

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY

SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

**A Bone to Pick: Grievance as a Motivator of Civil War Onset**

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FALL 2012

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements

for baccalaureate degrees

in International Politics and French and Francophone Studies

with honors in International Politics

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## **ABSTRACT**

In statistical studies of civil war onset, variables such as ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF), GDP per capita, and polity scores, are often hypothesized to be important determinants of civil war. Yet, it is common for two different countries with similar scores across each of these statistical measures to have very different civil war onset histories. We can conclude as a result that these statistical measurements, although important to our understanding of civil war onset, do not fully explain why different states experience civil war. My goal in this thesis is to see what role, if any, grievance plays in determining civil war onset. Examinations of political terror indexes, chronological historical occurrences, and various rebel groups are examined as more nuanced means of addressing the question of what role ethnic, economic, and political grievances may play in civil war onset.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my thanks to Dr. Gretchen Casper, for providing me with helpful insight and knowledge which helped me to strengthen my thesis and enhance my argument and understanding of my topic. Without her assistance my thesis would not be the piece of writing it is today.

I would also like to thank Dr. Douglas Lemke for his indispensable support in the conceptualization, realization, and substantial editing of this thesis. Without his academic expertise and assistance, I would never have been able to create such a work. He has helped me to grow as a student of political science, as a writer, and as an aspiring academic.

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## GRIEVANCE IN EXISTING LITERATURE

As time has passed, the methods and weapons used globally in civil wars have evolved and changed to reflect available technology.<sup>1</sup> The broad motivations for these conflicts, by contrast, continue to be either the prospect of economic gain or a reaction to exclusion of internal factions by a government. Put more simply, civil war onset is most frequently understood through the lens of greed and grievance. Recent literature has tended to stress the former explanation for civil war onset over the latter, characterizing rebel groups as calculated-risk takers interested in the financial pay-offs of civil war, rather than factions which are ideologically motivated and have mobilized accordingly. A large sect of those publishing modern civil war literature maintain that rebel groups are more interested in acquiring jewels than attaining justice. Although economic motivations are pervasive in civil wars today, this is not a new phenomenon, and should not be thusly regarded. By extension, that all modern civil wars are purely motivated by economics without any trace of social or political stimuli seems highly implausible. Grievances should still have a place in our understanding of civil wars, and should not be treated as inconsequential in our examinations of civil war onset.

As just indicated, recent civil war literature has focused largely on dichotomizing wars as motivated by either grievance or greed. Many political scientists have proposed the delineation of post-Cold War civil wars and pre-Cold War civil wars. Kalyvas examines this phenomenon by dividing civil wars along three axes: causes/motivation, support, and violence. Using these distinctions, he compares “new” and “old” civil wars accordingly. The breakdown essentially claims the following characteristics are inherent to “old” civil wars: collective grievances; broad popular support; and controlled levels of violence. Divergently, new civil wars are motivated by

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<sup>1</sup> Stathis Kalyvas and Laia Balcells. 2010. “International System and Technologies of Rebellion.” *American Political Science Review* 104 (3):415-429.

the desire for loot; do not generate overwhelming amounts of popular support; and are riddled with instances of gratuitous violence.<sup>2</sup> Kalyvas explores these claims and their legitimacy using an historical examination. According to Kalyvas' analysis, the claim that new civil wars are fundamentally different from old civil wars lacks supporting historical evidence. Civil wars have been considered to be more violent than other types of conflict for centuries, not merely in the years following the end of the Cold War. Assuming Kalyvas' findings to be true, if old civil wars are perceived as being frequently grievance based, and new civil wars do not exhibit noticeable variance from old civil wars, we can logically conclude that grievances still play an important role in our understanding of modern civil wars. By extension, we could draw valuable conclusions about civil war onset by examining cases in which grievances were acute at the inception of a civil war.

Contrasting Kalyvas' finding that grievance indeed plays a role in modern civil wars, Collier and Hoeffler make an argument for civil war onset being motivated primarily by economic factors, or greed. Their argument that civil war onset is stimulated by economic factors is predominantly based on an examination of expected utility theory. They assume that would-be rebels resort to civil war if the perceived benefits of engagement outweigh the costs.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, rebel groups here are presented as being concerned with profit maximization. In rationalizing civil war in this way, Collier and Hoeffler assume that only economic concerns yield civil war outcomes, and do not give full consideration to the prospect that ideology could be the primary determinant of a particular insurgency. They found what they believed to be strong evidence for their argument that rebel groups are highly motivated economically, but these findings do not necessarily disprove the fact that some civil wars are motivated by social or political factors.

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<sup>2</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, "'New' and 'Old' Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?" *World Politics*, 54 (Oct 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "On economic causes of civil war" *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50 (1998).

Grievance could be a component influencing even the most seemingly economically-focused conflict. Separating greed and grievance into two distinct categories with one option consistently taking precedence over another is an oversimplification, and merely finding support for economic motivations does not entirely discount the chance of government injustices influencing rebels' decisions in tandem. In fact, Collier and Hoeffler's finding that ethno-linguistic fractionalization is positively associated with the likelihood of civil war onset supports the idea of grievance as a potential explanatory variable.

Expanding upon this idea, Keen argues that greed and grievance are not entirely separate entities, and that both have a place in our study of modern day civil wars. His argument is based largely on the conceptualization of particular groups falling outside of the range of physical and economic protection of a given state as more likely to engage in civil war. These groups, he claims, are likely to be subjected to hardships such as exploitation, famine, and violence, not only in times of war but correspondingly in times of peace.<sup>4</sup> These groups have inferior access to the state's resources, have experienced some form of mistreatment, and are therefore more likely to suffer at the hands of the reigning government and see rebellion as a viable option. Keen in no way discounts the viability of greed as a motivator, but supplements it with an argument that grievance also plays an important role in influencing the onset of civil war.

Further support for the idea of grievance as a factor motivating civil war comes from a study completed by Buhaug et al. Their findings indicate that states with ethnic minorities who are excluded from involvement with the state on various levels or who lack feelings of community with other groups within the state are more likely to experience civil war than those

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<sup>4</sup> David Keen, "The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars" *Adelphi Paper*, 320 (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1998).

states which facilitate political and social cohesion more effectively.<sup>5</sup> This argument clearly supports the idea of grievance as an influential factor in determining the onset of civil war. Although this research examines ethnic conflict specifically, it could easily be extended to groups with a common political affiliation who feel that their government has wronged them or discriminated against them in some unforgivable way.

In essence, grievance still has value in our understanding of civil war onset. Arguments in support of economic motivations should not discount the importance of a group's perceived exclusion by the government as a catalyst for civil war. If we conceptualize civil wars as existing on either side of the pre and post-Cold War cleavage as being fundamentally different, we are in many ways doing ourselves a disservice. The civil wars of the present may not be any more or less economically motivated than they were one hundred years ago. Civil war onset has historically been the product of greed and/or grievance, and this continues to be true today. It is important to recognize that societal fractionalization, polarization, or exclusion of one group can result in grievances powerful enough to incite violence. By examining specific instances of this in modern history, we can better understand the role that grievances play in the onset of civil war.

## **THEORIZING GRIEVANCE**

All civil wars are not created equally. Across instances of civil war, we see enormous variation in onset, duration, resolution, and recurrence. For the purpose of limiting my scope of exploration, I focus specifically on the factors that determine civil war onset. Many existing theories highlight particular characteristics states possess that might lead them to engage in civil

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<sup>5</sup> Halvard Buhaug, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Jan Ketil Rod, "Disaggregating Ethno-Nationalist Civil Wars: A Dyadic Test of Exclusion Theory" *International Organization*, 63 (2008).



war. Common explanations include states' levels of ethno-linguistic fractionalization (ELF), states' democracy scores, and GDP per capita. However, through a simple examination of existing data, we see that two states can possess considerable similarity in these respects, yet have very different civil war experiences. Despite their similarities, one state can have a history of recurrent civil war, while another may have no history of civil war. This begs the question: why do we see civil war onset in certain states but not others, despite shared compositional characteristics among these states?

In situations where states share similar traits but have different experiences with civil war onset, I hypothesize that the defining explanatory variable is the prevalence and acuteness of grievance in society. Grievance can be simultaneously tangible and intangible, making it a powerful social presence. It can manifest itself physically and measurably in the form of a government "wronging" a societal group. "Wronging" could be defined as a government intentionally excluding a group (economically or socially), damaging a group's cultural or physical integrity, or damaging the cultural or physical integrity of members within that group primarily on the basis of their association with said societal faction. Examples of tangible "wronging" could include fatality data from a government-conducted mass killing against a particular group, or in acres of land forcibly extracted from a particular faction by the state's government. Intangibly, the feelings of resentment generated by these wrongs are much harder to measure. It is logical to assume that if the tangible wrongs committed by a government lead to strong, but intangible feelings of resentment, the combination of these elements could conceivably be pervasive enough to spur rebellion (The parameters for identifying the presence of these "wrongings" which lead to grievance will be addressed in the research methodology

section). Put succinctly, grievances of one societal group against its government could lead to the onset of civil war. This yields the following hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: In societies where a particular faction has been wronged by the government, feelings of resentment and grievance are likely to lead to civil war onset.

Thus, a positive relationship is expected between grievance and civil war onset. This factor could explain the variation in civil war onset across states that share similar characteristics.

Conceptual opposition to the grievance school assumes that discontent is always present in society.<sup>6</sup> This assumes that at all times in a given society, there is a continuous grievance level of invariable intensity. Acting as a constant as opposed to a variable, grievance would logically be incapable of influencing the onset of civil war (since said onset is time-varying). In conceiving grievance as such, adherents to this line of thought by necessity equate all grievances despite their differences in intensity, severity, and duration. Doing so not only results in a dangerous oversimplification of societal discontent, but also completely ignores the inherent variation in grievances. For instance, we cannot equate grievances about stricter gun control laws in Virginia with state-sponsored, systematic killing of civilians in Rwanda. Equating these two situations results in obvious measurement error. There are clearly situations which would result in stronger feelings of resentment by a particular faction towards its government than others, such as those where inhumane acts have occurred. We can see that the nature of the grievance a particular faction experiences is a vitally important factor to consider as we try to understand

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<sup>6</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War" *American Political Science Review*, 97 (Feb 2003).

civil war onset. Thus, we can see that the nature and severity of grievance could possibly account for variation rather than simply act as a societal constant.

By extension, considering grievances to be omnipresent and unchanging is an ineffective means of interpretation. In assuming the constancy of discontent, we presume that grievances have no place in understanding civil war onset. In so doing, we could be disregarding some important aspects which might help us to better understand why civil war onset occurs in some states but not others, despite obvious similarities of statistical measurement between them. Where factors such as GDP per capita, ELF scores and democracy scores between two states are similar but their instances of civil war onset vary, we can logically conclude that another, previously unexplored factor is influencing onset. In order to determine what other factors are present, it is rational that we more closely examine specific cases. By exploring cases where the aforementioned variables are nearly parallel but with different instances of onset, we could look for the presence of acute grievance in the civil war state versus the state remaining at peace as a possible explanatory factor. Further exploration provides us with the opportunity to solidify our understanding of civil war onset.

Another argument against the grievance school comes with the separation of “new” and “old” civil wars. Many argue that a dichotomy exists between new and old civil wars, with the end of the Cold War acting as the decisive disjuncture. As per this line of thought, past civil wars were more grievance based, while new civil wars are more strongly motivated by greed. Besides ample historical evidence to the contrary, this greed school of thought would imply that modern societies are “greedier” than those of the past, leading to the outbreak of a new, different kind of civil war. Assuming that people in this century and the last are fundamentally different in terms of their needs, desires and objectives is not only a bit presumptuous but likewise highly unlikely.

Therefore, we could logically conclude that grievance, too, plays an important role in sparking the onset of “new” civil wars, just as it did in past civil conflicts.

As referenced by Collier and Hoeffler, rebel groups use cost-benefit analyses to decide whether to initiate rebellion. The idea of “cost”, however, is not merely limited to economics. We can incorporate grievance, along with greed, into utility theory. According to this conceptualization, civil war onset will occur if the benefits of a rebellion for a rebel group outweigh the costs that group will suffer by engaging in said rebellion. Social and political costs could also be considered in making these judgments, and these costs fall more appropriately into the category of grievance. Thus, grievance could play a defining role in convincing rebels to initiate a war with their government, or to refrain from doing so. The grieved group could see death as the most probable outcome regardless of the actions taken, and therefore rebellion may be of less cost to the particular group than inaction. Resentment built up from an instance of wrongdoing by the government could influence rebel groups to choose rebellion over continued “peace”. Contrastingly, in the absence of strong grievance, rebels may decide against rebellion. Thus, we see grievance potentially acting as an important, qualitative factor influencing the onset of civil war.

Death is not the only cost rebels face. Techniques used to extract information about rebel leaders and rebel group intentions can be both physically and psychologically harrowing. Infliction of bodily injury upon an individual, or death threats to family members are possible forms of punishment for involvement in rebel activity, as seen in the case of indigenous Guatemalans in the civil war lasting from 1960-1996<sup>7</sup>. Indefinite incarceration as a political prisoner is another disagreeable fate for many of those rebel group members who are captured by government forces. Even more severe is the utilization of biological weaponry, such as Saddam

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<sup>7</sup> Guatemalan Commission for Historical Clarification

Hussein's use of mustard gas against Iraqi Kurds in the Iran-Iraq war.<sup>8</sup> With these examples, we can see that the dangers of civil war reach far beyond economic destruction. Explaining a rebel's willingness to knowingly subject himself to these and other threats through only an explanation of greed seems incomplete. Grievance too could act as an important factor in rebels' cost-benefit analyses, with the results of inaction costing more than the possibility of mutilation or death. We can see here that grievance could be beneficial in explaining what causes rebels to commit to a rebellion, thereby enhancing our knowledge of factors influencing the onset of civil war.

Essentially, adhering to the greed line of thought is not incorrect, but rather incomplete. Economic motivations undoubtedly influence rebel groups' decisions about whether to engage in rebellion and challenge the status quo. However, it would be unrealistic to assume that all rebel groups operate purely using this thought process. By engaging the idea of grievance as an independent factor influencing civil war, or one which influences civil war in conjunction with greed based motivations, it is possible for us to better understand the nature of civil war onset.

### **Case Selection**

In selecting cases for examination, it was desirable to find state pairs with roughly equal ELF, polity scores, and GDP per capita. Additionally, to ensure as little extraneous variation as possible, I endeavored to select states with close geographical proximity to one another. To achieve these objectives, I examined the average ELF scores of states using the data set compiled by Fearon and Laitin.<sup>9</sup> Preferably, states pairs would have an ELF with a difference of less than .1.<sup>10</sup> In order to find states' Polity scores, I examined the Polity data set. Ideally, the Polity

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<sup>8</sup> Council on Foreign Relations

<sup>9</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War" *American Political Science Review*, 97 (Feb 2003).

<sup>10</sup> The full range of ELF is from 0 to 1.

scores for the dyad would not vary by more than 1.<sup>11</sup> For the state's GDP per capita, the optimal difference in income would not be greater than \$1,000 USD (PPP).

Using this process, I determined Uganda and Kenya to be a nearly ideal dyad. These two states provide an excellent basis for comparison, as they exhibit incredibly similar ELF, Polity scores, GDP per capita, and geographic proximity. Located in eastern Africa, these two states have very different civil war histories despite their parallels in other variables. As per the Fearon and Laitin dataset, Uganda has an ethno-linguistic fractionalization score of .909, with Kenya following closely at .883. This satisfied my desire for an ELF difference of no greater than .1. In terms of Polity, Uganda has an average ranking of -3.83 (from independence through present), while Kenya's is -4.12. This makes both countries anocracies by the standard definition, and also makes them appropriate choices as per my intent to keep the variance in polity with a 1 point range. In 2011, the GDP per capita (in terms of purchasing power parity) for Ugandans was \$1,300 (USD), while Kenya's rested at \$1,700 (USD).<sup>12</sup> Once again, this dyad satisfied my specified criteria.

Despite limited variation between these two countries in terms of ELF, Polity score, and GDP per capita, we see that their civil war onset histories vary greatly. While Uganda has been subjected to recurring civil wars,<sup>13</sup> Kenya, contrastingly has not experienced any civil war onsets since independence was achieved. Therefore, we can conclude that ELF, Polity score, and GDP per capita fail to explain differences in civil war onset in Uganda and Kenya. This means that another variable must be present and influencing the onset of civil war. It is possible that grievance could be the independent variable which accounts for this variation. Thus, I intend to

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<sup>11</sup> Polity has a full range from -10 to 10.

<sup>12</sup> United States Government. "World Fact Book." Central Intelligence Agency, 15 March 2012. Web. 15 March 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Civil war onset has occurred in 1982, 1987, 1988, 2002 and 2004 according to Uppsala Conflict Data.

examine the acuteness of grievance societal factions in Uganda feel toward their government's actions. I will probe whether factions feel they have been wronged by their government. Perhaps obviously, I expect to find that social groups in Kenya either have no such resentments toward their government, or that their resentments are far less acute. It is my hope that this examination will yield evidence that the acuteness of societal grievance influences the likelihood of civil war onset, thus explaining the initiation of civil war in Uganda while Kenya maintains relative peace.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

As previously stated, current approaches in political science research seek to explain civil war onset in a given state using factors such as ELF, Polity score, and GDP per capita. This method of analysis is, however, incomplete. Although Collier and Hoeffler have found ELF to be a statistically significant factor positively associated with civil war onset,<sup>14</sup> there could potentially be a spurious relationship rather than a causal finding. We can conclude this from the example of Kenya and Uganda, where ELF is very similar but civil war onset varies greatly. The challenge is to determine what other variable could be influencing civil war onset in these cases. I have chosen to test grievance acuteness as a possibility, because it provides the opportunity to account for some of the shortcomings inherent to ELF.

Firstly, ELF compares the likelihood that two members of a state chosen at random from the population are of a different ethnicity. One innate flaw in this measurement includes defining "ethnicity." Ethnicity is a very subjective measure, and data from countries such as Uganda or Kenya are potentially inaccurate. Therefore, we can conclude that this measurement would be very crude. Secondly, ELF assumes constancy. It is ineffective in representing changes over time. By contrast, examining civil war onset from the grievance perspective allows us to examine

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<sup>14</sup> Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "On economic causes of civil war" *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50 (1998).

the histories of the two countries, examining government actions and wronging of different societal groups as well as general treatment of their respective populations since independence. Labeling a faction which rebelled against the government is far less subjective than determining the ethnicities of every individual in society. That being said, identifying rebel factions is not necessarily immune to error, as many groups can be implicated in the onset of a civil war. However, it is arguable that identifying rebel groups involved within a given conflict is a much less crude measurement than determining the ethnicity of every citizen in a given state. Likewise, examining specific instances of grievance allows us to show variation over time. For instance, after a certain action taken by the government against a faction, we could see the disruption of peace and the onset of civil war as a result of grievance. This, of course, remains to be seen in examination of the cases.

### **Civil War Onset**

The dependent variable to be examined is civil war onset. Civil war will be defined in accordance with the Uppsala Conflict Data Set. This means that a conflict will be considered a civil war if there are 100 deaths total, with at least 25 deaths annually. The first year of a conflict is of paramount interest, as my concern is civil war onset as opposed to duration. The government of the state must act as side A, with at least one intrastate faction acting as side B.

### **Defining Grievance**

In order to measure the relationship between grievance and civil war onset, we must first define the term. Grievance will be viewed as an issue of group identity, and defined as an injury committed against an intrastate faction by the state's government through economic or social



exclusion, or through practices which damage the cultural or physical integrity of the intrastate faction.

An example of economic exclusion could be the forcible extraction of land from a particular faction by the government without appropriate compensation. Economic exclusion is not the equivalent of GDP per capita. A lower GDP per capita does not necessitate grievance. Extraction of land from one faction is a more appropriate measure of economic exclusion, as it implies inherent inequality and discrimination against said faction.

Social exclusion could refer to the purposeful ostracism of a societal faction from participation in government processes. This could include appropriating seats only to members of a specific faction, or deliberately excluding members of a given faction from participation in government. Not allowing members of a particular group to participate could result in feelings of resentment and frustration with unequal treatment.

Damaged cultural integrity could include prohibiting indigenous peoples from speaking their native language in schools, or denying rights to culturally specific dress in public places. Disrespect of a culture could incite great resistance on the part of the affected faction.

Lastly, damaging physical integrity could include torture (both psychological and physical), mutilation, murder, recruitment of child soldiers, or undue incarceration of an individual pertaining to his or her identity as a member of a given societal faction. Kidnappings and “disappearances” could also be included in this definition. An assault on physical integrity will be considered more intensive as the percentage of the population who suffers increases.

“Acute grievance” could be defined as a combination the presence of any of these grievance factors, especially the combination of many or where physical integrity is severely damaged; or as the exclusion of a societal faction for a period of ten or more years. Greed, by

contrast, will merely be considered the initiation of civil war when grievance (according to the specified guidelines) has not been determined to be a factor leading to the onset of civil war. In examining the role of grievance on civil war onset with these specific guidelines, it may be possible to determine what role, if any, acute grievance plays in influencing groups to rebel, thereby influencing civil war onset.

## **CASE STUDIES**

### POLITICAL TERROR IN UGANDA AND KENYA

In order to determine measured presence of political violence within Uganda and Kenya, I used Mark Gibney's Political Terror Scale (PTS).<sup>15</sup> As quoted from the site: "The PTS measures levels of political violence and terror that a country experiences in a particular year based on a 5-level 'terror scale' originally developed by Freedom House." This scale contains terror rankings by both Amnesty International and the United States Department of State (US DoS). The range of years for the scale is from 1976-2010. Because the data for Uganda were non-existent from the year 1976-1980, both countries were examined starting in the year 1981 as a means of maintaining consistency.

Uganda has had scores ranging from 3 to 5 over the 30 year time span, according to both Amnesty and US DoS evaluations (see Appendix A). I calculated the mean terror score for Uganda to be 3.85. (All data were rounded to the nearest hundredth). Kenya has had scores ranging from 2 to 4 over the 30 year time span, also according to both Amnesty and US DoS evaluations (Appendix A). I calculated the mean terror score for Kenya to be 3.19. This is a difference of about 13% from Uganda, with Uganda having a higher average political terror score.

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<sup>15</sup> Gibney, Cornetta, & Wood (2012).

Although the difference in these scores may not seem like much, upon a closer examination of the data, it becomes evident that Uganda has been statistically more violent in general. For instance, Uganda has had 3 years in which it was ranked at the highest level of political terror (“5”) by Amnesty International standards, and 4 years in which it was ranked at the highest level of political terror by the US DoS. Kenya, contrastingly, has not been ranked at a political terror of “5” by either Amnesty or the US DoS. Furthermore, Kenya has been ranked in the “2” range of political terror (3 times by Amnesty, 7 times by the US DoS). Uganda has never been ranked below a “3”, even at its most peaceful. Thus, we can see that Uganda has generally been more violent than Kenya, even if an average of these results skews our interpretation.

### **CASE STUDY: UGANDA**

Examining the Uppsala Conflict Encyclopedia, I found that between 1962 (the year Uganda obtained independence from the British Government) and the present, the government of Uganda experienced civil war onset 5 different years with three different rebel groups. I only examined those conflicts which were considered as “wars” (at least 1000 battle related deaths in total) within the data set, and ignored those labeled as “minor” conflicts.

Three rebel groups have acted as “Side B” in these intrastate conflicts: the National Resistance Army (NRA), the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM), and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The NRA and the Ugandan government initiated civil war in 1982, and this continued consecutively until 1986. (Once again, my focus will be on 1982, the year of onset). The HSM and the government saw civil war onset in the year 1988. Finally, the LRA saw civil war onset in 1988, 2002 and 2004.<sup>16</sup>

Wars w/ NRA: 1982-86 (National Resistance Army)

War w/ HSM: 1987 (Holy Spirit Movement)

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<sup>16</sup> Uppsala University. Uppsala Conflict Data Program.

Wars w/LRA: 1988, 2002, 2004 (Lord's Resistance Army)

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

It is vital to note that Uganda's population is highly fractionalized, with Northern and Southern Uganda acting as the two opposing poles. This division dates back to as early as 1894, when the country was still under British occupation.<sup>17</sup> These deeply rooted schisms have continued into the present, and were in fact reinforced by the boundaries implemented by the British back in 1962. As stated in the CIA World Factbook: "The colonial boundaries created by Britain to delimit Uganda grouped together a wide range of ethnic groups with different political systems and cultures. These differences prevented the establishment of a working political community after independence was achieved in 1962."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the inability of the Ugandan state to completely integrate its various ethno-linguistic groups has come, at least partially, as a consequence of its colonial history.

In addition to its colonial experience, Uganda's political history has also been fractionalized. It has been rife with military coups and power struggles. In 1962, when the state achieved formal independence from Britain, Milton Obote became the Prime Minister. Almost immediately after having been elected, Obote began taking action which gradually increased his power. By 1967, a new constitution was put in place, and Uganda was dubbed a republic.<sup>19</sup> Obote's newfound political power was relatively short lived, for in January of 1971, then armed forces commander Idi Amin Dada ousted Obote, declaring himself president. He took even more drastic measures to ensure his power, including dissolving parliament almost immediately.<sup>20</sup> The

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<sup>17</sup> Hazan, Pierre. *Judging War, Judging History: Behind Truth and Reconciliation*. Pg. 129

<sup>18</sup> CIA World Factbook

<sup>19</sup> US DoS

<sup>20</sup> US DoS

economy, social structure, and human rights in general all suffered dramatically over the course of Amin's eight years in power. It has been stated that "Amin came to epitomize the worst in endemic leadership misrule in Africa."<sup>21</sup> Throughout his reign, an estimated 300,000 Ugandans were murdered<sup>22</sup>, the majority hailing from the Acholi and Langi ethnic groups. Many opted to flee the country as a means of escaping from his lethal rule. He was eventually toppled only with help from the Tanzanian government.<sup>23</sup>

The 1980s were particularly volatile years for Uganda, and saw the emergence of many armed groups. After a series of political incidents from interim governments to election rounds, Obote returned to power in 1980. It was during this part of his reign that some of the most graphic human rights violations occurred. This second administration headed by Obote is often cited as conducting "political witch hunt murders" of those in opposition to his ideals, as well as brutal oppression of already disadvantaged ethnic groups.<sup>24</sup> The government under Obote sought to destroy the National Resistance Army (NRA) headed by Yoweri Museveni, and in the process ended up being severely costly for both physical and human capital, with estimated fatalities at 100,000 during the conflict.<sup>25</sup> Museveni and his NRA finally succeeded in deposing Obote in 1985.<sup>26</sup>

Yoweri Museveni formed the NRA, a guerrilla group, as a reaction to the 1980 reelection of Obote.<sup>27</sup> His argument was that the elections had been fraudulent, and as such his response was an armed resistance to Obote's reelection. Evidently, this would fall most directly under the category of social exclusion. Election fraud could be interpreted as exclusion from government

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<sup>21</sup> Falola, pg. 158

<sup>22</sup> Falola, pg. 158

<sup>23</sup> Falola, pg. 158

<sup>24</sup> Falola, pg. 158

<sup>25</sup> Falola, pg. 158

<sup>26</sup> Falola, pg. 158

<sup>27</sup> Finnstrom, Sverker. "Wars of the past and war in the present: The Lord's resistance movement/army in Uganda."

processes. If individuals feel as though their votes are being ignored or purposefully counted inaccurately, they may become disillusioned and angry. However: this grievance alone does not seem incredibly acute, and other less violent options could have been employed, such as protesting or pressing for repeat elections. What factors strove Museveni to form a guerilla group as a response to this particular incidence of perceived election fraud?

Before answering this question, it is also important to take into consideration the myriad human rights abuses committed by Amin's regime during his time in office from 1971-1979. As previously mentioned, about 300,000 Ugandans, primarily Acholi and Langi, were estimated to have been killed during this period. As Museveni belongs to neither of these ethnic groups, and proceeded to later kill many of these ethnic minorities himself, it is fair to say that this also did not grieve him acutely. An interesting consideration is why members of these particular groups themselves did not choose to engage in civil war after having been so obviously wronged. Perhaps the perceived costs of engaging in conflict outweighed the perceived benefits for members of the Acholi and Langi groups. As we see later, the Acholi group did not stay silent under the oppression of the state government for long.

With respect to Museveni's LRA, it seems in this specific case that grievance was not severely acute, and therefore was not the explanatory variable behind the rebels' decision to engage in war. Rather, it seems as though Museveni capitalized on an opportunity to alter the status quo and inch closer to a position of power. This is not to say that he was not grieved by the political exclusion he found under Obote, but rather to say that it had not reached an aggravated level in which to do nothing would be more costly than to act. Rather, to act seemed to be potentially more profitable than to remain idle. Thus, although grievance was undoubtedly a factor, it does not seem to be incredibly acute or the most swaying reason for Museveni to take

his group to war. Although we cannot know Museveni's particular thought process here, we can assume that he saw a moment of opportunity where the potential gains of initiating rebellion outweighed the costs. Thus, we can assume that this was an act of greed, rather than grievance. We see that Museveni's offensive is successful, and he comes to power after the defeat of Obote.

Museveni's government was one of martial law. It has been argued that Museveni inherited a Uganda plagued by "decades of brutal dictatorship, economic mismanagement, and interethnic conflict."<sup>28</sup> He further solidified the rupture between the Ugandans of the north and south by using his southern military forces to attack groups in the north. It seemed that the benefits of abstaining from war no longer outweighed the costs for the Acholi group, and the Holy Spirit Movement (HSM) commenced. The HSM was headed by Alice Auma, a woman of the Acholi tribe who plays an interesting role in the history of guerilla warfare in Uganda. Auma had an occupation as a medium and a spiritual healer, but in 1986 she added "military leader" to her list of credentials.<sup>29</sup> It was in this same year that Auma began "channeling" a spirit by the name of Lakwena. His message was that Auma had to create a guerilla group to counter the "evil and bloodshed"<sup>30</sup> inflicted by Museveni's military government. After receiving this message, Auma took Lakwena's name as her last, and began to amass troops. Although there were many rebel groups which had developed as a reaction to the Museveni government, the HSM was the most popular of these.<sup>31</sup> A few victories against the opposition brought even greater numbers of recruits to the HSM.

As stated by the International Museum of Women: "Alice Lakwena's channeling came in the midst of...the threat of annihilation posed by the occupying Southern Ugandan forces." This

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<sup>28</sup> Falola pg. 159

<sup>29</sup> International Museum of Women

<sup>30</sup> IMOW

<sup>31</sup> Falola, pg. 159

rather convenient timing suggests that acute grievance was at play in this decision to rebel. The Acholis have been targeted myriad times throughout Ugandan history, and as such have plenty over which to grieve. The damaging of physical integrity has been an obvious consequence, since the government military forces inflicted a great deal of casualties upon the group under Museveni. Clearly, members of the Acholi group were acutely grieved by their treatment, influencing their decision to rebel.

Their suffering continued even after the failure of the HSM. Although the HSM did not see many victories once the fighting moved from northern to southern Uganda, it is important to note that the Lord's Resistance Army "emerged from the remnants" of the HSM after it had "failed in its resistance to the Museveni government".<sup>32</sup>

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was formed under the direction of Joseph Kony, a native of northern Uganda and a member of the Acholi group. This group formed as an opposition group to the Museveni NRA government in the south.<sup>33</sup> Knowing about the north/south division within Uganda, we can see that feelings of resentment were nearly 100 years old during the 1980s when the LRA came to power. Although the LRA, like the HSM, claims spiritual motivations for engaging in warfare, "the guerrilla war against the government could rationally be explained as motivated by Northern loss of political power and the deep-rooted ethnic divide in Uganda."<sup>34</sup> Since 1986, the Ugandan government has employed military forces in hopes of destroying the LRA, but these attempts have failed.<sup>35</sup> Government forces have committed myriad atrocities against civilian members of the Acholi group. These atrocities have included "executions, torture, rape, arbitrary detentions, forced displacement...and the

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<sup>32</sup> Falola, pg. 159

<sup>33</sup> Falola, pg. 159

<sup>34</sup> Falola, pg. 159

<sup>35</sup> Hazan, pg. 129



recruitment of child soldiers.”<sup>36</sup> Concentration camps have also been used against the Acholi people, with an estimated two million individuals detained within.<sup>37</sup> On a less dramatic level, the Ugandan military elite have also monopolized many national resources which could have otherwise been used for the benefit of the state as a whole.<sup>38</sup> The LRA has also committed its fair share of violent acts in response to the measures taken by the government, which in turn only perpetuated the vicious cycle of violence. Ironically, much of this fallout is suffered by the group LRA leader Joseph Kony belongs to, the Acholi people themselves. In fact, after failing to attract the widespread support of Acholi individuals for his rebel organization, Kony in fact turns the LRA forces against the Acholi people, and begins to terrorize them himself.<sup>39</sup>

The question is not whether grievance was present, but rather how acute was that grievance to devolve into a state of war. In the case of the LRA, the government has committed acts of economic exclusion, social exclusion, and damage of physical integrity. Citizens were excluded economically through the preservation of national resource revenues for a few elites, as opposed to redistributing the wealth to the country. Unfair distribution of national resources prevents the majority of the population from reaping the benefits. Therefore, all members of society excluding the Ugandan military elites were not provided access to the financial gains of the country. Forced displacement also serves as an example of economic exclusion, as appropriate compensation has not been provided for these individuals. Exclusion from economic processes on myriad levels clearly could generate some acute feelings of grievance.

Social exclusion is another evident factor driving the LRA’s decision to rebel. The Acholi group in particular has been targeted by the Ugandan government. Undoubtedly, this group was

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<sup>36</sup> Hazan pg. 129-130

<sup>37</sup> Hazan, pg. 130

<sup>38</sup> Kapferer and Bertelsen, pg. 128

<sup>39</sup> Falola, pg. 159

not involved with government processes, as the central government has been marginalizing the Acholi for decades. Likewise, individuals have been detained or incarcerated, in complete exclusion from others, indefinitely.

Disrespecting physical integrity has obviously been the most significant violation by the Ugandan government against the Acholi people. The recruitment of child soldiers falls into this category, as children are often forced to “commit brutal acts of violence including abduction, mutilation, rape and torture.”<sup>40</sup> Likewise, the ethnic group itself has been subjected to these same punishments. It is likely that acute grievance was present within society at the time of the LRA’s rebellion as a result of the violence against the Acholi group.

Lakwena’s motivations appear, for the most part, motivated entirely by grievance. Though her methods were uncommon, she did seem to continue to drive her forces forward—even when defeat seemed likely—until the movement itself collapsed. At the same time, Kony’s motivations for rebellion are questionable, especially considering his decision to later rebel against members of his own ethnic group which he had previously worked to protect. This means that either Kony had always been partially influenced by greed, or became increasingly greedy over the course of his leadership in the LRA. Regardless, we can see that grievance at the very least partially explains his decision to mobilize rebel forces.

## **CASE STUDY: KENYA**

By the UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia standards, Kenya has had only one minor conflict and no civil wars. Additionally, the high fatality estimates for Kenya’s one minor conflict were only about 340 dead. Clearly, this is well below the required 1000 battle-related deaths to be

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<sup>40</sup> IMOW

considered a civil war. Hence, despite other spells of violence that may have occurred throughout Kenyan history, at least by UCDP guidelines, it has existed in relative peace.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Kenya, too, has a British colonial history. In 1963, independence was achieved and Jomo Kenyatta became the country's president.<sup>41</sup> During his term in office, Kenyatta centralized the power of the government further and increased the power of the presidential position. He also allegedly harassed opposition candidates during election rounds.<sup>42</sup> Contrastingly, his economic policies were much more "western" and open in nature, and far more based on a capitalist system. Kenyatta served as president in Kenya until his death in 1978.

Vice president Daniel Arap Moi acceded to the position of president in Kenya upon the death of Kenyatta. Arap Moi made special efforts to help Kenya continue on the path to becoming an authoritarian, one-party state. There was a great deal of political repression under Arap Moi, with opposition voices being squashed quickly. Frustrations grew over the political repression, and many felt disillusioned. This being the case, rumors of a coup began to surface in 1982. Only a few months later, the Air Force of Kenya, under the direction of low-ranking officer Hezekiah Ochuka,<sup>43</sup> launched a coup in an attempt to overthrow the Arap Moi government. This rebellion was swiftly flattened (within one day), and the entire Air Force was arrested, in addition to any conspirators. Thus, the conflict ended swiftly and decisively, and Arap Moi retained office. Kenya remained a one-party state for almost another ten years, until

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<sup>41</sup> UCDP

<sup>42</sup> UCDP

<sup>43</sup> UCDP

1991 when the clause within the constitution was repealed.<sup>44</sup> As a result, the first multiparty elections were able to occur in 1992.

Although instances of one-sided violence have been committed by the Kenyan government towards certain ethnic groups, no more intrastate armed conflicts have occurred post the failed 1982 coup attempt. The coup seemed to be particularly motivated by political exclusion. As a one-party state, opposition voices were silenced. Thus, although members of other parties were likely grieved, and potentially acutely so, it is curious that the situation did not devolve into civil war. It seems that this particular instance acts as an outlier, with acute grievance not leading to civil war onset for a reason beyond the scope of this thesis.

#### **ANALYSIS: UGANDA'S CIVIL WAR HISTORY VERSUS KENYA'S**

As we saw specifically in the cases of the HSM and LRA in Uganda, much of the government's violence and excluding practices were directed primarily toward the Acholi ethnic group. This group in particular has been acutely grieved multiple times in the past. They have been subjected to a history of oppression by government forces within Uganda. Interestingly, this grievance is not only acute, but also unrelenting. For decades the Acholi have been actively discriminated against and massacred. This is a marked example of acute grievance based on the provided definition.

Most of Uganda's political terror ratings of the highest value (5) occurred during the 1980s. It is fair to point out that this was the most violent time for rebel activity, with three of five instances of civil war onset occurring during this decade. Uganda's political terror was rated as "5" in 1981, 1983, and 1985 according to Amnesty International, and in 1982, 1983, 1985, and 2005 by the US DoS. These cases generally coincide with rebel activity from the NRA,

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<sup>44</sup> US DoS

HSM and LRA. Average political terror scores were already high for Uganda (see Table 2, Appendix A) in 1981 when civil war broke out, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. They remained at this level in 1982 and then increased to the highest rating of 5 in 1983. In this case, it seems that grievance not only generated civil war, but in turn civil war onset increased levels of grievance.

In 1986, a year before the onset of civil war in 1987, the PTS was 4, and remained as such for the next six years, through civil war onset with the LRA in 1988. In 2001, the PTS was at 3.5, but increased to 4 during the year of civil war onset in 2002. Continuing this trend, in 2004 grievance remained at 4, but increased to 4.5 in 2005, the year after the onset of civil war. Based on this observation, there does seem to be a distinct correlation between PTS and civil war onset. This correspondence goes beyond mere coincidence. I found the average of PTS during civil war onset years in Uganda to be 4.1. By contrast, the non-war year average PTS from Uganda was 3.8. It is arguable not only that acute grievance can cause civil war onset, but that civil war onset can correspondingly generate higher levels of grievance.

Despite statistically measured similarities, Uganda and Kenya have very different histories. As we can see, both countries contain grievance, but the acuteness varies. Overall, grievance in Uganda appears to have been far more acute than grievance in Kenya on the average. Incidents such as the abuse of specific ethnic groups have been more recurrent and pervasive, with the Acholi being targeted repeatedly. Likewise, political terror has consistently been higher in Uganda than in Kenya, with the latter country never achieving the highest political terror ranking of 5.

So, traditional statistical measurements such as ELF, Polity Score, and GDP per capita are useful in many facets of our research and study, but they certainly are not able to tell the

whole story. For instance, although the Polity score between Uganda and Kenya may be incredibly close and reflect similar government policies and practices, it may not fully represent the ability of a given regime to exert the power necessary to implement those policies. Although both the Ugandan and Kenyan governments took measures to consolidate power and increase that of the presidential position in particular, Kenya seems to have done so more effectively. Thus, the rebellion by the Kenyan Air Force was much easier to put down than the NRA's rebellion in Uganda.

Furthermore, it is possible that GDP per capita is not the variable to be explored economically. Out of curiosity, I also explored income inequality as a possible explanatory factor, but these data too were very similar between Uganda and Kenya (Gini coefficients of .44 and .42 respectively). Differences in tax revenue between the two countries were also negligible (a difference of only 4.5%). Therefore, we could conclude that crude statistics do not always capture the realities of the economic exclusion of specific ethnic groups. As in the case of the Acholi in Ugandan, this exclusion is arguably systematic. Such information is difficult to represent in a collection of general statistics.

Finally, ELF might not be the most telling factor for a country, but rather the extent to which those divisions are stressed and exploited. As we see in the case of Uganda, ethnic divisions were intense as far back as during the British occupation of the country. The social divisiveness of Northern and Southern Uganda is very profound, and the British added insult to injury by further dividing these groups through redistricting which disrupted ethnic groups. As a reaction, rebel and guerilla group leaders, in many ways, exploited these already pervasive divisions to generate support for their respective causes. In a country with fewer preexisting divisions, ELF might not be so divisive.

Taking all these factors into consideration, it becomes evident that the political and social situations in Kenya and Uganda are importantly different, despite any similarities they may possess on paper.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Though vitally important for organizational purposes and enhanced understanding of the world, statistics do not always tell the entire story. As in the case of Uganda and Kenya, individual historical experiences and social realities have manifested differently. In Uganda, civil war has been the norm. Contrastingly, in Kenya, agitations have rarely reached a level of violence intense enough to even be considered minor conflicts. We see these variations despite closely correlated ELF, polity, and GDP per capita.

There is much improvement to be made in examining these cases. There are problems inherent to attempting to measure or define “acute grievance”. As a concept, it is rather intangible. Thus, the constraints of arbitrary definitions make measurement error likely. Additionally, the PTS, although very helpful in simplifying the prevalence and acuteness of political terror within a given state is just that: simplified. It must be difficult to determine political terror scores for every country in the world using only a 5 point range. Still, it is important to understand—or at the very least endeavor to understand—the factors which cause states with similar statistical profiles to be so inherently different in their civil war experiences.

By attempting to generate better measures and methods of answering these questions, we come closer to understanding why civil war onset occurs in some states but not others. Perhaps a collection of intangible factors are at play in each of these cases, but without a close examination

of them individually, there is little hope of better understanding why civil war onset occurs in some states and not others for the future.



## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A, TABLE 1

Year	Terror Score Kenya (Amnesty International)	Terror Score Kenya (US DoS)	Terror Score Uganda (Amnesty International)	Terror Score Uganda (US DoS)
1981	2	2	5	4
1982	3	2	4	5
1983	3	2	5	5
1984	4	3	4	4
1985	2	2	5	5
1986	3	2	4	4
1987	3	3	4	4
1988	3	2	4	4
1989	2	2	4	4
1990	3	3	4	4
1991	3	3	4	4
1992	4	4	3	3
1993	3	4	3	3
1994	4	4	3	3
1995	4	3	3	4
1996	3	4	4	3
1997	4	4	4	3
1998	3	3	4	3
1999	3	3	4	3
2000	3	3	4	3
2001	3	3	4	3
2002	4	4	4	4
2003	3	4	4	4
2004	3	3	4	4
2005	3	4	4	5
2006	3	4	4	4
2007	4	4	4	4
2008	4	4	3	4
2009	3	4	3	4
2010	3	4	3	4
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.17</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>3.87</b>	<b>3.83</b>

This table was compiled based on data from the Political Terror Scale (PTS). All data averages were rounded to the hundredths place.

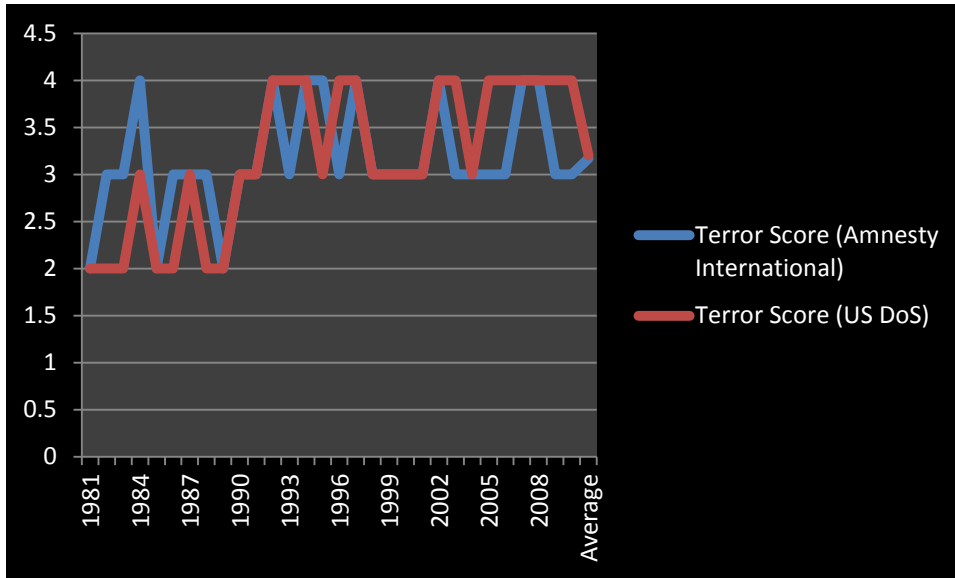
**APPENDIX A, TABLE 2**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Terror Score (Kenya)</b>	<b>Average Terror Score(Uganda)</b>
1981	2	4.5
1982	2.5	4.5
1983	2.5	5
1984	3.5	4
1985	2	5
1986	2.5	4
1987	3	4
1988	2.5	4
1989	2	4
1990	3	4
1991	3	4
1992	4	3
1993	3.5	3
1994	4	3
1995	3.5	3.5
1996	3.5	3.5
1997	4	3.5
1998	3	3.5
1999	3	3.5
2000	3	3.5
2001	3	3.5
2002	4	4
2003	3.5	4
2004	3	4
2005	3.5	4.5
2006	3.5	4
2007	4	4
2008	4	3.5
2009	3.5	3.5
2010	3.5	3.5
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>3.85</b>

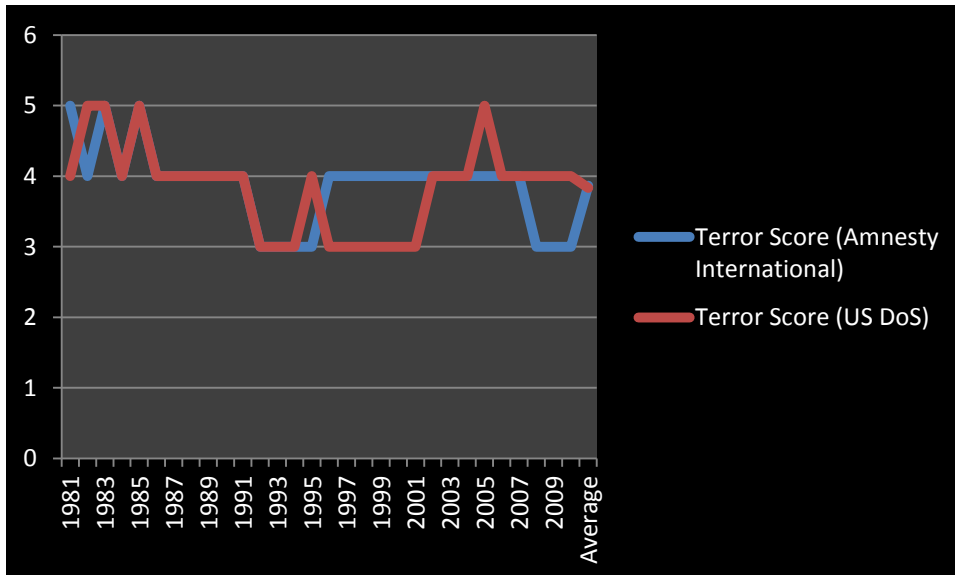
Averages compiled based on US DoS and Amnesty International Scores averaged together.

## APPENDIX B

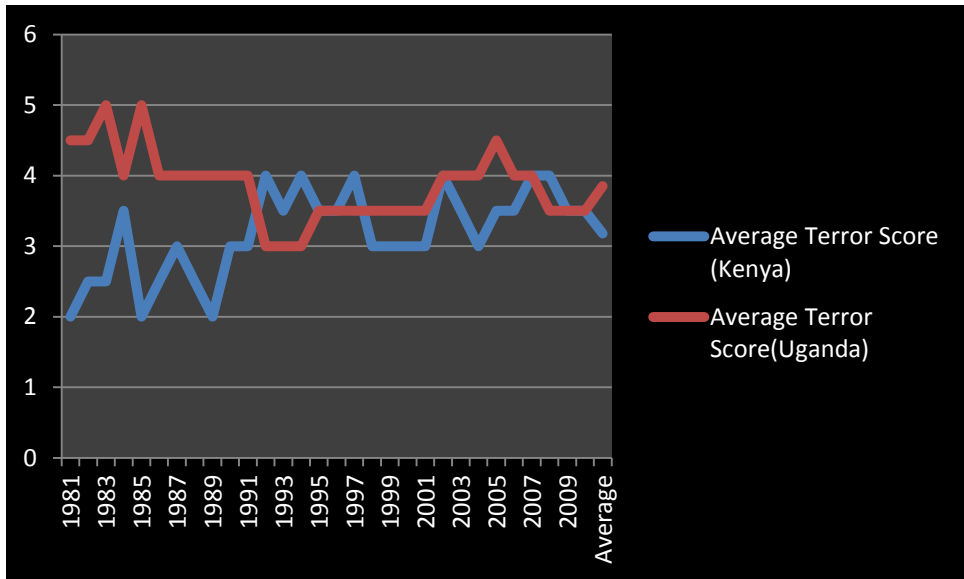
### Political Terror Scores for Kenya



### Political Terror Scores for Uganda



### Compilation of Terror Scores for both Uganda and Kenya



Graphs found in Appendix B were created based on Political Terror Score Data (averages of both US DoS and Amnesty International scores).

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