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Conflict legacies

Understanding youth's post-peace agreement practices in Yumbe, north-western Uganda

Both, J.C.

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4. 'THE PRESIDENT IS GOING TO REBUILD THIS HOUSE FOR MY FATHER': LEGACIES OF MILITARISM AND PENDING PROMISES

Abiriga was waiting for me at the trading centre. We walked together slowly to the family homestead, greeting relatives along the way. As we walked through the fields, we discussed the crops (sesame and sorghum) that were getting ready for harvest and why most people no longer grow sorghum: it requires the mobilization of a lot of labour all at once when it is ready since it has to be harvested quickly, and such labour is expensive nowadays. After a little less than an hour we arrived at the family compound, which is built on top of and around the still visible foundations of Abiriga's father's old home. His father was once a sergeant in Amin's army. While on the ground one can see the remainder of the foundations, which still indicate the relatively large size of the house that once stood there, on top of them a traditional hut had been built, in which his father now lived. The square hut was about 4 x 4 metres. Around his father's hut, in the same compound, three brothers (with their wives and children) and Abiriga himself had homes of a similar size.

Onzima lived not so far from Abiriga's home. When I lent him my camera to take pictures with, Onzima had others snap his picture against the background of a dilapidated home. The house was built in the same period as Abiriga's father's house. Onzima's father too was once part of Obote's and Amin's armies. Perhaps Onzima's father's house had been stronger, in line with his higher rank and access to better resources while still serving in the army, because although dilapidated it remained standing. But its roofing (iron sheets) and furniture had all been looted at the beginning of the war in the early 1980s and had never been replaced. Some walls were crumbling, while in other places it was just the plaster that no longer held. Onzima occasionally and quite nonchalantly remarked: 'The president is going to rebuild this house for my father.' For approximately 30 years, his father's family had been living in traditional homes behind the worn-out structure of the building; only the kitchen and a space for bathing remained in use from the original structure. I was once hospitably invited to bathe there in the bathroom without a door, luxuriously provided with a bucket of warmed water and a new piece of soap after having stayed over for a 'transnight' disco that followed a traditional Muslim wedding between a young clan member and a young girl from outside. I wondered how Onzima, normally so critical of the government, could believe so confidently that the reconstruction of this ruin would happen in his father's lifetime. Perhaps it was because his father remained well connected (to the current president's brother, General Salim Saleh) and therefore still had some influence, that he strongly believed it would happen soon—unlike many others of

his father's generation, who seemed to be waiting in vain (see for example Mwesigye 2010).

INTRODUCTION

The many dilapidated structures, as described above, are considered telling of the character of the district of Yumbe. They act as a symbol of the defeat of Idi Amin's greedy regime and the poverty that befell Amin's collaborators thereafter. Because of this, various authors have referred to them (see for example Mwesigye 2010; Rice 2009).¹⁸⁷ Above, however, in the description of the photographs Onzima liked taking, a young man has entered the image. He is posing, proud and cool. The burden of the loaded histories of those who originally constructed these houses—their engagement in a brutal regime and in plunder to make such wealth possible—does not seem to weigh on his shoulders. In other photographs that my interlocutors took using my camera, women, children, and whole families posed against such backgrounds, showing that there is still significance attached to the existence of such structures in their midst. At the very least, they see it as a suitable décor, as a vestige of wealth that was and is still valued.

Some of my young interlocutors grew up in compounds marked by such rundown structures of houses that were built by their fathers or uncles at a time when they had been able to easily access money, businesses, loans, and building materials as members of the army under Amin's regime. The structures today are not only references to past times that were much better—contrasting sharply with people's poverty experienced today—but also, 35 years after their demolition and plunder, they continue to remind people of violent loss and destruction. At the same time, they symbolize the promises of political redress made by the current government, as became clear with regard to Onzima's father above. As former Ugandan army-men and sometimes later UNRF rebels, during their lives these fathers have insisted on and received promises of access to pensions or compensation (see Chapter 2). These are promises that are exploited by those in power, particularly around election times (see introductory chapter to this dissertation),¹⁸⁸ or at other times when ex-combatants loudly voice their threat of taking up arms again in the fragile post-conflict phase (Bogner & Neubert 2013: 68), threats which nevertheless remain unfulfilled (Mwesigye 2010; Bogner & Neubert 2013; field notes, JB).

All of these references provoked by the image of ruins—to a past that was better, to the destruction that followed, and to the politico-military promises—play an

¹⁸⁷ One could argue that this is rather narrow in focus, merely repeats the dominant discourse about the region, and ignores the fact that such houses can be found over the whole of West Nile (including Moyo, Koboko, and Arua District), and that the larger part of the population of Yumbe District was not involved in this military history. Yet the data used in this chapter show that there is a legacy of this military past that affects and is engaged with by youth in Yumbe today, and therefore these powerful images are important for the narrative in this chapter.

¹⁸⁸ Again, around the 2016 presidential elections, this was at stake, when running candidate Mbabazi renewed such promises while visiting Yumbe District (Okello 2016).

important role in this chapter in terms of how they are experienced and engaged with by a younger generation: those who did not build the houses, but who grew up around their ruins and their symbolism of loss and promise. The dilapidated structures bring together two generations: the fathers who were once enrolled in the army (Obote I's and Idi Amin's armies, and later often also joined rebel groups) and their sons.

While the previous chapter focused primarily on the parents who had survived the atrocities and other war crimes in the past and remain marked by these experiences up until today, in this chapter the focus is predominantly on the category of parents (fathers) who were formerly military men.¹⁸⁹ These former soldiers often began their careers in the colonial army (see for example Grahame 1980), served under Obote's first regime when Uganda became independent, and were often quickly promoted under Idi Amin in the 1970s—before they fled into exile in 1979 when Amin was ousted.¹⁹⁰ Many of these men then joined the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) when it formed in exile to protect West Nile from revenge atrocities and with the aim of regaining power. Later, after the demobilization of the UNRF, when Museveni came to power, many were absorbed into the new national army, but a large retrenchment exercise and growing mistrust led to the formation of the WNBFB rebel group and to UNRF II a little later. Some former UNRF rebels joined these new rebel groups, while others remained with the Ugandan army or stayed at home after their retrenchment.

Most of the fathers in this chapter served and fought in a number of such armed parties. By focusing on this generation of fathers and their sons, the aim of this chapter (as with the previous chapter) is to address the youth in this study as embedded in historical relations that have shaped them significantly. What has trickled down to the next generation from growing up with these military fathers, and how has this shaped the youth in this study? To address these issues, in this chapter I first examine ethnographic material regarding the life histories of two young men, whose cases are used to set the scene of problematic relations between former military fathers and their sons in Yumbe. These two young men in turn joined the last rebel group in Yumbe (UNRF II) at a young age due to what they referred to as *a lack of love* from their fathers.

GROWING UP WITH A MILITARY FATHER: LIFE HISTORIES OF SONS

When asking young people in Yumbe what it meant to grow up with a military father, I often encountered answers such as: 'My father was hardly ever at home'; 'We used to grow up with guns around the house and learned how to handle them at a young age'; or

¹⁸⁹ During the many years of conflict in Yumbe District, the division between the former military and the victims of violence were not so straightforward, as the story of Faridah in the previous chapter showed. For example, former UA military and their families were sought out and executed during the liberation war of 1980 and in its aftermath. However, here I look at the legacies of militarism, rather than the legacies of survivorship (see Chapter 3). Both groups (in as far as we can identify them as groups) have in common, however, the fact that they suffered great material losses and that for both, their offspring have had to come to terms with this 'inheritance of loss', as shown in this and the previous chapter.

¹⁹⁰ Or fell into disgrace with Amin before the end of his regime (see Hansen 1977; Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

‘My father would teach us about military techniques and military discipline.’ While this is interesting information, especially when trying to understand the legacies of militarism in Yumbe (see also Chapter 5), more specific insight was gained through the biographic narratives that my young interlocutors shared over time. As these unfolded in our ongoing interactions, their fathers turned out to play a more complicated role than expressed in these single phrases.

The first two cases shared in this chapter explore the narratives of two young men who grew up with army fathers. We start with Abiriga, already introduced in the opening case, whose father, at the time of my research, would spend much of his time sitting alone in front of his hut, which represented a mere fragment of what he had once had. Abiriga often recounted to me the problematic youth that he felt he had experienced as his father’s son. He attributed the blame for the negative developments in his young life to his father and his lack of care for him as his son.

My mother was the only one who really cared for me

Abiriga’s mother, Mariam, left her family behind in Yumbe in 1995 when Abiriga was 13 years old. She did not originally come from the region but had married Abiriga’s father when he was a soldier during Idi Amin’s regime and was stationed in another part of the country. During this period, Abiriga’s father had been able to construct a good house with iron sheets in Yumbe and acquire some property such as motorized vehicles. At the time and also today, such possessions are significant assets in Yumbe that were/are extremely difficult to obtain. All of these possessions were lost, however, when in 1979 Idi Amin was overthrown and his soldiers and all those associated with him sought refuge in neighbouring countries. This occurred before Mariam became pregnant, and she gave birth to only one son, Abiriga, in 1982 while she was in exile in southern Sudan.

In 1995, long after settling back in Uganda, Mariam decided that she wanted to go home to visit her family, whom she had not seen for a long time. Abiriga once suggested that the fact that she had no other children aside from him made it difficult for her to stay in Yumbe. In order to be able to undertake the journey to her parents, Mariam had been working hard to raise enough money for the trip.

By that time there was a cotton plant in Nebbi District and people were growing cotton in the region. My mother proposed to me her idea of growing cotton and I thought it was a good plan and I helped her. The cotton yielded well, also compared with other people who had even more land. When my mother had the money, she called together my father and my stepfathers¹⁹¹ and explained to them that she was tired and that she had gone long without seeing her parents. She asked permission to go home and take her son with her. My stepfathers were OK with that, but not my father. My father told her that he wanted me to [first] finish P7 [Primary Seven, the last year in primary school] as I would be sitting for my PLE

¹⁹¹ Abiriga referred to his uncles as ‘stepfathers’.

(Primary Leaving Exams) that year. (Fragment from fieldnotes after spending a long day with Abiriga at his family compound 08-07-2012)

Abiriga told me that the fact that he was about to sit his exams made him very proud, so he was not unhappy to stay around, especially as his father had promised that afterwards he would take him to his mother. Abiriga performed well in his exams and started to look for admission to some good secondary schools in the area. But his father could not pay the admission fee of UGX 70,000.¹⁹² 'In my eyes, my father was the rightful person to pay for my school fees', Abiriga lamented. Knowing that his mother had been the one who had always paid his school fees, he requested permission to travel to his mother. His father, who had initially promised his mother that he would take Abiriga to her after his exams, however, now suddenly refused, telling Abiriga that he had never promised such a thing. Abiriga was crushed, explaining that he had had the deep wish to go to university and now saw all his dreams shattered.

After I did my exams, nothing was showing to me that my father was taking me to my mother. When I confronted my father and stepfathers with this, my father said he had never had any intention to take me to my mother. My stepfathers were disappointed in my father and asked him why he had not spoken the truth in front of his wife. [...] After this meeting, I cried for three days! And, in fact, that was the reason why I joined this rebellion [UNRF II]. (Fieldnotes 21-07-2012)

In fact, Abiriga did not join the rebels immediately. In the beginning, he sought admission to a cheaper secondary school and for two years he was supported in school by two of his older half-brothers. But after these two years, these half-brothers became occupied with getting married and starting their own families, something that required all of their resources. In the meantime, a new rebel group, the UNRF II, had become active in the region. Tensions rose and Abiriga was visited once in the evening by a good friend who had 'already gone to the bush'. Of this friend, he said he really 'had the feeling of staying with him', expressing this feeling as a type of love, since the friend was someone who really cared for him. The friend also 'looked fat', according to Abiriga, indicating that life must be good in the bush. They talked the whole night because the friend had to stay indoors and hide from the Ugandan army, as he had sneaked home to Yumbe for a visit—and probably to recruit others.

Initially, he convinced Abiriga to become a spy. The rebels wanted to know where the Ugandan army in Yumbe was located and what they were up to. His friend believed that Abiriga, with his lighter complexion compared with other Aringas (because his mother came from another part of the country), would make an ideal spy, as he looked more like the soldiers from elsewhere than an Aringa. Spying could furthermore earn him some money to continue with school.¹⁹³ Initially, this is what Abiriga started doing, hanging out

¹⁹² UGX = Ugandan Shillings

¹⁹³ As is described elsewhere, the UNRF II group had access to money because it was supported by the Khartoum government in fighting the SPLA, and it could thus afford to pay for such services.

in places where Ugandan army soldiers hung out for lunch. But at some point he became worried, as he started to realize that he would not be able to defend himself in case he was caught. He did not carry a weapon, and he became more and more aware of the danger of his work. This motivated him to join the UNRF II rebels, who were based in southern Sudan. But he did not stay with the rebels for long, and after nine months he returned home.

He described his time in the bush with the rebels as unproblematic. In a way, he loved being taught about guns and how to handle them. He indicated that he was involved in fighting the SPLA and was thus part of the proxy war that was fought at the border between Uganda and Sudan. One episode was difficult for him to talk about: this was when he was very sick and almost died, as he had been roaming around in the bush where they had to live on wild fruits, and he had tried to treat his severe stomach condition with local berries and herbs.

After returning home, he continued to work as a spy and enrolled in a different secondary school so as not to be identified as someone who had been in the bush (due to his suspicious absence). With his spying activities he paid for his school fees, but it meant that he generally had to do all his studying at night. In the school holidays, he sometimes tried to get the information he had gathered to Sudan and thus spent time away without raising suspicion at school. Shortly before the rebels came out of the bush to start their peace negotiations with the Ugandan government, Abiriga decided to join the rebel camp again. From there, before the negotiations were finished, UNICEF negotiated with the former rebel leaders to take away the child soldiers. Although he was already 19 at the time, Abiriga was selected by the rebel leaders as qualifying, because he was *small-bodied* and eager to go back to school. The agreement with UNICEF included the promise of being able to go back to school; later, in the official peace agreement, this promise was taken up by the Ugandan government. In reality, however, it never materialized. Meanwhile, former child soldiers like Abiriga also missed out on the amnesty cards and amnesty packages distributed by the Amnesty Commission in the rebel camp after the children had been removed, and later they were not included in the redistribution of the compensation (UGX 4.2 billion) negotiated by the rebels for the reintegration of former combatants. This fact of unfulfilled promises and missing out on material support made many former child soldiers like Abiriga and other ex-combatants bitter and angry, and they were still waiting for redress when I encountered them in the field more than ten years after the peace agreement.¹⁹⁴

When I met Abiriga in 2011 for the first time, he still held deep grievances against his father. He was also intending to start looking for his mother, whom he had not seen since 1995 and whose flow of letters had dried up over time. He still hoped for his amnesty package to be paid,¹⁹⁵ since the money would allow him to travel and search for his mother to find out if she was still alive. When, one day in 2011, he asked his father if

¹⁹⁴ See also Both & Reis (2014).

¹⁹⁵ At that time in 2011, former child soldiers like Abiriga had recently convened a meeting with the Amnesty Commission to raise awareness of the fact that since 2002, they had still received neither an amnesty card nor the amnesty package. Abiriga was therefore hopeful that the package would soon be paid. In August 2014, however, this had still not occurred (see Both & Reis 2014).

he would agree that once Abiriga had received his package (which was expected to include material items as well as money), he could use the money to search for his mother, his father denied ever having refused to let him to go to his mother in the first place. This once again led to a lot of frustration for Abiriga.

One evening in mid-2012, when Abiriga and two friends were visiting me (one of whom shared a story similar to that of Abiriga with regard to his time with the rebels and having a former soldier father), they suddenly once again started to share their frustrations about all of their disappointments in the aftermath of the peace agreement. They had been discussing it quite extensively before meeting me and said they wished they could pay a lawyer to take UNICEF and the other parties involved to court for their neglect of the many promises made to them. They then referred to the story of Dawud and Galut (as David and Goliath are called in the Quran), emphasizing that the small person will one day be able to conquer the large. Obviously, they identified with Dawud from their position as former child soldiers, and Goliath was all the parties that had wronged them, including the co-opted rebel leaders who had, according to them, become rich since disarming.¹⁹⁶ Occasionally, throughout my fieldwork, they uttered statements about forming a UNRF III rebel group, primarily to fight against their former rebel leaders.

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What we see above is that Abiriga attributed the lack of support from his father—in the concrete form of a lack of support for school fees and his refusal to allow him to follow his mother—as the factor that led him to join the rebels. In my contact with Abiriga and Aluma (below), such *pain*—as they often referred to it—experienced in the relationship with their fathers often emerged as a reference. It was visible on their faces and in the way they spoke about their fathers. Aluma (below) also expressed a lack of fatherly love as the motivating factor behind his joining the rebellion.

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At some point you start thinking: 'Let me meet my death on the way'

In the early 1990s, Aluma went to school in Kampala for a while. Although he is originally from Yumbe, he had a brother¹⁹⁷ (not from the same father and mother) who, in his words, 'loved me so much' and paid for his school fees. He reached Primary 7, but then his brother got sick and passed away. Aluma found himself without support to continue his education. He returned to Yumbe but lacked any prospects because, according to him, his father did not look after him. In 2012, when explaining his position to me, he often compared himself with Majid, the owner of the small wooden roadside shop in Yumbe

¹⁹⁶ The fact that many rebel leaders became rich after disarmament is not such an uncommon phenomenon; see Lombard (2012).

¹⁹⁷ Aluma referred to the man as his 'brother'. Yet they shared neither the same father nor the same mother, but were more distantly related.

who sold small grocery items, including batteries, sugar, sweets, soap, and 'airtime'.¹⁹⁸ Majid was Aluma's close neighbour and they were of the same age. He suggested that Majid had a *foundation*, by which he meant a father who supported him. He often lamented that he had none. Majid's father, according to Aluma, was someone who had cows, and he had given his son the shop.¹⁹⁹

When Aluma told me how he came to join the rebels, he referred to his great disappointment in, and lack of support from, his father. At my first encounter with Aluma in October 2011, he explained that he had gone to the bush in 1997, when he was around 14 years old. Over time, I felt that he remained ambiguous about the circumstances under which he had gone into the bush. Had he been forced or did he go by choice? In his initial statement referring to his moment of joining the rebels, he said: 'I joined not to be a problem to someone. [...] There were no school fees and there was no money [at home].' Sometime later, he said: 'If they [the rebels] know that you have a problem, they can force you to go.' The particular 'problem' affecting Aluma was the lack of support from his father.

Thus, the first time I met Aluma, he spoke of joining the rebels in order 'not to be a problem to someone', which carries the suggestion of a 'free' choice, while in later encounters he often used the expression of having been 'forced'. In August 2012, for example, the issue came up again, and in the fragment from my field notes below, it is clear that once again I was thrown into confusion by his explanations.

As we were seated in a taxi together, about to visit another interlocutor and friend, and waiting for the taxi to fill up on this quiet Sunday morning, Aluma told me that the boy we were observing outside (a broker at the taxi park) was a former child soldier like himself. 'He was among the youngest, we used to call him Babyface.' I asked him what such a small boy (he looked young but must have been in his late twenties at least) did with the rebels. [...] 'Ah [...],' Aluma replied, suggesting that the boy was not so innocent as he came across. [...] Then the story unfolded about how boys like them came to join the UNRF II rebels. I had most often heard Aluma refer to the notion 'I was forced', but the explanation now once again provoked questions: he referred to not having anyone to support him, and that Babyface was *in the same condition*. 'There was no money for school, for clothes, for shoes. At some point you start wandering, and at some point you start thinking, "Let me meet my death on the way".'²⁰⁰ (Based on field notes, August 2012).

¹⁹⁸ Mobile phone top-up cards.

¹⁹⁹ Majid explained to me himself how he had started up his own business. He began by selling cassava flour and later was able to develop his business dealings further. He never referred to the fact that his father had helped him. It was nevertheless obvious that he had his own hut and access to land and that his father had supported him to go to school up to Senior 4. In 2012, a brother of his who was in the army fulfilled a longstanding promise to him to pay for his driver's license. During his stay in Arua to obtain the license, he worked as a *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxi driver), and with the money he earned, supplemented by the money from his business in Yumbe, he was able to buy a motorcycle. In Yumbe, he later applied for a small job guarding one of the telephone masts at night, using a traditional bow and arrow, asking a younger brother to sell from his little shop occasionally when he had to sleep during daytime.

²⁰⁰ See Chapter 5 on similar expressions.

In 2013, during a brief visit to Yumbe, once again the *forced* nature of Aluma's joining the rebels returned in our conversations; and when after this I asked him explicitly for clarification, he suddenly gave more details than before: 'Didn't I tell you? We were ambushed [and abducted] as we were travelling with a taxi.' One could perhaps understand this ambiguity of—and the sudden addition of new information to—Aluma's story in terms of his wanting to maintain in front of me an impression of having been forced to join the rebels, while at the same time, during off-guard moments, he let slip the truth about having actually joined voluntarily. However, something else might be at stake here.

The story of Hamid, another so-called former child soldier in the UNRF II, sheds more light on how to understand this tension between 'force' and 'choice'. Hamid told me how he came to join the UNRF II:

I was 18²⁰¹ years when I joined at the end of 1999. I was at school, but it seemed I could not continue to Senior 3. My father received no proper pension²⁰² to sponsor me. My father was old and he could not manage to dig [i.e. farm]. *The anger of no school fees made me join*. Those people [the rebels] came, robbed our goats and chickens. I was inside; they called for me and said [that] for three months they had been looking for me. If possible, I go with them. If I did not do what they wanted, they said let me see what happens. *I was ready [...]* so I was *captured* from my home. (Hamid, November 2011)²⁰³

Hamid's case (and others) suggests that rebels communicated directly with some youths and gave them the idea of having, to some extent, choice in the matter. Sometimes the rebels knew the youths whom they approached²⁰⁴ and were counting on their dissatisfaction with their general situation. They sometimes even offered them some good opportunities in the bush.²⁰⁵ Perhaps this helps to explain some of the rather ambiguous narratives in terms of whether the youths were forced to join or whether they had chosen to join the rebels. Many referred to rather choiceless decisions (Coulter 2008; Bolten 2012: 87), yet also expressed their agency—stating, for instance, that they were offered a moment of reflection in which they would argue that staying behind held no promise or was at times a dangerous choice compared with going to the bush, which promised the

²⁰¹ Even though Hamid was 18 at the time of joining, he nevertheless belonged to those designated as 'child soldiers', for reasons that are also explained for Abiriga.

²⁰² Here Hamid indicates that his father was a member of the former Ugandan Army; thus, Hamid's situation also fits with that of Abiriga and Aluma in this chapter, namely that of having a former combatant father who was currently 'incapacitated'.

²⁰³ In a similar vein, other interlocutors stressed the choices that youths were given: either to be taken or to be killed: 'There was a time when they [the rebels] met with the forces of the government, the UPDF. Even the gunship [...] was called and those people [the rebels] were just bombarded with bombs. And that is how they now left the place. And then at that point of their actions, they could not even think of leaving the youths behind [...]; if they get you on the way, you are either taken or you are killed. So [...] that is exactly what was happening here.' (Interview with two youths, 2 August 2010)

²⁰⁴ In some cases they were brothers.

²⁰⁵ Two children were told that they were needed as a 'secretary' as there were few educated people in the 'bush'.

opportunity of a career or some money, and a way out of the (sometimes dangerous) situation that they were living in, in a territory caught between rebel and army activity.

To return to Aluma, it is clear that he proposed that it was the lack of support from his father and the despair that it led to that, when he was forced to make a choice, drove him to the bush. A similar explanation was offered by Hamid. For Aluma, the love that he found in his brother, who helped him go to primary school, was long gone. He had already become a 'wanderer' and was now confronted with the choiceless decision of going into the bush.

Since returning from the bush, where he had seen and participated in fighting against the SLPA,²⁰⁶ Aluma had been confronted with the same frustrations and disillusionments as Abiriga with regard to the promises of reintegration for former child soldiers²⁰⁷ made by a variety of actors, promises which remained unfulfilled more than ten years after the peace agreement had been signed (see Both & Reis 2014). When I met him in 2011, he was struggling to buy a plot of land, while he accused his father of selling off his land (during a period of land speculation in the region) and of not thinking of his children. Aluma often described himself as looking like a mad man, a wanderer still, without a job or support. He had learned to live on one meal a day and was very thin. He had tried twice to find work in Juba, despite the hardships and insecurity he faced there, in order to try to earn some money for a plot of land. It was clear from my interactions with Aluma that he was looking for alternative father figures and had encountered a man²⁰⁸ who was willing to help him find a new job. However, this man was involved in a fatal car accident at the end of 2013 and all of Aluma's options for a better future were cut short. He was very anxious to leave Yumbe, where he felt more and more angry and, as he explained, was starting to feel vengeful towards those who he felt had cut his future short—namely, the former rebel leaders, district officials, and other parties that had not lived up to the promises of looking after the proper reintegration of the former child soldiers of the UNRF II (ibid.). He also occasionally referred to his peers whom he met when travelling to Kampala and Juba, who were similarly angry and waiting for redress.

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²⁰⁶ Elsewhere I explain how they freely spoke about fighting against the SPLA, while they remained ambiguous about fighting within Yumbe (see Chapter 2; and this also occurs in Abiriga's case above).

²⁰⁷ Throughout this dissertation I have chosen to refer to these youth as 'former childsoldiers' a term they use themselves. A more correct term would be 'children and youth formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups'. The use of either one of these labels creates the risk of reinforcing stigmatization or reinforcing particular parts of one identity. The labels can also actively be used by children and youth in order to portray themselves as victims and claim benefit of development and governmental programmes, as I sometimes observed in Yumbe.

²⁰⁸ He had re-encountered a man whose life he had been able to save while with the rebels, by convincing his peers to leave him alone and not shoot him.

UNCARING FATHERS?

How can we understand the feelings of these children and youths—their high aspirations for education, the absence of fatherly love, and their despair and wandering in search of alternative sources of ‘love’—as motivations for them going so far as to ‘join’ rebel groups?²⁰⁹ In their narratives, these interlocutors presented their fathers as uncaring and somehow incapable, and stressed how this factor caused them what they refer to as ‘pain’. Four aspects in particular mark their relationships with their fathers, aspects which they explained as having shaped the course of their life histories: first was the notion of a lack of ‘fatherly love’ that was closely entangled with the pain my interlocutors feel; second was the material aspect (or rather its absence) related to this lack; third and fourth, there seemed to be other aspects at play that explained the attitudes of these sons towards their fathers, concerning their fathers’ attitudes of ‘waiting’ and their fall from status, which were much less easily expressed. Below, I elaborate on these four points in more detail. For analytical purposes, they have been divided into different sub-sections; however, it is important to remember that they are all in fact closely related and intertwined.

A lack of love

My interlocutors’ approach to a lack of love should be understood as more than a reference to the absence of fatherly affection. Rather, the concept refers more to care and support and has a material core. Bolten (2012: 3) provides the following description of love as it applies in Sierra Leone: ‘Love is a Sierra Leonean concept of material loyalty—relationships forged and sustained in complex, often compassionate acts of resource exchange [...]’. Aluma and Abiriga gave a strong portrayal of their fathers as unable to love them. Occasionally, they portrayed the love of others as influential in their lives: Abiriga was loved by his mother, who worked to grow cotton—with his help—to provide for him, and his half-brothers also provided for him for a while; Aluma’s brother at some point also helped him with his school fees. But apparently the structural lack of love from their fathers could not be redressed by these other people who came and went in their lives, and hence the pain they often referred to.

Their fathers were unable to support or provide care for their sons when they were teenagers, which was the expectation of these youths. Here, these fathers were seen to breach the moral norms in the context of the reciprocity expected between generations (Alber et al. 2008: 7). Moreover, this occurred after significant loss, defeat, and deprivation (remember the ruined structures beside which they lived). This latter situation led to a form of generational conflict (ibid. 8), something that seems inevitable in situations of turmoil, poverty, and rapid social change (Abbink & van Kessel 2005; Alber et al. 2008). Generational conflicts and their relationship to youth mobilization for armed conflict in Africa over the past decades have been described for other regions (see for

²⁰⁹ See Chapter 5 for further explanation on going to the bush / joining a rebel group.

example Peters & Richards 1998: 187; Jones 2009). But these other descriptions all have their own particular local and cultural dynamics that are not explanative of the dynamics of generational conflict and tension at stake in Yumbe. Among youths in Yumbe, the conflict can be understood predominantly with reference to fathers' more prosperous past (under Idi Amin) and how this past has subsequently been dealt with. Young people like Aluma felt deserted by father figures who were supposed to love them but who could not live up to this expectation—even though in many cases the fathers had loved their older brothers, at a time before going into exile when they had still been able to. This means that an element of comparison also plays a role in the experienced lack of love. Equally, the interlocutors compared themselves with other 'privileged' youths in their surroundings, like Aluma's recurrent references to Majid, explaining their success in terms of the presence of *fatherly love*. In line with Bolten's (2012: 3) explanation, we see that '[I]ove is a foundational tenet of social personhood [...], thus it informed individual actions and influenced major events during the war'. The absence of fatherly love, in the case of Yumbe, had motivated young men to join the rebellion.²¹⁰ Furthermore, never far from the horizon of their narratives was the reference to the accusation of 'greed'. The greed of which they accused their fathers was the ultimate threat to the fulfilment of love (ibid.). The following section explains this dynamic.

Mafuta mingi

Like other former military fathers in Yumbe, the lives of Aluma's and Abiriga's fathers were marked by extreme material loss, and this influenced young people's lives (as also shown in the previous chapter). The youths in my research, when they talked about their parents, often referred to them as lamenting their loss of property and wealth, especially when confronted with hardships today. When faced with difficult circumstances in the present, their parents would talk in front of their children about how such a problem (financial difficulties or misfortune in the family) would have been solved in the past (by selling a cow or organizing a prayer meeting with clan elders that required slaughtering a cow to bless the clan), but which could now not be performed. But the interlocutors who are central to this chapter referred to a different sense of material loss: both Abiriga and Aluma had fathers who had once served in Idi Amin's army and were once, during another period in their lives, much richer. It is this part of their father's history that made my interlocutors feel particularly disaffected.²¹¹ They referred to this period that no longer existed as something painful for them personally, as if they felt nostalgic for a period even though they had not personally experienced it.

The following, which takes us back to the same taxi journey with Aluma referred to above, illustrates how I came to understand this dynamic:

²¹⁰ The absence of fatherly love for Yumbe youth also led to other 'negative' choices; see Chapter 6 on khat use.

²¹¹ A similar disaffectedness, which emerged as a theme in several FGDs with predominantly male interlocutors, ran through the references of those who had fathers in the UNRF I and UNRF II who were still waiting for compensation.

In the beginning, when I was still getting to know Aluma and we spent an hour in a taxi together, he told me about his frustrations with his father. I tried to probe him on what his frustrations were about. Was he perhaps disappointed by the fact that his father was once part of Amin's notorious army? But I seemed to have totally missed the point; Aluma, like the two brothers we were about to visit, was upset with his father's loss of wealth, accumulated under Amin's regime, but lost during flight and destroyed by the UNLA while the family were in exile in Sudan, where Aluma was born. In my notebook that evening I wrote: 'Every time I try to explore into parents' [i.e. fathers'] roles in the past and how their children judge these, my interlocutors refer to their lost wealth as something painful, not to their possible collaboration with a hideous regime.' (Field notes, August 2012)

I noted down similar observations after spending a day with Abiriga:

After having referred to the fact that his mother was 'the only one that really cared for me' and that he was only able to attend [primary] school because of her, he was again negative about his father. He pointed to the fact that his father had a small car in the past [before exile] and a new motorcycle. All were sold in Sudan [when they were in exile]. When I asked Abiriga if his father had sold them to feed the family, he uttered a disinterested 'I don't know'. It sounded as if Abiriga blamed his father a lot for not having been able to save anything of the wealth he once had. Interested in the extent of the family's economic well-being in the past, I asked him whether there were any pictures of his father or other family members from those days, hoping that these might portray some of the material wealth once possessed. But instead of answering my question, he mumbled something about *mafuta mingi* and then said, 'The way they enjoyed that money was very different from the way we enjoy ours. They thought it would be forever.' (Field notes, 12 July 2012)

With quite a piercing sense of neglect, these young men thus accused their fathers of not having been 'development minded' (to use the words of another former UNRF II child soldier) and of having been greedy in the past. In Swahili (the vernacular language used in Uganda's army since colonial times), *mafuta mingi*—the expression used by Abiriga in the quotation above in reference to his father—means 'a lot of fat' and is a term that was used frequently to refer to the soldiers, police, and others in the 'security sector' in Amin's regime during the 1970s, those who accumulated the spoils of the economic war after the expulsion of the Indians from Uganda (see Decker (2013) on the 'economic war'). According to Decker (2014: 204): 'The literal translation of this Kiswahili phrase is "a large amount of cooking oil". It implies that one has enough money to overindulge or get fat. It signifies wealth and extravagance.' The term can also be translated as 'dripping in fat' (ibid. 81). While at the time of Amin's regime, people referred to his soldiers pejoratively as *mafuta mingi*, their sons now applied this term in the present to accuse their fathers of greedily squandering their previous wealth.²¹² They paid little attention to the fact that

²¹² Decker (2014: 80-82) describes how the West Nile soldiers during Amin's regime became a new socio-economic 'class', together with their female, often Muganda, companions/wives. What emerges in the accounts of some of my interlocutors, as children of military fathers, was that their family's wealth was not very visible in Yumbe. Much of it remained in the south, and this is in line with Gersony (1997: 82), who states that the spill-over effects of the wealth into the West Nile region were limited. But when their fathers fled Kampala and other regions when Amin was chased out, they left with a lot of property (buses/cars), which they used in the attempt to take their families and properties (often including cattle) safely into exile.

due to being forced to flee and seek refuge, and because of the looting that took place in Yumbe following this flight, their wealth could not have survived in any case.²¹³ At the same time, we see no moral judgement made towards fathers for the role they might have played in Amin's regime, or a questioning of how their wealth was obtained during his reign. Such a line of thought was completely absent among my interlocutors. The reference by these sons to greed, in retrospect, is difficult to understand, but is explicable bearing in mind the way it was perceived as threatening one of the most important social tenets (*love*) holding people together, and more so perhaps in a context of severe deprivation after many years of conflict and exile.

Still waiting

Due to his age, Abiriga's father was no longer able to engage in farming and usually sat passively in the compound, hoping for his pension to finally come. The father of Onzima (see the second opening vignette to this chapter) was more hopeful, despite his years of waiting. Due to his close relationship with the president's brother, he still expected the government to contribute to his rehabilitation. Onzima's expression that 'the president is going to rebuild this house for my father' thus conveys another important dynamic that held captive the fathers of the youth described in this research. They still expected redress, in the form of the literal reconstruction of their homes and a reaffirmation of their status as former soldiers, majors, etc. by the current regime. In the meantime, while waiting, they needed to portray themselves as dependent on and loyal to a military president.

When I visited another friend's father, who had also held a high position in Amin's army, I had the impression that he was drunk already at midday and was convinced that I, a foreign visitor to his home, would dedicate my efforts to seeing his ruined house rebuilt and his idle land cultivated. This man exhibited the same kind of externalization of his problems and expectations of redress as the fathers of Onzima and Abiriga. He had been unable to rebuild either the structure of his home or his former status and life since his return from refuge in southern Sudan in the late 1980s, and he was waiting expectantly for help from outside.

Such attitudes displayed by this generation of former combatants resonate with those described by Mwesigye (2010) for the larger West Nile, those of a generation seeking to be loyal to the current president, going so far as to actively campaign for him in the hope of receiving redress. Such attitudes were nourished by the Ugandan government under the former NRA rebel leader and military president, Museveni (Kagoro 2013). It was widely accepted among interlocutors that belated payments might take a very long time

²¹³ One person I encountered did manage to save his two sewing machines, however, by ordering his two wives to carry them to Sudan. This man was not a soldier in Amin's regime but was employed by an Indian costume maker before the Indians were expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972. In general, people (wealthy and poor) often lost their possessions as they fled into exile to Congo or southern Sudan, where local security forces forced them to hand over their possessions in order to cross the border, while other goods were exchanged for land and food (see Harrell-Bond 1986).

to come, but precedents had fostered hope that eventually they would be ‘recognized’ and ‘paid’.²¹⁴ In the meantime, hanging on to one’s ex-combatant identity was therefore necessary in order to maintain ‘contact’ and obtain potential rewards in the future (Both & Reis 2014; Maringira et al. 2015). This became particularly clear when I followed the 2011 political campaigning of one former rebel²¹⁵ in the region. He went extremely far in his loyalty during the presidential campaign of Yoweri Museveni. He canvassed in the countryside intensively, aiming to convince people in various villages to vote for Museveni. His activities did not stop with the election outcome that confirmed Museveni’s stay in power; rather, he continued to visit people and greet them in his election-campaign style. It was obvious in his conversations with me that in return for his support, he expected final recognition for himself and other ‘liberation fighters’, as he labelled them.²¹⁶

The constant reappearance of promises made by the president to the large cohorts of former soldiers and demobilized rebels in Yumbe—around election times in particular (see introduction to this chapter)—meant that this generation of fathers was caught in an ambivalent state of hope. On the one hand, they knew that after so many years of being ignored, there was not much to expect from the government; but, on the other hand, they maintained the self-image of a loyal soldier who deserved redress (see also the Introduction chapter). These men were rather passively waiting for ‘love’ from the state in the person of President Museveni and his brother, Major General Salim Saleh, in order to elevate them from the marginal positions that they, formerly wealthy and important men, had found themselves in ever since being forced to go into exile. While waiting for this ‘love’, this reciprocity that they felt entitled to from a president to whom they had either shown early loyalty or later signed peace with, this attitude of rather vainglorious waiting made them unable to provide the ‘love’ that their children expected from them. These two generations central to this chapter are closely linked not only to each other in their disappointments and ambivalent hopes but also to the larger political-military dynamics in Uganda. The former child soldiers now also found themselves waiting. Although they were less inclined to campaign for the sitting president, they were nevertheless held in suspense by his ability to fulfil ‘military promises’ and therefore had an ambiguous attitude towards him.

²¹⁴ (Kagoro 2013; field notes, JB)

²¹⁵ Someone who had engaged in various armed groups, based on what Debos has framed as ‘fluid loyalties’ for similar armed ‘careers’ in Chad (Debos 2008).

²¹⁶ None of his hopes were realized in the way he had hoped. What was most striking was this man’s humble, submissive attitude vis-à-vis the president of Uganda and his army general brother as a means to access redress. At the same time, he was considered someone dangerous by some of my interlocutors, and he often spoke to me about how a new rebel group would be formed if their demands were not met—although he used less straightforward wording than some other former rebels did.

Loss of status

For my young interlocutors, their fathers had fallen from their powerful positions and had experienced a steep decline in their fortunes in the aftermath of their demobilization as soldiers/rebels. This decline was not only material. Their prosperous careers had been shattered and they had been expelled from their former social status (Mbembe & Roitman 1995: 330). In their inability to accept this fact, the fathers held on to a more heroic past and social position (Leopold 2005a: 53; Bogner & Neubert 2013) and tried to rehabilitate their status continuously by presenting themselves as significant players in the achievements of the Aringa people (Rice 2010; Bogner & Neubert 2013; field notes, JB). This was a position, however, that did not allow for moral reflection or doubt about their various roles in the past, but rather preserved a high regard for the military. Their manner of discharge/disarmament from the army had not been honourable and did not allow them to move on and take up a different social status. Rather, their careers had been destroyed (Maringira et al. 2015: 137), and they sought to regain control over their lives by hanging on to the one status they knew and still expected something from, thereby reproducing its value (*ibid.*).

While young men—their sons—easily referred to their fathers' loss of material wealth, they were undeniably also bothered by the imagination of their once so 'respected' fathers, in their role as military men, now exposing themselves as continuously awaiting redress. Often, their fathers were poor, as seen from their clothing (see also Rice 2010), and demoralized, sitting around all day in the family compound. The fact that their fathers had not been 'rehabilitated' shaped the political subjectivities of their sons and of many young men in Yumbe, who were constantly aware of their parents' expectations, and of the government's delay in fulfilling its promises. But, as we have already seen, the young men themselves, those who had joined rebel groups as well, could also not escape falling into the same expectations of entitlement as their fathers.

THE PERSISTENCE OF MILITARY IDENTITIES

Through the cases presented above, it became quite clear that in Yumbe the air is still pregnant with hopeful expectations and at the same time discontentment among former military men and combatants. The sons of these men have thus grown up in an environment of constantly postponed, pending economic rewards for perpetrators of violence (see also Mischnick 2010; Bogner & Neubert 2012, 2013). In the context of such a state with a central military ethos (Kagoro 2013), young men in the margins of the country have grown up without being socialized with a sense of right and wrong with regard to their fathers' engagement in previous violent movements and histories. Nor has the state judged any of these former violent activities but has rather promoted a culture of impunity (Finnström 2010).^{217, 218}

²¹⁷ 'And over the years many former rebels and other human rights violators have joined the present government and its security apparatus, thus being granted immunity and even rewarded and promoted in

In such a context, sons are not ashamed of their fathers' past careers, nor do they reject their fathers' past use of violence and accumulation of wealth. Rather, fathers disappoint their sons through a lack of support, love, and reciprocity. Many young men joined the party (rebellion) that promised them better prospects, or an alternative form of love, that promised them money or a way out of the impasse they felt stuck in. But through such *choiceless decisions* (Coulter 2008) by youths—this aim to go against the unfortunate fate of their fathers—one can notice an ill-fated repetitive pattern in Yumbe. For with their engagement in the UNRF II (and also in the WNBf before and later the WNBf Congo battalion), a new generation of young people with a 'combatant career' came into being and has later been put on hold by the government for more than ten years after their demobilization. The continuous postponement of the reintegration and compensation promises made leads to a feeling of neglect and deception. A new generation socialized in military/rebel identities and the related expectations of redress and attitudes of dependency was born. Even simple promises, such as those of education or an amnesty certificate, have not been lived up to and seem to take decades to materialize (if at all) (Both & Reis 2014).

BEING A BETTER FATHER

The youths in this research actively aimed and tried to do better than their own fathers, yet they faced significant challenges as young fathers themselves—as becomes clear throughout this dissertation. They claimed strongly that they wanted to support their own children in school and to avoid a repetition of their own childhood experience of neglect. Yet Abiriga, for example, one of these fathers and former child soldiers, found it particularly difficult to live up to his own young family's expectations. He hoped that his compensation and amnesty allowance would soon be paid, and he still aimed to access education, despite now being more than 30 years old. He believed these things would allow him to 'put his family right'. But in the meantime, he had become deeply involved in chewing khat, spending almost all the little cash, earned through 'illegal' logging or which he received from his brothers, on cigarettes and sodas, products consumed with khat. In his generation, the number of ex-combatants is smaller than in that of his father. But his cohort's often disgruntled²¹⁹ waiting for help and compensation looks very much like that

military rank, something that has infused the present government with a "culture of impunity" (Finnström 2010: 140, referring to Obote-Odora 2005: 3 & Eltringham 2004: ch. 5)

²¹⁸ A civil servant in Yumbe also made the following point: 'Now, during the discussions some people asked the [...] department, that people who were killed, who have been harassed by the rebels, have never been compensated. Why should these people that have been killing us now be compensated? Is it now that if you want to get something, you must become a rebel before you are helped? It became a very big argument. [...] And that is why the youth up to now have that mentality. They think that only doing rebel activity you will be compensated! So we need to address this issue! Should you compensate a wrongdoer [...]? Forget the victim?' [7 September 2011].

²¹⁹ Remember the reference to Dawud and Galut, and Aluma's wish to leave Yumbe as a way of addressing his desire for revenge. He also occasionally made reference to angry former UNRF II child soldiers in Yei and Juba he had met on his journeys in south Sudan who wanted to form a new rebel group and return home with arms.

of his father, and this in turn has an effect on these young men's supporting and parenting abilities with regard to their own young wives and children. Longer-term research would permit us to observe how parenting (fathering) develops and how these men engage with their children, and vice versa, once the children become teenagers and school fees become higher than the current primary school fees.

That the deep grievances my interlocutors held against their fathers did not permeate all relational engagements became clear to me when in 2012 I discovered that Abiriga was aiming to fulfil his contribution to the plan his brothers made to construct a new house for their father. The house would be a three-room brick house with iron sheets. Abiriga was assigned the task of contributing bricks to the house, while the brothers who had a more regular income in their small businesses would pay for iron sheets and other needs. Abiriga fulfilled his part and felt relieved to have done so and to be able to hand the project back into the hands of his brothers to finish it. Aluma, on his part, once spoke about a period in which his father was heavily injured in an accident and spent months in hospital. He was the only one who stayed by his father's side for months, dressed the dirty, smelly wounds when the health personnel refused to do so, and made sure that those neglecting his father were reprimanded. These examples show how, despite their difficulties with their fathers, these young men tried to adhere to social norms and take on some of the responsibilities expected from them as mature sons.

DISCUSSION

The above reflections on the inter-generational interactions between fathers and sons, their experience of loss, and the political environment that both holds out promises of entitlement and at the same time neglects, point to a certain continuity in Yumbe. Fathers have transferred to their sons much of their own understanding of their position in Ugandan politics as well their perception of their being in the world (having been wronged and deserving redress), explicitly as well as implicitly. The process in which this transference takes place is not straightforward, but it seems to lie in factors such as teenagers' experiences of a lack of love, collective references to past wealth spent badly, and continued politico-military connections that dominate the nature of the region's connection to the centre of power.²²⁰ Therefore, it is impossible to isolate and confine what is happening between fathers and sons in this region to intimate family relationships, to a generational conflict and a breaching of expectations of reciprocity between the two generations. Rather, ex-military and ex-combatants in Yumbe are highly intertwined and in a complex relationship with both a military president and a general

²²⁰ See Dickson-Gómez (2002) for an ethnographic study of the trans-generational transmission of war trauma that shows how parents' 'reactions to and interpretations of everyday events' explicitly transfer trauma to a generation that has not experienced the war at firsthand. She also points to illness narratives as explicitly and implicitly transferring trauma. While I do not argue that trauma is at stake in this chapter, it is obvious that here also a specific worldview is transferred from parents (fathers) to children (sons). Additional research would be required to understand if this is a specifically gendered process or whether similar worldviews are shared by and transferred from fathers to daughters in Yumbe.

military legacy in Uganda. These are processes to which the signing of a peace agreement brought no end.

This complex relationship with the state implies that these former militants must continue to maintain and preserve a specific military identity in order to continue to be able to make claims on long-belated forms of compensation (Both & Reis 2014; Maringira et al. 2015).²²¹ In such an environment, future generations are not taught much about the rights and wrongs of their parents generation's involvement in violence, as the parents claim a 'noble' rebel or 'righteous military identity'.²²² This not only leads to questions about which worldviews are transferred from one generation to another, but also about which emotions and lessons of war might be silenced or find no space in socialization processes.

This military legacy in Yumbe and the overall militarized state of the nation means that this new generation of young men sometimes have as their only recourse the language of militarism: of threatening to form another rebellion. Others, in the generation of the fathers, have appropriated the language of peace, and some manipulate it for political gain, turning against any reference to renewed rebellion and actively promoting 'peace' in the district. The core of this alternative position is again a military one. Often these men seek close alliance with current president Museveni and the NRM party, on the basis of military-brotherhood claims that go back to the 1980s when the UNRF I and the NRA temporarily fought on the same side.

Beyond trying to understand these dominant dispositions that shape the region and explain them historically, this chapter intends to lay bare how these patterns are partially reproduced in Yumbe's recent history, albeit at a lower scale. This is not only with regard to the group to which Abiriga and Aluma belonged—along with 133 others, the so-called 'Former UNRF II Child Soldiers' in Yumbe. There are also other groups of youths—for example, those who were once allied to the WNBF and those who were abducted by Taban Amin to fight in the DRC and freed and returned in 2004.²²³ All of them have been disappointed in the aftermath of demobilization and wait in vain for promised forms of educational and/or financial redress. This new generation of ex-combatants is becoming increasingly angry and feels defeated in its expectations of redress as an entitlement. While they have not known the wealth that the older generations once possessed in their positions as *mafuta mingi*, they experience an equal sense of deprivation vis-à-vis the promises once made to them which remain unfulfilled. Today, they have equally little at hand in order to show *love* to their own children, and they hold unfulfilled government promises accountable for their deplorable state—even if their state of poverty may not be very different from that of non-combatant youth in Yumbe. Simultaneously, their maintenance of an identification as former rebels and their occasional threats to form another rebellion constitute some of their few social-political resources (see next chapter).

²²¹ The idea here is not that the 'military identity' of people in a region with such a specific military history would have faded if pensions and compensation had been paid or if they had never been promised such redress in the first place, but to argue that the region is caught up in a very specific socio-historical dynamic.

²²² See also Chapter 3.

²²³ See Chapter 2

The dynamics described in this chapter specifically apply to the particular ‘cohort’ of young former combatants focused on here. But non-combatant youth in this study also referred repeatedly to unfulfilled promises that maintained a grip on their parents or uncles who had once been members of the UNRF or UNRF II, indirectly also affecting the *love* that these youth received in their childhood and early manhood. Despite the formal peace agreement, such persistent dynamics point to continuities in attitudes that come about and are reproduced in the historical and contemporary interactions among local actors, and between local actors and a militarized state.

CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter, we saw how a generation of survivors of the multiple armed conflicts grieved over the repeated loss of property, lived in remote areas in deep poverty, and were unable to overcome the feeling of ‘living in the bush’ more than ten years after the signing of the peace agreement of 2002. Children born into such families face a difficult trajectory overcoming these conditions and are likely to be deeply affected by the inheritance of material and morale loss and related worldviews, as spill-over effects of years of conflict.

While the distinction victims/perpetrators is difficult to maintain in a context of prolonged conflict (see also Dolan 2009), the present chapter has highlighted the plight of children of parents that were former combatants (rather than civil ‘victims’) in military or rebel groups, and often in both. The analysis has shown that material loss in this cohort of formerly better-off men has led to a loss of love and support from fathers and to the breaching of the expected reciprocity between fathers and sons. A prolonged state of unfulfilled expectation of redress that occupies many former combatant fathers greatly deprives many youths in Yumbe of the possibility to break with this history. Many of them are preoccupied with the lack of love from their fathers, which even led some youths to join rebellions themselves. In turn, they themselves ironically have become disgruntled fathers waiting for redress. A memory of deprivation that is political informs their self-understanding and acting, their disposition towards the world. However, although this engagement with such particular legacies of conflict may be dominant:

Members of a generation are not surrendered to their cultural and societal position, but are able to use that position to bring about new ideas and practices and pursue their own interests within the historical circumstances in which they live. (Alber et al. 2008: 3)

In the following chapters, it will become clear how youths in Yumbe navigate these legacies of deprivation, loss, and expectation that have come to influence their worldview in the present, and the new ideas and practices they bring to the community. The lack of fatherly love remains one of the themes running throughout this thesis, playing a role in the widespread uptake of khat (see Chapter 6); it also casts a gloomy shadow over the future when we look into some of the personal crises that have provoked migration to Juba (Chapter 7). But there are, fortunately, also signs of positive change. To discuss the theme of diversity among young people, as well as their ability to detach themselves from

predispositions shaped by a militarized past, the following chapter explores how a variety of young people relate to what they refer to as 'typical Aringa' expectations of manhood.