

5-2010

# The Violences of Capitalism: Privatization and Land Tenure in Uganda, Minnesota, and Mexico

Nicole S. Kligerman

Macalester College, nicoleskligerman@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/lashonors>

 Part of the [African Studies Commons](#), [Agricultural and Resource Economics Commons](#), [Latin American Studies Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kligerman, Nicole S., "The Violences of Capitalism: Privatization and Land Tenure in Uganda, Minnesota, and Mexico" (2010). *Latin American Studies Honors Projects*. Paper 4.

<http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/lashonors/4>

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin American Studies at DigitalCommons@Macalester College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Latin American Studies Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Macalester College. For more information, please contact [scholarpub@macalester.edu](mailto:scholarpub@macalester.edu).

**The Violences of Capitalism:  
Privatization and Land Tenure in  
Uganda, Minnesota, and Mexico**

Nicole Scharf Kligerman

Macalester College  
Latin American Studies Department  
Advised by Professor Paul Dosh

Defended on April 12, 2010

## **ABSTRACT**

This project analyzes the relationship between land privatization and violence in societies that previously employed non-capitalist land tenure systems. Exploring the cases of the Dakota in Minnesota, the Acholi in Northern Uganda, and indigenous communities in southern Mexico, I examine how the state forcibly incorporated collective land systems into capitalism through a combination of physical, structural, and intra-community violences. This results in the disintegration of previous means of agricultural production and the accompanying community-based cultural systems. Communities resist this process, however, as they battle for natural resource sovereignty and sustainable peace in their homelands.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b> .....	5
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	8
<b>Overview</b> .....	11
The Dakota.....	11
The Acholi.....	13
Indigenous Communities in Southern Mexico .....	15
<b>Theoretical Background of Resource Privatization and Capitalism</b> .....	17
<b>Chapter Outline</b> .....	20
<b>CHAPTER 2: PHYSICAL VIOLENCE</b> .....	22
<b>Theoretical Background of Physical Violence</b> .....	23
<b>Case Studies: Physical Violence in the Dakota, Acholi, and Indigenous Mexican Communities</b> .....	24
Minnesota and the Dakota:	
The 1862 U.S.-Dakota War and Dakota Genocide .....	24
Uganda and the Acholi: The 23-Year Civil War .....	31
Mexico and Indigenous Communities: Militarization of Southern Mexico .....	41
<b>Concluding Comparative Discussion</b> .....	51
<b>CHAPTER 3: STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE</b> .....	53
<b>Theoretical Background of Structural Violence</b> .....	55
<b>Case Studies: Land Policies in Minnesota, Uganda, and Mexico</b> .....	59
Minnesota: Localized and National Legislation .....	59
Uganda: The Land Amendment Bill, the Madhvani Plantation, and the Gulu University Expansion Plan .....	68
Mexico: The 1992 Agrarian Law .....	76
<b>Concluding Comparative Discussion</b> .....	85
<b>CHAPTER 4: INTRA-COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE</b> .....	88
<b>Theoretical Background of Intra-Community Violence</b> .....	89
<b>Case Studies: Intra-Community Violence in the Dakota, Acholi, and Indigenous Mexican Communities</b> .....	91
The Dakota: Legal Battles and Leadership Tensions .....	91
The Acholi: Land Wrangling .....	96
Indigenous Communities in Southern Mexico: Piecemeal Dissolution .....	101
<b>Concluding Comparative Discussion</b> .....	103
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION</b> .....	105
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	114
<b>APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS</b> .....	115
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	116

If Acholi people didn't have land, there would be a very big problem.  
Investors would be chasing them all the time. Now that I have kids,  
how am I going to feed them?  
How am I going to send them to school?

If Acholi people had no land, they would be sleeping in verandas,  
on the balconies of some rich people.

-Grace, interview participant from Gulu, Northern Uganda

They want to displace us as if we have no children.

We need development;  
this is democracy.

-An executive officer of the Gulu Concerned Landowners Association, Northern  
Uganda

## FOREWORD

I came to study the relationship between land rights, capitalism, and violence in Northern Uganda, where I lived with a family for two months in an area that was virtually uninhabitable three years prior because of war. In collaboration with my friend Obunya Dean, I undertook a one-month fieldwork research project to better understand the relationship between land conflict and the 23-year civil war. When I asked Acholi people about the result of land alienation, they responded almost exactly the same as when I asked about the effects of war: violence experienced both by land privatization and from the war resulted in widespread physical displacement, internment, malnutrition, starvation, physical battle, and death. Further, violence from land alienation and from war result in massive changes to cultural, political, spiritual, and economic systems; this community breakdown—which results in death in some cases—is a form of structural violence (violence built into systems that results in unequal life chances) as Acholis are denied land, their most basic need. Community survival systems continue to breakdown in the aftermath of war, as the government continues to build pressure to legally title property—and therefore allow formerly inalienable land to be bought and sold— leading to intra-community violence in the form of nearly daily land wrangles (skirmishes between neighbors over land delineation).

Listening to and learning from my Acholi friends and host family, I came to understand the war as far more complex than the terroristic barbarity that not only the Ugandan central government, but also many of non-governmental

organizations (that sustain themselves on continuing the poverty they pledge to combat) portray it to be. The war is about colonialism, geopolitics, power, natural resource rights, and many other factors too complex to fully grasp in a mere two months. Leaving Uganda very humbled, one thing did seem clear to me: sustainable peace cannot come to the Acholi people until safe access to communal land is assured.

I began to think more deeply about the relationship between land privatization and violence. What forms of violence are manifested in the shift from a collective to a privatized land system? Can land privatization—often the basis for implementing capitalism—be considered a form of violence? I wanted to investigate these questions and push myself to better understand the complexities between violences and capitalism across time, geography, and community. The case of the neoliberalization of Mexico, predicated on legally changing the land system from the collective *ejido* to now-alienable land, first drew me to Latin American Studies. As a current Minnesota resident, I thought it imperative to learn more about the genocide and land expropriation policies that enable my residency in this state.

As a white woman and a U.S. citizen, I harbor a sense of ambivalence about my position within this project. I am acutely aware that the ability to study the Other comes with an extremely fraught colonial history of privilege based on exploitation; as Jane Blocker (2009) argues, the witness is a privileged subject position. In particular, researching populations that have been labeled as “indigenous” is predicated on painful histories of degradation on the part of white

academics (and the political and economic forces they frequently support). Those are not historical grievances, but the continuing problems of the neocolonial academy in which I am participating through this project.

I do not claim to speak for or represent the communities I discuss and though I act as a conduit between my case studies and the reader, I undoubtedly shape the transmission of information. I encourage those reading to interrogate their own positionality, relationship to the studied communities, and relationship to me as a highly privileged person within the neoliberal system.

I have tried to fully represent the challenges surrounding issues of land privatization and manifestations of violence. I take full responsibility for any misrepresentations of people, history, events, or concepts.

I welcome any question, concern, critique or comment you may have of this project. Please contact me at [nicoleskligerman@gmail.com](mailto:nicoleskligerman@gmail.com) to begin a dialogue.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.*

-Franz Fanon (1965: 44)

Safe access to land provides the cornerstone for sustainable peace for many communities throughout the world. Land provides not only for the physical well being of those who tend it, but the basis for political, economic, social, religious, and cultural exchanges as well. What happens when people, who previously accessed their land communally, are pushed into privatized land systems? How, and by whom, is that privatization enacted and what are its long-term effects?

In this project, I explore the relationship between different forms of violence<sup>1</sup> enacted on societies that previously employed non-capitalist land tenure systems. My theoretical analysis is based on three case studies, all of which formerly operated under non-capitalist land tenure systems: the Dakota in the Midwestern United States, the Acholi in Northern Uganda, and different indigenous communities in southern Mexico. Specifically, I examine the process through which non-capitalist land tenure systems are forcibly incorporated into capitalist production systems through a combination of physical, structural, and intra-community violences. Though separate phases, these forms of violence exist on an interconnected spectrum that mutually reinforces their differing

---

1 There is a contentious theoretical debate surrounding the definition of violence. In this project, I use Johan Galtung's (1969) definition as "violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations" (168).

manifestations. As Robben and Nordstrom argue (1995), “too-narrow conceptualization of violence prevents us from realizing that what is at stake is not simply destruction but also reconstruction, not just death but also survival” (6).

My research findings suggest a causal relationship between the three forms of violence: physical war “clears” communal land of its inhabitants via death and forced internment, leading to further land alienation and the subsequent structural violence born from the inability to safely access land. Structural violence leads to intra-community violence as neighbors begin to fight for control of the quickly diminishing natural resource. Intra-community violence can then result in civil strife or even war. This results in the disintegration of previous means of agricultural production and the accompanying community-based cultural systems. Communities resist this process, however, as they battle for natural resource sovereignty and sustainable peace in their homelands.

The Dakota, Acholis, and southern Mexican communities experience the three stages of violence on a spectrum, with varying levels of severity and impact at each formation. They differ in important ways, yet in all three cases shifting the land tenure systems from collective holding to a privatized system necessitated state-sponsored physical violence and legal changes that sabotaged the populations’ ability to safely access land. Differences between the case study societies contrast with the similar outcomes of experiencing violences, highlighting important theoretical cohesion despite differences. The fact that similar causal processes can be identified despite case differences points to the

broader applicability of my hypothesis. In all three cases, capitalism serves a form of violence in and of itself.

The story between the relationship between capitalism and violence would not be complete without highlighting community resistance at every stage of violence<sup>2</sup>. Ignoring these highly political community actions, which occurred in all three cases, would be not only misleading, but disempowering as well. As such, I additionally chronicle community-based resistance to land privatization.

This project took place over several stages. I began by conducting nine in-depth interviews with residents of the Laroo Division in Gulu District of Northern Uganda on the effects of war in terms of land access<sup>3</sup>. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Acholi and translated by Obunya Dean, but some were held in either English or a combination of the two languages. To protect my interview informants, all of their names have been changed in this paper; my informants chose their own pseudonyms. Additionally, we held interviews with local experts in field related to my research, including a local politician, an NGO worker, a professor at Gulu University, and the executive committee of the Gulu Concerned Landowners Association. I researched the Dakota and indigenous Mexican case studies primarily through secondary research accomplished by

---

2 There is considerable scholarly debate surrounding definitions and recordings of resistance, but the purpose of my project is not to enter into such analysis. Michael Brown (1996) contends that “attributions of resistance become an important rhetorical tool” for the social scientist to preach her own sense of morality (729). He further argues that “the indiscriminate use of resistance and related concepts undermines their analytical utility” (730) and ultimately can serve to “violat[e] the complex and creative understandings of those for whom we [anthropologists] presume to speak” (734). Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner (2004) convincingly argue that “resistance is a fashionable topic” (533) and outline varying uses of the contested term.

3 Although all of my interview participants lived in the same division in Gulu, there was diversity in their responses based largely on generational and educational differences, as well as on what kind of land tenure my informants lived and worked.

other researchers in addition to primary documents such as copies of land privatization bills and transcripts of statements made during war. To support my research specific to the case studies, I drew upon the works of several theorists of structural violence, capitalism, the role of resource privatization, and resistance in other conflicts worldwide. I incorporated that research throughout the theoretical analysis of this project.

### **Overview of Case Studies**

The ordering of my case study material reflects the specific connections between the events in these three populations; while the Dakota and Acholi cases are more comparable to each other, the experiences of indigenous Mexicans who oppose neoliberalism (the contemporary form of capitalism based on global “free” trade and state deregulation)<sup>4</sup> are less parallel. Despite the differences in process, however, the results of violence and land alienation on Mexicans are similar to that of the more analogous experiences of the Dakota and Acholi. Below, I briefly describe the experiences of the Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexican communities in relation to war and land alienation; the subsequent chapters will provide significantly more detail and analysis of these events.

#### **The Dakota**

The expansion of Euro-Americans into the present day western United States was predicated on the massacres of many nations indigenous to the land and federal legislation that further alienated those nations. The Dakota of *Minisota Makoce* (“Land Where the Waters Reflect the Skies” in the Dakota

---

<sup>4</sup> Please see David Harvey’s (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* for more.

language, and termed “Minnesota” by settlers) entered into several land treaties with the U.S. government, notably the 1851 Treaty of Traverse de Sioux. In 1862, angered at violations of that 1851 treaty, a group of Dakota warriors declared war on the state of Minnesota. After the Dakota soldiers lost the war against the Minnesotan troops in six short weeks, Minnesota Governor Alexander Ramsey ordered the forced internment of 2,100 Dakota civilians in concentration camps at Fort Snelling and Mankato, Minnesota, as well as the mass execution of 307 Dakota men (ultimately 38 of them were killed). Arguing that “the Sioux [the umbrella term for the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota nations used by non-Native Americans] must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the State” (Wilson 2005: 190), Ramsey presided over the Dakota Genocide that ultimately took the lives of hundreds of civilians in concentration camps and death marches. Bounties of \$25 to \$200 dollars were placed on the heads of remaining Dakota people resulting in their fleeing and an exacerbation of the Dakota Diaspora.

Simultaneous to the war, federal legislation legally alienated the surviving Dakota from their land as the U.S. Congress exercised its plenary power over all American Indian nations. The 1887 General Allotment (Dawes) Act passed by the U.S. Congress legalized the expropriation of Indian land throughout the U.S., resulting in high levels of structural violence via the denial of the basic necessity of land. By the time of the nation-wide Allotment Act, however, the U.S. government had almost entirely legally alienated and disestablished the Dakota from their land. Combined with a series of fraudulent cases and misleading

taxation regulations, the immediate-term result of the Allotment Act was Indigenous peoples' loss of approximately 60 million acres of their land.

The long-term effects of physical violence and land expropriation devastated the Dakota nation. Fractionated land ownership (the division of land into smaller and smaller parcels as inheritance trickles down the generations) and the "checkerboard" effect (whereby land ownership on reservations is divided between Indigenous and non-Indigenous individuals) have resulted not only in extreme economic difficulties and challenges in accessing natural resources, but also in political, cultural, and social hardships. Internal to the Dakota nation, decades-long legal battles between Dakota people over land ownership have resulted in intra-community strife. In contemporary times, however, many people in the Dakota community, as well as other American Indian nations, are involved in combating the continuing process of land alienation.

### **The Acholi**

The British colonization of Uganda divided the fledgling country into agriculturally productive and unproductive zones, deeming Northern Uganda, home to the Acholi people, to be unproductive. The ethnic divisions mainly created by colonization continued after Uganda's independence in 1962. Following decades of strife, the Northern Ugandan war began in 1986 after Yoweri Museveni's rise to the presidency following his five-year "bush war" against Milton Obote, prompting rebellions in Northern Uganda.

Over the next two decades, hundreds of thousands of Acholis were killed, tortured, raped, or kidnapped by the rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army

(LRA) and the national army, the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF). Ninety five percent of the Acholi population was forced to resettle into Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. In 2010, the war had yet to formally end, with stalled peace deals in Juba, Sudan in 2008 leading only to the LRA's movement to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the rebel group continues its violence. Northern Uganda existed in a fragile atmosphere far from the violence of the 1990s, but also far from sustainable peace.

Various land privatization plans supported by the central government reinforce the widespread Acholi belief that Museveni began the war to alienate them from their communally accessed land. Where the war physically alienated Acholis from their land via death and forced internment, land privatization policies would legally maintain that alienation. The structural violence of land alienation often has the same ramifications as war: malnutrition, inability to farm and provide for oneself, deep difficulties in carrying out social, cultural, and political practices, and even death.

In addition to the violence presented by land privatization in the post-armed conflict<sup>5</sup> era, intra-community violence rages through Northern Uganda as bloody land wrangles occur between neighbors fighting over land delineation. Knowledge of land borders has decreased over the course of the war for several reasons: most elders who held the clan-based knowledge of land delineation died during the war; hundreds of thousands of young people lived virtually their entire

---

5 Although it is common to refer to the era after the LRA moved out of Northern Uganda as the "post-conflict" era, I choose to write "post-armed conflict" to emphasize that despite the LRA's absence, conflict still riddled the region.

lives in camps without access to their ancestral homes; and the UPDF cut down the trees that served as physical boundaries of land holding. Resultingly, neighbors struggle—often fatally—to determine land ownership. And yet Acholis like the Gulu Concerned Landowners Association persevere, working to prevent the central government’s land privatization schemes and to decrease land wrangling.

### **Indigenous Communities in Southern Mexico**

The Spanish conquest of Mexico was marked by highly unequal land ownership that continued after Mexico’s independence in 1821. *Latifundios*, huge swaths of land owned by a single family, characterized both pre- and post-independent Mexico; by 1910, one percent of the population owned 96 percent of the land.

As a result of the Mexican Revolution, the state created a program of communal land holding called *ejidos*. Beginning in 1910, the Revolution formed as a rebellion against dictator Porfirio Diaz whose 34-year reign was marked by violence and increasing agrarian inequality. Forces led by Francisco Madero, a wealthy oligarch from northern Mexico, battled Diaz, as did the troops led by Emiliano Zapata from central Mexico and Pancho Villa from northern Mexico; the latter two forces fought for agrarian reform, although they did not reach an agreement over the terms of that reform (Tutino 1986).

Stemming from this agitation for land reform, Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution created the *ejido* system that legally redistributed land, making the resource both communally accessible and inalienable. Additionally, all water and

land became property of the Mexican state. This constitutional rhetoric did not directly translate into the widespread system overhaul that the Zapatistas fought for during the Revolution; *ejidos* were not distributed until the 1934 election of Lazaro Cardenas and not all those who petitioned to become *ejiditarios* successfully received land. The bureaucratic agrarian redistribution process continued for decades after Cardenas' rule despite that agrarian reform remained a key platform of political rhetoric of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Tutino 1986).

The rise of neoliberalism in Mexico, however, radically disrupted Article 27, and began a process of land consolidation in the hands of the elites—this time represented by domestic and international corporate interest. The 1989 “Reform of the Countryside” implemented by then-President Carlos Salinas, followed by the 1992 Agrarian Law, effectively ruptured agrarian reform and impoverished Mexican farmers (many of whom are also indigenous) by legalizing the alienation of land. Coupled with other harmful agrarian measures of NAFTA, the ability to sell *ejido* land piecemeal through the Agrarian Law continues to erode the communal land base. Though this affected all Mexican farmers, it was particularly detrimental to indigenous communities who relied primarily on subsistence farming for survival (Lewis 2002).

Simultaneous to this legislation has been the militarization of southern Mexico by the recently combined Mexican army and police forces. Heightened military presences in Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero have particularly targeted indigenous communities that oppose the change in land systems and the

increasing corporatization of Mexican agriculture. Massacres and political repression by the army are coupled with large-scale construction projects that cut through many indigenous communities, further decreasing safe land access. Physical violence targeting indigenous communities has been at the center of the low-scale war designed to protect state and corporate interests in natural resources in southern Mexico (Hodges and Gandy 2002).

### **Theoretical Background of Resource Privatization and Capitalism**

Using these cases as examples, I expand upon the plethora of scholarship by neo-Marxist and anti-neoliberal theorists who work at the intersections of capitalism, natural resources, and various forms of violence to theorize on the role of privatization in conflicts worldwide. In this section, I draw upon classical critiques of capitalism that describe the shift from communal natural resource use to privatized systems; these theorists also analyze the link between land privatization and physical violence. I continue by exploring literature critical of neoliberalism and exploitation of natural resources by the neoliberal system. I conclude by highlighting academic material that exposes the role of land access in global conflicts. My own research is situated in the nexus of these critiques of capitalism, natural resource exploitation, and global conflict.

Karl Marx (1867) describes the process of primitive accumulation as turning subsistence agricultural production into profit-oriented market production. This transformation, which separates rural peoples from ownership of or free use of land for their own sustenance, serves to “divorce the producer from the means of production” (Marx 1867: 874-5). Through primitive accumulation,

expropriated former communal land becomes privately owned land, which can be employed by its owner as capital—that is, to employ labor and produce a profit. The former subsistence dwellers of that land become exploited wage-laborers<sup>6</sup>. Massimo De Angelis (2001) argues that this process of primitive accumulation continues in contemporary times in varying forms including the privatization of publically-owned utilities, and David Moore (2004) continues by analyzing the connections between primitive accumulation and neoliberalism. Primitive accumulation is evident in all three of my case study populations: physical violence is the first step in expropriation formerly communal land and legislative changes complete the process of land commodification.

Peter Linebaugh (1993) and E.P. Thompson (1990) analyze the privatization of the commons in eighteenth century England, which was Marx's example of primitive accumulation. Linebaugh traces the rise in Britain of property capitalization and the simultaneous use of capital punishment for those who committed crimes against private property; he states that "the forms of exploitation pertaining to capitalist relations caused or modified the forms of criminal activity, and second, that the converse was true, namely, that the forms of crime caused major changes in capitalism" (Xxiii). Thompson describes the enactment of the Waltham Black Act in May 1723, which allowed for the death penalty for crimes against property, which included "hunting, wounding or stealing red or fallow deer...maliciously killing or maiming cattle; cutting down trees....; sending anonymous letters demanding 'money, venison, or other valuable

---

6 For a more in-depth discussion of primitive accumulation and its surrounding theoretical debate, see Massimo De Angelis's (2001) "Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The continuous character of capital's enclosures."

thing,” (22) among other charges. This meant that not only were the farming and hunting practices of people who used to rely on the land illegal, but criminal as well. This shift in conceptions and legal (mis)uses of “property” greatly hindered British farmers’ ability to self-subsist.

But primitive accumulation and the subsequent rise in capitalism is not exclusive to eighteenth century Britain. As Talal Asad (2000) argues, “capitalism and the associated culture that many call by the name ‘modernity’ are promoted vigorously by powerful liberal states and business corporations, and followed with varying degrees of enthusiasm and of success, by other agents around the world” (26).

Tracing the rise of contemporary neoliberalism, Walden Bello (2005) argues against the exploitation by the G-8, the Bretton Woods Institutions (like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank), and the World Trade Organization. He states that “while governance...is often described as the function of these institutions, a more appropriate description of their role might be maintenance of the hegemony of the system of global capitalism and promotion of the primacy of the state and economic interests that mainly benefit from it” (1). The promotion of neoliberalism through these institutions and their state and corporate partners, he argues, is at the root of vast global inequality. Further, Bello points to the important role of agriculture in global free trade agreements, such as the 1995 Agreement on Agriculture, which granted “big agricultural superpowers [the legal right] to consolidate their system of subsidized agricultural production that was leading to the massive dumping of surpluses on those very markets, a

process that was, in turn, destroying smallholder-based agriculture” (72-73).

Battles for natural resources are on the rise throughout the globe as a result of this increase in neoliberalism, unequal policies of free trade agreements, and the so-called “modernity” that accompanies capitalism. Writing about water privatization in India’s Doon Valley, Vandana Shiva (2002) argues that the “destruction of resource rights...undermine[s] cultural identity,” later resulting in community competition “over scarce resource that define economic and political power” (Xii). She argues that water rights are natural rights that do “not originate with the state; they evolve out of a given ecological context of human existence” (20). Further, Shiva contends, community resource rights are “a democratic imperative...[that] hold states and commercial interests accountable” (31).

The role of land in global conflicts, particularly in Israel/Palestine, has also received considerable attention. Shaul Ephraim Cohen (1993) traces the role of the Israeli planting of a “green belt” of trees around Jerusalem in what the Israeli government calls “open” areas, despite Palestinian claims that the land is their ancestral farmland. Competing forestation practices between the Israeli government and the resisting Palestinian farmers plays a critical role in debates over the borders of Jerusalem and, more broadly, sovereignty and state legitimacy.

### **Chapter Outline**

Chapters 2-4 are divided by stage of violence, which corresponds roughly with the chronological order of forced land alienation. Chapter 2 explores physical violence in the form of war and militarization in Mexico, Uganda, and Minnesota, highlighting the role of colonization in the creation of unequal land

policies that led to war. This physical violence begins the processes of land enclosure necessary for the capitalist commodification of formerly non-capitalist land. Chapter 3 analyzes the legal change in land tenure system after the period of intense physical violence in each of these three societies, noting how juridical measures legalize alienation. In this chapter, I highlight how land alienation acts as a form of structural violence, completing the process of primitive accumulation. Chapter 4 discusses the effects of land privatization and alienation on my case study populations. This section also demonstrates the resulting intra-community violence born from the combination of physical and structural violences; this frequently takes the form of legal disputes and land wrangles (skirmishes between neighbors regarding land delineation). In this chapter I also describe both historic and contemporary resistance to land expropriation by the Dakota, Acholi, and southern Mexican indigenous communities. Chapter 5 concludes with an overview of my analytic claims and the theoretical implications of this project. I argue that capitalism is a form of violence and discuss the broader implications of that claim. I close by suggesting future areas of study.

## CHAPTER 2: PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

In 1862, a group of Dakota soldiers declared war against the government of Minnesota by attacking Euro-American settlers living in Acton, *Minisota Makoce*. Bdweakantunwan Chief Little Crow, leader of the Dakota, led these attacks in protest of the Minnesota government's violations of an 1851 land treaty. The Euro-American soldiers quickly defeated the Dakota, and hanged 38 Dakota soldiers—the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Furthermore, in retaliation to the attack, Minnesota Governor Alexander Ramsey ordered the Dakota Genocide, marked by forced removal, death marches, concentration camps, and mass execution. Far more than a barbaric “Sioux Uprising,” as it was coined by Euro-Americans, the U.S.-Dakota War and genocide were based, in large part, on the expropriation of Dakota land by invading colonial forces.

I tell this history to link the physical violence in Minnesota, Uganda, and Mexico to broader struggles for land control as outside forces attempt to expropriate formerly communally accessed land. In doing so, I establish that in my three cases, outsider interest in commodifying land use resulted in physical violence in order to shift the preexisting land tenure system. Physical violence was the first stage of violence used as a mechanism for that capitalization process

My cases differ from each other in many respects: different populations, land use systems, time periods, countries, and manifestations of physical violence. Despite this, they are united by a striking similarity; physical violence was used as a state mechanism for alienating the Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexicans from their communal land and to begin the process of creating privatized land

tenure systems. As such, capitalism and resource expropriation became inextricably intertwined with extreme physical violence inflicted by the state. The “clearing” of the land via internment and death allowed for outside party land expropriation, later legalized through land privatization.

### **Theoretical Background of Physical Violence**

As Antonius C. G. M. Robben and Carolyn Nordstrom (1995) contend, physical violence should not be presented as a static phenomenon; its “focal points multiply and...the center is a constantly changing nexus” (8). Due to its constant shifting, and my own position as an outsider, representing violence “is fraught with assumptions, presuppositions, and contradictions” (5).

Robben and Nordstrom argue that too often war is analyzed outside of political conflict, described by outsiders as a regression “to a level of inhumanity that is outside normal social life, an unreal world where soldiers enjoy kill and rape is a military strategy” (1995: 2). This assertion certainly holds in my three case studies; in popular media representations, the Northern Ugandan war is reduced to exclusively a battle for child soldiers, the Dakota Genocide becomes the “Sioux Uprising,” and quaint indigenous women in knit caps represent the Zapatista insurgency against neoliberalism in the Western imaginary. By demonstrating the link between economic and political struggle for resources and physical violence, I argue that these experiences of physical violence are highly political and do not occur outside of “normal” social life. Indeed, wherever capitalist land expropriation has occurred, some form of violence has been used as a mechanism to ensure the commodification of the resource.

## **Case Studies: Physical Violence in the Dakota, Acholi, and Indigenous Mexican Communities**

### **Minnesota and the Dakota: The 1862 U.S.-Dakota War and Dakota Genocide**

Physical violence against the nations already residing in the land now known as the United States marks Euro-American colonization of the territory. The U.S. government justified its genocidal military, governmental, and economic policies with the expansionist rhetoric of Manifest Destiny, which deemed Euro-American settling of western territories to be God-granted. The U.S. colonial powers drastically diminished the Indigenous population and altered the diverse land tenure systems in place before capitalist expansion through a combination of tactics, including armed conflicts, the spread of diseases like smallpox and chickenpox, forced assimilation policies, and land treaties that resulted in massive loss of Indigenous territory (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998).

Importantly, through the plenary powers given to the U.S. Congress under Article IX of the Articles of Confederation<sup>7</sup>, Congress—not states—negotiated directly with American Indian nations, who were legally recognized as political entities. Through the 1790 Trade and Intercourse Act, the Constitution also gave Congress the sole authority “to regulate commerce with the Indian tribes” (Fletcher 2008: 170). Because of these plenary powers, the federal government negotiated American Indian land and trade treaties<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Article IX states that “The United States in Congress assembled shall also have the sole and exclusive right and power of... regulating the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians, not members of any of the States, provided that the legislative right of any State, within its own limits, be not infringed or violated” (as quoted in Fletcher 2008: 166)

<sup>8</sup> Importantly, the case of *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) ruled in favor of the Cherokee nation,

The Dakota were not exempt from colonial invasion. The Dakota nation in Minnesota is divided into the subtribes of the Mdweakanton, Wahpeton, Sisseton, and Mahpekiye. The Dakota inhabiting area west of Minnesota included the Yanktonais and the Yanktons, with the Tetons living beyond the Missouri River (The Dakota Society of Minnesota). While Euro-Americans labeled the Dakota the “Sioux” (a word meaning “enemy” or “snake” in Anishinaabe), the word “Dakota” means “ally” or “friend” in the Dakota language (Harjo 2005: 31).

Prior to colonial invasion, the Dakota nation operated through the *tiyapaye* system, the basic sovereign unit based on a grouping of families similar to a village or municipality. In the *tiyapaye* system, there are several societies that serve different functions for the communities, including societies of warriors, hunters, police, identified political leaders, and spiritual leaders. Political and spiritual leaders work together to form the legislative function of the *tiyapaye*, which includes designating land use structures. Resource management, including land, is based upon need; sufficient land is set aside for hunting, fishing, and gathering and animals are contained to a specified area. The collective process for deciding land use is decidedly non-capitalist as leaders identified by the community take the *tiyapaye* as a whole into account when allocating resource use (Janis interview, 10 March 2010).

Beginning in 1824, the U.S. government forcibly transferred Dakota children out of the Dakota community and into boarding schools designed to “civilize” and Christianize Dakota youth. The Office of Indian Affairs, later

---

stating that the federal government could protect the sovereignty of Indians if state governments violated that sovereignty.

renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), created a program for educating American Indians under its “Civilization Program” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998). Removed from their families and communities, beaten for speaking their first language, and shamed for exhibiting any “native” characteristics, many Dakota children died of disease and homesickness in boarding schools run by the BIA or Christian missionaries (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998: 63). Physical, sexual, and emotional abuses were common and, without the “culturally integrated behaviors that led to self-esteem, a sense of belonging to family and community, and a solid American Indian identity,” many children who had been forcibly transferred to U.S. Americanization institutions were “ill-prepared for raising their own children in a traditional American Indian context” (Brave Heart and DeBruyn 1998: 64).

Additionally, land treaties signed between the Dakota and the U.S. Congress government damaged the Dakota’s ability to live in community in the ways possible prior to Euro-American invasion. In 1851, the U.S. government and the Wahpeton and Sisseton bands of the Dakota (“Upper Sioux”) signed the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux, which ceded all Dakota land in Minnesota, and parts of Iowa, to the Minnesota government except for two 150-mile tracts along the north and south sides of the Minnesota River, which were saved as reservations. In exchange, the U.S. government promised to pay the “Sioux” \$1,665,00 in annuities and cash. Although Article One of the treaty states that “peace and friendship now so happily exist between the United States and the aforesaid bands of Indians [the Dakota],” Article Two continued by establishing

the U.S.'s massive land gain, to include

all their lands in the State of Iowa; and, also all their lands in the Territory of Minnesota, lying east of the following line, to wit: Beginning at the junction of the Buffalo River with the Red River of the North; thence along the western bank of said Red River of the North, to the mouth of the Sioux Wood River; thence along the western bank of said Sioux Wood River to Lake Traverse; thence, along the western shore of said lake, to the southern extremity thereof; thence in a direct line, to the junction of Kameska Lake with the Tchan-kas-an-data, or Sioux River; thence along the western bank of said river to its point of intersection with the northern line of the State of Iowa; including all the islands in said rivers and lake.

Between the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the Treaty of Mendota,<sup>9</sup> the Dakota lost approximately 24 million acres of land to the Minnesota government, who opened the land for Euro-American settlement. The Minnesota government granted the Dakota two reservations, each approximately 70 miles long and 20 miles wide: the Lower Sioux Agency near Redwood Falls, MN, and the Upper Sioux Agency near Redwood Falls, Minnesota and the Upper Sioux Agency near Granite Falls, Minnesota. The arrangement dissatisfied the Lower Sioux in particular, as it displaced them from the woodland area that had previously been their home. Additionally, the U.S. government, rather than fulfilling their promise of \$400,000 to the Dakota, instead gave that money to fur traders and people of mixed Indigenous-European heritage that had claims against the Dakota.

### *The U.S.-Dakota War and Genocide*

Dissatisfaction with the corruption of the 1851 land treaty provoked the U.S.-Dakota War and the subsequent genocide, which stand out as brutal

---

9 The 1851 Treaty of Mendota, signed between the U.S. federal government and the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute bands allocated \$1,410,00 to those bands in exchange for their movement to the Lower Sioux Agency. This "opened" the majority of southern Minnesota to Euro-American settlers ("Treaties with Minnesota Indians").

examples of U.S. government-sponsored mass physical violence. In 1862, with the backdrop of the Civil War raging on the eastern coast of the U.S., a group of Dakota killed Euro-American settlers living in Acton, *Minnesota Makoce* in large part to protest the land treaty (Wilson 2005: 184). Shortly thereafter, the Dakota nation declared war against the Minnesota government in an attempt to recuperate the homeland upon which the Euro-American homesteaders increasingly encroached. The Dakota lost the U.S.-Dakota War against the better-organized U.S. soldiers after six weeks, in part due to secret treaties signed between some Dakota individuals and General Henry Sibley as part of the U.S. governments' "divide and conquer" colonizing technique towards American Indian peoples (Wilson 2005: 187).

In retaliation for the war, Minnesota Governor Alexander Ramsey ordered the forced internment of 2,100 Dakota men, women, and children in concentration camps located at Fort Snelling and Mankato (Wilson 2005: 191). On September 9, 1862, Ramsey addressed the Minnesota state legislature, stating that the Dakota "have themselves made their annihilation an imperative social necessity" (Wilson 2005: 205). He continued by adding that "the Sioux must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the State" (Wilson 2005: 190). He then ordered the mass death and forced relocation of the Dakota people.

That November, 1,600 Dakotas were forcibly marched to concentration camps in the Dakota Death March of 1862. In the spring of 1863, the Minnesota government forcibly moved the 1,300 surviving Dakota (who had just spent a winter in the concentration camps under horrific conditions) to newly created

reservations in Crow Creek, South Dakota (Wilson 2005: 191). Meanwhile, the Minnesota government hanged 38 Dakota men, and roughly one third of the remaining prisoners died due to disease and poor conditions. The government placed bounties of \$25 to \$200 on Dakotas still residing in the Minnesota area. Due to persecution, those Dakota who had remained in their ancestral homeland fled throughout the Midwestern United States and north into Canada (Wilson 2005: 192). Colonial William Marshall, the official in charge of the 1862 Death March, later became the governor of Minnesota (Wilson 2005: 199).

During and after the U.S.-Dakota War, Minnesotan soldiers murdered Dakota people. Elsie Cavender, a Dakota woman, spoke of the experiences of her grandmother, Maza Okiye Win, who witnessed the murder of her grandmother during the death march to Fort Snelling in an oral history project conducted by Waziyatawin Angela Wilson. Cavender recounted the story of the death march and the murder of her great-great grandmother:

[The Dakota] passed through a lot of towns and they went through some where the people were real hostile to them. They would throw rocks, cans, sticks, and everything they could think of: potatoes, even rotten tomatoes, and eggs. They were throwing these things at them, but the Indians still had to walk...Someone threw hot, scalding water on them. The children were all burned and the old people too. As soon as they started to rub their arms the skin just peeled off (196)... [As food, the soldiers] would just throw [bread] on the ground. They would have them sleep in either cabins or tents. ...The meat was the same way. They had to wash it and eat it. A lot of them got sick. ...It was on this trip that my maternal grandmother's grandmother was killed by white soldiers. ...The killing took place when they came to a ridge that had no guard rails. [She was supposed to look after the horses] but they couldn't hold them still. ...the soldiers came running to the scene and demanded to know what was wrong. But most of [the Dakota] couldn't speak English...this irritated [the soldiers]...and they succeeded in pushing the older one off [the bridge] and she fell into the water. ...the soldier came again and stabbed her mother with a saber

(197). ...Up to today we don't even know where my grandmother's body is (quoted in Wilson 2005: 198).

After being forced to endure horrific violence during the death march, the Minnesota government forced the Dakotas into concentration camps Fort Snelling and Mankato. Dakota Duane Schultz recounts the conditions during internment in Fort Snelling, stating that

The Indians were confined in a fenced camp of tepees on the north side of the river. It was a gloomy, inhospitable site, on bottomland that turned to mud and offered no protection from the icy winter winds. Settlers ran off the Indians' few horse and oxen and taunted them until eventually they grew bored. The army allotted the Indians only meager rations, typically bread for the adults and crackers for the children (quoted in Wilson 2005: 202).

Many scholars (Wilson 2005; Cook-Lynn 2009) argue that these events constitute genocide under the United Nation's 1948 Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (CPPCG). The Minnesota government's actions against the Dakota specifically violate provisions several provisions of the CPPCG, including (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; and (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part. Taken in the context of Governor Ramsey's statements that the "Sioux" must be "exterminated," violence against the Dakota is established as part of a policy designed to bring about the death of the Dakota nation. As such, Euro-American invasion and colonization of Dakota lands, events that heavily depended on capitalist expansion and land resource use, vitally connect acts of genocide to land expropriation.

## Uganda and the Acholi: The 23-Year Civil War

*“They [the LRA and the government] are like two big elephants fighting.  
Who do you think suffers? The grasses.  
We are like the grasses.”*

-Odokos, interview participant

Uganda became actively involved in the growing world trade system in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century through trade with Egypt and Britain. During the British Protectorate (1894-1962), the colonizers divided Uganda into agriculturally productive and unproductive zones, with Northern Uganda categorized as the latter. While the Acholi were heavily involved in the ivory trade with Egypt<sup>10</sup>, the British favored the Baganda of the central Ugandan Buganda<sup>11</sup> kingdom, appointing them to be civil servants in the Protectorate<sup>12</sup>. Contrastingly, the Acholi were relegated to the position of soldiers. The British created a system of private land tenure for the Buganda kingdom, which was not offered widely to other kingdoms in the fledgling country.

As a direct result of Britain’s “divide and conquer” policies, Uganda’s 1962 independence found an ethnically divided country with uneven economic

---

<sup>10</sup> British explorer Samuel Baker was sent by the Egyptian government to search for ivory and slaves, but received violent resistance by the Banyoro people; as a result, Baker wrote a book denouncing the Banyoro, causing them to be disfavored in the eyes of the incoming British civil servants and army, and thus lose half their territory under British colonialism. The Acholi had a better relationship with the Egyptians, becoming heavily involved in exchanging ivory tusks for guns firearms helped the Acholi maintain their independence from other areas, but skewed the balance of power within Northern Uganda as a system of unequal wealth distribution based on relative control of guns was born (Lange 2004).

<sup>11</sup> The origination of the name “Uganda” for the British-named country. The Baganda Kingdom includes the nation's capital, Kampala.

<sup>12</sup> Baganda chiefs were charged with tax collection and general administration for the rest of the country as the Uganda Railway encouraged the trade in cash crops between East Africa and Britain. British demand for cotton grew, furthering the production of cash crops throughout the country despite the subsistence farming history of many of the ethnicities now incorporated into the protectorate.

access, particularly in regards to agriculture, and ethnically divided political parties. The regimes of Milton Obote<sup>13</sup> (1964-71 and 1980-86) and Idim Amin<sup>14</sup> (1971-79) furthered ethnic tension. Believing the 1980 elections of Obote to be fraudulent, the National Resistance Army, led by Yoweri Museveni, led a five-year “bush war” against the Obote government, leading to Museveni’s rise to the presidency in 1986; with heavy support from the U.S. and Britain, Museveni has ruled continuously since then (Lange 2004).

Today, Uganda has an ethnically and linguistically diverse population of about 32 million. The 2002 Ugandan census states that the population of Northern Uganda, the ancestral home of the Acholi people, is 1,45,437 people (five percent of the Ugandan population) and geographically encompass 12 percent of Uganda (Finnstrom 2008: 34). Northern Uganda’s Acholi region is composed of Gulu, Pader, and Kitgum, Amuru, and Lira Districts.

Acholis historically worked as subsistence farmers, producing millet and sorghum as staples in addition to sweet potatoes, cassava, beans, maize, groundnuts, sesame, squash, and other vegetables (Finnstrom 2008: 35). Before the war, they grew other products (such as mangoes, pineapples, avocados, cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, sunflowers, and rice) for consumption and trade, but the war devastated production (Finnstrom 2008). My interview participants, particularly the seven that worked as subsistence farmers, emphasized the importance of land as the primary means of eating, generating an income, supporting ones children,

---

13 A Lango from the north of the country, Obote’s rule was notably marked with the terrorizing and harassing of the Baganda people and others from central Uganda.

14 Military commander Idi Amin overthrew Obote in a military coup in 1971, leading to an eight-year reign of terror. Estimates of killings during his rule ranged from 100,000 to 500,000 people murdered (“Idi Amin”).

and providing a sort of spiritual solace. Solina, an older woman who works on rented land though she has communal land in a more rural area of Gulu, stated that “we eat land” (Solina interview, 16 April 2009) while the middle-aged farmer and father Otim William argued that he used his communal land for “farming cash crops and food crops” and described it as “wealth” (Otim William interview, 19 April 2009). Grace, a middle-aged mother who no longer has land, told me that “land feeds the Acholi people and can keep my kids.” Odokos, a high school student and Solina’s grandson, elaborated further, explaining that “before whites came with education, land was useful to make them survive with digging, planting, your properties, harvesting to eat, to make life easy” (interview, 15 April 2009).

Land tenure is communal (often described as “cultural” or “customary”) and passed patrilineally through localized families and clans via male heirs; women have access to land only through their husbands and male heirs (Atkinson 2008). Clan chiefs, called *rwots*, distribute clan land based historical use of specific plots (Odur interview, 24 April 2009). Non-clan members can use cultural land, but are unable to claim ownership (Atkinson 2008). Communal land is not titled and therefore often is not recognized as “owned” by the government and investors.

Land also connects deceased ancestors with the living generation (Odur interview, 24 April 2009); farming cultural land provides a deep spiritual importance. Stella, an elderly woman, stated that “when I dig, that’s where I find it good” (interview, 21 April 2009). Properly buried ancestors provide the

continuity and link between generations of Acholis, vitally blessing the present generation and allowing for the flourishing of the Acholi people (Odur interview, 24 April 2009)<sup>15</sup>. Communal land is the fundamental source that allows for this generational continuity (Odur interview, 24 April 2009).

### *The LRA-UPDF War*

Museveni's 1986 presidential gain sparked instant rebellion in Northern Uganda. Though several armed rebel groups formed in the mid-1980s, the only to survive repression by the national army, Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF), was the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by Acholi Joseph Kony and comprised of Acholi fighters. While at first receiving support from many Acholi people because it represented resistance to the repression of the UPDF and the national government, the LRA soon lost that support as its violence ravaged the region and turned against Acholis themselves<sup>16</sup>. Reliant primarily on abducted soldiers, many of whom were children, the LRA murdered and tortured hundreds of thousands of Acholi, making rural subsistence farming a near impossibility. Simultaneously, the UPDF's human rights atrocities, coupled with the horrific conditions in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, further exacerbated

---

15 Acholis honor their ancestors and promote family unification by burying the deceased on communal land. Because of this, Acholis consider graves sacred while simultaneously fearing them because of the power ancestors hold. It is considered unfavorable to step on or desecrate a grave and people fear that spirits will arise if graves are opened. Animal sacrifice, the creation of an *abila* (shrine), and the planting of ficus trees are three mechanisms for honoring ancestral spirits. Because these traditions depend upon communal land, the homestead is "the source of life, source of blessing, and source of continuity" (Odur interview, 24 April 2009).

16 The LRA claims to be guided by a spirit; originally, this spirit was Christian in origin, but has since shifted to being Chinese in origin (Odur interview, 24 April 2009). Professor Odur, a Religious Studies professor at Gulu University, argues that had the spirit guiding the LRA was that of an Acholi ancestor, Acholi people would be more receptive to supporting the group. In Acholi cosmology, there are five main divinities (spirits): *olalteng* (the divinity of war), *lapul* (divinity of fertility), *loka* (of rain), *baka* (a mixed divinity), and *lagoro* (another mixed divinity). Interestingly, Joseph Kony, the leader and founder of the LRA, is from the geographic headquarters of *olalteng*, the divinity of war.

the terrorization experienced by the Acholi population. British and U.S. support of Museveni<sup>17</sup>, coupled with the support of the LRA by exiled Acholis, further complicates the conflict as it appears that those with the power to stop the conflict—the Museveni government, the UPDF, and the leadership of the LRA—receive substantial power from its continuation<sup>18</sup>.

Throughout the war, discourse surrounding land rights presented one of the biggest political battlefields as well as one of the most challenging practical obstacles to peace and stability. Military actions of both the LRA and the UPDF, coupled with the national government’s policy of internment of the displaced population, coalesced into the most devastating overall effects of the war: the increasing difficulty of land access and land security for the agriculturally-dependent Acholi people. But many Acholis believe that the loss of communal land access is not an effect, but a cause in of itself: the impetus for the war, according to many, was outsider desire for control of fertile Acholi land for large-scale farming and natural resource exploitation.

### *The Government, the UPDF, and Land Issues*

Acholis widely believe that Museveni profited from the war. One interview informant told me that “the war has not brought [Museveni] problems,

---

<sup>17</sup> The U.S. labeled the LRA a terrorist organization, increasing funding to the Museveni government to combat the group despite widespread claims of human rights atrocities on the part of the UPDF.

<sup>18</sup> In 2005, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Joseph Kony and four other top leaders of the LRA for war crimes, but failed to issue warrants for the UPDF commanders who have committed human rights abuses on par with (and in some cases, worse than) those of the LRA. Most Acholis I spoke with were vehemently against the ICC warrants, as it decreases the likelihood that Kony will negotiate and enact a genuine peace for Northern Uganda, and argue that a punitive justice system via luxury prisons in the Hague does not adequately address the needs of the Acholi.

only happiness because he knows he can do anything he wants. He insults the Acholi. Acholi people are like rotten mushrooms. [Museveni] can call for water, but they give him milk. If he wants the war to continue, he can continue” (Solina interview, 16 April 2009). Many blame the government for “causing the rebellion in Northern Uganda” (Otim William interview, 19 April 2009). As Otim William told me, “the government has no close relationship with the Acholi people” (interview, 19 April 2009).

Many concur that “Museveni has taken people into camps” (Solina interview, 16 April 2009). During the war, Acholis either lived in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, migrated to urban centers, or hid in the bush<sup>19</sup> (Komakech interview, 15 April 2009). By some estimates, two million people, or nearly 90 percent of the Acholi population, lived in camps during the height of the war (Atkinson 2008). In 2005, it was estimated that 1,000 people died each week in the IDP camps, but only 11 percent of these deaths were from physical violence; the vast majority of the deaths were from curable diseases and malnutrition. Of those not in camps, 40,000 fled across the Nile to Masindi district, while others lived in urban areas like Gulu Town, whose population grew from 40,000 before the war to 140,000 today (Finnstrom 2008:133).

Some informants argued that forced movement to IDP camps “kept people in a poverty way” (Otim William interview, 19 April 2009). Finnstrom (2008) argues that “the forced mass movement of people to the camps must be understood in terms of military strategy,” despite governmental and NGO claims that IDP camps would protect citizens from physical violence (142). As military

---

19 The “bush” is the term used by Acholis to signify uninhabited rural areas.

officials believed all Acholis to be potential LRA collaborators, physical internment became an important military strategy. The physical set-up of the camp placed security forces in the center, leaving the residents of the IDP camps to exist as a “living shield” between the UPDF and the LRA who attacked the camps (Finnstrom 2008: 143).

Many people also believed that the camps served to intern Acholis so the government could seize their “open” land. An article published on 1 December 1997 in one of Uganda’s daily newspapers, *The New Vision*, testifies to this claim; it states that “Museveni told Acholi [parliamentarians] that funds would come for tractors to help with large-scale farming that was part of the five-point program on the camps” (Finnstrom 2008: 175). Although these funds never arrived, Museveni’s claim points to a strategic purpose of the camps beyond physical protection: interning two million Acholis opened up land for large-scale corporate farming.

Simultaneously, the UPDF looted Acholi foodstuffs and general property. “They burnt my house, carried everything out, even all the food I grew, all the properties,” Opio Richard, who now works as a local pastor and owns a small vending stand, told me (Opio Richard interview, 18 April 2009). Many Acholis I spoke to said that their cattle had been killed or taken by the UPDF. Government soldiers took cattle via army lorries; resultingly, only 2% of the pre-war cattle remain today—significant because, while cows are not the main source of income, they are “very culturally important and the most prestigious form of

wealth” (Finnstrom 2008: 34)<sup>20</sup>. As such, “cattle looting is seen as a deliberate strategy to impoverish the Acholi so as to control them (Finnstrom 2008: 72).

### *The LRA and Land Issues*

Western media commonly represents the LRA as a force with no political agenda, indiscriminately slaughtering Acholis in its self-genocide. The group, however, does outline its political agenda, the primary aim of which is to oust the Museveni regime. Additionally, it releases statements on its policies regarding agriculture, health, education infrastructure, commerce and industry defense, and land and natural resources (Finnstrom 2008: 123)<sup>21</sup>. A key theme in the LRA’s political discourse is government and NGO policy in relationship to land and natural resources; political manifestos released by the LRA argue that paternalistic NGOs act to decrease Acholis’ ability to access natural resources. In one manifesto, the LRA writes that NGOs are

masquerading as relief workers during trouble and times of war. But these organizations operate on a set agenda *to deplete your natural resources* [emphasis added]. Those operating among you are actually the shield and spears for Museveni against you. You should know they are in Gulu, Lira, Kitgum, or Apac not as relief workers, but to fulfill the agenda of Museveni. Do not be deceived that we [the LRA] have no political agenda. Where were the UN, the human rights agencies, and UNICEF at the time you were herded into the camps? (quoted in Finnstrom 2008: 42)

NGOs working in Northern Uganda must strictly adhere to the central government’s “humanitarian” plans, which are often heavily intertwined with

---

<sup>20</sup> In one case, the UPDF admitted to taking 871 head of cattle, but the “claimant wasn’t compensated and was accused of being a rebel collaborator” (Finnstrom 2008: 72).

<sup>21</sup> The LRA further critiques the International Monetary Fund and World Bank’s structural adjustment policies, arguing that they “achiev[e] low inflation and deregulat[ion] to the exclusion of other considerations” (quoted in Finnstrom 2008: 125).

military policy. Organizations' involvement with the Museveni government inextricably connects their work to the destruction of natural resources.

Additionally, many blame NGOs for creating a culture of dependency on food aid and thus fostering a lack of knowledge about agricultural production. The LRA's articulation of these beliefs originally resonated with many in Northern Uganda.

However, many Acholis now discredit LRA claims of protecting natural resources, arguing that the group destroyed livelihood and land access because of their high levels of violence particularly in rural areas, murdering and kidnapping people while looting fields and food storage and destroying valuable property. The people I interviewed strongly opposed the LRA and believed the armed group to have no viable political goals. In response to questions regarding why the LRA took up arms, answers ranged from "because they wanted to lead the country by force" (Odokos interview, 15 April 2009) to "because of sheer stupidity" (Solina interview, 16 April 2009). All of my participants stated that the real impact of the war was on the civilians. Furthermore, "if they had cared about land, they wouldn't let people stay in camps, just leaving land idle in the villages" (Milana interview, 16 April 2009). "They just slaughter [Acholis] like chickens," Okelo, a man in his twenties who works his family's communal land while studying to be a teacher, says. "So what are [they] fighting for? Kony just kills the Acholi people" (Stella and Okelo interview, 21 April 2009).

### *Effects of Physical Violence and Displacement*

A primary result of the war was the drastic reduction in land access. Much of the economic basis of subsistence farming was severely disrupted due to

physical violence, further challenging survival (Finnstrom 2008). A United Nations report released in October 2008 found that only one fourth of displaced Acholis had returned to their farms (Atkinson 2008). The rest still reside in urban centers or camps, which foster high levels of dependency on food aid<sup>22</sup>. The decrease in knowledge of farming practices and dependency on food aid creates a culture of “laziness,” according to elders I spoke to in an IDP camp in Kitgum; this makes farming difficult for younger generations after moving out of the camps.

Land displacement and destruction also threatens cultural and spiritual survival. According to Gulu University Professor John Olanya Odur, alienation from the land equates to “nonexistence. You are completely uprooted from your ancestors.” Acholis “would have no origin, as if they’ve been wiped from the earth” because of the disconnection with the land (interview, 24 April 2009). The destruction of graves spiritually signifies alienation from the ancestors and thus the breakdown of the link between past and present that allows for the future (Odur interview, 24 April 2009). Rituals such as installing new chiefs are rendered nearly impossible, with no place to create an ancestral shrine, plant an ancestral tree, or sacrifice a goat, all necessary practices for this tradition (Finnstrom 2008).

In my interview with Okelo, he outlined his opinion on the effect of war on the communal land he shares with his elderly mother, Stella, in Laroo. He argues that the war

has done many things. One, bullets that have not exploded. Once it rots or

---

<sup>22</sup> This dependency on food aid caused major disruptions when the World Food Programme began to withdraw its donations to the IDP camps in May 2009.

rusts, it becomes acidic to the soil. Two, some place in the village where many people were killed. People fear to go and till the land. They feel the demonic spirits, even the bones of dead or on the land. Three, it has scared the younger generation. Most boys have come to town instead of tilling. They resorted to singing. Four, it has polluted the atmosphere. Rain used to fall in March but now it doesn't. That shows that the war has spoiled the atmosphere. Five, water has spoiled the most. It has led to numerous diseases like AIDS which is very hard now. All the soldiers are brought and just thrown here. Six, it has spoiled the family structure. The elders that were supposed to lead the people are the most stupid. They drink, not supportive, and don't give advice. (interview, 21 April 2009)

While perhaps not all of the negative realities that Okelo outlines should actually be attributed to war (such as climate change), this eloquent explanation of the connection between war and the societal and environmental problems facing Northern Uganda demonstrates the holistic devastation caused by the war.

Violence caused by both armed forces directly links to environmental and cultural destruction, with severe limitations to land access forming the basis for those devastations.

### **Mexico and Indigenous Communities: The Militarization of Southern Mexico**

Spanish colonialism in Mexico created a system of elite land domination for three centuries, notable for its “constricting peasant villages” and enormous *latifundio* system, whereby one family owned huge swaths of land (Tutino 1986: 11-12). Small-scale insurrections of landless peasants against this inequality were quickly put down, save Father Miguel Hidalgo's influential four-month rebellion in 1810 during which tens of thousands of peasants rebelled against the elite system. This was followed by small guerrilla revolts that sometimes continued for years. The period between 1810 and 1816 marked a shift from the relatively low conflict colonial system to “over a century of escalating conflict” regarding land

access (Tutino 1986: 12).

National independence in 1821 was not a social revolution nor did it bring peace to Mexico.

Beginning in the late 1840s, rural insurrections over land reform became widespread as multiple agrarian uprisings challenged the *latifundio* system<sup>23</sup>.

Porfirio Diaz's rise to the presidency in 1876 successfully crushed the insurrections and augmented vast inequality in land ownership (Tutino 1986: 13).

By the end of Porfirio Diaz's 34-year dictatorship in 1910, "1 per cent of the population owned 97 percent of the land and 96 percent of the population was landless" (Lewis 2000: 404).

Conflict between the landed elites and millions of landless peasants spurred the Mexican Revolution, which lasted from 1910 to 1920<sup>24</sup>. Troops from northern Mexico led by Francisco Madero, from the central state of Morelos led by Emiliano Zapata, and an additional group from northern Mexico led by Pancho Villa rebelled against the Diaz government, resulting in Diaz's exile (and Madero's rise to the presidency in 1911). These three armed groups differed in their visions of Mexico's future, as Madero was from a very wealthy oligarchic family and Zapata and Villa both advocated for agrarian reform; Zapata and Villa, however, were unable to create a unified agrarian program, a move that could

---

23 For instance, the Ley Lerdo of 1847 "divested both the church and peasant communities of their lands" as "peasant communities were stripped of their patrimonies and peasants reduced to minifundistas on the margins of expanding haciendas" (Foley 1995: 59).

24 It is important to note that the Mexican Revolution was not solely formed for agrarian reform, but "revolved around alliances and conflicts among numerous factions with varying programs" (Tutino 1986: 9). Divisions between the Mexican elites eroded support for Diaz, further allowing for a bloody war against the *Porfiriato*, as the Diaz's reign was termed. For additional enquiries into the agrarian causes of the Revolution, see *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico* (1986) by John Tutino.

have increased their collective power (Tutino 1986: 338). After becoming president, Madero's refusal to return land to peasants ended Zapata's support for the new president, who "attempted to restrain and if possible to demobilize the many agrarian rebels who had rallied to the fight against Diaz" (Tutino 1986, 337).

In 1911, Zapata released the *Plan de Ayala*, his vision for Mexican land reform, which would require large landholders to cede one-third of their land to landless peasants in collective holdings called *ejidos*. Fighting between Madero and Zapata's forces continued as more joined the Zapatista army after Madero's increasing demonstration of brutality. Zapata's forces continued agitating for agrarian reform through the presidencies of General Victoriano Huerta and Venustiano Carranza, who "issued a series of decrees that finally recognized the rights of Mexican peasants to subsistence lands and community organization" (Tutino 1986: 339). Carranza's acquiescence to agrarian reform succeeded in dividing Villa and Zapata, who had not come to a compromise reconciling the differences between agrarian needs for northern versus central Mexico. After Villa's 1915 military defeat, Carranza shifted his agrarian policies again, this time to benefit the elites.

Through Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, Zapata's *Plan de Ayala* was legally enacted. This constitutional provision legalized collective land redistribution to peasants and recognized that "all land and water in Mexico belonged to the nation, which has the right to impose on private property conditions prescribed by public interest" (Lewis 2000: 404). Private property was

limited to 100 irrigated hectares of land and *ejido* parcels were set at a minimum of 10 hectares each. Crucially, this *ejido* land was deemed both collective and inalienable.

After Zapata's death in 1919 and the official end of the Revolution in 1920,<sup>25</sup> political rhetoric espousing agrarian reform continued. Despite this, land redistribution did not become an instant reality, as "only the most persistent and often violent rebels, like the Zapatistas, received land from the new leaders of Mexico" (Tutino 1986: 6). By this logic, "only those who threatened the regime got land; thus those seeking land must threaten the regime. The early 1920s therefore brought numerous rural revolts, as villagers fought to claim the government's attention" (Tutino 1986: 6). "By 1930, 93 percent of the 324,805,000 acres registered by the census were private properties and only 7 percent belong[ed] to *ejidos*" (Camin and Meyer 1993: 120). In the state of Morelos, the birthplace of Zapata, 59 percent of land was *ejido* controlled. In the urban Federal District (Mexico City), 25.4 percent of land was *ejido* controlled. Conversely, in the states of Baja California and Quintana Roo, less than 1 percent of land was accessed through the *ejido* system (Camin and Meyer 1993: 120).

After his election in 1934, Lazaro Cardenas began the process enacting of land reform and redistribution promised under the 1917 Constitution through his

---

25 The revolutionary conflict largely ended in a stalemate because of the different visions of two key factions involved in the opposition to Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship that led to the protracted armed conflict. One camp (represented by Madero and Carranza) held a vision of Mexico as a nationalistic, capitalistic country while an alternative vision (led by Zapata and his Zapatistas) held that the new Mexico should be an agrarian and anticapialist state (Tutino 1986: 10). Revolutionary Pancho Villa led numerous factions from northern Mexico whose "irreconcilable conflicts...no doubt contributed to Villa's eventual defeat" (Tutino 1986: 10).

“six-year plan”<sup>26</sup>. This was undergone in part to recognize the alliance of peasant groups that had supported his candidacy, and to increase dependency on the central government and pacify potential insurgencies. Over a six year-period, Cardenas expropriated 20,000,000 hectares (almost 50,000,000 acres) of rural land and distributed it to almost 800,000 rural families who became members of organized *ejidos*; 8.2 million acres of land on average were distributed each year (Camin and Meyer 1993: 143). This redistribution “finally destroyed the landed base of Mexican elites” by allotting land to communities of peasant families (Tutino 1986: 347). This resulted in the 50% decrease of landless laborers in Mexico (Lewis 2000: 404). By the end of Cardenas’ rule, *ejidatarios* controlled almost half of all cultivated land (Camin and Meyer 1993: 132).

The six-year plan also attempted to provide sufficient water to agrarian communities and recognized the need for infrastructure and credit for peasant farmers. Additionally, Cardenas supported the organization of self-defense groups that would be able to protect the *ejidos* against attacks from “large landholders and their ‘white guards’” (Camin and Meyer 1993, 142). Cardenas’ institutionalization of agrarian reform also targeted commercial agriculture, with notable government expropriation of commercial farmers in the Yucatan and Michoacan. The result of this massive restructuring created a society in which the rural sector and agricultural economy—which now revolved around the *ejido*—was the most important in the economy. Agriculture gave jobs “to the most

---

26 An increasing amount of the revolutionary leadership wanted increased land redistribution, a cause aided by the Great Depression which threatened the commercial economy that provided the income of the remaining members of the landed elite. Export markets almost entirely disappeared, “open[ing] up the possibility of completing” agrarian reform (Tutino 1986, 347).

essential sector of the population” (Camin and Meyer 1993, 142).

But while this marked an important moment for agrarian reform, the central government gained unprecedented control over *ejidatarios* as they were pressured to politically support Cardenas and commercialize their agricultural production. *Ejidots* were underfunded and “did not obtain resources to sustain local governments, which remained dependent on the favor and resources of the revolutionary regime. ...The reconstituted peasant communities of revolutionary Mexico received more lands than autonomy” (Tutino 1986, 347). By the 1960s, “the majority of rural families only possessed small plots of land were ever more dependent on seasonal wage labor” as the government pressed for commercial agriculture production (Tutino 1986, 348). Despite the failure of government-supported land reform to create a truly self-sustaining and autonomous rural agricultural, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI), the ruling political party since the Revolution,<sup>27</sup> maintained a discourse of agrarian reform “to present itself as the guardian of the Revolution” (Jones and Ward 1998: 77).

### *Contemporary Militarization in Southern Mexico*

While the Mexican Revolution provided the legal basis for land redistribution (although it was not entirely successful in doing so), lower-scale militarization of indigenous communities in southern Mexico (primarily in the states of Chiapas and Oaxaca) acted to alienate those communities from their collectively held land. Unlike the other two case studies, whose period of violence

---

<sup>27</sup> The PRI was in power from the Revolution until 2000, when Vicente Fox's PAN (Partido Autonomo Nacional) gained power.

came prior to legalized land alienation via legislation<sup>28</sup>, this increasing physical violence and militarization occurred simultaneous to the rise in the national government's support for neoliberal economic policies. While I describe Mexico's move towards neoliberalism in the next chapter, in this section I highlight the militarization of southern Mexico and physical violence targeted at indigenous communities who opposed the neoliberalization of their former collective land.

While the rhetoric of militarization (and its U.S. support) deploys rhetoric of combating crimes and drugs, critics claim that the military actually protects the increasing number of multinational companies that have used changes in land use policy (altered under the 1992 Agrarian Law) to exploit natural resources for corporate gain. Because Mexico is the "top destination in Latin America for foreign direct investment, particularly in extractive industries," multinational corporations have clamored to begin natural resource exploration (Miller 2009). Since 2006, "multinational companies have received over 80 federal mining concessions in just Oaxaca, covering 1.5 million acres of land. Mining is only the tip of the iceberg: Other megaprojects include hydroelectric dam construction, tourism and infrastructure, energy generation projects, water privatization, and oil exploration" (Miller 2009).

With a backdrop of neoliberal economics and indigenous resistance, the Mexican army and policy integrated in a militarization process that specifically targeted indigenous communities. With local, state, and federal police forces now under the command of the army, military control in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and

---

28 In the case of the Dakota, although the 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux did legally alienate the Dakota from their land, the legislation I refer to is the 1887 Allotment Act, which was much wider in its scope.

Guerrero have become low-scale war zones. The Public Security Police utilizes “army vehicles, weapons, and tactics but have blue uniforms instead of green” (Stephen 2000: 829). This army integration expanded military coverage into areas of Chiapas and Oaxaca that were previously inaccessible to military forces, usually by establishing permanent residence in rural indigenous communities” (Stephen 2000: 829). Large-scale construction projects such as roadways “have been undertaken to support the increasing number of troops in Chiapas, a move that greatly disrupts the communities that the roads traverse” (Stephen 2000: 828).

U.S. aid funds this militarization project under the 2008 Merida Initiative<sup>29</sup>, which operates under the stated goal of combating the drug trade and increasing border security in Mexico and Central America. The U.S. congress has signed off on \$1.6 billion dollars for the six-year plan. U.S. financial support for Mexican militarization pre-dates these contemporary programs; “between 1996 and 1997 alone, U.S. anti-narcotics funds allotted to Mexico jumped by 400%” (Fernandes 1999: 49). Much of that funding was used for increases in militarization.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP), launched in 2005 by U.S. President George Bush, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, and Mexican President Vicente Fox, created a regional security program designed to protect NAFTA, the tripartite neoliberal economic model. In 2007, then- U.S. assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs explained that the basis of the SPP “understands North America as a shared economic space” which

---

29 Critics of the program have dubbed it “Plan Mexico,” a reference to the U.S.-funded Plan Colombia.

“we need to protect...more broadly throughout North America” via “security cooperation;” he continued by explaining that “to a certain extent, we’re armoring NAFTA” through the SPP (Carlsen 2008). The regional security agreement is an acknowledgement that neoliberal economics necessitates military protections.

Despite Mexican government claims that U.S. aid money went towards combating organized crime and drug cartels, human rights groups argued that force is increasingly used against community members to “protect the interests of multinational corporations” (Miller 2009). Indeed, there have been many instances of indigenous massacres caused by military troops over the past two decades. In 1995, 17 peasants activists were shot and killed by state police in Aguas Blancas, Guerrero (Stephen 2000: 826). In the two months leading up to the July 1997 elections, “dozens of people were killed and wounded in local confrontations between the PRI, the PRD, and the violence caused by paramilitary forces and even federal police forces” in Chiapas (Stephen 2000: 828). In December 1997, a massacre led by a paramilitary group composed of members of “the local PRI, armed and trained by state policy and an ex-soldier from the Mexican army” killed 45 Tzotzil people praying in a village church in Acteal, Chiapas (Stephen 2000: 828). Many of these massacres targeted alleged sympathizers of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN, or the Zapatistas), a movement primarily of indigenous people based in Chiapas, which challenges the hegemonic neoliberalism of the Mexican government and its corporate partners (Hodges and Gandy 2002). More than one-third of Chiapas has been militarized since the 1994 Zapatista uprising with approximately one soldier

for every three or four inhabitants of an indigenous community (Stephen 2000: 828). In August 1999, approximately 37,000 troops “surrounded three [indigenous pro-Zapatista] communities which have a combined population of no more than 500;” despite this, the vast majority of the Zapatista communities “are unarmed, defending themselves only with fistfuls of stones and barricades of their own bodies” (Fernandes 1999: 2).

Reacting to a series of military attacks carried out by the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR, an armed leftist movement operating out of Guerrero that declared war against the Mexican government in 1996), the military arrested “most of the municipal government of San Agustin Loxicha...between October and December 1996, as suspected members of the EPR” (Stephen 2000: 828). “Since the fall of 1996, more than 2000 indigenous people—including teenagers—have been imprisoned after raids in which Federal Judicial Police entered houses and rounded people up while the army maintained watch” (Stephen 2000: 828).

In another example of brutal militarization, protests against the Trinidad mine in San Jose del Progreso, Oaxaca ended on May 6, 2009 when 700 police forces “stormed into the community in anti-riot gear along with an arsenal of tear gas, dogs, assault rifles, and a helicopter” (Miller 2009). Community members were organizing against the Canadian mining company, Fortuna Silver Mines. “The result was a brutal attack, with over 20 arrests and illegal searches of homes. Police seemed to be going after a heavily armed drug cartel, not a community protest” (Miller 2009).

Whereas the Mexican Revolution legally created collective land tenure, the current war carried out by the Mexican state against communities in Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero is a violent attempt to alienate indigenous communities from their communal land. Because Mexico's neoliberalization is dependent upon land privatization and exploitation, the state targets communities who resist neoliberal policies to maintain their collective land holding. Physical violence is needed to accompany the piecemeal privatization of land through the 1992 Agrarian Law, which will be outlined in greater detail in the next chapter.

### **Concluding Comparative Discussion**

The enactments of physical violence in Minnesota, Uganda, and Mexico vary greatly. In Minnesota, genocidal colonial violence decimated American Indian populations; I focus, however, solely on the U.S.-Dakota War and genocide, which specifically targeted the Dakota Nation in the aftermath of the fraudulent 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux. In Uganda, the Northern civil war focused on the Acholi, but the physical violence occurred against a backdrop of decades of violence initiated by British colonial policies and uneven agricultural support from the government. In Mexico, the most divergent case, the violent Mexican Revolution served to enact legal land redistribution; fifty years later, the militarization of indigenous communities in southern Mexico coincided with neoliberal economics that abolished the Revolution's land reforms. This violence targeted communities actively opposed to the neoliberal policies that serve to alienate collective landholding.

Rhetoric surrounding state-sponsored physical violence portrayed the

target populations as barbaric and uncivilized, linking market reforms and capitalist land tenure systems as a key part of the civilizing project. All three experiences of physical violence were predicated on outsider desire for a radical change in the communal land tenure system to a privatized, market-based system. The process of violently “clearing” communally-held land via death and forced internment allowed the state, corporations, and settlers to purchase that “open” land and thus shift the land access system to a privatized one. Physical violence served as the impetus for the land expropriation process that Marx calls primitive accumulation.

But the violence of war and militarization does not begin and end with itself; state-enacted legislation continues the process of land alienation first started through physical violence. In the next chapter, I show that legal land alienation followed physical violence in all three of the cases. The results of such legal changes amounts to structural violence, the next stage in the relationship between forced land privatization and violence.

### CHAPTER 3: STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

The 1992 Agrarian Law in Mexico radically altered the 1917 Mexican Constitution, legally changing the most important constitutional provision of agrarian reform born from the Mexican Revolution. Under the new law, individuals and investors can now buy formerly inalienable, communal land. Enacted as a prelude to the 1994 passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Agrarian Law legalized the radical alteration of Mexican farmer's relationship to land. As a result, the ability of Mexican farmers to provide for themselves was greatly hindered. The resulting emigration, malnutrition, and poverty came as a direct result of these legal changes<sup>30</sup>.

Chapter 2 described the cessation of physical violence in all three cases, but in no case did this yield a return to sustainable peace. Instead, where the violence of war physically removed communities from their land, legislative changes legalized alienation from the communal resource. The previous period of physical violence enabled these changes, as the land was left "open" by death or physical removal. This period ushered in a new stage of unrest in the form of structural violence, a term I use to describe the structural inequalities that lead to the slow killing of a population through the denial of access to its basic needs. Legally alienating communities from their land—a fundamental need of these populations—resulted in the widespread breakdown of social, cultural, and

---

<sup>30</sup> The case of violence against indigenous communities in southern Mexico differs from the cases of the Dakota and the Acholi in that physical violence (via militarization) and structural violence (via the 1992 Agrarian Law that changed Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution) occurred nearly concurrently. Despite this, I divide these two violences organizationally to parallel the other two cases in order to best highlight the relationship between militarization and changes in land law.

political practices; this led to malnutrition, homelessness, difficulty in accessing other natural resources such as water, and, in some cases, even death as communities were increasingly challenged to provide sustenance for themselves. My three case study populations now exist in different stages of these legal changes due to their varying time periods; a cross-historical analysis, however, suggests that despite temporal differences, legal land alienation reinforces physical violence to complete the process of outsider land expropriation necessary for implementing capitalism.

In this chapter, I analyze national land legislation that affects millions more people than my three case study populations, and argue that legislation that privatizes land is tantamount to structural violence, the second stage of violence. In the case of Uganda, I highlight national legislation as well as two proposed plans for Northern Uganda that will only affect the Acholi and others living in the region. In the case of the United States, I analyze the land treaties between the Dakota nation and the U.S. government as well as the 1887 General Allotment (Dawes) Act, which parceled out land to individual Euro-American settlers and American Indian people deemed competent by the government; the process of complete land alienation had already occurred for the Dakota by 1887, yet the Allotment Act remains an important example of the plenary powers of the federal government. In Uganda, I highlight the proposed Land Amendment Bill (2007), which is still blocked in the Ugandan parliament, and the proposed Madhvani Sugar Corporation and Gulu University expansion plans, both of which are also stalled due to fierce resistance. In Mexico, I evaluate the 1992 Agrarian Law,

which effectively ended decades of land reform first implemented through the 1917 Constitution.

### **Theoretical Background of Structural Violence**

I ground this chapter in theories of *structural violence*, systemic or structural inequality that leads to avoidable death. As my key points of departure, I use theories of Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, credited with conceiving the theory of structural violence and founding the academic discipline of peace and conflict studies, and U.S. American medical anthropologist Paul Farmer. I expand upon Galtung and Farmer's work on structural violence to include the example of the inability to access communal land because of national legislation as a form of this violence. As such, I argue that my case study populations have all experienced structural violence due to the legalization of land alienation by their national governments.

Galtung (1969) argues against narrow conceptions of violence "according to which violence is *somatic* incapacitation, or deprivation of health alone (with killing as the extreme form), at the hands of an *actor* who *intends* this to be the consequence" (168). Rather, Galtung contends that "*violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations*" (168). As such, he expands the conception of violence to include systems that may not intend to cause suffering; he calls this structural violence, that which is "built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (170).

By way of example, Galtung argues that if someone died of tuberculosis in

the eighteenth century it would not have been an example of structural violence because the death was most probably unavoidable. If a person dies of tuberculosis in contemporary times, however, it is a result of structural violence because medical resources exist in the world to cure tuberculosis. As such, because the person was unable to access the resources necessary to cure her illness due to her unequal life chances, structural violence was the indirect cause of death. Other examples of structural violence include racist, homophobic, sexist, and/or classist structures that systematically deny (or give unequal access to) certain populations, thus resulting in that population's higher death rates comparative to other communities.

Galtung argues that “if people are starving when this is objectively avoidable, then violence is committed regardless of whether there is a clear subject-action-object relation, as during a siege yesterday or no such clear relation, as in the way world economic relations are organized today” (171). Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993) further highlights the structural violence that causes widespread *delirio de fome* (the madness of hunger) in rural Northeastern Brazil, tracing the slow death by starvation in an area that in fact has sufficient resources to support the population. Starvation and lack of direct access to abundant food is a form of structural violence evident in my case studies as well.

Importantly, Galtung further contends that it should not be assumed that structural violence leads to less human suffering than direct physical violence (which he calls *personal violence*). Galtung traces the relationship between personal and structural violences, ultimately arguing that while there is not

necessarily a causal relationship between them, “pure cases [of personal violence] are only pure as long as the pre-history of the case or even the structural context are conveniently forgotten” (178).

Paul Farmer (2001; 2004a; 2004b) expands upon Galtung’s work to analyze the relationship between structural violence, medical access, and global inequality. He argues that the distribution of medical ailments such as HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, as well as human rights abuses, are “historically given and economically driven” (2004a: 17), tying the transmission of these diseases to poverty, extreme economic and social inequality, uneven distribution of both resources and the power to allot those resources, and disenfranchising political, social, and economic systems (2004b). Farmer contends that “control of lives is related to *control of land, systems of production*, and the formal political and legal structures in which lives are enmeshed [my emphasize added]. In each of these arenas, poor people overall are already laboring at a vast disadvantage; the voices of poor women in particular are almost unheard” (2004b: 91). As such, he argues, the high prevalence of diseases like AIDS in certain areas is not based on cultural difference or ignorance on the part of those who contract the disease; rather, it is the culprit of structural violence which, through historically-bound inequalities, denies populations control over their lives and potential to access resources (2004b).

Crucially, Farmer connects structural violence to physical violence, as “the adverse outcomes associated with structural violence—death, injury, illness, subjugation, stigmatization, and even psychological terror—come to have their

‘final common pathway’ in the material” (2004a: 308). Other adverse affects of structural violence include “epidemic disease, violations of human rights, and genocide” (2004a: 308). According to Farmer, not only does structural violence enable and create these physical violences, but physical violence also enables structural violence in this relationship: “societies characterized by extreme inequality or structural violence...require other kinds of violence in order to maintain the status quo, which is so unbearable for the majority. In the United States, the enormous number of African Americans in prisons reflects this violence, as do death squads in Haiti and police brutality in Bombay” (2004b: 81). He furthers that “human rights violations are not accidents; they are not random in distribution or effect. Rights violations are, rather, symptoms of deeper pathologies of power and are linked intimately to the social conditions that so often determine who will suffer abuse and who will be shielded from harm” (2001: 40).

Kathleen Ho (2001) builds upon Farmer’s connection between structural violence and human rights abuses, arguing that “structural inequalities that systematically deny some people their basic human needs constitute a structural violation of human rights” (1). She claims that the inability to possess equal power in distributing resources is “the pivotal causal factor of these avoidable structural inequalities,” leading to the structural nature of the uneven distribution of human rights (1).

While Galtung, Scheper-Hughes, Farmer, and Ho connect the inability to access resources to structural violence and human rights abuses, my project

extends the theoretical dimension of the study of structural violence by examining land access. Because they are denied access to their land, the Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexican populations are challenged to decide the distribution of that vital resource. This forms the basis of other forms of structural violence prevalent in those communities such as starvation, high rates of disease in some cases (like the growing AIDS rate in Northern Uganda), and high levels of poverty compared to the rest of the national population. The structural component of this violence—analyzed in this chapter as national legislation that legally alienates communal land—builds upon the devastating effects of war in terms of the drastic decrease in safe land access. The combination of militarization and capitalist legislation create the kind of unequal power structures, and avoidable deaths, analyzed by the aforementioned theorists. Continued access to safe communal land would prevent those deaths and enable more equal power relations, thus decreasing the slow death caused by structural violence.

### **Case Studies: Land Policies in the Minnesota, Uganda, and Mexico**

#### **Minnesota: Localized and National Legislation**

In the late 1880s, after decades of armed conflicts with American Indian nations throughout the country and the 1862 U.S.-Dakota War (and subsequent genocide) in Minnesota, the U.S. government began to allot land to Euro-American settlers and Indigenous individuals (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2). These land allotments frequently violated the terms of treaties that had been signed between Indigenous nations and the U.S. government after the cessation of armed conflict.

Notably, the 1830 Indian Removal Act, passed under President Andrew Jackson, flagrantly breached those treaties. The Act gave the U.S. government, via the executive, the power to relocate American Indians living in the eastern United States to reservations in the west based on treaties that were to be mutually negotiated between the indigenous groups and the U.S. government (Black 2007: 186). The Removal Act also allowed for the president to negotiate land exchanges with Natives and pay for “improvements” on land such as barns and orchards. The executive was also allotted \$500,000 for transportation costs from the east to the west (Cave 2003: 1333).

The legislation legally granted the president “the same superintendence and care over any tribe or nation in the country to which they may remove...now that he is now authorized to have over them at their present places of residence” (Black 2007: 186). While the Indian Removal Act dealt solely with Indigenous populations residing in the eastern United States (as states like Minnesota were not yet part of the Union), it set the legal and moral grounds for the U.S. federal and state governments to enact populations of forced migration and internment in newly created reservations as was seen after the U.S.-Dakota War. Although Congress did not authorize the forcible resettlement of the populations or the abuse of American Indian treaty rights, coercion, fraud, and corruption were rampant both in negotiating removal treaties with Native groups and in the execution of the relocation itself (Cave 2003: 1337).

The reservation system was a key piece of U.S. government land allotment policy. Believing that American Indian people could be better controlled

if put in a confined location, the U.S. government formed reservations as a means of enabling this control process while creating the Indigenous displacement necessary for Euro-American expansion. Exclusive land use within the boundaries of reservations was reserved for Indigenous populations, while “pressure for more land from mining, railroad, timber and homesteading interests began to build” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2). The process of forced migration after the U.S.-Dakota War set the groundwork for many of these reservations in the Upper Midwest.

Given this broader context, the General Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887, named after its key sponsor Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts, was the pivotal allotment policy that led to the expropriation of American Indians lands for Euro-American use throughout the U.S., leading to enormous loss of land, displacement, fractionation of land, and the erosion of “the very basis of the culture” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2) that was based on communal access to land. By the time that the Allotment Act was passed, however, all Dakota land had been effectively alienated from the Dakota people through the Treaties of Mendota and Traverse des Sioux. As such, the Allotment Act served to nationally implement the land expropriation and alienation process that had already fully occurred for the Dakota of the Upper Midwest.

The Allotment Act legalized the reduction of reservations to give land to homesteaders and to move indigenous peoples to the western U.S. (Black 2007: 185). The government granted 160 acres of land to each head of family and 80 acres to single males over age 18. Land beyond the allotment given to adult

American Indians was deemed “in excess of Indian needs” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2) and therefore open for non-Indian acquisition. “The immediate tribal land losses through the Allotment act provisions were estimated to total 60 million acres;” meanwhile, Indian groups were not monetarily compensated for their land and lands granted through the previous treaties were expropriated (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2). In response to the Allotment Act, emissaries from American Indian nations traveled to Washington D.C. to lobby against the allotment of Indigenous lands, though “Indian people were not consulted for approval or disapproval” (*The Message Runner* 2002, pp. 2).

The Bureau of Indian Affairs held those land titles in trust for the first 25 years after the passage of the Allotment Act and only gave American Indians land titles if they had complied with government mandated farming (Black 2007: 190)<sup>31</sup>. The Burke Act of 1906 allowed for the federal government to legally hold those lands until Indigenous individuals were deemed “competent” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2). When allotted land moved from trust status (controlled by the federal government), the allottee was given a “fee patent” which signified complete ownership of the land. Fee patents, however, were not necessarily given at the request of the individual; this situation was known as “forced-fee patents” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2).

Because many individuals “did not understand the principle of taxation,” their land was sold at public auctions, most often to non-Indigenous individuals (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2). Indigenous land ownership was further eroded when Indigenous people sold part of their land in order to pay taxes. In some

---

31 This could be considered one of the U.S. government's first structural adjustment policies.

cases, American Indian soldiers in the U.S. army would return home to find that their land had been sold during their military service. At times, land changed from trust to fee status without the notification of the Indian owner, further augmenting the amount of lost land (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2). Because of the poverty resulting from the change in economic systems, many American Indian people—including Dakotas—sold their land for cash in often-corrupt deals, allowing for the federal government to repossess the land. As a result, over the fifty years after the Allotment Act was passed, the U.S. government repossessed over 80 million acres of land from Indigenous possession (Black 2007).

The 1889 Nelson Act, named after Minnesota congressman Knute Nelson, served as Minnesota's implementation of the Allotment Act. While the Nelson Act did not directly affect the Dakota, it provides a crucial broader context for the implementation of Minnesota government land policy in the Allotment Act era. The Nelson Act called for the relinquishing of all Chippewa<sup>32</sup> reservations except for the Red Lake and White Earth Reservations in north central Minnesota. The rest of the Chippewa's land, given to them under previous government-negotiated treaties, would be ceded to the government to be categorized as pine or agricultural lands and later sold on the market; profit gained from the sale of land would be placed in a fund for members of the Mille Lacs Band, who previously resided on the Mille Lacs reservation and would be forced to move under the provisions of the Nelson Act (Wedll 2009).

The Nelson Act appointed three commissioners to negotiate the bill and

---

32 The Chippewa of Canada call themselves the Ojibwe; "Chippewa" is the word used in Minnesota. See <http://www.whitearth.com> and <http://millelacsobjibwe.org> for more information about the White Earth and Mille Lacs Bands.

required two-thirds of adult males on reservations to approve its terms. Henry Rice was the assigned Minnesotan commissioner to the Mille Lacs Reservation and promised the elders present that they would not cede their rights to the reservation if they signed the treaty. Elders agreed to sign the treaty under the pretense that Rice would maintain his promise and that the government would respect an 1864 federal treaty stating that the Mille Lacs Band would not be forced to leave their homes on the reservation. After the Mille Lacs signing of the Act, Minnesota Senator D.M. Sabin additionally injected language validating non-Mille Lacs individuals rights to the Reservation land; Sabin had claims to timber on the Reservation (Wedll 2009).

The Act allowed for the Mille Lacs Band to maintain land on their reservation or move to the White Earth Reservation. Though promised monetary compensation for health care and education from the sale former reservation land, Mille Lacs Band members rarely received money from the government and by 1924 the Mille Lacs Reservation was inhabited by only 284 Band members. Today, after generations of legal battles and struggles, about 2,050 Band members live on the Mille Lacs Reservation (Wedll 2009)<sup>33</sup>.

The 1935 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) ended the allotment policy created by the 1887 Act while simultaneously extending the trust system in perpetuity, legalizing paternalism that treated people as children who could not care for their own land. As such, the plenary powers of the federal government were deemed absolute with no limiting authority, as normal restrictions of land

---

33 For more information about the White Earth Reservation, see *The White Earth Tragedy: Ethnicity and Dispossession at a Minnesota Anishinaabe Reservation* by Melissa Meyer (University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

management did not apply to the government. Another aspect of the IRA was the creation of constitutions that more reflected the U.S. political system; nations were given a “choice” as to whether or not to adopt these constitutions, but with a deeply rooted history of forced paternalism and violence did not make declining the IRA constitutions a viable option for the vast majority (Janis interview, 10 March 2010).

Where the U.S.-Dakota war and other armed conflicts forcibly removed the Dakota from their land via concentration camps and murder, federal land policies cemented land alienation and, by extension, alienation from the economic, social, political, and cultural practices connected to this invaluable resource. Land expropriation disallowed American Indian use of land, made accessing resources much more challenging (if not impossible), and divided communities through the parcelization of land. This served as a continuation of colonialism’s global “divide and conquer” policy, internally tearing apart communities and legally cementing the effects of war. As such, federal land policies acted as a manifestation of Galtung’s structural violence on all of the Indigenous nations in the U.S., including the Dakota. Because of the Dakota’s experience of war and genocide, however, this structural violence augmented already severe physical violence.

Land loss had a “checkerboard” effect,” whereby land ownership on American Indian reservations was mixed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ownership, creating significant challenges to land access, resource use, economic growth, and perpetuating cultural practices on Indian reservations. Because land

ownership is divided it can be difficult to access natural resources, such as river fishing sites, which are next to privately owned, non-Indian land. Furthermore, because land ownership was inherited through undivided interest, future generations inherited parcels of land, but the size of each divided parcel did not increase by generation. Because ownership of land—though not parcel size—was divided, “the ownership of their allotments began to be spread among a large number of succeeding heirs” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2). In contemporary times, more than 100 individuals now own some land parcels that were given to one individual through the Allotment Act. “As the land base became more fractured, the cohesiveness of the Indian community continued to disintegrate” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2).

As a result of colonial legal policy towards the Dakota, today communities are dependent upon the federal government for subsidies and stuffs; divisions form between those who established working relationships with the federal government and those who did not. This factionalization is a direct result of the U.S. government’s paternalistic legal policies, including its push for the constitutional governing policies created under the 1835 Indian Reorganization Act.

The effect of U.S. government policy can also be seen in the language loss experienced by the Dakota nation; according to Waziyatawin Angela Wilson, in 2005 there were only nine fluent speakers of Dakota, two of whom are also language instructors. The trend of Indigenous language loss is not unique to the Dakota; in the late 1990s, the director of the Native Alaska Language Center at

the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Michael Krauss, created four categories of surviving Indigenous languages. According to this classification, “Class A includes the 34 languages still spoken by all generation, including young children; Class B includes the 35 languages spoken only by the parental generation and older; Class C includes the 84 languages spoken only by the grandparental generation and older; [and] Class D includes the 57 languages spoken only by the very elderly, usually fewer than 10 persons;” class A represents the languages that are not in immediate danger of becoming extinct (Wilson 2005: 110).

Black (2007) argues that during implementation of the Allotment Act, many American Indian people and groups reappropriated Euro-American and U.S. discourse about the Indigenous as a method of resistance against the land allotment policy. Indigenous resistance to the Dawes Act called out the U.S. government and Euro-American settler ideals and rhetoric as baseless and at odds with their actions. Through collective memory invocation of paternal benevolence and the hypocrisy of the U.S. government, “the resistance-through-memory in American Indian anti-allotment discourses exists as an instance in which the dominance of the US government was weakened by Native agency” (Black 2007: 199).

For instance, a communiqué released by the Choctaw Nation in 1894 called upon U.S. hypocrisy, arguing that

[a]s soon as the Indian receives his individual [allotment], the white man will be there with money in one hand, whiskey in the other, and soon the tribe will be consummated...This is absolutely what did happen when the Choctaws took land in severalty in Mississippi [in 1832] (quoted in Black 2007: 186).

In another example, Sarah Winnemucca, a member of the Piute nation, drew on Euro-American rhetoric of its supposedly superior “civilization” in order to criticize the Allotment Act and the violence of colonization. She denounced the U.S. government, stating

O, for shame! You who are educated by a Christian government... Yes, you, who call yourselves the great civilizations... then you rise from your bended knees and seizing the welcoming hands of those who are the owners of this land, which you are not, your carbines rise upon the bleak shore, and your so-called civilization sweeps inland... but, oh, my God! Leaving its pathway marked by crimson lines of blood, and strewn by the bones of two races: the inheritor and the invader (quoted in Black 2007: 193).

### **Uganda: The Land Amendment Bill, the Madhvani Plantation, and the Gulu University Expansion Plan**

Although the LRA left Northern Uganda in the mid 2000s, conflict surrounding land access has not abated as the national government proposes land privatization plans for Northern Uganda. The government considers land to be “open and “idle,” and thus available for purchase (Atkinson 2008); this generated controversy because much of that “open” land belongs to Acholis still living in IDP camps. “Regaining access to land will be one of the single most important factors determining peace, reintegration, and recovery in the region” (Atkinson 2008: 2). Despite this, access to safe land seemed increasingly distant as smaller-scale privatization of formerly communal land becomes increasingly common. According to Finnstrom (2008), “to lose their land is perhaps what Acholi people fear the most, and in the judicial vacuum that has accompanied the war, displaced people can do little to legally protect their interests” (179). My interview subjects

uniformly stated that displacement and legal land alienation results in poverty, malnutrition, homelessness, and both physical and cultural death for the Acholi people.

My interview participants articulated that the central government had a strong interest in accessing Acholi land<sup>34</sup>. While many people did not know the specific actions of the government to possess that land, some suggested that Museveni aims to create large-scale farming plantations by “encourag[ing] the landlords to sell land to those investors by telling them they’ll be paid some money” (Milana interview, 16 April 2009). Others recounted scare tactics and high taxes for those with large land acreage; these taxes are impossible for the poor to pay. Okelo wondered, “If you’re a poor man, how will you pay all that? They take it” (interview, 21 April 2009)<sup>35</sup>.

According to my participants, outsider interest in Acholi land was due to the size, fertility, strategic location of the land, as well as the strong possibility of oil reserves. The majority of my participants argued that said land still rightfully belongs to interned families. Milana, a young woman enrolled in Gulu University, believes that “they want the land to put factories, claiming they’ll bring

---

34 My interview participants also suggested that other outside parties interested in Acholi land include the Madhvani Group, Gulu University, Indians, people from Western countries, the Dinkas (an ethnic group from Southern Sudan), and the Alur, a Ugandan ethnic group that live on the border of Sudan (Milana interview, 16 April 2009; Otim William interview, 19 April 2009; Stella and Okelo interview, 21 April 2009; Solina interview, 16 April 2009).

35 While the majority of respondents were adamantly opposed to government intervention, some believed that the government could bring development. These respondents differentiated between land that is accessed through “land grabs” and land that will be used for development, arguing that “when they are just grabbing the land, that is not good. What we need is development and employment” (Milana interview, 16 April 2009). Interview subjects who favored government-sponsored development projects were all young adults or are early middle-aged, while the older generation fiercely opposed government intervention into Acholi land issues. Solina, an elderly woman, declared that “the government is really interested and wants to finish the Acholi people with all of their land. Museveni cannot steal the land with all the people around” (Solina interview, 16 April 2009).

development, but it's a land grab. Acholi people don't benefit because they take the money make to their countries [through] profit repatriation" (Milana interview, 16 April 2009). Another key problem cited was the difficulty of finding alternative residences after the privatized purchase of land. Odokos wondered, "Big companies and investors shouldn't be able to buy land because where would the people go? It's difficult and not good" (Odokos interview, 15 April 2009).<sup>36</sup>

My interview informants varied slightly on whether or not communal Acholi land should be sold. My six middle-aged and elderly informants argued that Acholi land should exclusively belong to clans and connected the sale of land to war. "Customary land is not supposed to be sold but because of the war it has begun to be sold," Solina declared. "The people who sell it don't think because what are their siblings going to do if they sell the land? These stupid people want to sell land of their parents" (interview, 16 April 2009). Opio Richard told me that he lived on his customary land for years and he doesn't "even know what a land title is. Nobody knows what it is" (interview, 18 April 2009). Otim William explained that in the Acholi tradition, "we replace generation to generation. We don't sell [land]" (interview, 19 April 2009). Others simply stated that "land is not for sale. It is not good to sell or buy. This is cultural land" (Stella and Okelo interview, 21 April 2009).

This prophesies a catastrophic ending for Acholis if land access is no longer possible; Acholis would not be able to economically support themselves

---

36 Only one of my respondents, a young woman attending Gulu University, believed that the land was "huge...with no use" (Makamiko Claudia interview, 16 April 2009). She believes that investment could bring development to the area, although those investors should return the land back to its original owner after a period of five years (Makamiko Claudia interview, 16 April 2009).

and future generations would not be able to survive. Opio Richard told me that without land “the Acholi people would not be there because of the struggles” (interview, 18 April 2009) while others believed that Acholis would migrate to neighboring countries (Otim William interview, 19 April 2009). Solina rhetorically asked me, “If I didn’t have land, what would my people eat? There would be a lot of poverty” (Solina interview, 16 April 2009) while Grace questioned, “Now that I have kids, how am I going to feed them? How am I going to feed them? How am I going to send them to school? If Acholi people had no land, they would be sleeping in verandas, on the balconies of some rich people” (Grace interview, 17 April 2009). Others were more blunt, stating, “If I didn’t have land, I would just die, because land is what we live on” (Stella and Okelo interview, 21 April 2009), “there would be famine” (Milana interview, 16 April 2009), and “when you don’t have land, you are homeless. There is no food for you also” (Otim William interview, 19 April 2009). Solina told me that “all Acholi people feel pain” because of land takeovers (interview, 16 April 2009). Shaking her head, Stella mourned that because of the land issues “we are so sorrowful” (interview, 21 April 2009).

When I asked one elderly woman what would happen if Acholis no longer had access to land, she fatalistically responded that they “would end up dying” (Stella interview, 21 April 2009).

In what follows, I outline three different proposals that would further alienate the Acholi people from their land by eroding the communal land structure according to the majority of my Acholi interview participants.

### *The Land Amendment Bill (2007)*

The controversial national Land Amendment Bill (2007) has stalled in the Ugandan parliament due to fierce opposition primarily from Acholi and Baganda parliamentarians. The Land Bill, according to the government, intends to protect land renters from illegal eviction by landlords, something that the 1998 Land Act—the last piece of national land legislation—does not grant because it does not penalize landlords for illegal evictions (Atubo 2009). Critics argue, however, that protecting the rights of poor land tenants is a guise to allow for wider privatization and governmental expropriation for use by investors (Omara 2008). This national 2007 initiative follows the 1995 Constitution's creation of a land law that promotes the conversion of customary land into a privatized land holding system and the 1998 Land Act's expansion of that policy via the creation of land allocation institutions that bypass traditional leaders. The Land Act does, however, recognize communal land membership, provided it helps further community development (Atkinson 2008). When I raised questions about the Land Amendment Bill to my interview respondents, none had a clear idea about the specific provisions of the Bill or how it would affect them.

### *The Madhvani Sugar Plantation*

The proposed creation of a sugarcane plantation on communal land in Amuru District by the Madhvani Group, a private sector conglomerate of agriculture-based companies in East Africa, is one of the most controversial proposed investment plans in Northern Uganda; the plantation would occupy

60,000 hectares of land (though the Madhvani Group has requested 85,000 hectares from the Amuru Land Board), the majority of each belongs to people still residing in IDP camps. A court injunction currently blocks the plan, but if it were to go forward “at least 10,000 people face eviction” (as quoted in Atkinson 2008: 4). Museveni’s brother, Salim Saleh, is a key investor in the Madhvani plantation proposal, reinforcing the opinion that Museveni started the war to expropriate land for economic gain.

Many of my interview participants expressed concern that the installation of the sugar plantation would force Acholis to move away from subsistence agriculture production and towards a system of land use dependent upon Acholi wage laborers who would be permanently displaced from their communal land (Finnstrom 2008: 178). The result of creating a population of day laborers would be devastating: no longer able to feed themselves and largely stripped of their cultural ties, Acholis would be dependent upon investors for their survival and would most probably be permanently displaced. This process of contemporary primitive accumulation strikingly resembles the eighteenth century British expropriation of the commons. I was told that the plan was a “land grab” (Milana interview, 16 April 2009) that would cause “chaos” if Madhvani succeeds (Makamiko Claudia interview, 16 April 2009).

The World Bank agrees with my Acholi interview participants; a July 2008 report recommended a moratorium on land titles to investors in Northern Uganda until residents returned home from camps and people had been “sensitized” to land issues. The report also recommended that the government demonstrate its

commitment to protecting natural resource rights. Considering that the World Bank is one of the major promoters of land privatization globally, this is remarkable support for Acholi farmers. (Atkinson 2008).

### *The Expansion of Gulu University*

The federal government's plan to expand Gulu University, a public institution opened in 2002, is another important instance of proposed governmental land expropriation. In a move that generated significant controversy, the government's allocated 742 hectares of land to the university for expansion without consulting the approximately 10,000 people who would be displaced. Most of the land is communal (thus not legally titled), leading to widespread fear that the government will not compensate landowners (Laroo Division councilman Abonga Moses interview, 24 April 2009).

A Gulu University professor explained to me that locals "shouldn't be against [the expansion], because the university will benefit them. [The university and the Madhvani Sugar Plantation] are not the same institutions. This one is not income generating" (Odur interview, 24 April 2009). He also argued that as a public institution, the university has a negative association with the Museveni government (Odur interview, 24 April 2009).

Approximately 30 local landowners organized themselves into the Gulu Concerned Landowners Association in 2003 to oppose the proposed land takeover; the Association's constitution states that it formed because residents were "facing the threat of unlawful eviction and other injustices pertaining the land" (Gulu Concerned Landowners Association statement, 2003). While the six

executive members of the Association acknowledged the importance of the university, they argued that the proposed area of take over was too large, landowners would not be compensated, and the displaced would have nowhere to live<sup>37</sup>. The Association also claims that locals feel disregarded by investors and university administrators, who “think they are superior [and] we are small,” as one executive member told me (Gulu Concerned Landowners Association interview, 24 April 2009).

The Association argues that they will not acquiesce to government takeover of communal land, stating that “we will fight to defend our land. This is our grandfather’s land” (Gulu Concerned Landowners Association interview, 24 April 2009). They claim that if the plan goes forward, they “will fight [to] defend our land;” “if the police fail to control us,” one member continued, “it shall end up in war.” Ultimately, the Association claims, “they want to displace us as if we have no children. We need development; this is democracy” (Gulu Concerned Landowners Association interview, 24 April 2009).

As of 2009, the Association had mounted a vigorous legal battle against the Gulu University plan, successfully suing the public institution in two different court cases. Represented by Ocen & Co. Advocates, Obwoya Robert and Others versus Gulu University in case (No. HCT-02-CV-0019-2995) and Nicolas Ochora and 34 Others (in case No. HCT-02-CV-0025-2004) successfully sued Gulu

---

<sup>37</sup> Local Council Three Chairman Abonga Moses suggested that the displaced could move to rural areas (Abonga interview, 24 April 2009). The Association members contend, however, that rural locales are in the midst of their own land conflicts, the majority of which are land wrangles, and that it would result in violence should they move to those areas (Gulu Concerned Landowners Association interview, 24 April 2009). And Abonga Moses contended that there is very little infrastructure such as schools or health clinics in rural areas and there are no plans to create new centers for health or education; moving to rural areas would leave residents even more deprived of government services (Abonga interview, 24 April 2009).

University, resulting in a court injunction against the university's expansion plan on October 31, 2006. Despite the court injunction, however, the plan moved forward. On July 31, 2007, however, the Gulu District Land Board appropriated land to the university against the court injunction, causing confusion regarding the future of the expansion. On June 14, 2008, the university sent a letter to residents stating that land surveyors would arrive to evaluate the monetary worth of the property so the landowners could be compensated when the university expanded into their land. On June 18, 2008, Anywar Paolo, the founder and Chairman of the Association, sent a letter of reply stating that as per the court injunction of 2006, land surveyors would be interpreted as illegal criminal trespassers. Regardless, surveyors came to Laroo, but local youth chased them away (Gulu Concerned Landowners Association interview, 24 April 2009).

In April 2009, the Association forwarded their case to President Museveni via the presidential advisor to Northern Uganda. The members of the Association were certain that Museveni will protect their land and interests. An executive member of the Association told me that "he is going to answer that. We are a very big population. He has to help us. Our argument is leaning on the Constitution of Uganda which says the land belongs to the people, not the government" (Gulu Concerned Landowners Association interview, 24 April 2009)<sup>38</sup>.

### **Mexico: The 1992 Agrarian Law**

In 1989, President Carlos Salinas launched the "Reform of the Countryside," a series of agrarian and economic "reforms" that ended decades of

---

<sup>38</sup> This presents an interesting paradox between reliance on Museveni to stop the expansion plan yet simultaneous hatred of him because of the war.

state-sponsored land redistribution established by Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution. These policies came in the wake of the 1982 Mexican debt crisis and the subsequent cessation of the important-substitution-industrialization development model in Mexico; during this period, Salinas's presidential predecessor, Miguel de la Madrid (1982-88) economically oriented Mexico towards deregulation, privatization, and economic liberalization (Pastor and Wise 1997)<sup>39</sup>.

Salinas's institution of wide-scale change in the Mexican agrarian system "intended to open Mexican agriculture to international markets and decrease state regulation of the agricultural sector" (Lewis 2000: 405)<sup>40</sup>. Mexico's 1986 entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) began the process of neoliberalization, an economic policy reinforced in 1990 "when tariffs on most products were dropped or drastically lowered, subsidies on inputs (including credit) were withdrawn or sharply reduced, and the guarantee price was eliminated for all crops but maize and beans" (Foley 1995: 62). Whereas the government previously subsidized (or provided for free) fertilizer, the electricity and water industries, machinery, and technical support to *ejidatarios*, those

---

39 De la Madrid's attempted to stabilize the national economy and solve the national debt problem through a neoliberal plan of "reduc[ing]...government spending and [enacting] a large on-time devaluation of the peso. Unfortunately, the recessionary impact of this initial strategy was more severe than originally anticipated, and much of the task of economic adjustment was left to" Salinas (Pastor and Wise 1997: 331).

40 Salinas decided to "stabilise the macroeconomy by combining: (1) an incomes policy (i.e. wage and price guidelines), which was codified in a series of tripartite pacts including government, business, and labour; (2) fiscal restraint, which removed the underlying inflationary impetus; and (3) a commitment to a stable peso with the further liberalisation of imports, the rationale being that import competition would serve as an additional brake on inflation" (Pastor and Wise 1997: 332). In the short term, this lowered inflation and jumpstarted economic growth. Halfway through Salinas reign, however, returns diminished. Policy makers were hesitant to change the liberalization policies as they felt pressure from both national and international parties and Salinas team had already entered NAFTA negotiations (Pastor and Wise 1997: 332).

services were privatized in the early 1990s. This increased price inputs for small-scale farmers and challenged economic survival.

Further augmenting economic difficulties for small farmers, Anagsa, the government's crop insurance program, was eliminated and Mexico's rural development bank Banrural gave loans only to "peasant growers whose operations were judged profitable" (Foley 1995: 62)<sup>41</sup>. The simultaneous decline in credit availability from national development banks intensified the negative economic impact on *ejiditarios* and "the total amount of credit in pesos received by the *ejido* sector decreased by 20 per cent between 1990 and 1994" (Lewis 2000: 405). These changes angered both peasants and commercial growers, as foreign competition increased and production input costs soared. Peasant farmers had little economic recourse as foreign agricultural markets flooded both the international market with cheaper products. Imports into Mexico swelled, leaving growers with bad debt and dependent on crop insurance (Foley 1995).

It was in this context<sup>42</sup> that on November 7, 1991 President Salinas announced the 1992 Agrarian Law<sup>43</sup>, profoundly altering agrarian use throughout

---

41 To replace previous government subsidies for agriculture, the government implemented a 15-year direct income support program called PROCAMPO, which "have benefited the approximately 2.5 million subsistence farmers in Mexico by providing rural aid based on land farmed as opposed to amount of grain produced for sale" (Lewis 2002: 410).

42 Salinas' 1989 agrarian changes should also be analyzed retrospectively in the context of policies in the 1940s and 1950s, "the period of the rapid expansion of large-scale irrigated agriculture once known as the 'Mexican miracle'" (Foley 1995: 60). Policies at that time gave landholders increased protections in the judicial system and legal limits on individual land parcels were disregarded. Electricity, pesticides, water, and fertilizer subsidies were available for farmers with credit. This made peasant farmers more economically vulnerable, as they had to work through middlemen to sell products and "subsidized inputs promoted high productivity on modernized farms, leaving undercapitalized peasant producers ever farther behind. ...Limited access to land and growing populations promoted minifundismo and drove millions of peasants to emigration or agricultural labor on unfavorable terms" (Foley 1995: 62).

43 The 1992 Water Law should also be analyzed in conjunction with the 1992 Agrarian Law. The Water Law "transferred the management of irrigation districts from the government to its users.

Mexico. The changes to the law were “conceived behind closed doors under the president’s direction and quickly imposed with a minimum of consultation” (Foley 1995: 67). Governmental rhetoric surrounding the change of the seven-decade policy framed the changes in terms of the “modernization”<sup>44</sup> and increased efficiency of the *ejido*, “considered by its critics to be one of the main obstacles to agricultural growth. The insecurity of collective tenure, the relatively small size of individual plots and the underinvestment held to characterize the *ejido* sector were viewed as barriers to economic efficiency and progress” (Lewis 2000: 406)<sup>45</sup>. This was “probably the most thoroughgoing and radical revision of agrarian relations since Cardenas” in its economic and legal scope (Foley 1995: 62). Foley (1995) argues that the neoliberal reforms of Mexico differ little from...the ‘progressive’ enclosing landlords of 18th century England, despite the century-long gaps between them” (64), a replication quite similar to land tenure changes in Uganda.

The constitutional changes legalized ejidatarios right to right to “rent, sell

---

Hitherto farmers had received water at substantially subsidized prices, paying approximately 85 per cent of total water costs in the early 1960s and approximately 15 per cent by the late 1980s. These subsidies were significantly reduced with the new water law, and government transfers to support on-farm irrigation decreased from US\$102 million in 1992 to US \$36 million in 1995” (Lewis 2002: 413). Many farmers connect high prices for water and irrigation as a primary reason for renting out their *ejido* (Lewis 2002).

44 Opposition to inalienable landholding can be traced to the 1857 Mexican Ley Lerdo, “whose creators saw in the inalienable landholdings of church and peasant community a fundamental obstacle to the modernization of Mexican agriculture and the Mexican economy” (Foley 1995: 64).

45 Conservative arguments state that the change in Article 27 was not privatization *per se* because “the *ejido* has never been public land and thus the reform is not equivalent to privatization...if the *ejido* had ever been public, expropriation would have been unnecessary (Jones and Ward 1998: 79). According to this argument, the reform has left the decision of whether or not to privatize in the hands of individual ejidatarios (Jones and Ward 1998: 79). Considering the significant increase in economic difficulties in maintaining small-scale farming because of the neoliberalization of the Mexican economy, however, framing privatization in terms of “choice” is highly euphemistic.

or mortgage their previously inalienable land; created programmes and institutions to officially certify and record *ejidatarios*' rights to their land; and allowed for that formation of joint ventures between *ejidos* and the private sector," including foreign investors (Lewis 2000: 403). Additionally, the new article constitutionally disallowed groups of peasants from petitioning for *ejido* land, as reform proponents argued that there was no land left to distribute. Further, the new law allowed commercial associations, private investors, and stock companies to purchase *ejido* land, though these groups cannot hold more land than the "legal limit for individuals multiplied by the number of members, and the total for any one association cannot exceed 25 times the individual limit. Groups of investors, moreover, cannot incorporate anonymously—individual investors must be registered publicly and cannot, via investment, acquire more than the legal limit of small property" (Foley 1995: 65). The government also gave landowners two years to sell excess land before it was seized by the state. These changes were intended to increase foreign investment in formally communally accessed land (Lewis 2000).

Critical to the legal alienation of *ejido* land, the 1992 law made the dissolution of communal *ejido* property possible with a majority vote that would distribute the land amongst its members. Additionally, any *ejidatario* or group of *ejidatarios* are now permitted to partner with joint-stock companies, associations, or individuals for the use of *ejido* land, thus widening the possibility of privatized use of formerly communal land. It also allows for legal rental of *ejido* land and states that land can be offered as loan collateral; defaults on those loans, however,

lead to at least temporary loss of access to land, and “without the crop insurance system of the past defaults have become common, particularly in marginal areas” (Foley 1995: 66). Whereas the former article required that *ejidatarios* personally cultivate their parcel to maintain their land rights, the new law abolishes that provision. Further, the new Agrarian Law created the Program for the Certification of *Ejido* Land Rights and the Titling of Urban House Plots (PROCEDE) to officially certify *ejidatario* rights to their land.

In response to the new law, the peasant movement was split into two broad groups: the New Peasant Movement and the Coordinadora de Organizaciones Agrarias (CAP) who, respectively, accepted and rejected the proposed constitutional changes. The CAP and its constituent organizations drafted a dissenting response to the proposed law, but this initiative was ignored by the Mexican legislature. “The constitutional reform was passed in January and the implementing laws, after a mere two weeks of debate in extraordinary session of the legislature, in mid-February” (Foley 1995: 67).

The changes in Mexican agrarian policies paved the way for Mexico’s signing of NAFTA, a regional trade agreement between Mexico, the U.S., and Canada. This neoliberal measure came six-years after the 1988 passage of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA’s goal was to eliminate trade barriers between the three countries by eliminating tariffs on more than half of US imports from Mexico and more than one third of US exports to Mexico. The stated goal at the time was to eliminate all tariffs between Mexico and the US in ten years, except for some US agricultural exports to Mexico that would be

eliminated in 15 years.

Despite claims that NAFTA would improve the Mexican economies, the depreciation of the Mexican peso in December 1994 resulted in a 50 percent rise in inflation in 1995, as well as the quick rise in nominal interest rates. From 1989-94, the Mexican interest rate averaged 27 percent in nominal terms and 8 percent in real terms and soared to 61 percent and 19 percent in nominal and real terms by 1995 (Lewis 2000). Under NAFTA, the U.S. government subsidizes U.S. farmers' crops (most notably corn), while Mexican farmers are not granted the same governmental support; U.S.-produced corn thus floods the international market at falsely low prices, dramatically challenging the ability for Mexican farmers to economically survive. The increased usage of genetically modified crops also hinders Mexican farmers as new seeds must be purchased each growing cycle rather than non-altered seeds that can be reused. The disastrous effects of NAFTA on Mexican peasant farmers has been well documented<sup>46</sup>, though it is not the purpose of this project to chronicle the free trade treaty. In the next chapter, I more specifically explore the effects of the 1992 Agrarian Law whose impact must also be examined with the neoliberal influence of NAFTA on Mexico.

The combination of these increasingly neoliberal programs dealt a devastating blow to the *ejiditarios* who “had long benefitted from government aid in the form of input subsidies, crop guarantee prices, and additional credit and housing programmes” (Lewis 2000, 405). While the 1992 amendment was

---

46 For more information about the negative effects of neoliberal trade policies (and NAFTA in particular), see *Deglobalization* by Walden Bello (2005), *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* by David Harvey (2005), and *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* by Noam Chomsky (2003).

predicted by many to “result in the mass sale of *ejido* land, increase land concentration, and heighten poverty in *ejido* communities” (Lewis 2000, 403), the actual ramifications of the change depend largely on “a combination of factors, including type of land and access to it, agricultural management practices, proximity to the USA, ethnic composition of *ejido* population, and history of agricultural practice and agrarian reform in the region” (Lewis 2000, 403). Some studies show that economic privatization has been increased, resulting in increased alienation from the land (Lewis 2000). The withdrawal of government support for *ejidos* resulted in an increase in *ejidatarios* renting out their land due to a lack of “capital to compete in a highly mechanized agricultural environment that favours land consolidation and large farm sizes” (Lewis 2000, 408).

Farming became decreasingly financially viable due to high input prices (including water, machinery, and genetically modified seeds that must be repurchased each growing season) and challenges competing with the falsely low prices of U.S. agricultural products (particularly corn) in the international market. Simultaneously, “Article 27 no longer requires *ejidatarios* to work their land personally in order to maintain ownership rights” (Lewis 2002, 416); these challenging economic factors lead to high rates of emigration. Lewis (2002) argues that as increasing numbers of young *ejido* members emigrate to urban centers in Mexico and internationally, the value of *ejido* land as family patrimony will decrease” (Lewis 2002, 416).

Tight immigration regulations made it nearly impossible, however, to emigrate legally, so many turned towards undocumented border crossing. This

coincided with the 1994 “Operation Gatekeeper,” which constructed walls through border cities and increased the number of Border Patrol Agents. Thus, as economic depravity forced a need for migration, Operation Gatekeeper simultaneously increased the number of deaths of border crossers as walls force immigrants through the dangerous Sonoran Desert.

Increased environmental degradation was also prevalent as a direct result of NAFTA. Because “NAFTA allows companies to sue governments for cash compensation if a country implements legislation that ‘expropriates’ the company’s future profits” (Shiva 2002: 96), corporations have successfully sued the Mexican government when it attempted to stop corporate environmental damage. For instance, the U.S. American waste management company Metalclad won \$17 million in a lawsuit against the Mexican government after its waste disposal and treatment sites in San Luis Potosi were closed “by local officials on the grounds that it was not environmentally sound. ... The intense community opposition to Metalclad’s facility was irrelevant” (Shiva 2002: 96).

Immediate resistance to these policies came from peasant farmers, including many women. In 1995, the “Women’s Platform for the Dialogue” at a Zapatista conference in Chiapas had the following demands in 1995: “throw out the new Article 27 because it takes away women’s right to land;” “women should have the right to own and inherit landed property;” “if a man abandons his family, the parcel should automatically pass to the woman;” “in recognition of women’s property rights and to protect the children, land adjudication and titles should explicitly include women as co-owners” (Deere and Leone 2001: 153). This came

in response to widespread agreement that the constitutional changes to Article 27 particularly negatively effected women by a) deeming that ejidos could be dissolve only by ejido members, only 17.5 percent of whom are women; b) allowing the dissolution of individual ejidos to give his family the “right of first buyer,” though because many rural women have low wages many are unable to buy the land should their partner choose to dissolve his parcel; c) changing inheritance law so ejidos no longer remain within the family, plac[ing] rural women in a much more prearious position than ever before with respect to land rights;” and d) no longer requiring a parcel of *ejido* land to be used for women’s productive activities (Deere and Leone 2001: 151-152)<sup>47</sup>.

### **Concluding Comparative Discussion**

In Minnesota, Uganda, and Mexico, the end of physical violence did not bring lasting peace or land security to the Dakota, Acholi, or indigenous Mexican populations. Conversely, the legal changes to land access enacted by all three state governments exacerbated experiences of physical violence in these communities. In all three cases, national legislation legalized land alienation and severely hindered farmers’ ability to access their land, which led to varying levels of homelessness, starvation, emigration, and death. As such, legalized land alienation constituted a form of structural violence, with land policies “built into the structure” leading to “unequal power and consequently...unequal life

---

<sup>47</sup> Women's resistance to the agrarian changes was coupled by the campaigns of the *Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional* (EZLN, or the Zapatistas), a revolutionary political group that officially declared war against the Mexican state on January 1, 1994, the day that NAFTA came into effect in Mexico. The EZLN, based out of Chiapas and formed primarily by Mayan farmers, has continued to oppose neoliberalism in Mexico.

chances” (Galtung 1969: 170). While federal policies were implemented nationwide, their negative effects disproportionately affected people with non-capitalist land tenure systems who already experienced physical violence.

In Minnesota, U.S. policy effectively eradicated all of the Dakota’s communal land and pushed the Dakota people who had not been killed into reservations; fraudulent treaties played a critical role in the complete alienation and expropriation of Dakota land. According to my Acholi informants, the Museveni government’s contemporary policies will, if implemented, exacerbate preexisting malnutrition, homelessness, and breakdown of community-based cultural systems caused by the war; the piecemeal privatization of communal Acholi land has already led to a decrease in subsistence farming, the most essential component of Acholi life. In Mexico, the 1992 constitutional change in agrarian law has led to the continued breakdown in communally accessed *ejido* property. Indigenous communities that relied on communal farming for survival disproportionately experience the resulting poverty, which has resulted in wide scale migratory out-fluxes, environmental degradation, and reported losses in a sense of community.

Following intense periods of physical violence targeting the Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexican communities, this structural violence enhanced preexisting somatic and psychological violences. As such, physical and structural violences mutually reinforce each other in these cases. Although the specificities of the legislation vary greatly, all of the described policies took advantage of previous periods of violence to legalize the expropriation of exploitable land that

began during the physical violence stage. In this context, these legislative policies reaffirmed the belief of the populations that physical violence was as an excuse for land take over, intimately linking the underlying cause of war to the legislative changes that followed.

Although physical violence catalyzed the process of Marxian primitive accumulation, legislation attempted complete the land privatization necessary for imposing capitalism on formerly non-capitalist populations. Additionally, this structural violence made returning to “normalcy” after physical violence nearly impossible because the basis for rebuilding the fundamentals of life—physically self-sustaining oneself and ones family—was eroded.

In the next chapter, I outline the combined effects of physical and structural violences, which I argue leads to the third stage resulting from the process of land alienation: intra-community violence.

## **CHAPTER 4: INTRA-COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE**

Solina, an elderly Acholi woman, spends hours every day digging cassava and millet in her garden in the Laroo Division of Gulu District in Northern Uganda. Originally from the village of Unyama, about ten kilometers away from Laroo, Solina moved to Gulu Town during the war to escape from extreme physical violence in her village. During her time in Gulu Town, Solina often fell sick, complaining of frequent bouts of malaria. Now living in the more rural area of Laroo, Solina's health restored through access to a garden, digging, and open space. But despite the marked improvements in her life in the post armed conflict era, Solina has not yet returned to her communal land in Unyama; disputes with neighbors there regarding her communal land have created potentially severe physical insecurity despite the cessation of armed conflict in 2007.

Even after physical violence and changes in land policy, violence does not abate. In Chapter 4, I discuss the effects of land alienation formed by the physical and structural violences highlighted in Chapters 2 and 3. I focus on the political, economic, and cultural effects of the forced commodification of formerly communal land, which leads to the third stage of violence: intra-community violence.

In the wake of physical and structural violences, intra-community violence has devastated the Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexican populations and reinforced the severe negative effects of land alienation. This frequently comes in the form of violent land wrangles and legal disputes between neighbors over the

exact demarcation of land. With much of the community knowledge of land delineation destroyed by war, community members often begin to fight each other for the ownership of now-privatized land. Corporate and outsider control of Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexicans' land (as well as other natural resources such as water and oil) further exacerbate intra-community conflict as land becomes a quickly diminishing resource and thus access to it becomes increasingly urgent. Intra-community violence in some cases threatens to augment into full-scale war, thus restarting the process of the three stages of violence this project analyzes. This violence also decreases the possibility of re-accessing communal land as community divisions allow for outsider land expropriation and privatization.

### **Theoretical Background of Intra-Community Violence**

The long-term effects of physical and structural violence, as well as the effects of capitalist resource expropriation, have been a site of theoretical analysis for the scholars who inform my project. Shiva argues that the “destruction of resource rights and erosion of democratic control of natural resources....[reduces] culture...to a negative shell where one identity is in competition with the ‘other’ over scarce resources that define economic and political power” (2002: Xii).

While communal control is not necessarily synonymous with democratic control, Shiva's contention highlights “the double fascism of globalization” which enables this violent competition, as survival depends on responses to “economic fascism that destroys people's rights to resources and...fundamentalist fascism that feeds on people's displacement, dispossession, economic insecurities, and fears” (Xii).

Pitted against each other by globalization in order to control scarce natural resources in their communities, my case study populations (to different extents) have experienced intra-community competition and violence after “economic fascism” largely disrupted community rights to resources via legal changes.

Similarly, Galtung and Farmer contend that structural violence results in, and is necessitated by, material violence. Galtung argues that there is a possibility “that manifest structural violence presupposes latent personal violence. When the structure is threatened, those who benefit from structural violence, above all those who are the top, will try to preserve the status quo so well geared to protect their interests” (1969: 179). Writing specifically about post-armed conflict periods, Galtung expects “a focus on personal violence...lest they should become between-war periods; and if the periods protracts sufficiently for the major outburst of personal violence to be partly forgotten, we would expect a concentration on structural violence” (174). This highlights that the “post” of armed conflict is a euphemistic term; war may officially cease (or not, in the case of Northern Uganda, where the government and LRA have yet to sign a peace agreement), but both physical and structural violence continue.

Farmer (2004a) argues that the adverse material consequences of structural violence include “epidemic disease, violations of human rights, and genocide” as well as “death, injury, illness, subjugation, stigmatization, and even psychological terror” (308). While he highlights the role of the those in power to enact material violence (specifically citing the U.S. prison systems, Haitian death squads, and police brutality in Bombay, India), I argue that given continued resource scarcity

also results in violence internal to the community. The material and psychological consequences of structural and physical violence, coupled with uneven political and economic power distributions within communities, create situations of continued Galtungian violence<sup>48</sup>.

### **Case Studies: Intra-Community Violence in the Dakota, Acholi, and Indigenous Mexican Communities**

#### **The Dakota: Legal Battles and Leadership Tensions**

The long-term effect of war, land privatization, and forced assimilation has been devastating to Dakota communities, although important community efforts work against this destruction. The Indian Land Tenure Foundation argues that “although the end result was probably not anticipated, the intended change to Indian lifestyle brought about by the Allotment Act has caused widespread social, cultural, and economic hardships for Indian people” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 2).

Different forms of internal governance heavily divide Dakota communities in North and South Dakota and Nebraska. In one faction, some Dakota communities govern themselves under the constitutions created by the IRA. In another, the practice of the *tioyapaye* is still vibrant yet not represented by the IRA-formed governments. This causes tension and great divides internal to communities as a continuing legacy of colonial “divide and conquer” policies. Direct actions, such as building occupations, violently mark these intra-community tensions based on differing governance styles.

---

48 I refer to Galtung's definition of violence as “when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (1969: 168).

The 1973 Wounded Knee takeover is another example of intra-community violence. After many American Indians had been killed by whites with impunity by both the U.S. government and the IRA governments, the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Oglala Lakota of the Pine Ridge reservation occupied a church located at the site of the Wounded Knee massacre. This highly symbolic action brought out U.S. martial and IRA forces that resulted in a violent three-month standoff. The Wounded Knee takeover deeply divided the Pine Ridge reservation and deepened mistrust between the IRA governments and the traditional *tioyapaye* but was not successful in ending the plenary powers of the U.S. government as AIM had desired.

The Pine Ridge reservation, now home to the Oglala Lakota, in South Dakota on the border of Nebraska provides an additional example of intra-community violence, though in this instance one of the communities is formed of white U.S. Americans who inhabit Whiteclay, Nebraska. Whiteclay is less than two miles from Pine Ridge and sells alcohol approximately 12,500 cans of beer a day to Pine Ridge inhabitants. "Sale and possession of alcoholic beverages on the Pine Ridge is prohibited under tribal law. Except for a brief experiment with on-reservation liquor sales in the early 1970s, this prohibition has been in effect since the reservation lands were created" ("The Battle for Whiteclay"). Whiteclay alcohol sales are made without regulation and in frequent violation of Nebraska law; despite requests by Pine Ridge for regulation of Whiteclay alcohol sales which promote widespread alcohol addiction and that disease's accompanying violences, the State of Nebraska has done nothing to regulate Whiteclay sales.

Work is being done to combat the community violence in Pine Ridge. Terry Janis of the Indian Land Tenure Foundation argues that the increasing practices of spiritual ceremonies and sweat lodges allows for more social interaction between younger people from families who represent the IRA and *tioyapaye* governments; social bonding by these young people has helped to heal intra-community wounds (interview, 10 March 2010).

In Minnesota, meanwhile, divisions in the Dakota community exist as a legacy of the differing roles played during the U.S. Dakota war and genocide. Two different communities, the Shakopee and Prairie Island, are descendants of the Dakota “loyal” to the U.S. government during that violence; today, the Shakopee and Prairie Island communities operate casinos in Minnesota which garners \$1 million a year for each member of the communities. Dakota communities that formed the Dakota Diaspora as a result of the 1862 internment and physical violence cannot access this gaming wealth. Sheldon Wolfchild, the president of the Lower Sioux and a descendent of the diasporic Mdewakanton Dakota, sued the U.S. government in a class action lawsuit (representing 2,000 members of the Mdewakanton community) over this conflict of unequal access. According to Wolfchild, the law suit is “a legal effort to unite all three communities under one government where all share in the profits of Jackpot Junction, Treasure Island and Mystic Lake casinos,” which are currently operated only by the Shakopee and Prairie Island communities (Schechter 2006). The lawsuit argues that because of the war and genocide, the U.S. government is to blame for its failure "to protect the rights of the descendants of the loyal

Mdewakanton" (Schechter 2006). The suit has created great controversy and divisions between different Dakota communities as a direct outcome of the violence that took place 150 years ago (Schechter 2006).

There are active movements to support the regaining of American Indian homelands throughout the U.S., including within the Dakota communities. These movements can be divided into initiatives by Indian nations and by non-governmental and non-profit organizations. Of the initiatives made by Indian nations, many are inter-tribal efforts that have formed organizations such as the National Association of the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, the Tribal Education Department National Assembly, the National Congress of American Indians, the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association, the Affiliation of Large Land-based Tribes, and many others. These diverse groups work to advocate for Indian rights and the preservation of land, among other goals.

Additionally, many non-profits work for land recuperation. One example of an organization working towards recuperation is the Indian Land Tenure Foundation (ITLF), which founded in 2001 and based in Little Canada, Minnesota. The ITLF actively works to "support the acquisition, ownership and management of Indian land by tribes and Indian people" (ITLF CD-ROM). The ITLF was formed after a three-year planning process that involved hundreds of American Indian people from throughout the U.S. with the collective goal that "land within the original boundaries of every reservation and other areas of high significance where tribes retain aboriginal interest are in Indian ownership and management" (*The Message Runner* 2000: 1). The ITLF articulates its mission in

part as a means of rectifying the “wrong perpetrated on Indian people by the General Allotment Act [which] have continued unabated for the past 115 years” (*The Message Runner* 2000: 1). It works towards this goal through programming and grants in education, law reform, cultural revitalization, and economic development. In the education area, ITLF works to create and implement a school curriculum about American Indian land rights that stresses the critical relationship between people and land; the ITLF also gives grants to educators to implement this curriculum. Additionally, the ITLF supports the legal efforts of American Indians to acquire their land.

Another American Indian non-profit organization, the Indian Land Working Group (ILWG) works with individual Indian landowners. ILWG “meets annually to discuss ways to make the fractionate lands useful again. Indians are encouraged to consolidate their family’s ownership interests through a variety of methods including purchase, exchange, or gift deeds when they can” (*The Message Runner* 2002: 3).

Movements towards language recuperation also strive to restore community unity and heal the divides formed by colonial invasion. Through language schools (such as the first Dakota language immersion preschool and family language classes)<sup>49</sup>, the creation of a Dakota-English dictionary and computer programs, and more informal family-based language learning, Dakota communities actively work towards the restoration of the linguistics that are so critical to identity.

---

<sup>49</sup> These programs were in place until April 2000 (Wilson 2005: 112).

## **The Acholi: Land Wrangling**

War and land privatization have ravaged Northern Uganda, resulting in a sharp increase in land conflict between the Acholi people as safe access to communal land decreases. In September/October 2008, the Gulu District NGO Forum (an organization that serves as a hub for the dozens of local and international non-governmental organizations operating in Northern Uganda) carried out a study about perceptions of key land issues in Gulu and Amuru districts. Among the 35 land conflicts that informants identified, the most pressing included: limited knowledge on the processes of acquiring certificates and renewal of titles by the community; misinterpretation of the land laws by some organizations; sub county boundary conflicts; legality of some land owners given land during Idi Amin's regime; reclamation of communally owned land by individuals; land grabbing from the disadvantaged people (orphans, widows); encroachment on public land; the dilemma of land owners who hosted IDPs; reclaiming formerly given land by ancestors to friends, relatives, in-laws, and institutions by the current generation; and land wrangles (Gulu District NGO Forum, 2008). In the post-armed conflict era in Northern Uganda, conflicts surrounding land have become a key deterrent in creating sustainable peace in the region.

As previously discussed, the twin policies of the central government and the LRA resulted in widespread disease in camps, food dependency and loss of culture of digging, difficulty of access to land because of physical insecurity (because of the presence of one or both of the armed forces as well as land

mines), and destruction of property. As such, “war and displacement have limited or even deprived most Acholi from growing their own food” (Finnstrom 2008: 35). Large-scale land privatization policies threaten to augment pre-existing land alienation; despite the temporary stalling of those policies, it is increasingly common for individuals to sell their plots of communal land piece-meal, quickening the process of privatization.

But the violence of land expropriation does not stop there. In an example of Shiva’s argument that when denied sovereignty over natural resource control, internal conflicts occur to access scarce resource, local land conflicts in Northern Uganda now pose intra-community threats to safe land access. These land wrangles occur as neighbors, families, and clans dispute, sometimes violently, over land boundaries and ownership. Land wrangles most often stem from a lack of knowledge of the specific boundaries of communal land; knowledge about the demarcations of communal land was generally not written down, but rather held by elders, many of whom died during the war. The UPDF’s policies of deforestation further exacerbated this problem, as trees that formerly delineated land boundaries no longer stand. Many youth, who have spent the majority of their lives in camps, have returned back to their ancestral villages to claim familial property, only to find others claiming the same plot. As privatized land titles become more common, confusion and manipulation concerning the sale of land results in further conflict. Local government has been largely ineffective in outlining land plots and peacefully settling land disputes, frequently leading to violence as people fight to defend the little land they have left after decades of

violence.

One example of a local land wrangle was recounted to me by Otim

William. He told me:

There is a land dispute between us and somebody who came early. So they came here and they stay here for about 29 to 30 years. The acres that they've been plowing—they expanded the boundaries on our land. With the dispute, we take it to the LC, but they've failed to solve. We talked to the paramount chief so there could be peace (interview, 19 April 2009).

In another example, Solina related her experience with land wrangles on her communal land in Unyama. She says the land “was destroyed but not by the LRA but by the people, the neighbors. One lady took my land, but she gave it back. I spoke with my mouth and said everybody should bring back my land. If you want to dig, you should come ask me then I can help them. It is in accordance with the law” (Solina interview, 16 April 2009). Because not all the land was given back, problems continue on her land.

Solina recounted another episode of investors causing internal family strife, this time in the case of a neighbor:

Some white men colluded and bought land without consent of the other family members. The family sat down with the brother [that sold the land] and told him to take the money back to the white man. How could he sell cultural land? They got their land back, but some of money had already been spent (interview, 16 April 2009).

Abonga Moses, the Local Council (LC) Three of the Laroo Division, estimates that about 90 percent of the cases heard by the Division Court Committee concern land issues, the majority of which are for land wrangles (Abonga interview, 24 April 2009). Many of these conflicts stem from confusion

caused by selling a single plot of land to multiple buyers, selling land at a low price and then reselling the same land to another person at a higher price and then returning the original buyers' money, and unclear delineation of land borders (Abonga interview, 24 April 2009). In order to solve these local land cases, citizens go to the LC Two Chairman and then, if one party decides to appeal the case, to the Division Court Committee; it is ultimately the Gulu District Land Board that holds the power to decide land issues in Gulu (Abonga interview, 24 April 2009).

Contemporary land struggles have been particularly disenfranchising to women, as they cannot directly inherit land through the patrilineal Acholi land system; this leads to disproportionately high rates of land loss by women. Unsupportive local governments seem unwilling and unable to help women regain access to the land. Women also continue to face physical insecurity while farming, particularly from former LRA and UPDF soldiers. The lack of infrastructure and support for digging, such as equipment, tillable land, and manual labor, also affects women's ability to return to farming (Obunya interview, 10 February 2009).

Despite this, many people have not lost hope and strongly believe that despite current struggles, Acholis will never lose access to their land. Stella told me that "land is always there. Even you in your place have land. It's God given" (interview, 21 April 2009). Recognizing that increasing safe access to land could provide the security needed to return to peace and normalcy, there have been movements by local government and Acholi cultural leaders to create a nonviolent

mechanism for demarcating the borders of their land plots and hold local government accountable for peacefully settling land disputes.

To do so, local cultural and governmental figures drafted a proposal to create an Acholi Communal Land Trust. The Trust would serve as an umbrella organization for overseeing and implementing an ambitious communal land-mapping project, as well as form an important bridge between local government and cultural leaders (Atkinson 2008). The proposed Land Mapping Project would have helped protect land rights and decreased the instances of land wrangles by delineating borders without titling them as privatized land. The project would conduct a needs assessment in consultation with local communities, aided by many different leaders and experts. Clan leaders would draw clan boundaries to come to a consensus regarding the delineation of clan land. These agreed upon boundaries would be digitized and printed in hard copy; this would provide the necessary proof to developers and investors that this land was not “free” or “idle” but protected by an agreement with the local government and cultural leaders, thereby enabling greater land security. It was proposed that the Land Mapping Project could also lead to the creation of Customary Land Associations and certificates of customary ownership, providing even more security against developers and land wrangles. Unfortunately, these plans stalled and there are no longer plans to continue forward with the implementation of the Land Mapping Project (Atkinson 2008). The attempt, however, is an important reference for future plans to help Acholis protect their land.

## **Indigenous Communities in Southern Mexico: Piecemeal Dissolution**

As of 2002, there were still more than 27,000 *ejidos* and 3.1 million *ejidatarios* in Mexico, accounting for more than half of Mexico's arable land (Lewis 2000: 404). Despite this, however, intra-*ejido* conflict and factionalism have become increasingly common in the wake of changes in Article 27. Legal provisions of the constitutional amendment disallow former constitutional provisions that allowed for groups of peasants to petition for land undermined "the basis for a great deal of peasant mobilization and organization" (Foley 1995: 65).

Increasing poverty, inequality, and inability to self-sustain within *ejido* communities augments the problem of community strife, which has been experienced throughout Mexico. While proponents of neoliberalism claimed that neoliberal policies under the Salinas administration would create economic growth, this has largely not been felt on a micro-level. Resultingly, some *ejidatarios* sell their parcel of *ejido* land, leading to their piecemeal dissolution.

Because of differentiated land uses within *ejidos* and the legal ability for individuals to sell land that used to be accessed by the collective, intra-community strife arises.

For example, in the Yaqui Valley in northern Mexico, *ejidatarios* "stated feelings of community within their *ejido* had decreased since 1992. Explanations given included lack of interest in *ejido* matters by fellows *ejidatarios*; poor attendance at *ejido* meetings; poor administration and/or corruption by *ejido* leaders; the 'individualization' or 'sectorization' of the *ejido*; and the increased

rate of land rentals” (Lewis 2002: 413). As land rentals increased, so did negative opinions about community. “As feelings of unity decreased among ejidatarios, individual members have had fewer qualms about renting their land to persons outside of the ejido nucleus” (Lewis 2002: 413).

There is also a generational component of *ejido* use changes. There are higher rates of *ejido* rental by the “children and grandchildren of *ejidatarios*” because they “are not as historically tied to their land” (Lewis 2002: 414). Lewis (2002) argues that “ejidatarios who inherit from their relatives are farther removed from direct struggles waged to gain land, and for this reason are often more willing to transfer control of its management” (Lewis 2002, 414).

There are, however, widespread movements to recuperate communal land and control agricultural production. For instance, the Coordinadora Nacional de Ayala (CNPA) formed in the 1980s “to gain control of the productive process and, through it, economic power at the grass roots” (Foley 1995: 60). Under the slogan “land to the tiller,” during the 1990s the CNPA demanded “adequate crop prices, credit, the renegotiation of old debts, and the maintenance of subsidies on inputs; among the activities are credit unions, commercialization schemes, fertilizer distribution enterprises, first-stage processing plants, and rural stores” (Foley 1995: 60). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Union Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas, a network of autonomous regional and local organizations, was a primary organization to help peasants recuperate alienated land (Foley 1995: 61).

## Concluding Comparative Discussion

Although the combined effects of physical and structural violences caused by land alienation devastated the case study populations, perhaps the most enduring and dangerous result is the accompanying intra-community violence that occurred as individuals struggle to access quickly dwindling natural resources. As accessing land becomes increasingly difficult, vying for the resource pits individuals against each other, furthering the breakdown of community-based economic, political, and cultural systems.

In Minnesota, Dakota communities are currently engaged in legal battles to access wealth garnered through the gaming industry while intra-community struggles regarding governance style also persist. This violence directly results from Euro-American “divide and conquer” policies during the stages of physical and structural violences. In Northern Uganda, the increasing frequency of land wrangles between neighbors threatens to spark a new civil war. In Mexico, the piecemeal selling and renting of *ejido* land erodes the collective basis of the *ejido* system.

Understood in a vacuum, intra-community violence is often portrayed as an example of uncivilized, barbaric people turning against each other. Because of this (in addition to tearing apart communities, reducing the ability to safely access land, and augmenting the preexisting loss of cultural, political, and economic systems), intra-community violence can serve to justify the original rhetorical logic of state-sponsored physical violence: the state’s political, economic, and cultural interventions are necessary to turn “inadequately” capitalist populations

into capitalist subjects. Intra-community violence could be used as an excuse for increased outsider intervention into community sovereignty.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

*“Land is not equal to money.  
Money will just be scattered around, but land will always stay.”*

-Solina, interview participant

My research explores the forcible incorporation of non-capitalist land use mechanisms into the capitalist market system. I argue that a mutually reinforcing combination of physical violence (war and militarization), structural violence (legislated land alienation), and intra-community violence (land wrangles and legal debates) result in a forcible shift from communal land use practices to privatized systems, which ultimately devastates the practices of communities that previously relied on communal land. I use the case studies of the Dakota in Minnesota, the Acholi in Northern Uganda, and indigenous communities in southern Mexico to demonstrate the relationship between land privatization and the three stages of violence.

This project chronicles how the three stages of violence—all created by land privatization—reinforce each other. Physical violence “cleared” communal land of its inhabitants and legislative changes reinforced this process, provoking intra-community strife. The juridical and physical battles of intra-community violence in some cases threaten to trigger more physical violence, aiding the state and corporate goal of accessing land for exploitation. Separated from the ownership and use of communal land, members of my case study populations became employed wage laborers for the profit of outside parties.

The theoretical implications of my findings extend beyond Minnesota, Uganda, and Mexico. I argue that my claims that the institutionalization of capitalism depends upon multiple forms of violence may also apply to other communities and to resources other than land. Ultimately, I argue that not only does capitalism depend upon violence, it can be a form of violence in and of itself.

In this chapter, I reiterate and expand on my analytic and theoretical claims to show how my work contributes to existing academic literature. I further develop my argument that capitalism is a form of violence and discuss the larger implications of this claim. I close by suggesting areas for further research and my hopes for the future of this project.

### **Analytic Claims**

This project argues that the state and its corporate partners alienated all three case study populations from their land. In Chapter 2, I argued that the process of land alienation and expropriation begins via physical violence; as war and internment force inhabitants from their homes, their land is left idle and thus “open” for expropriation by investors, settlers, or the state. I also demonstrated that in all three case studies, the states’ desire to acquire communal land in order to privatize it was a key impetus of the physical violence. The Dakota War and subsequent genocide in Minnesota, the two-decade war in Northern Uganda, and the militarization of southern Mexico by combined army and police forces created the violence that left formerly communal land available for privatization. As such, land privatization was both the goal and outcome of physical violence.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrated that following periods of physical violence, the state implemented legislative changes that legally alienated communities from their land via a privatized land system. Although these pieces of legislation were implemented nation-wide, their negative effects were disproportionately felt by communities who previously did not operate under a market-based land system. I argued that land alienation exacerbated the negative effects of war and the inability to safely access communal land resulted in Galtungian structural violence. Unable to safely access their land because of disenfranchisement, the Acholi, Dakota, and indigenous Mexicans experienced high rates of poverty, malnutrition, homelessness, and even death. This structural violence completed the process of primitive accumulation and strengthened the capitalist land system. The U.S. 1851 Treaty of Traverse des Sioux and the 1887 Allotment Act, the 2007 Ugandan Land Bill (as well as two other privatization schemes exclusive to Northern Uganda), and the 1992 Mexican Agrarian Law constitute prime examples of legalized land alienation through national legislation.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the overall effects of physical and structural violences and introduced intra-community violence, the third stage in this process. Conflicts between neighbors regarding land delineations destroyed by war and eroded by privatization now threaten communities and, in some cases, create an atmosphere ripe a new civil war. These intra-community conflicts also distract from the continuing encroachment of the state and corporations who rely on violence to enact the capitalism necessary for natural resource exploitation.

Although the three stages of violence roughly correspond to the process of

land alienation (beginning with a war, followed by legal changes and then intra-community strife), the case study populations demonstrate marked differences and are not neatly aligned. While the Dakota and Acholi experienced the stages of violence in a temporally linear manner, the case of Mexico varied. In Mexico, the 1910 Revolution enacted state-sponsored land redistribution that aimed to break down the *latifundio* system in place since Spanish colonialism; though the *ejido* system—the collective landholding system established under Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution—was not entirely successful, it differs from the state (neo)colonial policies in Uganda and Minnesota that alienated the Acholi and Dakota from their collective land tenure. Unlike in Minnesota and Uganda, whose period of legislative changes occurred in the wake of war, legal land changes in Mexico occurred simultaneous to the militarization of southern Mexico, where state troops targeted indigenous communities that resisted neoliberalism, particularly in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, and Guerrero. And unlike the cases of the Acholi and Dakota, who were specifically targeted by the Ugandan and Minnesotan armies, the Mexican troops did not focus on a singular ethnic group, but rather any indigenous community that opposed neoliberalization.

Despite these differences, there are striking similarities of the effects of land privatization and changes in land tenure in the cases of the Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexican case studies. In all three cases, land privatization not only threatened economic well-being but physical well-being as well as those who present a challenge to the commodification of land become embroiled in the state's violence.

## **Theoretical Implications**

War, governmental policies, and community strife are normatively understood as separate entities, as if existing in a vacuum outside of larger political, economic, and social forces. I complicate this understanding by arguing that physical, structural, and intra-community violences neither begin nor end with themselves, but are stages in a larger process. In the case of communities with non-capitalist land tenure systems, the state, corporations, and other beneficiaries of capitalism frequently orchestrate these stages of violence in order to alienate people from their communal land. As such, none of the stages should be understood as separate occurrences, but rather a collective process to force land privatization.

In an era of increasing neoliberalism and corporate power, the implications of the violence inherent to capitalist privatization appear devastating. Enacting a privatized land tenure system is a way of naturalizing capitalism by trying to destroy resistance, which comes from communities whose self-sustenance system runs counter to privatization. As a result of this, I argue that capitalism is a form of violence. My research demonstrates that capitalism cannot be implemented without a high degree of physical, structural, and intra-community violences, which alone are not enough to shift communal land systems to privatize one.

My argument bridges several different theories and expands upon existing notions of natural resource use, capitalism, and violence. I demonstrate that the cases of the Dakota, Acholi, and indigenous Mexicans are examples of primitive accumulation; the enclosure of the commons and transforms rural peoples into

wage laborers on their now-alienated land. I argue that this process of primitive accumulation (achieved through physical and structural violence) is a form of structural violence as the inability to access land results in the unequal life chances and death described by Galtung (1969) and furthered analyzed by Farmer (2001; 2004a; 2004b). The effects of land privatization are no less severe than the consequences of colloquial understandings of physical violence.

In arguing that land privatization is a form of structural violence, I reinforce neo-Marxist theorists' claims that neoliberal exploitation of natural resources is a "double fascism" (Shiva 2002: Xii). Hegemonic neoliberalism presents natural resource privatization as a natural activity that is an inevitable stage in the linear progress narrative of so-called modernity. My project, however, argues that the incorporation of non-capitalist peoples into capitalism is inherently a violent process that needs the three stages of violence to be fully enacted. What is presented as "natural" actually rests on genocidal grounds and can only be implemented through violence.

## **Conclusion**

Paul Farmer (2004a) argues that the "erasure or distortion of history is part of the process of desocialization necessary for the emergence of hegemonic accounts of what happened and why" (308). Throughout this project, I have tried to complicate normative understandings of the implementation of land privatization and its connection to other sociopolitical and economic events in order to work against the hegemonic histories that Farmer describes.

I hope that reading this project provides readers with a more critical lens

of global conflict's connections to resource use. Often, violence is misrepresented and misunderstood as barbarity acting outside of the political economy. In an example of this assertion, Mahmood Mamdani (2009) argues that what has been labeled a "genocide" in Darfur, Sudan is actually not the Black versus Arab conflict that the Western media portrays, but rather a complicated conflict over natural resource use. Another example of distorted portrayals of violence that are in reality inextricably connected to natural resource use is the case of so-called Somali "pirates." Beginning in 1991, European ships began dumping nuclear waste on the shores of this coastal nation, resulting in radiation sickness. European over-fishing of Somalia's ocean has devastated Somali fisherman who have lost their livelihoods. In this context, "pirates" attack European ships and Western media portrays them as nothing more than barbaric thugs (Hari 2009). I aim to heighten awareness of the vital role of resource use and access in global conflict and the role privatization plays in different forms of violence throughout the world.

Given the constraints on this work in terms of time-span, geographic scope and lack of primary source material in two of my cases, my project has not yet not exhausted its possibilities in terms of analytic and theoretical connections. In particular, I have not addressed the changing relationship between corporations, the state, and global financial institutions in our age of deregulation, "free" trade, and environmental devastation due to overuse and misuse of natural resources. I am left with lingering questions: how does climate change (and the resulting challenges in producing enough food in many agricultural communities)

complicate the relationship between land privatization and violence? How does the relationship between corporations and the state differ across my case studies and in countries that I did not directly examine? How do differing states' political systems affect the implementation of land privatization? How does the study of privatization and violence translate into urban environments, where communities throughout the world attempt to access resources such as water, electricity, and other utilities?

With these questions left unexamined, I hope to continue active conversations about the violent role capitalism plays in quotidian and larger-scale events. Increasing resistance to neoliberalism and natural resource privatization throughout the world has sparked global conversations between activists who seek to challenge capitalism's hegemony and provide more sustainable, peaceful, and local alternatives to exploitation. I hope that this project is part of that conversation.

Safe land access can act as the cornerstone to sustainable and self-determining peace. And communities throughout the world, including the three case studies I chronicle, attempt to reclaim their land rights to build upon community economic, political, cultural, religious, and social systems threatened by land privatization. But this is also a reclamation of autonomy, of history, and of community; reestablishing access to communal directly threatens the capitalism presented as the natural progression of modernity. As such, attempts to practice non-capitalist land tenure systems not only provide vital sustenance but also destabilize the hegemony of capitalism so necessary for breaking its cycles of

violence. I believe that exploitation of community natural resource rights is the primary basis for the most pressing political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural crises of our time. Restoration of and respect for those sovereign rights is critical.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a primary thanks to my advisor and friend, (Professor) Paul Dosh, without whom everything from adventures in the altiplano to absurdly late (though rewarding) work nights would not be possible. Your guidance, support, and respect have been invaluable throughout the past four years.

I would also like to thank Professors David Blaney, Olga Gonzalez, and Peter Rachleff for their support, advice, and critiques over the course of this project.

Thank you to my family and friends for their constant love and helpful reminders to take a deep breath. A particular thanks goes to the members of 719: in the words of the Beach Boys...

And, most especially, an endless thank you to those in Gulu, Uganda who translated so much more than the Acholi language, and to whom this project is dedicated.

## **APPENDIX: LIST OF INTERVIEWS**

- Abonga Moses. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 24, 2009.
- Gulu Concerned Landowners Association, Executive Committee. Interview by author. Gulu Uganda, April 24, 2009.
- Grace. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 17, 2009.
- Makamiko Claudia. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 16, 2009.
- Janis, Terry. Interview by author. Little Canada, Minnesota, March 10, 2010.
- Komakech. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 15, 2009.
- Milana. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 16, 2009.
- Obunya Dean. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, February 10, 2009.
- Odokos. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 15, 2009.
- Odur. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 24, 2009.
- Otim William. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 19, 2009.
- Opio Richard. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 18, 2009.
- Solina. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 16, 2009.
- Stella and Okelo. Interview by author. Gulu, Uganda, April 21, 2009.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asad, Talal. "What Do Human Rights Do? An Anthropological Enquiry?" *Theory & Event* 4, no. 4 (2000). 1-28.
- Atkinson, R. "Land Issues in Acholi in the Transition from War to Peace." *The Examiner*, December (2008): 3+.
- Anderson, G. C. and A. R. Woolworth. *Through Dakota Eyes: Narrative Accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862* Minnesota Historical Society Pr, 1988.
- Bello, W. F. *Deglobalization: Ideas for a New World Economy* Zed Books, 2004.
- Black, J. E. "Remembrances of Removal: Native Resistance to Allotment and the Unmasking of Paternal Benevolence." *Southern Communication Journal* 72, no. 2 (2007): 185-203.
- Blocker, J. *Seeing Witness: Visuality and the Ethics of Testimony*. Univ of Minnesota Pr, 2009.
- Brown, M. F. "On Resisting Resistance." *American Anthropologist* 98, no. 4 (1996): 729-735.
- Camín, H. A., L. Meyer, and L. A. Fierro. *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution: Contemporary Mexican History, 1910-1989* Univ of Texas Pr, 1993.
- Carlsen, Laura. "Armoring NAFTA: The Battleground for Mexico's Future." *Americas Program Special Report* (2008).
- Cave, A. A. "Abuse of Power: Andrew Jackson and the Indian Removal Act of 1830." *Historian* 65, no. 6 (2003): 1330-1353.
- Chomsky, N. *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism and Global Order* Seven Stories Press, 2003.
- Cohen, S. E. *The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery* University Of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Collier, G. A. "Reforms of Mexico's Agrarian Code: Impacts on the Peasantry." *Res Econ Anthropol* 15, (1994): 105-128.
- Cornelius, W. A. and D. Myhre. "The Transformation of Rural Mexico: Reforming the Ejido Sector." *US-Mexico Contemporary Perspectives*. (1998).

- De Angelis, M. "Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital's Enclosures." *The Commoner* 2, (2001): 1-22.
- Deere, C. D. and M. L. de Leon. *Empowering Women: Land and Property Rights in Latin America* Univ of Pittsburgh Pr, 2001.
- Fanon, Franz. *Wretched of the Earth* Grove Pr, 1965.
- Farmer, P. *Infections and Inequalities: The Modern Plagues* University of California Press Berkeley, 1999.
- . *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* Univ of California Pr, 2004.
- . "An Anthropology of Structural Violence." *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 3 (2004): 305-326.
- . "On Suffering and Structural Violence: A View from Below." *Daedalus: Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*. 125, no. 1 (1996): 261.
- Fernandes, Deepa. "Militarization Continues in Southern Mexico," *NACLA Report on the Americas*. Nov/Dec 33, no. 3 (1999).
- Finnstrom, S. *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda* Duke Univ Pr, 2008.
- Fletcher, M.L.M. "The Original Understanding of the Political Status of Indian Tribes." *St. John's Law Review* 82, no. 153 (2008): 153-177.
- Foley, M.W. "Privatizing the Countryside: The Mexican Peasant Movement and Neoliberal Reform." *Latin American Perspectives* 22, no. 1 (1995): 59-76.
- Galtung, J. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167-191.
- Gulu District NGO Forum. "Follow up report in Gulu and Amuru in Land Issues." September/October ed. (2008).
- Hari, J. "You Are Being Lied to About Pirates," *The Huffington Post* (Jan. 4 2009). [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johann-hari/you-are-being-lied-to-abo\\_b\\_155147.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johann-hari/you-are-being-lied-to-abo_b_155147.html) (accessed April 2, 2010).
- Harjo, S.S. "Just Good Sports: The Impact of "Native" References in Sports on Native Youth and What Some Decolonizers Have Done About It." In *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, edited by Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird. School for Advanced Research, 2005.

- Harvey, D. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* Oxford University Press, USA, 2007.
- Harvey, N. "Impact of Reforms to Article 27 on Chiapas: Peasant Resistance in the Neoliberal Public Sphere." *Reforming Mexico's Agrarian Reform* (1996): 151–171.
- Heart, B. and L. M. DeBruyn. "The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief." *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 8, no. 2 (1998): 56-78.
- Ho, K. "Structural Violence as a Human Rights Violation." *Essex Human Rights Review* 4, no. 2 (2007).
- Hodges, D. and R. Gandy. *Mexico Under Siege: Popular Resistance to Presidential Despotism* Zed Books, 2002.
- Hollander, J.A. and R. L. Einwohner. "Conceptualizing Resistance." *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (2004): 533-554.
- "Idi Amin." *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/20642/Idi-Amin> (accessed on 11 March 2010).
- Indian Treaties, Acts and Agreements. *Treaty of Traverse des Sioux—Sisseton and Wahpeton Bands* (10 Stat. 949), 1851.
- Jones, G.A. and P.M. Ward. "Privatizing the Commons: Reforming the Ejido and Urban Development in Mexico." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 22, no. 1 (1998): 76-91.
- Lange, M. K. "British Colonial Legacies and Political Development." *World Development* 32, no. 6 (2004): 905-922.
- Lewis, J. "Agrarian Change and Privatization of Ejido Land in Northern Mexico." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 2, no. 3 (2002): 401-419.
- Linebaugh, P. *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* Verso Books, 2003.
- Mamdani, M. *Saviors and Survivors: Darfur, Politics, and the War on Terror* Verso.
- Marx, K. *Capital, Volume 1*. Trans.E.and C.Paul.London: Dent (1930).
- Miller, Todd. "Megaprojects and Militarization: A Perfect Storm in Mexico."

- NACLA Report on the Americas* (2009).
- Moore, D. "The Second Age of the Third World: From Primitive Accumulation to Global Public Goods?" *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2004): 87-109.
- Omara, James. "MPs from Northern Uganda oppose Land Amendment Bill." *Adungu: News and backgrounds by young radio journalists in Northern Uganda* (19 Feb. 2008).
- Pastor, M. and C. Wise. "State Policy, Distribution and Neoliberal Reform in Mexico." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 29, no. 2 (1997): 419-456.
- Pisa, R. A. "Popular Response to the Reform of Article 27: State Intervention and Community Resistance in Oaxaca." *Urban Anthropology* 23, no. 2-3 (1994): 267-306.
- Robben, A.C.G.M. and C. Nordstrom, "Introduction: The Anthropology of Ethnography of Violence and Sociopolitical Conflict." In *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, edited by Carolyn Nordstrom and Antonius C.G.M. Robben. Univ of California Pr, 1995.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. *Death without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* Univ of California Pr, 1993.
- Shiva, V. *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution and Profit* Pluto Press, 2002.
- Stephen, L. "Too Little, Too Late? The Impact of Article 27." *Reforming Mexico's Agrarian Reform* (2000): 289.
- The Message Runner*, compiled by the Indian Land Tenure Foundation, Nov. (2002).
- "The Battle for Whiteclay." [http://battleforwhiteclay.org/?page\\_id=140](http://battleforwhiteclay.org/?page_id=140) (accessed Feb. 20, 2010).
- "Treaties with Minnesota Indians." <http://www.kstrom.net/isk/maps/mn/treaties.html> (accessed Feb. 20, 2010).
- Tutino, J. *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940*. Princeton Univ Pr, 1986.
- Wedll, Don. "Culture and Traditions." Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe (2009). [http://www.millelacsojibwe.org/Page\\_culture.aspx?id=166](http://www.millelacsojibwe.org/Page_culture.aspx?id=166) (accessed Feb. 20, 2010).

- Wilson, A. C., E. Taylor, and W. C. Schommer. *Remember this!: Dakota Decolonization and the Eli Taylor Narratives* Univ of Nebraska Pr, 2005.
- Wilson, W. A. "Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches." *American Indian Quarterly* 28, (: 185-215.
- . "Voices of the Marchers." *The American Indian Quarterly* 28, (2004): 293-334.
- . "Defying Colonization Through Language Survival." In *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, edited by Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird. School for Advanced Research on the, 2005.
- Wilson, Angela Cavender. *In the Footsteps of our Ancestors: The Dakota Commemorative Marches of the 21st Century*. St. Paul, Minn.: Living Justice Press, 2006.