

CHAPTER 2

Case Study One: Tanzania into Uganda

Introduction

Around midday October 9 1978 Ugandan troops, ostensibly in hot pursuit of disloyal Ugandan regulars, crossed into Tanzanian territory in a region commonly referred to as the Kagera salient.¹²¹ Following what is believed to be a failed mutiny over pay and conditions at the Bombo barracks in Southern Uganda, disaffected Ugandan soldiers fled to the Tanzanian border pursued by loyal members of the Masaka Suicide and the Mbarara Simba Battalions.¹²² In an effort to conceal yet another serious incident of disloyalty within the army and to divert attention from the parlous state of internal affairs, Amin ordered the pursuing battalions to subsequently occupy the Kagera Salient.¹²³ The invading troops laid waste to the region, looting, raping and destroying as they pushed south to occupy some 1800 square kilometres of Tanzanian territory. Caught almost fully unprepared, it took the Tanzanian forces some several months to mobilize fully and respond in force, expelling the Ugandan units, pushing them back over the border, and then in a move that would eventually overthrow the Ugandan regime, manoeuvring in detail into the heart of Uganda. Thus began a conflict that would last some eight months, cost several thousand lives and eventually end the bloody regime of Idi Amin.

Global Context

The international situation in the late 1970s is usually characterised as one firmly located within the Cold War bipolar condition. The two major powers, by then superpowers, represented the embodiment of the bipolar divide between communist/Soviet East and capitalist West. These blocs exerted considerable influence across the globe co-opting many smaller states as clients. Indeed many smaller states at the time came to see themselves as constituting the stage for great power proxy contest. In this scheme, Africa was a peripheral

¹²¹ Michael Kaufman, "Uganda Charges It Has Been Invaded by Tanzanian Troops in Area of Mbarara," *New York Times*, 14 Oct 78 1978.

¹²² Caroline Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention* (New York: St Martins Press, 1985).

¹²³ News Agency Reuter, "Amin's Reports Called a Cover for Army Mutiny," *Globe and Mail*, 31 October 1978.

but important continent of contest in which the major powers exerted, attempted to exert, or attempted to prevent each other from exerting, influence in the region.

With its unique post-colonial history underpinning the Cold War proxy contest and clientism, the continent of Africa resembled a patchwork quilt of aligned, non-aligned, and neutral states in which internal conflict and strife served as the backdrop for the wider great power struggle for influence and containment. In the late 1970's this patchwork reverberated with the politics of internal unrest and external competition. As Colin Legum in a 1979 *Foreign Affairs* article "*The African Crisis*" suggests: "Developments in Africa – and the capitals of the great powers – made the continent an important testing ground for the foreign policies of the Western nations and the Soviet Union in 1978".¹²⁴

Following the withdrawal of the colonial powers of Britain, Belgium, France, Italy and Germany and the establishment of numerous newly independent states, the West was still the dominant external influence in Africa. However, they (the Western states) had been forced onto the defensive by rising Soviet activism and they groped for new ways of protecting their longstanding interests amongst these independent and vulnerable states. In open diplomatic confrontation with the Soviet Union and Cuba in the Horn of Africa, the West came off second best but they were manoeuvring actively in Southern Africa. In neither area was the West able to discourage the Soviets and Cuba from intervening militarily in the continent's internal affairs. Africa had become the scene of new Soviet efforts possibly foreshadowing important shifts even in the balance of world power between the West and the Soviets. The bold Soviet policy coincided with, and perhaps benefited from, the West's strong disinclination to become involved in any new military ventures in the third world. Early in his administration United States (US) President Jimmy Carter declared that the US would not become involved in any foreign conflict just because the Russians were there.¹²⁵ The persistent pursuit of such policy by the West was intended to foster détente and to permit the level of arms shipment to the third world to be scaled down, but the concomitantly lower risk of major conflict with the West provided opportunities to exert new influence, which the Soviets were forward in capitalizing upon.

Carter's African policy emphasized 'African solutions to African problems', however, this policy afforded few means to discourage Soviet military intervention into internal

¹²⁴ Colin Legum, "The African Crisis," *Foreign Affairs*, 1979 1979, p. 633.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

African affairs, especially Soviet activism in the Horn. This inadequacy set up a series of ambivalent responses in the Carter policy, which had become evident by the spring of 1978. Deviations from this policy included; debate early in the year about the linkage of detent and Soviet behaviour in the Red Sea region, and Carter's initial approval of a Western sponsored African force to resist Soviet incursions, following the second Shaba invasion from Angola in May the same year. Carter finally backed off his support for such force following strong opposition from the British and stinging rebuke from Tanzania and Nigeria. Nyerere accused the Western powers of insulting Africa, and termed it the height of arrogance for them to talk of establishing a pan-African security force, adding "the danger to Africa does not just come from countries in the Eastern bloc. The West still continues to see Africa as being within its sphere of influence, and acts accordingly."¹²⁶

Legum characterized the 49 African states at the time as broadly falling into four categories:

1. those more or less committed Marxist-Leninist states
2. those hard line anti-communist states
3. those few broadly anti-Soviet states, and
4. those pragmatic middle ground states such as Tanzania and Uganda¹²⁷

Of interest in Legum's grouping is the fact that the middle group of thirteen pragmatic states held the balance between the pro and anti Soviet stance, and that neither Tanzania nor Uganda had strong allegiances nor alliance to either the West or the Soviets despite their colonial heritage and Uganda's inconsistent pro Arab/pro Soviet foreign policy shifts. Thus neither major ideological camp had any great interest in or obligation to either Tanzania or Uganda and likewise they held no strong ties or identification with the US or the USSR. This, it may be suggested, proved significant to the 'permissive environment' argument that is developed later in this chapter, in which it is proposed that the intervention was 'permitted' to occur in the manner that it did because of the permissive great power environment that prevailed at the time in the region.

Despite the significant influence and activism that the great powers demonstrated on the continent in the late 1970's, the direct role of the Soviets and the Western states in the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., pp. 638 - 639.

war between Uganda and Tanzania is one of apparent disinterest. Disinterest not only in the conduct of the war itself but disinterest also in debating the matter in the forum of the UN Security Council or the General Assembly. As Wheeler¹²⁸ notes, the Security Council had been the forum in which the major powers had played out, diplomatically, their rivalry in the case of the Vietnamese intervention into Cambodia that same year, and India's intervention into Pakistan eight years earlier, yet in the case of Tanzania and Uganda the superpowers were not sufficiently engaged or interested to either become involved militarily on the ground or diplomatically in the international institutional arena. Unlike the strategically important contest between Somalia and Ethiopia in which the Soviets and the US competed for influence (with the Soviets and the Cubans being militarily active also), the Tanzanian-Ugandan conflict represented no substantial superpower interest, with neither having significant stake in the outcome.

Whilst some competition did exist between China who was engaged economically with Tanzania, and Russia who had financially backed Uganda and had supplied military hardware, this rivalry was subdued due to the absence of significant Western influence or involvement in the matter and due to the Soviets withdrawal from Uganda following its growing embarrassment and disquiet with the Amin regime. For while the Soviets had been Uganda's major supplier of arms and military advisors during Amin's rule in the 1970's, the relationship was never particularly consistent with Amin's crude diplomatic treatment of the British, the Israelis, and finally the Soviets causing the latter to gradually distance themselves from Amin and his excesses.

Following Amin's expulsion of the Asians in August 1972 and his unilateral termination of diplomatic relations with Israel four months earlier¹²⁹ Britain finally halted all aid to Uganda and in September that year, in conjunction with Israel, imposed a trade embargo against Uganda. Amin retaliated by expelling the British High Commissioner from Kampala and recalling his Ambassador from London. The embargo, by contemporary accounts, had little impact on Uganda however, as neither the Soviets or the US supported it, but rather increased their aid to Uganda, and along with Libya, filled the gap left by the departure of the British and to a lesser extent the Israelis.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*, p. 123.

¹²⁹ Amii Omara-Otunnu, *Politics and the Military in Uganda, 1890 - 1985* (Oxford: Macmillan, 1987), p. xix.

¹³⁰ Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, pp. 10 - 12.

By November 1973 the Ugandans had received their first military mission from the Soviet Union at a time when other avenues of military supply were difficult to secure. President Milton Obote in 1964 had negotiated a military agreement with the Soviets but this had somewhat lapsed, and the Soviets were cool toward Amin until he broke relations with Britain and Israel in 1972. Stepping into the opportunity afforded them the Soviets steadily established themselves as Uganda's primary supplier of military hardware and advice. Unlike the Western powers, in particular the UK and US, the Soviets were less reluctant to provide heavy arms to Amin and eventually huge quantities of small arms armour and even jet strike aircraft flowed into Uganda. By 1975 it is estimated that \$12M in economic aid and \$48M in military aid had been poured into Uganda from Soviet sources.¹³¹ Unable to compete with the West in terms of foreign aid dollars, the Soviets were able and ready to supply hardware and expertise, and so increase their influence in East Africa to counter growing Chinese influence in Tanzania and steady British influence in Kenya. Yet despite this interest in East Africa the strategic import of Uganda to the Soviets was marginal at best and this did not represent a major effort by the Soviets to confront the West in Africa or to engage substantially in Ugandan domestic politics. Indeed the Soviet-Ugandan relationship was irregular at best. Amin's eccentricities and his frequent *volte-faces* on foreign policy resulted in a tentative relationship between Kampala and Moscow, one that at one point in 1975 following Angola's independence was severed completely, only to be patched up again within a week.

Amin's regime in Uganda prevailed from his coup against Milton Obote in 1971 until Tanzania's intervention in 1978, and his eventual ousting in 1979. During this period Uganda increasingly became isolated from the major powers and lurched inexorably toward internal collapse and international pariahdom. As the state descended into social, political, and economic turmoil, its principle foreign backers steadily distanced themselves from it. Britain, Israel, the US, and finally the Soviets withdrew financial and military support leaving Uganda to rely increasingly on the Pan-Arab motivated interests of Gaddafi's Libya.

On 28 July 1978 the US congress under pressure from human rights groups in the US enacted a bill imposing a trade embargo on Uganda.¹³² In the same month following Uganda's invasion of the Kagera salient in Tanzania, the Soviet Union finally ceased all arms supplies to Uganda and made no further effort to support the Ugandan or Libyan forces in Uganda in their struggle against the retaliation and intervention by Tanzania. Uganda and to

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 12.

similar degree Tanzania (materially if not morally) were effectively on their own (notwithstanding the Libyan forces assisting Uganda). The events that were to unfold late in 1978 and early 1979 took place in an environment in which the major powers had neither the influence, interest or desire to be substantially involved.

As noted although the major powers, particularly the Soviets were active in Africa throughout the 1970's, by 1978 there was no substantial overt great power interest in Uganda or Tanzania that directly influenced the events or motivations of the actors in the intervention under consideration. The major powers were either indifferent to, or so disaffected by the actions of the states involved, that they had withdrawn all economic, military and political support to both Tanzania and Uganda (although the UK did provide humanitarian financial aid to refugees and displaced persons in the Kagera after the commencement of hostilities). The intervention into Uganda by Tanzanian forces in response to Uganda's invasion of the Kagera salient in October 1978 substantially represented a local phenomenon outside the influences or intervention by the great powers or their proxies.

Notwithstanding this absence of direct influence, it may be argued in the widest sense, in an international environment dominated by the presence and actions of two great power blocs in a bipolar arrangement, that all significant inter-state relations and interactions are to some degree influenced by the systemic structure in which they inhabit. Although in its most general sense such argument is reasonable, its utility is perhaps questionable in this instance where more immediate and significant causes are apparent. In particular, in the case of Uganda and Tanzania, which is of special interest precisely because of the lack of great power influence, it would seem that the events of 1978-79 were as remote from the bipolar Cold War environment as was possible. However, there may be a reasonable argument to suggest that whilst no overt great power interests were at play in this particular interaction, this episode is nonetheless subject to the circumstances of the systemic conditions, in that, it was in fact this lack of great power interest that made possible a military intervention of such a nature. This argument might suggest, for example, that the lack of great power interest in these East African states during this period constituted 'a permissive international environment' that, if not facilitating at least allowed, the Tanzanian government to react militarily as it did in the knowledge that it was unlikely to trigger an international or wider regional response. Because no substantial great power interests were represented in either

¹³² New York Times, "Carter Signs Legislation," *New York Times*, 11 Oct 1978.

Uganda or Tanzania and because of the nature of Uganda's regime, and the moral/humanitarian dimension of Tanzania's actions, great power intervention into the war was reasoned to be very unlikely. This would particularly be the case if the episode were concluded rather quickly with limited casualties and little dramatic international attention. In short, because this military action between two small, and to degree internationally insignificant states, could take place under the circumstances extant at the time, it did so, relatively free of constraint imposed by the major powers. The term 'permissive environment' in this context is used to convey a sense that the states involved were to a fair degree free of constraint by the major powers to act in a fashion that was largely of their own volition and of their own choosing. The concept of such a permissive environment should be seen not as suggesting that great power influence did not exist in world affairs at the time or that these states existed in an environment completely divorced from the affairs of the international environment, but rather that the actions of Tanzania and Uganda were effectively unconstrained by direct great power influence. As to how far the conceptual boundaries of that environment might extend is difficult to say with any precision, but this environment stands in stark contrast to the Vietnamese/Cambodian situation in which the Soviet, Chinese, and US interests and influences in the affairs were overt and significant. For the purposes of this example it could reasonably be argued that the Tanzania/Uganda conflict would have to have escalated to a major conflict involving other regional players on a large scale before it impacted great power interests sufficiently for them to act to constrain the actions of either state.

Therefore it is suggested that a permissive *international* environment contributed to the Tanzanian decision to intervene militarily into Uganda in much the same way as *regional* environmental conditions contributed to the lack of a diplomatically acceptable resolution to the tension between the states. From the macro international perspective therefore, the permissive great power circumstances constitute a possibly significant factor in the nature, scope and eventuality of this particular intervention between small states. In conjunction with the history of colonial, then post-colonial rule in Eastern Africa, the retreat of American foreign policy to one of 'African solutions to African problems', the disenchantment and withdrawal of Soviet interest in Uganda, and the limited nation building Chinese interest in Tanzania, the permissive international environment constituted the broader historical context in which the events of 1978-79 unfolded.

In stark contrast to Uganda's flagrant foreign policy subordination to external powers who would provide Amin with military hardware, financial aid and commodities, Tanzania's president Julius Nyerere consistently sought to resist being drawn into great power machinations or "Big power confrontation"¹³³ or the power politics of the Cold War protagonists. Although seeking ways and means to advance Tanzania's economic position Nyerere, according to various biographers, refused to subordinate his hard won independence to any external power. Having peacefully severed the vestigial colonial rule, Tanzania sought and was open to aid and support from a variety of foreign sources including Western states and to the chagrin of the US and UK, China. Although very aware of the disapprobation in the West that courting Chinese involvement in Tanzanian affairs would bring, Nyerere was determined not to be party to the larger political divide between East and West and sought Chinese funding and expertise for national infrastructure projects such as railways. Although Chinese influence in Tanzania steadily grew from 1965, Nyerere it appears, was largely able to maintain his independence and autonomy from overt Chinese or other foreign government interference.

Having once sought and obtained British military assistance in staring down an abortive military coup, Tanzania's army was subsequently strictly circumscribed and although well disciplined and trained was doctrinally wedded to neither prevailing Soviet, Sino nor Western orthodoxy. His forces therefore at the time of the 1978 intervention were neither particularly well equipped nor interoperable with the regular forces of any major power. As a consequence of Nyerere's firm stance regarding non-alignment, his socialist political and economic programs, and the poor economic prospects of his country, great power interest in Tanzania in 1978 was marginal at best and typically indifferent.

Regional Context

Having briefly contextualised the conflict between Uganda and Tanzania in terms of global conditions and circumstances that had bearing on this episode of violence, and having laid the broad foundations of power relations and interests in the African continent during the period, it is useful next to discuss the regional conditions and circumstances that formed the more proximate backdrop to the intervention.

¹³³ William Edgett Smith, *We Must Run While They Walk: A Portrait of Africa's Julius Nyerere* (New York: Random house, 1971), p. 177.

In order to satisfactorily interpret the events of October 1978 it is necessary to understand something of the histories of both Uganda and Tanzania and the proximate and distant particular historical circumstances that proved causal in the events as they unfolded. Even an incomplete appreciation of the particular historical circumstances that form the context to this conflict illuminate an understanding of the how and why of this intervention and it is to such that this study will now turn.

Uganda

As noted earlier, Uganda's history includes the common African experience of colonial rule and post-colonial political turmoil as African states came to terms with the legacy of arbitrary colonial boundary making. As is commonly described in the large body of literature that treats post-colonial circumstance and the volumes of work that investigate the range of social and political maladies that are purported to be the legacy of that colonial rule – Uganda's history is one that was extensively shaped by its colonial experience and the subsequent ramifications of that experience following independence.

As Laremont describes in his analysis of the causes of war in Africa, much of the explanation “lies in the disorderly creation of nations and states that emerged as a result of the colonial period”.¹³⁴ This disorderly creation was the result of the European imperialist division of the continent beginning with the Congress of Berlin in 1885 and its arbitrary partitioning into colonial territorial units. This ‘state forming’ contrasts sharply with the European experience in which ethnic, religious and cultural affinities led, through a long and negotiated process, to a more ‘natural and organic’ coalescence of nation-states.¹³⁵ The African experience, at once more arbitrary and imposed had the effect of either dividing already established communities or imposing unity on disparate and dissonant communities.¹³⁶ This ‘unnatural’ process Laremont goes on to argue has led to unstable nation-states lacking the vital internal coherency and identity that mark the more stable nations. Furthermore this imposed territorial partition was subsequently ratified and reified by the OAU in its attempt to stabilise and solidify the fragile post-colonial boundaries in a period of uncertainty. Choosing to consolidate the new states’ territories rather than risk further division and instability the OAU ratified the imposed boundaries at the expense of

¹³⁴ Ricardo R Laremont, *The Causes of War and the Consequences of Peacekeeping in Africa* (Portland: Heinemann, 2002), p. 5.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

social cleavages. Again following Laremont's argument "whereas in Europe national identities were developed before the creation of the state (to create nation-states), in post colonial Africa a reverse process was at work. The state – preferably a strong centrally controlled state – was created first".¹³⁷ In such, he argues, lies the root of much of the conflict, usually internal, that has bedeviled modern Africa.

The legacy of such history certainly is writ large in the post-colonial experience of Uganda. From the formal proclamation of the British protectorate over Uganda on June 19 1894, it is possible to trace the influence that trying to maintain coherency over diverse peoples has had on the functioning of the state and the performance of state organs such as the military. Uganda has been beset with tensions resulting from the internal cleavages that have traditionally delineated the fifteen major ethnic groups and four major language clusters that characterize the peoples of Uganda. The significance of these cleavages and the impact they have had on the governing of Uganda are, it has been argued, the direct result of *inter alia*, the arbitrary colonial boundaries that constitute the state, and this backward process of state formation as described by Laremont.¹³⁸ Ultimately it may be argued these disintegrative forces and their consequences contributed to the tumultuous conditions that led to Amin's seizure of power and the rampant unrest and chaos that eventually spread beyond the state boundaries of Uganda and sparked the conflict with Tanzania in the late 1970's.

In October 1962 Uganda formally gained independence from British rule. From these early days of Kabaka Mutesa II's presidency in 1963 to February 1966 when Milton Obote suspended the constitution and later in April that same year proclaimed himself Executive President, the "pressures of latent parochialism and primordial sentiment were contained".¹³⁹ Uganda appeared to be well on the way to stable national development, institutionalised pluralism based on its multi-party political system and liberal polity. However, by 1966 this neo-federal structure had collapsed, the country descended into widespread violence and Uganda appeared rather to be following the path of so many other African post-colonial liberal failures. Following Obote's establishment of himself as President, Uganda entered a phase characterized by rapid social change, including the abolition of the traditional

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ James H. Mittleman, *Ideology and Politics in Uganda: From Obote to Amin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 19.

kingdoms, the establishment of a military government and Obote's attempt at the radical "move to the left".¹⁴⁰

Obote's increasingly radical and ethnically divisive rule eventually led to increased opposition to his authoritarian and unpopular rule. The ideology that Obote attempted to foist upon the people, which was largely transplanted from the Tanzanian national setting, proved to be "inappropriate to the Ugandan social structure, unsuited to the historical setting, and misconceived in its application"¹⁴¹ hence doomed to failure. Having despoiled the polity through his intervention of the military into the political realm during his Move to the Left, Obote himself subsequently fell foul of the re-intervention of the military in the 1971 coup. Thus the military that Obote had empowered and politicised to maintain his position of power, had come in turn to oust him and install a new authority.

While President Obote was en-route back to Kampala from the Singapore Commonwealth Conference, Amin's troops overwhelmed the paramilitary general service unit in Kampala then moved to cut off the regular battalion that was relocating to the capital in support. Seizing power thus, Major General Idi Amin announced the *fait accompli* on Radio Uganda insisting that: "Matters now prevailing in Uganda force me to take a special task... Mine will be a purely caretaker administration".¹⁴² Thus began what would seven years later be described in an Amnesty International report as a:

structure of repression (that) can be said without fear of exaggeration to have transformed the whole society in a short period of time into a ruthless military dictatorship marked by arbitrary arrest, torture, murder, the removal of virtually all human rights, the terrorization of the population, and the turning of tens of thousands of Ugandans into refugees.¹⁴³

By 1978 not only was the social and political fabric of Ugandan life rent thoroughly, but so too did the country face economic despoliation. In the initial months following the 1971 coup, the major capitalists, farmers and big business interests in Uganda that had suffered under Obote's nationalization and socialization programs, were the major supporters and beneficiaries of Amin's regime. Under Amin this moneyed elite expanded to include

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. according to Mittleman, Obote was strongly influenced by Nyerere's 'successful' introduction of socialist ideology and program into Tanzanian circumstance and attempted to emulate Tanzania's experience in Uganda)

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁴³ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 91.

military officers and politicians who filled the void that Amin's 'economic war' against Asians created.¹⁴⁴ The Asians, mostly of Indian extraction had dominated Ugandan commerce, import and export sector, and retail and wholesale trades, and although targeted under Obote, felt the full brunt of racial vilification and blame under Amin. In 1972 the situation came to a head with Amin expelling the entire Asian community in what, although disguised as an Africanisation economic policy, was rather clumsy and ultimately destructive political propaganda. Having exiled the competent economic community Amin handed the expropriated business interests to loyal Nubian and Kalewa soldiers and corrupt supporters. By 1973 the vast majority of the eighty thousand odd Asian community had fled the state and by 1978 only around fifty Asian Ugandans remained in country.

Although initially popular, the ousting of the Asian community and the inept economic acumen of the new benefactors soon established the enduring pattern of Ugandan economic ruination. As the financial and commercial sectors descended into chaos so to did the social and political ills of the country manifest more bucolically. Amin's military-capitalist elite plundered the rural sector also, seizing land and crops and establishing corrupt and illegal smuggling operations in efforts to raise cash as capital fled the country and the legitimate economy collapsed.

Simultaneously, as Honey and Avirgan describe, the military transformed from a broad based national force to an ethnically narrow non-national mercenary force. The process is well documented in Anni Omara-Otunnu's work *Politics and the Military in Uganda 1890 – 1985* where he details the changing professional nature of the military during this period and the shift from the largely post-colonial Acholi, Langi, and Itesot ethnic force to the Nubian, Kakwa, and West Nile force under Amin. This process of post-colonial Africanisation, then politicisation, then tribalisation, of the military is significant in that the military under Amin transcended its traditional role as the legitimate coercive arm of the state into the undisciplined and barely contained forces of change and riot that it represented during his rule. This proved significant for Ugandan society and for the way the war with Tanzania was subsequently conducted. Unable to secure loyalty based upon anything other than bribery, fear and intimidation Amin dealt as ruthlessly with the military as he let them deal with the population. Frequently purging his forces in classically paranoid fashion, Amin successfully sought to establish a coterie of troops loyal only to himself and answerable only

¹⁴⁴ Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, p. 5.

to himself. Ultimately it was an intra-army purge that forced Ugandan soldiers fleeing from troops loyal to Amin, over the border into the Kagera salient. Their subsequent hot pursuit sparked the clashes that provided the proximate cause of the open hostilities between Tanzania and Uganda.¹⁴⁵

The tyranny, corruption, and oppression under the Amin regime are comprehensively documented, including the intrigues and inconsistent dealings with foreign powers as noted earlier. Together these had left Uganda by 1978 in a parlous state. The economy was virtually destroyed, politics had descended to a tyrannical military dictatorship based on fear, murder, and rapine, and the social structures were fragmented and reduced primarily to tribal and ethnic conflict. Amin resorted increasingly to internal military purges and scapegoating through unsubstantiated claims of foreign intrigue and aggression by neighbouring states, particularly Tanzania, to divert attention from his eroding power base and internal strife. Amin had an established pattern of blaming others for the mayhem created by his own brutality and corruption. Having expelled the Asians for ostensibly exploiting the black Ugandans and for corruptly manipulating the economy, Amin turned to inculcating a series of foreign powers including Israel and Britain for Uganda's security woes. In September 1972 a poorly orchestrated invasion by exiled Ugandan forces operating out of and with some support from Tanzania, gave Amin the excuse he needed to vilify Tanzania as a hostile and aggressive neighbour intent on territorial conquest. Although largely baseless these accusations would be problematic for Tanzania following its intervention in 1978.¹⁴⁶

The substantial and persistent forces of internal resistance, and the active exile political forces against the Amin regime, further added to the internal tension and paranoia that characterized Uganda during this period. Although fairly numerous and widespread, internal resistance to Amin's power was easily fragmented and intimidated to inactivity by the states military and security forces. Often based on ethnic divisions, opposition to Amin in the form of numerous clandestine movements aimed at his assassination, were generally brutally put down and through an early form of ethnic cleansing, purged from positions of power or from within the military. Similarly, although fairly numerous and vocal, the exiled political groups represented a disparate, poorly organized and funded opposition to Amin. Attracting little international attention or sympathy, groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Uganda, the Ugandan Freedom Union, and the Ugandan Liberation Movement

¹⁴⁵ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 93.

to name a few, were largely ineffectual and fragmented, characterised by internal strife within and amongst themselves. Although these groups did eventually bring forth several post Amin national leaders, they demonstrated the intractable difficulties in bringing national unity and harmony to the diverse groups that comprised Uganda.

Tanzania

The history of Tanzania during the period discussed in this study is intimately bound up with the life and actions of its President Julius Nyerere. It is difficult to imagine an African leader who epitomized more starkly the contrast between the arbitrary brutality of Amin and the democratic values and respect for the rule of law than that embodied in the Presidency of Nyerere.

Coming to power as the first Prime Minister of independent Tanzania (then Tanganyika) in December 1961 Nyerere remained in office just forty five days before voluntarily resigning his post to dedicate himself to the re-vitalising of the political party through which he had led Tanzania to independence from British rule. Returning as first President in 1964, Nyerere remained the popular and much loved leader of his country until 1985 when he again voluntarily and peacefully stepped down from power.

Although generally criticized by Western economists and commentators for his socialist policies and relations with China, Nyerere consistently pursued socialist policy initiatives based upon his ethical foundation of a commitment to equality and on an understanding of the crises that Tanzania faced. This Tanzanian socialism was based upon a uniquely African understanding of socialism, one more focused on equality rather than Marxist doctrine. Pratt reports that: "at the heart and centre of Nyerere's political values was an affirmation of the fundamental equality of all mankind and a commitment to the building of a social, economic and political institutions which would reflect and ensure this equality".¹⁴⁷ In reaction to the sort of military-capitalist elite that developed in Uganda, Nyerere acted swiftly and forcefully (if unpopularly) to ensure that the material welfare enjoyed by Tanzanian elites was not out of step with the material improvement of all Tanzanians. It was from this sense of equality and human dignity that Nyerere developed and initiated his socialist policies. Himself living within the strictly prescribed financial and

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 92.

¹⁴⁷ Cranford Pratt, "Julius Nyerere: The Ethical Foundation of His Legacy," *The Round Table*, Jul 2000 2000.

material limits he felt appropriate for public servants, Nyerere resisted corruption and nepotism, starkly contrasting Tanzanian government with that of Uganda.

Again at odds with political practice in his neighbouring states Nyerere, dedicated to free and fair democratic control, instituted reforms to the inherited colonial Westminster type parliamentary system so as to make it compatible with the Tanzanian circumstance and so as to develop the shallow and unsubstantial formal institutions of parliamentary democracy in Tanzania into robust and enduring political practice. However, his outspoken criticism of other African states and particularly his critique of the OAU saw Nyerere to some degree fitting comfortably into no aligned position amongst African states or with the major international powers. The pursuit of these policies and philosophy and his particular vision of Pan-African federation and unity saw Nyerere at sharp odds with his neighbouring leaders, none more so than Amin. Yet there can be little doubt of the magnitude and depth of the sincere respect and affection that the people of Tanzania held for their venerable 'father'. Nyerere was loved at home and generally, even if grudgingly, admired and respected as a man of great personal integrity by leaders abroad.

As Thomas notes, during the 1970's Nyerere stood virtually alone in his strident condemnation of Amin's regime. Suggesting that his motivation stemmed not only from his humanitarian concern for the people of Uganda and his repugnance of the brutality of Amin's regime, but also his self-interest in seeing a troublesome and threatening neighbour state weakened.¹⁴⁸ Whatever the reasons, relation between two states so diametrically opposed in so many ways were never going to be cordial, and although the interstate animosity was epitomized in the relations between their leaders, the differences between Uganda and Tanzania also resulted from deep social differences in the way the ethnic and tribal dimensions of the states had developed and evolved during and post colonial rule. Although comprised of numerous tribal and ethnic groupings, Tanzania's population had through the consistent unifying actions of Nyerere's governance developed a sense of national unity and harmony which was lacking in the Ugandan experience. As Mittleman affirms, in Tanzania unlike Uganda one common language is spoken by over 85% of the population, and although there are numerous tribes no one of them was in a position of dominance over the political

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 91.

system, and of course they possessed a charismatic and popular leader – Nyerere. None of these were present in Uganda.¹⁴⁹

In 1975, Tanzania roundly condemned the OAU and Amin's regime when it boycotted the OAU summit in Kampala. Always a critical supporter of the OAU, Nyerere was incensed when Amin was elected head of the OAU and vowed never to attend the conference in Kampala under such a guilty and bloody dictatorship. Although accustomed to Nyerere's expressions of indignity, the OAU was stung by his vociferous attacks and this no doubt was also significant in its subsequent deliberations over events in 1979.

Relations Between States

As described, relations between Amin and Nyerere were never friendly and there were substantial and significant social, political and ethnic differences between the polities as well. But what was the history of relations between the states prior to Amin's seizure of power?

Obote had been both friend and ideological kindred spirit with Nyerere. Mittleman suggests in fact that eventually Obote emulated much of Nyerere's ideology and attempted to transplant the Tanzanian experience to Ugandan soil. As noted previously this was spectacularly unsuccessful, nonetheless relations between the states prior to 1971 had been very friendly if not entirely consistent. There can be little doubt that Obote and Nyerere shared similar ideology and in fact as early as 1964 Obote, Nyerere and Zambian head Kenneth Kaunda formed a fraternal order called the Mulungishi Club in which the members attended annual meetings of each other's political parties.¹⁵⁰ Nyerere however, was circumspect in regard to Ugandan affairs. As Mittleman notes he "believed that African statesmen should not comment upon, let alone intervene in, the internal affairs of other states".¹⁵¹ Obote however, did once candidly acknowledge:

I know President Julius Nyerere well, I can say that I have learnt from and hope to continue to learn from him. After all he is older than myself and his country achieved independence before mine. In the second place, he built a strong party, which is the only party in mainland Tanzania and ... we in Africa are learning from each other.¹⁵²

Although fairly small, trade between the states was regular and uninhibited and border relations were normal. Tanzania was mostly preoccupied with social and economic reform

¹⁴⁹ Mittleman, *Ideology and Politics in Uganda: From Obote to Amin*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 179 - 181. Julius Nyerere *Freedom and Socialism: Uhuru and Ujaama* in Mittleman.

and development while Uganda was struggling under the programs Obote was attempting to implement.

This situation of course changed immediately Obote was ousted from power in 1971. Nyerere consistently maintained that Obote was the legitimate albeit unpopular, elected head of Uganda. Following Amin's seizure of power Obote sought exile in Tanzania and as a guest of Nyerere's in Dar es Salaam, there he remained for the most part during Amin's rule. Ever active in exile, Obote worked assiduously from within Tanzania to scheme and plot Amin's demise. Although numerous, Obote's plans were largely characterized as inept and ill led¹⁵³ and as demonstrated in the aborted 1972 invasion, particularly unsuccessful. During the period of Amin's regime Tanzania did however, give aid and succour to Ugandan exile elements in addition to that provided to Obote in the lead up to the 1972 invasion attempt. In 1971 Tanzania provided Obote facilities and a training camp at Kingolwira in which to prepare for his invasion.¹⁵⁴ Following the 1972 debacle and the stern international and African condemnation for its part in the attempted coup, (and although no Tanzanian soldiers had directly participated in the attempt) Amin claimed that Tanzania had in fact attempted invasion and so retaliated by sending war planes to strafe the Tanzanian towns of Bukoba and Mwanza. Amidst the condemnation of Tanzania, Libya went so far as to provide material aid in the form of troops and equipment to Amin. Eventually in October 1972 Somali President Said Barre mediated a truce between Uganda and Tanzania in the form of the Mogadishu Agreement in which both parties agreed to cease and withdraw military forces and operations from the border region, cease hostile propaganda, and to refrain from allowing subversive forces to operate in one country against the other.¹⁵⁵

In the years following the accord, Nyerere moved through public gestures to stabilize relations between the countries, even going so far as to meet Amin face to face in 1973 at the OAU summit in Addis Ababa, despite his abhorrence of Amin's rule.¹⁵⁶ Amin for his part however, maintained his unsubstantiated claims of Tanzanian aggression, insisting that Tanzania had been on the verge of invading several times in March 1973, August 1975, February 1977 and just prior to the 1978 OAU summit in Khartoum, and that they had in fact invaded in July 1974 and September 1975. Amin had also given support to Oscar Kambona, a

¹⁵² Milton Obote, *Myths and Realities*, p. 32, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 180.

¹⁵³ Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, p. 33.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36 - 37.

dissident Tanzanian who sought to replace Nyerere, in his anti-Nyerere activities. Nyerere, following the Mogadishu Agreement had ceased active support of exiled Ugandan forces but had let it be known privately that he would tolerate their activity within Tanzania if it were discrete.¹⁵⁷ It is generally supposed that Nyerere, although vehemently opposed to Amin's rule did not intend to violate the non-intervention tenets of the OAU, nor the sovereignty of Uganda by open intervention. Believing rather Obote's counsel that Ugandans would rise in spontaneous rebellion against the illegitimate rule given a spark to ignite the flame, Nyerere allowed and encouraged subversive anti-Amin activity within his borders. By 1975 however, outraged over Amin's excesses and propaganda, Nyerere boycotted the OAU summit in Kampala launching a scathing criticism of the Amin regime and the OAU's failure to act and its racially bigoted practice of not intervening in black African affairs despite atrocities being committed. The relations between Uganda and Tanzania by this time were probably irreparably soured.

The OAU

As relations between Tanzania and Uganda continued to deteriorate between 1971 and 1975 the dilemma that characterized the role and operation of the Organisation of African Unity intensified. Since its foundation in May 1963 the OAU had adopted a charter that reflected the conservative values of the Brazzaville-Monrovia group, which incorporated a conventional interpretation of state sovereignty and only minimal functions for supranational organizations such as itself.¹⁵⁸ Following the assassination of President Olympio of Togo in 1963 the OAU codified the repudiation of assassination and subversion as methods of African diplomacy. Similarly, as an extension of its weak conception of the functions of international institutions, the OAU developed a strong but inconsistent proscription of intervention in inter-African diplomacy. Condemning external intervention as violation of the sovereign right of territorial integrity, the OAU however, ascribed to itself a very limited role in enforcing this proscription.¹⁵⁹

Following Laremont's post-colonial rationale, this dilemma can perhaps be understood as a deep seated conflict between the need to maintain the colonial territorial boundaries for national integrity reasons, with the desire to allow sovereign governments the ability to govern their affairs without intervention by external agency. Such prescription may

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

¹⁵⁸ Mittleman, *Ideology and Politics in Uganda: From Obote to Amin*, p. 199.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

be permissible in a benign and stable environment but woefully inadequate in the turbulent African context in the 1970s. Faced with serious internal abuse of human rights and irresponsible government, the OAU was bound by its own proscriptions not only not to intervene, but also to condemn any external agency or government that did. Caught squarely on the horns of this dilemma the OAU was doomed to inaction at worst or ineffectual attempted mediation at best.

In the dispute between Uganda and Tanzania it was precisely this dilemma that not only bedeviled the OAU but frustrated Nyerere to the point perhaps of being significant in his decision to oust the Amin regime. By 1975 Nyerere was thoroughly frustrated by the OAU's failure to condemn Amin and he felt that it had dangerously and foolishly lent legitimacy to Amin's rule by nominating him as chairman and by agreeing to convene the 1975 summit in Kampala. Nyerere, a consistent proponent of pan-African socialism staunchly defended the non-intervention principle but equally firmly condemned the OAU for its blind application of this principle in the face of compelling evidence that serious abuses were taking place within Uganda. Nyerere boycotted the 1975 summit in protest at what he felt was the bigoted application of principles by the OAU. As Thomas describes, Nyerere wanted an "equitable application of the principles of justice, and he wanted the OAU to stand up for this too; but the latter condemned atrocities only when they were committed by white regimes."¹⁶⁰ Tanzania argued that the OAU had the duty to intervene in cases of egregious abuse of justice. As one a statement from the Tanzanian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in July 1975 insisted:

When massacres, oppression and torture are used against African in the independent states of Africa there is no protest anywhere in Africa... it is made to appear that African lose their right to protest against state-organised brutality on the day that their country becomes independent through their efforts. For on all such matters the OAU act like a trade union of the current Heads of State and Government, with solidarity reflected in silence if not open support for each other.¹⁶¹

For its part the OAU firmly stood by its principle of non-intervention and remained unified in their silence on the internal affairs of sovereign independent Uganda.

With the commencement of hostilities in October 1978 the dilemma reached crisis point. Outraged by the blatant transgression of Tanzanian sovereignty, Nyerere expected an

¹⁶⁰ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, pp. 90 - 112.

unequivocal condemnation of Uganda's actions by the OAU and wanted some positive action by the African states – neither was forthcoming. Trapped in the fragility of consensus and its inability to surmount its own proscriptions to action the OAU did very little but call for peaceful resolution of hostilities.¹⁶² In private Nigeria promised condemnation but failed to do so publicly. Kenya failed, despite requests, to block oil supplies to Uganda, and although other front line states like Zambia, Botswana, Angola and Mozambique did individually condemn the invasion there was no institutional condemnation by the OAU.¹⁶³ Tanzanian officials found this response incongruous and were confused and upset by the OAU's stance. Uganda's aggression clearly transgressed the territorial sovereignty principle espoused by the OAU yet, as an organisation it was unwilling to condemn Uganda's action or to intervene to any extent other than attempt mediation. The OAU had never condemned a black African or Arab state despite the circumstances and it was clearly not going to do so now. Rather, it lamely called for negotiated resolution – a response that drew sharp criticism from Nyerere who argued that negotiation was inappropriate and that as he perceived it: "How do you mediate between somebody who breaks into your house and the victim of the assault?"¹⁶⁴

As hostilities continued the OAU's ineffectual attempts at negotiation, although perhaps somewhat significant in compelling Amin to seek settlement (far more likely is that pressure from African, Soviet and Arab supporters forced Amin to accept his untenable position), served only to exasperate Nyerere and to harden his resolve to bring a permanent solution to the situation. In the face of the OAU's refusal to act any further than propose negotiated settlement Nyerere continued his criticism of it and what he saw as its bigoted and inconsistent behaviour. In December 1978 in a speech celebrating Tanzania's anniversary of independence Nyerere attacked Amin and the OAU, insisting that:

Amin is a killer. Since he took over the leadership of Uganda – and I am not sure whether I should call it leadership of oppression – he has killed many more people than Smith has done. He has killed many more people than Vorster has done in South Africa: an African leader can kill Africans just as he pleases, and you cannot say anything. If Amin was white, we would have passed many resolutions against him. But he is black, and blackness is a licence to kill African. And therefore there is a complete silence, no one speaks about what he does.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Claude Welch, "The OAU and Human Rights: Towards a New Definition," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 19, no. 3 (1981): p. 405.

¹⁶² John Darnton, "African Nations Begin Mediation," *New York Times*, 7 November 1978.

¹⁶³ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 93.

¹⁶⁴ Julius Nyerere, *Africa Contemporary Record* (1978 - 1979).

Yet the OAU did attempt to bring about the cessation of hostilities and to seek a negotiated settlement throughout the conflict.¹⁶⁶ In January, unsettled by the realization that he had bitten off more than he could chew, Amin appealed to the OAU and the Arab League for settlement. By this time however, incensed at the OAU intransigence, Nyerere was in no mood to settle what he saw as an act of open aggression. Nyerere stated, "There has been naked, blatant and brazen aggression against Tanzania. I want to know what the OAU will do about this. I expect African countries to tell Amin to withdraw before people talk about restraint. I expect no dithering."¹⁶⁷ By February Nyerere had again criticized the OAU for failing to condemn the invasion. By late February another attempt to mediate by the OAU had failed. Having established an ad hoc mediation committee of nine African states the OAU sought mediation between the warring parties. Tanzania called for four key criteria to be met before mediation could succeed; an outright condemnation of the invasion by the OAU, for Uganda to renounce any claim to the Kagera salient, a promise from Amin never again to invade Tanzania, and the payment of compensation.¹⁶⁸ The OAU however, steadfastly refused to condemn Amin's actions and negotiations foundered. The OAU was to play no further significant role in bringing about the cessation of hostilities or the resolution of the conflict. This task was taken on by Tanzania and its subsequent removal of the Amin regime.

In his substantial analysis of ideology and politics in Uganda, Mittleman examines what he terms the evolving norms of pan-African law and inter-African diplomacy.¹⁶⁹ He describes as previously noted the development of the OAU's charter of sovereign integrity and non-intervention and suggests the existence of a somewhat uniquely African conception of non-intervention, state sovereignty and diplomacy. He notes the influence of the *coup d'etat* in the evolution of inter-African ethics and diplomacy and suggests that as a result of its post-colonial historical experience that a particular set of norms governing inter-African diplomacy evolved that were at once proscriptive yet inconsistent. "Intervention in the African normative context was seen as neither moral or immoral, legal or illegal and whilst many Africans condemn external intervention in the Congo they condone it in South Africa.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 98.

¹⁶⁶ Darnton, "African Nations Begin Mediation."

¹⁶⁷ Julius Nyerere, "Blatant Aggression," *Journal of African Studies*, no. Fall (1987).

¹⁶⁸ Broadcast BBC, "Nyerere's Conditions for Reconciliation," in *Middle East and Africa News* (Tanzania: BBC, 1979).

¹⁶⁹ Mittleman, *Ideology and Politics in Uganda: From Obote to Amin*, p. 197.

Similarly some have denounced intervention in Nigeria yet call for assistance to Biafra.”¹⁷⁰ Whilst these norms or developing conventions may be seen as inconsistent or bigoted, albeit comprehensible given the particular historical rationale, they may also be seen as immature first steps toward a wider more inclusive trend within the evolution of global norms concerning sovereignty and intervention. By 1978 the OAU had existed for a mere fifteen years. Years in which the turbulent post-colonial experience proved perhaps overwhelming to the fragile unanimity of the OAU. The application of consistent and just principles by a supranational organization such as the OAU would have been no mean feat for such a juvenile institution. Yet the existence of supranational norms, albeit ineffective are evident in this case of intervention, and they perhaps portend further development and significance for the role of norms in the understanding of interventions.

Role of Regional States

Although a conflict primarily between Uganda and Tanzania, a few adjoining states also played a small part in the eventual manifestation of events. In particular Kenya had the opportunity to bring to bear the greatest economic pressure on Uganda at the least cost to itself. Although relations between Tanzania and Kenya were not overly friendly before Amin’s regime, Kenya’s ‘legalistic neutralism’ was interpreted increasingly by Tanzania as pro-Amin as the conflict deepened.¹⁷¹ Although Kenya had spoken out against Uganda following Amin’s performance at the Afro-Arab summit in 1977, it continued to trade, flow oil to, and profit from the illegal coffee smuggling trade from Uganda. Consistent with the African reluctance to condemn or interfere in the affairs of other African states despite the conditions, Kenya did not act against the Amin regime and continued to profit substantially from it almost right up to the point of Uganda’s collapse.

Other neighbours did however, at least publicly condemn Amin although they did not materially intervene. Angola, Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia did support Tanzania in condemning Uganda, and Nigeria also privately at least offered moral support. Apart from these pronouncements however, as with the OAU, the regional states played no major role in the conflict or the intervention and subsequent regime change.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁷¹ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 106.

Individuals and Organizations

It is possible from the discussion to date to get the impression that this work has focused on the role of the primary individuals involved in the conflict – namely Nyerere and Amin – and certainly this is largely a reflection of the available literature concerning the subject, in which most sources frame the events in terms of the actions, decisions, and personalities of the two national leaders. The characters of Amin and Nyerere loom large in African history in the 1970s and were such dominant personalities that it is easy to identify all of Ugandan and Tanzanian history during this period with their identities. Whilst enormously significant, even central to the dispute, such conclusion is clearly not an accurate one.

As this paper has demonstrated there existed very significant global currents that influenced and shaped the conditions in which the intervention took place. Likewise the substantial regional influences constituted the immediate context of the dispute and manifestly affected the way it developed and eventuated. Nonetheless this case is a very good example of the significance and import of unit level factors in the precipitation and conduct of this intervention. In briefly examining the unit level factors involved, the most immediate fact that springs to the scholar's attention is that Amin and Nyerere were so central to the events. Those who favour the 'great man in history' line of reasoning may indeed find fertile ground in this conflict for arguing that the role of the national leaders here were of major significance in the course of events as they unfolded. This is undoubtedly the case however, in this particular circumstance it may also be argued in fact that the particular and peculiar histories of these states precipitated an almost unique conjunction of circumstances such that the identity of the states was perceived by many as virtually synonymous with the identities of the leaders, such that the interests of Amin supplanted and represented the interests of the state of Uganda. Similarly the interests of the state of Tanzania to large degree became an expression of the interests of Nyerere. It may also be suggested that conditions in both states had, for very different reasons, led to situations in which the usual unit level factors were subordinate to, and eclipsed, by the influence of the national leaders. This perhaps says as much about the state of other unit level factors such as the public, the political elites, and non-state actors, extant at the time, as it does about these two leaders.

In the case of Uganda, as described previously, having usurped the unpopular but elected government of Obote, Amin set about dismantling (or perhaps allowing to decay away) the organs of civil society, the polity and the economic structures that constituted the

typical unit level agencies within states. Simultaneously he acted to centralise political power, quash dissenting opinion, and intimidate the country through his various apparatuses of fear and violence. To large degree he became, certainly he hoped to become, the embodiment of the state. As brutal dictator in a country with such pervasive agencies of fear and coercion the only unit level actors effectively still remaining were the relatively large but increasingly homogenous and ineffective military, a vestigial economic elite, and a disparate and ineffectual opposition. The military as previously noted were rapacious and frequently subject to dissention, but were brutally purged by Amin along ethnic and tribal lines to the point of constituting a non-viable independent unit level force. Although highly scrutinized by Amin, the military was also highly politicised and factious, and their unruly and undisciplined behaviour eventually provided the immediate *casus belli* of the open hostilities. As a political force however, able to influence the foreign policy directions of the state, they were far too emasculated and fractured to be a significant unit level influence.

The vestigial political and economic elite too suffered under the pervasive corruption and undisciplined action of the state authorities. Constantly replacing suspect officials with his own cronies, the once relatively substantial Ugandan elite was reduced to an ever decreasing coterie of self serving corrupt ex-military members bent on their own survival and gain caring and contributing little to the governance or functioning of the state. As a social or political force they were not a significant factor in the decision to invade Tanzania and did little subsequently to influence events once Tanzania intervened. Again as detailed briefly earlier the resistance movement and political opposition were disparate, ineffectual and largely forced underground and inactive by the pervasive and fearsome internal security apparatuses. Although playing their part in the abortive coup attempt in '72 and in the vanguard of the Tanzanian push into Uganda in 1978-79 they played little role in precipitating the invasion and were mostly augmented by ex-patriot opposition forces during events in 1978-79. Most significantly they failed to materialize as a rising popular revolt against Amin as Obote had insisted they would and most definitely would have foundered again in 1978 were it not for the Tanzanian military advice, support and firepower. Although ostensibly a Ugandan revolt against Amin's forces, the reality on the ground was that it was the disciplined and professional Tanzanian army that routed Amin's Ugandan troops.

The diminishment of the causal significance of these unit level factors was also exacerbated by the nature of Amin's rule and the extent to which he replaced legitimate state

interests with his own personal self interests and ambitions. Amin had had very little formal education nor was he experienced in politics, public policy, business or bureaucracy. He had served as an army sergeant during the immediate post-colonial period and was extremely fortunate to have been rapidly advanced into the officer corps, then senior officer level following the hasty Africanisation of the Ugandan army. Recognised for his brutality, strength, and ability with men, Amin rose quickly in the politicised Ugandan army and managed to reach the level of Chief of the Army prior to his successful coup, without the benefit of experience of state political life. When he realised almost unlimited national political power at the head of his loyal forces in 1971, he was consequently manifestly ill equipped and ill-prepared by Western standards for public life let alone national leadership. In short, with little imagination, experience or altruistic motivation, equipped with virtually no policy, concern, or program for national advancement, Amin found himself in a position to indulge his ambitions and self-interest virtually unrestrained. The state apparatus increasingly became vehicles for the pursuit of his personal objectives, and as the machinery of state ground down through neglect and malpractice, the legitimate aims of the state were supplanted by the ignorant and rapacious desires of Amin and his forces. For a realist explanation such conditions are problematic. In such circumstance the state interest can hardly be reconciled with what is normally conceived of as state interests of survival, security and prosperity. Uganda's condition was clearly atypical of what is usually considered 'normal' state structure. This point will be taken up later in the chapter conclusion, however it does highlight the criticality of historic circumstance in determining what constitutes state interests and how they interrelate with other states, and the difficulty realist accounts have in positing all states with synonymous interests and prescribed mechanisms of interaction.

In the case of the Tanzanian unit level factors, the situation was markedly different. As the founder and father of independence and Tanzanian democratic rule, Nyerere dominated the political life of Tanzania. But Tanzania was a fully functioning (although peculiarly constituted) democracy and although Nyerere certainly embodied the Tanzanian polity in the person of President, the decision to overthrow the Ugandan regime was one that was overwhelmingly supported by the government and it would appear by the populace at large.¹⁷² Under Nyerere's direction Tanzania developed a representative democratic system based upon the British parliamentary system but with the unusual characteristic of having

¹⁷² Broadcast BBC, "Nyerere's Warning to Tanzanians of Hard Times," in *Africa news* (Tanzania: BBC, 1979).

only one major political party.¹⁷³ Being a one party democracy there is little record of opposition to the decision and no accounts of widespread or localized discontent with the decision have been noted. Presumably once the party, led by Nyerere, decided to act against Uganda the public by and large fell behind the decision and supported it. There is ample evidence in the literature and media at the time to suggest that the military moves were well discussed and considered and the sharp economic constraints that the war imposed on the population would certainly not have gone unnoticed.¹⁷⁴ As one of Africa's poorest countries the war cost Tanzania dearly, yet the economic hardships it caused appear to have been stoically met by the public. (Keesing's contemporary archive) There is very little in the literature or reporting concerning the role of Tanzanian public opinion during the events of 1978-79 and nothing to suggest that public sentiment was anything but either silent or in support of the actions of the government. At least one report confirms this support when it describes: "The war with Uganda has caused an extraordinary surge in patriotism and national dedication in Tanzania"¹⁷⁵ although of course such is always the claim of any government in such circumstance. The role of non-state organizations is similarly unreported and little can be inferred as to their influence at the unit level.

What is of some interest and significance however, is the role of Tanzanian socialist philosophy, *Ujamaa*, and Nyerere's associated vision of pan-African unity.¹⁷⁶ As a strong and vocal advocate of pan-African socialism, Nyerere's conception of sovereignty to degree transcended national boundaries and placed the value of human rights and the greater good of Africa above those of the states involved. Deeply humanitarian, Nyerere believed concern for the rights and dignity of the people of Uganda superseded the territorial rights of the state of Uganda, thus giving impetus to his decision to overthrow Amin. Yet this decision was not taken lightly and as Thomas and Wheeler argue in their work Nyerere was at great pains to legitimate his intervention so as not to contravene the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention – unless circumstances were so dire as to justify them – which he believed they were. Again this highlights the historical contingency of state interests- in this instance they were clearly the result of political decision-making heavily influenced by Nyerere's ideology. In the complex of reasons underlying Tanzania's intervention, the role of ideas therefore is

¹⁷³ Smith, *We Must Run While They Walk: A Portrait of Africa's Julius Nyerere*.

¹⁷⁴ BBC, "Nyerere's Warning to Tanzanians of Hard Times."

¹⁷⁵ Sanford Ungar, "Tanzania Goes to War," *The New Republic*, Mar 10 1979 1979.

¹⁷⁶ Harvey Glickman, "Tanzania: From Disillusionment to Guarded Optimism," *Current History*, May 1997 1997, p. 127.

significant in that they provided the foundation upon which was built Tanzania's understanding of itself as a nation, as part of Africa, and as a nation of people with rights and values. The point is significant here in that a distinction can be made between the base material motivations of the Ugandan regime and the ideological and principled position of Tanzania.

While Amin's interests came to supplant the legitimate Ugandan state interests, the situation in Tanzania was similar but for radically different reasons. As national leader since 1961 and founder and head of the only national political party, Nyerere, it would appear, embodied Tanzanian state ideals and values. Certainly his humanitarian values and ideals of equality and democratic representation heavily influenced the manner and direction that political discourse took in Tanzania¹⁷⁷ and we can see his understanding of pan-African unity reflected in official Tanzanian rhetoric in forums such as the OAU. At the unit level therefore it is proposed that ideological considerations were significant in this episode of intervention, and that the particular manner in which the states interpreted and pursued state interests was similarly significant in the manifestation of this intervention. In summary, unit level influences, ideological considerations, and historically contingent manifestations of state interests, were at least as important in the manner in which this intervention occurred, as were considerations of power, anarchy, and states.

The Intervention

Despite Amin's continued accusations of Tanzanian aggression across their land border and the rhetorical war of words that characterized the relationship between the two states, the actual state of military disposition on the border was relatively benign in 1978.¹⁷⁸ Tanzania had no troop strength of any consequence in the border region, in accordance with the Mogadishu Agreement and it had no military mobility plans in place in case of border infractions.¹⁷⁹ In fact, Amin's protracted rhetorical attacks had, it appears, to have convinced Tanzanian authorities that all that was likely to come over the border was continued 'hot air' and refugees. The light Tanzanian forces that did occupy the West Lake district constituted reconnaissance and observation units of the 3rd Battalion under the newly appointed command of Lieutenant Colonel Morris Singano. Singano's brief was to monitor the

¹⁷⁷ Smith, *We Must Run While They Walk: A Portrait of Africa's Julius Nyerere*.

¹⁷⁸ Brian Jeffries, "Ugandan Radio Broadcast Claims Troops Are Fighting against Battalion Of," *New York Times* 1978.

Mogadishu Agreement conditions and to report, and if possible contain the rampant smuggling operations in the area.

Within weeks of assuming command in August 1978 Singano apparently observed what he believed to be unusual levels of Ugandan military activity on the Ugandan side of the border. This activity, which included elevated troop levels, the presence of armoured personnel carriers (APC), and increased reconnaissance aircraft activity, was reported to his Command Brigade Headquarters at Tabora. By mid September Singano had reported further increased reconnaissance and surveillance flights by Ugandan aircraft and on 9 October he reported that a motorized detachment of Ugandan troops had crossed the border near the village of Kakunyu destroying some buildings.¹⁸⁰ The activity steadily increased with Ugandan Mig aircraft bombing (ineffectually) across the Tanzanian border on the 10th of October. Tanzania responded with artillery fire on Ugandan positions across the border on 14 October which was followed by further MIG attacks this time against the town of Bukoba, the regional centre, four days later. On October the 25th Tanzania observers reported unusual activity in the vicinity of Mutukula and within minutes large-scale manoeuvres at three locations along the border were underway. The scant Tanzania defence collapsed and troops and civilians alike fled in number to the south bank of the Kagera. Singano realized that this latest incident represented a full-scale invasion of the region and withdrew his forces to the town of Kyaka. His reports during September and early October had evoked no significant reaction from Brigade headquarters and now he stood by unable to retaliate to any effect as over 2000 Ugandan regulars poured across the border in the Kagera salient.

By October 30th thousands of Ugandans had entered Tanzania via four axes at Kikunyu, Masanya, Mutukulu, and Minzero, killing, raping, and looting as they went. By that evening they had advanced some 30 kilometres into Tanzania to the Kagera river, occupying 1800 square kilometres, killing approximately 1500 civilians and causing extensive property damage and widespread chaos.¹⁸¹

Tanzania's forces (the TPDF) had not fought a war since independence and Amin's troops faced little serious organized opposition as it pushed into the Kagera salient. Additionally when Nyerere's orders for full mobilization came, only one of the TPDF's four Brigades was ready at short notice and it was located at Songea in the South West corner of

¹⁷⁹ Kaufman, "Uganda Charges It Has Been Invaded by Tanzanian Troops in Area of Mbarara."

¹⁸⁰ Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, pp. 53 - 54.

¹⁸¹ Kaufman, "Uganda Charges It Has Been Invaded by Tanzanian Troops in Area of Mbarara."

the country, 1100 kilometres from the war with no direct transport lines of communication to the front. The mobilization began almost immediately and by the second week of November the TPDF had begun to form a sizeable force on the southern side of the Kagera River. The remainder of November and the start of December saw a few minor clashes occurring in the border region with Ugandan forces losing several tanks and APACS to the TPDF. Meanwhile the Tanzanian command staff were preoccupied with planning their first major counter offensive aimed at securing the high ground in the vicinity of Mutukula. Following a visit to the front, Nyerere reportedly had been convinced by his staff and his own assessment of the area, that the Kagera salient would remain vulnerable to Ugandan action so long as Amin's forces occupied the adjacent high ground at Mutukula. Thus the crucial decision was taken that Tanzanian forces would cross the border into Uganda to secure the high ground objective. On January 21st TPDF units crossed the Ugandan border *en masse* in preparation for a dawn offensive against the Ugandan forces occupying the Mutukula high ground. With a simple but highly effective deception plan followed by a coordinated sweeping attack from the Ugandan rear quarter, the Tanzanian forces quickly routed Amin's troops who hastily fled leaving a sizeable quantity of ammunition and equipment behind. The first serious action in the counter offensive proved not only to be a largely one sided affair but it set the pattern of most subsequent engagements, with the fairly poorly equipped but disciplined Tanzanian forces quickly dispersing the disorganized and undisciplined Ugandan soldiers. In perhaps one of the sourest incidents in the conflict the vengeful Tanzanian forces not only routed the Ugandan troops but subsequently completely destroyed the town of Mutukula, razing huts and indiscriminately killing civilians and military alike, in an act of savagery, as Honey describes, not dissimilar to the Ugandan brutality in the Kagera. Once word of the atrocity reached Nyerere, predictably he responded angrily ordering that no more civilian lives or Ugandan civilian property were to be harmed in any way. Mindful of the ultimate motives behind their retaliation against Amin's forces and the nature of their opposition to Amin's regime, Nyerere was careful not to allow any action by his troops to alienate or intimidate the Ugandan people.

Southern Uganda. Phase I. Tanzania's response to the Kagera invasion appears to have been almost instinctual. They had moved to expel the invaders and to punish those troops in the immediate vicinity and to secure the tactical situation by gaining the high ground in the Mutukula district. What happened next very much depended on the reaction of the international community and the regional states as represented by the OAU. Anticipating

a swift condemnation of Uganda's invasion, Nyerere was not only incensed that such was not forthcoming from the OAU but was further infuriated by Nigeria's attempts to have Tanzania negotiate with Uganda. Similarly frustrated by a lack of international support, Tanzania felt increasingly isolated as the victim of aggression by an odious dictatorship that was seemingly going to get away with its actions with virtually no serious consequences. Informally, Tanzania had been advised by sympathetic Western countries that for her to retaliate further against Uganda would be both militarily and politically disastrous. For whilst there was some sympathy for her plight, a counter offensive would result in Tanzania being viewed internationally as the invader thus reversing any international goodwill and probably leading to condemnation of Tanzania. Additionally, militarily Tanzania was viewed by most as quite inferior to what was believed to be a combat hardened Ugandan force.

In such a climate - Amin having not renounced his territorial claims against the Kagera and the OAU having failed to condemn Uganda's aggression - Honey asserts that Nyerere was convinced that he must proceed further against Uganda if he was to attain any satisfaction at all against their invasion.¹⁸² Strongly denouncing any claim to Ugandan territory, Nyerere decided in favour of retribution against Amin by way of a retaliatory attack against the major southern Ugandan towns of Mbarara and Masaka thus igniting, he hoped, a wider indigenous revolt against the regime as he had been led to believe would occur. During their time in exile, Obote and other exiled Ugandans had led Nyerere to believe that a substantial and willing popular uprising was effectively waiting in the wings, both within Uganda and amongst those exiled, for some reversal in Amin's strong position to allow them to rise up against their oppression and bring about regime change. It was this uprising that Nyerere hoped would erupt if the exiled Ugandan forces and the internal opposition within Uganda witnessed Tanzania's stern retaliation against Amin in southern Uganda.

At the urging of the exiled Ugandans, immediately following the Kagera invasion, Tanzania hurriedly moved to mobilize anti-Amin elements into some form of organized fighting force to equip them to take advantage of any possible opportunity that might arise. Gradually a mixed bag of exiled Ugandans, including serious ex-military, ex-patriots from the Tabora refugee camp in Tanzania and opportunistic outcasts assembled in Tanzania under the eventual command of Colonel Ojok to form the *Kikosi Maalum* or Special Battalion. It

¹⁸² Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, p. 78.

was this force that would line up beside the Tanzanian regulars in the counter offensive in February 1979.¹⁸³

Phase II. Before Masaka could be approached a series of small towns had to be secured. The first of these was Kukoma, then Simba Hills by 13 February.¹⁸⁴ The combined Tanzanian/exiled Ugandan force then pressed forward toward Masaka in the East and Mbarara in the West, engaging in battles at Kyotera, Kalisingo, Bukere, Sanga and Miakitele as they proceeded. By February 24 Masaka was taken and Mbarara the following day, phase II had begun and now the Tanzanian forces paused in anticipation of the widespread popular uprising they had been promised. No mass reaction was forthcoming. Fearful of Amin and insecure in Tanzania's ability or will to remove him the Ugandan population hid and waited. Tanzania now had its army deep within Uganda and Nyerere had again to decide his next course of action. Confident in the superiority of his forces over Amin's, but acutely aware that each move deeper into Uganda inflamed the international and regional diplomatic protest,¹⁸⁵ Nyerere was very aware that if he were to withdraw his forces the future of the occupants of southern Uganda at the hands of an enraged Amin were assured – certain death. Tanzania's best option it appeared was to weather the diplomatic storm and continue against Amin in the hope that the exiled Ugandan forces with the support of Tanzanian troops could effect the overthrow of the regime in as short a time as possible.

Tanzania's original battle plans called for a two-pronged advance that drove up the West border and simultaneously advanced from the East to the capital Kampala. Sensing that it would be diplomatically too inflammatory for his troops to march into Kampala, Nyerere decided to revise the plans and have the Tanzanian forces lead the fight up to the outskirts of the capital, decimating Amin's army in the process, then allow the Ugandans of the Kikosi Maalum to effect the actual liberation of the capital.¹⁸⁶

Persistent and at times heavy fighting was reported in the Mbarara region where some of Amin's best forces, the Simba Battalion, defensively withdrew and fought a rear guard action.¹⁸⁷ The road to Kampala led through the town of Lukaya, which could easily have been isolated by destroying the only access to it via a 20 kilometre long causeway through the deep-water swamps. Amin however, confident that his Libyan support would lead to ultimate

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ News Agency Reuters, "Forces Advance from Tanzania on Uganda," *Globe and Mail*, 15 Feb 1979.

¹⁸⁵ Press Associated, "Amin Sues for Peace," *Globe and Mail*, 1 March 1979.

¹⁸⁶ News Agency Reuters, "Serious Situation," *Globe and Mail*, 2 March 1979.

victory, prohibited the destruction of the causeway, believing it would impede his return to the area to drive out the Tanzanians. Reuters reported that Lukaya was uneventfully taken by the Tanzanian forces however, subsequently a more significant engagement ensued just North of the town, and finally after three weeks of battle, heavy Ugandan casualties led to a comprehensive victory for the combined Tanzanian and exiled Ugandan forces.¹⁸⁸ By this stage Libyan support to Amin had peaked with large numbers of troops and substantial arms and equipment including TU-22 aircraft.¹⁸⁹ The entry of the Libyan forces into the conflict proved to be far less decisive than Amin had anticipated or Nyerere had feared.¹⁹⁰ Comprising poorly trained militia who believed they were in Uganda on training exercises, the Libyan troops offered very little organized resistance and very quickly fell in to disarray and retreat. Soon the town of Mpigi was overrun leaving Amin in the unenviable position of having played his Libyan card and lost.¹⁹¹ Amin's troops were in a state of chaos, the road and rail west from Kampala were cut and Tanzania commanded the high ground surrounding Kampala from which it could shell the capitol with artillery with relative impunity.

Following a pause in operations in which Nyerere apparently hoped the political process would catch up with the military situation, the offensive was resumed. Cognisant of the need to secure Entebbe before marching on Kampala, the 208th Brigade set about engaging that objective. By the 7th of April the city was secured, the remaining Libyan forces had been put to flight, the Ugandan army was broken and Kampala lay but 35 kilometres away. Significantly in an attempt to allow the Libyan forces in Kampala an escape route so as to facilitate a plausible Arab denial of involvement, Nyerere ordered that the road out of Kampala to the east to Jinja be left open. The remaining plan to take the capital entailed the 208th attacking from the south from Entebbe, the 207th advancing from the west from Masaka with the 201st establishing a blocking position to the north of the city.¹⁹² On April 10th the offensive against Kampala began in earnest. By 5 pm the forces had advanced to the very city centre. Amin, to the chagrin of the Tanzanians had fled the capital via the escape route left open to the east.

¹⁸⁷ Avirgan and Honey, *War in Uganda: The Legacy of Idi Amin*, pp. 84 - 87.

¹⁸⁸ Reuters, "Serious Situation.", 12 March 1979.

¹⁸⁹ News Agency Reuter, "Visitors to Uganda Report Libyan Troops," *Globe and Mail*, 20 March 1979.

¹⁹⁰ Press Associated, "Two Amin Battalions Annihilated," *Globe and Mail*, 19 March 1979.

¹⁹¹ John Darnton, "Libya Evacuates Its Troops," *New York Times*, 8 Apr 1979 1979.

¹⁹² Press Associated, "Amin's Forces Reported to Be Fleeing," *Globe and Mail*, 5 Apr 1979.

After 10 days of occupation, most of which was spent attempting to quell the looting by local and to establish security, the combined forces moved out toward Jinja 80 kilometres to the east. Amin's forces still held Jinja and the hydroelectric power station at the Owen Falls Dam, which supplied electrical power to most of Uganda and much of Kenya. A week later Jinja was liberated followed by Tororo 205 kilometres away on the Kenyan border. The battle for the heart of Uganda was over.¹⁹³

West and Central Axes. Meanwhile heavy battles in the Western Ugandan mountains from Kasese to Fort Portal had been raging. The biggest task and most challenging difficulty faced in the Western axis was the securing of dozens of small posts on the Zairian border. Gradually however, these were achieved and the Tanzanian regulars swept through the remaining districts until every major town east of the Albert Nile had been secured. The West Nile district, Amin's home region alone remained. Expecting heavy resistance the Tanzanian forces proceeded cautiously, only to find unsurpassed support and cooperation from the local Ugandans as they cleared the last of the loyalist troops from the country.¹⁹⁴ By June 1979 the West Nile was secured and the war was over. Tanzania had spent over \$500M and lost 373 soldiers, 96 to enemy fire and the remainder to accidents.¹⁹⁵ The exiled Ugandan forces had suffered 150 casualties while the Ugandan troops had lost around 1000 and the Libyans 600. What had begun ostensibly as an operation to expel invading Ugandan troops and punish their rapine in October 1978, had some eight months and many thousands of kilometres later ended with the complete routing of the Ugandan army and the overthrow of Amin's dictatorship. The previously inexperienced Tanzanian army had transformed itself into a combat hardened, yet weary, fighting force, ready to return home yet compelled to stay in Uganda until some measure of security and stability was realised. The Tanzanian intervention was in many regards a watershed in intra-African relations and quite possibly a milestone in the development of shared values within the international community.

Reaction

Regional Reaction

As has been described briefly in the discussion concerning the OAU, African sentiment toward Tanzania's intervention was mixed – mixed between those who supported the action

¹⁹³ News Agency Reuter, "Anti-Amin Forces Move," *Globe and Mail*, 19 Apr 1979.

¹⁹⁴ News Agency Reuter, "Amin's Village Liberated," *Globe and Mail*, 4 June 1979.

¹⁹⁵ News Agency Reuter, "Mishaps Killed Most in Uganda Invasion," *Globe and Mail*, 27 July 1979.

publicly and those who did not, and mixed between those who supported it privately and those who did not. As Thomas notes at the time: “Tanzania’s action represented a violation of the norms governing behaviour in the international system. In the African context it was of great significance for the precedent it set on a continent whose geographical and ethnic divisions has hitherto rendered such a violation totally unacceptable”.¹⁹⁶ In 1979 the notion of humanitarian intervention had no universal currency and in Africa in particular territorial integrity and state sovereignty were particularly sensitive subjects. Tanzania’s intervention therefore was always going to raise suspicion and ire among fellow African states and as noted earlier, the OAU especially. The immediate regional reaction could be judged by the manner in which the front line states of Zambia, Angola, Botswana, and Mozambique accepted the outcome and quickly recognized the new Ugandan government. These were soon followed by similar recognition by Malawi, Rwanda, Gambia, Ethiopia, and Guinea, giving by and large the appearance of a fairly widespread tacit approval. However, the real forum of discussion of the conflict was to come at the next OAU summit in Monrovia in July 1979. There despite some vigorous exchanges between Tanzania, President Numiery of Sudan, Godfrey Binasisa of Uganda, and President Obasanjo of Nigeria, most states remained silent during discussions on the subject of the conflict, thus further lending a sense of tacit approval of Tanzania’s actions.¹⁹⁷ As Okoth¹⁹⁸ recounts the summit was notable for the manner in which the Tanzanian intervention was dealt with. President Numiery of Sudan, the outgoing OAU chairman surprised the delegates of the summit by opening the event with what amounted to an attack on Nyerere through an account of his failed mediation efforts between Amin and Nyerere: “Numiery said that Tanzania was not interested in mediation and that as OAU chairman he had no mandate to issue any condemnation of Amin’s invasion of Tanzania.”¹⁹⁹ President William Tolbert of Liberia the incoming chairman also expressed his opinion stating that: “Today, again, the principle of non-interference is violated as one member state engages in subversive activities against another. We should not feel secure in control of our own destinies while making efforts to destabilize the destiny of sister states.”²⁰⁰

Okoth reports that the Tanzania/Uganda conflict dominated the conference on the 18th of July when General Olusegun Obasanjo accused “Tanzania of setting a dangerous precedent

¹⁹⁶ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 109.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ P. Godfrey Okoth, "The OAU and the Uganda-Tanzania War, 1978-79," *Journal of African Studies*, Fall 1987 1987, p. 156.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

of unimaginable consequences, causing the weaker and smaller nations of Africa to feel their security threatened by their powerful neighbours whenever they had to act”.²⁰¹ Obasanjo’s case however, was almost certainly coloured more by his personal relations and possible resentment at Tanzania’s support for Biafra against Nigeria, than by sound argument – as the notion of Tanzania as a powerful and aggressive African nation was convincing to no one. The following day after Nyerere returned to Tanzania (to prepare for a royal visit by Queen Elizabeth) the new Ugandan President Godfrey Binaisa defended the Tanzanian action, detailing some of the atrocities committed during Amin’s reign and challenging the OAU for remaining silent on human rights violations in Africa. Although the OAU chairman had the remarks removed from the record, as Thomas suggests they must have accorded ill with a group of leaders most of whom were manifestly in breach of such rights in their own countries.²⁰² Eventually the Tanzanian debate was taken out of the public forum to a closed plenary session. Somewhat controversially Okoth claims that the summit represented the squaring off of those states that favoured Tanzania against those who supported Amin. He continues to propose three reasons why Egypt, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and most former French colonial states and most military regimes supported Amin’s cause. Firstly he suggests because they too had indulged in egregious abuses of human rights and so could not speak out in condemnation of Uganda. Second, because he believed that smaller states saw this incident as a dangerous precedent for larger state aggression, and third he claims because member states and their populations regarded Amin as something of a hero, representing black Africans in the struggle against a white first world.

Regardless of the validity of Okoth’s propositions, the Monrovia summit did reflect the reaction of the regional states to the intervention - and they can at best be described as mixed. Although Thomas’ conclusion that general silence indicated general tacit approval is appealing, it perhaps does not give sufficient weight to the suggestion that the silence was one more born out of an unwillingness of the states to criticize or praise due to their own poor records, rather than tacit approval. Nonetheless she is correct in identifying the presence of a sentiment that such human rights abuses should no longer remain cloaked by the nation of state sovereignty and that impetus was generated toward the development of an African peacekeeping force. Ultimately the caucus of states pressing for reform to the OAU charter

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 111.

was strengthened, so too was the acceptance within the union of the value, utility and need for an supranational institution such as the OAU to mediate affairs amongst the states.

International Reaction

If the regional response to the intervention was mixed but generally concerned, the response amongst the wider international community was generally ambivalently mixed. Neither Tanzania nor Uganda were the 'darlings' of the great powers and interest in, and concern for, affairs in East Africa were marginal at best amongst the major players. This disinterest stemmed from a few sources as discussed previously. Neither the Soviets nor the West were too concerned to push for influence in that part of Africa, although Russia had actively supported Amin's regime, as the leader's actions became more outrageous and embarrassing they (the Russians) drew back their previous close engagement and following the intervention took further measures to distance themselves to an even greater degree from his failed regime. Amin subsequently was publicly denounced by the Soviets for his truck with imperialist reactionary forces and as Thomas notes, Budapest television announced that his position had been re-evaluated as dictatorial and militaristic and not at all conducive to socialist policy²⁰³. The West had made the point of not being engaged in the region despite the Soviet presence and although they did eventually sanction trade with Uganda they were also unhappy with Nyerere's independent and at times pro-Chinese stance. Clearly of very little strategic importance to the US, Tanzania was neither praised for her action nor criticized for her intervention by the US. Reaction to the outcome however, was generally favourable in the West with both Britain and Sweden quickly supplying financial aid to Uganda and the new Lule government was recognized quickly by many foreign states as it had been by regional African states. The US resumed normal relations with Uganda and most Western states seemed supportive of and somewhat relieved with the establishment of a new less brutal and embarrassing government.²⁰⁴ However, despite relief at the outcome, praise for Tanzania was in short supply. Dismayed at the potentially dangerous precedent in violating the sacrosanct non-intervention protocol, the Western states warned that such action should be seen as an exception to the rule. As Thomas quotes from the New York Times: "What has

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 113.

²⁰⁴ New York Times, "Us Gives Cautious Welcome to Uganda's New Provisional Government," *New York Times*, 13 Apr 1979.

been done this time in a good cause, with considerable provocation, might as easily be done by others in different circumstances.”²⁰⁵

For China, who had been engaged with Tanzania to some degree, the outcome would have been a welcome triumph by proxy over the Soviets (although no direct Chinese influence in the conflict has ever been suggested). Otherwise Chinese reaction was also muted although the New China News Agency in line with Sino/Soviet tensions at the time did lay the blame for the conflict squarely at the feet of the Soviets: “Soviet social-imperialism doing its utmost to aggravate divergencies, create contradictions and even repeatedly provoke bloody conflicts among African countries.”²⁰⁶

In addition Tanzania’s intervention posed a dilemma for China in which its strategic interests in Tanzania conflicted with its doctrinal principles and its firm stance against Vietnam’s use of force in Kampuchea. China did however, recognize the new Ugandan government on 2 May and as Wheeler suggests:

it is hard to avoid the realist judgment that the divergent positions it (China) took on recognizing the new governments in Kampala and Phnom Penh reflect a blatant example of the selective application of principles. It was power politics that dictated that China condemn Vietnam for toppling a government that had committed mass murder against its citizens whilst turning a blind eye to its clients’ violation of the same rule.²⁰⁷

While the use of the term ‘client’ is too strong a phrase to convey the relation between China and Tanzania, Wheeler well makes the point that China’s reactions were superficially inconsistent but at heart an expression of its power interests in South East Asia and the relative unimportance of Tanzania to its core concerns.

Other states however, were placed in a difficult situation in as much as recognition of the Lule government would acknowledge a regime that was the direct result of the interventionary action of one state into another. Following the Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia and the installation the Heng Samrim government, states such as India had refused to recognize the new government while Vietnamese forces were still in country. Clearly the parallel was too similar for them now to recognize a regime change coming about for not too

²⁰⁵ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 113.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*, p. 124.

different reasons.²⁰⁸ In general however, most states were satisfied that an ugly and repressive regime had ended, even if the manner in which it occurred gave them cause for misgiving. At this juncture the tension between the apparent inviolability of sovereign states rights to non-intervention and the growing consensus concerning the need to intervene in cases of gross violation of human rights, was only just beginning to find expression through supranational institutions and international opinion. While the Vietnamese intervention was for most states to prove to be too closely bound to Chinese politics and great power machinations to be instructive, the far more remote and uncomplicated case in Eastern Africa was perhaps one from which the international community could learn. Although never actively justified on the basis of humanitarian necessity, clearly this intervention demonstrated something about the need for states to intervene in the affairs of odious regimes when their actions proved in Walzer's phrase to "shock the moral conscience of mankind".²⁰⁹ Although not lauded for her action in deposing Amin, Tanzania was not reviled either and quietly she won some support from other African states and some Western states. The suggestion that state sovereignty and state territorial integrity were perhaps not as inviolable as was conventionally espoused was possibly beginning as an idea to come into its time.

The UN Reaction

As the OAU provided a forum for institutional discussion of the intervention at the regional level, so did the UN provide such institutional forum for discussion at the international level. The result however, was far different. The Tanzanian-Ugandan conflict was never debated by either the General Assembly of the UN or by the Security Council.²¹⁰ In February 1979 sensing that the war was going badly for him, Amin wrote to Kurt Waldheim the Secretary General requesting that Security Council meet to immediately consider "the serious and explosive situation now prevailing on the border".²¹¹ Abdullah Bishara the President of the Security Council at the time reportedly responded that neither he nor the Secretary General considered Amin's message to constitute a properly worded request.²¹² Wheeler suggests the implication was that the Security Council did not consider Uganda to be the injured party in the conflict at the time thus they were unwilling to become involved in Amin's

²⁰⁸ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 114.

²⁰⁹ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, 3 ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 107.

²¹⁰ Rames Amer, "The United Nations's Reactions to Foreign Military Interventions," *Journal of Peace Research*, 1994 1994, p. 13.

²¹¹ Reuters, "Forces Advance from Tanzania on Uganda."

²¹² Broadcast BBC, "Amin's Call to Un," in *Middle East and Africa News* (Uganda: BBC, 1979).

misfortunes.²¹³ Amin again pressed the UN for Security Council consideration of his case some six weeks later, but this time he withdrew his request a few days later following advice from the fifty-member African Group in the UN. In fact Amin had written to Kurt Waldheim on at least five occasions according to BBC Broadcast summaries requesting UN consideration and on each occasion nothing was granted. Wheeler also notes that the Tanzanian Ambassador to the UN, Salim Ahmed Salim, played a significant role in influencing the UN through skilled diplomacy to deny Uganda a Security Council hearing and that the general sentiment amongst African representatives at the UN was that they were glad to be rid of Amin. The UN therefore played virtually no role in giving expression to international opinion on Tanzania's use of military intervention, rather the lack of discussion in this institution lent, by omission, a degree of tacit approval and assent to the action. In the absence of any debate it is difficult to determine whether Tanzania's intervention would have garnered international support as an act of self-defence or on humanitarian grounds, however, the fact that some skilful diplomacy on Tanzania's part kept the matter from official debate at least suggests that the international community was sympathetic to the Tanzanian cause and as suggested earlier that perhaps some of the previously conventional norms of the international community were beginning to be questioned.²¹⁴

Justification

In her examination of military interventions in the *Purpose of Interventions*, Finnemore makes a very sound argument for the examination of justification as a means of understanding purpose. She suggests that justification:

speaks directly to, and therefore reveals something about, normative context and shared social purpose. When states justify their interventions, they draw on and articulate shared values and expectations that other decision makers and other publics in other states hold. Justification is literally an attempt to connect one's actions with standards of justice or, perhaps more generally, with standards of appropriate and acceptable behaviour.²¹⁵

Through an investigation of the justification that states provide therefore one may begin to understand not only the reasons for the intervention, but also how the states interpreted their own actions and what reasons they believed would be most acceptable to the international

²¹³ Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*, p. 122.

²¹⁴ Pamp Oke, "Invasion of Uganda," *Globe and Mail*, 23 March 1979 1979.

community. This in turn tells one about the state of shared norms and values within the international community and how those relate to the intervention at hand.

In examining the justifications offered by Tanzania for intervening in, and eventually overthrowing, the Amin regime, it becomes obvious that the reasons offered initially – to expel and punish Amin – do not accord with the events as they ultimately unfolded and that Tanzania's actions developed more in response to the changing circumstances on the ground than according to a pre-planned program. As a consequence of being 'caught up' to some degree in the events as they unfolded, Tanzania's justification for its action amount ultimately to a case of 'special pleading' of the contravention of the general principle of non-intervention.

It was no secret that Nyerere personally detested Amin and his brutal rule, however, following the Mogadishu agreement Nyerere had shown considerable restraint in his dealings with Uganda and had, as far as it is able to be determined, no plans to oust Amin or to retaliate against Amin's public pronouncements against Tanzania. Following the invasion and despoliation of the Kagera salient, however, Nyerere chose to act forcefully and decisively to repel the invaders and to punish the incursion. The initial justification offered by Tanzania was that it was acting in self-defence to expel the Ugandan forces to behind the legitimate borders. Having achieved this objective, following a hasty but time consuming mobilization of its troops and forces, Tanzania under a blanket of some secrecy proceeded not only to expel the Ugandan forces but also to pursue them some way in to Ugandan territory.²¹⁶ Claiming a legitimate right of hot pursuit and the right to punish the transgressors, Tanzanian forces pushed deeper into Uganda. Initial Tanzanian excesses were admonished and curtailed by Nyerere, then ostensibly in order to secure his border and to protect his forces from counter attack by Uganda artillery that held the neighbouring high ground, he proceeded to route the remaining local forces loyal to Amin and to capture the Ugandan towns of Msaka and Mbarara.

The evidence suggests that it was at this point, facing the tactical military necessity to secure its borders and the surrounding high ground, and in the face of very limited organized resistance, hence with very good prospects of success, the opportunity presented itself to Tanzania to advance deep into Uganda from the South and perhaps to effect some substantial

²¹⁵ Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs About the Use of Force*, p. 15.

²¹⁶ News Agency Reuters, "Tanzanian Confirms Raid on Uganda," *Globe and Mail*, 27 January 1978.

change. With a plan subsequently devised whereby Tanzanian troops would tie up Ugandan regular forces in the south and support the Ugandan exiled forces as they swept in from the East, Nyerere committed his forces to the removal of the Amin regime. It was, it might be argued therefore at this juncture that Tanzania's justification for its actions shifted from the very sound legal bases of self-defence and limited retribution – to a far less secure rationale of supporting the overthrow of an unpopular regime.²¹⁷ Wheeler presents an interesting argument that suggests that Nyerere in fact resorted to what he calls the “two wars argument” similar to that invoked by Vietnam in its war with Cambodia. Quoting a Herald Tribune article, Wheeler cites Nyerere in a nationwide address on 27 March 1979: “ First there are Ugandans fighting to remove the fascist dictator. Then there are Tanzanians fighting to maintain national security.”²¹⁸ The ‘two wars’ argument suggests that the Tanzanian's were only supporting the exiled Ugandans in their cause and that Tanzania's efforts did not amount to an attack on Amin's regime only an attack on his offensive capability towards Tanzania.²¹⁹ Both claims were manifestly unsupportable in the fighting that subsequently took place in Uganda. Although there is ample evidence, including protests by Nyerere himself, that it was never Tanzania's intent to prosecute the conflict to the extent that eventuated, the suggestion that two wars were taking place amounted to a contradiction of poorly disguised facts and a weak attempt to justify the regime change. No matter how much Nyerere may have liked to have believed the exiled Ugandan's claims that a popular uprising was immanent, he was faced with clear evidence that this was a gross exaggeration of the exiled forces capability, and that like it or not, once committed to the fight his options were limited to increasingly supporting the exiled forces' efforts or abandoning them to probable defeat. As both Wheeler and Honey describe, the Tanzanian forces quickly realized that without sustained Tanzanian support the exiled Ugandan forces would soon falter and fail. The predicament for Nyerere was acute. He was determined to punish Amin for his invasion of the Kagera, and given the opportunity, which had eventuated, he was determined also to capitalize on the moment and rid Uganda of Amin's regime once and for all. The hoped for popular uprising would provide him with plausible rationale, and under the auspices of self-defence and support to the exiled forces, he could helpfully assist in the downfall of the brutal neighbour. Clearly however, events had proven far less serendipitous than he had hoped and now his continued intervention was looking increasingly difficult to justify on its original basis.

²¹⁷ Associated, "Amin Sues for Peace."

²¹⁸ Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society*, p. 118.

The situation was exacerbated by the intervention of around 2000 Libyan troops who were dispatched by Qaddafi to bolster Amin's fragmenting forces. The reversal of the exiled Ugandan forces at Torono on 2 March forced the Tanzanian's hand and the plan of a two pronged attack from the South and East was abandoned for a combined assault from the South. Thus destroying, as Hassan insists, "the argument that the intervention was by Ugandan exiles alone without the physical combat help of Tanzanian forces."²²⁰

As described earlier the ensuing routing of Libyan and Ugandan forces, saw the combined Tanzanian and exiled Ugandan forces capture the capital – after inadvertently allowing Amin to escape – and concluded with a full sweep of loyalist Ugandan forces from all provinces. Incrementally almost, Tanzania proceeded from limited retribution to complete regime change, thence to caretaker police and security operation during the first months of the new governments rule. Nyerere's justifications of self-defence and limited punitive action were manifestly insufficient. Yet he was faced with an insurmountable dilemma posed by his strong support for the OAU and state sovereignty, and his subsequent actions to remove an odious and unpopular regime. Nyerere was committed to a consequentialist position regarding the principle of non-intervention, in that he believed the 'the imperative of justice can be stronger than that of order, and that in such a case, absolutist rules can have grave shortcomings if they are adhered to strictly'.²²¹ This position is entirely consistent with Nyerere's political and social philosophy and grows out of his abiding respect for humanity and his love for the African people.²²² It clashes head on however, with his support for the OAU and the territorial integrity of sovereign states. In his discussion of humanitarian interventions, Wheeler argues that as a consequence of Nyerere's conflicted position, he was not able to employ an appeal to a humanitarian basis for the his actions even though clearly his concern for the welfare of Ugandans was a major factor in his decision to end the Amin regime. As Wheeler also correctly identifies this is at least partially because Nyerere was caught between his absolutist principled stance that even in the case of tyrannical rule states remain sovereign, and his consequentialist belief in the rights of those ruled. Nyerere had championed the cause of reform to the OAU charter that would prevent tyrants from hiding behind state sovereignty, but as he argued in a 28 February speech:

²¹⁹ Reuters, "Serious Situation."

²²⁰ F Hassan, *Realpolitik in International Law* (1981).

²²¹ Thomas, *New States, Sovereignty and Intervention*, p. 116.

²²² Smith, *We Must Run While They Walk: A Portrait of Africa's Julius Nyerere*.

Despite my dislike for Amin – and I really do dislike him – the Government of Tanzania has no right to enter Uganda in order to topple Amin – No other government or anyone else in the world has the right to overthrow Amin’s regime. That is the matter of principle...But Amin’s regime is a brutal one, and the people of Uganda have that right²²³.

For Nyerere the balancing act of respect for order in the form of sovereign territorial integrity and the rights of those within those territories was one that could only be judged by common sense by the majority of peer states acting in multilateral fashion. Absolute rules such as non-intervention needed rational application and should never form a shelter behind which tyrannical abuse could hide. Any notion of intervention based on humanitarian need therefore could only be sanctioned by the supranational institution of the OAU who provide legitimacy to such action and should not be the purview of unilateral state initiative.

Tanzania’s actions therefore, were in direct contravention of the OAU principles and in Nyerere’s opinion were not sustainable from a unilateral humanitarian point of view. Thus in the absence of a new OAU charter that sanctioned multilateral action in circumstances of humanitarian need, and in the absence of OAU condemnation of Uganda, Tanzania could only argue on the over-stretched notion of self-defence and the shallow two states argument. At best Nyerere could hope that the exiled Ugandan forces would prevail, that he could withdraw quickly from Uganda once Amin was ousted, and that the regional and international community would sympathetically view his actions and adopt a more consequentialist position on the matter.

Conclusion

The intervention into Uganda in the closing months of 1978 was the result of a complex set of causal and constitutive relationships that existed between the neighbouring states of Uganda and Tanzania. The causal dynamics themselves were multi-faceted and complex and reflected a range of conflictual circumstances at both the unit/domestic level of state interaction, and the systemic/structural level of international relations. At the domestic level the relationship between the states of Uganda and Tanzania was the product of a long history of both shared ideas and beliefs as well as persistent points of disagreement and conflict. Ethnic, ideological, political, and economic issues have all constituted matters of

²²³ Nyerere. *African Contemporary Record*, 11, 1978-79. p. B395.

dispute, as too have the particular identities each state has assumed within both the regional and global contexts. As a uniquely 'African socialist' leaning state, Tanzania was ideologically and politically the antithesis of the authoritarian and despotic Ugandan regime, yet there existed deep connections as well as cleavages between the various ethnic, religious, and commercial groups within the two neighbouring societies. All of these factors proved significant not only in the foreign policies of the states toward each other and the causal dynamics that shaped this intervention, but in the constitutive nature of the relationship that had developed between these states.

The particular historical context in which this intervention was set not only reflected the shared histories of each state with their common colonial experiences, but also the manner in which different ideas, beliefs, and values had uniquely shaped each state and given meaning and expression to the way in which each had evolved and developed in reaction to those circumstances. The historical contingency of the unit level experiences proved in this episode as influential as the broader sweep of global circumstance, with the intervention representing as uniquely an 'East African' intervention as much as an African 'intervention' in the depths of the Cold War.

At the global/structural level of analysis the intervention took place in the 'permissive environment' of benign great power disinterest. While state clientism and proxy conflict appeared to characterise much of the international interaction during this period, this episode of intervention displayed none of the hallmarks of great power balance of power contestation nor hegemonic aggression. Occurring as it did within international and regional normative contexts in which non-intervention and state sovereignty were deemed *a priori* superior to considerations of humanitarian concern, this intervention appears to run counter to the prevailing normative and power milieus. A 'structure only' account of this intervention therefore is inadequate to explain the 'how' and 'where' questions of this case let alone the 'why' and 'when' questions.

The conventional realist explanations appear to be insufficient accounts of the multi-leveled and multi-faceted dynamics that shaped and precipitated this intervention, failing to take account of the substantial unit level factors that are significant in this case, and in failing to acknowledge the critical role of the constitutive nature of the relations between these states. Similarly, exclusively materialist explanations fail to account for the vital role of ideas, beliefs, and values in shaping the behaviour of these states, and in creating the normative

context in which they occurred. A more substantial analysis of this case study is presented in Chapter Five where some conclusions regarding each case study individually are offered, as well as a comparative analysis of the three cases in which conclusions regarding the sufficiency of realism as a theory of international relations are proffered.