The clash of institutions: traditional authority, conflict and the failure of 'hybridity' in Buganda

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Tom Goodfellow[a]* and Stefan Lindemann[b]

[a]*Department of International Development, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK;* [b]*GIGA Institute of African Affairs, Neuer Jungfernstieg 21, D-20354 Hamburg, Germany*

In the context of the widespread 'resurgence' of traditional authorities in Africa, increasing attention has been devoted to the manner in which the institutions of the state combine with those of non-state authorities. While much of the debate has been focused on the implications for democracy, this paper addresses the relationship between traditional resurgence and violent conflict. An analytical framework that distinguishes between 'institutional hybridity' and different forms of 'institutional multiplicity' is presented. This is then explored through a case study of the Buganda Kingdom in Uganda, where institutional disputes over land and decentralisation can be linked to the violence between state forces and Kingdom supporters that erupted in 2009. The analysis underscores the importance of careful institutional analysis in cases of traditional resurgence in order to mitigate violent conflict outcomes.

Keywords: traditional authorities; institutional hybridity and multiplicity; violent conflict; Uganda; decentralisation; land

Introduction

During the 1990s and 2000s, in many parts of the African continent there was a widespread 'resurgence' of traditional authorities. The consequent efforts to combine 'traditional' institutions with 'modern' state institutions have attracted considerable attention.[1] It has been argued that many African societies are 'adept at integrating seemingly incompatible institutional structures' (Logan, 2008, p. 23) and that political systems have thus been undergoing processes of *hybridisation*, through which democratic state institutions and precolonial, 'customary' ones are combining in a process of mutual adaptation and transformation (Beall, Mkhize, & Vawda, 2005; Beall & Ngonyama, 2009; Burr

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*Corresponding author. Email: t.a.goodfellow@lse.ac.uk

& Kyed, 2006; Logan, 2009; Williams, 2004). This literature is paralleled by a growing focus in political science on the importance of informal institutions and how these relate to formal laws and procedures (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004), not least with respect to Africa (Bratton, 2007).

Much of this literature has generally been concerned with questions about how the interface of formal and informal institutions affects democratisation and governance. However, these issues also raise questions about peace and stability. One such question is why hybridity is sometimes associated with reducing violent conflict, as, for example, in the post-1994 transition in parts of South Africa (Williams, 2004, 2010; Beall et al., 2005), while in other cases hybridity is associated with 'state fragility' and conflict itself (Ganson & Wennmann, 2011, p. 17). This article delves more deeply into the different kinds of interface between state and non-state institutions in contemporary Africa, and how these differential relationships contribute to violent conflict or its avoidance. We argue that the idea of hybridity has been used rather loosely to refer to a range of different institutional arrangements, some of which are more accurately characterised as institutional *multiplicity* (Hesselbein, Golooba-Mutebi, & Putzel, 2006). Moreover, the conditions under which such multiplicity is likely to cause violent conflict remain under-researched and under-theorised.

We develop a new analytical approach to institutional hybridity and multiplicity through an examination of the relationship between the Buganda Kingdom and the Government of Uganda, which has moved from alliance to political violence. When President Museveni came to power in 1986, the Baganda[2] were regarded as his strongest allies, having provided critical support to his National Resistance Army/Movement (NRA/M) in the successful guerrilla war against Milton Obote's second government ('Obote II'). In 1993, Museveni rewarded them by agreeing to restore the Buganda Kingdom (which had been violently abolished in 1966), albeit as a purely cultural institution (Mutibwa, 2008, p. 227). The restoration of the Kingdom and the Coronation of Ronald Mutebi as Kabaka (King) of Buganda was greeted with great jubilation and consolidated the NRM's position in Buganda. However, less than two decades on, the government's relationship with Buganda has deteriorated dramatically.

In July 2009, the Buganda Lukiiko (parliament) accused the Museveni government of engaging in a hate campaign against the Kabaka and asked it to relocate its government away from Kampala to somewhere outside Buganda (*The Independent* [Kampala], 24 July 2009; *Daily Monitor* [Kampala], 25 July 2009). Two months later, the government prevented the Kabaka from visiting a corner of his Kingdom where a small breakaway group, the Banyala, had proclaimed independence from Buganda. Enraged at this attempt to control the movements of their king, many Baganda took to the streets in a series of

riots that prompted a violent crackdown by the government, leaving at least 27 dead, 100 injured and 560 arrested (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], 13 September 2009; *Daily Monitor* [Kampala], 17 September 2009; see also Baral & Brisset-Foucault, 2009). Tensions flared again in March 2010, when the Kasubi tombs – the historic residence and burial ground of many past Kabakas – were burned down in a suspected arson attack, leading to clashes between angry citizens and state security forces and the killing of at least two protesters (*The New Vision* [Kampala], 17 March 2010).

The situation is puzzling: *why did the relationship between Yoweri Museveni's government and the restored Buganda Kingdom deteriorate into estrangement and violent conflict, when in many other cases the restoration of traditional authorities has helped reduce tensions?* We propose that in Uganda, efforts to bring about institutional hybridity of the kind observed in some other African states were half-hearted and ultimately failed. Violence was a consequence not of hybridity but of the particular nature of institutional multiplicity in Uganda. Our analysis of this case has implications for further research, which we propose could move forward the debate on institutions and conflict in Africa.

The paper proceeds as follows. The first section develops the basic contours of our analytical framework, building on existing literature to propose a new perspective on relationships between traditional authorities and the state. The next section provides historical background to the Buganda case, presenting the broad narrative of relations between the Kingdom of Buganda and the Government of Uganda since colonial times. We then turn to the in-depth empirical material in two sections that focus on key issues of institutional contention between the government and Kingdom since Museveni came to power (decentralisation and land). Through these we situate the Buganda case in relation to our framework and explain the turn towards violent conflict. Finally, in the conclusion we draw together the threads of the argument and highlight its implications.

'Traditional' resurgence and institutional interface: hybridity or multiplicity?

Since the 1990s, much has been written about traditional authorities and their degree of integration with modern state structures. While many African governments sought to ban or limit traditional authorities after independence – chiefs being closely associated with colonial repression (Mamdani, 1996) – indigenous political structures have recently experienced a revival (Englebert, 2002a; Foucher & Smith, 2011; Ubink, 2008a). Notable cases in which they have been formally re-instituted include Ghana (Ray, 1998; Ubink, 2008b), South Africa (Beall et al., 2005; Williams, 2004) and Mozambique (Burr & Kyed, 2006) as

well as Uganda (Englebert, 2002b). Some observers of this phenomenon have argued that traditional authorities are likely to be forces for good in enhancing stability, government legitimacy and even democratic deepening (Ayittey, 1991; Englebert, 2002a; Logan, 2009; Sklar, 1999).

In most of these cases, traditional authorities and elected politicians have combined, forming 'hybrid' systems of governance. Indeed, traditional authorities have often been given positions in formal government administration, and the public often make little distinction between the two (Beall et al., 2005; Logan, 2008, 2009). In Ghana, 30 per cent of seats in District Assemblies are reserved for traditional authorities (Ray, 1998), in Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, Zulu chiefs occupy 20 per cent of the seats on regional councils (Williams, 2004, 2010) and in Mozambique chieftaincy now has clear a constitutional role in state administration, including tax collection and policing (Buur & Kyed, 2006).

One way of interpreting these developments is to examine the ways that formal and informal institutions, understood as 'rules of the game' (North, 1990), have interacted to create these new hybrid structures. While formal institutions can be thought of as rules promulgated and sanctioned by the state, informal institutions are associated with non-state organisations, such as traditional authorities. They can be defined as 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels' (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 727). We define 'institutional hybridity' as occurring when rules and procedures associated with the state merge in some way with those of other organisations. In relation to traditional authorities, this might be referred to as the 'integration' or 'embedding' of traditional systems into state ones, or the 'incorporation' of traditional authorities by the state (Beall et al., 2005; Ubink, 2008a; Williams, 2010). It entails the idea of fusion or synthesis, and implies an effort to *syncretise*: to reconcile or unify different systems and principles (Williams, 2010, p. 4). South Africa provides the clearest example of this. Here, traditional resurgence involved the 'mutual transformation of both the state institutions and the chieftaincy and the blending together of the different political norms, rules and processes associated with each' (Williams, 2010, p. 4). The tax collection role of chiefs in Mozambique (Burr & Kyed, 2006, p. 868) constitutes another example.

However, not all institutional interface takes this form. As Helmke and Levitsky (2004) note, informal institutions can combine with formal ones in a number of different ways, some of which are much more complementary than others. Hybridity does not accurately describe every situation in which state institutions coexist and interact with non-state ones. Indeed, one of the problems with recent work on 'hybrid political orders' (Boege, Brown, Clements, & Nolan, 2008) is that *every* situation in which non-state institutions play an important role is described as 'hybrid', whether it is an enduring conflict

zone or a relatively stable system where cultural practices are incorporated into the state (something which arguably applies to every state). This breadth renders the term somewhat meaningless.

Our point is that in some cases there is no synthesis of state and non-state institutions; no incorporation of the structures of one into the other. This situation is better described as 'institutional multiplicity' than as hybridity. Institutional multiplicity has been defined as a situation where multiple 'rule systems' confront economic and political actors, 'providing distinct and different normative frameworks and incentive structures in which they act' (Hesselbein et al., 2006, p. 1). It is important to recognise that this is actually what is sometimes being described (we think inaccurately) as hybrid by some authors. The looseness with which the idea of hybridity is frequently used undermines its capacity to explain why in some cases the interface between different institutional forms seems to be a problem and in others a solution. To achieve analytical clarity we therefore need to distinguish between hybridity and multiplicity, particularly if we want to understand the different paths of traditional resurgence in Africa.

Institutional multiplicity, however, it is not in itself sufficient to explain violent conflict, despite the fact that it has been considered a 'defining characteristic' of state fragility (Putzel & Di John, 2012, p. 15). There is no logical reason why the coexistence (rather than synthesis) of different institutional forms should always be problematic. There are examples of cases where a traditional institution has not merged with state institutions but has authority in relation to certain 'customary' or local affairs; in other words, non-state organisations effectively have license to implement their own rules and procedures in relation to certain circumscribed issues. This, for example, is the case with regard to local *sungusungu* vigilante groups in Kenya (Heald, 2007). There is no reason why such arrangements should generate conflict between the state and non-state organisations as long as the latter are not competing with state institutions in relation to particular roles or functions. In other words, violent conflict is not likely if the state recognises legitimate roles for the traditional institutions, and the traditional authority in question does not attempt to usurp roles and functions claimed by state institutions. Under such conditions, institutional multiplicity can be thought of as *concordant*, involving a demarcation of roles between state and non-state institutions. On the other hand, institutional multiplicity can be *discordant* either if the state does not officially permit the non-state institutions to perform the roles they are performing or if the traditional authority seeks to perform roles that the state is claiming exclusive rights to fulfil.

This tripartite distinction between institutional hybridity, concordant institutional multiplicity and discordant institutional multiplicity (see Figure 1) has several merits for analysing the relationship between the state and traditional
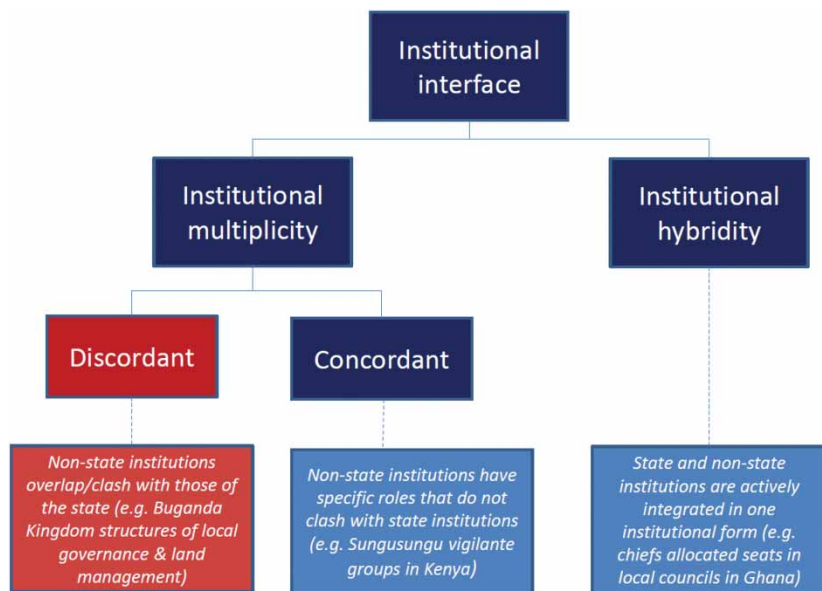
Figure 1.   A simple typology of different forms of institutional interface.

authorities. Unlike previous attempts to categorise such relationships (Bako-Arifari, 1999; Ubink, 2008a), it takes into account not just government policies towards traditional leadership but the agency of non-state leaders themselves and the institutional roles they *seek* to fulfil. Discordant institutional multiplicity comes about when non-state authorities lay claim to jurisdiction over issue areas that the state is governing through its own separate institutional systems; in other words where there is neither syncretism nor accommodative role redefinition by either actor. The analytical prism we present therefore takes into account the interests and agendas of actors that oversee particular institutions, rather than seeing the institutions as somehow disconnected to the organisations and actors that promulgate and maintain them. What determines these interests and agendas, and the effects that discordant institutional multiplicity has, are matters for empirical investigation.

    We suggest that it is important to recognise when institutional multiplicity is discordant and assess whether this discordance is surmountable. If the interests supporting fundamentally incompatible institutions are deeply entrenched, violent conflict is more likely than under conditions of either hybridity or concordant institutional multiplicity. This does not make it inevitable, and the nature and scale of conflict depends on the influence and reach of the non-state organisation relative to the state. However, recognising these

different forms of institutional multiplicity represents a step forward relative to the assumptions that all forms of interface between state and non-state institutions constitute hybridity or that institutional multiplicity necessarily implies state fragility. It also facilitates further research into the conditions under which 'traditional resurgence' is likely to result in peaceful or violent outcomes, making a theoretical contribution to an area of study that so far has not been adequately theorised.

This paper advances two propositions: first, that discordant institutional multiplicity is a distinct form of institutional interface, and second, that it can be linked to violent conflict outcomes. To explore these propositions, we study the case of Buganda. This choice is based on the 'deviant case method', which 'selects the case(s) that, by reference to some general understanding of a topic (either a specific theory or common sense), demonstrates a surprising value' (Gerring, 2007, p. 105). Our case is 'deviant' in that the restoration of traditional authorities in Africa is commonly thought to reduce conflict, yet the restoration of the Buganda Kingdom by the Museveni government has generated mounting distrust and violence. By studying this anomalous case, we probe for new explanations, which is the main purpose of the 'deviant case method'.

More specifically, we explore two issues that have been particularly important in terms of the institutional interface between the Kingdom and the government: decentralised governance and land management. With respect to each of these we undertake the following:

a. Establish that there are institutional systems competing for influence (those of the Kingdom and those of the state), and that unlike in many other cases these have not been hybridised.
b. Establish that these multiple institutional systems are discordant (or fundamentally incompatible).
c. Trace the processes through which this institutional discordance led to violent conflict.

Through these processes we aim to provide a new understanding of recent events in Buganda, with potential implications for other cases in which there are failures to achieve institutional hybridity or concordant multiplicity.

The 'Buganda question' in Ugandan politics

The 'Buganda question' has always been at the core of Ugandan politics (Mutibwa, 2008). Before colonialism, Buganda was home to a powerful centralised Kingdom that displayed every attribute of a self-contained nation-state (Green, 2010a). In 1890, the Imperial British East Africa Company entered

into a military alliance with the Kingdom to conquer the territory of what would become Uganda (Jorgensen, 1981). The most prominent joint military campaign was the conquering of Bunyoro in 1893, after which the Baganda were rewarded with land torn away from Bunyoro (the 'lost counties'). The preferential treatment of the Baganda, the largest ethnic group, continued after the British government took over in 1894 and turned the territory into a protectorate. The 1900 Buganda Agreement provided the Kingdom's ruling elite with considerable autonomy and large amounts of freehold land (see below for details). Moreover, the colonialists imposed the hierarchical Buganda model of administration throughout the territory and appointed Baganda chiefs as administrators and tax collectors (Kasozi, 1994). This created long-lasting anti-Baganda sentiment, especially in the segmentary societies of the North-East. Such resentment was reinforced by the importation of Luganda as the official language and sharp disparities in regional economic development: whereas the North served as a labour reserve and recruitment ground for the army, development opportunities were concentrated in the South, especially in Buganda (Jorgensen, 1981; Kasozi, 1994).

At independence, the Buganda Kingdom's leaders entered into an uneasy alliance with the nationalist Uganda People's Congress (UPC), led by Milton Obote from Northern Uganda. Kabaka Mutesa II became the ceremonial President of the country, while most executive powers were vested in Obote as Prime Minister. The coalition was short-lived, breaking up in 1964, after which the power struggle between Obote and Mutesa escalated. This culminated in the '1966 Crisis' when on 24 May 1966 Obote's army invaded and captured the Kabaka's palace after brief but fierce fighting (see Kasfir, 1976; Mutibwa, 1992). Obote assumed the Presidency, centralised power and abolished all of Uganda's Kingdoms. The Kabaka flew into exile and Buganda's historic role at the centre of Ugandan politics was suddenly and dramatically reversed.

Idi Amin's rise to power in 1971 provided only temporary relief. Initially, Amin appeased the Baganda monarchists by bringing back the body of Kabaka Mutesa II (who had died in his London exile) for burial in Uganda, which earned him popularity among many Baganda and bolstered his fragile leadership (Mutibwa, 1992, p. 86). Moreover, Buganda was home to many commercial elites who benefited from the expulsion of Asians in the early 1970s and the ensuing Africanisation of trade (Mutibwa, 2008, p. 159). However, as time went on, like most other ethnic groups the Baganda came to suffer from the extremely exclusionary and repressive nature of Amin's minority regime, which was based on a tiny Nubian–Kakwa core (representing less than 1 per cent of the population), and Muslims more generally (Jorgensen, 1981; Kyemba, 1977).

Amin's fall in 1979 was followed by the coming and going of no less than three different Baganda presidents as part of the Uganda National Liberation Front (UNLF) between April 1979 and December 1980, including the

popular conservative monarchist Yusuf Lule. The UNLF, however, did not last long. The controversial 1980 elections returned Milton Obote – the monarchists' arch enemy – to the Presidency, leading to continued Baganda marginalisation, especially in the army. In response, Buganda became the epicentre of violent resistance to the Obote II government. Some Baganda formed the Uganda Freedom Movement and the Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda – two smaller Buganda-based insurgencies (Kasozi, 1994, pp. 166– 168). Many others, including avowed monarchists and even members of the royal family of Buganda joined forces with Museveni's NRA from Ankole-Kigezi in Western Uganda, which launched a guerrilla war in early 1981 (for details on the NRA war, see Museveni, 1997; Amaza, 1998; Kasfir, 2005). Tellingly, the NRA was based in Buganda where the opportunity to mobilise popular support was greatest due to the almost unreserved resentment for Obote (Muhwezi, 2009).

After 1986, Buganda's prospects looked bright. The NRA victory had put an end to decades of Northern political and military hegemony and, as critical supporters of Museveni's guerrilla war, the Baganda were rewarded with prominent representation in the post-1986 administration (Lindemann, 2011) and the restoration of 'their' Kingdom. Understandably, both the Buganda monarchy and the majority of the people living in the region have been regarded as Museveni's strongest allies in the early years of his rule, central to his success in building a coalition broad enough to rule such an ethnically fractured country (Tripp, 2010, p. 42). However, as detailed above, this alliance subsequently unravelled dramatically, as became evident through increasing separation, mistrust and eventually the open conflict described above.

Before attempting to explain this with reference to decentralisation and land, it is worth first explaining in more detail the conditions under which the Kingdom was restored in 1993. The NRM came to power in 1986 with a 10-point programme explicitly based on the elimination of all forms of sectarianism, prohibiting any form of political organisation along ethnic lines (Museveni, 1997). The decision to reinstate the Kingdom and three other ancient Ugandan Kingdoms – Bunyoro, Busoga and Toro[3] – was therefore made on the grounds that they would only be restored as 'cultural' institutions, in recognition of their symbolic value to the communities that had supported the NRM's war (Mutibwa, 2008, p. 229).[4] The 1995 Constitution clearly reflects these limitations on their role, stating that 'A traditional or cultural leader shall not join or take part in politics or exercise any administrative, legislative or executive powers of government' (GOU, 1995, Article 246). However, the Buganda Kingdom was reinstated along with '*ebyaffe*' ('our things'), entailing an organisational structure 'more or less identical' with that which existed before its abolition (Johannessen, 2006, p. 10) when it was an intrinsically *political* entity. This included its own parliament

(Lukiiko), Prime minister (Katikkiro), ministers (Abakungu) and clan chiefs (Bataka), as well as the Kabaka and his palace at Mengo (an area of Kampala).[5] The seeds of discordant institutional multiplicity were therefore already in place in 1993, because institutions that the state decreed as purely 'cultural' were viewed by people within the Kingdom as rightfully being structures of government.

While this contradiction was initially overshadowed by exultation at the Kingdom's rebirth, these tensions have become increasingly apparent over time. Particularly important in exposing the discordance at the heart of the restoration were issues relating to decentralised governance and land. We now focus on these two issues, which represent two key forms of institutional interface between the Kingdom and the government, showing that there was institutional discordance and that it can be causally linked to the genesis of violent conflict.

The institutional clash over decentralised governance

In the late 1980s, Uganda embarked upon a radical decentralisation policy considered to be one of the most advanced on the continent (Francis & James, 2003; Ndegwa, 2002), rooted in the NRM's wartime system of 'Resistance Councils' (RCs) (Kasfir, 2005). Through the decentralisation programme the existing RC system was converted into a pyramidal, five-tier structure of Local Councils (LCs) that were linked through complex political and administrative arrangements (see Ahmad, Brosio, & Gonzalez, 2006; Lambright, 2011; Ssewankambo, Steffensen, & Tidemand, 2008). Basic local government statutes appeared in 1987–88 and pilot programmes in 1993–94, before Uganda's 1995 Constitution and 1997 Local Government Act fully codified the system. LCs were given far-reaching decision-making and administrative functions, and the extent of fiscal decentralisation is high by regional and even inter-regional standards: the overall size of local revenue almost quintupled between 1998 and 2006, and locally available revenue as a percentage of total government revenue increased from 19.8 to 31.1 per cent, though little of this revenue is actually generated locally (IMF, 2009).

Decentralisation has been accompanied by an 'epidemic' of district creation (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], 15 May 2010), which can be interpreted as a mode of patronage that has bought support and also helped to reduce conflict in peripheral areas (Green, 2010b; Lindemann, 2011). In Buganda, however, the creation of new districts has always been viewed with deep suspicion; it is often seen as 'a divide and rule strategy whose objective is to ensure that Buganda does not act as a single unit' (Kayunga, 2000, p. 28). Indeed, the Baganda Kingdom elite (hereafter simply termed 'Mengo') has always demanded more far-reaching autonomy in form of a federal system of

government. This parallel (and older) discourse of federalism – termed *federo* in Luganda – has competed with that of decentralisation since the latter was first introduced, essentially forming an alternative institutional model. The structures and rules of governance that Mengo envisages for Buganda are based on the Kingdom's traditional ones, and are entirely different from those imposed by the central government through its decentralisation policy. In what follows we explore how this amounted to an institutional discordance that helped foment violent conflict.

Establishing discordance: decentralisation versus 'federo'

Buganda had previously achieved federal status as part of the independence settlement in 1962. This was a central aspect of the agreement between the Kabaka and Obote. The federalism granted by the 1962 Independence Constitution was structured around the institutions already described in the earlier passage on the restoration, but at that time, they had constitutionally enshrined political and administrative roles (see Barongo, 1989; Sathyamurthy, 1982).[6] In other words, the system created at independence was one that could accurately be described as hybrid. It did not last long, however, and the 1966 events described above led to abrogation of the Independence Constitution and introduction of a Republican Constitution in 1967. The Kingdoms were replaced with 18 unitary districts that suffered from seriously curtailed local autonomy, and Buganda's entire local hierarchy was dismantled. Ever since then, the restoration of federalism has been a recurrent demand among monarchists.

While it was clear that the Obote and Amin regimes would never allow a return to federalism, the NRM victory provided a new window of opportunity. In the early 1990s during the debates over the Constitution, the newly-reinstated monarchy seized the opportunity to call for federalism instead of decentralisation, arguing that the small districts proposed by the NRM were inappropriate both on the grounds of economic viability and cultural viability (Kayunga, 2000, p. 16). The latter point exposed a particularly sensitive fault-line in NRM–Mengo relations. Mengo's perspective was the opposite of that put forward by the government: the former believed that districts should be based on cultural criteria, essentially espousing 'ethnic federalism', while the government's rationale for district formation deliberately excluded ethnic criteria (Carbone, 2008, p. 33). Put differently, the government wanted administrative divisions that were entirely unrelated to the 'cultural' Kingdoms it had just restored, while Mengo argued that the two should be congruent.

The mood in the Constituent Assembly debates over these issues was soured by the fact that Museveni initially pledged that he would support full federalism for Buganda if Mengo supported a continued ban on multipartyism. However, when he secured this much-coveted ban, he blatantly reneged on this

commitment to federalism (Oloka-Onyango, 1997; Tripp, 2010, p. 121), leading to a deep sense of betrayal among monarchists, who began to shift their allegiance towards groups calling for a reinstatement of political parties (Johannessen, 2006, p. 9). Trying to salvage its position among Baganda, the NRM offered a compromise by allowing culturally similar districts to co-operate on issues of culture and development. This allowed for the creation of a 'Buganda Council' with the power to co-ordinate policy in Buganda's districts on issues such as education, health, culture, roads and other development projects, so long as the participating districts continue to opt in to the union (Kayunga, 2000, p. 56).

This compromise won the support of some Baganda, not all of whom supported *federo* at the time; in fact, the majority of Baganda delegates to the Constituent Assembly actually favoured decentralisation over *federo* (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], 21 September 2009; see also Englebert, 2002b, p. 362).[7] However, the Mengo elites opposed the government's compromise for four main reasons. First, they were concerned that the proposed Buganda Council would not have the power to levy taxes, thereby leaving unresolved the Kingdom's main problem, that is, its lack of fiscal powers. Second, the arrangements would only grant positions of power to those who had been directly elected, while Mengo favoured (and still favours) a political King and appointed Katikkiro (Prime Minister). Third, they objected to the idea that any district in Buganda could opt out of the union.[8] Finally, Mengo felt that districts within Buganda should derive their power downwards *from* a Buganda government, not consent to delegate powers up to it (Kayunga, 2000, p. 57). The point, from Mengo's perspective, is that the communities predating colonialism are prior, and in a sense morally superior, to any other political entity created since: 'We make Uganda, Uganda doesn't make us' (Mpanga, 2009). The idea of decentralising power to districts created by the central government of 'Uganda' – considered a 'colonial state' and even a 'corrosive idea' by Mengo elites – therefore runs completely counter to their federal ideal (Mpanga, 2009).

The government went ahead and instituted the constitution, enshrining both a distinctly non-federal system of decentralisation and the prohibition on cultural leaders participating in politics. Meanwhile Mengo continued to function largely according to its traditional systems, with an appointed Katikkiro and a shadow cabinet – including ministers of issues such as finance, land, justice and local governance. This parallel government proceeded to develop policies on a range of issues that it was constitutionally prohibited from legislating on, and ministers were forced to work for free due to prohibition on raising resources for such activity (Mayiga, 2011). They also continued to demand that a system of federalism be established based on their desired institutions, and subdivided according to precolonial counties within the Kingdom –

accountable directly to Mengo – rather than the districts created by the postcolonial state (Mpanga, 2009). Significantly, such demands were accompanied by the rebuilding of the Kingdom's local government structures after 1995, including the re-establishment of counties (*amasaza*), sub-counties (*gombolola*) and parishes (*miluka*) and the appointment of chiefs at all three levels (see Englebert, 2002b, p. 350). This created and staffed an administrative structure that shadows, overlaps and rivals the official LC system. The institutions of the state and those of the Kingdom were therefore not only far from being hybridised, but were fundamentally discordant.

From discordance to conflict: the politicisation of federo among ordinary Baganda

Events in the new millennium further increased Baganda scepticism towards decentralisation and broadened demands for *federo* substantially. With multipartyism reintroduced in 2005, the federalists were gathering strength and had new channels though which to further their cause. In an effort to try and stem the federalist tide while retaining Buganda's favour, prior to the 2006 election the NRM introduced the idea of a 'regional tier' of government (sitting below the centre and above the districts). Perceiving that this was an attempt to undercut demands for *federo*, the Lukiiko voted to reject this proposal, which it saw as another meaningless gesture aimed at keeping the regions dependent on the centre (Tripp, 2010, p. 125). In response, the government stepped up its battle against *federo*, denouncing it 'much more strongly' than in the two decades leading up to 2006 (Anonymous, 2009). This was arguably a key turning point, with the government starting to actively aggravate Mengo rather than attempt to keep its former ally close, partly because it was clear the Kingdom was not going to let go of its federalist principles.

Government discourses linked *federo* to the age-old 'arrogance' of Buganda's demands for special treatment, thereby also attempting to undermine opposition parties that were starting to take the federal idea more seriously. This was more than a political game: the increasing volume of calls for *federo* was a cause for genuine concern for the NRM elite, which had laid down many lucrative roots in Buganda, not least with regard to land (see below).[9] Observers noted that 'if he gives them *federo*, he gives them everything' (Makara, 2009), and 'he will feel like he is betraying his people when he gives in to that arrangement' (Nambooze, 2010). Yet the government's efforts did little to diminish the idea's popularity, with opposition parties increasingly using *federo* 'as a vote catcher' between the 2006 and 2011 elections (Kamya, 2010; *The Observer*, 3 January 2010). Consequently, parties that were not previously close to Mengo – including the Democratic Party (DP), a mortal enemy of the monarchist elite back at the time of independence – grew much closer.

Although Mengo is constitutionally barred from party affiliation, many of the politicians officially representing its interests (such as Betty Nambooze) are key players in the DP.

Moreover, while *federo* was associated with conservative monarchists right up until the millennium, in the late 2000s it became a rallying point for many disaffected Baganda including the youth. This was vividly illustrated when Buganda's Katikkiro was booed by a crowd of Baganda youths simply because he was advocating dialogue with the Government, rather than stubborn opposition (*Daily Monitor*, 5 July 2009). Support for *federo* thus both broadened and deepened given the widespread disillusionment with the NRM, with decentralisation and, increasingly, with the impotent and divided opposition parties. A representative of Mengo argued that 'To a large extent the Kingdom has come to represent the polarity against the government . . . it's the one institution that people look at and think it's not been corrupted, it stands for something, it's been deprived' (Mpanga, 2009). The general emphasis in the *federo* discourse therefore shifted, as many people came to see it less as a conservative monarchist project and more as a progressive agenda to overcome over-centralisation of power and institute new systems of resource allocation.

The ultimate irony is that if part of the purpose of decentralisation was the attempt to keep Buganda relatively divided, 15 years down the line it had the opposite effect, uniting them against the government's model of decentralisation. Yet the government continued to refuse to grant federalism, and began discussing its proposed 'regional tier' again in 2009, to the outrage of Mengo who continued to see this as a project to undermine their traditional institutions (Mayiga, 2011). Kingdom figures suggest that ordinary Baganda expect the *Kabaka* to care from them materially, and their increasing awareness of the government's prohibition on the Kingdom raising taxes to facilitate this was fuelling public anger (Mayiga, 2011). Inflammatory aggressive rhetoric on both sides over the *federo* issue provided fertile ground for the violence that was sparked in September 2009. The fact that ordinary Baganda in the city were touting the *federo* slogan around the time of the riots[10] indicates that far from remaining a conservative elite concern, the institutional discordance between *federo* and the state's model of decentralisation had been politicised and translated into popular outrage. However, there would not have been nearly such fertile ground for violence without further institutional discordance on another, more specific issue: land.

The institutional clash over land in Buganda

Above all, it was institutional disputes over land that stimulated the breakdown in the relationship between the NRM government and the Buganda Kingdom and fuelled the eventual violent conflict. The land question in Buganda is

extremely complex, with a long and troubled history – some of which can be interpreted as efforts towards creating a form of institutional hybridity. Due to space constraints, this section highlights the historical background only briefly before focusing on the failure to create a functional hybrid land system, highlighting key areas of discordance that fed conflict. Two issues are of particular significance: first, the ongoing dispute over the rules governing a form of private land tenure known as *mailo*, and second the dispute over the management of public land in Buganda.

The origins of the land controversy in Buganda date back to the 1900 'Buganda Agreement', mentioned earlier. Of Buganda's estimated 19,600 square miles, the Agreement gave the British control of 9000, designated 'Crown Land', alongside some 1500 miles of forest. The Agreement also created a new form of private land tenure, known as *mailo* due to the measurement of land allocations in square miles, which institutionalised legal inheritance of land and thereby created a new hereditary ruling class (Richards, 1963; Okuku, 2006). Everything not designated as 'Crown Land' was either granted as *mailo* to around 3700 local chiefs and royals, or to the Kabaka personally (Englebert, 2002a, p. 352). After 1966, *mailo* land remained in the hands of private Baganda landlords, despite the Kingdom's demise. It was only in 1975 that it was formally abolished by Amin's Land Reform Decree (Okuku, 2006; Batungi, 2008), but this was barely implemented and when Obote returned to power in 1980 land policy was in considerable disarray (Okuku, 2006, p. 11). By the 1980s the Baganda landlords' attachment to *mailo* was as strong as ever, but the system was still highly disadvantageous to the peasantry, which meant that the NRM – who while fighting their guerrilla war had allied themselves with *both* the peasants and Buganda's landed elite (Kasfir, 2005; McAuslan, 2003; Oloka-Onyango, 1997) – faced real difficulties resolving this issue on their arrival in power.

The 'Mailo' controversy: from efforts towards hybridity to open institutional discordance

The incoming NRM government, which included prominent Baganda monarchists, was split on whether to eradicate *mailo*. Any talk of comprehensive land reform was strategically delayed until 1993, as the conflicting priorities at play were inescapable. A first priority was the need to visibly reverse the trend of the previous three decades whereby the state had progressively strengthened and often abused its powers over land (Opiyo, 2010). Second, and related, was the desire to consolidate the alliance with Mengo by officially reinstating *mailo* institutions and protecting the interests of powerful landlords. A third priority, however, was to not alienate Baganda peasants by entrenching their position of virtual serfdom, especially as since 1986 returnee landlords had

been vigorously evicting poor peasants in favour of those who could pay (Green, 2006, p. 375).

The 1995 Constitution remained deliberately vague on the issue, not least since the Museveni government had already reneged on its *federo* promise and did not want to further fuel the conflict with Mengo (Oloka-Onyango, 1997, p. 184). It was therefore not until the ensuing 1998 Land Act that these tensions came to the fore. The Act aimed to bring greater tenure security for *mailo* occupants – both 'lawful occupants' who entered land with the owner's consent and 'bona fide occupants' who prior to 1995 had occupied and used the land unchallenged by the owner for 12 years or more (GOU, 1998, Article 29). Occupants were to be legally protected from eviction on the simple condition that they paid an annual nominal rent of 1000 shillings (around \$0.50). Resistance from Mengo and the landlords was fierce, and passing this Act was one of the greatest political battles Museveni had faced since taking power (Green, 2006, p. 377). Yet it was not as radically in occupants' favour as it might sound and gave very mixed messages. On the one hand, it 'permits the separation of ownership of land from the ownership of developments on land made by a lawful or bona fide occupant' (GOU, 1998, Article 3), with the aim of providing incentives for occupants to invest. On the other, occupants can only undertake basic transactions on the land if given formal permission by the owner (GOU, 1998, Article 34). The result was a botched effort towards syncretising the *mailo* system with principles on occupancy rights derived from British law, which ultimately hindered both landowner and occupant from developing the land.

The landlords' opposition to the Act was compounded by the fact that many occupants on *mailo* land are historically non-Baganda, and often Banyarwanda or Banyankole-Bahima (Museveni's ethnic group);[11] hence giving rights to occupants was perceived as a deliberate attempt to allow non-native people to 'steal' Buganda's land (Green, 2006; Okuku, 2006). While the Act was barely implemented, the distrust it created was deep and it formed an important landmark in the NRM–Buganda relationship breakdown. Even worse, however, was yet to come. In the wake of the Act, Mengo became increasingly vociferous in its criticism of the NRM. Framing the government's support for occupants as an attempt to undermine Buganda's 'traditional' land tenure institutions, it gained considerable political capital and cultivated the support of ordinary Baganda for a land tenure system that had in fact exploited them historically.

A Land (Amendment) Bill tabled in 2007 strained the NRM–Mengo relationship to breaking point. Unlike in 1998, there was no effort to balance the interests of landlords and occupants; the explicit purpose of the Bill was to 'further enhance the protection of lawful and bona fide occupants' against landlords in the context of a mounting eviction problem. Essentially, the effort to create a hybrid land system had failed, and *mailo* landlords were

simply acting the way they always had: the NRM government claimed 'rampant illegal evictions' were taking place (Prime Minister Apolo Nsibambi, quoted in *The New Vision* [Kampala], 25 November 2009), sometimes 'carried out at night in a brutal and secret manner' and with as many as 400 families being evicted at one time (GOU, 2008). Under the proposed amendment, any eviction taking place without a court order would render the landlord liable for imprisonment for up to seven years (GOU, 2007).

The Bill enraged Mengo, especially because of the ethnic element now underpinning the landlord/occupant issue. Even if these occupants had not been in place for 12 years, they could now claim bona fide occupancy if they had purchased usufruct rights on the land *from* people who had occupied land for 12 years (GOU, 2007, Article 29). Thus, in the view of the Baganda, there was little to stop Westerners and 'foreigners' – often from Rwanda – squatting in Buganda in perpetuity as long as they paid a tiny sum each year (Green, 2006, p. 382). Mengo issued a strident rejoinder to the Bill, ridiculing the category of 'bona fide' occupants as 'mala-fide (bad faith) occupants who illegally invaded the land of other people' (Buganda Kingdom, 2008, p. 9). As soon as the amendment was put forward, they set up the Central Civic Education Committee, led by the DP's Betty Nambooze, to orchestrate a campaign against it. The amendment and Mengo's response stimulated a crisis among Baganda MPs, who suddenly found themselves in the stark position of having to support either the Kabaka or the President, with no room left for middle ground (*The Independent* [Kampala], 8–21 February 2008).

The vehement response of the Kingdom to the amendment meant that the Bill remained on the shelf throughout 2008 and most of 2009, while the controversy continued. Again, this hostility towards the government's reforms now stretched far beyond the monarchist elite: according to a 2008 survey, 71 per cent of people from Buganda were dissatisfied with the way Museveni has handled the land issue of land (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], 15 November 2008). Some observers speculate that proposing the amendment was less about actually changing the land law than playing a political game, deliberately attempting to draw opposition from Buganda and make them look 'arrogant' and 'intolerant' (*The New Vision* [Kampala], 14 February 2008). The conflict between land tenure institutions was becoming linked to a broader power struggle between Museveni and the Kabaka: the will to create a system that could meaningfully be called hybrid had largely evaporated on both sides.

The '9000 square miles' controversy: the dispute over public land

At independence, the 9000 square miles of Buganda's land that had been designated British 'Crown Land' was given to Buganda under the short-lived federal arrangement, and administered by the Buganda Land Board. Yet the 1966 crisis

and subsequent Public Lands Act (1969) stripped Buganda of control over this land, which was then centralised under the Uganda Land Commission for three decades. The 1998 Land Act made significant changes, decentralising the land to District Land Boards. Mengo, however, demanded that the land be returned in its entirety to the Kingdom's control, like the 350 square miles of 'Kabaka-ship land' that had been granted with the restoration of the Kabakaship in 1993 (Buganda Kingdom, 2001).

Although the conversion of some public land into private over the decades renders the figure of 9000 now somewhat mythical, 'the return of the 9000 square miles' became another slogan central to the Kingdom's demands for institutional reform. The reasons for this were twofold. Firstly, and most importantly, Mengo hoped that ownership of the 9000 square miles would not only provide it with much-needed income from tenants but also allow for the development of lucrative plantations (Englebert, 2002b, p. 353). Secondly, the strongly emotional ethnic attachment to land that was evident in relation to the *mailo* issue (Green, 2006) was also reflected increasingly strongly in the demand that the Kingdom should regain control of public land in Buganda. Mengo insiders see the proprietorship of this land as integral to the role of the Kabaka, who they maintain is not 'a King without a Kingdom' like the Aga Khan, and should hold this land in trust as the ancestral home for Buganda's over 50 clans. Indeed, the clan link to public land is considered 'crucial' (Mayiga, 2011). For the government, however, granting this change to the management of public land would be tantamount to giving the Kingdom control over a critical political economy issue – as well as potentially threatening their own interests in the region.

Again, a clear institutional discordance is evident between the existing state rules for managing this land and the norms that the Kingdom considers central to its existence and identity. Controversy over the position of Kampala, which according a 2005 Constitutional amendment was to be administered by the central government rather than any local authority, added fuel to the fire. In 2009 the government tabled the Kampala Capital City Bill, which proposed expanding the boundaries of the city deep into the neighbouring districts of Buganda. This, in the view of Mengo, would mean losing control over an even larger proportion of its land and was targeted at weakening the Kingdom and dissolving it from within (Buganda's Attorney General, quoted in *Daily Monitory* [Kampala], 21 July 2009).

All these issues combined meant that institutional discord on land issues in Buganda had reached fever pitch by the summer of that year, compounding discontent over *federo*. An active media campaign by the Kingdom, including through its mouthpiece, CBS radio, served to translate this institutional dispute into deep public discontent, to the extent that by summer 2009 the atmosphere was ripe for conflict. Without these conditions, it seems highly

unlikely that the decision by the government to control the Kabaka's movements on one fateful September day would have had such an explosive outcome. The immediate importance of the land question during the riots became apparent in the fact that, according to eyewitnesses, people were dragged out of cars at roadblocks in several parts of the city because they looked like Banyankole or Banyarwanda, and beaten up (*The New Vision* [Kampala], 11 September 2009; Baral & Brisset-Foucault, 2009). This allegedly followed calls on CBS radio to take action against people with 'long noses' (a derogative name for Banyankole or Banyarwanda) who threaten to take away Buganda's land (*The New Vision* [Kampala], 9 February 2010).

Conclusion

In their list of demands for a constitutional review in 2001, the Buganda Kingdom's leaders reflected on the dramatic events of the 1960s, noting that 'The merger of traditional leadership of a Kingdom and political leadership of the whole Nation, led to an inevitable clash between the two institutions' as well as between the President and Kabaka (Buganda Kingdom, 2001, p. 6). This clash in many ways repeated itself in the late 2000s under Museveni. Was it, however, inevitable? The fact that other states have effectively managed this 'merger' suggests otherwise. Yet in post-restoration Buganda *there was actually no merger*: hybridity failed to emerge because of the tenacity with which the traditional authority clung to institutions based on its powerful past, while the government – threatened by the Kingdom's popularity and influence – refused to allow those institutions a role in formal government.

In this respect, the nature of institutional interface cannot be understood without reference to the individuals and organisations with which particular institutions are associated. The clash of institutions in Buganda in the 2000s, which was linked to unresolved issues from the past, quickly became a clash of individuals (Museveni and the Kabaka) in the context of Uganda's complex political calculus and its tentative steps towards multiparty democracy. The total estrangement between Museveni and the Kabaka became apparent in reports that the two former allies had not talked in more than two years before the riots (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], 11 September 2009; see also Baral & Brisset-Foucault, 2009). This personal battle in turn precipitated actual physical violence between supporters of the Kingdom and forces of the state, while also causing both parties to act in ways that made the institutional discordance even worse. In other words, there was a vicious cycle of incompatible institutions and personal political struggles that became to a degree self-reinforcing, and violence was an unfortunate side-effect.

This analysis has implications for contexts in Africa and beyond where the relationship between the state and traditional authorities (or indeed other

non-state organisations that wield significant influence) is still unresolved. Successful experiments with 'hybridity' yield important lessons, but it is equally important to learn from less encouraging experiences and to understand why what appeared to be attempts to merge authority ultimately failed. 'Hybrid governance' cannot be forged in the abstract: its chances of success depend on whether there is a fundamental discordance between the institutions of the state and those of the non-state authority, which in turn depends on deeper historical factors and the prevailing political calculus in a given context. A keener understanding of whether there is underlying institutional discordance in a given case could help dispel damaging illusions that institutional hybridity or concordant multiplicity have been achieved, potentially averting violent conflict further down the line.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. While we recognise many of the problems with labelling precolonial authorities as 'traditional' and state structures as 'modern', for the remainder of the essay we drop the use of quotation marks to avoid monotony.
2. 'Baganda' refers to people from the Buganda region in plural.
3. The fifth of Uganda's historic Kingdoms, Ankole, was not restored. Given that Museveni is from Ankole, it is widely believed that he did not restore this Kingdom due to the fear that a monarch in Ankole might undercut his own authority in the region (Tripp, 2010, pp. 60–61).
4. Speculation is rife about a pact to restore the Kingdom, made between Museveni and Kabaka Mutebi when the latter visited the liberated areas during the 'bush war' in 1985. Much of the speculation is over the question of whether or not Museveni promised to restore the Kingdom with political and administrative powers, and then reneged on this promise (*The Independent* [Kampala], 25 September 2009).
5. Among the minsters were those in charge of 'constitutionalism', 'political affairs', 'internal affairs' and 'local government', which stood in obvious contradiction to the purely cultural nature of the Kingdom's restoration (Oloka-Onyango, 1997, p. 182).
6. The other kingdoms (Toro, Ankole, Bunyoro and Busoga) were given semi-federal status, while the non-kingdom areas came to be divided into nine unitary districts.
7. It must, however, be noted that there were arguably tactical reasons for this, relating to the fact that many UPC supporters had come out in favour of federalism, which aroused suspicion as to their motives. Having said this, federalism had never been universally popular in Buganda. For example, in the 1980 elections,

the Buganda-based Conservative Party was the only party to explicitly champion *federo,* and it failed to win a single parliamentary seat (though this may also relate to tactical voting).

8. Attempts by the government since this time to persuade parts of Buganda such as Bugerere and Buruuli to 'secede' from Buganda have, in the eyes of Mengo, vindicated Baganda fears about how this 'opt out' clause might be used.

9. There is some evidence that top NRM officials from Western Uganda (who are reportedly mostly Bahima) are buying up huge chunks of land in Buganda (see Green, 2006, p. 381; *The Independent* [Kampala], 29 October 2008). Salim Saleh, Museveni's brother, is known to own at least three square miles of land in Buganda (*The New Vision* [Kampala], 14 February 2008).

10. Interviews with motorcycle taxi-drivers supportive of the Buganda Kingdom, September–October 2011.

11. On the long history of Banyarwanda migrants in Buganda, see Mushemeza (2008). While some claim that Museveni himself is a Muhororo/Tutsi, most Ugandans – including Museveni himself – consider him as a Munyankole from the Bahima subgroup.

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