
RWANDA/UGANDA: A DANGEROUS WAR OF NERVES

INTRODUCTION

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda were once called the “new breed” of African leaders but hopes that they can deliver peace and prosperity to their countries are being severely shaken. In early November the two presidents held a crisis meeting in London hosted by the British Minister for International Development, Clare Short in response to the dramatic degradation of relations. The former allies now accuse each other of backing and training armed opposition groups. Each is mobilising his own forces, and unless the dispute is resolved, it could lead to renewed fighting on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where both countries have significant military and economic interests.

The London meeting was the fourth time this year that the two leaders have sat down to try to resolve their differences. Officially, it went well, leading to the creation of a joint Ugandan/Rwandan verification committee with the participation of the UK as a third party. However, such meetings have never yet managed to dispel the mutual distrust that arose with the outbreak of the Second Congo War in August 1998.¹ Earlier agreements have not been implemented. The hope for better follow through this time lies with the new element of close British involvement.

The quarrel between the former allies is linked to differing strategies on the management of the Congo war, regional leadership rivalries, and

competition over Congo resources. It has already resulted in three battles in the Congolese town of Kisangani, in August 1999, March 2000 and May 2000, that caused extensive destruction and the deaths of more than 600 Congolese civilians. Rwanda has accused Uganda of harbouring its dissidents at least since the departure of its Parliament Speaker Joseph Sebarenzi Kabuye for Kampala in December 1999. Uganda declared Rwanda to be a “hostile state” ahead of its March 2001 presidential elections, because it allegedly funded President Museveni’s main opponent, former UPDF officer, Colonel Kiiza Besigye.

Since the London meeting, the joint verification and investigation committee has visited Rwanda and Uganda several times and, with MONUC (the UN observer mission in the Congo), has also inspected alleged dissident training camps in the Congo. These missions have all been accompanied by British officials and conducted to the public satisfaction of all parties.² Neither the Ugandan nor the Rwandan people want a conflict, nor would they really understand it. Yet, there are signs that the dispute will not be solved by the verification of military positions or impromptu visits to alleged training sites. Personal rivalry – not only between the two presidents – and regional political leadership in East and Central Africa are involved. Half a dozen determined military figures on both sides have the capacity to take their countries at least to the brink and are under very little control by civilian institutions.

¹ For more details on these three confrontations see ICG, *Uganda and Rwanda: Friends or Enemies?*, Africa report n°15, 4 May 2000 and ICG, *Scramble for the Congo: Anatomy of an Ugly War*, Africa report n°26, 20 December 2000.

² ICG Interviews with UK Heads of Mission to Rwanda and Uganda, 27 November and 6 December 2001; “Rwanda: President says relations with Uganda now stable”, Radio Rwanda/BBC monitoring, 20 December 2001. ICG Interviews, members of the verification team, 20 December 2001.

Both parties have been told that any outbreak of hostilities on their own territory would have dire consequences for international financial support. However, the prospect of the leaders replaying their military rivalry again in the Congo's North Kivu is real.

In order to avoid further conflict, the United Nations and international community should make clear to the parties that a consequence would be sanctions with teeth, including immediate suspension of all bilateral and multilateral aid.³ The Rwanda-Uganda feud is a major factor preventing a peace deal in the DRC and threatens further the already shattered lives of many Congolese. The dispute also limits post-genocide reconciliation and reconstruction in Rwanda. The two countries must be held accountable for the fragmentation and militarisation of eastern Congo, which has accelerated as a result of their indirect occupation rule. Rwanda and Uganda's reconciliation must be rooted in an improvement in bilateral relations. It must equally, however, translate into clear progress in the implementation of the Lusaka agreement in the DRC, including unconditional support to DDRR⁴ of their respective "negative forces", clear benchmarks for their orderly withdrawal from the DRC and support for new institutions created by the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.

³ Rwanda and Uganda are obliged already to pay reparations to the city of Kisangani by UN Security Council Resolution 1304. Since they have not done so, international pressure on this point should certainly be increased if the parties again come to blows. Moreover, a demonstration by the international community that it is serious about this obligation could help to remind Kigali and Kampala of the costs of further hostilities and thus serve as a deterrent.

⁴ Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement.

I. THE VERIFICATION EXERCISE

A. RENEWED TENSION IN 2001

While the situation in the DRC was dramatically improving following the accession to the presidency of Joseph Kabila, tension between Uganda and Rwanda rose again at the beginning of 2001, as defectors from both armies sought refuge in the neighbouring country. The February escape to Uganda of the Rwandan officer, Major Alphonse Furuma, together with several other army personnel and youths, re-ignited bilateral hostility. From Kampala, Alphonse Furuma, a close friend of Uganda's chief of Military Intelligence, Noble Mayombo, issued a sharp letter accusing President Kagame and the RPF leadership of criminal management since they came to power in July 1994.

Just before the presidential elections in Uganda in March 2001, Kampala listed Rwanda as a "hostile state", together with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan. This was based on allegations that Rwanda was financing the presidential campaign of Colonel Kiiza Besigye, the main challenger to Museveni. In a letter forwarded to Uganda's parliament by the Office of the President, Museveni personally endorsed the classification, making Rwanda's hostility and alleged collusion with his opponents a leading mobilisation theme of his campaign.

Three months later the renegade Lt. Colonel Samson Mande, a former Uganda military attaché to Tanzania, together with UPDF Lt. Colonel Anthony Kyakabale, defected to Rwanda. They later declared they would wage a struggle against the Museveni government and for restoration of democracy. Mande also published a letter accusing Museveni of having betrayed Uganda's liberation objectives.

By early April 2001, movements of troops were reported on both sides of the border.⁵ In an attempt to reduce tensions, the two heads of state agreed to meet at the common border post of Gatuna on 6 July but made little progress. By the end of

⁵ "Rwanda-Ouganda: bruits de bottes sur les frontières ougando-rwandaises", *L'Observatoire de l'Afrique centrale*, Vol. 4, n°14, 2-8 April 2001, www.obsac.com.

August, the Ugandan Peoples Defence Force (UPDF) moved its 79th battalion from Fort Portal to Bushenyi and areas near the border with Rwanda. This followed reports that Kyakabale and Mandé were recruiting rebel forces from western Uganda.

Uganda embarked on a countrywide recruitment of cadets and regular army personnel most of whom are undergoing training at the infantry school in Jinja, in the east of the country. During the recruitment drive, a number of suspected Rwandese “infiltrators” were arrested and detained.

The presidents met again in September 2001 in Durban, South Africa, at the UN International Conference against Racism, and set up a joint commission to verify their respective accusations. But by mid-October, Uganda had still not appointed its representatives, the joint-commission had never met, and tension had risen to a new high. Government officials met in Goma on 12 October to try to harmonise strategies in advance of the start of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue but without much result.

Troop movements were again reported at the border, and Uganda was alleged to have cleared access roads to facilitate an attack. In Rwanda, RPF Secretary-General Charles Murigande circulated a brief to all Rwandan missions abroad and to RPF political cells, mobilising the population and the Diaspora to prepare for war.⁶ According to the Ugandan *Monitor*, on 17 October, Rwandan officials notified all diplomatic missions in Kigali that Uganda intended to attack within 48 hours. The Rwandan government simultaneously launched several diplomatic offensives. It circulated a letter that Museveni wrote on 28 August 2001 to British Minister Clare Short, requesting additional aid to restore Uganda’s capacity to protect itself against Rwanda, and describing the RPF regime as “ideologically bankrupt”. The letter was sent to all leaders of the Great Lakes region and to key diplomats at the UN headquarters in New York. Simultaneously, Rwanda’s *New Times*, and Uganda’s *New Vision* traded accusations alleging

support to rebel groups.⁷ Rwanda was also falsely accused of having taken over the town of Kanyabayonga, vacated by the UPDF in June 2001 after three days of siege, and of threatening Beni.⁸

Minister Short of the UK and Presidents Mbeki of South Africa and Mkapa of Tanzania called President Museveni to express concern over the “impending” war. Under pressure, both presidents allegedly promised Presidents Moi, Mkapa, and Mbeki and Minister Short that they would not be the first to shoot.⁹ All military build-ups were then denied in the press, and MONUC confirmed on 29 October that Kanyabayonga had never been occupied by the RPA.

B. THE RESULTS OF BRITISH MEDIATION

Following this outburst of hostility, both countries were pressured into finding a way to genuinely ease the tension. As the core budget supporter of both regimes, which are key targets of its development and peace-building strategy in the Great Lakes, Britain took the lead. The joint military verification committee agreed on in Durban, and headed by Colonel Charles Kayonga for Rwanda and Major James Mugira for Uganda, finally met in Kigali, 27-28 October, to prepare a memorandum of understanding. The document established a verification procedure with third party participation.

Defence ministers Amama Mbabazi of Uganda and Colonel Emmanuel Habyarimana of Rwanda then met for six hours on 29 October in the south-western Ugandan town of Kabale to sign the agreement.¹⁰ An official communiqué announced that both countries would relocate dissident RPA and UPDF officers and called for transparency and prior notification of any new troop deployments in their own countries and in the DRC.¹¹

Yet, the three earlier Kisangani clashes were brought up again. The Uganda delegation raised

⁷ *The New Vision*, 23 October 2001.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ “UPDF-RPA amass at border, pressure grows to avert war”, *The Monitor*, 25 October 2001.

¹⁰ The meeting was also attended by the deputy chief of staff of the RPA, Brigadier General James Kabarebe, and the UPDF commander, Lt General Jeje Odongo.

¹¹ *The New Vision*, 30 October 2001.

⁶ “Ibisobanuro ku Mubano wa Uganda N’U Rwanda”, mimeo, undated.

the issue of arms that the UPDF had lent the RPA in August 1998 during their intervention in the DRC and before the Kisangani fighting.¹² These weapons are suspected by Uganda to have been used against them in that Congolese city and to remain in Rwandan hands – a matter that created considerable parliamentary embarrassment to President Museveni in June 2000. The meeting also failed to address comprehensively the relocation of the renegade officers, and there was no joint agreement on when and how to hand back defectors, despite an official commitment to involve the UNHCR, and subsequent confirmation that some had indeed been presented to the UN agency.

In his 28 August 2001 letter, Museveni asked Clare Short to accept his intention to raise defence expenditure beyond the 1.9 per cent of GDP agreed with donors because of the threat from Rwanda. The letter claimed that President Kagame, with an army of 100,000 compared to Uganda's 40,000, was planning aggression and referred to the Rwandan leadership as "ideologically bankrupt". It also asked for an additional U.S.\$139 million on top of approximately U.S.\$113 million in existing defence aid.

To Kigali, this was not only an insult but also confirmation of its strongly held belief that President Museveni is determined to undermine the RPF leadership internationally. Similarly, Uganda's fear of a Rwandan attack was such that President Museveni, who is the head of the regional initiative on Burundi, missed the inauguration of the government of transition in Bujumbura that was attended by President Kagame. Both leaders nevertheless agreed to meet in London on 6 November 2001.

In an interview given to the pro-government Kampala daily, President Museveni described the London meeting as "good, fruitful and frank".¹³ According to some reports though, it nearly did not take place, because a Rwandan soldier was "kidnapped" by Ugandan officers on the border on

the very day.¹⁴ The 28 August letter was also an embarrassment for Museveni, who attempted to avoid discussing its precise contents and wording before being forced to offer an apology to Kagame after Minister Short pushed it in front of him.¹⁵ This incident is likely to have extended the bitterness of the Ugandan leader towards the British mediation, which he sees as biased.¹⁶

In the end, both countries further agreed that they would not interfere in the political or security situation of the other, they would continue to cooperate on economic and transport projects, and they would permit free movement of people. They also agreed to cooperate on the handling of armed opposition groups and to negotiate a bilateral extradition treaty.

The presidents further agreed that there would be visits to a dissident "training" site in each country within a week, accompanied by a third party.¹⁷ The UK, moreover, agreed to explore the visits to alleged training sites in the DRC.¹⁸ The memorandum of understanding does not give the joint commission a mandate to investigate the allegations of the governments but does authorise impromptu visits to any sites within the national territories and within their areas of control in the Congo.¹⁹ Finally, the presidents resolved to meet

¹⁴ "Uganda-Rwanda, who will monitor the pact?", *The East African*, 12-18 November 2001

¹⁵ ICG interviews, Rwandan and Ugandan participants to the meeting, Kigali-Kampala, November-December 2001.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The UK is not necessarily the formal third party to the verification process. American, Belgian, Russian and Tanzanian defence attachés accredited to both countries or to the DRC have also been invited to participate in the exercise by the UK.

¹⁸ "Understanding agreed between President Kagame and President Museveni", 6 November 2001, mimeo, signed by President Museveni, President Kagame, and Clare Short.

¹⁹ "Memorandum of understanding between the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the government of the Republic of Rwanda on the formation of a joint verification and investigation committee", signed by Ugandan Minister for Defence Amama Mbabazi and Rwandan Minister for Foreign Affairs André Bumaya, 6 November 2001. Some doubts can be raised, though, on the credibility of the verification process. The hosts are given, at any particular moment, a maximum of six hours to prepare logistics and security in the designated area. This actually gives ample time to temper with evidence of wrongdoing. Random sampling and questioning of local inhabitants is also used.

¹² ICG Interview, Kabale meeting participant, Kampala, 30 October 2001.

¹³ *The New Vision*, 9 November 2001.

quarterly, in the presence of a UK official, to review the operations of the agreement.

C. THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM?

By early December 2001 the joint commission's verification process had not confirmed any of the earlier accusations.²⁰ Less than one week after the London meeting, a Rwandan delegation led by Colonel Charles Kayonga was in Uganda to prepare for the first verification exercise, which took place simultaneously in both countries on 13 November. The team operating in Uganda visited the UDPF training ground of Singo and Kawaweta in Mubende district, Kyankwanzi national political school in Kiboga district, Nakasongola, Kabale and Kasese areas, and interviewed RPA deserters at Makindye military police training camps and Mbuya barracks. Similarly, the team operating in Rwanda visited sites and military facilities in the northwest, and in Kigali, and in the Rutshuru region of the Congo.

However, other actions do not seem to confirm the officially upbeat mood. The appointment of Major General James Kazini as acting head of the army to replace Lt. General Jeje Odongo, the day before the London meeting, for instance, does not bode well for Uganda's interest in reconciliation. Kazini was in charge of UPDF operations in Eastern Congo when the first clash broke out in Kisangani. He was clearly identified as responsible by a joint investigation team led by the former UDPF commander, General Jeje Odongo, and the RPA Brigadier General, Kayumba Nyamwasa. The replacement of Odongo by Kazini appears a clear sign that Ugandan leaders are not inclined to accept responsibility for the Kisangani clashes, or even forget about them. Shortly after the appointment, President Kagame answered by giving Kazini's counterpart in Kisangani, Brigadier General James Kabarebe, the position of acting army commander. Also, the ink had barely dried on the documents signed in London before bitter exchanges resumed in the press.

²⁰ ICG interviews with UK Heads of Mission, other western diplomats and Rwandan and Ugandan members of the verification team, Kigali-Kampala, November-December 2001.

Dr Théogène Rudasingwa, director of the presidential cabinet in Kigali, was the first to renew the public debate, reacting to an article published on 5 November in *The East African* weekly that accused Rwanda of training Uganda dissidents in the DRC, based on "Ugandan government sources".²¹ His piece was answered by Uganda's director of information,²² Ofwono Opondo, and then by a letter signed by the minister for defence, Amama Mbabazi,²³ which in turn brought a Rudasingwa response.²⁴ In his 25 November letter, Minister Mbabazi had categorically ruled out possibilities of resumption of fraternal ties between the two countries until the events of Kisangani are fully investigated and resolved. President Museveni nevertheless ended the debate himself on 3 December, arguing that "irresponsible and provocative talks by leaders will scare off investments in the two countries". But at the same time he implied that the issues had not been resolved, adding: "It is no good to discuss interstate matters in newspapers. We were forced to answer Rudasingwa's lies soon after we had met President Kagame in London (...) I will ask my state officials not to comment on the Uganda-Rwanda issue".²⁵

Similarly, President Kagame's interview on the BBC after the London meeting indicated he was not yet prepared to let bygones be bygones: "Anybody can judge from the content of the [28 August] letter who is the cause of the problem".²⁶ Moreover, despite recent official reassurances by President Kagame that Rwanda-Uganda relations were now stable and that "each side seems to be making an effort to improve things to get whatever obstacles that were there out of the way"²⁷, the government of Rwanda leaked to the press almost simultaneously a humiliating videotape showing General Kazini confessing his responsibility in the

²¹ "We're not Ugandan students-Rwanda. Besigye not cause of bad relations", *The Monitor*, 9 November 2001.

²² "We want peace, no mistrust, between Uganda and Rwanda", *The New Vision*, 17 November 2001.

²³ "Uganda doesn't want war, but we are ready", *The Sunday Vision*, 25 November 2001.

²⁴ "We have no links with Savimbi, says Rwanda", *The Monitor*, 3 December 2001.

²⁵ *The New Vision*, 3 December 2001.

²⁶ As reported in *The Sunday Monitor*, 11 December 2001.

²⁷ "Tensions between Rwanda, Uganda subsiding - Rwandan president", Radio Rwanda/BBC monitoring, 20 December 2001.

Kisangani fighting during the joint investigation.²⁸ As yet neither side seems prepared to accept its share of responsibility for the worsening of relations.

II. THE ORIGINS OF THE FEUD

A. FROM KIGALI TO KINSHASA AND KISANGANI

The two leaders have been closely allied in the three wars that have transformed the Great Lakes political landscape over the past ten years. The National Resistance Army (NRA), of which a few Rwandans, including Kagame, were founding members, brought Museveni to power in 1986. The 1990-1994 war in Rwanda brought the RPF to power. At the time the RPA was considered in Kampala as an extension of the Ugandan army. The first Congo war in 1996-1997, supported by the godfather of Africa's socialist liberation movements, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, aimed at destroying the security threat represented by the presence of the *génocidaires* in refugee camps, and at overthrowing the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, whose fall was to mark the end of an era and the rise of a "new breed" of African leaders. Mobutu's successor, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, was introduced to Kagame by Museveni, and put in power by the RPA. But the lead role Rwanda took during the first war in the DRC and after Kabila's victory led to the initial hiccups with Kampala.

After the coup against Kabila in August 1998 failed and when a long war became inevitable, the two leaders started disagreeing over strategy.²⁹ This led to Kampala's demand to strictly separate Uganda and Rwanda's military command zones in the DRC. Confrontations soon followed between the UPDF and the RPA over control of the towns of Isiro, Buta and Bunia in Orientale Province in October 1998. Two months later Uganda created Jean-Pierre Bemba's *Mouvement de Libération du Congo* (MLC), an alternative rebel movement to the Rwanda-controlled *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD). Underlying the strategic disagreements over military strategy was a quarrel over Congolese resources. The sharing of the Congo's territory meant a sharing of access to its resources. Uganda wanted diamond rich Kisangani, the capital of Orientale Province.³⁰ The

²⁸ ICG Interview, regional reporter, Kampala, 20 December 2001.

²⁹ See "Rwanda-Ouganda: bruits de bottes sur les frontières ougando-rwandaises", *L'Observatoire de l'Afrique centrale*, Vol. 4, n°14, 2-8 April 2001, www.obsac.com.

³⁰ For illustrations of how much the exploitation of natural resources has become an issue in the Congo, see United

RPA, which had captured the town, did not share that perception and held firmly to half of it and to one of its airports.

Kampala saw Rwanda's resistance as betrayal by a dependent and a challenge to its leadership of the Great Lakes region. Museveni himself had imposed Paul Kagame after the assassination of the first RPF leader, Fred Rwigyema, in 1990, but Kagame's presidential ambitions worried Museveni, who had always wanted to retain a Hutu President in Kigali. That, he believed, would help counter accusations that he was building his own Tutsi-Hima empire in the Great Lakes, and would serve as a symbol of reconciliation for the Hutu majority in Rwanda.

The RCD schism in the Congo between the Wamba dia Wamba and Emile Ilunga factions added oil to the fire. Wamba reached out to Kampala and by May 1999 claimed control over Kisangani under UPDF protection. Uganda wrongly believed that its bigger troop presence in Kisangani would prevent the RPA from attacking but the RPA prevailed in the first Kisangani fight in August 1999.

Beyond these frustrations, the RPA had additional reasons to fight in Kisangani. Anglophone officers felt mistreated by constant UPDF reminders of their past in the NRA and of their junior status; the former Hutu ex-FAR, now reintegrated into the RPA, wanted revenge against the Ugandans whom they had fought when the UPDF supported the RPF during Rwanda's civil war; and francophone officers felt that it was time to destroy the myth of the NRA, on which the anglophones founded their claims to primacy in the RPA³¹.

For Uganda, it became necessary to cut Kagame down to size and weaken his leadership both internally and externally. Kampala, therefore, became a safe refuge for Rwanda's dissidents and Kagame opponents. Joseph Sebarenzi Kabuye, the parliament speaker, was the first Rwandan political

Nations, "Report of the panel of experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other sources of wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo", 12 April 2001; and United Nations "Addendum to the report of the panel of experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other sources of wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", 26 November 2001.

heavyweight to escape Kigali with Kampala's help in December 1999. Pierre-Célestin Rwigyema, a former Prime Minister, followed soon thereafter.

Kagame accused Museveni of openly training Hutu guerrillas to overthrow him, and Museveni defended himself by saying that he could not return Rwandan dissidents to Kigali since he had done so with 48 individuals in the past, who had all been killed.³² Three months before, Museveni had refused to come to Kigali for Kagame's inauguration.

The reports and recommendations on the first two Kisangani battles have been persistently ignored. Uganda has always claimed that the conclusions were inadequate. A proposal to have independent mediation has also been shelved indefinitely. For Kampala, however, the third confrontation was the worst, not only because the UPDF was more severely beaten and there were more Congolese casualties, but also because Ugandan Hima officers were actually killed. Part of the reason for the UPDF's Kisangani defeat was actual disagreements between Bayankole Hima and other Ugandan officers, who refused to risk their lives and fight the RPA for what they considered to be a Hima-Tutsi feud.³³

B. A FAMILY FEUD?

In many aspects, the Rwanda-Uganda quarrel looks indeed like an irrational and emotional family feud, between the Bahima Bayankole leaders of Uganda and the Tutsi Rwandan refugees who lived in Ankole in 1959 after the Hutu "social revolution" in Rwanda.³⁴ Their intimate twenty-year collaboration means that they know all of each other's secrets. This feeds paranoia within the top leaderships and tendencies to see previously close associates as possible enemies.

The Rwanda leadership now views Museveni as domineering and patronising. He is known for his belief in negotiations as a war strategy that he used

³² "Museveni telling lies to Ugandans – Kagame", *The Monitor*, 11 June 2000; and "Ouganda-Rwanda: ce que personne n'avait prévu", *L'Observatoire de l'Afrique Centrale*, Vol. 3, n°23, 12-18 June 2000, www.obsac.com.

³³ ICG Interviews, UPDF officers, Kampala, July 2000.

³⁴ The 1959 Hutu "social revolution" led to the massacres and the flight of thousands of Tutsis.

in both the struggle against the military junta in Uganda in 1986 and in 1994 in Rwanda on behalf of the RPF. This makes it difficult for the leadership in Kigali to trust Museveni's commitment to any agreement. In return, the Ugandan leadership views Kagame as resilient, driven by the need for recognition as a fighter, arrogant and unwilling to listen to advice. These perceptions lead to fears and allegations that the RPA has infiltrated all Uganda's security services in Uganda and could try to eliminate senior officials, including Museveni himself, to settle scores. Such fears has led to the hunt for Tutsis hiding as Banyankole Bahima within the Ugandan security services.³⁵

Their common past creates permanent suspicion and fuels concerns for infiltration. Colonel Jack Nziza, the director of Rwandan military intelligence, has close family relationship with senior Museveni aides, notably Colonel Kaire Kaihura, who is one of President Museveni's advisors on military affairs. The director of Rwanda's External Security Organisation (ESO), Patrick Karegyeya, has relatives in Uganda (in Mbarara). The RPA chief of staff, Major General Kayumba Nyamwasa, was assistant resident district commissioner (RDC) of the Northern Ugandan district of Gulu. Major Alphonse Furuma, who is back in exile in Uganda, was in charge of the economic desk in the office of the Ugandan president in 1988/89 before he returned to Rwanda. Paul Kagame himself was the head of Uganda military intelligence in 1986. The list is endless and in Kampala makes the invisible enemy appear omnipresent. Bayankole Bahima security officers are therefore often suspected to be Rwandese Tutsi refugee undercover, notwithstanding the fact that more than four million Ugandan citizens are actually rwandophones.

This knowledge of the Ugandan system gives Kigali an oversized complex of external intelligence superiority, but the many ties that the anglophone Tutsis have maintained with Uganda threaten the regime. Not all Ugandan Tutsis actually favour Kagame's regime, and many anglophone Rwandans are also likely to inform Kampala about the RPF's leadership moves.

³⁵ ICG interviews, human rights activists, Kigali-Kampala, November-December 2001.

Criticism has been increasing within the Rwandan leadership's own community of origin for the past two years, mainly due to the campaign waged by the security services against the monarchists.³⁶ Moreover, anglophone Tutsis can not ignore that Uganda is by far a more stable, economically viable, and less autocratic state than Rwanda, where many returnees have been disappointed by the RPF's tight management. Some have actually returned to Uganda for lack of economic opportunities.

Finally, Rwanda and Uganda have a divergent interpretations over the origin of the dispute. On the one hand, Rwandan officials, as illustrated by Dr Rudasingwa's published letters, repeatedly and bitterly complain about Uganda's patronising attitudes and meddling into their internal politics. And indeed, Museveni's (and the Uganda military's) habit of calling Rwandans their "boys" rather than use their appropriate rank, is difficult to understand. Ofwondo-Opondo's answer to Rudasingwa's initial letter in the *New Vision* was the best illustration of Uganda's patronising behaviour. Not only did he claim that Rwanda owed everything to Uganda, as if the RPF leadership had not fought their own war and Museveni's, but he seemed to forget that more than 7.5 million Rwandans did not benefit from Uganda's alleged generosity and owe nothing at all to their northern neighbour. On the other hand, in some ways Rwanda's leaders behave exactly as the outraged sons they claim they are not when they rebuff all Ugandan criticism. It is indeed a constant feature of Rwanda's leadership to reject any criticism of their governance by attacking the critic's attitude, for example, by whispering campaigns questioning dissidents' character and integrity.³⁷

A major concern for Kigali is the possible information RPA defectors in Kampala might give to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) about the massacres committed by the RPA in 1994 while marching towards Kigali

³⁶ See Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda: the Search for Security and Human Rights Abuses", New York, 27 April 2000.

³⁷ See Michael Dorsey "Violence and Power-Building in post-Genocide Rwanda" in *Politics of Identity and Economics of Conflict in the Great Lakes Region*, Ruddy Doom et Jan Gorus (eds) VUB University Press, Brussels, 2000.

during the genocide. The ICTR prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, has publicly announced the beginning of proceedings and asked for the co-operation of the authorities in Kigali. Some opponents of the Kagame regime might also give information to the French Judge, Jean Louis Bruguières, who is investigating the attack on the presidential plane that on 6 April 1994 caused the death of President Habyarimana on the eve of the genocide. This context creates suspicion within the RPA.

III. CONGO AS THE FIGHTING GROUND

A. COMPETING FOR A SOLUTION

Despite Rwanda's 200 km withdrawal from the frontline³⁸ and the departure of most Ugandan troops from the country, vivid rivalries in the Congo remain. The succession of Laurent-Désiré Kabila by his son Joseph, followed by the deployment of MONUC to observe the cease-fire and the implementation of the Harare and Lusaka disengagement plan, at least temporarily ended the conventional war. Uganda took the opportunity to reduce an economically and politically costly presence and improve bilateral relations with Kinshasa. In the trade-off with the new Kabila, Kampala agreed with Angola to remove the military threat to the strategic town of Mbandaka on the Congo River.

By mid-September 2001, Uganda had, therefore, dropped its support for Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC in favour of RCD-ML leader Mbusa Nyamwisi, a Nande from Beni with close connections to the commander of the Ugandan army, Brigadier General Kazini. Uganda needs peace at its borders and prefers to support leaders strong enough to guarantee that there is no sanctuary in Congo for Ugandan rebels. Conveniently, Mbusa would also share the resources extracted from the Kasindi border post, the gold mines of the Kilo-Moto area and the Coltan mines around Beni, Butembo and Lubero.

But in reaction, Bemba turned to Rwanda and its Congolese ally, the RCD-Goma, for protection. One day before the official opening of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue meeting in Addis Ababa, Olivier Kamitatu and Azarias Ruberwa, the secretary-generals of Bemba's MLC and Onosumba's RCD-Goma, signed a joint declaration adopting a common strategy of negotiation. Consequently, the two delegations presented a united front in Addis Ababa and announced at the end of October 2001 the creation of a common military unit. This special unit was intended to neutralise the "negative forces" and

³⁸ As agreed in the Harare disengagement sub-plans, signed by the Lusaka signatories in December 2000.

become a nucleus for the future post-war Congolese national army.

Kampala's *rapprochement* with Kinshasa and Angola, as well as Uganda's withdrawal from the Congo, was seen in Kigali as a betrayal of the anti-Kabila cause and a clear attempt to isolate Rwanda diplomatically. Rwanda feels that it faces alone the weight of the war in South Kivu, and regrets that Uganda never officially condemned the continuous supplies of weaponry and ammunitions to the Mai Mai, Burundian FDD and Rwandan ALiR by Kinshasa. Uganda's withdrawal from North Kivu also considerably eased the task of infiltration and destabilisation for these armed groups in May and June 2001. Combined with the perception reinforced by the new alliance between RCD-ML's Mbusa Nyamwisi and Uganda and Joseph Kabila, this could be seen as tacit support to Rwanda's negative forces enemies in the Congo. Rwanda cannot allow the build up of a new threat in North Kivu involving the remnants of the ALiR forces defeated in Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, other Rwandan armed opponents and Mai Mai associates.

There has never been independent confirmation that either some elements of the UPDF were arming or training RPA and RCD-Goma deserters or the RPA was doing the same with the People's Redemption Army of Mandé and Kyakabale. Yet, political incitement and provocation from both sides has been constant since 1999. Deserters from the RPA have found welcome ground in Uganda. Civilian politicians, civil society or human rights activists all found it extremely easy to escape Rwanda through Uganda³⁹. Rwanda reciprocated and very probably funded Besigye's presidential campaign in March 2001.⁴⁰ Museveni's reputation will probably never fully recover from that campaign, during which he used all means in his powers, including character assassination, to beat an extremely popular opponent. Kigali's financial support was perceived as a genuine threat.

In Kampala, RPA deserters and other dissidents not under military police or UNHCR control claim

that they have created a political-military movement, nicknamed by some "RPF 2", that is preparing to replace the "corrupt" leadership in Kigali.⁴¹ The dissidents deny receiving any support from the Ugandan government but their leaders have the capacity to circulate freely and mobilise international and regional support within the different circles of anti-Kagame Congolese, Rwandan, Ugandan or Tanzanian activists. They claim to be awaiting President's Kagame physical elimination to fill the expected vacuum. Uganda's chief of military intelligence, Noble Mayombo, has been in regular contact with the Rwandan opposition in Brussels, such as Joseph Sebarenzi's *Alliance pour le Renouveau National (ARENA)*, for the same purpose. Similarly, there are indications that Rwanda is still sponsoring Besigye's anti-Museveni political tours and travels in the region and beyond.⁴²

This mutual provocation and incitement is dangerous. The aim is probably to push the other party to commit a lethal political mistake. Neither country can afford a true war but in a situation where wrong perceptions are often enough to light a fire, the total confusion that reigns in North Kivu could easily lead to exactly that.

B. NORTH KIVU AS THE MOST LIKELY BATTLEGROUND

The situation in North Kivu is complex to say the least. RPA/RCD forces, Mai Mai groups, ALiR units, ADF rebels and RCD-ML militias fight one another in an intertwined quest for resources and security, while the UPDF has massed troops on the Ugandan side of the three borders, ready to move in. Currently, the only reported positions of the UPDF in the Congo are in Buta, Bunia and Beni. By the end of October 2001, they were also suspected to be positioned undercover in Luofu, Kirumba and Lutunguru, within a 10-40 km radius of Kanyabayonga. The RPA was reported to be have troops at Rwindi, on the Goma-Beni-Butembo axis, Kibirizi and further east at Vitshumbi, on the shores of Lake Edward.⁴³ There

³⁹ The most prominent among them are former Prime Minister Pierre Célestin Rwigyema, former Parliament speaker Joseph Sebarenzi Kabuye, former Minister for the interior Theobald Rwaka, etc.

⁴⁰ ICG interviews, western diplomats, Kigali, Kampala, Nairobi, November-December 2001.

⁴¹ ICG interview, Rwandan dissident, Kampala, 6 December 2001; ICG interview with UN diplomat, Nairobi, April 2001.

⁴² ICG Interview, Brussels, November 2001.

⁴³ "Le Nord-Kivu, probable théâtre d'une confrontation ougando-rwandaise », AFP, 30 October 2001.

are, moreover, consistent reports of RPA/RCD troops being removed from the North-Katanga/Kasai frontlines to be transported towards North Kivu. But the risks also come from the two countries' proxies in the area.

Mbusa Nyamwisi, who faces stiff resistance from Mai Mai groups defending their coltan mines in the Butembo and Lubero areas, has been trying to convince the UPDF that his opponents are allied to the RPA and threaten Uganda's sphere of influence. He alleges that Mai Mai Commandants La Fontaine and Akilimani have been working with Congolese Hutu from Rutshuru, allied to the RPA.⁴⁴ It has been indeed RCD/RPA policy in the past year and a half to recruit massively from the local Congolese Hutu communities to strengthen their control of the province. But the Hutu allies of both Mai Mai groups could very well be dissident elements or actual AliR units associated in the Coltan trade.

The absence of any authority makes the upper part of North Kivu, of course, a very fertile ground for the Rwandan AliR. AliR has always used and roamed the 30 km no man's land between Rwanda and Uganda's spheres of influence, attacking villages and Mai Mai groups in search of food, medicine and weaponry. Their re-arming by either of the parties, such as Mbusa Nyamwisi, who is reported to be in regular contacts with Kinshasa and has met Joseph Kabila twice in the past two months,⁴⁵ could be a reason for the RPA to intervene. So far, the allegations that planes from Kinshasa have landed on the Beni airstrip have not been confirmed. Moreover, none of the allegations of preparations for an RPA/RCD offensive in North Kivu have been proven. In Orientale Province, allegations have also been made that the RPA/RCD forces were currently moving towards the diamond rich fields of Bafwasende, recently taken over by Mbusa Nyamwisi. Bafwasende and Buta are two of the strategic locations controlling access routes towards Kisangani. To guarantee a smooth demilitarisation of Kisangani and to appease RCD fears that the town could be threatened by the UPDF supported Mbusa Nyamwisi, it is absolutely necessary that Mbusa's expansion to the west be stopped. This could

become another likely confrontation opportunity for Uganda and Rwanda.

In the Congo, a war can be declared based on faulty intelligence and biased perceptions, and a renewed outbreak of hostilities cannot be discounted. So far, renewed bloodshed in Ituri Province and lack of trust for Nyamwisi have kept Uganda from moving back into the Congo. But for how long?

⁴⁴ ICG interviews, members of parliamentary committee on defence, Kampala, December 2001.

⁴⁵ Including in Luanda.

IV. THE NEED FOR STRONGER INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

In this context of regional mistrust and mutual denial, British mediation is not yet tackling a number of important issues:

- If the Kisangani fighting is still a major bone of contention, it cannot be pushed under the carpet. Uganda contests the joint report and wants another commission of inquiry. Rwanda says another investigation would not change earlier conclusions. An international commission led by the UK and agreed by both leaderships, which would commit in advance to implement its recommendations, is the best option. If Rwanda has nothing to hide, it cannot lose, and Uganda should not be able to contest the results. Moreover, the facts should be established so that liability can be attributed and a procedure set-up to provide reparations for Congolese victims. Both governments should accept that they cannot fight on foreign territory, kill more than 600 civilians, and destroy the second biggest town of the Congo without bearing responsibility. The UK should commit itself to reviewing its aid policies towards Rwanda and Uganda if they refuse to make reparations.
- The verification of alleged training sites for dissidents does not get near the heart of the cyclical political tensions. A more permanent mechanism to diffuse those tensions is needed as well as a wider political agreement. A new memorandum of understanding would be necessary to establish a permanent political follow-up for implementation of the leaders' commitments.
- What is really at stake in the quarrel is the governance system of the two countries. Neither leader should be able to declare war without civilian and democratic control. Years of reconstruction and reconciliation efforts in both countries could be put in jeopardy because of military egos. This is definitely not acceptable for international

donors. Pressure must be applied so that clear and strict checks are made by the parliaments of both countries before any military adventure is undertaken. The two governments should be left in no doubt, however, that a return to fighting, regardless of the constitutional proprieties that may or may not have been followed, puts at risk all international assistance programs.

- The verification process fall short of a third concern that could draw Rwanda and Uganda into renewed fighting: the increasing chaos that reigns in eastern Congo. It is urgent that the security situation in North Kivu and Orientale Province be clarified. MONUC is the sole body with capacity to deploy on the ground and continuously monitor the fighting and movement of troops. It should urgently strengthen its positions in the area and establish permanent positions in Kanyanbayonga and Lubero in order to provide a constant flow of confirmed information about the situation on the ground and alert the international community in case of serious risk of outbreak of hostilities.

It would be useful for the international community to search out additional means by which to encourage Rwanda and Uganda to lay aside their quarrel and cooperate better both with themselves and with the wider efforts to resolve the Congo conflict. Some measures, such as the substantial aid programs of the British government and others, involve positive inducements, in the first instance at least. Other measures, with more intrusive aspects, that might be considered could include:

- Appointment of a permanent mediator, assisted by an international team of military and political experts, to clear away progressively all material bones of contention and work with MONUC on a mechanism to monitor army movements at the common border, as well as in North Kivu, until all signs of tension have disappeared.
- The implementation of the primary recommendation of the addendum to the

April 2001 report of the UN Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the DRC: a moratorium on the purchase and importation of minerals

originating in areas where foreign troops are present in the DRC.

Nairobi/Brussels, 21 December 2001.

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a private, multinational organisation committed to strengthening the capacity of the international community to anticipate, understand and act to prevent and contain conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts, based on the ground in countries at risk of conflict, gather information from a wide range of sources, assess local conditions and produce regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers.

ICG's reports are distributed widely to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analysis and to generate support for its policy prescriptions. The ICG Board - which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media - is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans has been President and Chief Executive since January 2000.

ICG's international headquarters are at Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Paris. The organisation currently operates field projects in nineteen crisis-affected countries and regions across four continents:

Algeria, Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Zimbabwe in Africa; Myanmar, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in Asia; Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in Europe; and Colombia in Latin America.

ICG also undertakes and publishes original research on general issues related to conflict prevention and management. After the attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, ICG launched a major new project on global terrorism, designed both to bring together ICG's work in existing program areas and establish a new geographical focus on the Middle East (with a regional field office in Amman) and Pakistan/Afghanistan (with a field office in Islamabad). The new offices became operational in December 2001.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governments currently provide funding: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Foundation and private sector donors include the Ansary Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the Ploughshares Fund and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation.

December 2001



International Crisis Group

International Headquarters

149 Avenue Louise, 1050 Brussels, Belgium · Tel: +32 2 502 90 38 · Fax: +32 2 502 50 38
E-mail: icgbrussels@crisisweb.org

New York Office

400 Madison Avenue, Suite 11C, New York 10017 · Tel: +1 212 813 08 20 · Fax: +1 212 813 08 25
E-mail: icgny@crisisweb.org

Washington Office

1522 K Street, Suite 200, Washington DC 20005 · Tel +1 202 408 80 12 · Fax: +1 202 408 82 58
E-mail: icg washington@crisisweb.org

Paris Office

51 Rue Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 75001 Paris, France · Tel: +33 1 44 88 60 20 · Fax: +33 1 44 88 24 26
E-mail: icgparis@crisisweb.org

All ICG reports are available on our website: www.crisisweb.org