Title: Peacebuilding through Demobilisation: A Case Study of the Uganda National Rescue Front II Peace Agreement, West Nile, Uganda

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Abstract

From 1979 to 2002, the West Nile region in Uganda experienced insurgencies notably, the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) which signed a peace agreement with the NRM/A government in 1986 and the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) II that began in 1987 ended in 2002 following a peace agreement with the NRM government. Unlike the 1986 Peace Agreement that failed to create lasting peace, the 2002 Peace Agreement resulted in peace that has lasted for the past two and a half decades. Why was the 2002 peace agreement effective? Using this particular case, this study examines the process of peacebuilding through demobilisation. The study was guided by four objectives: to analyse the contextual evolution of the UNRF II armed conflict in West Nile; to examine the negotiation practices adopted during the UNRF II peace talks; to explore the demobilisation components and implementation efforts of the UNRF II peace agreement; and, to assess the impact of the UNRF II demobilisation processes on peacebuilding and security in West Nile. Employing a qualitative approach the study drew on key informant interviews, five Focus Group Discussions, six unstructured Event-Centred Interviews, and structured observation. A total of sixty-six informants participated in the study. Additionally, archival documents, including mediation correspondence, peace agreements and reports, were analysed. Using social constructivism, the the study established that the emergence of the UNRF II insurgency was induced by threats from UNRF ex-combatants and non-participation in the negotiations leading to the 1986 peace agreement. However, under the UNRF II peace agreement, the belligerent parties adopted mediated peace negotiations, Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) of UNRF II combatants. The hybridity of DDR, combining ancestors, spirits, rituals, and cleansing, has contributed to last twenty-four years of calm in West Nile. This study contributes to peace studies discourse by emphasising adoption of indigenous peacebuilding mechanism; provides policymakers and practitioners with a successful case of how demobilisation processes in peace agreements can create an environment for dialogue and context-based peacebuilding. In spite of some gaps, the study concludes that the UNRF II peace agreement has contributed to peace and security in West Nile. This study recommends that future studies investigate the role of local governments, informal institutions, and cultural norms in enforcing DDR and peacebuilding.