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The Ethnic Politics of Coup Avoidance: Evidence from Zambia and Uganda

Stefan Lindemann

Abstract: Though military interventions seem endemic in sub-Saharan Africa, more than a third of all countries have been able to avoid military coups. To solve this puzzle, this article relates the likelihood of military coups to the degree of ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders, arguing that coup avoidance is most likely when government and army either exhibit the same ethnic bias or are both ethnically balanced. This argument is illustrated by a comparison of the diverging experiences of Zambia and Uganda. While Zambia is among Africa's coup-free countries, Uganda's vulnerability to military intervention has varied over time – with four coups under Obote and the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) but no coups under Amin and Museveni. Drawing on original longitudinal data on the ethnic distribution of political and military posts, the article shows that the absence of military coups in Zambia goes back to the balanced composition of government and army. In Uganda, coup avoidance under Amin and Museveni can be linked to the fact that government and army exhibited the same ethnic bias, whereas the coups against the Obote and UNLF regimes reflected either ethnic incongruence between civilian and military leaders or the destabilising combination of a similarly polarised government and army.

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Keywords: Zambia, Uganda, Coup d'etat/military insurrection, ethnic policy, relations between the military and government/party

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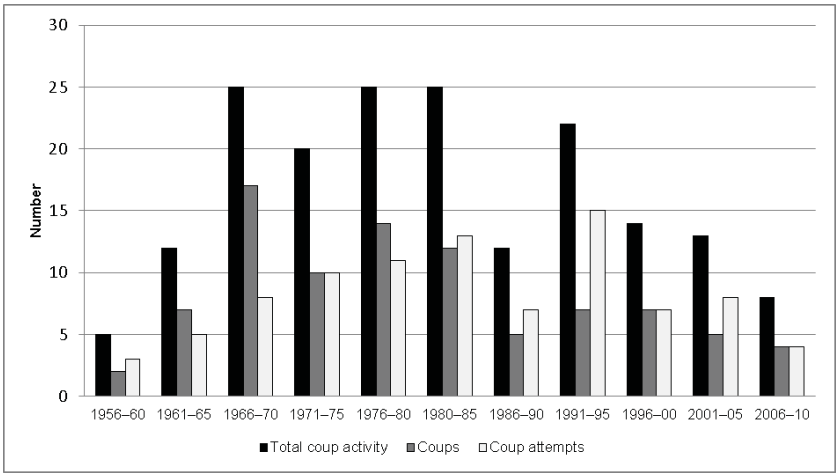
Military intervention seems endemic in sub-Saharan Africa. Powell and Thyne (2011) count a total of 90 military coups along with 91 coup attempts between 1956 and 2010.[1] Of all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, 64.6 per cent have experienced at least one coup, and 41.7 per cent have even suffered multiple coups. Out of 48 countries, 39 (81.3 per cent) have experienced either coups or coup attempts. Interestingly, military intervention has remained relatively pervasive over time (see Figure 1). Even though coup activity has declined since the mid-1990s, the military coup is clearly not a phenomenon of the past in Africa, with four coups (Mauritania, Guinea, Madagascar and Niger) and four coup attempts (Chad, Guinea-Bissau and Madagascar) since 2006 (ibid.).

Figure 1: Military Coup Activity in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1955-2010



Source: Powell and Thyne 2011.

The pervasiveness of coup activity notwithstanding, one should not overlook the fact that 17 of 48 countries (35.4 per cent) have so far avoided a military coup. These include countries as diverse as South Africa, Namibia, Mauritius, Eritrea, Cape Verde, Botswana, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Djibouti, Angola, Mozambique, Cameroon, Tanzania, Kenya, Gabon and Zambia. This is a very significant number and raises the question of why some African countries have proved immune to the seemingly inescapable "coup epidemic".

1 For similar data see McGowan 2003.

A brief look at the literature provides surprisingly few definite answers to this question. First, there is a substantial body of quantitative literature on the structural causes of military coups in Africa (Morrison et al. 1972; Jackman 1978; Johnson et al. 1984; McGowan and Johnson 1984; Jenkins and Kposowa 1990, 1992; Kposowa and Jenkins 1993). The cited risk factors include, among others, high levels of social mobilisation; an "overload" in political participation; the political centrality of the military; ethnic plurality; corrupt and authoritarian rule; widespread public discontent; and economic decline. Yet, this literature has remained largely inconclusive, not least because scholars have lacked data on factors relating to intra-military politics and have therefore relied on broad and indirect proxies. Beyond the quantitative literature, there is a huge case study literature, which has focused on the bureaucratic and professional attributes of the military, macrosocietal conditions, boundary relations between military and society, and regional and global factors (see Luckham 1994 for a review). Unfortunately, however, this literature has also failed to produce a body of commonly established knowledge on the causes of military coups (ibid.; McGowan 2003). Moreover, it has – just like the quantitative literature – focused on African countries that have experienced military coups, while neglecting those that have remained coup-free. The only exception is the still-pioneering work by Goldsworthy (1981) and Decalo (1989), who argued that coup avoidance can be achieved through a number of specific techniques including, among others, ascriptive recruitment, political indoctrination, co-optation of army personnel, the creation of paramilitary counterweights and the use of a foreign patron. On the downside, Goldsworthy and Decalo merely enumerated potentially relevant factors that have not been systematically taken up and tested ever since – neither for Africa's coup-free countries, nor for its coup-prone ones.

This article does not fully resolve the puzzle of varying coup risks across sub-Saharan Africa. Instead, it seeks to advance our understanding of African military coups[2] by focusing on one particular explanatory factor that

2 Military coups are defined as "overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting head of state using unconstitutional means. […] A coup attempt is defined as successful if the coup perpetrators seize and hold power for at least seven days" (Powell and Thyne 2011: 252). I acknowledge that using military coups as the dependent variable (DV) is today sometimes considered problematic since the military can exercise considerable influence in politics without resorting to the extreme case of overt military takeover. Yet, while this problem has led some to castigate the "fallacy of coup-ism" (Croissant et al. 2010), the focus on coups remains defensible for a number of reasons. First, there is a clear qualitative difference between the situation of military influence in politics and the extreme event of a full military takeover – a break in continuum that merits special

has so far received insufficient attention – namely, *ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders*. I argue here that coup avoidance is most likely when government and army either exhibit the same ethnic bias or are both ethnically balanced. To illustrate this argument, the article compares the diverging experiences of Zambia and Uganda. While Zambia is among Africa's coup-free countries, Uganda's vulnerability to military intervention has varied over time – with four coups under Obote and the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) but no coups under Amin and Museveni. Drawing on original longitudinal data on the ethnic distribution of political and military posts, this article shows that the absence of military coups in Zambia goes back to the balanced composition of government and army. In Uganda, coup avoidance under Amin and Museveni can be linked to the fact that government and army exhibited the same ethnic bias, whereas the coups against the Obote and UNLF regimes reflected either ethnic incongruence between civilian and military leaders or the destabilising combination of a similarly polarised government and army.

The article is organised as follows. I first lay out my theoretical argument and discuss methodology. Second, I establish the varying degrees of ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders in Zambia and Uganda and trace this congruence's link with the observed differences in coup occurrence. Afterwards, I go on to consider a number of competing explanations. The conclusion summarises the argument and outlines avenues for future research.

The Ethnic Politics of Coup Avoidance

The link between ethnicity[3] and African military coups is a long-standing theme in the literature. The main reason for this is that ethnic cleavages are generally known to provide leaders with a particularly effective basis for organising collective action (e.g. Bates 1983; Fearon 2006; Habyarimana, Humphreys, Posner and Weinstein 2007), especially if they coincide with political and economic inequalities (Stewart 2008; Cederman et al. 2010).

In the quantitative literature, there are essentially three competing arguments. The "ethnic plurality" argument holds that the greater the number

attention (Goldsworthy 1981: 52). Second, as discussed above, the African military coup remains a topical phenomenon, which is still poorly understood and thus requires further research. Finally, alternative DVs such as military influence, civil–military friction or military compliance involve considerable operationalisation problems (Feaver 1999: 218ff.).

3 Following the Weberian tradition, I define ethnicity as a subjectively felt sense of belonging based on the belief in shared culture and common ancestry (Weber 1985: 237).

of ethnic groups, the greater the ethnic tensions and risk of military coups. While Morrison and Stevenson (1972) and Jenkins and Kposowa (1990, 1992, Kposowa and Jenkins 1993) found evidence for such a proposition, Jackman (1978) comes to the opposite conclusion. The "ethnic dominance" argument, by contrast, suggests that the existence of a dominant ethnic group provokes conflicts and, through them, coups. This expectation finds support in Jackman (1978) and Johnson et al. (1984), whereas Jenkins and Kposowa (1990, 1992, Kposowa and Jenkins 1993) provide evidence to the contrary. The "ethnic competition" thesis, finally, submits that the likelihood of military coups is greater in countries where the two largest ethnic groups are roughly similar in size – an argument that seems to find some empirical support (Jenkins and Kposowa 1990, 1992, Kposowa and Jenkins 1993). Altogether, however, the cited findings are not only mostly inconclusive but also problematic in that they are based on rather dubious proxies. Lacking the necessary data to explore tensions within the military, scholars have had to rely on macrolevel indices that describe a country's ethnic demography. Yet, such indices tell us nothing about the actual ethnic power constellation. To give an example, there is *a priori* no reason to believe that the mere existence of multiple ethnic groups will favour ethnic tensions and military intervention. Instead, everything arguably depends on how members of these competing ethnic groups are represented not only in the military but also in the civilian sphere.

This point has long been recognised in the qualitative literature on African coups. Accordingly, many scholars have pointed to the destabilising effects of ethnic imbalances in the army (Cox 1976; Enloe 1980; Kirk-Greene 1980; Welch 1986; Omara-Otunnu 1987). Others have preferred to focus on the ethnic match of the civilian and military leadership, arguing that civil–military boundaries are inherently porous whereby "civilian and military ethnic politics must be viewed in tandem" (Horowitz 1985: 459). Here, it is suggested that ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders – that is, a military command dominated by individuals who have close ethnic ties with the civilian leadership – enhances the loyalty of the army and thereby prevents military coups (ibid.: 534f.; Goldsworthy 1981: 57f.; Decalo 1989: 561). While the overall thrust of the "ethnic matching" argument seems plausible, there has been little systematic thought about whether all constellations of ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders favour coup avoidance. Similarly, the literature has paid little attention to the question of whether all constellations of ethnic *in*congruence are equally prone to military intervention.

In light of these shortcomings, this article tries to think more systematically about how ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders

affects the likelihood of military coups. Figure 2 includes a nine-field matrix that relates the ethnic composition of government to the ethnic composition of the army. I propose that the ethnic composition of these two institutions can be captured in three broad ideal types:

- A "biased" composition exists when members of a particular ethnic group monopolise key appointments.
- A "polarised" composition describes a situation where key appointments are divided between representatives of two contending ethnic groups.
- A "balanced" composition means that there is no clearly discernible ethnic bias in the distribution of key appointments.

If one combines these ideal types, this leads to different constellations of ethnic (in)congruence between civilian and military leaders (see Figure 2). As laid out below, I argue that situations of ethnic congruence are not all prone to coup avoidance. While coup risks can be expected to be low if government and army exhibit the same ethnic bias or are both balanced in composition, they should be high in case both government and army are ethnically polarised. Situations of ethnic incongruence, by contrast, tend to involve high coup risks, yet not equally so.

There are three possible constellations of ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders (see Figure 2). One constellation is when government and army are both ethnically balanced in composition. Such a constellation is expected to be associated with very low risks of military intervention. On one hand, military leaders will show little inclination to engage in coup activity not only because members of all ethnic groups feel represented in the army but also because the government is equally broad-based in composition, an aspect that bestows civilian leaders with high legitimacy and enhances the loyalty of the army. On the other hand, military leaders will also lack the ability to intervene, as members of competing ethnic groups in the officer corps keep an eye on each other – a situation that helps deter and detect conspiracies. A second constellation of ethnic congruence is when government and army are biased in favour of members of the same ethnic group. This constellation is also expected to be associated with low coup risks. First, the ethnic kinship between the civilian and military leadership is likely to enhance the loyalty of the army. Second, members of other ethnic groups lack access to strategic positions not only in the army but also in government, which constrains their ability to organise a coup. A third constellation of ethnic congruence is when both government and army exhibit the same polarised composition. This constellation is expected to be associated with high risks of military intervention since civilian leaders of the

two competing groups are likely to forge alliances with their ethnic kin in the army, which leads to considerable insecurity on both sides. As the military becomes the key battleground to play out struggles over the state, a coup becomes very likely – either a power-seeking coup by those with less control over the executive or a preventive coup by their opponents.

Figure 2: Ethnic Congruence between Civilian and Military Leaders and the Likelihood of Military Coups

		Ethnic composition of the army		
		Biased	Polarised	Balanced
Ethnic composition of the government	Biased	Low*	High**	Medium
	Polarised	High***	High****	Medium
	Balanced	Medium	Medium	Low

* High if the bias in government and the army is not in favour of the same ethnic group

** High if the dominant ethnic group in government is not also one of the two dominant groups in the army

*** High if the dominant ethnic group in the army is not also one of the two dominant groups in government

**** High if government and army are not polarised between the same groups

Source: Author's compilation.

Constellations of ethnic incongruence tend to increase coup risks, albeit to different degrees (see Figure 2). Constellations that involve either a balanced government or a balanced army should be associated with medium coup risks "only". The combination of a balanced government and a biased army will favour coups in that members of a particular group enjoy unrestrained control over the means of coercion and are thus tempted to advance their

interests through a military takeover. Yet, coup risks are medium only since broad-based governments typically enjoy high legitimacy, which makes it more difficult to justify a military coup. Also, army leaders may have difficulties finding civilian allies since their ethnic kin are represented in government. The combination of a balanced government and a polarised army is conducive to coups in that the coexistence of two strong ethnic factions in the army will create destabilising jealousies and insecurity on both sides. Yet, coup risks should again be lowered by the inclusive nature of government and the difficulty in finding civilian allies. The combination of a biased or polarised government and a balanced army should favour coups in that partisan governments suffer from low legitimacy. Moreover, members of ethnic groups that are excluded from government will try to align with their ethnic brethren in the army to reverse their political marginalisation. Nevertheless, coup risks are medium only since the inclination and ability of military leaders to intervene will be constrained by the fact that members of all groups feel represented in the army and watch one another.

The remaining constellations of ethnic incongruence can all be expected to involve high coup risks. Coup risks are expected to be high if government and army are both biased, but not in favour of the same ethnic group. In this case, members of the group that monopolises the army are likely to use their unrestrained military power to reverse their political exclusion. The combination of a polarised government and a biased army will also be vulnerable to coups since members of the dominant group in the army are likely to join forces with their ethnic kin in government to gain full control over the state.[4] The combination of a biased government and a polarised army should be conducive to coups in that members of the ethnic group that is represented in the army but marginalised in government will try to use their position in the military to undo their exclusion from political power.[5] Finally, coup risks are also high if government and army are both polarised, yet in favour of different groups. Here, members of the two dominant groups in the army will join forces to end their political marginalisation.

To explore these propositions, I compare the experiences of two African countries: Zambia and Uganda. It bears emphasis that this small-N

4 Coup risks are also high if the group that monopolises the army is not also one of the two dominant groups in government since group members are likely to use the army to reverse their exclusion from political power.

5 Coup risks are also high if the dominant group in government is not also one of the two dominant groups in the army since members of the two groups that are well-represented in the army but marginalised in government will try to use their position in the military to undo their political exclusion.

comparison does not allow for a rigorous test of my theoretical framework. This would require a large-N study, which is not feasible at this stage due to a lack of suitable large-N data on the ethnic composition of African militaries and the impossibility of collecting such data within the limited scope of this article. Still, by allowing a close examination of two cases, the small-N analysis provides a useful "plausibility probe" that shows whether the different assumptions resonate with causal processes within actual cases. Hence, the case-based comparison advances the central objective of this article – furthering a more nuanced theory of how ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders affects the likelihood of military coups.

Table 1: Coup Activity in Zambia and Uganda, 1962–2010

Zambia		Uganda	
Coups	**Coup attempts**	**Coups**	**Coup attempts**
None	16.10.1980	22.02.1966	12.07.1971
	30.06.1990	25.01.1971	23.03.1974
	28.10.1997	11.05.1980	11.11.1974
		27.07.1985	16.02.1975
			August 1975
			10.06.1976
			July 1976
			18.06.1977
			07.04.1988

Source: McGowan 2003; Powell and Thyne 2011.

The selection of the Zambia and Uganda cases follows the "diverse cases method", which has the distinct advantage of enhancing the representativeness of the selected cases (Gerring 2007: 97ff.). Zambia and Uganda are "diverse cases" in that they exhibit significant variation in coup occurrence (see Table 1). Zambia is one of sub-Saharan Africa's coup-free countries; though it has been through three coup attempts. Uganda, by contrast, is among the area's most coup-prone countries, having experienced four military takeovers and eight additional coup attempts. At the same time, the Uganda case exhibits puzzling within-case variation, which makes it particularly suitable for the purposes of this article. Whereas the Obote and UNLF governments lost power in military coups, the Amin and Museveni regimes were able to avoid military intervention.[6]

6 The Amin regime was of course itself a military regime.

The Zambia and Uganda case studies are based on original longitudinal data on the ethnic composition of government and army, which were put together during fieldwork in 2008 and 2009. To collect the data, I first tried to compile lists of all ministers, deputy ministers and army officers in those two countries since their independence. While this was no problem for ministers and deputies, data on army leaders were only available for selected years. Afterwards, I identified the ethnic affiliation of every individual, relying on help from many Ugandans and Zambians. My dataset is complemented by insights from interviews with a great variety of stakeholders.

The Ethnic Politics of Coup Avoidance in Zambia and Uganda

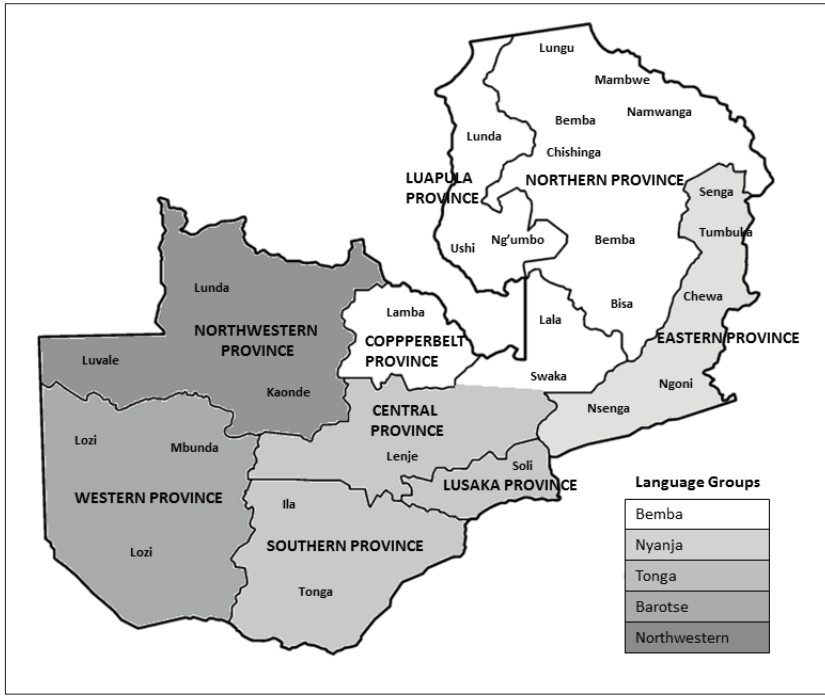
In this section I argue that variation in coup occurrence in Zambia and Uganda can be traced back to varying degrees of ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders. In Zambia, the absence of military coups goes back to the balanced composition of both government and army. In Uganda, coup avoidance under Amin and Museveni can be linked to the fact that government and army exhibited the same ethnic bias, whereas the coups against Obote and the UNLF reflected either ethnic incongruence between civilian and military leaders or the destabilising combination of a similarly polarised government and army.

Ethnic Congruence and Coup Avoidance in Zambia

Zambia is characterised by considerable ethnic and linguistic diversity (see Map 1). In pre-colonial times, a few ethnic groups such as the Bemba or Lozi were organised in centralised kingdoms, while most lived in decentralised societies (Roberts 1976: 80ff.). Colonial rule, starting in the 1890s, did little to promote national integration. To ensure efficient taxation, the British ruled "indirectly" through chiefs, creating a system that greatly strengthened ethnic identities (Posner 2005: 26ff.). Moreover, missionary activity, colonial education policies and labour migration favoured the progressive emergence of five language groups: Bemba, Nyanja, Tonga, Barotse and Northwestern.[7] As a result, national conflicts were henceforth mainly seen in linguistic terms, while local interactions continued to be ethnically framed.

7 As indicated in Map 1, the broader language groups are roughly composed of smaller ethnic groups that share the same language, which makes them *ethno-linguistic* groups.

Map 1: Ethnic and Linguistic Cleavages in Zambia



Source: Author's compilation

After independence in 1964, the country's first president, Kenneth Kaunda, and his United National Independence Party (UNIP) set out to forge an inclusive "elite bargain" (Lindemann 2011a). "One Zambia, One Nation" being the overarching motto, Kaunda relied on a practice called "ethnic balancing", whereby public appointments were to be distributed equitably between representatives of contending groups. This favoured ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders, evident in the balanced composition of government and army.

The governmental appointments reflected the country's linguistic diversity. As shown in Table A1 (see Appendix), this was true for both the multiparty regime of the First Republic (1964–72) and even more so for the one-party state of the Second Republic (1972–91). Also, and this is especially significant, the largely proportional balance in government was achieved not only for "ministers" and "deputies" but also for the more consequential positions at the "inner core" of political power. In the early 1990s, the UNIP under public pressure reintroduced a multi-party regime and subse-

quently lost power to the trade union-led Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD). Yet, the advent of the Third Republic (1991–present) did not put an end to "ethnic balancing" in government. Instead, the MMD presidents, Frederick Chiluba (1991–2001) and Levy Mwanawasa (2001–08), continued to make a UNIP-style attempt to forge an inclusive elite bargain. Accordingly, the MMD governments always retained a broadly national outlook (see Table A1).

The broad-based nature of Zambia's post-colonial governments was mirrored in the army. The current Zambian Defence Forces (ZDF) grew out of the Northern Rhodesia Regiment, which the British colonialists created in 1933 (Phiri 2002: 3). The Northern Rhodesia Regiment recruited members of ethnic groups from all parts of the country, in particular the Bemba and Bisa in the North, the Tonga in the South, the Nsenga, Chewa, Ngoni and Tumbuka in the East, the Lozi in the West, and the Lunda, Luchazi, Luvale and Kaonde in the Northwest (Haantobolo 2008: 92ff.). As a result, the UNIP government inherited a non-sectarian army, with no single group being in a position to dominate. After independence, President Kaunda tried to reinforce the national character of the army by applying his principle of "ethnic balancing". At the level of the "rank-and-file", a newly introduced quota system prescribed that army units were to be composed of soldiers from all provinces and districts – a system that ensured that the whole country had a stake in the army.[8] Also, trained soldiers were purposefully posted outside their home areas to further ensure the national integration of the armed forces. At the leadership level, appointments and promotions were also deliberately balanced. Even though detailed information on the composition of the entire officer corps was not available, a close look at the linguistic affiliation of Zambian army commanders during the Second Republic reveals that members of all five major language groups were represented at the very top of the military hierarchy (see Table 2). This did not change after the democratic transition of 1991. According to Mbita Chitala, a member of the Defence Council under President Chiluba, ethnic balancing was continued at all levels of the army to ensure "that the whole country is represented".[9] Such a claim is supported by the fact that members of all language groups – except Barotse speakers – continued to have access to top command positions in the ZDF during the Third Republic.

8 Interview, Gen Malimba Masheke, Lusaka, 7 August 2008.
9 Interview, Mbita Chitala, Lusaka, 29 July 2008.

Table 2: Distribution of Army Commanders among Language Groups, 1976–2008

	SECOND REPUBLIC	
	Unified command structure (1976)	
	Zambia National Defence Force	
	Gen G. K. Chinkuli (Tonga)	
	Lt Gen P. D. Zuze (Nyanja)	
	Lt Gen B. N. Mibenge (Bemba)	
	De-unified command structure (1980)	
Air Force	*Army*	*National Service*
Maj Gen C. Kabwe (Bemba)	Gen M. N. Masheke (Barotse)	Brig Gen C. J. Nyirenda (Nyanja)
Lt Gen A. Lungu (Nyanja)	Lt Gen C. S. Tembo (Nyanja)	Brig Gen F. S. Mulenga (Bemba)
Maj Gen Simbule (Bemba)	Lt Gen G. M. Kalenge (Northwestern)	Maj Gen T. Fara (Nyanja)
Lt Gen Simutowe (Bemba)	Lt Gen F. G. Sibamba (Barotse)	
	THIRD REPUBLIC	
Air Force	*Army*	*National Service*
Lt Gen R. Shikapwasha (Tonga)	Gen N. M. Simbeye (Bemba)	Lt Gen W. G. Funjika (Northwestern)
Lt Gen S. Kayumba (Northwestern)	Lt Gen S. L. Mumbi (Nyanja)	Maj Gen M. Mbao (Nyanja)
Lt Gen Ch. Singogo (Bemba)	Lt Gen G. R. Musengule (Bemba)	
Lt Gen S. Mapala (Nyanja)	Lt Gen I. Chisuzi (Tonga)	Maj Gen R. Chisheta (Bemba)

Source: Author's own data compiled based on Wele 1995: 158; Interview, Gen Malimba Masheke, Lusaka, 7 August 2008; Interview, Dr Geofroy Haantolobo, Lusaka, 31 July 2008.

As hypothesised, the combination of a balanced government and army undermined the prospects of military intervention. On the one hand, Zambia's military leadership had little inclination to engage in coup activity. First, as members of all groups felt represented in the ZDF officer corps, there was no serious ethnic discontent that could have become the basis of subversive action. This is an aspect that political and military stakeholders repeatedly mentioned in interviews. Interestingly, Peter Matoka, one of Kaunda's longest-standing ministers, suggested that the absence of ethnic grievances in the army was not only due to persistent "ethnic balancing" but also went back to the fact that the first army commander, Gen Kingsley Chinkuli, belonged to the small Lenje ethnic group – a constellation that from the beginning prevented potentially destabilising patterns of ethnic dominance:

> If we had started with someone from a big tribe like the Bemba, maybe the tribal disease would have grown. But we started with a brilliant young man from a small tribe.[10]

Moreover, the inclination to intervene was further undermined by the broad-based nature of Zambia's post-colonial governments. Even though this link is more difficult to establish, it seems plausible to argue that the ethnically balanced ZDF leadership maintained a high sense of loyalty to equally balanced governments. In fact, the broad-based military leadership was always part and parcel of the country's inclusive elite bargains, which endowed subsequent governments with high legitimacy and made military intervention difficult to justify.

On the other hand, Zambia's military leaders also had only limited *ability* to engage in coup activity. The broad-based nature of the ZDF officer corps meant that members of competing ethnic groups always kept an eye on each other, which made it extremely difficult to organise a serious military conspiracy without being detected and contained. Gen Malimba Masheke, army commander under Kaunda, identified this mechanism as the main driver behind the absence of military takeovers in Zambia.[11] Similarly, political analyst Neo Simutanyi argued that

> the army has been unable to wage a successful coup because whenever the idea has been advanced, other [ethnic] groups have refused to go along with it.[12]

On the whole, the similarly inclusive composition of government and army left little room for ethnically based military intervention. This can be shown

10 Interview, Peter Matoka, Lusaka, 16 July 2008.
11 Interview, Malimba Masheke, Lusaka, 16 July 2008.
12 Interview, Neo Simutanyi, Lusaka, 22 September 2008.

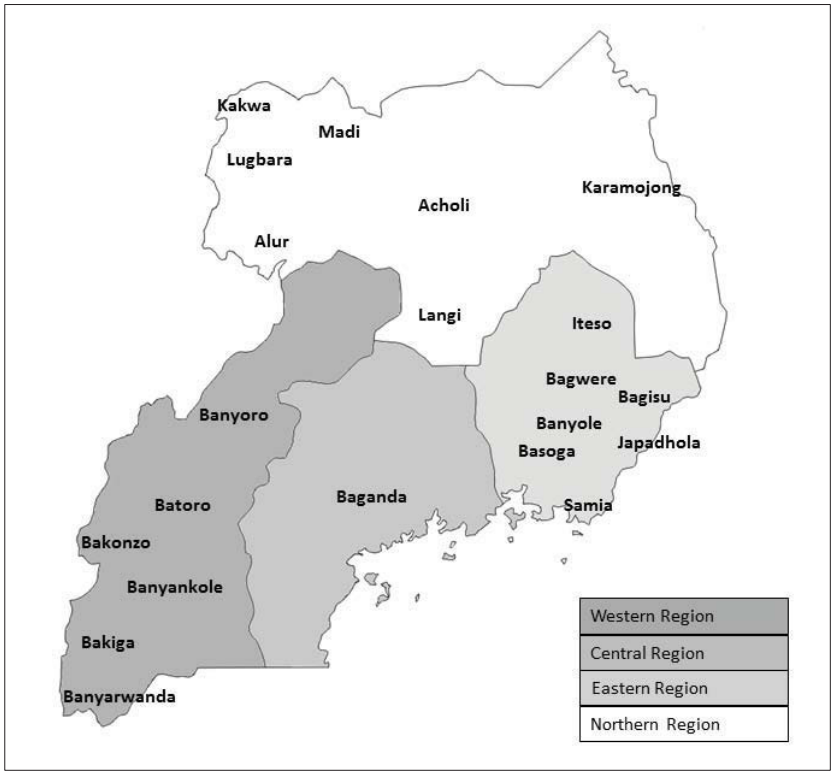
when briefly looking at the three coup attempts in Zambian history (see Table 1). The coup attempt on 16 October 1980 arose in the context of Zambia's escalating economic crisis from the late 1970s and mainly involved influential businessmen who were alienated by the UNIP's economic policies and therefore established contacts with a few disgruntled army officers (Larmer 2008: 114ff.). Even though the majority of the conspirators belonged to the Bemba-speaking bloc, the broad-based character of government and army stood in the way of ethnically based mobilisation. As a result, the mutineers failed to build substantial support in the civilian and military hierarchy and were arrested after a brief gun battle. A second coup attempt occurred on 30 June 1990, when Lt Mwamba Luchembe and a few followers took control of the national radio for several hours and announced that the army had taken over (Legum 1996: B676). This coup attempt followed prolonged economic decline and food riots, which is why it received some spontaneous public support. Yet, the conspiracy again lacked an ethnic base, which hampered the prospects of mobilisation. Accordingly, the protagonists of the coup were junior officers who were isolated in the officer corps and therefore easily contained (Phiri 2002: 12). The last coup attempt took place on 28 October 1997, when Captain Lungu (alias "Captain Solo") and a few comrades managed to gain control of Radio Zambia, claiming that they had assumed political power on behalf of the National Redemption Council, the alleged political wing of the army (ibid.). This coup attempt appears to have been carried out by UNIP loyalists who were put off not only by their own dismissal from the army but also by a law that required presidential candidates to have Zambian parents, thus preventing former President Kaunda from opposing Chiluba in the 1996 elections (Haantobolo 2008: 203). Even though Nyanja speakers from Eastern Province – the only remaining UNIP stronghold in the country – seem to have been prominently represented among the plotters, the broad-based character of the Chiluba administration again made ethnic mobilisation difficult. Tellingly, the conspiracy again originated among relatively junior officers who enjoyed only minimal support in the higher ranks and were quickly arrested by loyalist forces.

Ethnic Congruence and Coup Avoidance in Uganda

Uganda exhibits great ethnic diversity (see Map 2). In pre-colonial times, members of these different groupings lived under varied political structures, ranging from the stratified kingdoms in the Southwest (most notably the Buganda kingdom) to the non-stratified societies of the Northeast (Kasozi 1994: 17ff.). British rule from the 1890s heightened pre-existing differences. First, the colonial state ruled indirectly through chiefs who headed native

administrations that were organised along ethnic lines (Mamdani 1996). Second, the British created marked economic disparities between ethnic groups. While development opportunities were concentrated in the South (Kasozi 1994: 48ff.), the North served as a labour reserve and recruitment ground for the army (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 28ff.). The Baganda, the largest ethnic group, were especially privileged, which created widespread anti-Baganda sentiment. All this entrenched ethnicity as a social cleavage.

Map 2: Ethnic Cleavages in Uganda



Source: Author's compilation.

After independence in 1962, Uganda became embroiled in a seemingly endless cycle of mostly ethnically based political competition and violence, which reflected the political leadership's failure to forge and maintain inclusive elite bargains (Lindemann 2010). In terms of civil–military relations, the country came to experience a great variety of ethnic constellations, some of

which paved the way for a military takeover, while others facilitated coup avoidance.

The first post-independence regime led by Prime Minister Milton Obote was initially characterised by attempts to form an ethnically balanced government (see Appendix, Table A2), which was built around the alliance between Obote's Uganda Peoples Congress (UPC) and the Kabaka Yekka (KY), a party representing the powerful Buganda kingdom. By contrast, and in line with colonial imbalances, the army was dominated by members of ethnic groups from northern Uganda, with the Langi (Obote's group) and the Acholi in the forefront (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 48ff.). While this seems to indicate a certain ethnic mismatch between civilian and military leaders, the early post-colonial years witnessed a destabilising constellation of ethnic congruence, manifest in the mounting polarisation of both government and army. In the civilian sphere, there were two opposing factions: While a "centre faction" (led by Obote) championed the interests of the "disadvantaged" Northeast, a "conservative faction" (led by Grace Ibingira) served as an advocate for the interests of the "privileged" Southwest (Mutibwa 1992: 33). After the breakup of the UPC–KY alliance in mid-1964, the Baganda monarchists – led by the Buganda king (Kabaka), who at the same time served as Uganda's ceremonial president – joined forces with the "conservatives", which threatened Obote's hold on power. The army underwent a similar polarisation. While the "conservatives" turned to Army Commander Opolot, who had family ties with the Kabaka, Obote relied on officers from northern Uganda – in particular on Opolot's deputy, Idi Amin. In mid-1965, Obote consolidated his power over the army by taking direct control over the Ministry of Defence. The Kabaka – as president still titular commander-in-chief – and Opolot reacted by recruiting a secret army and shifting officers and units loyal to Obote to the periphery (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 74). As both government and army were riddled by ethnic polarisation, a coup became – as hypothesised – almost inevitable. Things came to a head on 4 February 1966, when the "conservatives" tried to unseat Obote and other Northern leaders by launching a parliamentary inquiry into the alleged receipt of gold and ivory from Congolese rebels (Jorgenson 1981: 229). This led to Obote's preventive coup on 22 February 1966, when the prime minister had the core of the "conservation" faction arrested and took over all powers of government. Subsequently, Obote abrogated the 1962 Independence Constitution and ordered the army to attack the Kabaka's palace.

After the 1966 crisis, Obote relied on an ethnically balanced government that no longer suffered from the extreme factionalism which had characterised the early post-independence period. By contrast, his army re-

mained deeply polarised, albeit now along intra-northern lines. In the officer corps, key positions were held by the Langi, Acholi and Iteso, whereas the military police command was dominated by West Nilers (Lugbara, Alur, Madi and Kakwa) (see Appendix, Table A3). The coexistence of strong Acholi–Langi and West Nile factions in the army soon created jealousies and insecurity on both sides, which translated into tensions between Obote and the new army commander, Idi Amin, himself a Kakwa from West Nile (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 78ff.). Amin tried to bolster his position by mainly recruiting in West Nile, while Obote stuffed the Special Forces and the General Service Unit with his ethnic brethren from Lango (Hansen 1977: 88). In late 1970, Obote tried to contain the West Nile faction by demoting Idi Amin and his closest associates (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 89ff.). Yet, Amin and his followers proved strong enough to counterstrike and – while Obote was out of the country – took power in the military coup of 25 January 1971. In the end, and as expected, the combination of a balanced government and a polarised army proved conducive to military intervention. Interestingly, the seemingly broad-based nature of Obote's government was no serious obstacle to the coup. This was arguably because the legitimacy of the UPC government had been tarnished by the bloody conflict with the Buganda kingdom and the subsequent failure to accommodate the monarchists who openly welcomed Amin's coup.

Amin's military regime (1971–79) exhibited a striking ethno-religious bias: While the army was initially dominated by members of all West Nile groups, Amin soon began to ensure that strategic posts were in the hands of trusted Muslim officers, particularly Kakwa and Nubians (Hansen 1977). Moreover, he appointed many foreigners to key positions, especially from Sudan. By 1977, 60 per cent of the 22 top army officers belonged to the Kakwa–Nubian–Sudanese axis, and 80 per cent were Muslim (at a time when only 5 per cent of the population were Muslim) (Legum 1979: B442). This ethno-religious imbalance was mirrored in government (see Table A2). In 1977 and 1979, West Nilers (mostly Kakwa), Nubians and Sudanese together provided 75 and 78.2 per cent of the "inner core" of political power, respectively, and 87.5 and 88.9 per cent of positions in the "inner core" were held by Muslims. As predicted, the same ethnic bias in government and army helped prevent military coups. Of course, even Amin's minority regime suffered from considerable ethnic divisions, evident in recurrent tensions between Kakwa and Nubians on the one hand, and other West Nilers – especially Lugbara – on the other (Hansen 1977). Nevertheless, both government and army were more "biased" than "polarised" since key appointments were always heavily concentrated in the hands of the "Nubian–Kakwa" core group. This arguably explains why strategic units in the army

always remained loyal to the regime and were able to defeat the many coup attempts between 1971 and 1979 (see Table 1 above). Even though little is known about most of these failed coups, it seems safe to say that most of them originated among disgruntled Lugbara officers who were progressively purged from the army (Martin 1974: 238f.; Legum 1974: B293ff.). The most prominent example in this respect was the coup attempt on 23 March 1974 (Legum 1975: B310). Other coup attempts can be attributed to relatively isolated Baganda or Busoga elements in the Air Force who perceived the escalating bias in favour of the "Nubian–Kakwa" core group as a threat to their own position (ibid.: B311; Legum 1979: B440).

The Amin regime was followed by the UNLF, which was designed as an inclusive umbrella but instead witnessed severe factionalism (Legum 1981a: B347ff.). The first two UNLF governments were led by Presidents Yusuf Lule and Godfrey Binaisa (both Baganda) and came to exhibit a marked Baganda bias, especially in the "inner core" (see Table A2). By contrast, the Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) was deeply polarised between the Acholi- and Langi-dominated pro-Obote forces and Yoweri Museveni's Front for National Salvation (FRONASA) from Ankole-Kigezi in western Uganda – the only two groups with significant military muscle that had shouldered the anti-Amin war alongside the Tanzanian army (Legum 1981a: B361f.; Jorgenson 1981: 335). This constellation of extreme ethnic incongruence between civilian and military leaders proved unsustainable. Lule was removed mainly because of his well-meant plans for ethnically balanced recruitment into the army, which would have entailed a high intake of Baganda and hence threatened the interests of the pro-Obote and pro-Museveni factions (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 146). Lule's successor Binaisa precipitated his own downfall by first removing Museveni from the Ministry of Defence and then sacking the army chief of staff, Oyite-Ojok, a Langi and key Obote loyalist (Avirgan and Honey 1982: 210). This prompted the coup of 11 May 1980 when members of the Military Commission took control (Legum 1981b: B359ff.).

The 1980 coup marked the victory of the pro-Obote forces, which was sealed by the controversial elections of December 1980. The second Obote regime (1980–85) was again characterised by a relatively balanced government (see Table A2). Yet, the army continued to be deeply polarised, this time between Acholi and Langi contingents that respectively comprised, according to Obote's own estimates, approximately 60 and 20 per cent of the armed forces (Legum 1987: B478). When the respected Oyite-Ojok died in a plane crash in 1983, Obote chose to replace him with Lt Col Smith Opon Acak (another Langi) – a decision that alienated more senior Acholi officers (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 160f.). These ethnic tensions soon infiltrated

the civilian sphere whereby Obote and his Langi officers were increasingly opposed by an Acholi faction led by Prime Minister Otema Alimadi, Army Commander Tito Okello and Brig Bazillio Okello. The Acholi perception that Obote was trying to eliminate them ultimately led to the military coup of the two Okellos on 27 July 1985.

In January 1986, Museveni and his National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) took power. While the NRM pledged to end decades of ethnically based exclusion and violence, this promise was at best partially fulfilled (Lindemann 2011b). In government, members of ethnic groups from western and central Uganda have remained heavily overrepresented since 1986, especially the Banyankole (Museveni's group)[13] and the Baganda (see Table A2). The numerical prominence of the Baganda notwithstanding, there is a widespread feeling that the positions of real power and influence have always been controlled by the Banyankole and a few other Westerners. In the words of a prominent opposition MP, himself a Muganda:

> The feeling is that they include you, they make you vice-president or prime minister, but you only do what you have been told. And you can always be shuttled out. People can trace ministers from the West who have been in the government from the beginning to the end. But you cannot say that for anybody from Buganda.[14]

The ethnic composition of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) (as the NRA was later renamed) has been even more unbalanced (ibid.; see also Tripp 2010: 51ff.). During the guerrilla war, the NRA came to be dominated by Banyankole commanders (mostly from the Bahima subgroup), while the rank-and-file was dominated by Baganda foot soldiers. This unequal division of labour in the military has persisted since 1986. Complaints about the entrenchment of "Banyankole hegemony" in the army surfaced in the late 1980s (Legum 1990: B446f.). By the mid-1990s, discontent within the army was rising due to the fact that Westerners – and in particular the Bahima – were not only still monopolising the army command but also benefitting from rapid promotions, largely at the expense of Baganda officers (Legum 2002: B448). This is still the case at the time of writing. Since 1986, five out of six army commanders have been from western Uganda, four from Ankole and three from Museveni's Bahima subgroup. Similarly, all officers appointed to the rank of full general since 1986 have been Bahima. In 2007, Banyankole officers still dominated the 23 UPDF top command and, albeit to a lesser extent, the top five UPDF ranks (see Table A3). While the Ba-

13 Museveni is a Munyankole from the Bahima subgroup.

14 Interview, John Baptist Kawanga, Kampala, 26 November 2008.

ganda were also overrepresented, they held none of the seven top strategic positions in the UPDF command, which were all in the hands of Banyankole or other Westerners. Altogether, the Museveni regime has therefore remained characterised by the same ethnic bias in government and army. As expected, this ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders has facilitated coup avoidance, with only one coup attempt since 1986 (see Table 1).[15] First, and most importantly, the basic fact that key leadership positions in post-1986 Uganda have continued to be dominated by Museveni and his core group from Ankole-Kigezi has greatly enhanced the loyalty of the army.[16] Second, as members of other ethnic groups have lacked access to strategic positions not only in the army but also in government, their ability to organise a coup has been severely constrained.

Competing Explanations

Ethnic factors are unlikely to be the sole determinant of differences in coup occurrence in Zambia and Uganda. In what follows, I therefore briefly consider three influential competing explanations, including arguments focusing on paramilitary counterweights, political indoctrination, and payoffs. I show that each of these arguments have at best partial explanatory power.

Paramilitary Counterweights

Paramilitary forces, which are separately recruited, equipped, trained and directed, help to break the regular armed forces' monopoly over the means of coercion and thereby provide civilian leaders with a loyal counterweight, especially if stuffed with family members or co-ethnics. As such, paramilitary forces have often been identified as an important tool to help avoid military intervention in Africa (First 1970; Goldsworthy 1981; Decalo 1989; Frazer 1995).

In Zambia, paramilitary forces played an important role during one-party rule when the Kaunda regime relied on the highly centralised Department of Military Intelligence, which operated undercover from the Ministry of Defence and managed to place its agents at all levels of the army (Haantobolo 2008: 175ff.).[17] The systematic collection of information on army

15 Unfortunately, little is known about the coup attempt of 7 April 1988.

16 Interview, Maj Gen Mugisha Muntu, former NRA commander, Kampala, 9 December 2008.

17 A second paramilitary force was the Zambia National Service (ZNS), which was created in 1971 (Haantobolo 2008: 146ff.). It involved all Zambians between 18 and 35 who were provided with military training and then became members of the

personnel was made possible by the creation of "defence and security committees" at the national, provincial and district levels, which helped to detect and contain subversive activities. In October 1980, military intelligence played a key role in the uncovering of the coup attempt (ibid.: 184). Yet, after the MMD took over in 1991, military intelligence – perceived to be a UNIP stronghold – suffered an abrupt reduction in experienced personnel and funds, which seriously undermined its capabilities and efficacy (ibid.: 203). Afterwards, military intervention was avoided despite the absence of a strong paramilitary force. This suggests that the "paramilitary counterweights" argument has only limited explanatory power in the Zambian context.

In Uganda, paramilitary forces have played a key role under all postcolonial regimes. Amin relied on a variety of paramilitary forces, including the State Research Department, the Public Safety Unit, the military police and the presidential bodyguard (Kyemba 1977: 111ff.). These forces were all dominated by Kakwa, Nubians and foreigners and were held responsible for the survival of the military regime. Museveni has even created about 30 different security outfits, which are regarded as a key factor in the stability of his regime (*The Independent* [Uganda], 6 December 2009). These mostly informal organisations typically report directly to the president and are packed with his "villagemates, relatives, and tribesmen" (ibid.). The most prominent and privileged paramilitary organisation are the Special Forces that recently grew out of the Presidential Guard Brigade (PGB) and are headed by Museveni's son, Lt Col Muhoozi Kainerugaba. Yet, while the prominence of paramilitary forces under the coup-free Amin and Museveni regimes seems to support the relevance of the "counterweights argument", the latter is undermined by the fact that the coup-prone Obote regimes also heavily relied on paramilitary groups. As mentioned above, Obote in vain tried to prevent Amin's coup by shifting resources and competences to the Special Forces and the General Service Unit (GSU) (Hansen 1977: 88). Similarly, the creation of two well-equipped paramilitary forces during the early 1980s, namely the Special Police Force and the National Security Agency (NASA), could not prevent the 1985 coup (Omara-Otunnu 1987: 161).

Political Indoctrination

The political indoctrination of military leaders enhances their ideological identification with the regime and thus lowers coup risks. This aspect was especially emphasised in the literature on "revolutionary armies", i.e. mili-

so-called "Home Guard". Yet, it seems doubtful that this reserve army was really able to function as an effective counterweight to the regular armed forces.

taries under strong party control (Perlmutter 1977; see also Herspring and Volgyes 1978; Pachter 1982). Concrete measures may include political education seminars or the introduction of party structures and personnel into the army.

In Zambia, the army was subjected to deliberate political indoctrination, albeit only under one-party rule, which means that political indoctrination can hardly be regarded as a decisive factor behind the enduring absence of military coups. While political interference into the army was minimal during the First Republic, this changed with the introduction of the one-party state in 1972 when UNIP organs commonly referred to as "works committees" were introduced into the barracks (Phiri 2002: 7f.). Moreover, all ranks had to participate in political education seminars where party policy was explained and loyalty to the one-party state was promoted (Legum 1976: B384). After the MMD took over in 1991, the new leadership held the view that the military should be politically neutral and professional (Phiri 2002: 12). As a consequence, party structures and political education in the army were quickly abolished.

In Uganda, the pre-1986 regimes all put little emphasis on the political indoctrination of the military. While the army was made a key player in Ugandan politics soon after independence (see above), the Obote I government seems to have undertaken few systematic efforts to secure its political loyalty. Obote's son, Jimmy Akena, claims that his father planned – like Nyerere in Tanzania – to build a new army that was to be recruited among UPC party cadres.[18] Yet, this plan even proved counterproductive in that it alienated the Amin faction and hence contributed to the 1971 coup. A similar dynamic seems to have taken place during the 1980s, when Obote began to recruit a group of officers from within the party – a move that threatened the existing military hierarchy, in particular the dominant Acholi faction, and thus added to the 1985 coup.[19] After Museveni took over, the political indoctrination of the army became a key concern. In fact, political indoctrination had already begun during the days of the anti-Obote guerrilla war when the NRA established an elaborate system of political education, built around political commissars at all levels of the rebel force (Kasfir 2005; Weinstein 2007). This system remains in place until today and may have helped to bolster the UPDF's political loyalty since 1986.

18 Interview, Jimmy Akena, Kampala, 5 December 2008.
19 Interview, Sallie Simba Kayunga, Makerere University, 3 December 2008.

Payoffs

Providing army leaders with generous payoffs is one of the most obvious strategies to secure the loyalty of the military since material satisfaction can be expected to yield low propensities toward military intervention (Goldsworthy 1981; Decalo 1989; Feaver 1999).[20] Payoffs can be either direct or indirect in nature. Direct payoffs may include high salaries and various other material privileges. Indirect payoffs may result from the co-optation of army personnel into government, the civil service or the parastatals.

In Zambia, the Kaunda regime provided military leaders with generous payoffs. As for direct payoffs, the ZDF benefitted from growing defence budgets from the 1970s, which mainly reflected regional threats to national security. Figures 3a and 3b show that the defence budget as share of GDP and the defence budget per soldier increased dramatically during the 1970s and remained high throughout the 1980s.[21] As this growing military expenditure was no longer made public from 1970 onwards, the military leadership gained considerable discretion in the distribution of financial resources as well as control over personnel policy and defence planning. Also, the army was from the beginning granted further material privileges, including free access to meali meal (the country's staple food) and subsidised prices for other foodstuffs and beer. As for indirect payoffs, the Second Republic witnessed a progressive "militarisation" of the civilian sphere whereby high-ranking army leaders were offered lucrative positions at all levels of government. This began as early as 1973, when Kaunda nominated the three heads of the armed services to parliament and appointed all three of them ministers of state (Legum 1974: B333). Such a strategy of co-optation was maintained throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with many current or former army officers being appointed to the cabinet, the UNIP Central Committee or as district governors.[22] The former army commander, Gen Masheke (Interview, Lusaka, 7 August 2008), who was himself appointed prime minister during the 1980s, argued that the practice of co-optation helped to convince the military leadership "that to arrive into a higher office, you do not need to take up arms".

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20 Others suggest that the higher the "political centrality of the military", i.e. the stronger its resources, the greater the likelihood of interventions (Jenkins and Kposowa 1992).

21 I acknowledge that these are poor proxies for direct payoffs. However, data on salaries or the defence budget as share of the total budget were not available.

22 Prominent ministers with military backgrounds under Kaunda included, among others, Maj Gen Chinkuli, Gen Masheke, Lt Gen Mibenge, Brig Gen Haimbe and Lt Gen Lungu.

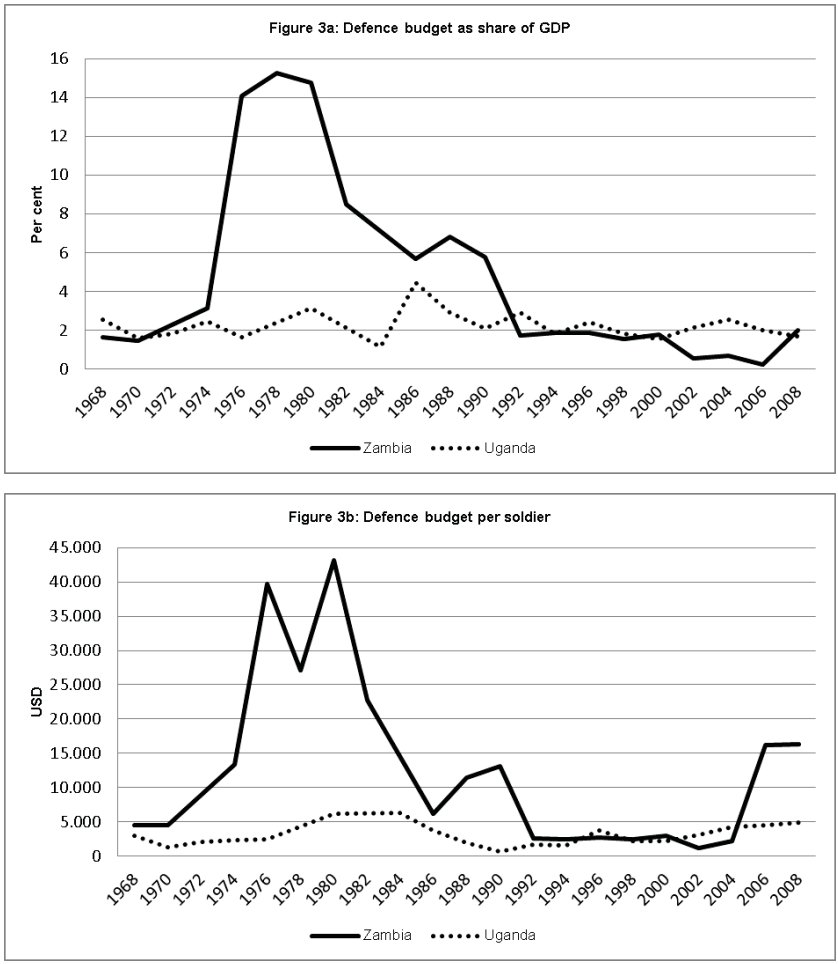
The explanatory power of the "payoff argument" is, however, undermined by the extreme decline in defence budgets after the MMD took over in 1991 (see Figures 3a and 3b). If direct payoffs are key to securing the loyalty of the army, why did the sharp decrease in budget allocations from the 1990s not lead to a military coup?[23] One – tentative – answer could be that the military leadership has been kept comfortable through "new" forms of patronage. Under Chiluba, high-ranking army officers were heavily implicated in lucrative corruption scandals, evidenced by the fact that many of them were subsequently prosecuted and convicted (*Saturday Star*, 10 March 2004; *Agence France Presse*, 30 December 2006; *Times of Zambia*, 3 March 2009). Mwanawasa kept the army busy by sending large numbers of military officers to participate in peacekeeping missions. By 2008, the country was involved in a total of nine such missions worldwide whereby the number of Zambian well-paid observers has grown from 8 in 1994 to 108 in 2008 (IISS Various Years). Moreover, while all military officers who had been appointed to civilian positions under Kaunda were either retired or retrenched after 1991, the MMD regimes never fully abandoned the UNIP's strategy of appointing military personnel to high political office. Accordingly, two out of three vice-presidents under Chiluba were of military background, including Brig Miyanda and Lt Gen Tembo. Even under Mwanawasa, former military officers like Lt Gen Shikapwasha (minister of Home Affairs) or Brig Gen Chituwo (minister of Health) occupied key cabinet positions, while many others were given lucrative posts as ambassadors.

In Uganda, direct payoffs have for the most part been much lower than in Zambia (see Figures 3a and 3b). While this may seem to support the "payoff argument", the data provide no evidence that direct payoffs were generally higher under the coup-free regimes. In line with this, a look at the existing literature shows that all post-colonial regimes are reported to have provided the army with extremely generous access to state patronage, including Obote I and II (Omara-Otunnu 1987), Amin (Martin 1974; Kyemba 1977) and Museveni (Tangri and Mwenda 2003). Moreover, there is no convincing evidence that any of the four military coups were linked to material grievances among military leaders. While Lofchie (1972) famously claimed that the 1971 coup was a response to declining military privileges from the late 1960s, in particular in the context of Obote's "Move to the Left", these socialist proposals were hardly implemented and the army continued to be well-served until the coup (Chick 1972; Gershenberg 1972). Finally, there is

23 As mentioned above, personnel and budget cuts in the army, especially in military intelligence, seem to have contributed to the 1997 coup attempt (Haantobolo 2008: 203). Yet, the fact that the conspiracy was led by relatively isolated junior officers suggests that the discontent in the army was rather limited.

also little evidence that variation in the provision of more indirect payoffs can help to account for differences in coup occurrence. Instead, the political co-option of army personnel into civilian office took place under both coup-free and coup-prone regimes, including those of Amin, the UNLF (Jorgenson 1981), Obote II (Omara-Otunnu 1987), and Museveni (Carbone 2008).

Figure 3: Defence Budget Allocations in Zambia and Uganda, 1968–2008



Source: IISS Various years

Conclusion

Why have some sub-Saharan African countries proved immune to the seemingly inescapable "coup epidemic"? To solve this puzzle, this article has focused on the understudied aspect of ethnic congruence between civilian and military leaders. It was suggested that coup avoidance is most likely when government and army either exhibit the same ethnic bias or are both ethnically balanced. The presented case study evidence from Zambia and Uganda clearly supports this argument. In Zambia, the absence of military coups can be traced back to the balanced composition of both government and army. In Uganda, coup avoidance under Amin and Museveni can be linked to the same ethnic bias in government and army, while the coups against the Obote and UNLF regimes reflected either ethnic incongruence between civilian and military leaders or the destabilising combination of a similarly polarised government and army. Competing explanations have, for the two examined cases, at best partial explanatory power. Even though paramilitary counterweights, political indoctrination and payoffs seem to have mattered at times, none of these alternative explanations can – unlike my "ethnic congruence" argument – fully account for the observed differences in coup occurrence in Zambia and Uganda.

Future research will show whether my argument also holds for a larger number of cases. The key challenge is clearly the collection of large-N data on the ethnic composition of militaries. While there is now better data on the ethnic composition of government (Cederman et al. 2010), we still know relatively little about ethnic power relations within militaries. This is hardly surprising since – due to the sensitive nature of the matter – I had great difficulties even collecting data on the composition of the two armies discussed in this article. Moreover, a look at the literature shows that there is also little reliable large-N data on many other aspects of military politics, including defence budgets, salaries, paramilitary forces, monitoring mechanisms, command reshuffles, etc. Without better data, the puzzle of varying propensities toward military coups is likely to remain unresolved.

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Ethnopolitik und die Vermeidung von Militärputschen: Sambia und Uganda im Vergleich

Zusammenfassung: Politische Interventionen von Militärs scheinen im subsaharischen Afrika allgegenwärtig zu sein. In mehr als einem Drittel der afrikanischen Staaten kam es jedoch bislang nicht zu einem Militärputsch. Der Autor dieses Beitrags vermutet eine Verbindung zwischen dem Grad ethnischer Kongruenz in der zivilen und der militärischen Führung eines Staates und der Wahrscheinlichkeit von Militärinterventionen; er argumentiert, dass ein Putsch immer dann vermieden werden kann, wenn Regierung und militärische Führung entweder von der gleichen ethnischen Gruppe dominiert werden oder wenn beide ethnisch ausgewogen zusammengesetzt sind. Dieser Erklärungsansatz wird an einer vergleichenden Fallstudie zu Sambia und Uganda empirisch überprüft. Während es in Sambia bislang keinen Militärputsch gab, war Uganda im Zeitverlauf unterschiedlich stark anfällig für politische Interventionen des Militärs – es kam zu insgesamt vier Militärputschen gegen Obote und die Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF), nicht aber gegen Amin und Museveni. Auf der Grundlage umfangreicher Primärdaten zur ethnischen Verteilung von Staatsämtern und hohen militärischen Funktionen führt der Autor das Ausbleiben von Militärputschen in Sambia auf die ethnisch ausgewogene Zusammensetzung von Regierung und Militär zurück. Im Fall von Uganda erklärt er das Ausbleiben erfolgreicher Putsche unter Amin und Museveni vor allem dadurch, dass die Schaltstellen politischer und militärischer Macht jeweils von Mitgliedern derselben ethnischen Gruppe dominiert waren. Demgegenüber führt der Autor die Militärputsche gegen Obote und die UNLF entweder auf die Inkongruenz der ethnischen Balance innerhalb der jeweiligen politischen und militärischen Elite zurück oder auf die destabilisierende Kombination einer ethnisch ähnlich stark polarisierten Zusammensetzung von Regierung und Armee.

Schlagwörter: Sambia, Uganda, Staatsstreich/Militärputsch, Ethnopolitik, Verhältnis Militär – Regierung/Parteien

Appendix

Table A1: Distribution of Government Positions among Language Groups, 1964–2008 (%)

Language Group	Population (2000)	Category#	Kaunda (1st Republic)	Kaunda (2nd Republic)	Chiluba (3rd Republic)	Mwanawasa (3rd Republic)
			1964-1972 average	1974-1990 average	1992-1998 average	2002-2008 average
Bemba	41.7	Cabinet	31.1	40.9	40.0	43.7
		Deputies	39.7	31.9	49.1	44.9
		Inner core	33.3	41.9	45.8	38.2
Nyanja	23.8	Cabinet	19.0	17.8	13.0	10.7
		Deputies	19.2	18.6	8.6	18.2
		Inner core	22.6	23.1	14.5	4.5
Tonga	13.9	Cabinet	18.3	15.1	16.9	19.9
		Deputies	11.6	23.2	23.6	7.3
		Inner core	18.1	14.7	16.5	35.7

Table A1 (continued):

Language Group	Population (2000)	Category#	Kaunda (1st Republic)	Kaunda (2nd Republic)	Chiluba (3rd Republic)	Mwanawasa (3rd Republic)
			1964-1972 average	1974-1990 average	1992-1998 average	2002-2008 average
Northwes-tern	7.7	Cabinet	9.8	12.1	8.0	14.9
		Deputies	11.5	12.4	7.4	16.1
		Inner core	6.5	4.3	8.2	9.3
Barotse	6.9	Cabinet	18.5	13.1	14.1	8.6
		Deputies	10.7	13.9	8.2	12.9
		Inner core	15.6	13.7	4.4	9.8
Other	6.0	Cabinet	3.3	1.0	8.1	2.3
		Deputies	7.3	0.0	3.0	0.7
		Inner core	3.8	2.3	10.6	2.5
Total	100.0	Cabinet	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
		Deputies	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
		Inner core	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Appointments are broken down into three different categories. “Cabinet” includes the president, vice-president (prime minister after 1972) and all ministers, whereas “Deputies” includes all deputy ministers. “Inner core” is defined as comprising the president and who my interviewees considered his key ministers at the time.

Source: Author’s own data compiled and calculated based on CSO 2003; GOZ Various Years. Data for 1988 and 2000 was not available.

Table A2: Distribution of Government Positions among Ethnic Groups, 1962–2008

Ethnic group	Population (1959)	Category#	Obote I	Amin	Uganda National Liberation Front			Obote II	Museveni
			1962-1970 average	1971-1979 average	Lule	Binaisa	Muwanga	1981-1985 average	1986-2008 average
Ethnic groups associated with Western Region									
Banyankole	8.1	Cabinet	8.2	2.7	20.0	14.3	18.9	7.1	18.2
		Deputies	13.6					15.8	14.0
		Inner core	12.9	0.0	12.5	11.1	14.3	11.1	25.8
Bakiga	7.1	Cabinet	6.1	6.7	5.0	3.6	5.4	7.1	9.1
		Deputies	0.0					0.0	2.8
		Inner core	2.5	2.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.5
Banyarwanda	5.9	Cabinet	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
		Deputies	0.0					5.3	2.1
		Inner core	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9
Batoro	3.2	Cabinet	6.1	3.3	0.0	3.6	2.7	0.0	4.0
		Deputies	7.6					5.3	4.9
		Inner core	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.6
Banyoro	2.9	Cabinet	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7	3.6	4.3
		Deputies	4.3					5.3	4.9
		Inner core	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5
Bakonzo	1.7	Cabinet	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Deputies	6.6					5.3	0.0
		Inner core	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	2.7	Cabinet	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.1
		Deputies	0.0					0.0	3.5
		Inner core	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.1

Table A2 (continued):

Ethnic group	Population (1959)	Category#	Obote I	Amin	Uganda National Liberation Front			Obote II	Museveni
			1962-1970 average	1971-1979 average	Lule	Binaisa	Muwanga	1981-1985 average	1986-2008 average
Ethnic groups associated with Eastern Region									
Iteso	8.1	Cabinet	4.0	6.7	10.0	10.7	5.4	3.6	3.6
		Deputies	9.9					21.1	4.3
		Inner core	8.7	5.1	0.0	11.1	14.3	11.1	0.8
Basoga	7.8	Cabinet	6.1	9.0	10.0	7.1	10.8	7.1	6.8
		Deputies	4.3					5.3	7.4
		Inner core	8.7	5.1	12.5	22.2	14.3	11.1	6.9
Bagisu	5.1	Cabinet	2.1	3.1	5.0	3.6	2.7	7.1	3.5
		Deputies	4.3					0.0	3.3
		Inner core	0.0	7.3	12.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.9
Bagwere	1.7	Cabinet	4.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3
		Deputies	1.1					0.0	3.4
		Inner core	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Japadhola	1.6	Cabinet	2.1	3.1	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	0.3
		Deputies	1.1					5.3	0.7
		Inner core	4.2	7.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	5.3	Cabinet	2.1	1.8	0.0	3.6	5.4	10.7	0.5
		Deputies	6.3					0.0	3.1
		Inner core	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.1	0.0

Table A2 (continued):

Ethnic group	Population (1959)	Category#	Obote I	Amin	Uganda National Liberation Front			Obote II	Museveni
			1962-1970 average	1971-1979 average	Lule	Binaisa	Muwanga	1981-1985 average	1986-2008 average
Ethnic groups associated with Northern Region									
Langi	5.6	Cabinet	12.2	2.2	0.0	3.6	5.4	10.7	1.8
		Deputies	0.0					10.5	2.9
		Inner core	17.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	11.1	0.0
Acholi	4.4	Cabinet	5.8	5.3	15.0	10.7	13.5	10.7	1.4
		Deputies	4.5					5.3	7.6
		Inner core	0.0	0.0	12.5	11.1	21.4	11.1	0.9
Lugbara	3.7	Cabinet	0.0	10.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	2.6
		Deputies	6.0					5.3	2.4
		Inner core	0.0	9.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Karama-jong	2.0	Cabinet	2.1	4.0	0.0	0.0	2.7	3.6	0.0
		Deputies	2.8					5.3	3.6
		Inner core	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Alur	1.9	Cabinet	0.0	3.8	0.0	3.6	2.7	0.0	0.0
		Deputies	3.8					5.3	1.7
		Inner core	0.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Madi	1.2	Cabinet	4.8	5.5	0.0	0.0	2.7	3.6	3.0
		Deputies	1.1					0.0	2.9
		Inner core	10.1	11.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0
Other	1.4	Cabinet	0.0	9.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.5
		Deputies	0.0					0.0	0.4
		Inner core	0.0	21.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table A2 (continued):

Ethnic group	Population (1959)	Category#	Obote I	Amin	Uganda National Liberation Front			Obote II	Museveni
			1962-1970 average	1971-1979 average	Lule	Binaisa	Muwanga	19811985 average	1986-2008 average
Ethnic groups associated with Central Region									
Baganda	16.3	Cabinet	29.4	14.9	35.0	35.7	16.2	17.9	33.4
		Deputies	22.6					0.0	24.2
		Inner core	17.8	21.2	50.0	44.4	21.4	33.3	32.0
Other	0.4	Cabinet	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		Deputies	0.0					0.0	0.0
		Inner core	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other									
Non-Ugandans	1.9	Cabinet	1.3	5.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0
		Deputies	0.0					0.0	0.0
		Inner core	2.9	6.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	Cabinet	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
		Deputies	100.0					100.0	100.0
		Inner core	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Appointments are broken down into three different categories. “Cabinet” includes the prime minister, president (after 1966), vice-president, and all ministers, whereas “Deputies” includes all deputy ministers. “Inner core” is defined as comprising the prime minister or president (after 1966) and who my interviewees considered his key ministers at the time.

Source: Author’s own data compiled and calculated based on EASD 1960: 1; GOZ Various Years; Jorgensen 1981: 280f., 338f.; UBOS 2006: 44.

Table A3: Distribution of Key Positions in the Army under Obote I and Museveni (%)

Ethnic group	Population (2002)	Army command (1966)[a]	Military Police command (1969)[a]	Top 23 UPDF command (2007)[b]	Top five army ranks (2007)[b]
Ethnic groups associated with Central Region					
Baganda	17.7	9.4	0.0	26.1	28.0
Other	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ethnic groups associated with Western Region					
Banyankole	10.0	4.1	5.6	43.5	28.0
Bakiga	7.2	1.2	2.8	8.7	6.7
Banyarwanda	3.3	0.6	2.8	0.0	0.0
Banyoro	2.9	1.2	0.0	4.3	2.7
Batoro	2.6	1.2	0.0	4.3	2.7
Bakonzo	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ethnic groups associated with Eastern Region					
Basoga	8.9	14.0	5.6	0.0	1.3
Iteso	6.7	5.8	2.8	4.3	4.0
Bagisu	4.8	3.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bagwere	1.8	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Japadhola	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7
Other	4.7	4.1	2.8	0.0	0.0
Ethnic groups associated with Northern Region					
Langi	6.4	13.5	8.3	0.0	0.0
Acholi	4.9	15.2	13.9	8.7	13.3
Lugbara	4.4	8.8	25.0	0.0	1.3
Alur	2.3	0.0	2.8	0.0	1.3
Madi	1.3	5.3	13.9	0.0	2.7
Karamajong	1.1	4.7	5.6	0.0	4.0
Other	2.0	5.8	8.3	0.0	1.3
Total	100.0	100.2	100.2	100.0	100.0

Source: a Compiled and calculated based on Omara-Otunnu 1987: 80.
b Author's own data compiled and calculated based on UBOS 2006: 44; GOU 2008.