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STATUS COMPETITION IN AFRICA: EXPLAINING THE RWANDAN-UGANDAN CLASHES IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

HENNING TAMM[1]

ABSTRACT

Yoweri Museveni's rebels seized power in Uganda in 1986, with Rwandan refugees making up roughly a quarter of his troops. These refugees then took power in Rwanda in 1994 with support from Museveni's regime. Subsequently, between 1999 and 2000, the Rwandan and Ugandan comrades-in-arms turned on each other in a series of deadly clashes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country they had invaded together only one year earlier. What explains these fratricidal clashes? This article contends that a social-psychological perspective focused on status competition between the Rwandan and Ugandan ruling elites provides the most compelling answer. Long treated as 'boys', the new Rwandan rulers strove to enhance their social status vis-à-vis the Ugandans, seeking first equality and then regional superiority. Economic disputes over Congo's natural resources at times complemented this struggle for status but cannot explain all of its phases. The article draws on interviews with senior Rwandan, Ugandan, and former Congolese rebel officials, and triangulates them with statements given to national and regional newspapers at the time of the clashes. More broadly, it builds on the recently revitalized study of status competition in world politics and makes a case for integrating research on inter-African relations.

IN AUGUST 1999, AND AGAIN IN MAY AND JUNE 2000, Rwandan and Ugandan troops fought each other in Kisangani, a large city in north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These clashes surprised many outside observers.[2] The Rwandan and Ugandan armies had entered the Second Congo War in August 1998 as long-term allies. The two countries' rulers, their army commanders, and many other senior officials had fought side by side during a vic-

[1] Henning Tamm (ht37@st-andrews.ac.uk) is a Lecturer in International Relations at the University of St Andrews. He would like to thank Joslyn Barnhart, Taylor St John, Harry Verhoeven, the anonymous reviewers, and the *African Affairs* editors for their invaluable suggestions on earlier drafts. The interviews for this article were completed while the author was a Postdoctoral Prize Research Fellow at Nuffield College, University of Oxford. He gratefully acknowledges travel grants from the Cyril Foster Fund and the Alastair Buchan Subsidiary Fund of the Department of Politics and International Relations, the Peter Fitzpatrick Fund of St Antony's College, and the John Fell OUP Research Fund, all at the University of Oxford.

[2] International Crisis Group, 'Uganda and Rwanda: Friends or enemies?' (ICG Central Africa Report No. 14, Nairobi/Brussels, 2000), p. 1.

torious rebellion in Uganda in the 1980s.[3] In the DRC, the two armies – which supported different Congolese rebel groups – were already facing a difficult military situation, as Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad, and Sudan were backing the Congolese government.[4]

So why did the Rwandan and Ugandan armies, led by former comrades-in-arms, turn on each other on foreign soil, severely damaging their international reputations? What explains this fratricidal conflict within 'Africa's world war'? Most leading experts offer nuanced perspectives. Gérard Prunier, Filip Reyntjens, and Jason Stearns all note that a complex set of disagreements between Rwanda and Uganda preceded the fighting.[5] Scott McKnight's recent analysis distils these issues into three main causes: 'zero-sum economic disputes, personal feuds and disagreements over strategy'.[6]

Several other authors give priority to economic disputes alone. They regard the clashes in Kisangani – a diamond hub – as a symbol of 'greedy outsiders' falling out over the DRC's natural resource wealth.[7] David Van Reybrouck's bestselling history of the country suggests that, for the two armies, 'profit' in Kisangani 'had taken precedence over victory' in the wider war.[8] Similarly, renowned scholar René Lemarchand views the Kisangani clashes as primarily reflecting 'a deadly rivalry' for eastern Congo's 'rich deposits of gold, diamonds, and coltan'.[9] An almost identical argument is made by Stephen Kinzer in his otherwise largely sympathetic biography of Rwandan President Paul Kagame.[10]

While sometimes overdrawn, claims about economic interests are not without merit. It is well established that both armies exploited Congo's natural resources.[11] Both entered the war in 1998 at least in part due to the economic interests of key senior officers.[12] This article, however, argues that economic disputes were not the main driver of the Kisangani clashes or the tensions that preceded and succeeded them. It offers a theoretically informed explanation that stresses the *status competition* between Rwandan and Ugandan ruling elites which resulted from Rwanda's key role in the First Congo War. The Rwandans sought to enhance their

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[3] See the section 'Never really equals' below.

[4] Gérard Prunier, *Africa's world war: Congo, the Rwandan genocide, and the making of a continental catastrophe* (Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2009), pp. 203–209.

[5] Prunier, *Africa's world war*, pp. 220–223; Filip Reyntjens, *The great African war: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996–2006* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009), pp. 205–206; Jason K. Stearns, *Dancing in the glory of monsters: The collapse of the Congo and the great war of Africa* (Public Affairs, New York, NY, 2011), pp. 236–237.

[6] Scott McKnight, 'The rise and fall of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance (1981–1999)', *African Studies Quarterly* 15, 2 (2015), pp. 23–52, p. 40.

[7] Macartan Humphreys, 'Natural resources, conflict, and conflict resolution: Uncovering the mechanisms', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, 4 (2005), pp. 508–537, p. 511. One of the first such analyses was Lara Santoro, 'Behind the Congo war: Diamonds', *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 August 1999, <http://www.csmonitor.com/1999/0816/p1s4.html> (9 June 2018).

[8] David Van Reybrouck, *Congo: The epic history of a people*, translated from the Dutch by Sam Garrett (Ecco/HarperCollins, New York, NY, 2014), p. 450.

[9] René Lemarchand, *The dynamics of violence in central Africa* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2009), p. 234.

[10] Stephen Kinzer, *A thousand hills: Rwanda's rebirth and the man who dreamed it* (John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, 2008), pp. 211–212.

[11] For the first systematic documentation, see United Nations Security Council, 'Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo' (S/2001/357, 12 April 2001).

[12] Henning Tamm, 'The origins of transnational alliances: Rulers, rebels, and political survival in the Congo wars', *International Security* 41, 1 (2016), pp. 147–181, pp. 173–175.

social status vis-à-vis the Ugandans, who refused to accept them as equals. Such a social-psychological perspective suggests that what McKnight calls 'personal feuds' needs to be seen in an intergroup context: senior military and political officials on each side identified strongly with their ruling parties. Due to their legacy of coming to power by force, they also viewed their parties as synonymous with their states.

The next section develops the theoretical argument and foreshadows the main findings. It builds on a new wave of International Relations scholarship that regards status-seeking and the related desire for revenge as important causes of inter-state conflict. The third section addresses methodological issues and explains why this article relies heavily on interviews I conducted with key protagonists in the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda between 2011 and 2014, as well as on statements that senior officials gave to national and regional newspapers at the time of the Kisangani clashes. Subsequent sections trace the origins and evolution of the Rwandan-Ugandan status competition, beginning with the position of Rwandan refugees in Ugandan society from 1959 to 1990 and ending with the aftermath of the clashes. The conclusion makes a broader case for integrating inter-African relations into the study of status competition in world politics.

Status and revenge in the Great Lakes region: a social-psychological perspective

Imported from social psychology, social identity theory is the most influential theory upon which recent International Relations scholarship on status-seeking has come to draw.[13] The theory was originally developed to explain intergroup behaviour for which so-called realistic conflict theory could not fully account.[14] Realistic conflict theory emphasizes 'instrumental competition' for 'a material reward or goal'.[15] This resonates with explanations for the Kisangani clashes that prioritize economic disputes. Social identity theory, on the other hand, focuses on 'social competition' for 'positive identity' derived from intergroup comparison.[16] Its foundational assumption is self-evaluation, not self-interest.[17]

The two theoretical perspectives, however, do not necessarily contradict each other, and social identity theory's leading proponents readily concede that it is often extremely difficult to distinguish between 'objective' (instrumentally driven) and 'subjective' (psychologically driven) conflicts in non-experimental settings.[18] Accordingly, this article's goal is not to deny the importance of material interests but to show that an explanation grounded in social identity theory provides a more compelling account of the Rwandan-Ugandan clashes in the DRC.

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[13] Steven Michael Ward, 'Lost in translation: Social identity theory and the study of status in world politics', *International Studies Quarterly* 61, 4 (2017), pp. 821–834.
[14] Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes* (Routledge, London, 1988), pp. 38–43.
[15] John C. Turner, 'Social comparison and social identity: Some prospects for intergroup behaviour', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 5, 1 (1975), pp. 5–34, pp. 31, 10.
[16] *Ibid*., p. 10.
[17] *Ibid*.
[18] Henri Tajfel and John Turner, 'An integrative theory of intergroup conflict', in William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel (eds), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (Brooks/Cole, Monterey, CA, 1979), pp. 33–47, p. 46; Rupert Brown, 'Social identity theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 30, 6 (2000), pp. 745–778, p. 748.

For example, the theory can make sense of both the International Crisis Group's claim that the 'Rwanda-Uganda quarrel' looked 'like an irrational and emotional family feud' and *Africa Confidential*'s suggestion that the two countries were willing to 'lose aid and investment' to pursue their rivalry even after the clashes.[19] Social identity theory suggests that 'perceived insults to status evoke strong emotions that can override rational interests in improved economic ties or security considerations'.[20]

Status has two different meanings in International Relations, both of which are relevant here. First, status may refer to collective beliefs about a state's membership in a club.[21] Scholars typically think of 'the great powers' as the most important international club, but what matters more for this article is the basic principle of states forming a club of sovereign equals.[22] Following the second Kisangani clashes in May 2000, for instance, Rwandan army commander Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa complained that some Ugandan officials 'have never realised until today' that 'Rwanda is a sovereign country, it is not a district of any other country'.[23]

Second, status may also refer to collective beliefs about a state's relative position within an informal hierarchy.[24] Most International Relations scholars focus on the global hierarchy of states. This article, by contrast, heeds William Thompson's recommendation to focus on distinct 'regional hierarchies'.[25] According to the International Crisis Group, Rwanda and Uganda competed for 'leadership of the Great Lakes region'.[26] The claim to superiority rather than simply equality also appeared in the interview with Nyamwasa: he likened Rwanda to 'a university professor [who] was once a primary pupil taught by a primary teacher', with Uganda representing that teacher.[27] The chronological sections below show that the Rwandans' longing for equality partly originated in their refugee experience in Uganda after 1959, whereas their superiority claims arose only after the First Congo War.

Status denial does not necessarily lead to geopolitical competition. Steven Ward argues that, properly translated to the international realm, social identity theory implies two jointly necessary conditions for the emergence of such competition. First, leaders must 'believe that geopolitically significant resources or characteristics – such as weapons, military power, or

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[19] International Crisis Group, 'Rwanda/Uganda: A dangerous war of nerves' (Africa Briefing, Nairobi/Brussels, 2001), p. 7; *Africa Confidential*, 'South Africa/Congo-Kinshasa: Deeper and deeper', 18 April 2003, p. 2.
[20] Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, 'Status seekers: Chinese and Russian responses to U.S. primacy', *International Security* 34, 4 (2010), pp. 63–95, p. 94.
[21] Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul, and William C. Wohlforth, 'Status and world order', in Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth (eds), *Status in world politics* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2014), pp. 3–29, pp. 7–8; Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, 'Reputation and status as motives for war', *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (2014), pp. 371–393, pp. 374–375.
[22] United Nations, 'Charter of the United Nations' (26 June 1945), chap. I, art. 2, para. 1.
[23] Quoted in *The Monitor* (Kampala), '"RPA not battalion of UPDF"' (first interview part), 14 May 2000, p. 12.
[24] Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and world order', pp. 7–8.
[25] William R. Thompson, 'Status conflict, hierarchies, and interpretation dilemmas', in Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth (eds), *Status in world politics*, pp. 219–245, p. 228. See also Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for status: Hierarchy and conflict in world politics* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2017), pp. 42–44.
[26] International Crisis Group, 'Rwanda/Uganda: A dangerous war of nerves', p. 7.
[27] Quoted in *The Monitor*, 'Brig. Kazini can't crush RPA – Nyamwasa' (second interview part), 15 May 2000, p. 21.

colonies – constitute consensually valued markers of the status the state aspires to'.[28] Second, leaders must 'think that the state can feasibly acquire these markers'.[29]

The first condition highlights that status markers are socially constructed: if states instead value characteristics such as cultural achievement, then competition may take the form of peaceful emulation. The second condition points to the distinction social identity theory makes between competition and creativity: if an inferior group believes the dominant group's position to be secure, then competition seems futile, making creative re-interpretation of some element of the comparative situation the only feasible strategy. For example, a football team losing heavily may console itself with the thought that it is displaying better sportsmanship than the winning team.[30]

Both conditions for geopolitical status competition were met by the start of the Second Congo War, as subsequent sections show in more detail. First, following Uganda's involvement in bringing Rwandan rebels to power in 1994 and Rwanda's crucial role in catapulting Congolese rebels into office in 1997, the ability to act as kingmaker in other states had become a distinct status marker in the Great Lakes region. Second, and directly related, Rwanda's impressive military performance in the First Congo War from 1996 to 1997 created what sociologist Roger Gould calls 'ambiguity about social rank': Rwanda was no longer in an obviously inferior position to Uganda.[31]

When geopolitical competition escalates, it results in inter-state conflict. Defeating a peer competitor on the battlefield has long served as an effective way of improving a state's global or regional status. Decisive military victories are highly visible, dramatic events that can shift the beliefs of both vanquished states and the wider international audience.[32] If an opponent is not decisively defeated, however, it is likely to seek revenge for having been humiliated, believing 'that its position has been lowered in the eyes of others and that this lowered estimation will result in a future decline in respect and deference'.[33] Revenge, a particular form of retaliation, tends to be disproportionate and directed at symbolic targets.[34] I show below that this explains why the Ugandan army, after its humiliation in the first Kisangani clashes, attacked the Rwandans twice in that very city, using many more troops and much more heavy weaponry.

Finally, social identity theory suggests that status competition ends when the originally lower-status group wins its 'battle for acceptance' and thus gains 'recognition' from the originally higher-status group.[35] According to Ugandan journalist Charles Onyango-Obbo, this is

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[28] Ward, 'Lost in translation', p. 822.
[29] *Ibid*.
[30] *Ibid*., p. 824.
[31] Roger V. Gould, *Collision of wills: How ambiguity about social rank breeds conflict* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 2003). See also William C. Wohlforth, 'Unipolarity, status competition, and great power war', *World Politics* 61, 1 (2009), pp. 28–57, pp. 36–40.
[32] Jonathan Renshon, 'Status deficits and war', *International Organization* 70, 3 (2016), pp. 513–550, p. 526.
[33] Joslyn Barnhart, 'Status competition and territorial aggression: Evidence from the scramble for Africa', *Security Studies* 25, 3 (2016), pp. 385–419, p. 390. See also Richard Ned Lebow, *Why nations fight: Past and future motives for war* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010), p. 74.
[34] Oded Löwenheim and Gadi Heimann, 'Revenge in international politics', *Security Studies* 17, 4 (2008), pp. 685–724, pp. 691–692.
[35] Rupert J. Brown and Gordon F. Ross, 'The battle for acceptance: An investigation into the dynamics of intergroup behaviour', in Henri Tajfel (ed.), *Social identity and intergroup relations* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1982), pp. 155–178, p. 158.

what finally happened in 2012, when Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni for the first time acknowledged unequivocally that it was the Rwandans who defeated Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko in the First Congo War.[36] Before tracing this struggle for status in greater detail, the next section briefly addresses methodological considerations.

Methodological note: triangulating elite interviews and statements

This article emerged out of a larger research project on the Congo Wars that takes self-interest, not self-evaluation, as its foundational assumption. It finds that the involvement of neighbouring states and the interactions between these neighbours and their Congolese rebel allies are best explained by a strategic-choice approach.[37] The three Kisangani clashes, however, struck me as outliers: they do not entirely make sense from a strategic perspective, even taking into account the financial interests of certain Rwandan and especially Ugandan army officers. Rather, interviewing senior Rwandan and Ugandan decision makers (as well as their Congolese allies and numerous observers), sifting through their statements in newspapers at the time of the wars, and revisiting the secondary literature highlighted what Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven call 'the highly emotional character of the conflict'.[38] They note that 'emotions of anger, guilt and hatred regularly led our interviewees to say things that seemed in direct contradiction with their own political interests'.[39] This article follows Roessler and Verhoeven's approach of relying heavily on elite interviews while carefully triangulating them with a wide range of other sources.[40]

Such an approach is in keeping with best practices concerning the question of 'what counts as evidence in the psychology of international politics'.[41] I share Janice Gross Stein's belief that documents, public statements, and interviews can be used 'to assess indirectly what leaders … know, what they think, and what they feel'.[42] In this endeavour, triangulation and interpretation are paramount: while 'no one source is determining', 'multiple streams of evidence increase confidence' in scholarly assessments.[43]

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[36] Charles Onyango-Obbo, 'Behind Museveni's political kissing and makeup: A president searches for his legacy', *The Independent* (Kampala), 4 August 2012, <https://www.independent.co.ug/behind-musevenis-political-kissing-makeup-president-searches-legacy/> (9 June 2018).

[37] Tamm, 'The origins of transnational alliances'.

[38] Philip Roessler and Harry Verhoeven, *Why comrades go to war: Liberation politics and the outbreak of Africa's deadliest conflict* (Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2016), p. 422.

[39] *Ibid*., p. 423. On the strengths and weaknesses of elite interviewing, see Jeffrey M. Berry, 'Validity and reliability issues in elite interviewing', *PS: Political Science & Politics* 35, 4 (2002) pp. 679–682; Oisín Tansey, 'Process tracing and elite interviewing: A case for non-probability sampling', *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40, 4 (2007), pp. 765–772.

[40] Roessler and Verhoeven, *Why comrades go to war*, p. 425.

[41] Janice Gross Stein, 'Psychological explanations of international decision making and collective behavior', in Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse, and Beth A. Simmons (eds), *Handbook of International Relations* (SAGE, London, 2012), pp. 195–219, p. 215.

[42] *Ibid*.

[43] *Ibid*. I was unable to access Rwandan *New Times* newspaper issues from the time of the Congo Wars. Neither the *New Times* nor the Rwandan Patriotic Front headquarters in Kigali were able to make them available to me. To compensate for the potential bias of relying primarily on Ugandan media sources, I draw on both the pro-government *New Vision* and the much more critical *Monitor*, with the latter often giving voice to Rwandan perspectives during the war. Below, page numbers for newspaper articles indicate that I cite directly from print

Applying social identity theory poses the particular challenge of distinguishing between personal (individual) and social (group) identities in non-experimental settings. Were Kagame and Museveni, or the military commanders on the ground in Kisangani, primarily worried about their own personal status or their ruling party's – and thus their state's – status? Many personalist African rulers have long thought of themselves and their state as one and the same, further complicating the distinction between personal and social identities.[44]

In any case, the evidence presented in subsequent sections is clear: the Kisangani clashes were not simply about two vain rulers or an arrogant commander. They were the culmination of status concerns that had built up for around two years and – according to one interviewee – 'eaten up' not only Kagame and Museveni but also significant parts of Kagame's ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and Museveni's ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM).[45] This status competition occurred primarily between those Ugandans and former Rwandan refugees who once fought together in Uganda and now identified strongly with their ruling parties, making their individual status dependent on their group status. It is to this critically important historical background that I now turn.

Never really equals: Rwandan refugees in Uganda, 1959-90

Most of the key Rwandan decision makers involved in the status competition with their Ugandan counterparts during the late 1990s grew up as refugees in Uganda.[46] Exploring the psychological impact of their refugee experience is an important first step in identifying the root causes of the Rwandan-Ugandan clashes in the DRC. This section describes the deep frustration of these former refugees with their precarious position in Ugandan society both before and after the civil war that lasted from 1981 to 1986. Paul Kagame himself expressed this frustration in a meeting with Roméo Dallaire, the force commander of United Nations peacekeepers in Rwanda, in January 1994: Kagame 'described growing up in a refugee camp in Uganda, always the outsider, the minority, tolerated but never really accepted as an equal'.[47] Highlighting the psychological toll of these experiences, he 'showed flashes of anger as he relived his struggle to maintain a sense of self-worth and dignity against the crushing defeatism of the refugee camps'.[48]

Like tens of thousands of other Rwandan Tutsi, Kagame's family fled to Uganda in the wake of the 1959 Rwandan revolution that ended the long-lasting dominance of the minority Tutsi and brought to power the much more populous Hutu.[49] In Uganda, these refugees be-

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versions (accessed in the two newspapers' archives in Kampala). Note that AllAfrica.com's digital archive for these newspapers is incomplete and that some of the digital versions differ slightly from the print versions.

[44] Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal rule in black Africa: Prince, autocrat, prophet, tyrant* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1982).

[45] Confidential interview, Kampala, March 2012.

[46] For a list of names and further discussion, see Elijah Dickens Mushemeza, *The politics and empowerment of Banyarwanda refugees in Uganda 1959–2001* (Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2007), pp. 112–118.

[47] Roméo Dallaire, *Shake hands with the devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda* (Arrow, London, 2004), p. 155.

[48] *Ibid*.

[49] Kinzer, *A thousand hills*, pp. 10–12; Mahmood Mamdani, *When victims become killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2001), chap. 4.

came 'the butt of popular prejudice and official discrimination'.[50] After Idi Amin deposed Milton Obote in a coup d'état in 1971, they found some respite, only to become scapegoats once again when Obote returned to power following a contested election in December 1980.[51]

It was Obote's alleged election rigging that led Yoweri Museveni to start the Ugandan civil war in February 1981 – with Kagame and another child of Rwandan refugees, Fred Rwigyema, by his side. Kagame and Rwigyema had fought for Museveni's Front for National Salvation (FRONASA), which helped Tanzania overthrow Amin in 1979. Because Obote prevented Rwandan refugees from being integrated into the new Ugandan army, Museveni took on Kagame and Rwigyema as bodyguards.[52]

During the civil war, Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) rebel administration offered an alternative to Obote's politics of indigeneity. Instead of using 'descent as the litmus test for defining the political subject, the test for the NRA was that of residence'.[53] As a result of this inclusive approach and Obote's increased persecution, an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 Banyarwanda (both Ugandan citizens of Rwandan descent and post-1959 Rwandan refugees) joined the NRA.[54] There were no significant group-based tensions between Rwandan and Ugandan officers in that period.[55]

After the NRA took power in 1986, however, the Rwandan officers' frustration with their unequal status in Ugandan society resurfaced. As Kagame complained to Dallaire, 'he was never able to rise to his full potential in the NRA because no one ever forgot he was Rwandan'.[56] Indeed, despite their key roles during the rebellion, Kagame and Rwigyema found themselves as someone's deputy once Museveni was president. Mugisha Muntu, the Director of Military Intelligence under whom Kagame served, recalled this 'issue of citizenship' and the 'feeling amongst Banyarwanda refugees that there was a ceiling above which they could not go'.[57]

To the Rwandan refugees serving in the NRA, Mahmood Mamdani concludes, 'the period after 1986 seemed a betrayal by their former comrades-in-arms'.[58] Partly as a result, Rwigyema, Kagame, and others stepped up their plans to retake Rwanda. The Rwandan Alliance for National Unity – which had been founded in Nairobi in 1979 and was now able to gather in Kampala – changed its name to Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in December 1987 and began plotting an invasion.[59] On 1 October 1990, when both Museveni and Rwandan

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[50] Mamdani, *When victims become killers*, p. 165.
[51] *Ibid*., pp. 167–168; Catharine Watson, 'Exile from Rwanda: Background to an invasion' (US Committee for Refugees, Washington, DC, February 1991), pp. 9–10.
[52] Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, *Sowing the mustard seed: The struggle for freedom and democracy in Uganda*, second edition for Kindle (Moran Publishers, Nairobi, 2016), Loc. 5168.
[53] Mamdani, *When victims become killers*, p. 170.
[54] Watson, 'Exile from Rwanda', pp. 10–11.
[55] Interviews, Maj. Gen. (retired) Jim Muhwezi (joined the NRA in 1981), Kampala, 23 April 2014; Maj. Gen. (retired) Mugisha Muntu (joined 1981), Kampala, 1 May 2014; Brig. Gen. (retired) Geoffrey Byegeka (joined 1984), Kigali, 8 May 2014.
[56] Dallaire, *Shake hands with the devil*, p. 155.
[57] Interview, Muntu.
[58] Mamdani, *When victims become killers*, p. 175.
[59] Interviews, Tito Rutaremara (RPF secretary-general, 1987-93), Kigali, 12 August 2011 and 12 May 2014; Mushemeza, *The politics and empowerment of Banyarwanda*, chap. 7.

President Juvénal Habyarimana were in New York, Rwigyema led a force of about 2,500 Banyarwanda across the border, turning them from NRA soldiers into RPF rebels.[60]

More than equals? From the Rwandan civil war to the First Congo War, 1990-7

Over the next seven years, the relationship between the Ugandan ruling elite and what Museveni continually referred to as his Rwandan 'boys'[61] changed dramatically. At first dependent on Uganda's discreet backing of their liberation project, the RPF rebels became the NRA's sovereign equals after they seized Kigali in 1994. Three years later, against Museveni's advice, they helped overthrow the Zairian dictator Mobutu and boldly declared themselves the Great Lakes region's 'master player',[62] effectively challenging Uganda's superior regional status. This section recounts these developments.

In the first few weeks of the invasion in October 1990, the RPF lost several senior commanders, including Rwigyema himself. Kagame replaced his fallen friend as the RPF's military leader and began to re-organize a force that was in serious disarray.[63] While Museveni publicly maintained 'a pretence of neutrality', his army's clandestine logistical and material support was crucial in enabling the RPF first to recover and then to seize Rwandan territory.[64]

Even after the RPF managed to take over Rwanda and stop the genocide against the Tutsi in July 1994, it continued to face an existential threat from the *génocidaires* who had fled to eastern Zaire. With Mobutu's support, the *génocidaires* controlled the massive Hutu refugee camps located close to the Rwandan border, using them as launch pads for their insurgency against the new RPF government.[65] In response, and following discussions with Museveni, Rwanda's new vice-president, minister of defence, and de facto ruler, Kagame, began to build a Zairian rebel alliance that could serve as cover for an invasion aimed at defeating the *génocidaires* once and for all.[66] In October 1996, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL) together launched what came to be known as the First Congo War. While the brutal campaign against the *génocidaires* failed to end their insurgency, the Rwandans and their Congolese allies managed to oust Mobutu within seven months.[67]

Despite having been involved in bringing together the AFDL, Museveni soon became concerned about the way the Rwandans handled the war effort. As he later recalled in a statement given at a regional summit, he was 'worried about the direct involvement of the

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[60] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda crisis: History of a genocide* (Hurst, London, 1997), p. 93.
[61] Bernard Leloup, 'Le Rwanda et ses voisins', in Stefaan Marysse and Filip Reyntjens (eds), *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: Annuaire 2004-2005* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2005), pp. 141–160, pp. 143–146.
[62] RPF secretary-general Denis Polisi's remarks at the Rwandan embassy in Brussels, 15 June 1997, quoted in Filip Reyntjens, *The great African war*, p. 141.
[63] Kinzer, *A thousand hills*, pp. 62–79.
[64] Gérard Prunier, 'The Rwandan Patriotic Front', in Christopher Clapham (ed.), *African guerrillas* (James Currey, Oxford, 1998), pp. 119–133, p. 131. Interview, Muntu (Uganda's Commander of the Army, 1989-98).
[65] Tamm, 'The origins of transnational alliances', pp. 165–166.
[66] Roessler and Verhoeven, *Why comrades go to war*, pp. 150–156.
[67] *Ibid*., chap. 6.

Rwandese troops in the combat role. I preferred that they only remain in a training role'.[68] Pointing to his own painful experience following Tanzania's invasion of Uganda in 1978-9, he outlined his fears that the use of foreign troops could create 'artificial winners' and prevent liberation forces from building domestic capacity and making political compromises.[69]

Another issue that troubled the Ugandans was André Kisase Ngandu's mysterious murder in January 1997. Kisase, one of the four AFDL co-founders, had previously worked with Ugandan intelligence operatives, making him Kampala's man within the AFDL and the main rival to the Rwandan-backed spokesperson Laurent-Désiré Kabila.[70] Senior Ugandan officials were convinced that the Rwandans assassinated Kisase, who had been openly critical of Rwanda in the early months of the rebellion.[71] Kisase's death led these officials to resent and mistrust their Rwandan allies, who clearly 'didn't want any competition'.[72]

Against this background, a Washington Post interview in which Kagame revealed Rwanda's key role in overthrowing Mobutu and installing Kabila as Congo's new president can be seen as a challenge to Uganda's superior regional status, just like the RPF secretary-general's 'master player' remarks cited above.[73] Both statements closely match what status theorists expect: 'A state seeking to improve its status position is also likely to draw attention to its accomplishments and to make a public claim'.[74] Kagame may indeed have wanted to 'inform Museveni that he has grown up and that he is now also able to be a "kingmaker"'.[75]

Struggling for superiority: Rwanda, Uganda, and the Second Congo War, 1998-9

Confirming Museveni's worst fears, Kabila soon proved an inept ruler of the vast country he re-baptized the DRC in May 1997. Within fourteen months of taking office, he fell out with his Rwandan and Ugandan backers, leading to the Second Congo War.[76] This section analyses the increasing tensions between Rwanda and Uganda, which began the war as allies but quickly grew apart and, in the process, divided the Congolese anti-Kabila rebellion.

When Kagame and Museveni decided to sponsor an uprising against Kabila in August 1998, each had legitimate security concerns. While the Rwandans were convinced that Kabila had begun to collaborate with resurgent *génocidaires* forces still using eastern Congo as their rear base, the Ugandans believed that he had forged an alliance with rival Sudan and started

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[68] Yoweri Museveni, 'Background to the situation in the Great Lakes region' (Harare, 9 August 1998, on file with the author).
[69] *Ibid*. See also Mahmood Mamdani, 'Why Rwanda admitted to its role in Zaire', *Mail & Guardian* (Johannesburg), 8 August 1997, <https://mg.co.za/article/1997-08-08-why-rwanda-admitted-to-its-role-in-zaire> (9 June 2018).
[70] Interviews with former AFDL officials, Goma, July 2011; Roessler and Verhoeven, *Why comrades go to war*, pp. 169–170.
[71] *Ibid*., pp. 215–217.
[72] Unnamed 'senior Museveni advisor', quoted in Stearns, *Dancing in the glory of monsters*, p. 239.
[73] John Pomfret, 'Rwandans led revolt in Congo', *Washington Post*, 9 July 1997, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/longterm/congo/stories/070997.htm> (9 June 2018).
[74] Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth, 'Status and world order', p. 12.
[75] Bernard Leloup, 'Rwanda-Ouganda: Chronique d'une guerre annoncée?', in Filip Reyntjens and Stefaan Marysse (eds), *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs: Annuaire 1999-2000* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2000), pp. 127–145, p. 131 (my translation).
[76] Roessler and Verhoeven, *Why comrades go to war*, part III.

backing Ugandan rebel groups based in north-eastern DRC. Both, however, had also developed an interest in Congo's natural resources.[77] Already in May 1998, Congo's minister of economy 'accused an unnamed top Ugandan government official of "smuggling" timber, gold and diamonds from DRC'.[78] This official was believed to be Salim Saleh, Museveni's brother.[79]

Economic interests were thus certainly part of the story of Ugandan – and, to a lesser extent, Rwandan – involvement in the Second Congo War right from the start, but they alone cannot explain the swift deterioration of Rwandan-Ugandan relations in late 1998. Rather, as one of Uganda's leading journalists explained, it was Museveni's desire 'to redeem [Uganda's] regional standing' that led him to send troops and to build up Jean-Pierre Bemba's *Mouvement de libération du Congo* (MLC) as a rival to the Rwandan-dominated *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD) rebels: 'Uganda was not taken seriously in the post-Mobutu order in Kinshasa, because it didn't fight [in the first war]. Museveni's prestige was dented'.[80] James Kabarebe, the Rwandan commander of both Congo invasions, similarly believed that the Ugandans 'wanted to compensate for missing out on the first war'.[81]

The Rwandans, in turn, were particularly angered when James Kazini, the commander of the Ugandan operation, convinced a group of RCD fighters to switch their allegiances to the MLC.[82] According to a senior Rwandan official, this was a crucial incident in the run-up to the Kisangani clashes: 'When you begin to take forces that we have trained together and take them to one side, then you have started a serious military confrontation.'[83]

Around the same time, in October 1998, the Rwandan and Ugandan ruling elites began insulting each other via national newspapers. Rwandan soldiers in the DRC were 'arrogant and undisciplined', Kazini charged.[84] 'For some time now', a retired Rwandan army officer responded, 'a certain clique within the UPDF led by Salim Saleh has clearly demonstrated an anti-RPA position simply because the Ugandan army's image pales in comparison to the RPA.'[85] Pointing to numerous allegations of corruption, he went as far as to suggest that this 'Saleh-Kazini clique' had reduced the UPDF in Congo 'to a thieving gang'.[86]

Despite meetings to patch up relations between Rwandan and Ugandan officials, tensions rose further once Uganda got involved in the internal politics of the RCD, which it continued to support alongside the MLC. Frustrated with Rwanda's overbearing influence and his inter-

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[77] Tamm, 'The origins of transnational alliances', pp. 171–175.

[78] Emmy Allio, 'Museveni to answer Congo', *New Vision* (Kampala), 27 May 1998, <http://allafrica.com/stories/199805270086.html> (9 June 2018).

[79] Reyntjens, *The great African war*, p. 168. On Saleh's role in exploiting Congolese resources, see Koen Vlassenroot and Sandrine Perrot, 'Ugandan military entrepreneurialism on the Congo border', in Mats Utas (ed.), *African conflicts and informal power: Big men and networks* (Zed Books, London, 2012), pp. 35–59.

[80] Charles Onyango-Obbo, 'Uganda-Rwanda war; beyond ego and gold (part III)', *The Monitor*, 17 May 2000, p. 10.

[81] Quoted in Roessler and Verhoeven, *Why comrades go to war*, p. 373.

[82] Interview, Azarias Ruberwa (RCD co-founder), Kinshasa, 12 July 2011.

[83] Interview, Patrick Mazimhaka (Minister in the Office of the Rwandan President, 1997-2000), Kigali, 9 May 2014.

[84] Quoted in *Mail & Guardian*, 'Museveni's legacy in the balance', 23 October 1998, <https://mg.co.za/article/1998-10-23-musevenis-legacy-in-the-balance> (9 June 2018).

[85] Quoted in Emmy Allio, 'RPF paper blasts Saleh', *New Vision*, 14 October 1998, pp. 1–2, p. 2. The NRA had been renamed Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) in 1995.

[86] Quoted in *ibid*.

nal rivals' attempts to undermine him, RCD leader Ernest Wamba dia Wamba moved from the Congo-Rwanda border town of Goma to Kisangani, where Uganda's operational headquarters was located.[87] He also met Museveni and MLC leader Bemba in Kampala, announcing hopes for a 'real rapprochement' between the two rebel groups.[88] To reassert control over the RCD, Rwanda orchestrated the dismissal of Wamba at a meeting in Goma in May 1999. But Wamba refused to step down and asked Kampala for help. In response, the Ugandans sent a plane to Goma and warned the Rwandans that 'if something happens to the plane, we have a problem'.[89] Under Uganda's military protection, Wamba was brought to the airport and returned to Kisangani via Uganda. Meanwhile, RCD members loyal to Wamba – together with Ugandan troops and their heavy military equipment – left Goma by road, crossing into Uganda and eventually joining Wamba in Kisangani.[90]

Wamba's tense departure from Goma highlights that Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers came close to fighting each other well before the clashes in the diamond hub of Kisangani. Despite being upset with their rival faction's sponsor, none of the former RCD members I interviewed believed that the Rwandan-Ugandan standoff in Goma was primarily about economic disputes. It resulted from a competition for regional status, not for natural resources. In the words of Emile Ilunga, who replaced Wamba as RCD leader in Goma, 'the struggle for regional leadership occurred through the RCD'.[91] What happened next in Kisangani was, first and foremost, the continuation of that struggle for superiority.

Battle of wills: the first Kisangani clashes, August 1999

By the time the first skirmishes occurred in Kisangani between the two RCD factions and their foreign backers, Rwanda and Uganda found themselves in exactly the scenario that social identity theory identifies as particularly prone to geopolitical conflict. Their relative status in the region was ambiguous, with both believing they could achieve superiority by taking charge of the Congolese rebellion. Even though the RPF had emerged out of the NRA, it was the Rwandans that overthrew Mobutu, helped Kabila run Congo, and then spearheaded the rebellion against him, calling into doubt Uganda's superiority. In turn, the Ugandans' nurturing of Bemba's MLC and their attempt to wrest control of the RCD from Rwanda were clear efforts to re-establish their dominant status. But as a prominent Nigerian pan-Africanist noted a few days before the first major clashes in Kisangani, 'Rwanda's leadership [did] not wish to be regarded as "Museveni's boys" again and made to play second fiddle in matters of direct

[87] Interview, Wamba, Kinshasa, 4 July 2011; *The EastAfrican* (Nairobi), 'Wamba moves base amid dissent in rebel camp', 5 April 1999, <http://allafrica.com/stories/199904090060.html> (9 June 2018).
[88] Quoted in Emmy Allio, 'Museveni off to Libya', *New Vision*, 18 April 1999, <http://allafrica.com/stories/199904180061.html> (9 June 2018).
[89] Interviews, Wamba; Willy Mishiki (RCD member), Goma, 25 July 2011.
[90] Interviews, Wamba; Mishiki; Delly Sesanga (RCD co-founder), Kinshasa, 12 July 2011; Emmy Allio and James Mujuni, 'UPDF pulls out of southern Congo front', *New Vision*, 29 May 1999, pp. 1–2.
[91] Interview, Ilunga, Kinshasa, 19 August 2014 (my translation from French).

relevance to their national interest'.[92] This section first discusses the crucial role of status competition in causing the first battle and then evaluates the role of economic disputes.

Tensions ran high when Wamba, having been flown out of Goma by the Ugandans, returned to Kisangani in late May 1999 to lead the RCD faction loyal to him, known as RCD-Kisangani. Rwandan soldiers and members of Ilunga's RCD-Goma faction were still present in Kisangani. Over the next two months, Ilunga and Wamba both held rallies in the city, trying to convince the population – and the media – that their respective RCD faction was the only rightful one.[93] The RCD leadership question became the main stumbling block for the Lusaka ceasefire agreement signed on 10 July 1999 by all states but none of the rebel groups involved in the war. Ilunga denied Wamba's right to sign on the RCD's behalf, and MLC leader Bemba initially refused to sign in solidarity with Wamba.[94]

The first Kisangani clashes, which lasted from 14 to 17 August, occurred just as a verification committee that had been formed in Lusaka was trying to ascertain the RCD-Kisangani's territorial claims. For Wamba and his supporters, 'Kisangani I' thus represents Rwanda's attempt to 'crush us before signing' the agreement.[95] A former RCD-Kisangani official claimed that Rwandan negotiator Patrick Mazimhaka even warned him in Lusaka that the Rwandans would 'resolve' the question of who controls Kisangani 'by force of arms'.[96]

Mazimhaka, however, suggested to me that the fighting 'wasn't about Wamba… He himself is about that rivalry [with Uganda]. … Wamba wasn't the principal issue'.[97] Indeed, in my interviews, senior Ugandan officials conceded that UPDF commander Kazini provoked the fighting.[98] General Jeje Odongo, the UPDF's overall commander at the time of the Kisangani clashes, explained Kazini's 'personal ego' issues and Rwanda's reaction:

> [T]he officers on the Rwandan side [in Kisangani] had been non-commissioned officers when he was an officer [in the 1980s], and therefore he felt they were junior. And even by the time they went to Rwanda – the RPF – they still were junior officers. Quite a number of them were second lieutenants. Kazini was already a colonel at that time. So really for him, from his thinking, militarily, 'These are my juniors. I cannot be at the same table with them.' … The Banyarwanda, on the other part, felt they were now no longer boys; they were men. And therefore nobody should be telling them what to do. At any rate, they were an independent country, with a right to take their own, independent decisions.[99]

These reflections on the importance of relative status – clearly based on an intergroup comparison between former Ugandan and Rwandan NRA officers – resonate with comments made in the heat of the battle by Rwanda's military spokesman. The fighting was not about

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[92] Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, 'Tajudeen's Thursday post card: Allies are to blame for Congo stalemate', *New Vision*, 5 August 1999, p. 10.
[93] *New Vision*, 'Congo rebels reject Kazini', 24 July 1999, pp. 1–2.
[94] Emmy Allio, 'M7 meets Goma faction leaders', *New Vision*, 4 August 1999, p. 1.
[95] Interview, former RCD-Kisangani official, Kinshasa, July 2014 (my translation from French).
[96] *Ibid*. (my translation from French).
[97] Interview, Mazimhaka.
[98] Interviews, Muhwezi; Odongo; Lt. Col. Felix Kulayigye (UPDF spokesperson, 2005-13), Kampala, 25 August 2011; see also McKnight, 'The rise and fall of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance', pp. 40–41. Ugandan journalists present in Kisangani confirmed these provocations (interviews, Kampala, March 2012).
[99] Interview, Gen. Jeje Odongo (Uganda's Commander of the Army, 1998-2001), Kampala, 7 March 2012.

gold and diamonds, he told *The Monitor*, but about 'jealousies and divergence of strategy', further explaining 'that Uganda felt jealous when "tiny Rwanda" committed more resources and called the shots during the struggle against Mobutu'.[100]

In my interviews, Rwandan and Ugandan officials largely agreed on Kazini's pivotal role in causing the clashes, but they disagreed over the extent to which Kazini alone was to blame. Ugandans tended to highlight his individual mistakes in handling the situation on the ground, which was convenient given that Kazini later fell out with Museveni and became the scapegoat for much of what went wrong for Uganda in the DRC.[101] By contrast, Rwandans believed that Kazini was following orders from Museveni. A Rwandan member of the joint commission investigating the clashes, for example, recalled that Kazini behaved very arrogantly towards Odongo, formally his superior, leading the investigator to conclude that Kazini must have had the blessing from the one person who outranked Odongo.[102]

Shortly after the clashes, Museveni certainly made remarks that aligned with Kazini's thinking. In a speech to parliament, he criticized 'the general arrogance of Rwanda in Congo' and suggested as an explanation for the clashes that, as a young government, 'our RPA brothers have never had time to develop sufficiently to know how to do some of the things'.[103] The Ugandan pro-government *New Vision* – sure to be read in Kigali – reported on this speech, summarizing that Museveni had called the RPA 'young, naive and inexperienced'.[104] These condescending statements, which clearly painted Rwanda's ruling elite as inferior in status, were a harbinger of things to come.

Before turning to the second and third Kisangani clashes, however, it is worth considering how economic disputes relate to this social-psychological account. To reiterate, there is no doubt that Kazini and other Ugandan officers were profiting from deals related to Congolese resources.[105] The Rwandans, too, exploited Congo's natural wealth, albeit in a more centralized manner.[106] Economic disputes certainly contributed to the tensions in the run-up to the first major Kisangani clashes. Put differently, 'objective' conflicts of interest complemented 'subjective' conflicts over status. In May, for example, Ugandan soldiers arrested several pro-Rwandan diamond dealers who had allegedly failed to pay taxes.[107] In July, Kazini sent a letter to the pro-Ilunga governor of Kisangani, requesting that he leave a diamond-trading company linked to senior Ugandan officials to do its business, as it had cleared taxes with MLC

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[100] Lt Col Wilson Rutayisire, quoted in *The Monitor*, 'UPDF, RPA fight it out in Congo', 16 August 1999, pp. 1–2, p. 2.

[101] Charles Onyango-Obbo, 'Congolese jungle becomes the general's Waterloo', *The EastAfrican*, 30 August 2000, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200008300293.html> (9 June 2018); Edris Kiggundu, 'Kazini was reckless, says Museveni', *The Observer* (Kampala), 13 November 2009, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200911121048.html> (9 June 2018).

[102] Interview, Kigali, May 2014.

[103] Reprinted in 'Why we fought Rwanda in Congo', *The Observer*, 20 July 2014, <https://observer.ug/features-sp-2084439083/57-feature/32882-why-we-fought-rwanda-in-congo> (17 September 2018); and 'Rwanda wanted to dominate, we wanted to empower Congolese', *The Observer*, 27 July 2014, <https://observer.ug/features-sp-2084439083/57-feature/33002-rwanda-wanted-to-dominate-we-wanted-to-empower-congolese> (17 September 2018).

[104] *New Vision*, 'Museveni warned Kagame', 31 August 1999, pp. 1–2, p. 2.

[105] Vlassenroot and Perrot, 'Ugandan military entrepreneurialism on the Congo border'.

[106] Stearns, *Dancing in the glory of monsters*, pp. 296–301.

[107] Todd Pitman, 'Ugandan troops round up diamond dealers in Congo', *Reuters*, Kisangani, 10 May 1999; Prunier, *Africa's world war*, pp. 222–223.

authorities. A Ugandan judicial commission later found this letter to have been 'inflammatory, and calculated to upset the appointed administration, RCD Goma and its ally, Rwanda.'[108] Neither of these incidents, however, directly led to armed clashes.

Instead, the most serious gunfights prior to 14 August 1999 resulted directly from attempts to hold political rallies. On 22 May, the day after Wamba returned from Goma to Kisangani, pro-Ilunga authorities tried to prevent a pro-Wamba rally, resulting in the death of four Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers.[109] On 6 August, Wamba returned from meetings abroad to hold 'a huge rally' in Kisangani, and 'the Ilunga group thought he had come with the Verification Committee from Zambia.' In an attempt to 'demonstrate that Wamba ha[d] no forces or support in Kisangani', pro-Ilunga troops disrupted the rally.[110] This led to multiple gunfights, Ugandan deployments in the city centre, and Rwandan counter-deployments. The joint military inquiry into the first Kisangani clashes found that these deployments were 'bound to spark off a fight'.[111]

In short, diamond-trade rivalries in Kisangani played a complementary role, but the struggle for regional leadership via the two RCD factions more proximately caused the outbreak of inter-state conflict, with the timing of the first major clashes being tightly linked to the Lusaka peace process.

Seeking revenge: the second and third Kisangani clashes, May-June 2000

The first Kisangani battle forced the Ugandans to evacuate Wamba and move the RCD-Kisangani headquarters to Bunia, much closer to their border. But the Ugandan army itself remained in Kisangani, and the struggle with Rwanda was about to intensify. The two clashes that followed in May and June 2000 left thousands of Congolese civilians dead or wounded and much of Kisangani destroyed.[112] Officials on both sides agreed that these battles were driven by Uganda's pride and desire for revenge.[113] According to Jim Muhwezi, former Ugandan internal security chief and Museveni confidant, the Rwandans 'knew it very well, and we knew it… It [was] a question of time, but there would be vengeance'.[114] This section documents how prevalent discourses of 'humiliation' and 'revenge' were at the time, linking them back to the theoretical literature introduced above.

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[108] Republic of Uganda, 'Judicial commission of inquiry into allegations into illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo 2001 (May 2001 – November 2002): Final report' (November 2002), p. 124. On file with the author.

[109] *New Vision*, 'UPDF, Congo rebels clash', 24 May 1999, pp. 1–2; Groupe Justice et Libération, 'La guerre des Alliés en RDC et le droit à l'autodétermination du peuple congolais', Kisangani, 30 August 1999, reprinted in Jean-Pierre Badidike (ed.), *Guerre et droits de l'homme en République Démocratique du Congo: Regard du Groupe Justice et Libération* (L'Harmattan, Paris, 2009), pp. 137–169, pp. 138–139.

[110] Andrew M. Mwenda, 'Bullets for breakfast in Kisangani: An eye-witness account by Ugandan scribes', *The Monitor*, 10 August 1999, p. 30.

[111] *The Monitor*, 'The road to death in Kisangani; who started the fight?', 18 September 1999, p. 31.

[112] United Nations Security Council, 'Report of the inter-agency assessment mission to Kisangani' (S/2000/1153, 4 December 2000).

[113] Interviews, Byegeka; Muhwezi; Odongo; Rutaremara. The interviewees emphasized that these were their personal opinions.

[114] Interview, Muhwezi.

Opinion pieces in Ugandan newspapers following the first Kisangani clashes show that battlefield victories can indeed shift an audience's beliefs about status. One editor wrote, for example, that the clashes 'taught the Ugandan military that irrespective of what Uganda did for [the] RPA in its formative stages nine years ago, they are now of age and deserve to sit at the table as equals'.[115] Ugandan officials, however, saw things differently, publicly denying that there had been a proper military battle.[116] Infuriated by a speech in which Kagame criticized Uganda's 'virulent anti-Rwandan campaign', Museveni's senior advisor on the DRC, Kahinda Otafiire, called the RPA 'bandits', not soldiers, and asked: 'Does Kagame think he can take on the UPDF?'[117] Just a few days earlier, a cover story suggesting the UPDF had lost 150 soldiers in the first Kisangani clashes noted that 'fears remain of a "revenge" counter-attack by the UPDF, whose officers were humiliated and felt "betrayed" by the RPA'.[118]

After the inconclusive battle on 5 May 2000, the *New Vision* reported that some observers saw the renewed clashes as proof of Uganda's determination 'to avenge the humiliation of the bloody nose inflicted on the UPDF by the RPA last August' whereas others pointed to 'a big power play between the two'.[119] But there is no contradiction between these two perspectives: the desire for revenge, with Kisangani as the symbolic target, went hand in hand with the continued competition for regional leadership in Congo's ongoing war.

Despite efforts by the United Nations to broker the demilitarization of Kisangani, clashes between the Rwandan and Ugandan armies resumed on 5 June and lasted for six days, the longest and most violent of the three battles.[120] The third clashes thus met the revenge criterion of 'excessiveness and disproportionality'.[121] Kisangani had now truly become 'the graveyard of Rwandan and Ugandan reputations'.[122] Reflecting on both the loss of lives and the damage to the two countries' image, General Odongo called the Kisangani clashes 'a disaster, whichever way you look at it'.[123] Rwandan interviewees voiced similar regrets.

At the time, however, the shouting match in the media continued even after the guns in Kisangani fell silent. Kagame, who had formally become Rwanda's president in April 2000, blamed Museveni's posturing for the collapse in bilateral relations, referring back to the speech Museveni gave in parliament.[124] He explained 'that Museveni sees himself as the strongman of the region, and that that was the problem in Rwanda-Uganda relations'.[125] In Kagame's own words: 'For Museveni, if his forces are not in charge then there should be

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[115] Henry Muwanga-Bayego, 'Congo saga: Kampala has itself to blame', *The Monitor*, 22 September 1999, p. 8.
[116] 'Letter from President Museveni to "New Vision" readers: "There was no battle for Kisangani town"', *New Vision*, 24 August 1999, p. 6.
[117] Quoted in *The Monitor*, 'Soon the dogs will be known – Kagame', and Andrew Mwenda, 'Uganda makes its case against Rwanda', *The Monitor*, both 18 September 1999, pp. 32, 33.
[118] Adonia Ayebare and Julius Mucunguzi, 'Kazini removed from Kisangani', *The Monitor*, 13 September 1999, pp. 1 and 3, p. 3.
[119] Peter Mwesige, 'Kisangani clash was expected', *New Vision*, 6 May 2000, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200005060017.html> (9 June 2018).
[120] United Nations Security Council, 'Report of the inter-agency assessment mission', paras. 54–59.
[121] Löwenheim and Heimann, 'Revenge in international politics', p. 692.
[122] Stearns, *Dancing in the glory of monsters*, p. 236.
[123] Interview, Odongo.
[124] Nanaho Sawano and Murray Oliver, 'Stop calling us boys, Kagame tells Museveni', *The Monitor*, 11 June 2000, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200006110003.html> (9 June 2018).
[125] *Mail & Guardian*, 'Kagame strikes back at Uganda', 15 June 2000, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200006150078.html> (9 June 2018).

fighting. It's a very bad attitude'.[126] Put differently, Kagame himself saw competition for regional superiority at the core of the clashes in Kisangani.

Aftermath: the bumpy road to recognition, 2000-12

A brief analysis of the Kisangani clashes' aftermath further strengthens the social-psychological account put forward in this article. Rwandan-Ugandan relations remained extremely tense throughout the rest of the Second Congo War, which lasted until June 2003. It took serious mediation by the United Kingdom to stop the two countries from going to war with each other.[127] Lead mediator Clare Short, then British Secretary of State for International Development, remembered that 'Museveni expected to be the senior ally, and to be dominant, and to give instructions'.[128] At one meeting taking place near the Rwandan-Ugandan border, an important agreement was reached. To alleviate their populations' fears of an impending war, the two presidents decided to make a public appearance in an open-top Land Rover, and Museveni 'said to Kagame: "Come on, stand up, the people want to see you." He was still being the big brother, but now in a nice way'.[129]

Even though bilateral relations improved after 2003, there were many bumps along the road. In 2009, for example, the Rwandan pro-government *New Times* criticized the speech Museveni gave on Rwanda's Liberation Day for once again revealing 'the good old patronising and condescending attitude towards Rwanda, the Rwandan people and the leadership'.[130] It took until 2011 for Kagame and Museveni to reconcile, and until 2012 for Museveni to recognize explicitly – in a statement published in both the *New Vision* and the *Monitor* – that 'Mobutu was defeated by [the] RPA'.[131]

Conclusion

This article has built on theoretical research on status and revenge as well as on key decision makers' contemporary statements and their subsequent reflections in interviews to provide a social-psychological account of the Rwandan-Ugandan clashes in the DRC. The violent competition for status identified here is not unique to the Rwandan and Ugandan ruling elites. Shortly after the first Kisangani clashes, Mahmood Mamdani identified important parallels

[126] Quoted in *ibid.*
[127] International Crisis Group, 'Rwanda/Uganda: A dangerous war of nerves', pp. 1–6.
[128] Video interview, Clare Short, 10 March 2014.
[129] *Ibid.*
[130] Andrew Gashabizi (pseudonym), 'President Yoweri Museveni squandered an opportunity', *New Times* (Kigali), 13 July 2009, <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/9275> (9 June 2018).
[131] 'Mogadishu: Museveni responds to Obbo', *New Vision*, 7 May 2012, <https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1301448/mogadishu-museveni-responds-obbo> (17 September 2018); '"Only patriots, revolutionaries can build an army like UPDF"', *Daily Monitor*, 8 May 2012, <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/688334-1401560-945g3cz/index.html> (17 September 2018). On the reconciliation process, see *The Independent*, 'Inside Museveni's visit to Kagame', 5 August 2011, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201108121329.html> (9 June 2018); Andrew M. Mwenda, 'Burying the hatchet', *The Independent*, 14 July 2012, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201207160083.html> (9 June 2018); Onyango-Obbo, 'Behind Museveni's political kissing and makeup'.

with the Eritrean and Ethiopian rebels-turned-rulers, who had gone to war with each other one year earlier.[132] Indeed, Richard Reid notes 'the common Tigrayan resentment of a perceived Eritrean superiority complex', in the sense of a refusal 'to accept their Tigrayan counterparts as equals', and Alex de Waal argues that the Rwandan-Ugandan and Eritrean-Ethiopian conflicts were both about 'who would be on top of the hierarchy'.[133]

In his book on the role of honour in African history, John Iliffe similarly cites 'concern for reputation' as 'a major reason driving both Ethiopia and Eritrea into a full-scale war'.[134] Iliffe rightly identifies such 'warfare to satisfy national prestige' as 'fortunately rare' in post-colonial Africa, and the same holds for armed clashes short of full-scale war that result from status competition, such as the ones analysed in this article.[135]

Yet Iliffe also encourages scholars to take into consideration psychological factors like honour and pride when investigating the broader, non-violent 'political behaviour of post-colonial African rulers'.[136] It is here that the theoretical literature on status competition in world politics has much to offer to scholars of inter-African relations, and vice versa. What role, for example, has status-seeking played in the formation of major continental organizations and the proliferation of numerous sub-regional ones? Potential case studies include the 'rivalry between Ghana and Nigeria for regional, if not continental, leadership' that shaped the creation of the Organization of African Unity, and the roles of Libya, Nigeria, and South Africa in its transformation into the African Union.[137] Given the highly personalized foreign policies of many African states, it should be easier than in more institutionalized regimes to detect the relative importance of psychological factors.[138] This, in turn, should make those African states attractive to theory-driven International Relations scholars seeking either to develop new hypotheses or to test the generalizability of existing ones.

[132] *The Monitor*, 'Three hard lessons from Congo conflict', 22 August 1999, p. 29.
[133] Richard Reid, 'Old problems in new conflicts: Some observations on Eritrea and its relations with Tigray, from liberation struggle to inter-state war', *Africa* 73, 3 (2003), pp. 369–401, pp. 371, 390; Alex de Waal, *The real politics of the Horn of Africa: Money, war and the business of power* (Polity, Cambridge, 2015), p. 48.
[134] John Iliffe, *Honour in African history* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), p. 347.
[135] *Ibid*., p. 330.
[136] *Ibid*., p. 328.
[137] Pierre Englebert and Kevin C. Dunn, *Inside African politics* (Lynne Rienner, Boulder, CO, 2013), pp. 320, 323.
[138] The level of institutionalization has of course changed over time. Daniel N. Posner and Daniel J. Young, 'The institutionalization of political power in Africa', *Journal of Democracy* 18, 3 (2007), pp. 126–140.