses this concept to break down the binary between state and non-state (Raeymaekers, Menkaus, and Vlassenroot 2008), my findings show that in the case of Uganda, the state shapes the space within which these public authorities can operate. The states potential interventions, backed by threat of meaningful force, render public authorities

fragile. These state strategies of fragmenting and undermining entrepreneurial public authorities is a low-cost way for the ruling regime to retain its power as the most important of authorities even in a complex, multiple, and fragmented institutional environment.

External validity

This project is one of inductive theory building—throughout, I have selected on the dependent variable and attempted to explain *how* the state governs, rather than making causal claims. However, it is worth noting that several scholars observe similar phenomenon in other countries with highly centralized and militarized rule, statist political parties, and external sources of funding—whether from natural resource rents or international aid. Examples include Zimbabwe, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Angola. For example, Joost Fontein examines the government’s use of unpredictable violence in Zimbabwe through a study of a large-scale government campaign to remove illegal housing and commercial buildings. Colloquially called *tsunami*, Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order began in 2005 and resulted in massive displacement across the country. Fontein notes the tensions between competing narratives: on the government side, a narrative of reasserting order and cleaning up urban spaces; on the side of international NGOs, the rejection of lawful violence in favor of a “demonstration of ‘state power’ deployed on a whim” (Fontein 2009, 372). Fontein argues that “it is precisely in the ambiguity and uncertainty generated by this tension, between the spectacle of [the regime’s] ability to deploy ‘state power’ as it chooses (that is, arbitrarily), and the resonances of official appeals to the reassertion of formal, bureaucratic planning and ‘governance’, that the political advantages of this operation for the ruling party become apparent” (Fontein 2009, 372). Indeed, the uncertainty of when the police and state

officials would arrive and the severity of intervention they might inflict led residents to dismantle their own homes in anticipation of the *tsunami*. Moreover, competing narratives resulted in a barrage of conflicting rumors, which in turn contributed to uncertainty about the actual purpose of the campaign. Fontein writes:

Like the father who beats his child, the brute force of the operation was ‘arbitrary’ not so much because it did or did not conform to the plethora of different logics and motivations ascribed by diverging rumours—there were too many contradictory explanations circulating for such an argument to work. Rather, it was ‘arbitrary’ exactly because its unexpected suddenness and brutality was experienced regardless of whether its motives would ever be properly understood (Fontein 2009, 372).

Thus, Fontein argues, Operation Restore Order was experienced as the ultimate expression of sovereignty. Fontein’s analysis shows how Zimbabwe’s ruling regime has used unpredictable and potentially harsh intervention to induce the population into self-discipline.

David Bozzini writes about the Eritrean state’s use of perceived surveillance to govern such that even diaspora believe their actions were recorded and reported on. He describes “erratic enforcement” and “uneven implementation” of laws against desertion (Bozzini 2015, 32, 34), causing ordinary citizens to live in a state of “fearful anticipation” (Bozzini 2015, 44). The regime’s unpredictable enforcement of these laws fostered mistrust between diaspora and nationals, “sending a clear signal that the state could at any time retaliate against deserters’ relatives back home” (Bozzini 2015, 33). Bozzini argues that “imaginings about the state play a crucial role by curbing the political dissidence of new exiles and by giving rise to new fault lines in the diaspora communities in ways that are beneficial to the current Eritrean leadership” (Bozzini 2015, 32). As a result, unpredictable intervention and perceived surveillance enforced Eritrean transnationalism and produces “haunting fears” that allow the authoritarian Eritrean regime to

fragment society and govern marginal and deterritorialized spaces in addition to major urban spaces (Bozzini 2015, 34).

The Ethiopian state has also been described as using strategic exception and memories of violence to govern, in this case in its peripheries. Tobias Haggmann and Benedikt Korf examine how the Ethiopian state conflates law and lawlessness to generate a perpetual state of exception in the Ogaden, located on its Somali frontier. They identify two interrelated elements that make exception an effective strategy to govern the Ogaden: first, the regime presents the Ogaden as exceptional—insecure and unruly; and second, the regime’s capacity to intervene. Thus the Ethiopian state has normalized exception to internalize disorder into the body of the Ethiopian sovereign (Haggmann and Korf 2012). Marco di Nunzio writes about how the government manages youth in its main urban center of Addis Ababa, particularly during the elections. He argues that youth perceive the ruling party’s structures of political mobilization as pervasive and effective, in part due to memories of post-2005 election violence, which made people “aware of the capacity of the ruling regime to repress and punish on a very large scale” (Di Nunzio 2014a, 429; also see Lefort 2007 on political mobilization in rural communities in southeast Amhara State). Di Nunzio describes an environment where young people expressed dissent through jokes and whispers, while physically performing support for the ruling regime by attending meetings and rallies, and in some cases, voting for the regime. Di Nunzio explains that “by publicly acting as supporters of the ruling party...[the youth] contributed to a general perception of the pervasiveness of the ruling party’s apparatus of control and mobilization in local communities, and the idea that, consequently, there was no viable alternative to [the ruling regime]” (Di Nunzio 2014a, 430). Moreover, Di Nunzio notes that although not all threats were carried out, following the 2010 elections, the ruling regime arrested and charged opposition party members with terrorism. Di Nunzio concludes that the

ultimate foundation of the regime's power was "the ability to remake and remark the 'red line'" (Di Nunzio 2014a, 430), which determined what citizens believed would be tacitly tolerated and what they believed would be oppressed.

Angola, too, has been described as having an "opportunistic, almost baroque entanglement of apparently contradictory policies...often ascribed to incompatible visions of the state, [which are] a defining feature of Angolan state-making in the periphery" (Soares de Oliveira 2013, 166). Ricardo Soares de Oliveira notes Angola's post-conflict government attempted to "convey in an unambiguous, visible way that it was now the highest authority, and that it could crush its enemies, at any time, anywhere" (Soares de Oliveira 2013, 175). This illiberal style of rule sought to realize conventional goals of statecraft including territorial coverage and domination of the periphery, while discarding other statist projects like service-delivery and exercise of citizenship (Soares de Oliveira 2013, 167). Soares de Oliveira cites an Angolan activist, describing the goals of the state: "The [Angolan] state tries to create in the collective imagination the idea that it can intervene everywhere at all times to defend its interests" (Soares de Oliveira 2013, 174).

These authors detail environments that resemble what I have described as a strategy of governance in Gulu. While they differ in terms of their emphasis on the importance of surveillance, violence, institutional fragmentation, and unpredictable intervention, these factors play a role in each case. In particular, the authors emphasize the fluidity between law and lawlessness, and the ability of the state to constantly redefine its jurisdiction, using (threat of) violence to enforce changing edicts (Bozzini 2015; Di Nunzio 2014a; Fontein 2009; Hagmann and Korf 2012; Soares de Oliveira 2013). They further emphasize how ordinary citizens attempt to negotiate the resulting systems of uncertainty, showing how citizens attempt to apply logic to the state's unpredictable interventions and non-interventions, and become frightened, disorganized, and quiescent.

Moreover, we need not look to states that are “failed” and “fragile” to see strategies of governance that rely on unpredictable and potentially harsh intervention to create disorder. How experiences of disorder are distributed—whether spatially, temporally, or based on identity—is a fundamental element of any governing strategy. For example, Sarah Chayes writes about how under Ben Ali the financial sector in Tunisia injected uncertainty into people’s lives by routinely granting tax waivers, but retaining the option of revoking them retroactively at any moment. Relatedly, the regime monitored corrupt behavior so as to use these infractions to demand obedience at a later point in time, under threat of prosecution (Chayes 2015). In this way, the Tunisian regime secured obedience or punished those who attempted to act independently. In another example, Patricia Fernandez-Kelly writes about African American communities in West Baltimore, and pervasive and systematic government intrusion in the lives of the poor. Her work describes how American state authorities similarly render the divide between public and private spheres fluid, using the example of how children living in poverty can call 911 to “render a mother powerless even when she believes her attempts at discipline are legitimate” thereby weakening the authority of low-income parents through unpredictable intervention into a space that is traditionally viewed as private (Fernández-Kelly 2015, 3). Anecdotes about the overwhelming violence of the American police during interventions against African Americans are well-known. Thus, even states with significantly more capacity than the Ugandan state use the production of disorder to fragment and govern certain populations.

Concluding thoughts: implications and further research

The Ugandan state is neither an absent ruler, nor an indirect ruler. Coupled with a long memory of violent conflict, unpredictable state intervention renders the government ever-present in civilian imaginations despite often being materially absent in the security and justice sectors. The state uses arbitrary intervention—both in terms of whether it will intervene, and if so, which rules it will apply—to secure a position as hegemon over use of force in the imaginations of the population. As such, the government is divested of any strategic need to provide day-to-day security for the population, as well as the logic of physical occupation to control territory. Instead, institutionalized arbitrariness prevails as a low-cost mode of governance, producing subjects and undermining threats.

I have analyzed four factors that are necessary for this mode of governance: the perception of state control of sovereign violence, non-institutionalization of the public/private division, the perception of potential presence of the state, and non-hierarchical and fragmented governance institutions. Together, these four factors produce an environment of seemingly arbitrary intervention that makes the government ever-present in civilian imagination, despite its general material absence in terms of daily security provision or law enforcement. Thus, institutionalized arbitrariness relies on a form of personalist authority while leveraging state institutions to control the use of violence in the polity. Citizens perceive the state as present and invasive, the system promotes social atomization and political demobilization.

The implications of this argument are significant. First, they suggest that institutional multiplicity cannot be viewed independently from the state, but rather must be understood in relation to the state's capacity for violence. While ordinary citizens may be competing to win or lose in a plural institutional environment, their competitions occur in relation to a larger power

game between the ruling regime and the polity at large. Second, the findings suggest that “fragile” states may be stronger than they appear. While there may not be method to the madness, there is a broader rationale at play. Indeed, these states are succeeding at governance far more efficiently in terms of return on investment than a traditional welfare state.

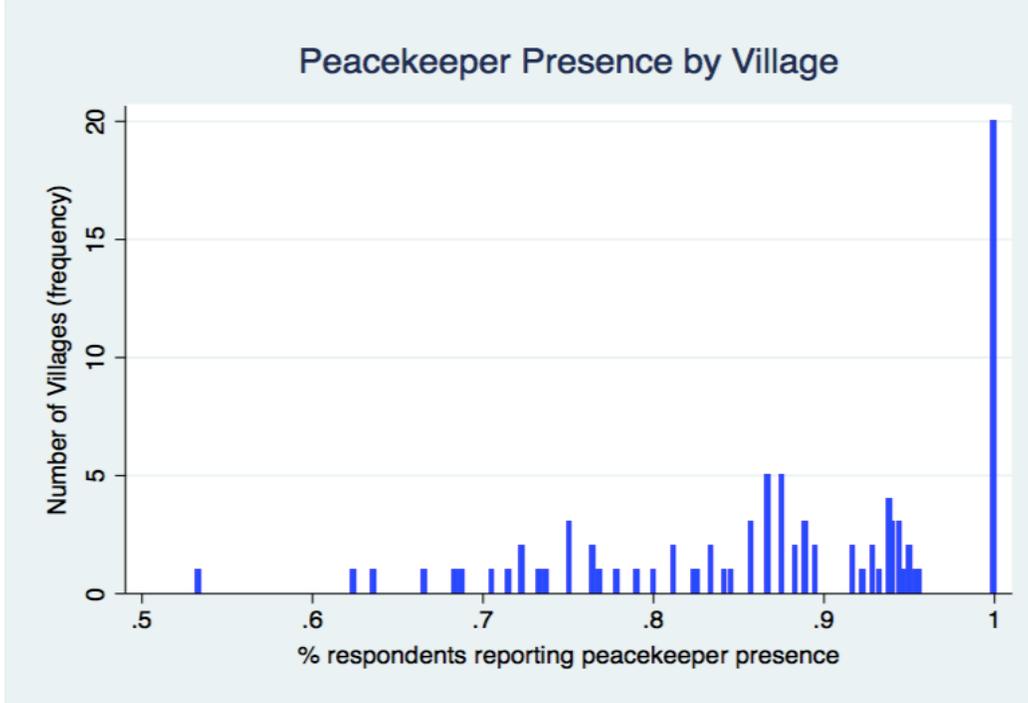
Of course, further questions remain. Promising directions for future research include comparative analyses of how unpredictability contributes to governance strategies in other regimes to pinpoint how uncertainty and disorder are distributed over time, space, and people. Relatedly, how and whether people resist disorder would further develop our understanding of questions related to “weapons of the weak” and “the art of not being governed” which illustrate certain benefits to illegibility (Scott 1985, 2009). The study could also be further expanded to examine how uncertainty impacts those in the higher echelons of the NRM regime, relating this question to for example, de Waal’s “political marketplace” where loyalties are bought and sold to the highest bidder and rulers run the country like a firm. Uncertainty is traditionally the enemy of a well-regulated and competitive market, and thus examining how these visions relate in practice may illuminate non-traditional strategies of illiberal rule. Finally, further deepening the contrast between institutionalized arbitrariness and neopatrimonial rule could help tease out factors contributing to contemporary authoritarian populist rule, which relies on the state as a vehicle of private patronage. These analyses might incorporate how improved technologies fundamentally reconfigure the relationship between citizen and state, client and patron. They facilitate surveillance but also communication, allowing for a more direct and personal relationship between ruler and ruled even in the absence of material intervention.

Thus, my dissertation has contributed a new theory on contemporary strategies of rule in a nominally democratic regime. The theory also challenges a dichotomy between liberal and illiberal

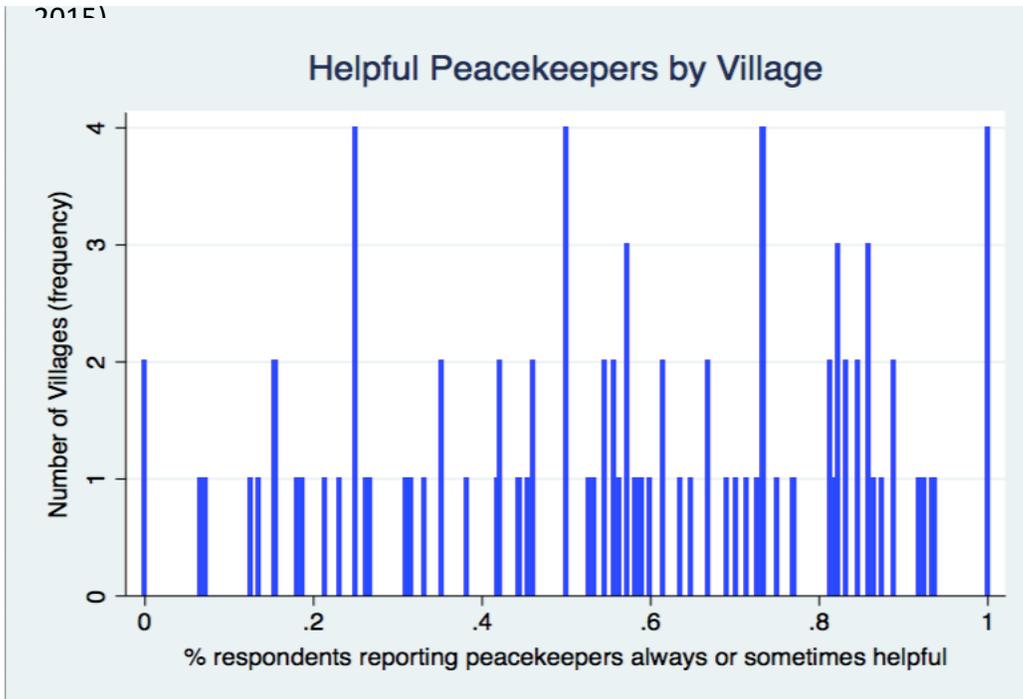
regimes, pointing out that successful governing strategies allow for spaces of liberalism to further broader goals of illiberal governance. I have illustrated how our current understanding of these regimes relies on two faulty assumptions: that the division between public and private can be conceived of as stable, and that a mismatch between violence and governing institutions is a necessary feature of post-colonial sub-Saharan African states. Instead, I have shown that Uganda has produced an unfamiliar match between violence and governing institutions which has allowed the NRM regime to efficiently and effectively extend and maintain its control to the conflict-affected borderlands of the country. Thus, we must now understand the relationship between violence and institutional form dynamically, as something that can be opportunistically de-coupled and re-coupled according to a wider strategy of rule. An increasingly fluid and labile relationship between violence and institutions bodes poorly for many goals of international development and global security, including the future of liberal democracy, human welfare, and access to security and justice—and thus, it must not be ignored.

**Appendix A:
Presence and effectiveness of local security groups and police aggregated by village**

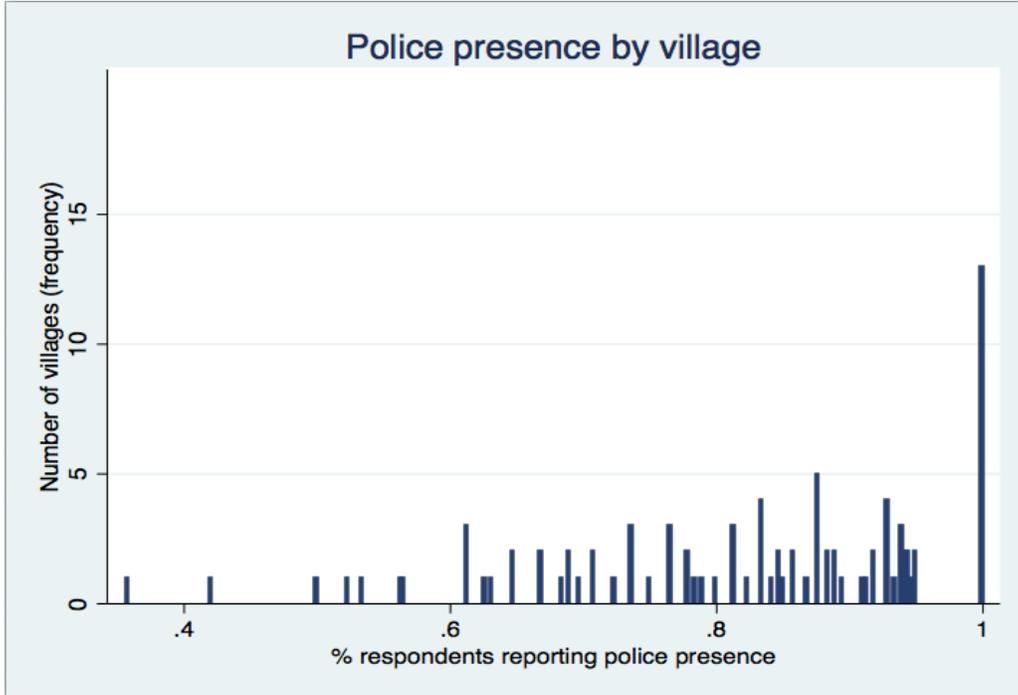
Graph 4.1 Reported presence of local security groups by village (SLRC 2015)



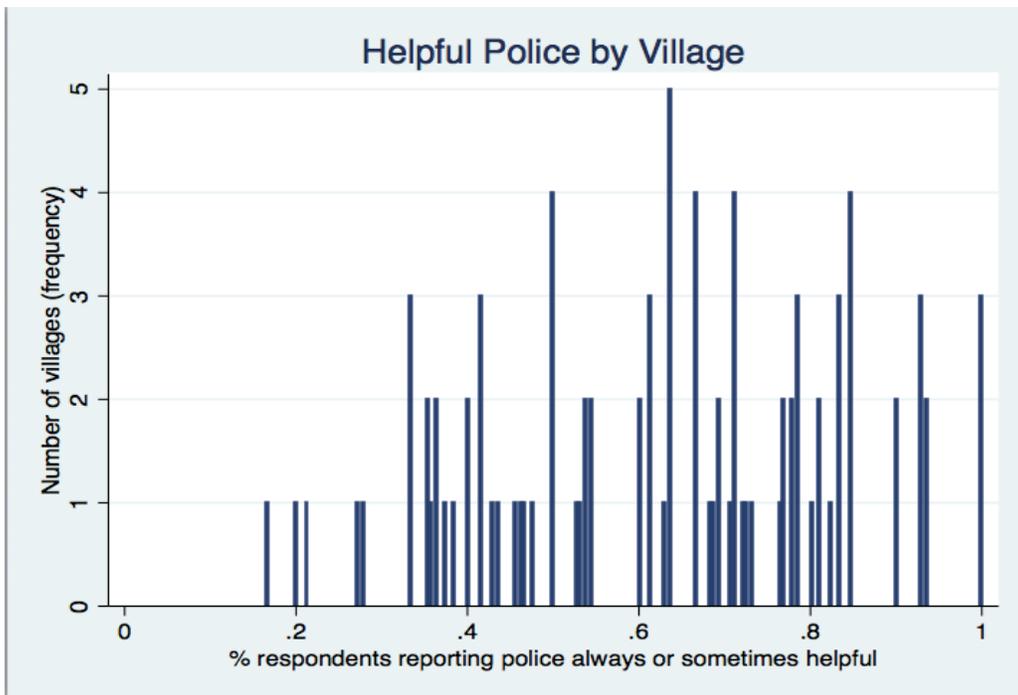
Graph 4.2 Reported helpfulness of local security groups by village (SLRC 2015)



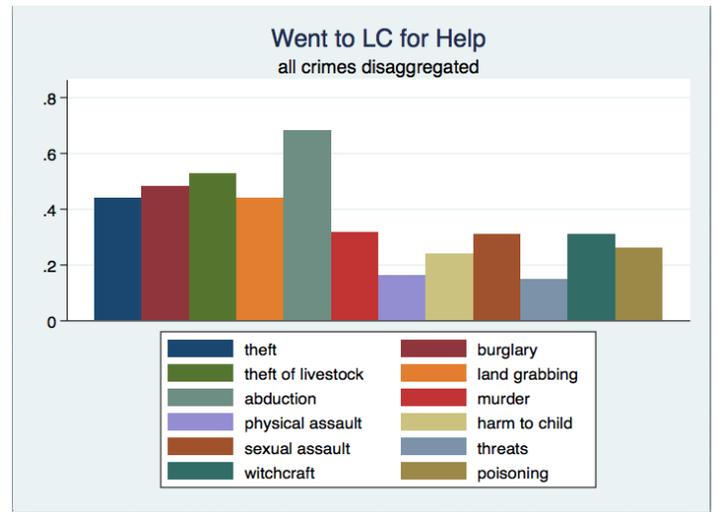
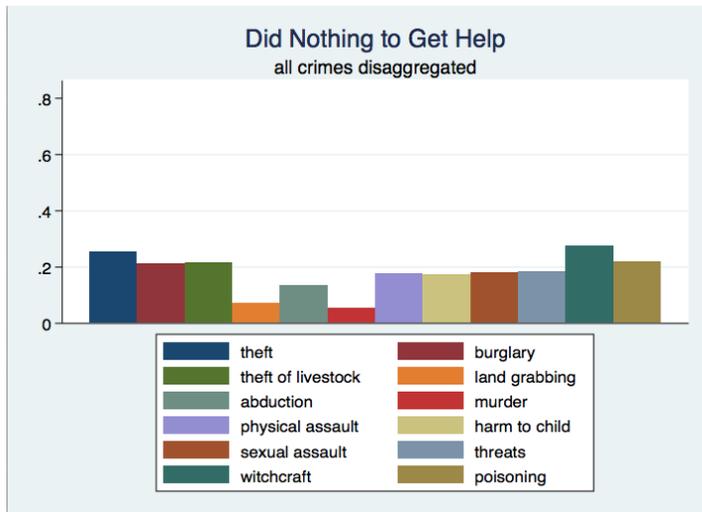
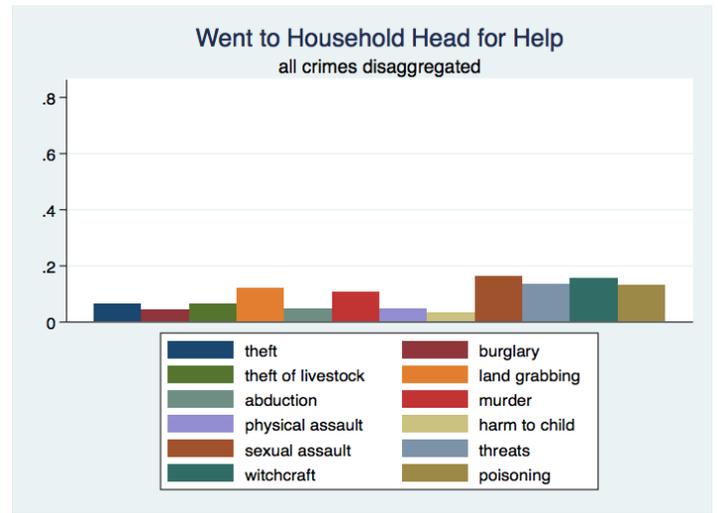
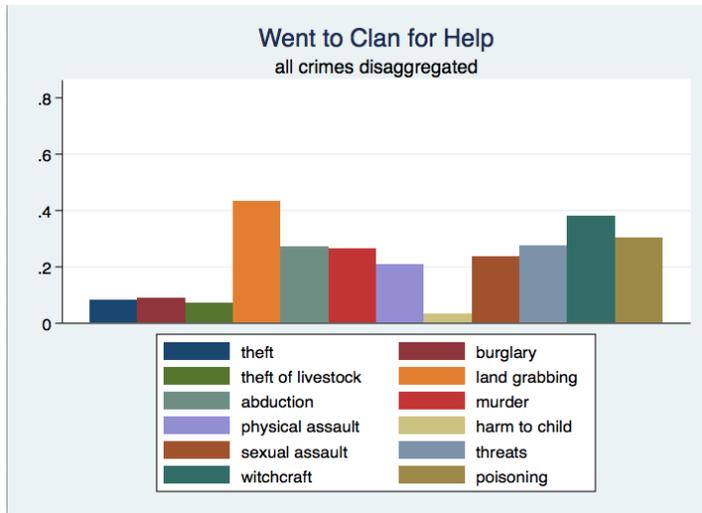
Graph 4.3 Reported helpfulness of police by village (SLRC 2015)



Graph 4.4 Reported helpfulness of police by village (SLRC 2015)



Appendix B: Who respondents went to for help with crimes disaggregated by crime, in Acholi sub-region (SRLC 2015)



Appendix C: Regressions Output Tables

Output Table 1 Individual-level characteristics

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	LSG	helpfulLSG	helpfulLSG	helpfulLSG	helpfulLSG	CSGhelped most	CSGhelped most
<i>sex_resp</i>	-0.0286 (0.0195)	-0.0229 (0.0292)				-0.0165 (0.0233)	
<i>age_resp</i>	-0.000562 (0.000591)	0.00199** (0.000896)	0.00223** (0.000882)	0.00224** (0.000891)	0.00235*** (0.000884)	-0.00110* (0.000602)	-0.000859 (0.000597)
<i>primary</i>	0.00344 (0.0298)	-0.00488 (0.0489)				-0.0699 (0.0482)	
<i>secondary</i>	-0.0417 (0.0389)	-0.0969* (0.0571)				-0.0926* (0.0537)	
<i>subregion</i>	-0.00177 (0.0182)	0.405*** (0.0262)	0.403*** (0.0264)	0.401*** (0.0263)	0.396*** (0.0267)	0.119*** (0.0210)	0.105*** (0.0207)
<i>urban</i>	0.0160 (0.0267)	0.0681 (0.0420)	0.0620 (0.0413)	0.0579 (0.0407)	0.0469 (0.0428)	0.000911 (0.0359)	-0.0233 (0.0377)
<i>livestock</i>			0.00652 (0.0135)				0.0100 (0.0110)
<i>movable</i>				0.000464 (0.00878)			-0.00532 (0.00772)
<i>immovable</i>					-0.0378 (0.0374)		-0.131*** (0.0391)
<i>Constant</i>	0.919*** (0.0348)	0.310*** (0.0554)	0.260*** (0.0496)	0.273*** (0.0511)	0.305*** (0.0516)	0.173*** (0.0518)	0.201*** (0.0523)
<i>Observations</i>	1,385	1,215	1,215	1,215	1,214		848
<i>R-squared</i>	0.003	0.175	0.172	0.172	0.172		0.059
<i>Robust standard errors in parentheses</i>							
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$							

Output Table 2 Crime and security providers

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	helpfulLSG	helpfulLSG	helpfulpolice	helpfulpolice	LSGhelped most	policehelped most
<i>propertycrime</i>		-0.0716** (0.0335)		0.0326 (0.0344)	0.105*** (0.0240)	0.0794*** (0.0233)
<i>socialcrime</i>		0.0153 (0.0315)		-0.0298 (0.0328)	0.0224 (0.0196)	0.0706*** (0.0214)
<i>violentcrime</i>		-0.0602 (0.0403)		-0.0914** (0.0416)	0.0877*** (0.0282)	0.222*** (0.0311)
<i>age_resp</i>	0.00224** (0.000893)	0.00217** (0.000899)	-0.000215 (0.000919)	-0.000387 (0.000928)	-0.000737 (0.000575)	-0.000804 (0.000644)
<i>subregion</i>	0.398*** (0.0267)	0.400*** (0.0266)	0.255*** (0.0281)	0.257*** (0.0281)	0.107*** (0.0206)	-0.0743*** (0.0228)
<i>urban</i>	0.0608 (0.0413)	0.0593 (0.0412)	0.118*** (0.0375)	0.126*** (0.0376)	0.000135 (0.0366)	0.0599 (0.0413)
<i>crime</i>			-0.0384 (0.0268)	-0.0407 (0.0282)		
<i>Constant</i>	0.296*** (0.0430)	0.298*** (0.0427)	0.512*** (0.0465)	0.508*** (0.0459)	0.00637 (0.0284)	0.0720** (0.0348)
<i>Observations</i>	1,195	1,182	1,134	1,121	827	827
<i>R-squared</i>	0.167	0.172	0.084	0.092	0.088	0.138

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Output Table 3 Security Assemblages

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	LSG	LSG	helpfulLSG	helpfulLSG
<i>helpfulpolice</i>		0.00452		0.110*
		(0.0228)		(0.0622)
<i>helpfulLC</i>		0.0127		0.0346
		(0.0266)		(0.0655)
<i>helpfultradi</i>		0.0130		0.176***
		(0.0203)		(0.0527)
<i>helpfulcomm</i>		-0.0169		0.362***
		(0.0272)		(0.0668)
<i>helpfularmy</i>		0.0162		0.184***
		(0.0181)		(0.0482)
<i>urban</i>	0.0418	-0.0329	0.0268	0.00181
	(0.0277)	(0.0345)	(0.0425)	(0.0714)
<i>subregion</i>	-0.0299	0.00133	0.410***	0.112**
	(0.0183)	(0.0196)	(0.0266)	(0.0543)
<i>police</i>	0.0517*		0.0643*	
	(0.0271)		(0.0345)	
<i>tradi</i>	0.259***		0.00212	
	(0.0654)		(0.0775)	
<i>army</i>	0.125***		-0.0750**	
	(0.0153)		(0.0299)	
<i>Constant</i>	0.559***	0.968***	0.334***	0.00543
	(0.0691)	(0.0191)	(0.0816)	(0.0486)
<i>Observations</i>	1,369	329	1,195	322
<i>R-squared</i>	0.060	0.012	0.175	0.401

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Output Table 4 Gov't popularity & security providers

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	central_resp	dist_resp	local_resp	local_resp
<i>helpfulLC</i>	-0.00864 (0.0530)	0.0169 (0.0557)	0.144* (0.0817)	0.0816* (0.0429)
<i>helpfulpolice</i>	0.0196 (0.0493)	0.0114 (0.0505)	0.124* (0.0724)	0.119*** (0.0352)
<i>helpfulradi</i>	0.0717 (0.0454)	0.0136 (0.0472)	-0.0124 (0.0586)	
<i>helpfulcomm</i>	-0.115** (0.0523)	0.0346 (0.0425)	-0.00332 (0.0684)	
<i>helpfularmy</i>	0.0151 (0.0499)	0.111** (0.0556)	0.195*** (0.0653)	
<i>helpfulCSG</i>	-0.00992 (0.0477)			0.0966*** (0.0350)
<i>urban</i>	-0.110*** (0.0348)	-0.0285 (0.0601)	0.0209 (0.0807)	0.00492 (0.0464)
<i>subregion</i>	0.0299 (0.0440)	-0.0136 (0.0453)	0.00937 (0.0627)	0.0759** (0.0351)
<i>Constant</i>	0.157*** (0.0522)	0.0814* (0.0466)	0.258*** (0.0725)	0.251*** (0.0397)
<i>Observations</i>	300	316	315	980
<i>R-squared</i>	0.036	0.027	0.087	0.057

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

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