

## Root Causes of Violent Ethnic Conflicts and Prevention Measures in Rwenzori Region in Western Uganda

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

The scientific research study analyzed the different root causes of violent ethnic conflicts and preclusion measures to deter the escalation of these conflicts in Rwenzori region in Western Uganda. This research study was guided by the following objectives; to analyze root causes of ethnic conflicts and to identify preclusion measures for ethnic conflicts in Rwenzori Region. A cross sectional survey design was used to collect explanatory research opinions whereby qualitative data was collected using interviews schedules, observation checklists and documentary analysis. The sampling strategy used was purposive sampling because it helped the researcher garner vital information from essential persons who possessed relevant facts for the logical study. The target population of the study comprised of the local community, representatives from the Kingdom authorities, the Local council leaders, religious and cultural leaders of the kingdoms in the area of the study. The target population was 320 people and the sample size chosen was 89 participants which was reached at by use of a Table developed by Morgan & Krejcie (1970). Data analysis was analyzed using content and thematic analysis science. Keen attention was employed to acknowledge or minimize the effect of possible bias on the interviews and on the interpretation. The study findings revealed that violent ethnic conflicts in the region were associated with the desire for an autonomous territory, Ethnicity, Radicalism, Unequal distribution of resources, cultural differences, poor conflict management strategies and effect of rebel group insurgencies. The study concluded that it is the intolerance towards all views except one's own, and the adoption of political selfishness which disregard accepted standards of conduct, including the life, liberty and the general human rights of the populace. The academics recommended that the government of Uganda should put in place preclusion measures such as equal distribution of resources by government, establishment of employment opportunities to natives, putting in place mitigation measures for rebel group activities in the Eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo, application of effective measures of conflict resolutions such as having frequent round table meetings. The intellectuals further recommended that the government of Uganda should encourage higher educational institutions to embark on the study on the role of Science and Technology in prevention of Ethnic Conflicts in Rwenzori region.

**Keywords:** Causes, Ethnic Conflicts, Prevention Measures, Western Uganda.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic violence has been defined by different scholars as a belief in and an expression of a political identity based on race, region; blood and language affinity: the aim being to confront and eliminate opposing views, persons, groups or institutions. It is the intolerance towards all views except one's own, and the adoption of political selfishness which disregard accepted standards of conduct, including the life, liberty and the general human rights of the people (Brubaker *et al.*, 2000). Over the past 10 years, the Rwenzori region of Western Uganda (Border to Democratic Republic of

Congo) has been the site of devastating Ethnic violence. The Bakonzo believe the government favors other ethnic groups such as the Bamba (Kagoro, 2016). This resulted into the formation of an ethnic violent extremist militia group in the two districts of Bundibugyo and Kasese vying for an independent YIRA State for the Bakonzo Ethnic group and their fellow tribes men in the DR Congo. However, this extremist militia group encountered a large scale clash with the security forces which resulted into death of security forces, militia group members and civilians in July 2014 and March 2016 (Kagoro, 2016). According to Scruton (2007:236) *ethnicism* is the desire to conserve or recapture a political

identity based upon race, region, or an ethnic group membership. Fenton's research in comparison supports the idea of ethnicity being socially constructed by arguing "the social construction of descent and culture, mobilization of descent and culture and the meanings and implications of classification systems built around them" have an impact on what creates one's ethnicity (Fenton 2010, p.3). With the aforementioned definition of ethnicity in mind, ethnic conflict can be interpreted as rising tensions between two separate communities because of their separate ethnic identities. Violent ethnic conflict on the other hand, can be regarded as the escalation of these tensions into physical violence (Aiyetoro, 2018).

Conflicts based on ethnic grounds often have catastrophic results such as genocide, mass migrations, economic sufferings, and environmental damage, thus proving to be a significant threat both national and international peace. Major ethnic conflicts from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are present in Rwanda, Chechnya, Iraq, Israel, and India (Aiyetoro, 2018). The very concept '*ethnicity*' ought to be operationally defined to critically analyze *violent ethnic conflicts*. Horowitz (2000:211) perceives *ethnicity* as an end by itself; for Williams (2011:113–126) it is a means to an end; and for Coleman *et al.* (2007:56) *ethnicity* is a social construction in a conflict situation. Among the characteristics of *ethnicity* are: - social unit, a common language, and territory and belief system. Secondly, a coordinating vehicle for group mobilization in an ethnic conflict, boundary is defined by the elite's will to recruit followers, constructed by and emanates from socio-political and historical contexts (Yonas 2014). According to (Isaac 1975:120; Huntington 1996:90; Carbone 2018:69) people identify with ethnicity because they are inherently linked with people's deepest feelings, the things that stir the blood: core needs for dignity, self-esteem, and/or belonging, when one's group is threatened, cheated, or denigrated, one's own self is threatened, cheated, or denigrated (Isaac 1975:120). *Ethnicity* thus tends to generate intergroup violence, separatism, nationalist mobilization, ethnic voting, and other for Horowitz (2000:211) is of divisive behavior, with variation mainly arising when different groups are 'balanced' or constrained in some way from asserting or resisting dominance (Connor 1989:200; Apter 1997:91, Kimmel 2018:123).

The Rwenzori region is located in Western Uganda, neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo and is comprised of 9 districts (Kasese, Kabarole, Bunyangabu, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa, Kamwenge, and Kitagwenda) and the newly created Fort Portal Tourism City. The districts of Kabarole, Kasese and Bundibugyo are at the heart of the Rwenzori region, and are inhabited mainly by the Batooro, Bakonzo, the Basongora and the Bamba ethnic groups (Kimmel, 2018). The region has a long history of

violent ethnic Conflicts, revolving around two interlinked key aspects which include the struggle of minority ethnic groups against a majority, and the recognition of cultural institutions or kingdoms in the region. For instance, in Kasese District, the Bakonzo are the largest ethnic group, with the Basongora and the Banyabindi ethnic groups being the minority. The cattle-keeping Basongora were the original inhabitants of the area before the peasant Bakonzo migrated to the area, and today the former make up only 1% of the population. The Basongora and Banyabindi feel displaced by the Bakonzo and feel that their collective identity and cultural institutions have been undermined by years of oppression (Kimmel, 2018). In Bundibugyo District, the role of the Bakonzo role is reversed: they present a minority against a majority of the Bamba. Whereas in greater Kabarole, the Batooro dominate making all other tribes minority groups (Kagoro, 2016). The struggle between a minority and a majority group date from the precolonial times, when the Bakonzo, the Basongora and the Bamba all were subjects of the Tooro kingdom, situated in Fort Portal. The complexity of colonial rule accentuated the problem of tribe and tribal identity; the Bakonzo were seen as labourers; the Tooro were given more clerical work. The government decision to recognize the coronation of the King of Bamba in 2014 caused discontentment amongst the Bakonzo who have long argued that the Bamba fall under the jurisdiction of their Rwenzururu kingdom, while the Bamba and neighboring groups have repeatedly refused to recognize the Bakonzo monarchy (Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu-OBR) as their cultural leaders.

These conflicts have been recurring and deeply a destabilizing issue across the region leading to significant human suffering, economic loss, and political instability. The intricate and multifaceted nature of these conflicts poses a substantial challenge to policymakers, researchers, and international organizations seeking to prevent and mitigate their occurrence. Consequently, there is an urgent need for comprehensive research to better comprehend the root causes of ethnic conflicts, violent extremism and develop effective strategies for their prevention. The primary problem that this research aims to address is the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors that fuel ethnic conflicts and violent extremisms amongst ethnic tribes. While some studies have delved into specific instances of ethnic conflicts, a holistic analysis that examines the commonalities and differences across various conflicts remains limited. Furthermore, the field lacks a clear consensus on the most effective preventive measures, as different regions and conflicts may require tailored approaches (Connor, 1989). Through rigorous analysis, the research aims to provide policymakers, international organizations, and local communities with a clearer understanding of the genesis of ethnic conflicts and offer evidence-based recommendations on how they can be prevented in the future in the cosmos.

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

### Data capturing

A cross sectional survey design was used to collect explanatory research voices whereby qualitative data was collected using face to face interviews, telephone interviews, observation notes and document collation.

### Selection of Participants

The target population of the study comprised of the local community, representatives from the Kingdom authorities, the Local council leaders, religious and cultural leaders of the kingdoms in the area of the study. Eighty nine participants were interviewed 57 male and 32 female of 18 years and above age group. The selection of participants was based on purposive, theoretical sampling to achieve an optimal spectrum of gender, function, age and experience. All prospective participants approached agreed to take part in the research after assuring them the purpose of the research as being for academic purposes and nothing else.

### Interviews schedules

Before the interviews took place, participants were informed that confidentiality was guaranteed and that all citations would not be traceable to any individuals. With their permission the interviews were recorded and some who did not wish to be recorded, it was done so. The Interviews took place on a one on one basis and each interview lasted for not more than 20 minutes. Interviews were semi-structured using a theme list and with open ended questions. Themes were drawn focusing on the topic of study that is ethnic violent conflicts; causes, prevention measures and their perceptions and experiences related to the topic.

### Data Analysis

The analysis of the interviews was a multi-step process following grounded theory procedures and techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Coding and analysis were conducted after each interview. After a verbatim transcription of the interview, the first step was open coding. Text fragments were analyzed line by line and were provided with a code. These codes were then analyzed and sorted into categories (themes). Codes corresponding or relating to the same subject were linked to concepts. This second step is called axial coding, "making connections between a category and its subcategories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data analysis was supported by the software package Atlas.ti version 5.2. Keen attention was employed to acknowledge or minimize the effect of possible bias on the interviews and on the interpretation.

### Presentation of Findings

The findings presented here below are illustrated by citations. These citations are presented as endnotes. Each respondent is identified as a Male or Female by the letter (MRe) or (FRe) respectively, in

brackets after the citation. Concepts and categories are introduced with a definition that is derived from (grounded in) the interviews. From the Interview questions, eight distinct categories of responses were elicited by the researcher to complement on the highlighted thematic areas. These which include: *Creation of territories, Ethnicity, Sub-national fragmentation, Radicalism, Unequal distribution of resources, cultural differences, Poor conflict management processes and systems.*

### Root Causes of Violent Ethnic Conflicts

#### Autonomy Related Needs

Respondents revealed that need for creation of territory processes led to different ethnic communities in Rwenzori region demanding separate districts as they regard their representation at Parliament, District, and even sub- County as minimal. This has caused tensions in the district as it is not clear how the district will be split. One section believes that a united Kasese is good for service delivery, while another group says that by splitting the district, services will be brought nearer to the people as well as increasing the representation of women and other ethnic minorities. Taking examples of how Ntoroko district was created from Bundibugyo, there has been growing demand for creating new Buhendara district to represent minority Bakojo in Bundibugyo district. By recognizing the Rwenzururu Kingdom in 2009, however, a precedent has been set that has resulted in the proclamation of a number of other kingdoms and chiefdoms across Uganda. In the study area, this concerns the kingdoms of Busongora (founded 1 July 2012) and Banyabindi (founded 3 August 2012). Both claim a fair part of the territory of the Rwenzururu Kingdom. Media have already reported serious ethno-political and cultural tensions (Habati, 2012). Moreover, the dominance of the Bakonzo in the Obusinga bwa Rwenzururu has brewed yet another conflict: the Baamba have realized that attaining some form of kingship brings with it a basket of resources. It is therefore not surprising that they have started agitating for their own kingdom (Steinicke & Kabann I.B. Kabanankye, 2014). In a focused group discussion, participants showed their disappointment on matters concerning the formation of other chiefdoms of Busongora and Banyabindi, a 54 years old participant mentioned several disadvantages of breaking the Businga Bwa Rwenzururu Kingdom into other smaller Kingdoms

*".....this is meant to weaken our Kingdom, our kingdom was strong without being divided. We shall appear as strangers in our own land. Several other participants agreed with the old man and added that ".....this has always been the plan of the government to divide us and have our resources taken by other tribes (Basongora and Banyabindi) for example the salt mining at Lake Katwe which is now occupied by the Basongora"(MRe5). ".....them being cattle keepers (Basongora), they always send their animals*

*intentionally to feed on or crops”.*

This meant that there was no need to create new kingdoms as this may always lead to confusion and underdevelopment of regions.

### **Ethnicity**

This refers to people's claim to and feeling of a shared historical, socio-cultural, ancestral, and geo-social identity “that is formed in extrinsic/intrinsic contexts and social interaction.” Respondents pointed out that ethnicity is often breed fissures within a sub-national region where different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups compete against each other for support and/or recognition from the central state, exercise decentralized sub-national power, and have conflict over resources at sub-national levels. Ethnic identity can also incubate group coalescence and the ability to resist the central state, or the dominating ethnic group. For instance, in Uganda the Bakonzo and Bamba once resisted domination by the Batooro, which led to the eruption of the Rwenzururu Liberation Movement, the result of which was the fragmentation of Tooro district and the creation of Kasese and Bundibugyo districts, along with further demands for recognition of new cultural institutions (Doornbos, 2017).

*“... ..we have a unique identity as Bakonjo and we have to fight for it, this is reflected in our language which is well understood by us” (MRe7). ...“We are not part of Banyakitara, they even claim that our language is hard. This is enough indication that we are different from them” (MRe7). The Bamba and Babwisi try our language dialect but they cannot speak it like we do, we are different...” We can easily identify someone who is not a Mukonzo, through speaking and this is what makes our Businga Bwa Rwenzururu unique” (MRe1).*

This suggested that need to be given freedom to develop in their own uniqueness without jeopardizing the peace of their neighbours. Therefore, government of Uganda needs to listen to them and recognize fully and lawfully their kingdom for the development of their region.

### **Radicalism**

Radicalization may be described as a tool purposively used to create and/or strengthen one's resilience and/or commitment to a particular cause normally in a manner that this resilience and/or commitment assumes a hardline stance (Carbone, G., 2018). Those who accept and or find themselves radicalized gradually or instantly embrace the cause on which this radicalization anchors as a matter of great importance for which they feel morally or otherwise obliged to defend, uphold and at times propagate. Meanwhile, those outside of the radicalized group may not comprehend and/or imagine individuals and/or groups assuming a radical position on matters that seem distanced from the otherwise normal needs and interests

of the radicalized. Rwenzori region is not a stranger to the vice of radicalization. This vice has often times assumed an ethno-political direction in both historical and contemporary perspectives. Looking at 2014 for example, over 100 youths whether on their own volition and/or upon mobilization attacked military installations and personnel in Bundibugyo, Ntoroko and Kasese districts. The aforementioned youth were said to have been smeared with medicine that was meant to safeguard them against the force of bullets. After receiving amnesty from government, this group of youth, now organized under the Nuyo Youth Patriotic Association remains vulnerable and may rejoin acts of violence. This reflected in the research conducted by Kabarole Research and resource center which revealed that Rwenzori region, 50.4 per cent of people in the sub-region are afraid of police and 21.9% are afraid of people that are not from their tribe (KRC, 2018). The chairperson of the Rwenzori Nuyo Youth Patriotic Association (Rwenyope), an association of more than 500 youth who were given amnesty by the government after participating in the July 5, 2014 Killings in the Rwenzori region, Mr Vincent Bwambale, said:

*“My people refrained from any criminal act of violence and they are now participating in developmental activities for their future”.*

This implied that the people of the Rwenzori region are now more law binding and can now welcome positively any ideas brought on board by government of Uganda in terms of development. Immediately after the 2016 elections, elements of ethno-political conflicts emerged again reflected in the assumption of rare risks by sections of people in Kasese and Bundibugyo districts. These risks included civilians armed with machetes, sticks and stones attacking government armed personnel. Conflicts continue to manifest itself in many other ways in Bundibugyo, Kabarole and Kasese districts including; civilians confronting government soldiers and the police, civilians establishing military-like camps and acquiring/making weapons and tools of violence. In the month of November 2016, national security forces encountered several armed individuals and groups resulting into the unfortunate loss of lives in Kabarole and Kasese districts and several arrests.

### **Unequal Distribution of Resources**

Kasese district was carved out of Tooro district in 1974 after a protracted civil strife of the Bakonzo and Bamba who demanded for autonomy from the Tooro Kingdom after experiencing continued unequal distribution of resources especially land, schools, roads, health facilities and participation in Governance. Kasese district is a host to 7 government institutions (Mt. Rwenzori National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Mubuku Irrigation Scheme, Mubuku Farm Prison, Ibuga Government Prison, and several water bodies including Lake Edward, Lake George, and Kazinga Channel) that take up 70% of the land cover in the district. With the

increasing population standing at 694,992 people, land as a resource has become scarce thus increasing the conflicts and struggle for territorial expansion. Connected to the history of settlement, current land use and distribution also provide important sources of conflict in the Rwenzori region. The Chairperson of the Kasese Land Board thus points out that the conflict is between economic and occupational activities within the same area where there are cultivators and cattle keepers. He states that:

*“Crops and animals have never been friendly. Once animals destroy the crops of people, then conflicts do emerge. The problem is between the activities and not the people, for example, wild animals and crops, cows and maize”.*

This implied that conflicts can also be created through man's activities and therefore, government of Uganda should employ strategies to keep people at peace. With regard to cultural identity and land ownership, gazetting land for conservation purposes by the Uganda Wildlife Authority has, for a start, led to conflicts and to the loss of cultural references. New conflicts have emerged as a result of the displacement of people from their ancestral land, resistance from 'hosting' communities and conflicts between the conservation authority and communities living on the boundaries of the protected areas. It was also noted by several respondents that the demarcation of protected areas does not accommodate population growth and the consequences of relocation. In addition, conflicts have emerged in respect to restricted access to heritage sites, although there are now attempts to allow access, under specific circumstances. The research has also revealed that the expectation of valuable oil resources in the lowlands is a further source of friction, as it is accompanied by claims of ownership and demands for compensation. In addition, as the Basongora, who are predominantly nomadic pastoralist communities in the lowlands, traditionally did not mark land ownership by their permanent physical presence, some Bakonzo descended from the mountains and made claims on large tracts of their land in their absence.

### Civil and Armed Conflicts

For many years, Rwenzori region has experienced civil and armed conflicts that have resulted into loss of lives and property. Most recently was the attack on the OBR palace (2016) and the attack on government installations in 2014 where scores of lives were lost. The ADF attack of 1996 on Kasese and the neighboring districts still brings fresh memories as children were abducted and maimed and schools were burnt. Other violent armed conflicts were the NALU insurrection in 1986/89 that led to the displacement of people from the mountains and in which lives, and property were lost. The effects of these armed conflicts have had a lasting mark on the communities, and the most affected are youth who are used as instruments of

war especially girl child (rape, forced pregnancies, unwanted children, early marriages, school drop-out and HIV/AIDS infection). These vices have accelerated ethnic conflicts especially in Kasese district. One of the respondent urged that

*“.....Some of the people involved in Conflicts activities were once abductees of ADF. They had the skills and knowledge on how to use weapons, how could a lay person like me know how to use a gun? (MRe17).*

This meant that government of Uganda should continue to disarm the armed conflicts strategically without fuelling conflicts in society. Disarmed personnel may be retrained to acquire new skills for survival.

### Poor Conflict Management Processes and Systems.

There is no society whose members have relations devoid of differences. Conflicts are both theoretically and practically part of human relations that should not alarm people. In part, poor conflict management processes and systems may reduce options for dialogue and peaceful settlements. This reduction may tempt some actors to embrace violence based on the reasoning that; violence will coerce an adversarial group into listening and/or; acting as needed and/or; violence will quicken the defeat of the adversarial group. In some cases, violence may be a common factor around the trajectory of conflict settlement in the community in question. A respondent asserted that:

*“Our government through local leaders has not assisted us, whenever we air out our views, they give us a deaf ear for example, we have always complained of the provocations by the Basongora but no help. If they were intervened in an effective manner, some of these conflicts would be not heard” (FRE81).*

This suggested that some issues need round table discussions not a fight thus the government need to provide a fertile ground for discussions and rather than deployment of armed forces

### Cultural Differences

The research revealed that most often mentioned cultural differences as a source of conflict, usually tracing them back to the colonial period and the centrality of the Tooro Kingdom, with its control over several other ethnic groups, besides the Batooro (Bakonzo, Banyabindi, Basongora, Bamba, etc.). Lines of division were then clearly defined between the Batooro and these other ethnic groups. The former for instance insisted on the wide use of their language, including in schools, to the exclusion of other languages, and tended to socially exclude the other ethnic groups who accused the Batooro of mistreatment and dominance. Intermarriages between the Batooro and the other ethnic groups were not common and the former occupied decision-making posts. The youth of other ethnic groups were brought up to believe that the Batooro were mostly oppressors. This perception was, in the eyes

of many, reaffirmed when the Tooro Kingdom Constitution explicitly excluded non-Batooro from leadership positions, resulting in the Bakonzo and Bamba Walking out from Parliament and the start of the Rwenzururu rebellion, which brought together the Bakonzo, Bamba and others to 'secede' from the Kingdom.

A member urged that:

*"When King Mumbere visited Bundibugyo, he set up a shrine at his fathers home area in Kirindi, Busaru and Bwamba Counties. This made the native tribe of the Bamba to feel the Kings action of establishing a shrine and rising of the obusinga bwa Rwenzururu flag in their area tantamounting to conquering their territory and thus a reason to fight back"*.

This meant that the practice of selfishness is still the order of the day in the Rwenzori region. People have not learnt to coexist and to respect someone's right and freedom for development.

### **Propaganda and Misinformation**

Respondents highlighted Misinformation and biased information stoke fears, prejudices, and hatred, leading to violence. This can be exacerbated in environments with limited free press or where the media is used as a tool for political ends. A member recalled that *"Rumours spread in the whole of Kasese district at that time that the government will be handing over a demobilization fee to the King's (Omusinga) "royal guards" – volunteers who are loyal to the Kingdom and work on its behalf. Eventually, word spread that the payout was imminent. And as people gathered in the palace compound, on November 25, the government soldiers arrived. The entire district was put to a standstill by the rumour that the kingdom was under attack spread into the outlying sub-counties. This escalated violence and Community members started attacking some police posts and I remember over 14 police officers and 32 civilians were killed in that conflict"* (MRe70).

This implied that poor communication can always be the source of confusion in the Rwenzori region. Government and Kingdom leaders need to communicate effectively in order to observe harmony and peace in the region and in the whole of Uganda as state.

### **Mitigation Measures of Ethnic Conflicts**

The Research findings revealed that equal distribution of resources by government will prevent conflicts amongst ethnic groups in Rwenzori Region. This is evidenced by the 98% of respondents who urged government to share resources including political positions to all ethnic groups. A respondent asserted that

*"If all resources were shared equally and our sons considered in higher political positions such as*

*ministerial positions, there would be no unrest amongst citizens"* (MRe40).

This suggested that the issue of sharing the national cake equitably needs to be more implemented meticulously by the government of Uganda. Appointment to government positions must continue to be balanced as usual so as to avoid feelings of ill will in Uganda as a state. The Research has further revealed a causal relationship between unemployment and ethnic conflicts. It showed that engaging unemployed youth in income generating activities and providing employment through the government agenda of industrialization would prevent violent ethnic conflicts. As the saying goes *"an idle mind is the devils workshop"*, a youth respondent asserted that *"if you have nothing to do, you can be convinced to do anything; right or wrong as long as it shows some light of making you earn a living"* (MRe69). This is in addition to the 93% of respondents who urged government to provide employment as a prevention measure to violent ethnic conflicts in the region. This is also supported by another respondent who in his response recommended the government to provide income generating projects to the former royal guards of *"obusinga bwa Rwenzururu Kingdom"*. The respondent asserted that

*"Income generating activities Would make citizens busy and facilitate their rehabilitation process"* (MRe50).

This meant that the government of Uganda should continue to engage the population in income generating activities so that they can forget all about engaging in conflicts that are not developmental. A program like Parish Developmental Model should be strongly supported by all stakeholders in the government of Uganda. The findings further revealed that the fight against ADF and other rebel groups in Congo forest would reduce on the violent ethnic conflicts. It was revealed that some actors in the ethnic conflicts had direct or indirect support from rebel groups. The rebel operations in Kasese, Bundibugyo and some parts of Kabarole left a number of unused weapons and other materials in the jungle which when discovered by people with a wrong agenda, can facilitate violence. Influenced heavily by realist explanations, he suggests that conditions of anarchy cause insecurity, which can lead to conflict (Posen 1993, p.27). Therefore, Approaches to avoidance and prevention should include ways to eradicate rebel activities in the region. Aiyetoro 2018, suggests a combination of Wolff, Hampson and Malone's proposals in tackling escalating tensions. These include establishing peace agreements through negotiations as key component to preventing conflict from escalating into violent conflict. Wolff's proposals are the most effective in comparison to others, for he considers ways to maintain peace through leadership and institutions.

With the demarcation and gazettement of protected areas in the region, the Uganda Wildlife Authority subsequently established a revenue sharing mechanism through which 20% of the park entrance revenue is granted to communities neighboring the protected area for livelihood projects, channeled through the local government. This, in addition to capacity building and partnerships in conservation protection initiatives and in allowing selective access, was designed to diffuse conflicts between the Park authorities and the communities. Non-governmental development organizations have engaged in a variety of initiatives, including dialogues involving various stakeholders, public moderation of debates and sponsored radio programmes. Seminars to share findings on the causes of conflict and possible recommendations to address these have been held by organizations such as the Kabarole Research Centre (Kasunga meetings), the Rwenzori Peace Bridge of Reconciliation, the Rwenzori Forum for Peace and Justice and the Shalom Mediation Institute (inter-cultural dialogues). NGOs have also provided specialized trainings on alternative dispute resolution and have promoted community and school-based peace clubs.

## DISCUSSION

The study findings revealed that violent ethnic conflicts in the region were associated with the desire for an autonomous territory, Ethnicity, Radicalism, Unequal distribution of resources, cultural differences, poor conflict management strategies and effect of rebel group insurgencies. This judgement is accordance to the findings of previous scholars such as Doornbos (2017) who conducted a study on Tribalism and Development in Senegal and found out that selfishness breeds hatred and animosity, a scenario that leads to underdevelopment in a society. On the other hand, the upshot was in disagreement with the study conducted by Aiyetoro (2018) on Class struggles and Talent development who found out that one can delay some body's luck but one may not prevent it from coming on board. This is because individual freedom and observance of human rights may act as an impetus to growth and development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The academics recommended that the government of Uganda should put in place preclusion measures such as equal distribution of resources by government, establishment of employment opportunities to natives, putting in place mitigation measures for rebel group activities in the Eastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo, application of effective measures of conflict resolutions such as having frequent round table meetings. The intellectuals further recommended that the government of Uganda should encourage higher educational institutions to embark on the study on the role of Science and Technology in prevention of Ethnic Conflicts in Rwenzori region.

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## CONCLUSION

Rwenzori region is a fragile region with multi-ethnic background built on unequal resource distribution, radicalism, tension between central and local monarchs, fragile politics based on tribes and central government policy of Decentralization. All these factors breed ethnic violent conflicts in the region.

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