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KONY'S MESSAGE: A NEW *KOINE*? THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY IN NORTHERN UGANDA

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Abstract

The article offers a sketch of Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) both in historical perspective and in a wider framework of the world system. The authors discuss the different stages and content of Acholi nationhood, from vague notions in pre-colonial days, through the building of an ethno-military identity during the colonial period, until the Acholi heyday after Obote II. The second period can be described as Acholi-hood on the defensive. Initially, the campaign of resistance fought by the Acholi-dominated Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) still fits into standard conceptions of political resistance. However, social collapse eventually gave birth to Alice Lakwena's Holy Spirit Movement and finally to the LRA. Possessed of a charisma bordering on the prophetic, Kony has forged a new vision of Acholi-hood, based on individual salvation and purity. This 'biblical' vision of political redemption, at first sight an inward-looking strategy, is making this movement extremely vulnerable to outward manipulation.

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