The Hidden People of Uganda

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Beyond Survival

By

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Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2026

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-0364-6016-7
ISBN (Ebook): 978-1-0364-6017-4

To the resilient *Hidden People* in Uganda, whose stories and humility illuminated our journey toward finding the truth. Your willingness to share your memories has enriched our understanding of Uganda's complicated history and uncertain future. This book is a testament to your strength, culture, and enduring spirit. Thank you for trusting us with your narratives; may they continue to inspire and resonate for generations to come.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the result of many hands, hearts, and minds coming together across continents in pursuit of truth, justice, and visibility for Uganda's hidden communities.

We begin by expressing our sincere appreciation to the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) for providing both academic guidance and institutional support throughout this project. Special thanks to the Nationality Room Scholarship Committee for investing in the global reach of student research, and for enabling meaningful fieldwork in Uganda.

We are deeply grateful to the ASA Social Fund for Hidden Peoples, whose commitment to illuminating underrepresented narratives aligned perfectly with our mission. Your support extended far beyond funding–it affirmed the purpose and urgency of this work.

To our invaluable Ugandan partners and NGOs, including Bright Kids Uganda (BKU), Women's Advocacy Network (WAN), and the Refugee Law Project (RLP)–thank you for your tireless advocacy, logistical coordination, and the vital services you provide to those too often left behind. This book could not have taken shape without your trust, openness, and collaboration.

We are humbled by the survivors who generously and bravely shared their lived experiences with us. Your voices, testimonies, and wisdom will not be forgotten. This book aims to reflect your truths with the care and respect they deserve.

To the dedicated team of graduate student researchers and interns, notably Courtney Smalt, Maura Conte, and Samantha Monks–your fieldwork, analysis, and enduring curiosity gave form to this vision. We are especially grateful for your commitment to ethical research and for treating every encounter with humanity and grace.

We also extend our deepest gratitude to our families, whose unwavering love and support sustained us during the long months we spent away from home. Your patience, encouragement, and faith gave us the strength to do this work with open hearts and focused minds. This journey would not have been possible without your sacrifices.

Finally, we thank all the friends, mentors, colleagues, and anonymous contributors who supported this journey with encouragement, critique, and

belief in the importance of listening to the marginalized. Your support meant everything. This book stands as a collective achievement–and we are forever grateful.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING HIDDENNESS

A Night Visitor

In January of 1966, a young, twenty-three-year-old teacher moved from the familiarity of his own home in Saginaw, Michigan to Masaka in southwest Uganda, trading in snow covered roads for red dirt ones.[1] As a member of the American Peace Corps, Picard was assigned to teach at a secondary school administered by the Kabaka's government. Little did he know this experience would define the rest of his life. After boarding his plane to leave Uganda on December 28, 1968, he would go into academia, authoring several books, all while educating thousands on matters in governance, human security, and international development in Africa.

Picard soon discovered that many of the coffee farm workers he passed on his daily walk to school were not native Ugandans, as he had assumed, but originally from Rwanda. He listened to his fellow teachers at school, locals in the bustling marketplace, and to those packed alongside him in the crammed matatu (a small, shared bus). One topic came up again and again: a seemingly unending war in the southern region of neighboring Sudan. The conversation was discussed regularly, commented on as though it was the weather. And yet, the most surreal moment for this young teacher came during a conversation with his headmaster. They had met at the Silver Springs Hotel in Kampala when Headmaster Robert Kerr shared with Picard a surprising detail: that in the Republic of Uganda, he worked for a "King." For someone from a country shaped by democratic elections, these new revelations constantly reminded him that much like Dorothy, he was "not in Kansas anymore."[2]

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[1] This is taken from Louis A. Picard and Fione M. Picard, *Uganda Diaries* (Masaka: Unpublished Document, August 1965-December, 1968).

[2] Louis A. Picard Research Diary Journal, January 29, 1966. University of Pittsburgh Archives.

In the aftermath of a global pandemic and recession, one might wonder in 2025 if Dorothy's Kansas ever really existed. It was certainly true that in 1966, Uganda was extremely different from anything the young teacher had ever experienced, rivaled only by the changes that would unfold nearly two decades later. Uganda, just three years into its independence, was a nation grappling with instability. Politicians and military leaders like Idi Amin and Milton Obote bore striking similarities with the very populations under their control, engaging in illegal activities such as gold smuggling, a reality all too familiar to their Asian business counterparts. Corruption was widespread as both kings and generals revolted against one another. Amid this unrest, Picard watched the discontent and disillusionment spread among his southwest Ugandan neighbors. He grew increasingly alarmed at their apparent readiness–even eagerness–to take up arms against one another. Sometimes, it seemed, the only reason needed for violence was the simple fact of living on opposite sides of the geographic divide: north or south.

In November, ten months into his assignment, a pregnant woman unexpectedly arrived in Masaka where Picard lived with several fellow Peace Corps volunteers. One of the residents, a young woman, answered the door and quietly led the expectant mother into the servant's quarters located behind the main house. Just a few hours later, the woman gave birth to a baby boy.

Her sudden and unaccompanied presence hinted at a deeper isolation–she appeared to have no family, clan, or social network to call upon. She did not seek connection, assistance, or even kinship; only a safe, warm place to bring her child into the world. Further compounding her situation was an inherent lack of resources, raising difficult questions, including whether the pregnancy had been planned at all.

Picard would later learn that the young woman was Rwandan. But he and his fellow teachers never discovered how she had come to be in Masaka–pregnant, alone, and in search of refuge. Her story remained a mystery, leaving them to speculate what her past and future held. Since at least the late 1950s, waves of Rwandan refugees had crossed into neighboring Uganda, fleeing the escalating conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi, a struggle that intensified following Belgium's withdrawal and Rwanda's subsequent independence. Perhaps she had found their residence purely as a matter of its close proximity to the Rwandan border. Perhaps she had been drawn by language, sensing a familiarity with the current residents' speech, which bore a striking resemblance to her native Kinyarwanda. Looking back, the reasons remained as elusive as the woman herself.

Perhaps the most perplexing part of the young mother's story was that which was left unwritten. Her presence, though unexpected, was not

unusual at the tail end of the colonial period. Looking back, the irony is not lost on him. He and his fellow volunteers should have had a better understanding of development issues. But they were young, fresh out of university, and still had a lot to learn. At the time, they were acutely aware of what was unfolding just outside the walls of their residence but lacked the conviction to intervene. Instead, they looked away, choosing to behave as if nothing had happened.

Soon after the baby's birth, the mother and her newborn son quietly vanished. The temporary occupants of the main house resumed their rhythm: shopping, preparing meals for the day, and assembling lesson plans. They were outsiders–foreigners in a complex land–and they neither knew how to get involved, nor truly wanted to. Despite their roles as secondary school teachers, they fit comfortably into the role of the expatriate, moving within familiar circles of other foreigners–British, Canadian, and European alike.

Since the night that child was born, Picard often found himself wondering what had become of him. Was he abandoned, or did he go on to live a long or happy life? If he survived, did he grow up in Uganda or eventually return to Rwanda? Though images of his future wrestled in the young educator's imagination, he often wondered what path life may have shown him. The uncertainty of it all lingered. Had the child and his mother traveled back to Rwanda, their story may have taken a drastically different course than the life that was offered in Uganda.

By the early 1980s, the child–now in his early twenties–may have reached adulthood without formal education or vocational training. One path may have led him to join the contingent of rebels that overthrew the Ugandan government in 1986, later participating in the invasion of Rwanda in 1994, in the wake of the Rwandan genocide. In another, he could have remained in Rwanda, a Tutsi or Hutu–perhaps a victim or perpetrator–caught up in that very same genocide and left to navigate reintegration into a broken society.

With both Uganda and Rwanda plagued by civil unrest and violence, was he ultimately destined to remain a marginalized person in both societies? To Picard, this former child, now a young man, came to represent a deeper form of exclusion and marginalization–a process we call "hiddenness." It was a kind of marginalization that extended beyond ethnic or physical differences, an erasure rooted in societal disconnection, representing a fundamental schism within society.

The memory of that child stayed with Picard throughout the course of his life, knowing full well that the circumstances of his birth marginalized the infant from the very beginning. With his birth, the child unknowingly

joined a large "tribe" of similarly situated Ugandans… a group we call "Hidden People." Hidden Peoples are individuals or communities that have been relegated to the fringes of society–those deliberately cast aside because of their physical traits, social or economic status, or their religious, ethnic, or linguistic identity.[3] This book explores the phenomenon of hiddenness in contemporary Uganda, both during and in the aftermath of its civil war, through the voices and experiences of those who lived it.

It is a narrative steeped in war and conflict, a chronicle of former child-soldiers, child-brides, victims and perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), everyday heroines, dedicated volunteers, and helpless bystanders. Their stories reveal not only the scars of war, but also the quiet persistence of those rendered invisible by society.

Although this book focuses on the Hidden People of Uganda, an East African country plagued by weak government, conflict, widespread civilian injuries, and state sponsored killing; the concept of "hiddenness" is not unique to the African continent. Hiddenness and its associated problems can be seen in every corner of the globe, from Asia to the Middle East, Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas. The Ugandan case study provides us with a better understanding of marginalization, and deeper "hiddenness," worldwide.

Scope

Originally a byproduct of the late 1960s, the Hidden People of Uganda have continued to grow through the present, with the largest influx occurring as a result of its twenty-year civil war. As a group, their origins date back to Uganda's inception. Crucially, hiddenness persists not only in times of war but also in times of peace, albeit with shifting parameters. To fully grasp their condition, one must take a macro-and-micro view of the finer details of Uganda's historical and political landscape.

This book seeks to do just that, weaving together macro-level historical insights with intimate, micro-level personal narratives. Through this dual lens, the authors aim to illuminate the lives of those relegated to the shadows, offering a more nuanced understanding of their hiddenness.

Our definition of hiddenness includes people of all ages, races, backgrounds, genders, and sexual orientation. In Uganda, individuals and groups alike have become hidden based on their physical and cognitive disabilities, ethnic and linguistic differences, sexual and gender-based

[3] The focus of the Hidden Peoples Project, of which this book is a part, is on the relationship between legal and traditional norms, community based cultural assumptions, and behavioral and physiological impulses and perceptions.

violence (SGBV), deep poverty, and as a result of conflict-related violence perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. Marginalization of this group has evolved throughout Uganda's history, largely a byproduct of its leadership and regimes. Targeted social division carried out by post-independence leaders has directly led to the ethnic dehumanization of many groups, setting the stage for extreme violence by the mid-1980s. Our story centers on the brutality of the civil war (1986-2008) in Northern Uganda and the resulting social ostracization and hiddenness after its end.

The bulk of this book focuses on the impact of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government during and after the war. We argue that the LRA's ruthless tactics and the Ugandan Government's reaction, as well as its blatant indifference to the conflict in Northern Uganda, contributed to countless lives lost, the creation and growth of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the marginalization that continues to exist today. To step into Atticus Finch's shoes, the goal here is to understand how the Ugandan civil war impacted the lives of those who lived it. By listening to their shared experiences and shedding light on stories that have too long lived in darkness. In doing so, it is our hope that others will come to understand the gravity of other ongoing civil wars. The people whose stories make up this book include perpetrators and survivors of one of the world's most protracted and gruesome civil wars.

Conflict and gender violence defines the class of Hidden People that have come out of Uganda's civil war. This violence takes many forms, including physical, psychological, and sexual, with rape impacting thousands in the north. As discussed in more detail later, the perpetrators of this violence in the Ugandan context, involve both state and non-state actors. This reality exists within and outside of Uganda's borders, with other African countries experiencing similar situations, such as the Central African Republic, Congo, and Sudan, creating an end result in which survivors are shunned by the nature of their involvement and injury. The impact of marginalization on these groups is often made worse by the decisions and actions of Uganda's political leaders (during both times of peace and conflict).[4] In addition to surveying the post-conflict lives of Uganda's Hidden Peoples in the north, this book also briefly examines the shape hiddenness has taken in southern Uganda, including hosts of homeless children, victims of acid attacks, and survivors of gender-based violence. A key part of this project involves examining several issues impacting meaningful reintegration of these groups into post-war Ugandan

[4] A good overview of Uganda which captures these issues up to the beginning of the Museveni period is Holger Bernt Hansen, *Uganda Now: Between Decay and Development*, ed. Michael Twaddle (James Currey, 1988).

society: sustainable development strategies, transitional justice, and post-conflict social integration in a post-Museveni presidency.

Fred Naume Ngomokwe, then of the Refugee Law Project, clearly summarizes the goals set forth in this book, namely "*helping the victims by writing their stories [to] really inform the history.*" According to Fred, "*we [as a society] are so good at losing information,*" while simultaneously being "*too good at not making history.*" As a direct result, what would be considered "*right [or correct] information today is highly inflated tomorrow, and no one speaks exactly like it happened yesterday.*" To Fred, this represents the problem with northern Uganda quite perfectly. "*A lot is documented in Uganda, put in the paper, beautifully hidden inside the ceiling board so that it is so hard to reach. And it's kept there… it's kept there.*"[5] Our goal is to bring this history down from the shelves by representing community level experiences across both perpetrators and victims. In doing so, this book casts light on the swarms of Hidden People in Uganda prior to, during, and after its war.

The Uganda case study provides an intricate look into the origins, as well as the impact, of marginalization on Hidden Peoples throughout various periods of time including colonialism, independence, and civil war. More importantly, it exposes the interconnectivity between political, religious, physical, mental, and social conditions, dividing entire groups based on social norms, social institutions, and access to justice. Compounding conditions–disease, conflict, ancestry, and identity–further divide individuals from society.

Lastly, the Uganda case study presents an opportunity to compare marginalization under different socio-political conditions negatively impacted by the increasing disappearance of the rule of law and further exacerbated by long-term conflict. Law and order under Idi Amin became a casualty of his regime. By focusing on divisions between northern and southern Uganda, one can understand the social impact of Uganda's divided societies. As a group, Uganda's Hidden People have grown significantly in number following independence in 1962, with the development of political uncertainty, a series of brutal military and quasi-military regimes, and a dirty civil war. It is our hope that this book brings Hidden People out of the shadows by sharing their stories, restoring their voices, and continuing the healing process in their respective communities.

[5] Fred Naume Ngomokwe, Interview with Ashley Saxe and Samantha Monks, Gulu, Uganda, June 4, 2019.

Marginalization Exacerbates Hiddenness

Like marginalization, the challenges faced by Hidden People passes through generations, as children often inherit the same physical, mental, and societal conditions of their mothers and fathers. In the Ugandan context, those born in LRA captivity, many of whom are the product of forced child marriage and rape, continue to face an uphill battle even in today's society. Known as children of the bush, they lack an ethnic identity, all too often isolated from the tribes of their parents. Instead, the circumstances of their birth brand them with symbolic scars serving as a constant reminder of the heinous actions of their fathers. To some, these "bush babies" are nothing more than weapons of war. To others, including the mothers of abducted girls, these children reflect nothing more than "the grandchild I hate to love."[6] Unwanted by their mothers and relegated to the fringes of society by their fathers, these children often find themselves waiting for a time when they too can take up arms to create a "better" life for themselves–a future that will never be provided to them by the current administration.

Unsurprisingly, the condition of Hidden People is generally worsened in conflicted societies, especially Uganda where pre-colonial and colonial conditions were further exacerbated by preexisting political, ethnic, and religious conflict. The marginalized are shamed and shunned as a result of their collective experiences and conditions. While men, women, and children are all susceptible to marginalization, women and children are acutely vulnerable, particularly during times of civil war and identity-based conflict. Not unscathed, male victims fail to receive the necessary psychological and rehabilitative support required. Further complicating matters are the underlying gender roles and stigmas within Ugandan society, roles that have historically ignored the impact of war and sexual violence on its male victims.

In Uganda, Hidden People have been excluded and subordinated for a variety of social, economic, and/or physical reasons. Over time their exclusion has created a host of human security challenges. The interconnectivity between physical and social status, disease, disability, and conflict-related violence further ostracizes them. This exclusion has resulted in a subclass of humans teetering on the edge of a new civil war, one Uganda may not survive.

[6] Louis A. Picard Research Diary, January 22, 2020.

The Human Security Challenge: Hiddenness on a Global Scale

Those who study human security recognize that the fundamental causes of human security challenges vary significantly across countries and communities, thereby promoting responses that are grounded in local realities. Many who focus on human security issues parse them out into component parts to examine them from individualized and categorical perspectives. In Uganda, Hidden People have emerged as the result of war and conflict, further compounded by discriminatory and often ethnic social policies. They include, but are not limited to, individuals impacted by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), landmines, machetes, homelessness, acid attack violence, health conditions such as HIV, and even disabilities.

Rather than parse each subsect out as others have done, the authors of this book take a holistic approach, focusing on marginalization as a social process, and hiddenness as social conditions that are uniquely interconnected, intimately interacting with each other. Simply put, marginalization and the resulting hiddenness do not live in a vacuum, but work in concert with one another. One must recognize that marginalization grows out of every society, even during times of peace, but the flames of hiddenness are fueled by civil war, torture, and murder.

This book exposes the interconnected nature of hiddenness by examining it from both an interpersonal and societal level, dissecting the root sources in Uganda: independence, ethnic identity, culture, and human conflict. Because of its history of violence and civil war, the impact of hiddenness is particularly harsh in Uganda. The focal point of our story, the creation of Hidden Peoples, is not unique to Uganda and can be seen in any corner of the globe.

A holistic analysis is necessary to understand the complex intermingling of the linkages that define "hiddenness." Although a wealth of literature exists which examines the individual impact of war, sexual and gender-based violence, child abandonment, child marriage, and human trafficking, little research exists examining the interaction between these groupings. In Uganda, marginalized peoples are often seen as the collateral damage of poverty, patriarchal leadership, and the cultural assumptions of its more than twenty-year civil war.

Genocidal style (or zero-sum) civil wars are a major crisis facing the world today.[7] Recent examples include Bosnia, Columbia, Congo, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria,

[7] Zero-sum civil wars are conflicts in which both the military and civilians are considered the enemy and subject to being killed.

Ukraine, and Yemen.[8] Central to their regime is the use and weaponizing of kidnapping, child soldiers, rape, child marriage, civilian slaughter, mine maiming, and physical mutilation. Like South Sudan, Uganda continues to tiptoe around the stain of its twenty-year civil war.

Around the world thousands are discriminated against and in some cases hurt, maimed, or killed for racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender or other reasons. A subset of that larger population, the group that we identify as Hidden People, reflect certain commonalities, shared identities, and physical or other characteristics.[9] This is a broad grouping of people, but it does not intend to include all, or even most people who engage in or suffer from ethnic, religious, or cultural conflict, or patterns of exclusion. What distinguishes "hiddenness" from other forms of discrimination and marginalization is the extent to which Hidden People are viewed as not human.

On an international scale, human security scholars tend to cluster Hidden Peoples into three groups: indigenous peoples, threatened societies, and endangered communities. Each of these groups are marginalized and dehumanized for many reasons. Many are born to be hidden, while others have it imposed upon them. As a result of this marginalization, individuals in these categories are often shunned, hated, and in extreme cases, murdered. Unfortunately, genocide and zero-sum wars are all too often the end process in the marginalization of a group of people.

Indigenous groups, sometimes classified as "first dwellers," are known for real or perceived prior claims of scarce resources that have been appropriated by those who came afterwards. Notable among this group are the San of the Kalahari, Batwa in the forests of central Africa, Native Americans, and Amazonian dwellers. Others are "First Nations" in the Americas, Aboriginals in Australia, the Inuit in Alaska, Canada, and Russia, and the Basques in Spain.[10] Indigenous peoples in Uganda include the Benet, the Twa, the Basongora, and to some, the Karamojong.

Endangered communities are those indigenous or threatened societies who have reached a point where they are in danger of extinction

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[8] The Congo wars are often labeled Africa's "Third World War" because of the number killed. Although not as large as the number of lives lost during the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide also lives in infamy.

[9] See Russell Ferguson, *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture* (MIT Press, 1960).

[10] The San of Southern Africa are a good example. See Rupert Isaacson, *The Healing Land: The Bushmen and the Kalahari Desert* (Grove Press, 2001). The issue of indigenous people has become part of the political debate in the Cape Province of South Africa.

either because of environmental, human (through genocide), or technological changes or threats. Threatened societies are those who are resented for their religious, gender, language, racial, and ethnic characteristics and are targeted for harm or extermination. They are often defined by their physical characteristics and their cultural or belief systems which intensify to the point of civil war. As conflict evolves, they are perceived as no longer human and thus targeted for destruction.

In Central and Eastern Europe, parts of North Africa and the Middle East, Jews have historically been threatened (and even endangered during the Second World War). Beginning in World War I and throughout the Ottoman Empire, Armenians were a threatened group, ultimately endangered by the war's end. The Dalit (or untouchables) and the so-called "other backward castes" in India should also be included in this group. Other threatened groups include the: Roma[11] in Eastern and Central Europe and Russia; Chechens in the Caucasus; Kurds in the Middle East; Muslims in India; and Muslims and Uyghurs in China.

The Caucasus, parts of Central Asia and the Balkans have a combination of diverse populations, shifting borders and periodic foreign interventions that have left numerous peoples under the jurisdiction of often hostile states. Even in today's society, division is rampant. In Central Europe, the Ukrainian people have most recently been targeted by Russia since at least 2014, with the most egregious affront in 2022. In many parts of the world, women–as a group–are threatened (and even endangered). Prior to their expulsion from Uganda in 1972, Asian Ugandans were a threatened group. In the twenty-first century, endangered groups might also include the: San in Southern Africa; Amazon dwellers in Brazil; Saami in Scandinavia and other arctic groups in Northern Russia; Caribs in the Caribbean; and Hmong in Southeast Asia.

During the Rwandan genocide in 1994, both the Tutsis and Twa were endangered groups, fighting for survival. Many in Northern Uganda have emerged as a threatened community, with some northerners, as well as outside observers, having concluded their status as endangered during the LRA war. The subsets of hiddenness that we identify are characterized by cultural distance, the real and perceived strength of threats, and the group's claim to prior status rights. Threatened, endangered, and other marginalized people, are all of concern here since they illustrate the severe threat faced by the peoples of northern Uganda in the twentieth and early twenty-first century.

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[11] Though the Roma carry many of the characteristics of an indigenous people, their origin is in South Asia. See Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1995).

The examples cited above are not discrete categories or one-off occurrences. The various groups overlap between and among one another, identified by, and in terms of, the impact of dominant societies upon them. Nor do these groups reflect a constant state of being; instead, they are part of an ever-changing world. Threats against groups come forward and recede particularly during the time of civil war (as evidenced by the Ibo in Biafra in the 1960s compared with the Igbo in Nigeria today). This too has been the case in Uganda since its independence.

The forms of conflict faced by each group are wide ranging: religious, tribal, and ethnic groups; the rise of warlords and zealots; competition over people and resources, including drug trafficking, kidnapping, and gangs; the rise of terrorism, local and rebel militias, insurgents; and even transnational criminal organizations. Violence perpetrated against them includes acid attacks, gender violence, mutilation, as well as abuse and abandonment of children.

Debates about the survival of Hidden Peoples often focus on the dichotomy between assimilation and equality on one hand; and separation and preservation (or multiculturalism) on the other. Competition between dominant and marginalized groups over basic needs, modes of production, use of natural resources, and property rights (including land, water, animal, and mineral resources) has been central to the debate.[12] In Uganda, access to land (or the lack thereof) became one of the critical components in the marginalization of the Acholi in northern Uganda. Issues of assimilation and protection are particularly prevalent in multinational states, even more so in Africa.

In many cases, these groups are perceived as challenging the integrity of the state. In some, they cooperate and collude with state structures while subtly undermining them; in others, the state is a passive bystander while violent armed groups fight amongst one another. All too often the state is the source of violence. Both the state and its challengers are often linked to or cooperate with international terrorist organizations. The mix is different, the combinations vary, and the perpetrators of violence have different motives, methods, and targets.

In spite of their divergent forms, non-state violent actors (often both ethnic and religious) share certain qualities and characteristics with their counterparts. Violent non-state actors represent a common challenge to national and international security and the establishment of institutionalized governance systems. This challenge is far greater than the sum of individual groups contesting common ground. These challenges are likely to grow

[12] A clear understanding of alternative views of property rights is essential to engaging the debates around various ways that people can be marginalized.

rather than diminish over time. Concerns about human security must factor this into the reaction and strategies of all sides.

The complex and troubling phenomenon of hiddenness illustrates the increasingly multi-polar dynamics of political conflict in Africa and other parts of the world. Its existence has been sparked by a fundamental change in the dynamics of international conflict after the end of the cold war. Unfortunately, the marginalization of people has been under-appreciated as a global phenomenon, partly in recognition of an aberration to state sovereignty, and because conflicts in different parts of the world are seen as more significant than others.[13]

The Ugandan Case Study: Social Distance, Social Difference, and the Issue of Ethnicity

Uganda is a prime example of the impact fragile and collapsed governance has on the social fabric of society. Because there is no single path to hiddenness, Uganda provides a unique insight into life on the edge of society. Central to our understanding of hiddenness and exploitation in Uganda is ethnic identity.

Uganda's ethnic groups have been hierarchically stratified since at least the 1890s, a characteristic that continues to plague the country in the early twenty-first century. Though ethnic identity plays a role in the politics of most African countries, ethnic conflict was more pronounced and more clearly defined in Uganda than many other African countries. One reason for this is the dominant role played by Uganda's five defined kingdoms and their roles in the post-colonial period, a time that created a deep cleavage within the country far beyond ethnic identity.

During the colonial period, historians and political scientists focused on the future of the five southern kingdoms (Ankole, Busoga, Bunyoro, Toro, and Buganda), while paying special attention to Buganda, the kingdom for which the country's name was based. The nature of the Southern entities no doubt influenced their conception of order. However, the schism between the Nilotic peoples of the north (most who speak a version of Luo) and Bantu speakers in the south created real questions as to the extent that each language group can and does coalesce internally.[14] Even during the early years of the Museveni administration, historians and political scientists focused on southern Uganda as central to the state's

[13] For example, the response to conflict in Chad and Sudan, from those in Ukraine and Gaza.

[14] Andy Lancaster, "The Divisive Nature of Ethnicity in Ugandan Politics, Before and After Independence," (University of Leeds, May 25, 2012).

political development. For the better part of 100 years, development of the country's infrastructure and roadways were prioritized in the south.

In northern Uganda, people are divided by language and ethnicity; however, the linguistic divide between the Nilotic languages of the North, and the Bantu speaking peoples of the South, is much stronger, and more entrenched. This divide deepened during the colonial period and, following Uganda's independence, was a significant contributor to the civil war that raged from 1986 through 2008. In Southern Uganda, despite the absence of war, people have been marginalized as individuals and as classes based on their physical, economic, and social status. Language, along with the form of traditional governance imposed, further divides southern Ugandans from their northern counterparts. In northern Uganda this schism deepened as a result of Buganda's historical domination of the north.

Although the primary division of the country lies between Bantu and Nilotic/Luo speakers, there are a few groups outside this dichotomy including those living in the West Nile and Northeastern Uganda. The resentment of and influence of the people from the West Nile was particularly significant during the rule of Idi Amin. Residents of the West Nile resemble people in South Sudan and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo while the Karamojong, though they speak a dialect of Luo, historically have had links to Northern Kenya.[15] They are perceived (because of their long history of cattle raiding) as an economic threat to Eastern Uganda. Many Ugandans especially in the South do not view people from the West Nile and Karamoja as part of *their* country.

Unsurprisingly, ethnic, racial, and cultural differences are often the cause of civil conflict and human insecurity. This has certainly been true for Uganda. Religion, unusually for Africa, has also played a divisive role in Uganda as syncretism (the blending of indigenous values with Christianity and portions of Islam) defined the rise and persistence of the Lord's Resistance Army.[16] While confronted in other parts of the world, these issues were not addressed in Uganda partly because of the country's long term political and socio-economic isolation during the Idi Amin and Milton Obote decades (1962-1986). Apart from the LRA, religious conflict seems to have diminished under the current government of Yoweri Museveni.

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[15] The population of West Nile is about 3 million people while Karamoja is 1.2 million. While the people in West Nile are of Sudanese origin, the Karamojong are Nilotic speakers and speak Teso/Luo. That said, they are seen as isolated from the political life of Uganda.

[16] The LRA even was notorious for using religious images to mobilize support for its "new Acholi nation" during the war.

Identity, both in Uganda and across the globe, is influenced by cultural norms. Although there have been many debates about ethnic and national definition throughout its history, ethnicity should not be viewed as rigid and unchanging. In Uganda and other parts of Africa, ethnic identity is contextual, situational, and experiential. Ethnic differences also intertwine with other characteristics. Linguistic divisions, identity, and fear have long defined Uganda's fragile identity as a country while simultaneously leaving it in a virtual state of civil war since 1962.

Uganda is not alone in struggling to confront the isolation faced by hidden populations; with the exception of one particular area: disabilities. Uganda has been lauded for its disability journey, having "ratified some of the most progressive disability laws and policies in the world," while simultaneously fostering "a robust disability activist movement."[17] Despite these advancements, "these laws, activism, and publicity have not significantly changed the lives of most disabled Ugandans."[18] One interview source, a former Member of Parliament, identifies a number of specific laws including provisions requiring primary schools to be accessible, affirmative action for admittance to schools, and accessible methods of examination; "*Implementation is still a challenge.*"[19] One reason for this is its failure to understand the hidden population of Ugandans living with disabilities, which includes hundreds if not thousands of Ugandans left maimed and disabled during the civil war, and countless others disabled as a result of its ineffective polio policies.

Many in Uganda still view disabled persons as a burden that they do not want to shoulder. One repercussion of this mindset is the impact on their access to education and the workforce. The neglect of Uganda's disabled population has also hindered the reintegration of its victims into society. Many individuals with physical and/or cognitive disabilities have been cast off from society, and worse, found themselves victims of violent sexual crimes further "hiding" them from the world. Over the years, the authors met and fostered a relationship with a young woman living in the slums of Katwe in Kampala. She suffered from polio as a young child, leaving her with limited use of her upper and lower extremities. In addition to the struggles of daily life cause by her physical limitations, she is a survivor of unnumbered rapes, resulting in five children.

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[17] Tyler Zoanni, "Disability Rights and Wrongs in Uganda," *Current History* 121, no. 835 (2022): 190-195.
[18] Zoanni, "Disability Rights," 190-195.
[19] SD149, Interview with Ashley Saxe and Courtney Smalt, Entebbe, Uganda, May 31, 2019.

One unintended byproduct is the offspring of such an attack, which in turn creates a new generation of Hidden Peoples. Even further, societal accommodations are increasingly limited, as those with mobility issues struggle daily to board jam packed matatu (small buses) or ride astride a boda-boda (motorcycle taxi). Some plead for passersby to assist them into a vehicle, while others resign themselves to wait hours for help.

Finally, there is a culture of patriarchy that has rejected a lost generation of Ugandans who lack basic health, education, and financial security. Children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army often did not escape captivity until adulthood, frequently returning home with children of their own. Not only did abductees miss large parts of their own education, but their generally unwanted offspring are not provided this opportunity; and instead, are rejected from their mother's homes.

The Evolution of Hiddenness in Uganda

From a governance perspective,[20] post-colonial Uganda can be divided into four parts with ethnic conflict defining each period: (1) Milton Obote's first administration from 1962 to 1971,[21] (2) Idi Amin's regime from 1971 to 1979, (3) Obote's second regime, sometimes referred to as "Obote II," from 1980 to 1986, and (4) the Museveni period which began in 1986 and continues through the time of this writing. Understanding the nature of political collapse during the 1971-1979 Amin regime and the two Obote periods is essential to any analysis of the conflict in Northern Uganda that broke out after 1986 and the uneasy peace that has existed since 2008.[22]

All three regimes, prior to the Museveni period, hold responsibility for the shift from constitutional order to the use of violence as a political tool for exerting control in Uganda. However, it is the conflict between the LRA and Museveni's National Resistance Movement Government which has defined the situation as Uganda moved into the twenty-first century. A historical perspective allows us to understand the nature of conflict related marginalization that preceded and followed it.

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[20] The action and manner of imposing political control through the making and implementing laws and policies.

[21] See Peter Gukiina, *Uganda: A Case Study in African Political Development* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1972).

[22] For background on this, see James H. Mittelman, *Ideology and Politics in Uganda: From Obote to Amin* (Cornell University Press, 1975) and Nelson Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena: Participation and Ethnicity in African Politics with a Case Study of Uganda* (University of California Press, 1976).

Several components must be examined to understand the post-independence collapse of Uganda. Key among them is the colonial impact on Ugandan society, the isolation of northern Uganda from the southern part of the country, and the conflict between Milton Obote's administration and the Buganda government. Following that discussion, this book then examines the Idi Amin regime and its routinization of terror. Finally, we describe the coming to power of the National Resistance Movement, the nature of the Museveni government, and the culmination of war between the LRA and the Ugandan government in the north. While the methods of the LRA were brutal and predatory, we try here to understand the LRA within the context of the historical divisions which have developed in Uganda. Moreover, the LRA was not alone in its violent tactics, with many among the Ugandan military committing their own war crimes.

Instability in Uganda has meant that intolerance for people who are different from oneself has intensified throughout the country over time. Social tensions in Uganda have been further exacerbated by the country's internal social marginalization throughout the country. The war also dehumanized those who face physical and mental challenges in a post-war Uganda. War related marginalization includes being shunned as a kidnapped child-soldier or child-bride and the physical manifestations of landmine injuries, burns, deformities suffered from the LRA and government, gender violence, and torture. Others are marginalized due to blindness, deafness, polio, birth defects, and cerebral palsy; all of which have been neglected throughout the country. All of this occurs as Uganda enters a period in which it has to deal with close to two million external refugees in the north and the west of the country adding to the challenges facing those Hidden Peoples captured by deep poverty.

Focus of the Book

Why is Uganda important? The goal here is to understand how a genocidal civil war impacts people by seeing into their lives and identifying the steps that must be taken as they start to transition to peace. By understanding Uganda better, people in the developed world might better understand many of the other twenty-first century civil wars. The people; the women, children, and men of northern Uganda, reflect conditions in much of the developing world (that are prone to civil war) and allow us to reflect on the powerful message that marginalization and dehumanization bring to our understanding of democracy and governance.

This book contextualizes Uganda's civil war by examining its fractured political history. In doing so, we are better able to understand the