

## **After the Smoke Clears: The Dynamics of Ethnic Identity in the Conflict, Displacement and Polity of Acholiland, Northern Uganda**

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In almost fifty years as an independent entity, Uganda has not witnessed a single day without an internal conflict, insurgency or operating resistance movement within its boundaries. This appears as a damning indictment for both the leadership and polity, as the damage to infrastructure, capacity and internal relations are issues the Ugandan underdeveloped economy nor infrastructure can afford. More concerning however, may be the implications ongoing conflict creates for adherents of the belief that Uganda is simply unable to move past tribalism, a primordial ethnic canvas, to be forever painted with the blood of conflict. While such a simple conception of Ugandan conflict and resultant displacement appears rudimentary, the conflicted past of Uganda for many could arguably resemble the penultimate primordial example. However, by providing an ethnographic, qualitative and quantitative examination, this work aims to show that although ethnic identity permeates the northern Ugandan landscape, it does so in manners far beyond that of ‘age-old’ cleavages. Furthermore, this work aims to highlight the absolute necessity for a reconciliation of divergent ethnic identity in Uganda, particularly in Acholiland. In acknowledging understanding the dynamics of ethnic identity in northern Uganda, local community reasoning for traditional justice, reconciliation, displacement assistance and conflict mitigation become all the more salient. Compiled during the electoral campaign season of 2010, this work is founded on participant observation and political fieldwork in northern Uganda and southern Sudan.