

## Uganda's revolutionary memory, victimhood and regime survival

*The road that the community expects to take in each generation is inspired and shaped by its memories of former heroic ages* —Smith, D.A. (2009)

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### Abstract

In revolutionary political systems—such as Uganda's—lies a strong collective memory that organizes and enforces national identity as a cultural property. National identity nurtured by the nexus between lived representations and narratives on collective memory of war, therefore, presents itself as a kind of politics with repetitive series of nation-state narratives, metaphorically suggesting how the putative qualities of the nation's past reinforce the qualities of the present. This has two implications; it on one hand allows for changes in a narrative's cognitive claims which form core of its constitutive assumptions about the nation's past. This past is collectively viewed as a fight against profanity and restoration of political sanctity; On the other hand, it subjects memory to new scientific heuristics involving its interpretations, transformation and distribution. I seek to interrogate the intricate memory entanglement in gaining and consolidating political power in Uganda. Of great importance are politics of remembering, forgetting and utter repudiation of memory of war while asserting control and restraint over who governs. The purpose of this paper is to understand and internalize the dynamics of how knowledge of the past relates with the present. This gives a precise definition of power in revolutionary-dominated regimes.

**Keywords:** Memory of War, national narratives, victimhood, regime survival, Uganda



## 1. Introduction

The predicament of memory of war is not as such very unprecedented in post-armed conflict nations of which Uganda is part. Most importantly, there is limited uniqueness of Uganda's context of nationalized memory. I explain here how memory of war accounts, in part, for the nested explanatory mechanism associated with regime consolidation in country politics all over the world. I seek to theorize and problematize memory beyond just the individual representations of historic events to include the politics of and narratives surrounding remembering, forgetting and repudiating part or all of the episodes of such historical representations and myths. While Renan (1947:16) in his French article '*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*' illustrated that remembering implies the real meaning of memory and experiential in nature transferred by agency or collectively through socialization, forgetting can be an 'ineluctable counterpart of memory'. Forgetting can be either by deliberate erasure of some history (Passerini 2003) especially the aspects that credit the makers of the immediate past history or giving limited attention and promoting political repudiation of the wrongs of the dominant paradigm at present. I shall illustrate the revolutionary regime's responsibility in the enforcement of remembering of the collective suffering in which the revolutionaries were victims and at the same time the liberators while promoting the forgetting of the perceived *divisive politics* (politics opposed to the revolutionary discourse). Although, Ashplant, Dawson and Roper (2017) descriptively illustrated with lived experiences of war in Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland, that excluded groups which feel completely alienated from official memory can seek to mobilize their counter-memory into an oppositional narrative in order to mount a full-scale challenge for political power, the excluded others in a revolutionary war memory may not be potentially cohesive and strong enough within a well-entrenched revolutionary patriarchy.

The paper also emphasizes that the duality and inter-subjectivity of memory is a gate pass to complex valuations of the processes of learning to speak, live and survive that are foundational not only for human existence but also dominance. This implies the likely interviewee-interviewer relationship quandary associated with the production and reproduction of memory as well as generating and constructing experiential historical anecdotes. To be able to contribute substantially to the making of meaningful historical claims, we have to put such claims in a larger context. The context according to Passerini is one in which the 'memory of the dead and in the end the unity of humanity through different times and spaces are at stake' (2011:248).

In this regard the paper emphasizes that when ideas about *who matters* change, so does the national memory. In his pioneering work on memory in social sciences mainstream, Halbwachs (1994 [1925]) concluded that social frameworks shape what people remember by filtering narratives to fit their collective significance. Only those things transferred are considered relevant to the collective within which people are positioned (see also Rigney 2018). Memory is always *on the move* (Rigney 2012). As this paper argues, along this memory lane, there are deformations tagged and eventually synced to cement the *true meaning of history*.

However, the academicians interested in analysis of national memory are more often than not entangled in the subjectivities of history and social science in general. How possible and tenable is it to tear open the mind of a person or a set of individuals to gain access to their *true memory*? How do people generate representations and symbolic interactions? The relationship between *orality* (recollections) and written claims is always conflicting and sometimes overlapping. On the one hand, the recollection of what happened and where it happened or who said what, is seemingly ephemeral (Joubert 2013:27-28). Written claims sometimes may be generated from the *orality* but the researcher has the onus to sieve the unwanted contents to suit the readership. This secondary representation can produce divergent representations and misinterpretations thereby nurturing distortions in the memory claims. Similar contradictions exist between history and memory (Passerini 2003, Passerini 2014). Between what we hear and read and what exactly happened is a gray zone in which every narrative could satisfactorily be admissible depending on the giver and the receiver of such narratives. It is therefore important to note that every historical event of political nature has a driver and passengers (just like the usual commuter vehicle). In this analogy, even though, the passengers witnessed the accident on the fateful day and some actually died, the dynamics surrounding the accident go beyond just the intentions of the driver in which case the passengers have no access to other factors that perhaps culminated into the accident (other than the obvious possibilities; the driver, the vehicle and perhaps the road).

In such studies as memory, we are asked to clearly indicate who and what the subject or object of history is. How did we come to conclude that the subject of history was really a subject? By what sufficient data (others call it representative sample space) can we substantiate claims of individual or collective memory in a multifaceted political culture? This dilemma on collection and later on analysis of data not only exists in memory studies but also elsewhere in social sciences. I labored to illuminate memory ramifications in the politics of other means. Also, in this spirit I explained that sizeable radical strands of knowledge prefer to sit on opposite sides; one claiming the influence of individual's memory as to the historic event, while the other emphasizing collective memory. Yet, novelty emerges in the studies that deeply analyze the consciousness and unconsciousness in the dealings of remembering, forgetting, ignoring and denying. I have viewed memory with three complementary and interdisciplinary lenses; one emphasizing representations (which anthropologists refer to as lived experiences). Two, narrations of shared history associated with generational transfer of memory within the subgroups, and three, the narratives (constructive) associated with shared memory considered national (official) collective memory. The collectivity of memory involves what Durkheim terms collective representation whereby he illustrated that societies require connection with the past in order to preserve cohesion and unity and that norms, rituals, traditional beliefs and values all relate to a shared memory of the past (1912); collective memory (Halbwachs 1994 [1925], Passerini 2014); and, accumulated subjectivities (Passerini 2003:2). In trying to blend individual and collective memory we identify the social

construction of meanings around political symbols, myths and practices as cultural components.

## 2. Data collection

The works of other memory scholars provided the foundation of my arguments. Although this is a comparatively-oriented-single-country-case, the intersubjective nature of memory requires an academic dialogue with scholars in different spaces and time. The emphasis on the academic interaction is so because, in the search for the meanings associated with political ordering of memory, we must deeply understand the intellectual claims along the spectrum and the convergences as well as divergences with anecdotes of individual and familial representations of symbolic claims that come with memory studies. This is to purely help me exercise diligent scholarly prerogative in the making of informed claims around the relationship between power configurations and politics of memory involving remembering, forgetting, ignoring as well as denial of historical events.

I sought to explore the historical and anthropological data related to collective patriotic sacrifice (heroism and collective victimhood related to memory of war). Efforts at establishing the individual representative symbolization of war and its impact on political actions of the actors were made. The strategic use of memory of war by the revolutionary warlords through education, ideological indoctrination and coercive use of force in enforcing remembering, forgetting and utter repudiation informed the focus of this paper. There is a common belief in this research that the glorification of the guerilla warlords (National Resistance Army) otherwise seen as heroes and the extensive liberation commemorations strengthens the trend and the belief in the shared cognition and agreement about the inevitability of patriotic sacrifice and its value. What is at stake if the revolutionary political power is usurped by the *insignificant others* (who perhaps lack revolutionary vision and ideology)? This is a question to be answered in this research piece while exploring the role of history and ideology in the dealings with regime survival.

In Uganda's ethnographic engagement, I established the generational discrepancies in relation to representative memory portrayals and the doing of present-day political business. The fascinating findings were that, while the young people in urban areas are most likely to engage in unconventional politics aimed at regime change, there is no distinction between the young and the old folks in rural Uganda. There existed no significant differences in generational internalization of politics and its socialization. This indicates that as Inglehart and Klingemann (1979) established, there are basic orientations, that apply uniformly to the people from childhood, which tend to persist even through the adult life. In seemingly similar results as those of Uganda's revolutionary society, Shi in the study on generational differences in political attitudes in China, established that in their formative years, older generations experienced several national political narratives that naturally caused them to accept traditional social norms established by the party in power and its rules of the game (1999:29). Given a vast exposure to the past amassed with turmoil, older generations in Uganda are more likely to give up

their interests instead of engaging in state-challenging politics. The reason however for the rural younger folks' lack of interest in unconventional political activities was the result of media-based socialization trap.

Also, the young people find themselves in a society which encourages them to obey leaders, and castigate dangerous unconventional activities. Nearly, at every center of socialization is a medium of communication portraying mainstream political ordering whether through media, school, church or village political forums intended to indoctrinate young people into accepting status quo. For example, I attended a friend's graduation party in Rwemiyaga county where the communication to celebrants was very structured. Every speaker that came to the podium had a responsibility to acknowledge the following before he/she spoke; God for giving them life, Museveni for bringing peace and security and National Resistance Movement (the revolutionary party) for the sacrifices made for Uganda. This acknowledgement starts from the district leader, member of Parliament and trickles down to the lowest leaders at the local councils. A similar message flow appeared in burial ceremonies I attended such as a friend's relative in Iganga district. I attended marriage ceremonies in Kiruhura, Mbarara and Kampala districts and still the political communication was status quo inclined. Village-based students' forums presented the same revolutionary characteristic such as one I attended at Biharwe. Such an ideological control of political communication does not allow for differentiations in ages while dealing with generational interpretation of political life. On one hand, there is a serious shift in political orientations among young and old in urban areas because of access to alternative media, they have become more aware of the needed strength over regime retaliations to dissidence and more determined to engage unconventional politics (with limited chances of success though). Collective memory on the other hand, is an instrumental [constructive] nature of memory configuration in political symbolization and definition of power.

### 3. Conceptualizing and contextualizing Memory of War (MOW)

Memory is used in linguistics as a verb and a noun. As a verb, it connotes an action, occurrence or a process; and as a noun, it stands out as a figurative object. As a concept, memory has been used in interdisciplinary studies cutting across natural and social sciences as well as liberal arts and in everyday individual use among humans. For long, memory had been a confine of the cognitive and medical/neurological psychology interested in trauma related to the works of Pierre especially in *dissociation et La Médecine psychologique* published in 1920s<sup>1</sup>; in history, memory is commonly associated with a Medieval France's historiographer Bloch<sup>2</sup>. In African traditions, memory guided orality in the generational transfer of knowledge that stood as a repository up until written history became predominant in the recent centuries (Karusigarira 2016). In anthropology memory was/is

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<sup>1</sup> J, Pierre's 1923 *La Médecine Psychologique*.

<sup>2</sup> M, Bloch's *Memoirs of War*, 1914

considered a tool for authentic and unbiased portrayals of the past incidences. Elsewhere in criminology, memory has been the basic foundation for evidence search on past offences and in archeological studies, it is interested in the world's early occupancy. In performing arts and aesthetic fields, the past speaks imagination. Memory however, started gaining active currents in political sociology in 1920s with pioneering works of Halbwachs with his work on the Social Frameworks of Memory<sup>3</sup> and later the collective memory (1980 [1950]).

Social science conceptualization and understanding of memory of war takes three shapes. One is the individual, two is familial/generational interactive cognition and three is, the instrumental construction of fear and a collective relationship with memory of the past guided by the political power. I seek to intentionally avoid treating the three categories in isolation because they best explain power and politics, if seen holistically. Given the calculated exposure to national war discourses and symbolism of revolutionary politics, the citizens bask in the uncompromising military regimes than scatter around uncertainty of what may come with transfer of power. Instead, maintaining the devil they consider the guarantor of security they perceive to exist is better than the angel they do not know. Characterizing collective memory requires an understanding of the intentional interpretation of historical events and socialization projects. In his 1996 working paper, Aguilar defines collective memory as the common elements in the memory of a society composed of different sub-identities and age groups. This is because, there are multiple sources of memory such as family, schools, churches, occupations and the state (1997).

In their article, Aguilar and Payne elucidated the effect of the contentious nature of collective memory when new truths begin to get unburied (2016). Of these collectives according to Hirsch's study on the transfer of traumatic *post-war memory* to later generations, the most resilient and important framework in the memory transmission is family (2012). The children of a holocaust victim family, Hite adds, inherit a horrible and unknown past that deprived them of belonging and survival system. Later on, upon becoming artists, educators, historians, such children produce works that reflect their intense search for the meanings of their familial losses and individual pains. However, understanding the interest in nationalism as a social framework has become conspicuous (*Ibid* 2012:76). Most post-colonial states rebuilt on the foundation of collective national memory related to disgraceful colonialism and powerful foreign occupations. In their Primary School teaching book on social studies (including national history), Nsubuga *et al.* echoed metaphorically, the rise of nationalism and Pan-Africanism as the identity that resulted from shared memory of the white man's dominance (2014:103-104). The question that remains to be answered however is, what were the nations that Nationalists and Pan-Africanists were struggling to preserve? Hobsbawm and Terence's *invention of tradition* (1983) highlighted the constructed character of nations as well as the importance of memory in their creation (see also, Anderson 1983).

The cultural analysis of memory in this study, is not necessarily a derivative of the *primordial*

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<sup>3</sup> M, Halbwachs in *the social frameworks of memory* gave an illustration of the collective elements of individual memory thereby putting memory into contexts.



*ethnos* but rather the carefully framed and constructed belief system that runs wild through the state institutions and sets a pace in the shaping of the political agenda. It starts with the instrumentalist strategic alignment and through the power of coercion and forcible enforcement, the state institutions start to reconstruct, revive and regenerate such agendas into lasting political folklores and rituals that sink deep into the wider membership of the nation-states. In short, culture is a discursive property carefully constructed and rather not essential. Such a process is reinvigorated by the existence of opposing forces which in one way or another presents a historical rhetoric that appears to be a threat to a defined wellbeing. In Africa, the colonial resistance campaigns ushered the popular support that for centuries now remains the rhetoric for political regime agenda. The renewed political contestations in the post-colonial Uganda has interwoven histories with emotions of war that continue to dictate actions of agency in the revitalization of a revolutionary regime. We ought to seek the understanding of the dynamics around memory intricacies during, just after and later years of the revolutionary regime. During the war between 1981-1986, the NRA rebels had the responsibility to convince the nation that they were the needed sacrifice.

Skepticism of the *we* however could remain eminent. Later, especially between 1986 and 1995 when the forth Uganda constitution—the first being the 1962, followed by the 1966 and without debate followed by the 1967—was put in operation, the revolutionary regime had the monopoly in the enforcement of *who the heroes were without question*. The period that followed 1996 presidential elections up until 2016 election (and even currently), the meaning of *we*, has been narrowing to the nucleus of the bush war's High Command whose chairmanship (Museveni) has never changed since the early days of the initial war mobilization. This implies that the younger and older generations across localities and of special interest (the former and surviving revolutionaries and their kinships) have different levels of representations of war memory. Museveni's revolutionary populism at first enjoyed acceptance emanating from the bad rule that had wrecked the nation politically and socio-economically. The disposition towards his presidency has been dramatically shifting since but with no serious change implications.

Since the National Resistance Movement (NRM) captured power, they celebrate 9th June as Heroes' Day and the only authentic rhetoric is that of the bravery of the first 27 men—including Museveni—who endured tough terrains in order to liberate Uganda from autocracy and all forms of injustice. It is on this day that the people who in different capacities have sacrificed to sustain the vision of the liberators are remembered. The purpose of such victim-based commemoration is to strengthen the ideology of the holders of power. The rhetorical apocalypse of leaders corrupted by power such as Idi Amin and Milton Obote gave the revolutionaries such as Yoweri Museveni a right that does not derive from formal mandate but exclusively from the *consentization* of their revolutionary ethos, a consciousness that coincides as Pellicani puts it, 'with Hegel's manner with the science of the ultimate purpose' (2003:199). The common good of man that the revolutionaries fought for, therefore, must have

ideological protection against adulterations likely from spontaneous reformists trying to disable the *revolutionary consciousness* such as the Reform Agenda that later transformed into Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) political party, and recently the People Power movement led by Robert Kyagulanyi. Such forces as the FDC and People Power (considered by the state as the anarchists) threaten to redefine history and de-sanctify the revolutionary claims of the past. The *new conscientization project* by the likes of Robert Kyagulanyi and Dr Kizza Besigye bring to question the authenticity of political sacrifice. Political Commentator Charles Rwomushana argues—just like Hungarian activist Lukács' theory (1968)—that classification of victimhood is displaced. The consciousness built around victimhood is in fact in Lukács' words absolute consciousness which is the philosophy of history to which the masses contributed nothing (1968). Such a philosophy is particularly a product and a work ethic of the elite class.

The Luweero 1981-1986 war is talked about in the National Resistance Army (NRA)'s institutional spheres, as a source of group identity. The nurtured ontological securitization presents itself as an end and the means of nation-building. Because of the perceived bad politics involving the colonial rule and the post-independence dictatorships, the claims made by the revolutionary regime subtly reifies the notion of security in a sense of military. Even when crime rates are high including spates of mysterious—and open—murders and human rights violations as well as thefts, deep-rooted corruption and robberies among others are scattered around the country, the *perceived security* against war, enforced discourses of revolutionary providence and widespread state-inspired violence continue to have a positive resonance in the public space. Meanwhile, the memory of Lord's Resistance Army that rocked the north of Uganda from 1986 to 2000s remains only a story of the Northerners and of no interest to the revolutionary regime although its victimhood could have doubled the Luweero numbers of deaths and casualties. This implies that the memorization of the Northerners losses to the LRA is of no symbolic importance to the revolutionary regime's consolidation project. To use the Rwanda's illustration; Paul Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) commemorates genocide with a victimhood narrative and the notion of the *new-all-inclusive-nationalization*. The Rwanda genocide commemoration which is 7<sup>th</sup> April of every year since 1994 (in fact the entire month of April) is a reflection on the horrible ethnic cleansing so that the history portrays the authenticity of the RPF warriors' heroism. The commemoration of the genocide and the imposed *de-ethnicization* was—and still is—generally intended to create a political space in which the minorities (victors of the 1994 war) could sustain uncontested occupation of a country that comprised the majority ethnic others (the Hutu). Any history from the perceived aggressor (Hutu narrative) cannot be tolerated. The narrative of the ethnic other considered the orchestrators of ethnic cleansing of the minority Tutsi is treated with contempt, ridicule and in fact as a subversive action deserving persecution. On the one hand, revolutionary regimes such as those in Uganda and Rwanda upon capturing power, emphasized grand nationalization of the nations. On the other hand, nationalization was contrasted by the need to build a trusted network capable of executing



serious and sensitive operations including an army that is capable of silencing dissidence and cover every trace which naturally points to employing people from close ethnicities with high-rated loyalties.

#### **4. Politics of remembering and not remembering**

In Uganda just—like other post-war societies—remembering and not remembering are political regime theaters. Political acknowledgement is not just a socio-cultural activity but involves deep nationalistic tensions that require political containment. Acknowledgement in itself has the potential to spur or facilitate a recourse to violence because it involves victims and perpetrators whose borderline is vengeance. In some cases, such as the Ugandan one, Quinn revealed that the truth commission conducted their inquiries after the 1986 war and established that Yoweri Museveni's regime had significantly been playing the politics of accommodation thereby keeping formal memorization on the low-key (2010:115). However, the concomitant conscious denial of formal acknowledgement of physical (experiential) memory of communities that suffered the greater deal of the 1981- 1986 by the revolutionary regime is contradicted by the presence of symbolizations scattered everywhere in the political parameters such as the presidential monuments and political image of a revolutionary nature. Obviously as Ranjan descriptively elaborates, one of the purposes of commemorative politics is to control its public reception (2010).

The typical example of the nation's socio-political acknowledgement or remembering is the commemoration of heroes and liberators which is a well-funded annual political fest involving parades, display of firepower and state dining. In Museveni's regime, there are three important days in which heroes are celebrated; one is Heroes' Day, first introduced in 1980s after the return of Milton Obote of Uganda people's Congress (UPC) to presidency (Quinn 2010). The selection of June 9<sup>th</sup> is however very controversial because other than administrative politics of the Military Commission of the National Liberation Army, there is no remarkable historical episode deserving of remembering. If Heroes' Day was indeed representing the fall of Amin's rule, then the best day should have been April 13<sup>th</sup> 1979 that saw Yusuf Kironde Lule replace Idi Amin's rule. Again, if the Heroes' Day was to resonate with or symbolize Obote's return as president of Uganda, then the day he won the election (11<sup>th</sup> December 1980) would have been a suitable candidate, not June 9<sup>th</sup>. Heroes' day was later co-opted by Museveni's regime and fully used to not only commemorate the personalities who have made a significant contribution to the development of Uganda but also and most importantly, those that made the revolutionary regime possible and later played a role in the consolidation of power since. For example, Heroes' Day celebrations in 2001 commemorated people of all kinds who died and those who contributed significantly to the revolutionary struggle. However, critics have maintained that the day has been chosen to remember those people who helped Museveni to ascend to power. Among the beneficiaries of the heroes' medals in 2001 were Mr. John Nagenda and Joan Kakwenzire (both the presidential advisors then).

The second commemorated heroism is *Tarehe Sita* (NRA/M liberation day). The commemoration of NRA/M liberation day is the agenda to consolidate and solidify the revolutionaries' political system. *Tarehe Sita* is the day to show case the military achievements of the revolutionary politics during and after the bush war. The day is also to cement the notion that the holders of the revolutionary ideology are the source of power considered of national interest (not necessarily for the people that died in the Luweero struggle). It is on this day that the president outlines his struggles, providence in terms of which roads have or are to be constructed, how the electricity and water will reach the most remote village or how his regime is approaching the development, health and education issues. A Museveni monument standing in Mubende district not only symbolizes the offensive on Kabamba barracks but also reinforces the guardianship of Museveni in the bush war struggle and the years that followed the war. The questions however that arise demand clarity of the inclusivity of the meaning of Museveni's statue in a military barracks considered national army.

What are the chances that national army will sanctify the person of the current president and gain energies to crash any other dissenting voices whose attempts manifest de-sanctification of their guardian? In this case when commemoration involves a monument of a sitting president, then the political image of absolutism cannot be ruled out. A memorial is usually supposed to be a connector of a community—disintegrated by history—around a shared memory. However, a memorial that favors one group over the other can spur further violence and duel. In such partial representation of groups, the revolutionary few become *the dad can provide* icons just beyond the historical memories of the 1986 bush war to current providence. Here history and present are interchangeably used.

Perhaps, the last one and most controversial is the October 9<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. This has been a special day in the politics of Uganda since independence in 1962. Although ceremonially the independence from colonial rule was attained on 1962, the transfer of power from the colonial administration was not until the late months of 1963. Independence commemoration received interesting interpretation and political constructions in the different post-independence regimes. For Kabaka Edward Mutesa ii (between October 9<sup>th</sup> 1963- 24<sup>th</sup> February 1966) and later, Milton Obote's regime (between February 24<sup>th</sup> 1966- January 25<sup>th</sup> 1971), the euphoria over nationalism and self-government among Ugandans was a shared cognition. At that time, European colonial rule was the common enemy to the national identity and therefore the take-over of political power meant the new era in which Uganda would make its own political decisions and relations. For Idi Amin's regime, independence meant the expulsion of imperialism and its ruminants such as Milton Obote's regime and Asians.

Indeed, the Independence Day even gained more power with the Uganda National Liberation Army's regimes (UNLA). For example, UNLA's Godfrey Binaisa's reign was preoccupied with proving his contested presidency. Most of his short-lived rule was spent in enforcing his own legitimacy and international recognition. There are claims that the fall of Binaisa was precipitated in part by the National Consultative Council (NCC)'s schemes to sneak *Obotism* (Obote Two's regime) back which was in fact

successful in a flawed infamous electoral process in 1980. For Milton Obote ii, his return to power not only meant the continuation of his nationalistic agenda but also to assert his sovereignty. During the Military commission of 1985, the nation was under a state of emergency as the government was under the successful coup plotted by Bazillio Olara Okello and Tito Okello Lutwa whose rule was between July 27<sup>th</sup> 1985- July 29<sup>th</sup> 1985 and July 29<sup>th</sup> 1985- January 26<sup>th</sup> 1986 respectively. Obote two's Independence Day commemoration carried much the same meaning in the period between 1980- 1984 as that during 1986- to-date (commonly known as *Musevenism* in the elite circles).

Before the 1986 revolutionary political turn, Uganda was not devoid of acknowledgement. Heroes' Day was established in Obote's regime to remember the personalities who occasioned his return. From the independence monument erected just near the Uganda's parliament signifying the era of nationalism and anti-colonial regime (apparently having been supposedly erected with European colonial government's guidance); to the naming of roads in Kampala after the political figures that made contributions to different regimes, the symbols of historic memorization are present. Some include, Luwum Street named after Archbishop Janani Luwum who was allegedly killed by Idi Amin's regime in 1977 and honored by Obote two regime for putting up a fight against Idi Amin's anarchy. In fact, Luwum day has since 2015 been declared a national holiday to commemorate his martyrdom acknowledged by Museveni's regime. His murder occurred in the same manners and time as that of ministers Lt Col. Erinayo Oryema and Charles Oboth Ofumbi. Both ministers met their deaths with Luwum but little is known of them since they met their death. Yusuf Lule road in remembrance of Professor Yusuf Lule for his contribution to national development.

Just a brief focus on the political tribes that played at the time leading to the revolutionary triumph could help us further understand national memory intricacies. Little is emphasized of the mutinous UNLA's composition. The tribal duel that caused the 1985 coup was also in part orchestrated by the replacement of David Oyite-Ojok (after a helicopter crash in 1983) by a junior Langi officer yet Bazillio Olara-Okello was a perceived appropriate candidate but an Acholi (Daily Monitor 2013). Muhoozi Kainerugaba (son of the revolutionary war Chairman of the High Command) gives a narrative history of 1981- 1986 (perhaps from his father's diaries) revolutionary war in his *Battles of the Ugandan resistance*—regardless of this contested title—on how the UNLA had been nursing a latent tribal conflict between the majority Acholi people and the Obote kinsmen (the Langi) who were the favored few (2010:134-135). Just during the same period in which the revolutionary bush war was at its peak, there was a tribal warfare within the UNLA, between Acholi and the Langi soldiers. This tribal coup in 1985 was also sparked in part by the *tribalization* of scarce commodities whose supplies were a reserve of the military shops. One remarkable feud is the official Chief of Defense Forces (CDF) letter directing a tribal Langi, Ogenga Otunnu to buy assorted items from the army shop, the directive that was turned down. Ogenga Otunnu was a younger brother to Olara Otunnu then the guild president of Makerere University with a big following from Democratic Party and whose support Dr. Milton Obote wanted so

badly to rally Baganda Democratic Party strong-holds for the 1986 anticipated presidential election.

Precipitated in part by this tribal sectarian animosity accumulation, the Acholi and Langi tribes went on a shoot-out spree at Mbuya army barracks in Kampala in 1985. This military mutiny and infighting among the tribal Acholi and Langi culminated into the toppling of Dr. Milton Obote by Lt. General Tito Okello Lutwa and Brig. Bazillio Olara Okello. Total repudiation of such a stage in the period of the revolutionary struggle could have been in part intended to showcase the mighty nature of the bush war organization. Counterfactually, if the internal tribal-based conflict was absent within the UNLA, perhaps the NRA rebels would not have triumphed to the capital in the manner they did. The environment was simply ripe for change. This is the most significant episode in the bush war struggle timeframe but the most unacknowledged. The fact is that, the divisiveness within the UNLA demobilized the army and the sources of command became vague and porous leading to the ease of entry for a more organized military organization such as the NRA. Most of the time, acknowledgment has been inwardly inclined and has disregarded outward perturbations.

The assertion of memory of war distortion and portrayal of the NRA as the most omnipotent in this period can be screened from the verbatim statement. Museveni in Kainerugaba's (2010:135) piece narrates:

We defeated 16 major offensives of Obote's Army, destroyed or disorganized 250 [companies] of the same army and destroyed or disorganized 300 vehicles of all types. In terms of deaths, we killed more than 4,000 soldiers of Obote's army. Therefore, it is incredible that Special Brigade could underestimate such a formidable force.

The highlight of Museveni's narration gives the notion that, the post-bush war period was a period in which the dominant paradigm (the revolutionary might) was supposed to be the only admissible knowledge in the public space.

### **5. Luweero Triangle death zone**

Luweero triangle is not just about Luweero district but a tactical zone which was a battle ground between the Milton Obote's government forces (the Uganda National Liberation Army-(UNLA)) and the National Resistance Army rebel forces. The *triangle* is a composition of many districts in Buganda including Luweero, Kiboga, Nakaseke, Kyankwazi, Mityana, Mubende, Nakasongola, Wakiso and Mpigi. Given the importance of Luweero in the revolutionary war and its devastating memory, the parliament passed the resolution to erect a statue or a memorial tower—of a sort—to remember country men and women who perished in the bush war struggle (although implementation has not been done).

There are many war-affected areas in Uganda but current Luweero district and Nakaseke district (formerly part of Luweero district) stand out exceptionally in respect to *revolutionalism*. Luweero

between 1981 and 1986 became the real synonym for war, fear and death. On the highway that runs through Luweero, lays abandoned dysfunctional military tanks. Luweero up until now is faced with the horror of the revolutionary war (see also Quinn 2010:206). The Uganda Radio Network which published in August 2012 an article *Luweero War Mass Graves Rotting Away*, illustrated the extent of destruction that remains present in the minds of the people in Luweero and Nakaseke. These memorial mass graves are situated at Sub-counties of Katikamu, Makulubita, Kikamulo, Bamunanika, Zirowe, Kalagala, Nyimbwa, Wabusana-Kikyusa, Kapeeka, Wakyato, Kikandwa and other areas in Luweero and Nakaseke. The graves were built to offer a decent burial for the fallen countrymen and women who died in the bush war struggle in the period between 1981-1986 that brought President Museveni to power<sup>4</sup>. But according to the community leaders such as Sulaiman Mugerwa—a war veteran—and Sam Sserunjoji—in an interview with Uganda Radio Network’s Brain Luwaga—the neglect to preserve the mass graves in these sub-counties means that the government is not taking the sacrifice of their fallen relatives seriously.

Perhaps, the revolutionary regime’s reluctance to fully acknowledge the masses that perished in Luweero triangle is two-fold. One of such *denialism* is from President Museveni’s own verbatim during the *Tarehe Sita* commemoration that:

Among bush warriors that were trained by the Mozambique and Tanzanian governments of Samura Mashel and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere respectively, apart from myself (Museveni), there are surviving comrades such as Gen. Ivan Koreta, Gen Salim Saleh. Others who died did not actually die in war involving battle-field shooting but died in other wars<sup>5</sup>.

This revelation in the interpretation of *denialism* is intended to portray and protect the legacy of the revolutionary formations. The departed in that period were therefore government soldiers that met the uncompromising fire from the bush warriors or the innocent people that soldiers charged after suffering severe offensives. For the people in Luweero, the horror of 1986 war is still fresh.

Other than the dysfunctional military tanks that were left in the area for memory and the mass graves scattered in Luweero and Nakaseke, there are still active war materials that explode from time to time with human contact and tampering. Savannah Regional Police spokesperson while in Nakaseke district 2015 (Lameck Kigozi) reported that there are still military ordnances detonating since the end of 1986 Luweero bush war. Kigozi reports:

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<sup>4</sup> Brain Luwaga, featured a journalistic article titled ‘Luweero war mass graves rotting away’ on Uganda Radio Network on 21 August 2012. <<https://ugandaradionetwork.com/story/luweero-war-mass-graves-rotting-away/> Accessed on 12 April, 2019.>

<sup>5</sup> NBS TV Uganda published a video coverage of Museveni addressing Tarehe Sita celebrants in 2018 in Butaleja. on Youtube channel. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tklHW7PB70/> Accessed on 12 April 2019.>

We had one in 2012. When children were playing with a rusty object. To them it was a bicycle ring. When these children attempted to dismantle the object using an axe, it went off. It killed one instantly and injured the other. In 2013, we had about 7 men who were burning charcoal. These ones picked an object. They were covering their logs, then lit the logs and the explosive detonated<sup>6</sup>.

As the war anxiety dust attempts to settle in the region formerly torn by war (Luweero Triangle), the fears of old are in continuous return with new cases of such active ordnances. The periodic and untimely detonation of such latent ordnances instigate the fresh representations of the war experiences in regions worst hit by war. Obviously, such a victimhood does not necessarily imply that, this eminent public fear of war alone is influencing the political participation in favor of the revolutionary regime in the region today. On the contrary, the discourse of fear and collective recollections of the memories of war in the public spheres in these regions and beyond capacitated total legitimation from the aftermath of 1986 bush war victory up until now (2019).

Charles Rwomushana reminds us that revolutionary regimes are a justification of peace and social transformation and they in general build caveats. Verbatim Rwomushana argues that:

Museveni's, *we brought peace, unity, modernization and transformation*, does not mean that Mr. Museveni is the inventor of peace, he is part and parcel of the mayhem in Luweero. So, Museveni had to have another group responsible for killings whether or not they participated in the killings. It is Milton Obote who killed during the guerilla war... it is ADF killing in recent murders in Kampala... so we must be reminded that peace is not natural, it is artificial and a culmination of insecurity<sup>7</sup>.

Rwomushana illustrated his claims with an example of AIGP Felix Kaweesi's Murder. At his burial where Mr. Museveni made a very fundamental statement that, the killing of Kaweesi is from Congo (DRC). He adds however that Mr. Museveni has not been asked of whether among those that were arrested some really relate to Congo in principle.

Within the surviving revolutionary soldiers' circles (including child soldiers commonly known as the *Kadogos*), the memory of war casualties needs limited reconstruction. As quoted from Kainerugaba (2010:148), Maj. Gen. Pecos Kutesa in his work *Uganda's Revolution 1979- 1988: How I saw It*, narrates of an incident in which a bush war soldier who was foraging for food in the nearby (in the

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<sup>6</sup> Richard Orweny and George Katagwa published a special NBS TV report titled 'Fear as Bombs start to explode in Luweero'. Uploaded on NBS TV Youtube channel on May 25th 2015.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhxoeOvlpBY/> Accessed on 9 April 2019.>

<sup>7</sup> Charles Rwomushana a political analyst on NBS talk show made a presentation published on NBS TV Youtube Channel <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppyng4Tb3a4/> Accessed on 20 January 2019>



barracks' vicinity) banana plantation and while trying to return back to their camp, got hit by a landmine. His cries after loss of the legs to the landmine attracted his friend who equally got hit by another mine and lost his legs too while on a rescue mission. Neither the enemy (UNLA soldiers) nor the bush warriors could venture into these two mine victims charging or rescuing respectively. Subsequently, the cries of the wounded soldiers tormented them for three consecutive days until they finally became silent. The recollections of this and similar events promote comradeship necessary to sustain an emotionally connected army. Similarly, Ross (2009) argues that a revolutionary cadre-ship of intellectuals can actually lead subordinate groups to indoctrination into dominant values and raise the level of their consciousness by reaffirming their group's expectations against the overthrown paradigm.

Along the way, some of such comrades gain opposing views but may not have immediate impact on the entire army solidarity because of such shared representation and its reproduction in the younger generations that follow (especially the *Kadogos*). In fact, the fall-out of some revolutionary comrades is seen by the in-group as the revolutionary betrayal and such comrades deserve total neutralization and disciplining. In this spirit, the loss of the comrades in the struggle strengthened the bush warriors. Pecos Kutesa in an NBS interview in 2017 elaborated that the fatalities of the comrades increased anger and determination to win the battle and consolidate their victory. This resilience was re-enforced and expressed in the songs such as *tusonge tusonge paka Kampala* (literally meaning let us keep advancing till Kampala). The Luweero war evoked both sad and very hilarious memories and indeed, the determination and deep anger against the government and their loss of comrades led to victory in 1986. Kutesa urges that the questions asked to people who were joining the struggle were; 'Are you angry? Is that anger sustainable? If you are angry today because the price of sugar is up, what if it goes down?'<sup>8</sup>. Such questions provoked notion of a *noble cause* implying that even if one died, their struggle was not in vain. This sanctioned remembering has since persisted in the military ranks and files.

## 6. Individual representation: Empirical anecdotes

The direct experience of war and its representations are not just about the time period in which the war was active. In fact, the war effects become more intense with the survivors whose unconditional responsibility is to internalize and cope with the war memory and related losses. This is majorly a psychological condition involving the post-war traumatic situations. The individual recollections of the *real things* created two worlds in the minds of the victims and survivors of NRA bush war. Such recollections may include the injustices they faced in the war, the exposure to direct violence and the immediate injustice the victims faced in the aftermath of war. The individuals have a full construction in their personal imagery representations of the fact that, there were the perpetrators of violence and the victims. The revolutionary regime's emergence and victory becomes a sanctuary as the victims try to

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<sup>8</sup> NBS TV's Youtube channel published Pecos Kutesa in an interview on NRA Memoir with NTV Uganda on 25 January 2017. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oc8I4Jccs/> Accessed on 10 April 2019.>

grapple with the disastrous past.

The relationship between the symbolization of war memory and the individual anecdotes is the refreshing of the remembrances of the past to suit real time politics. Perhaps, this is the most emphasized aspect in the reconciliation and truth commission in post-war period. This is because truth of what happened must be told if emotional wounds are to heal completely and proper containment of retribution is to be realized. The individual and his/her direct relationship with violent warfare, politicization and media discourses must be carefully scrutinized. The Luweero victimhood for example as narrated by Kaddu John Kavuma (a brother to late Luttaguzi killed on the same day with other 10 people in one village in 1981 by Uganda People's Congress' adherents)<sup>9</sup>, state murders represented the total disgust of the previous regimes in favor of the revolutionaries. This is a sentiment generally shared by people who had a direct interface with war. To such people, representations of the war are mirrored in the graves, widowhood, orphan-hood and poverty that became their everyday reality after the war. As long as there is no direct armed violence/war, the definition of security requires no extensions. In fact, the vast majority of the citizens in the regions that were directly affected by war such as Luweero triangle, are still victims of structural violence (poor roads, poor health services and poverty generally) but ironically speaking, it is in such places that the revolutionary regime is scoring highest in elections.

On Uganda's media for example, analysis must separate media in the capital (Kampala metropolitan area) from the peripheral coverage. As much as political activities of opposition have considerable space, the media in general is a restricted area for contestations. Outside Kampala according to Barbara—a Journalist in Uganda—almost 80% of media is owned by National Resistance Movement-inclined politicians and that in fact before you get into the radio station, you know the owner of the radio station. Outside the newsroom, there are governmental agents such as Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) who are the representatives, the voices of the president and have such powers. The character of media in the periphery is very well defined. The rural media houses serve particular tribes, speak the tribal languages, know the political boundaries, are aware of the sensitivities and taboos concerning the political rules on coverage and therefore effectively communicate to the local people who happen to be the voters. In extreme cases, such localized media can be used to instigate intolerance and violence against opposition to the establishment. For example, just like in other cleansings such as the Germany's infamous holocaust that aimed to exterminate lives of the European Jews and Non-Germans, the Rwanda genocide that aimed to exterminate the ethnic Tutsi people, the Luweero bush war has been perceived as a just war through the regime-inclined media.

The parties to the revolutionary ideology shape the narrative of how they played a great role in the writing of the new history, and therefore, that history should not be unwritten because the price they paid was the blood, resources and prospects for a stable life. Memory (by the living) of those who died

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<sup>9</sup> The narration of the war witness <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BD9bwq8agA/> Accessed on 21 May 2019>

against those who killed (with or without instrumental projects) is an individual reminiscence that represents a collective in the broadcasting and strengthening the power grip. Through the local media houses, the *perceived survivors* have drawn a clear line between acceptable politics and the forbidden politics. It is because of this restrictive claim that Wakiso district in this analysis is not considered too connected to the center point of Luweero 1981-1986 war. The media influence in the capital plays a great deal of influence on Wakiso district. As shown in table one below, Wakiso's political party distribution shows political competition and the war of discourses (a condition for balanced political participation and representation). This trend of political participation is very particular to Wakiso and explains why there is high state repression and military involvement in containing dissent.

Table 1. Parliamentary representation in Wakiso district 2016

S/no.	Constituency	Member of Parliament	Party affiliation
1.	Entebbe Municipality	Rosemary Tumusiime Bikaako	NRM
2	Busiro County East	Medard Lubega Sseggon	DP
3	Busiro County North	Dennis Ssozi Galabuzi	NRM
4	Kyadondo County East	Appolo Kantinti (later Robert Kyagulanyi in a By-election)	FDC/ (later no-party)
5	Busiro County South	Peter Simon Sematimba	NRM
6	Nansana Municipality	Musoke Wakayima Nsereko	DP
7	Makindye-Ssabagabo Municipality	Emmanuel Kigozi Ssempala	DP
8	Kiira Municipality	Ibrahim Ssemujju	FDC

Source: Extracted from the Gazette List of Members of Parliament 2016.

The regime actively consolidating power, therefore, —aware of the damaging effect of narrations and influence of media on war and related retribution—embarks on a censorship of the remembrance of events that the government perceives dangerous. There is less or no politicization in the center point in which the war was real and the devastation sunk deep into everyday lives of the people. The people know only one dominant narrative; one given by the revolutionaries with whom they must associate. This presents the sensitivities of the memorization of the sites of traumatic nature. People easily relate with every attempt at remembrances of what happened and what may happen with change. The immediate decades that followed the tragic war, kept the people in the same direct interpretation of actions only in relation to what happened and what may happen in the future. This is the worst form of muting to parochialism that I found disturbingly an obstruction for the sideline politics/counter-revolutionary paradigms. Therefore, the point that we quite often miss, is the role of individual representations of the *real experiences* in the public space. Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between the individual representation and social representation. When the individual thoughts of what happened are transformed into sound or other signs such as writing and expression of sadness, they cease to be just individual thoughts but rather get shared in the political interaction process. Table two

illustrates what muting to parochial state means in the epicenter of the revolutionary war. In areas like those in table two, opposition parties can hardly gain political triumph.

Table 2. Members of Parliament for Luweero Triangle's 2016 Parliamentary Elections

S/no	District	County	Name	Political Party
1	Luweero	Katikamu County North	Abraham James Byandala	NRM
2	Luweero	Katikamu County South	Edward Ndawula Ssembatya	NRM
3	Luweero	Bamunanika County	John Chrysostom Musingo	NRM
4	Luweero	Luweero	Lillian Segujja Nakate	NRM
5	Mpigi	Mawokota County South	Seguya Lubyayi John Bosco	NRM
6	Mpigi	Mawokota County North	Amelia Ann Kyambadde	NRM
7	Mpigi	Mpigi	Sarah Nakawunde	NRM
8	Mubende	Mubende	Benny Bugembe Namugwanya	NRM
9	Mubende	Buwekula County	Joseph Kakooza	NRM
10	Mubende	Kasambya County South	Simeo Nsubuga	NRM
11	Mubende	Kassanda County North	Patrick Oshabe Nsamba	NRM
12	Mubende	Kasamya County	Gaffa Mbwatekamwa	NRM
13	Mubende	Bukuya County	Micheal Iga Bukunya	NRM
14	Mubende	Mubende Municipality	Anthony Semuli	NRM
15	Nakasongola	Nakasongola County	Noah Wanzala Mutebi	NRM
16	Nakasongola	Budyabo County	Wilson Muruli Mukasa	NRM
17	Nakasongola	Nakasongola	Margaret Komuhangi	NRM
18	Nakaseke	Nakaseke South County	Paulson Ssemakula Luttaguzi	DP
19	Nakaseke	Nakaseke	Sarah Najjuma	NRM
20	Nakaseke	Nakaseke North County	Syda Namirembe Bbumba	NRM
21	Mityana	Mityana	Judith Nabakooba	NRM
22	Mityana	Mityana County North	Godfrey Kiwanda	NRM
23	Mityana	Mityana Municipality	Francis Zaake	No party

Source: Extracted from the Gazette List of Members of Parliament 2016.

Out of the districts considered the center point of the 1981- 1986 bush war such as Luweero, Nakaseke, Mubende, Mpigi, Nakasongola, Mityana (other than Wakiso), there are only two members of Parliament from the Opposition (out of whom, one is an independent MP). Luttaguzi Semakula Paulson Kasana of Democratic Party (DP) and Francis Zaake are the only opposition members of Parliament in this region. He fronts protection of land rights and fighting social injustices which speak to emotions and strategies of the people at an individual level. In this part of the country, memory of war is in itself a regime consolidation project as long as the views held of the war remain constant. Opposition strategist in this region must try to avoid politics that question the *Musevenism* and the revolutionary discourse lest they risk their political games.

In the northern part of Uganda, the memory of post-Luweero war involved the denial of National Resistance Army as a new national army in favor of Acholi-Langi that had dominated the national military. The tribal tensions that culminated into the overthrow of *Obotism* escalated even after the fall

of the regime but this time not in the capital city but to the far north. One of such manifestations was the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that exterminated millions of people and wrecked the region in a period of around 20 years. Sadly, the victimhood in this war does not attract any remembrance today. However, the pursuit of Joseph Kony and his LRA rebels off the north of Uganda allegedly to Democratic Republic of Congo's forests, implied the capacity of the revolutionary regime to guarantee freedom from armed violence in this region. Again, just like in Luweero, people in the north with direct memory of suffering, do not need enhanced internalization of the predicament of change. They are willing to support the revolutionaries because in part they perceive regime's struggle in their own imagery of suffering.

The collective thought processes (discussed in detail later in this paper) surrounding history of war coincide with manufactured public opinion and cement the noble cause of the revolutionary warfare. However as observed, the memory of war propaganda cannot be a stand-alone. Where the ideological claims have met the uncompromising terrains of increased political awareness, the memory of war has been watered down leading to opposition political triumph. Wakiso district stands out as an exceptional district manifesting the spillovers of Kampala Metropolitan's complex dynamics of political tribes (this includes political parties) as well as high political consciousness and competition capacitated in part by media. Only Kampala in central region presents total opposition regardless of memory of war.

In the western part of the country, memory of war has been given meaning and transformed into the politics as a bargain. In essence, most people in western Uganda did not really feel the direct effect of 1981- 1985 war (since they are in a distant periphery of this particular warfare). However, the individual representations that they held/hold of the post-colonial anarchy—with remarkable northerner aggressive politics—and the victory of *their own soldiers* (ethnic westerners), have presented the new rule—the revolutionaries—with the legitimacy needed to consolidate power. Among the westerners, ethnic consolidation of the electorate is at its best. In this region, nationalism is ethnically defined based on the oppression of ethnic others- the Northerners. The region that had for long (throughout the colonial and post-colonial political history up until 1986) been perceived to be the victims of exclusionary power and the absorbers of all the Northerners' tyranny, soon captured power and were the definers of new history, a history in which they collectively bask(ed).

This is so even when many people in rural western and southern regions are actually still trapped in a *cycle of disadvantages* such as illiteracy, poverty, poor health, unemployment, name it. Given the long history of political tyranny, anyone that offered a different form of politics devoid of open (armed) violence was/is ultimately the most legitimate leader even when the state-sponsored violence in the recent years has seemingly become pervasive. Save for Kasese where all members of Parliament in 2016 were from opposition parties in western region, the rest of the region continues to bask in the public opinion guided by memory of war such as that in Luweero and bad politics such as colonial rule, Idi Amin's dictatorship, Milton Obote and other military regimes that existed before 1986 when President

Museveni took power. Therefore, in such circumstances, memory is attached to identity orchestrating exclusionary politics. The northern regimes in such a national narrative are considered the *normative bad* that ought to remain under containment.

Because of the complex relationship between memory of war and power, we ought to characterize the memory in relation to its sites. Memory site is a multidimensional property and covers the material and non-material representations. The material involves the victims, instrumentalist heroes, war trophies, and utter perpetrators. For the direct victims and the heroes, emphasis is on those people that occupied the area and the so-called liberators considered the epicenter of the war (such as Luweero Triangle). Again, in this category, the victims who happened to be the residents of the battlefield do not have a shared representation as the liberators because, the liberators were already politically and ideologically charged to partake in the risk of lives. Yet the natives in this battlefield were partly suffering the brutal consequences of all-out-war between the government forces and revolutionary warlords. The choice between being a perpetrator of the revolutionary warriors (liberators) was as risky as choosing to be on the government forces' side. Sometimes either way, life of a relative or a friend got lost.

However, the post-war narrative in this center point of war—Luweero Triangle—is that the national forces were responsible for the killings of innocent civilians. The missing knowledge is establishing, who was taking stock of all those that were killed, and had the proof that the bullets or other tools used were only the reserve of the government forces. Politically constructed or not, the victims and the liberators seem to share a similar story line, one which implicates the past regimes as murderous and the current regime as the sacred liberators. In their parochial mode, it was not possible for the residents of the epicenter of the war to distinguish the official government military and the revolutionaries since they both were able to use military camouflage and military weapons. Because of this, the revolutionary narrative was well conceived and no alternative narrative is tolerated.

The other site is one of the people that live(d) in the periphery of war but equally share the same war narrative as those whose everyday was characterized by sounds of gunshots, the detonating ordinances and buzzing tankers (mentioned earlier). This category of people is from elsewhere in the western and southern regions and part of central Uganda. These people depended on the history anecdotes of revolutionary liberators whose ideological message soon after victory traversed the entire country like wild fire. The anecdotes resonated well with the historical contexts in which the country was since colonial rule. This is a purely non-material site filled with framing by politicians and the education-like approaches to ideological orientations.

Lastly, unlike the perpetrators of real damage during the war, those that were either caught fighting for the government forces but willing to switch allegiance, as well as those that freely crossed from the government forces to liberators, were aware of their position in the new system as war trophies. They had to play the obedient servant part lest be crashed completely. Although this group of soldiers out of whom are now veterans, had no choice but to support the new military political system.



## 7. Collective Memory of a Nation

To begin with, the 1995 Uganda Constitution's preamble presents aspects of the effect of national memory on politics and power. One is instrumental nature and the other is the collectiveness of constitutional claims. The preamble to this Constitution quotes:

Recalling our history which has been characterized by political and constitutional instability; Recognizing our struggles against the forces of tyranny, oppression and exploitation;

Committed to building a better future by establishing a socio-economic and political order through a popular and durable national Constitution based on the principles of unity, peace, equality, democracy, freedom, social justice and progress; Exercising our sovereign and inalienable right to determine the form of governance for our country, and having fully participated in the Constitution-making process...(1995)<sup>10</sup>

The emphasis in the preamble on the remembrance and recalling of the violent past and the strong struggle by the revolutionaries was directly implying the victors' formulation of definition of violence in the past and how the past should be seen as a lesson. It equally metaphorically intimates the constructive usage of historical wars to cement the revolutionary regime that was setting a pace for transformation from the military transitional period to pseudo-civilian politics that would later ensue in the year that followed its promulgation in 1995. Emphasizing *our* in the constitutional preamble, was basically to insinuate that—as military strategist Jay Winter would put it—memory has power when people come together in political life and transformation of the representations of the past into matters of urgent importance in the present politics (2012).

Particular to this part of analysis, the political aspects of remembering have over time constructed socio-cultural systems. The time following the end of 1986 guerilla war in Uganda, involved reorganizing, training and orienting the former bush war guerilla soldiers including the child soldiers (*Kadogos*) who were formally integrated in the national army formations, later educated, experienced and now active loyal soldiers. This was—and has been—the foundation on which the military professionalization has been built. The old and the younger generations that served in the bush war became the channels through which the working or acceptable memory is mediated and shared in the large public sphere. Generational mediation however, is not enough but with constant remediation and emphatic recollections and reiterations (Erll and Rigney 2009) through networks such as state-media, academia, museums, public rituals (Erll 2011) and patriotic training, the representative memory culturally gets synced. At this point, nobody is able to question why and how NRA changed its name to

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<sup>10</sup> Uganda Constitution, 1995.

Uganda People's Defense Forces. Were these name changes intended to professionalize the army or to extend NRA patronage countrywide? Such a revolutionary memory narrative was supposed to traverse through not only the army but also other institutions of government in order to enforce complete national allegiance. An officer in government who preferred anonymity intimated that, during their intermediary course, some of the regime sympathetic officers on course advanced a proposal to have a statue/monument of honor to symbolize the head of state as a political hero. Much as the monument—according to the interviewee—did not succeed, she was baffled by the assumption that everyone had a similar political orientation yet supposed to be apolitical officers on a governmental service course.

Uganda's revolutionary politics and politics of memory have an umbilical relationship. The memory of a revolutionary war relates to heroism, victimhood of the comrades in the struggle, victory against and liberation from the forces of political tyranny. It is at this point that memory starts to knit consolidation that increases national acceptance of the revolutionary warlords as new owners and controllers of power. In such regimes even if the war was between two parties, at the end of the war, the memory of the losing party is intentionally muted through suppression and threats as well as ideological deformation. Although the individual memory of the war is/was so tragic, the holders of the opposing experiential history may intentionally have such memories suppressed by victors. Quinn in her work titled *The Politics of Acknowledgement* argued that, the conscious spottiness in political remembering requires that the outward signs of memory remain muted at least in the public spheres (2010:5-10). It does not mean that suppressed memory is not memory; it is only unrecognized and therefore securitization of memory includes the censorship and de-sanctification of such opposing paradigms. Such censored memory, however, remains latent like a dormant volcano awaiting activation. The revolutionaries for example claim that, they were fighting for the common good—an idea widely considered utopian—and therefore the memory must represent that cause. The opposing representations to that main national narrative must be demobilized and suppressed.

The revolutionary politicians—who at first—in most cases represented the desire for social transformation, enact and remember days such as Independence Day, Heroes' Day and genocide. On such days, revolutionaries enforce the symbolization of selves as surviving distractors of the bad past and the key chain with keys to re-claim and sustain their society's existence. Uganda has experienced scores of socio-political events resulting into political unrest and serious threats to life and property. Some of such incidents are but not limited to; precolonial monarchical absolutism, colonial repressive rule, post-colonial authoritarian and restricted democracies. Interestingly, each of these political events (has) thrived on the rigor to create and interpret the historical narratives for which their existence was/is but a noble cause. On national symbolic days, the citizens are reminded that, the peace and security in the nation is as a result of the sacrifices and that such is not a negotiable item in the democratic auction. For example, during the colonial period as the retired Justice Professor of Uganda's Supreme Court George Kanyeihamba explains in his work titled *Constitutionalism and Political History of Uganda*,

pseudo-political parties, movements and associations that existed during colonial times were considered dangerous agitators because only the colonial powers had arrogated to themselves the prerogative to determine what was or was not of national interest (2002:39). In the same way, for such revolutionary politics, a nation cannot be a nation without its past. It was hard-earned and therefore not easily given to whoever holds claims to state power. The interactive rhetoric attached to such historical events constructs a pattern in which people socialize while aligning themselves to the intentions of the holders of state authority.

The ethnic notion demonstrated by the social media platforms has continued to exhibit the obvious tribal use of political space. The Facebook platforms administered by non-westerners show *anti-musevenism* yet the platforms from western Uganda especially Mbarara are *pro-musevenism*. The comment section on these Facebook platforms indicates the omnipresence of tribal politics nurtured by the war of information, war on information and information on war. The names inclined to Ankole for example rarely make a comment suggesting an alternative to Museveni's regime especially when a replacement is a non-westerner. Equally, most names inclined to non-western tribes find convenience supporting *anti-musevenism*. From the table below, only Kasese presents itself to be in the margins of 2016 presidential and Parliamentary elections. Kasese which supported Museveni and NRM successively from 1996 elections when he scored 97% and 87% in 2001, was lost terribly in 2016 amid voter intimidation and harassment by security forces (Basiime and Mumbere 2016). Neither the memory of war, nor the constructed public opinion have worked in favor of the revolutionary regime politics in Kasese. In fact, Kasese remained opposed to the NRM/A establishment both ideologically and militarily since 2016. This could, in part, be explained by the resilience of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the Rwenzori region and the spate of violent clashes between the Kasese people and the regime's army that escalated on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2016. See the comparative table below involving Mbarara and Kasese districts' political support for the revolutionary party and the opposition. Mbarara district represents the ethnic attachment to memory of war.

Table 3. NRM's Mbarara and Kasese districts representation in Parliament in 2016

S/no	District	Constituency	Name	Party
1	Mbarara	Mbarara Municipality	Michael Tusiime	NRM
2	Mbarara	Kashari South County	Nathan Itungo Twesigye	NRM
3	Mbarara	Kashari North County	Wilberforce Yaguma	NRM
4	Mbarara	Rwampara County	Charles Ngabirano	NRM
5	Mbarara	Mbarara	Rosette Christine Kajungu Mutambi	NRM
6	Kasese	Bukonzo County East	Harold Anthony Muhindo	FDC
7	Kasese	Busongora County South	Jackson Mbaju	FDC
8	Kasese	Kasese Municipality	Franco Robert Centenary	FDC
9	Kasese	Bukonjo County West	Godfrey Katusabe	FDC
10	Kasese	Busongora County North	William Musabe Nzoghu	FDC
11	Kasese	Kasese	Winfred Kizza	FDC

Source: Extracted from the Gazette List of Members of Parliament 2016.

Still, there is immense evidence illustrating the impact of anecdotal heroes' accounts for the regime consolidation. In the tales of war (Daily monitor 2004), Major Jacob Asimwe demonstrates the misery endured in the fight against established despotic regimes. Tasked to record atrocities of the war, to Asimwe, all battles in the liberation struggle until 1986 were dangerous, but the Bukalabi incident in February 1983 was particularly shocking. In that incident, a force led by Salim Saleh (the brother to Yoweri Museveni and a member of the High Command) fell into an ambush. They lost 10 people and had so many casualties including commander Saleh himself who was shot in both arms. By this time, Asimwe had just come from civilian life and had not been to a frontline. He was therefore very shocked seeing all these dead colleagues. The narrations of this nature traversed the whole nation by the revolutionaries. Such horrible tales have maintained a rhetoric of fear of war among the populace facilitating regime consolidation.

Asimwe's representations are shared by many revolutionary-inclined politicians (such as Salim Saleh, Kasirye Gwanga, Col Phinehas Katirima, Kiiza Besigye, Sam Kalega Njuba, Shem Bageine, Israel Mayengo, Mathew Rukikiire among other historicals that participated in Uganda's liberation struggle. For example, Mathew Rukikiire narrates that the consolation throughout the war times was that rather than be killed by Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) without hope, at least they embarked on killing them and reducing their stronghold in Uganda. He recalls that most people joined the bush war to liberate the country from fear of tyranny, oppression and most importantly, fear for loss of their families. In these special reports, it is evident that most liberators shared these values of their sacrifice to their followers, family and friends before, during and years after the war. Since the initial idea was a revolutionary one therefore, its translation into and internalization of its symbolic role has resonated with the peace-hungry generations that followed.

The interesting aspect of this memory of war usage is that most of the freedom/revolutionary fighters upon victory assumed the political and administrative positions such as judiciary, legislature, local government, police, schools among others making a system of patronage through which they spread their ideology of war and power. As some of the liberation fighters attempt to consciously undo the war memory indoctrination within the opposing paradigm, they have found the routinized meaning of revolutionaries that has conversely retarded the opposing efforts from within. For example, Sam Njuba illustrates how Museveni (the president of Uganda) has changed a lot from their perceived struggle until 1986. 'He has come to rely on people who are opportunistic. Young people with no experience of war' Njuba laments. In his interview with Uganda Monitor Newspaper in 2004, Njuba narrates that:

Museveni is increasingly relying on people who do not know the background to our struggle, and they will not give him the right advice. When he edited me out of that book of his about our Libya trip, he mentioned Abel Rukikaire (one of the revolutionary

fighters). But Rukikaire is now anti-third term. I fear that in the next edition Rukikaire may not appear in that book (Kavuma 2004).

Therefore, the multiplier effect of the revolutionary indoctrination deserves more attention than it has received. This should cover both the manipulators—in favor of regime consolidation—and the receiving end of the manipulative claims. Undoing the revolutionary memory means undoing the symbolism associated with nation-hood, nationalism and perceived freedoms that have become pillars of the regime's establishment. Opposing President Museveni—one of the symbols of liberation—could mean opposing the revolutionary ideology.

## 8. Conclusion

The politics of individual and collective memory viewed in a regime's consolidation mechanism could in part explain why successive regime transfer of power has been problematic in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa where revolutionary regimes are still strong. There are epistemological distortions regarding whether memory studies provide true knowledge or is instead awash with mere subjective opinions. Whereas the national memory involving open suspicion against the European colonial rule—the foundation on which *revolutionarism* and nationalism are grounded—has remained in the shadow, same colonial legacy (involving the military-politics relations—is systemically rooted in all functions of national magnitude including justice system, education system, public service bureaucracies and nationalism portrayals. Yet, the national trauma associated with colonialism is not commemorated (other than the independence rhetoric that seemingly gains more relevance to the holders of power and the future of their hold on such power).

Interestingly, in the axis of revolutionary regime's manipulative formations as well as the individual representation of meanings associated with memory of war, lies the inter-generational conscious and unconscious narrative transfer. This presents a clear blending of the national narrative and community transmission of generational knowledge and individual representations that strengthen the revolutionary political order with fear of unknown. However, in the era when the states have the prerogative to control and direct the media, the public opinion is well transferred without distortions as opposed to the upsurge of multiple centers of information catapulted by the social media coverage. Still, although social media in the recent decades has revolutionized modern protests, there are ethnic distortions that adulterate its political significance. Nevertheless, memory of war ideologies that were earlier dominant have recently lost some properties of potency, while repressive state approaches have taken the frontline in the making and maintenance of legitimacy especially in urban areas. Revolutionary messages shift swiftly from *we are the heroes* to *we are the fighters*. Not only does revolutionary narratives teach of the tragic past but also what is at stake if a contrary narrative surpasses the dominant revolutionary one. To achieve this end, the revolutionary regime not only transmits narratives of

remembrance of the suffering the *heroes* endured but also the powerfulness they exhibited in a war they won. Revolutionary antecedents are not just a memory but power in itself that demands reinforcing.

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