

# The Armies of the Great Lakes Countries

BY GÉRARD PRUNIER

**P**recolonial Africa was a rather special part of the world because durable state structures were extremely rare. Local chiefdoms or large (but transient) multi-ethnic empires—yes. Tight nation-states—hardly. Except in a rather limited geographical area to the east of the continent, a cluster of sacred monarchic states grew, expanded, and fought each other around the shores of the Great Lakes in Africa. There are no written records, so we can only fathom the historical depth of these monarch states through oral traditions, and these date to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

The basic reason why these small nation-states appeared around the central Great Lakes—Tanganyika, Kivu, Edward, Victoria, Albert, and Kyoga—is ecological. This is an area of mild climate, high precipitation, and fertile soil that is mostly free of the dreaded TseTse fly.<sup>1</sup> These favorable ecological factors led to a dense demography, which in turn led to more intense economic exchanges and the capacity to raise large armies.

The link between the favorable natural conditions and the more recent military-economic ones was mystical, with the appearance of political systems where the King was perceived as being of supernatural origin.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the oral traditions is the memory of a primal mythical empire, Bacwezi. All modern kingdoms—to include Buganda (presently Uganda), Rwanda, and Burundi—are descendants of Bacwezi, whose founders are believed to have returned to the heavens after their creation of secular states on earth.

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Behind the myth lies a reality—the cluster of states centered on the central Great Lakes have grown into the most impressive politico-cultural network of permanent states on the African continent. Complex administrative structures that were centered around the sacred monarchy allowed for effective taxation, military control, and a growing civil society.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately they also fostered enterprises of war and conquest that led to state growth, as with Buganda (presently

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Uganda), as well as state destruction and fragmentation, as with Buhya in Karagwe (presently Tanzania).<sup>4</sup>

Eastern Africa—in particular the Great Lakes region—is a unique part of the continent given the long precolonial existence of the state tradition. The military dimension of state power in this region since decolonization has produced extremely violent consequences. Any improvements presuppose an understanding of the specificity of various forms of state power that range from the monarchic federalism of Uganda to the hyper centralism of Rwanda. These states, contrary to many in Africa, are true nation-states, each imbued with unique cultural and historical constraints.

Although the Great Lakes region constitutes a geographically and humanly coherent

area, its history has developed along fairly diverging perspectives since independence. This is why it is best to analyze these armies country-by-country before venturing into any type of generalization.

### **The Armies of Uganda**

The nucleus of the Ugandan army can be traced to the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the King's African Rifles (KAR), the colonial force that Great Britain raised locally with British officers in the early 1900s to defend and police its possessions in the African Great Lakes Region—the Kenya Colony, the Uganda Protectorate, and the Tanganyika Mandate (now the semi-autonomous region of Zanzibar in Tanzania).<sup>5</sup> The KAR were highly professional and even fought outside the region during World War II, in Burma against the Japanese and in Somalia against the Italians. By 1964 portions of this force demanded pay increases and the establishment of an African officer corps. Their mutiny that January in Tanganyika led to the decolonization of the armies across all of Great Britain's possessions in the Great Lakes. This reorganization was, in many ways, a step forward—the armed forces were Africanized and became part of the new nations that had just gained independence from Great Britain. In Tanganyika, where the political landscape rapidly cleared after the mutiny, this had positive consequences. But in Uganda the ethnicization of the army grew apace. Since the Prime Minister of Uganda, Milton Obote, came from the Lango northern ethnic group that had been marginalized by the British, while the President was Mutesa II, ruler of the Buganda kingdom whose Bagandan population had been favored under colonial rule, the

army was soon at the center of a sharp power struggle.

In May 1966 Army Chief of Staff Colonel Idi Amin overthrew the President-King and installed Prime Minister Obote as President. President Obote immediately started to persecute the Baganda who were mourning their deposed King.<sup>6</sup> The army was at the heart of the process since each tribal faction had tried to recruit from within to fill units, which resulted in competition not just between the southerners (Baganda) and the northerners, but even among the pro-Obote northerners (Acholi and Langi) and those loyal to Colonel Amin (West Nile tribes such as Kakwa, Lugbara, or Madi). In January 1971, Colonel Amin overthrew Obote and took power. Colonel Amin's dictatorship lasted slightly more than eight years and was an unmitigated disaster that deeply compromised the military.<sup>7</sup> In October 1978 Colonel Amin, unable to pay his soldiers, ordered the invasion of neighboring Tanzania, and gave his men a green light for massive looting. The Tanzanian army, denied any help from the African Union, counterattacked and went all the way to Kampala and overthrew Amin in April 1979.<sup>8</sup> This was not sufficient to re-establish law and order in what was by then a deeply fragmented polity. There was no obvious legitimacy and Tanzanian President Nyerere, who had a weak spot for his old friend deposed Ugandan President Obote, allowed the Tanzanian army to tip the scales in Obote's favor.

The provisional government renamed the Uganda National Army as the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) and, although it had liberated the country, it was far from united. In fact it was a Langi/Acholi army which had kicked out a West Nile army.

Obote rigged the December 1980 elections and took power in a vengeful mood. His enemies were the Bantu tribes that represented almost 70 percent of Uganda's total population and all of the country's southern region. Those marginalized and pushed aside by the December elections—largely the Bantu speakers—started guerilla operations against the government troops, which were 90 percent Nilotic speakers.<sup>9</sup> The entire country then floundered into a pan-military situation, where all communities had arms but no one faction had more legitimacy than any other.

The war lasted five years with only a limited sliver of territory affected at first—the immediate region abutting the capital Kampala, and very far in the northwest, in the west Nile, and on the Sudan border. The early years of the conflict were studded with periodic massacres of civilians that surpassed those atrocities committed during Colonel Amin's dictatorship. The “democratic” government of President Obote, supported by the international community, unleashed its troops on the civilian population in the south since they were of the same tribe as the guerillas. The conflict eventually spread and toward the end covered an estimated 30 percent of Uganda. When the war ended in January 1986 Uganda was in ruins, physically and morally.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately post-war “peace” was only relative.

The army, renamed the National Resistance Army (NRA) and then later the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) was a political, tribal, and social extension of the victors of the war, the westerners—the Banyankole and Bakiga—who in victory had settled the conflict between the northerners and the southerners.<sup>11</sup>

Uganda was the first—and in many ways the model—of what Italian political scientist Marina Ottaway would later call “illiberal democracies.” Uganda would in the next few years be joined in that position by Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Rwanda—each led by men who, like current Ugandan President Museveni, were former leftists who gave up socialism to embrace a form of militarized authoritarian state-controlled “democratic” capitalism.<sup>12</sup>

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models of illiberal democracy are now in crisis, either openly—Ethiopia—or latently—Uganda and Rwanda. Since the UPDF had become a key element of the new social order in post-war Uganda, its recruitment became a central question for the regime. The days of open ethnicization were gone but this did not mean that ethnicity no longer played a key role. Instead it became overshadowed by technical competence. But with the booster of a political and social presence at the top of the Ugandan pyramid, the Banyankole and their allies got the lion’s share for themselves and were overrepresented among the top layers of the Army officer corps. This did not mean the exclusion of the less favored groups

but their specialization, for example in combat positions.<sup>13</sup>

The first serious military problem following the end of the war was the northern insurrection of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) beginning in 1986. Contrary to the civil war during which the Nilotic speakers in the North largely had been spared by the fighting, the Lango and Acholi regions were thrown into the heat of battle with the LRA.<sup>14</sup> The rebels and the counterinsurgency commandoes were drawn from the same tribal background while the higher levels of the officer corps were Banyankole. But with time good fighters from the vanquished ethnic group started to climb the ranks, introducing a measure of mixing in what had been at first a nearly mono-ethnic army.

Given the violence of the LRA and its odd ideology, its more logical aspect—the revolt of a previously dominant ethnic group that had been expelled from power—was often overlooked. The “war in the north” through the 1990s was in many ways the “big” civil war in reverse only with a lesser impact because it did not affect the economically vital parts of the country.<sup>15</sup> The gradual extinction of the “war in the north” as the LRA fled further and further away from Uganda opened the period of what some observers have called “the export UPDF” or at times “soldiers without borders.”<sup>16</sup> Since the late 1990s the UPDF has fought in a variety of places—to include in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with the Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), but never in Uganda.<sup>17</sup> As a private joke, Ugandan President Museveni will say: “Amin and Obote brought war to Uganda; me, I took it away from our borders.” UPDF participation in foreign operations, particularly with



In 2014, a Ugandan soldier serving with AMISOM rests in advance of an AU and Somali National Force operation to liberate the Somali town of Barawe from the extremist group al-Shabaab. (Tobin Jones/AMISOM)

AMISOM, has become a stock-in-trade element of Ugandan diplomacy vis-à-vis the international community.

### The Rwandan Defense Force (RDF) in the Wake of the Genocide

The Rwandan army is probably the least typical and historically grounded military force on the continent. Most African armies have a strong link to the old colonial forces who bequeathed them a certain spirit, a set of procedures, and an implicit history. The Kenyan army probably was the most “British” of all the African armies and the same could be said, in another geographical frame of reference, of the link between the Senegalese army and its French traditions. There is no trace of this in the RDF or its predecessor, the

Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA).<sup>18</sup> The Belgian colonial heritage was present in the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR), the old Hutu-run, post-colonial army that fought against the RPA from 1990–94 and was tainted by the genocide, but the RPA represented a definite break with this post-colonial tradition and led to the adoption of a radically different approach to shaping the role of the Army.<sup>19</sup> This alternative tradition was a product of the RPA’s Ugandan origins. One hundred percent of the Ugandan men (and some women) who invaded Rwanda in October 1990 were former NRA soldiers. The explanation for this dates back to the persecution of the Rwandan refugees by Obote’s government in 1982.

There was a direct symbiosis between the core network of the Ugandan guerilla and the



Rwandan soldiers deploy to the Central African Republic to aid French and African Union operations against militants. (Ryan Crane/U.S. Air Force)

young Rwandan refugee population, reflecting the ethnic proximity between the Ugandan Banyankole and the Rwandan Tutsi; the deep social (and matrimonial) embedding of the Rwandese Tutsi refugees in western Uganda; and how then NRA guerilla leader Museveni was himself a Munyankole.<sup>20</sup> The guerillas and refugees had decided to die fighting rather than to accept internment by the Ugandan Secret Police. Rwandan President Kagame was one of the first fighters of the Ugandan NRA in February 1981. By the end of the Ugandan civil war in 1985, an estimated 30 percent of the NRA was made up of Rwandese refugees, most of whom were born in Uganda after the 1959 Hutu revolution in Rwanda and ensuing waves of exile. The Rwandan presence within the Ugandan army during the late 1980s progressively

developed into a major political problem in the country and it was one of the factors leading to the creation of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1988 and to the decision to prepare a military invasion of Rwanda in 1990.<sup>21</sup>

In many ways, this guerilla ancestor of the present day Rwandan army went far beyond a purely Rwandan structuring of available insurgent forces. After the October 1990 RPA attack on Rwanda (purely from within Ugandan territory), large numbers of young Tutsi came to the battlefield. First from Burundi (which was in a state of pre-civil war) and later from the Kivu Province of Zaire (presently the Democratic Republic of the Congo) where the Tutsi-Hutu conflict had developed ominously.<sup>22</sup> Thus two years before the genocide in Rwanda, the civil war there

had already taken the global ethnic hue that was later to provide the local trigger for the regional/global civil war in the Congo (1996–2002).<sup>23</sup> The Rwandan civil war culminated in 1994 in the orgy of violence of the national genocide that lasted three months and claimed an estimated 800,000 lives.

From 1994 and all the way into the years of the resulting war in the Congo the army tried to turn itself from a regional Tutsi army into a national Rwandese Army and at the end of the war in 2003 renamed the RPA (a Tutsi connotation) as the RDF (national connotation). The tool to achieve this transformation was *Ingando*—the ideological/nationalist propaganda program developed by the Army in the years following the genocide. This program was part and parcel of the enormous ideological effort by the RPF to reintegrate—socially and ideologically—the (Hutu) majority of the Rwandan population. This was a typical Rwandan approach to political and social problems and the previous Hutu-led regime had operated in a very similar manner to promote the *Rubanda Nyamwinshi*—or majority people, pro-Hutu ideology.<sup>24</sup>

*Ingando* worked better for the army than it did for civil society largely because the integration of Hutu soldiers into the fighting forces was a more successful evolution than any similar attempt at promoting Hutu in civilian avenues of society. The war in the Congo forced the RPA to integrate ever larger numbers of Hutu into the army, but this was seen by RPF political leadership as an achievable process, even if dangerous. There were several reasons for this. First, the FAR (recall, the former Hutu-run post-colonial army) had been guilty of massive violence

toward the civilian population and there was a guilt ballast that loaded the approach of the problem by the military.<sup>25</sup> On the opposite side the RPA military command needed large numbers of troops for the Congo war and knew from experience that the militiamen it recruited inside Congo could not be trusted in the heat of battle. And finally the hierarchical nature of the Army enabled easy, close monitoring of the soldiers' behavior and opinions—something that was much more difficult to achieve in the case of civilians. To top it all, RPA—later RDF—was materially and symbolically satisfying, thus providing the “integrated” Hutu a modicum of social standing that their ethnic group could not so easily acquire in the new Tutsi-dominated regime.<sup>26</sup> This resulted in a better degree of political success in the Army than was the case in other similar programs, such as the *Gacaca* Justice program that was aimed at reintegrating civilians who were suspected of crimes during the genocide. In the Army many social advantages—regularly paid salaries, health care, good food, promotions, and access to higher education—gave the RDF a high degree of cohesion.<sup>27</sup>

### Disintegration of the Army in Burundi

In many ways Burundi is an inverted twin of Rwanda. Independence in Burundi was marked by a transfer of power from the Belgian colonial mandate not to a Hutu revolutionary regime but to a conservation of the traditional Tutsi aristocracy.<sup>28</sup> As a result, the later challenge to established power came from the Hutu while the state violence was carried out by the Tutsi. In July 1993, after 31 years of Tutsi-led independence, a Hutu President was elected in the first free and fair election organized in Burundi. President

Ndadaye ruled for slightly more than three months before being assassinated by members of a Tutsi army cabal and his murder triggered a decade-long ethnic civil war. The peace process lasted three years, during which an army integration process allowed a fifty-fifty sharing between the mostly Tutsi *Forces Armées Burundaises* (FAB) and the guerrillas from the ruling party, the *Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie* (CNDD–FDD), who were 100 percent Hutu. This resulted in the creation of the unified National Defense Forces (FDN according to the French acronym). Unexpectedly, the blending of the regular army with the guerrillas worked fairly smoothly.

One of the integrating factors was the participation of the FDN in AMISOM starting in 2007.<sup>29</sup> Burundi contributed to the new unified Tutsi–Hutu units where the officers were largely Tutsi of the old FAB army while the rank-and-file troops were almost all former CNDD–FDD guerrillas. As I remember a Burundian Tutsi officer telling me in Somalia: “confronting the same enemy and getting shot at when you are side-by-side is a very strong factor in motivating a new esprit-de-corps.”<sup>30</sup> Similar attempts by South Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to integrate regular armies with their former guerilla enemies have been fraught with problems, but Burundi was the exception.

The political and military process culminated in the August 2005 democratic election of President Nkurunziza, Chairman of the CNDD–FDD. This led to a consociation power-sharing system designed to protect the rights of the Tutsi minority. Paradoxically the problem was the President, whose attitude reflected that of a monarch rather

than a democratically elected president. His first mandate invented a conspiracy in which 90 percent of the political class were supposed to be involved, to include those people who were direct enemies of one another and who could not be part of a common plot. When this house of cards collapsed, he moved to control civil society functions and arrest opponents, to include mild dissenters. He also started a shadow army to the FDN with a private party militia, the *Imbonerakure*—or those who can see far ahead, which he equipped with heavy weapons.

The *Imbonerakure* were 100 percent Hutu and many of them were social misfits. The FDN, who were a positive example of Tutsi–Hutu cooperation, did not like the *Imbonerakure*, whom they perceived as violent, uneducated, tribal, and unpatriotic. This judgment was severe but not untrue. *Imbonerakure* included the margins of society and near criminal elements. Loose instructions, a sentiment of impunity, and a political agenda that often was in clear violation of legal rights, coalesced to create a corps of thugs whose loyalty was not to the nation, the government, or to the party; rather, to the President himself.

In 2015 it became evident that the President had no intention to abide either by constitution or by terms of the Arusha Peace Agreement when on April 25 he announced his decision to run for an additional term.<sup>31</sup> Demonstrations against the declaration immediately ensued, killing eight and wounding 37. Three weeks later the head of military security, General Niyombare orchestrated a coup d’état that ultimately failed and he fled to Rwanda. In a country where the ethnic cleavage was so strong and so old it

was unusual that it was the political choice and not ethnicity that had separated the putschists from the loyalists.

All of the Tutsi sided with the constitutionalist camp but surprisingly so did many of the Hutu. The broader popular opinion, traumatized by a decade of civil war and filled with hope from the Arusha Peace Agreement, did not want to resort to violence again, even in the name of ethnic majority triumph. The Hutu population was appalled and fled. There were 21,000 refugees within a month and more than 160,000 within three months. Most of the refugees fled to Tutsi-ruled Rwanda, even the Hutu who ended up seeking protection from a Tutsi-led regime.

At the end of July, Nkurunziza was re-elected with 69.4 percent of the vote. The polls were a bit doctored but Nkurunziza would have won even without rigging. Why this contradiction? Because this undemocratic president had had a fairly good track record in terms of social management, education, and agronomic problems. He was also a passionate soccer player and a very religious man. As a result, quite apart from problems of constitutionalism and adhering to the democratic path, he had a folksy appeal for the ordinary uneducated voter. The people who panicked and ran away tended to be from urban areas, from the majority, and many had some degree of education. Whereas those who voted for Nkurunziza were from rural areas and were often less educated.

For the army, the situation was catastrophic. The level of political consciousness among the officers and even the troops, was superior to that of the median level of the population. The men in uniform also knew what war was since they had been fighting each other only a decade prior and they knew

that if peace broke down they would be back in the hills, laying ambushes for one another. As a result they were keener on the respect of the constitution than were the civilians. And now the war was back in their lives, through no choice of their own.

On August 2, 2015 General Nshimirimana was shot and killed in the capital city of Bujumbura. He was the exact opposite of Niyombare and had been the enforcer of the political decisions made by the President. His brutality was well-known and he had taken a direct hand in organizing the Imbonerakure. Two weeks later General Bikomagu, a retired Tutsi general who had been Chief of Staff during the civil war, was murdered in retaliation.

Things started getting worse as the President obstinately tried to re-ethnicize the situation and blame the Tutsi for opposition to his unconstitutional re-election. One of his main targets was the popular politician Sinduhije (a Tutsi) who had fled to Rwanda. Well-known civil society activist and political moderate Mbonimpa was shot but survived. CNDD–FDD activists tried to paint the demonstrations (and the armed attacks) as being the work of Tutsi, who were nostalgic for the dominance of their ethnic group—something that was completely untrue. As more moderate Hutu and more Tutsi of all hues fled toward Tutsi-ruled Rwanda, President Nkurunziza’s propaganda tried to depict all opponents as enemies of the Arusha Peace Agreement. The opponents, however, were in fact supporters of the Agreement who felt that its demise would eventually lead to a revival of the civil war and most were Hutu. But the stream of refugees towards the North was recuperated by the Tutsi supremacist segment of the RPF. Twenty years after the

genocide it had become a divisive orientation particularly since segments of the army were supporting the opposition Rwanda National Congress.<sup>32</sup> The refugees were a fertile ground to recruit members for the three main rebel groups:

The *Front National de Libération* (FNL) is a carryover of the civil war. When former FNL guerilla leader Agathon Rwaswa returned to the political scene in 2013 this was felt to be a triumph for peace.<sup>33</sup> In fact it was more a triumph for careerism because when President Nkurunziza illegally ran for a third mandate, he did not part ways with the government and stayed in Parliament. Several of his associates—Aloys Nzabampena, Isidore Nibizi—did not accept the constitutional violation and went back to the bush. The new FNL is recruiting among the refugees.

The *Résistance et Démocratie* (RED–Tabara) is the armed expression of the former alliance of legal opposition parties called CNARED. This alliance existed on paper and never reached the level of a coherent organization.

The *Forces Républicaines du Burundi* (FOREBU) is led by General Niyombare—the officer who had tried to overthrow the illegal re-election of Nkurunziza and who fled to Rwanda, a former Chief of Staff of the CNDD–FDD guerilla army, and the chief negotiator with FNL Leader Rwaswa when the new regime had tried to integrate the reluctant FNL into the new Army. Niyombare and FOREBU seem to be the leading armed opposition force, largely because Niyombare still has a broad network of former army comrades who secretly sympathize with him and try to help him.

It is likely that Rwandan President Kagame thinks of the situation as a strategic

godsend, because the organization of armed Burundian opposition groups suddenly is opening the possibility for Kagame to undercut the rear bases of the *Front Démocratique pour la Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), the militant Hutu organization that is in many ways a direct heir to the old *génocidaire* regime of 1994. The FDLR was based in the Congolese province of South Kivu and the Burundian fighters Rwanda could gather from the Mahama refugee camp could be used first as a Rwandese counterinsurgency force before they are themselves turned into insurgents against the Nkurunziza regime.

### An Overview of the Role of Armies in East Africa

This short study did not include a detailed discussion of the Kenyan and Tanzanian armies since they do not really fit in the paradigm we have used to understand the social and political role of military forces in East Africa. In Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi armed forces have played a major role in shaping and controlling the state.

In Uganda the army intervened in politics after 1966—not of its own choice but because the civilian regime drafted the military for use in its own power struggle. This lasted for twenty years, after which the army ruled the country. In 1986 the Ugandan Army played a key role, largely because President Museveni, who was involved with the rebellions that toppled his predecessors—was keenly aware of the danger his armed forces represented to his power, and managed to get them permanently involved in wars abroad. Fighting the LRA in the north and later in the Sudan; invading the Congo; projecting a large expeditionary force in AMISON—so occupied

the Army (and also provided a nice opportunity for financial gain) that the forces always had something better to do than to interfere with their own national politics.

Even today tight control of the army is a key factor in ensuring civil peace in Uganda, partly because even Museveni's most radical opponents are still scared of the army. Nobody wants to see the army used to repress civilian troubles (where would it stop?) and nobody wants to see it overthrow the President (same problem). The terrible memories of the army days in the sixties, seventies, and eighties are a two-way deterrent—no one supports the idea of a politically active army, neither for repression nor for revolution. This keeps this mute partner as a key (non) player at the center of the political game.

The Rwanda genocide—where the FAR played a key role—and later the RPA-led anti-genocide regime, have left the country punch drunk. Probably no country in the world has been as traumatized in the contemporary period as Rwanda. Many of the opponents of the hard-line dictatorship in Rwanda are fearful of seeing it collapse. There was no real opposition to President Kagame's modification of the constitution to give him a near limitless number of constitutional mandates. In Rwanda the army is everywhere and it represents the ultimate level of authority—no matter what the civilian regime can say (and usually none of what it says ever contradicts what the army says or does). The formula French revolutionary Mirabeau once used apropos of Prussia can be used today: "it is not a country which has an army, it is an army which has a country."

Is President Kagame the head of a civilian administration or the chief executive of a

military force? The answer is both. This dual power is all the stronger for not being split—the RDF is both a people's army and an army that is not an "army of the people." It is closer to the army of the People's Republic of China than to the French revolutionary army of 1792 or the U.S. Army in World War II. The Rwandan army is a force drawn from the very bowels of society but it is more professional than popular.

Burundi's Army was a real "army of the people" at the time of the Arusha Agreement

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but it has been torn apart by the brutal ambition of President Nkurunziza. Today the armed forces are split by a social divide—the Imbonerakure are rank-and-file Hutu but theirs is a more political than military purpose. The Imbonerakure are what the Interahamwe were in Rwanda at the time of the genocide.<sup>34</sup> Their morals and personal integrity are also comparable, but the relationship between Imbonerakure and the regular army today is drastically split between the political allies of Nkurunziza's CNDD-FDD and those who sympathize with the insurgents.

This explains why the armies in Kenya and Tanzania cannot be viewed on the same level as these extremely political military forces. In Kenya and Tanzania the army never ruled the country nor did it attempt to rule the country. Their armies never tried to kill a segment of the nation nor did they pretend to be its savior and rebuilders. The Kenyan and Tanzanian armies never invaded a neighboring country except to defend itself from

foreign aggression, which is the basic task of a really professional non-political army.<sup>35</sup> In this way the armies of the Great Lakes region are more similar to the armies of the Horn of Africa—Ethiopia, the Sudan, Somalia—than to those of the southern African cone—Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Zambia—that tend to stay clear of intense national politics. The day when the armies of the Great Lakes regions will mostly stay in their barracks or on the training ground is not yet there. PRISM

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<sup>1</sup> The Tse Tse fly carries a parasite that is harmful and often deadly for most large mammals to include humans.

<sup>2</sup> The best synthetic work on this probably is that of Birgitta Farelus, *Origins of Kingship: Traditions and Symbolism in the Great Lakes Region of Africa* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> The socio-economic process is well summarized by the South African sociologist Archie Mafeje, *Kingdoms of the Great Lakes Region* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> See Richard Reid, *War in pre-Colonial Eastern Africa* (London: James Currey, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> The case of the Zanzibar Sultanate was special since the troops there were the Sultan's men rather than soldiers from the British Empire. See Abdul Sharif and Ed Ferguson, editors, *Zanzibar under Colonial Rule* (London: James Currey, 1991).

<sup>6</sup> See Phares Mutibwa, *The Buganda Factor in Uganda Politics* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Amin fired the old KAR cadre and the British educated soldiers. The bibliography on Amin is plentiful but uneven. What is probably the best work is: David Martin, *General Amin* (London: Sphere Books, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> The African Union was loath to act against a fellow African President, drawing from President Nyerere a fuming apostrophe when he told the assembly of heads of state in Addis Ababa: "*You are not the Organization of African Unity, you are only a Trade Union of Heads of State.*" See Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, *War in Uganda: the Legacy of Idi Amin* (Dar es Salaam: T.P.H., 1982).

<sup>9</sup> This is a rough estimate because, beyond the ethnic factor, there was another one—religion. The Protestant victors had totally marginalized the large Catholic community, which was mostly Bantu but also represented the Northwestern Nilotic electorate. So the civil war was fought along both ethnic and religious lines.

<sup>10</sup> I went back as soon as the war stopped and I was present for the opening of the mass graves in the Luwero. For a popular view of the war see Pecos Kutesa, *Uganda's Revolution (1979–1986): How I Saw It* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2006). For an assessment of the country at the end of the war, see Holger Bernt Hansen & Michael Twaddle, editors, *Uganda Now* (London: James Currey, 1988).

<sup>11</sup> After the new constitution was proclaimed in 1995 it was renamed Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF).

<sup>12</sup> See Marina Ottaway, *Africa's New Leaders: Democracy or State Reconstruction?* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> After the end of the war, the Baganda left the former guerilla-turned-Army en masse, and went into business and politics.

<sup>14</sup> Except of course in West Nile, which was a hotbed of post-Amin veterans and a Catholic region.

<sup>15</sup> There is a large body of sensationalistic bibliographies on the LRA, but the best balanced study is: Tim Allen and Koen Vlassensroot, editors, *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality* (London: Zed Books, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Today its surviving force is based in the eastern Central African Republic. Its soldiers are a multinational group of ruffians where the Ugandans have become a minority.

<sup>17</sup> The Ugandans who joined the U.S. invasion of Iraq were there as former soldiers, having resigned their UPDF status to join the US Army as an auxiliary force. They almost never saw combat but were used in security and logistical assignments.

<sup>18</sup> The Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) was the old name of the force during its revolutionary insurrectional phase. It became later the Rwandese Defense Force (RDF).

<sup>19</sup> For a realistic assessment of this evolution see Marco Jowell, "Cohesion through Socialization: Liberation, Tradition and Modernity in the Forging of the Rwanda Defense Force (RDF)," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 8, no2. (March 2014), 278–293.

<sup>20</sup> Not only a Munyankole, but from the Muhima aristocratic sub-group, which in popular imagination in Uganda was assimilated to the Tutsi. In fact during the Ugandan civil war, government propaganda always depicted Museveni as a foreigner—"a Rwandese Tutsi."

<sup>21</sup> See Gérard Prunier "Éléments pour une histoire du Front Patriotique Rwandais" *Politique Africaine* 51 (October 1993).

<sup>22</sup> See René Lemarchand, *Burundi: Ethnic Conflict and Genocide* (Cambridge University Press: 1994).

<sup>23</sup> See Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: The Congo, the Rwandan Genocide and the making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford University Press, 2011). This demonstrates the artificial border divisions of African countries. Real political (and hence military) phenomena exist often in a completely cross-border domain of reality.

<sup>24</sup> The study by M.E. Desrosiers and S. Thompson, "Rhetorical Legacies of Leadership: Projections of 'Benevolent Leadership' in Pre- and Post-Genocide Rwanda," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 49.3 (2011), 429–53. This demonstrates the coherence of style between the two regimes and their similar ideological approach in spite of totally opposed standpoints.

<sup>25</sup> More than 800,000 Tutsi casualties but also more than 60,000 Hutu casualties.

<sup>26</sup> See C. Mgbako, "Ingando Solidarity camps: Reconciliation and Political Indoctrination in Post-Genocide Rwanda," *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 18 (2005).

<sup>27</sup> Something that is not often achieved in many African armies.

<sup>28</sup> For an enlightening parallel study of the two countries, see René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1970).

<sup>29</sup> Burundi committed 1,700 men to AMISOM.

<sup>30</sup> Interview by Gerard Prunier in Mogadishu (April 2011).

<sup>31</sup> The Agreement gave a governance outline that shared power between the democratic Hutu (i.e. Hutu who had opposed the genocidaire regime and the Tutsi elements around the RPF.

<sup>32</sup> The RNC had been created abroad in 2010 by former high-ranking RPF civil and military leaders. It was illegal in Rwanda. President Kagame had reacted violently and several of the RNC leaders had to hide and/or live underground; some were murdered.

<sup>33</sup> After fighting alongside CNDD-FDD, he had long delayed rejoining civilian life after the conclusion of the Arusha Peace Agreement.

<sup>34</sup> In Europe the German *Schutz Staffeln* (SS) or the Vichy French *Milice* were similar political armies.

<sup>35</sup> Both the Tanzanian invasion of Uganda in 1978 and the 2012 occupation of parts of Somalia by the Kenyan Army were reactive and defensive.