

LEADERSHIP FAILURE AND THE TRAGEDY IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

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ABSTRACT

Ethnicity, political manipulation and the quest to have access to the rich mineral resources has been the main cause of the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The failure of political leadership created the circumstance and significant challenges where militia groups use violence against the population as a means to pursue their parochial agenda. The assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the installation of the dictatorship government of Joseph Mobutu open the flood gate political unrest and has since left the country in a circle of wars and violence from a multitude of foreign and local groups. Successive government since then have either been overthrow through a military coup d'état or have been part of a corrupt political class.

Keywords: Leadership Failure, Political Manipulation, Democratic Republic of the Congo

INTRODUCTION

Since independence in 1960, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has had numerous ethnic and political conflicts. Like many African countries, it is home to a multicultural society with some seventeen ethnic groups broadly divided into two main groups—the Tutis and the Hutus. Minor ethnic disputes can easily degenerate into armed struggle. The civil war in DRC is a struggle by various ethnic groups to control the mineral-rich areas of the country and external influences. The interplay of these factors paved the way for the tragedy that the world has witnessed in the DRC over more the past two decades.

Ethnic Politics

Kinshasa is the seat of power, where all major policy decisions are made. In some cases, local concerns are relegated to the background, often resulting in inequitable distribution of resources that, over the years, has led to alienation and a sense of neglect among the rural population. Such deprivations culminate in violent reactions to address the injustices. In the 1960s, the DRC had one of the best public sector structures in Africa. Its workers were professionally trained, and a regulatory apparatus was in place to deal with challenges confronting this new nation. The public sector began to witness harbingers of decay and inefficiency in the 1970s. Political interference and manipulation by successive politicians and the army resulted in financial mismanagement, gross inefficiency, favoritism, nepotism, and political corruption. These factors limited the ability of the government to deal with the problems facing the nation. The result was frustration and often labor strikes, coup d'états, or the formation of new political parties to address matters of national concern.

(i) The Historical Causes of the violence in the DRC

The early and mid-20th century was characterized by World War I, World War II and the Cold War. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the former Soviet Union ushered the way for the New World Order. This will greatly affect and influence the fate of the Congo between 1950s, 1960s and subsequently. The violence that characterized these eras, led to the death of many including the first DRC's elected Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. This violence injected the military into Congolese politics and help pave the way for the rise of many dictators including Joseph Mobutu into the political mix.

The history of the violence, war and human rights abuse in the DRC can be divided into three distinct phases in the country's history during the last two centuries. First, the well documented atrocious rule of King Leopold II of Belgium when he reigned as the owner of the country as a private plantation leading to colonialization by Belgium, second, the chaotic rule by Joseph Mobutu from 1965 to 1997 and finally, the recent situation marked by the accession to power by Laurent Kabila.

(ii) External Influence (Belgium, The USA, The Cold War) and DRC's Struggle for Independence

Under enormous pressure from the indigenous people, the Belgian King Baudouin held in late 1959 and granted independence to DRC. In December 1959, there were more than fifty registered political parties. The Mouvement National Congolaise led by Lumumba was the only one having an effective national presence. Others parties included the ABAKO (led by Joseph Kasavubu) and the Independence Katanga Movement Conakat (led by Moise Tshombe). These were regional political parties were characterized by intense ethnic and tribal connotation and overtones.

The massive boycott of the December 1959 elections forced the Belgian government to acknowledge the level of discontent among the indigenes and to convene a Conference of Congolese in Brussels. The conference was attended and represented by approximately one hundred political parties and organizations. The Belgians proposed a four-year transition to independence, but the Congolese parties refused, demanding immediate independence.¹ With very little preparations, elections were scheduled for May 1960 and independence for June 1960. Lumumba's MNC party won the polls and the Abako came in second. The Conakat of Moise Tshombe won a majority of the seats in the Katanga provincial assembly. It is important to note that no one party won obtained an outright majority in the elections. Consequently, a "patch-work" government was formed with Kasavubu as the President and Lumumba, Prime Minister. This arrangement set in motion a chaotic situation that unraveled barely two weeks after the independence celebration. The military mutinied, and through the newly country into a sea of violence and some parts of the country including the Katanga region declared independence from the DRC. The indigenous soldiers were disgruntled that all the top brass in the military were colonialist, and so they had no opportunity to become officers. Lumumba heeded to their cry, and asked Joseph Mobutu, the minister of defense to dismiss senior Belgian officers and replace them with Congolese. This dynamic unleashed the raft of the new military assault against the Belgian population. In just two weeks 25,000 Belgians fled the country, while 10,000 Belgian troops were sent to protect their interest.² At the Brussels conference, Tshombe's plan, called for the creation of a confederacy. He wanted the Katanga region to control the spoils from the sale of minerals because he asserted that the region contributed to more than 60 % of the country's revenue. A move that was endorsed and supported by Belgian, British and American mining companies notably the Union Miniere de Haut Katanga.

Following the collapse of the new central government in July 1960, Tshombe declared the independence of the Katanga region, expelled Congolese troops stationed in the province, and granting authority to the Belgian troops and white mercenaries from Rhodesia and South Africa to take charge. Lumumba wrote to Nikita Khrushchev of USSR requesting technical and military support needed to assist his government to recapture the mineral rich Katanga region. The West including the US saw this move as an affront and immediately branded Lumumba as a Soviet ally. The soviet responded in August 1960, but their response was a little too late as the chaos took a turn for the worst. President Kasabuvu and Prime Minister Lumumba were now openly adversaries. The United Nations through various diplomatic avenues tried to restore and maintain peace and order and to save the new country from disintegrating into anarchy. The UN sent peace keeping forces to the Congo against the stiff resistance of Tshombe. The last thing he

¹ (Gascoigne 2001) – History of DRC – History World.

www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/plainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ad34

² Ibid.

wanted to see was the presence of the UN peace keeping forces in the Katanga region. Dag Hammarskjold, the Secretary-General of the UN died in a plane crash in 1961, while shuttling in the region to negotiate a peace deal with Tshombe.

Back in Kinshasa, Kasavubu who had announced the dismissal of Lumumba as Prime Minister; joined forces with Mobutu, the minister of defense and the two began a manhunt for Lumumba who was being protected by UN peace keeping forces. Mobutu temporarily seized power, closed down the Soviet embassy and continued to plot against Lumumba with the support of the US, Belgium and the other Western powers. In November of 1960, Lumumba was captured in the capital, Kinshasa, and in January 1961, he was sent to Katanga, where he was later murdered.

The violence continued in the Katanga region. Tshombe resorted to the use of foreign mercenaries (from all over the world including Algeria, Belgium, South Africa, and Britain) to fight for Katanga.³ Despite UN resolution 161 of 02/21/1961 authorizing ‘all appropriate measures’ to prevent a civil war in the Congo and the mobilization of 5,000 UN peace keepers, over 7,000 local Baluba tribesmen and hundreds of mercenaries were killed in Katanga. The UN peace keeping forces compelled Tshombe to go on exile in Spain.

With Lumumba murdered and Tshombe on exile, Kasabuvu could not manage the mess that was facing the be-leagued nascent Congo nation. This chaotic situation offered the opening for Mobutu, the 29-year old minister of defense who had been using his position to consolidate his power base; to stage a military coup d’état in October of 1965, which catapulted him to the helm of power. This coup marked the beginning of a 32-year long chapter in the life of the DRC, characterized by a brutal and corrupt dictatorship who was one of Africa’s longest serving “five star” dictators.

Joseph Mobutu and “Mobutism”

Joseph Mobutu’s 32-years reign was built on the three pillars: ‘violence, cunning, and the use of state funds to buy off enemies.’⁴ He received systematic support from the USA and other western powers as payoff for their mining rights and his loyalty to the West over the Soviet Union. Mobutu used this leverage to transform the country into his image and ruled it with an iron fist. He introduced what he called ‘Mobutism’, a kind of Africanization and changed his name to Mobutu Sesse Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa za Banga.⁵ He bestowed upon himself the military title of Field Marshal and changed the name of the country to “Zaire” and that of the capital to

³ (Aspinall 1990) – Soldiers of fortune. <http://mercenary-wars.net/congo/list-of-congo-soldiers.html>

⁴ (French, Mobutu Sesse Seko 1997)- New York Times – Mobutu Sesse Seko, 66, Longtime

⁵ Mobutu Sesse Seko Koko Ngbendu Waza Banga - Translated (The all-conquering warrior who because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest leaving fire in his wake) or (The rooster that leaves no hen unruffled)

Kinshasa. In 1974, he went after the church, by changing the constitution. Christianity was replaced with ‘Mobutism’ and all Christmas and other religious holiday celebrations were banned and the people to change their crucifixes with his portrait.⁶ Mobutu’s nationalistic overzealousness led to a controversial process that nationalized most of the foreign companies that operated in the country, particularly those in the mining sector. This decision that was reverted two years later because of its disastrous consequences. He transferred ownership and management of these companies to his family members and other cronies who lacked the experience to manage them. They used these businesses to steal assets on behalf of the Mobutu clan.⁷ Mobutu owned fourteen plantations and became one of the country’s highest producer of rubber and cocoa and was the third highest employer in the country with twenty-five thousand workers.⁸

Barely, six months after seizing power, Mobutu consolidated his power by instilling fear in people. For example, he ordered the public hanging of four cabinet ministers in Kinshasa in front of a mammoth crowd.⁹ In fact, the French wire service, AFP reported that more than 300,000 people turnout to witness the hangings. Prior to the hangings, Mobutu displayed strange behaviors including avoided and contact with his wife for a few days because he did not want her to appeal to his conscience. He ignored the pleas of the Pope and that of the Archbishop of Kinshasa, and proceed with the killings.¹⁰ These public hangings and killings petrified the population and instilled fear within the military and political class and paved the way for Mobutu’s reign of terror and violence in Congo.

Furthermore, Mobutu banned all political parties because he blamed them for the violence in the country. It is interesting that shortly after his party ban, he created his own political party, the Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution (MPR) and declared its membership mandatory to all citizens. This was a corrupt move that he designed to grab power through a sham election. The election of 1970 amplified this point; ten million people voted for him and just 157 against. He then saw this as a benchmark for his popularity.

Although many were proud of Mobutu’s cultural nationalism, his policies had a devastating effects on the economy. Corruption was rampant, poor governance was sustainable and social unrest was pervasive. These had a choking effect on the country. The “Spoil System” that he put in place to hold the fragile country together started developing cracks as the economic

⁶ (O’Ballance 2000) – The Congo Experience 1960 – 1998 pp108

⁷ (Reybrouck 2014) - Congo: The Epic History of a People. ISBN978-0-06-220012-9 pp357

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ (French, 1997)- New York Times – Anatomy of an Autocracy, Mobutu’s 32-years reign – www.partners.nytimes.com/library/world/Africa/051797zaire-mobutu.html

¹⁰ (Reybrouck 2014), Congo - The Epic History of a People (New York City: Harper Collins Publisher, 2014), 339

opportunities to oil the cronyism dwindled and the economy started tanking. His lust for wealth led him to amass billions of dollars in personal wealth, and systematic dilapidation of Congolese treasury. He wasted the nation's wealth on financing prestigious projects including the \$ 10 million he spent to host the 1974 Muhamed Ali vs. George Foreman heavy boxing fight in Kinshasa. These greatly contributed to the bankruptcy of the country.¹¹

In 1978, France, Belgium and the USA helped Joseph Mobutu to repel a rebellion from the Katanga region.¹² By the mid-1980 the country defaulted on loans from its international creditors, including Belgium. This resulted in the cancellation of developmental programs and the further worsened of the economic situation. This malaise raised the wrath of Erwin Blumenthal, an IMF senior official, who was appointed to oversee the Central Bank in the Congo and to encourage foreign donor nations to cut-off aid from the Mobutu regime because of excessive corruption.¹³ The build-up of this economic malaise characterized Mobutu's stay in power until late 1989; when the rumblings of pro-democracy movements popped up across Africa, and the tragic events of the Rwandan genocide aftermath injected themselves in an already dire and fragile situation in the Congo.

(iii) Immediate Causes of Violence

The end of the Cold War open the floodgates of pro-democracy movements across the world in general and Africa in particular. The DRC was part of that wave of political change.

(a) The Pro-Democracy Movement of the 1990s

On April 24, 1990 Mobutu announced the end of one party state and a transition to the reintroduction of multi-party because of mounting protest and political pressure from within and outside the Congo. In 1991, a National Conference was charged with drafting a new constitution and laying the groundwork for political transition that would lead to democratic elections. As the protracted conference continued, the civil and political atmosphere in the country had deteriorated with university protests, political rallies and the activities of the news media greatly stifled and curtailed. Mobutu orchestrated the arrest of 62 soldiers for suspicion of belonging to the opposition. This chaotic build-up led to military rampages characterized by looting in the streets of Kinshasa and elsewhere. One such grumbling in the military barracks in the east of the country led to over 30,000 Congolese crossing the border into Uganda. Two Belgian nationals were killed, fueling an already tense situation. In the Katanga province, Mobutu appointed a governor, Gabel Kyungu, whose secret mission was to use the ethnic card to divide and better

¹¹ Ibid. , 347

¹² (Library 2015), Mobutu Sese Seko "Creator of the Republic of Zaire"

¹³ (Callaghy 2003), Life and Death in the Congo (Foreign Affairs, September 2001) – <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/review-essay/2001-09-01/life-and-death-congo>

rule. His verbal vitriol was a call for tribal hate and ethnic witch hunt of Kasai natives by ethnic Katangans.¹⁴

In August 1992, The Transitional Act, adopted by the national conference provided for a parliamentary system, with a powerful prime minister and a figurehead president. The National conference elected a two-year transitional government headed by long time opposition leader Etienne Tsisekedi Wa Mulumba as Prime Minister. The Western countries' backed government of Mobutu was dysfunctional and non-responsive to the needs of the population. Instead its leader in desperation was only interested in hanging on to what was left of power. He convened the former legislative assembly and requested that they craft a parallel constitution. Mobutu also created a stalemate by appointing a parallel government with Faustin Birindwa as prime minister. The succession of governments, including yet another one led by Kendo Wa Dondo in June 1994, had no real impact on the stalemate. In fact, the country was left with a president and a parliament whose mandate had long expired and thus, lacked the legitimacy to steer the country out of its woes. At this juncture point all the ingredients of a failed state had been united. The former US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, observed that to say that Zaire had a government was a gross exaggeration.¹⁵ At this time, the situation in the eastern part of the country fast deteriorated into a turmoil and there was fear that the genocide in neighboring Rwanda would spill over and act as a Trojan horse for Congolese against the moribund Mobutu dictatorship.

(b) The Spillover Effect of The Rwandan Genocide

One of the most direct and immediate causes of the violence in the DRC is the spillover of the violence that erupted in Rwanda leading to the 1994 Rwandan genocide that saw the massacre of more than 800, 000 minority Tutsis by the predominant Hutus who ruled the country. In Rwanda, the Hutus make up about 85% of the total population and the Tutsis make up 15%. These two ethnic groups were locked in a perpetual fight for power in the country. The Hutus who make-up the majority of the population accused the minority Tutsi of dominating the political life. In 1959, the Hutus overthrew a Tutsi monarchy leading thousands of Tutsis to flee into the DRC and Uganda.¹⁶ The bitter state of animosity between the two ethnic groups only grew complex with the passage of time. On April 6, 1994 a plane carrying the Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and Burundi President Cyprien Ntaryamira was shot down killing both presidents and the crew. It is important to add that both men were Hutus. The Hutus who were in power accused the Tutsis of a well-orchestrated mayhem and slaughter because of their quest for power. This would be the spark to set all alit. In just three months close to one million people of mostly

¹⁴ (Berkeley August, 1993)- Congo; an African Horror Story – Vol. 272, No. 2 pp 20-28

¹⁵ (Clark 2002)- The African Stakes of the Congo war (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 24

¹⁶ BBC News. 2014. Rwanda Genocide: 100 Days of slaughter. April 7.

ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed by the extremist Hutus. Many of them led by elements of the youth wing of the governing MRND party known as the Interahamwe. In reaction, the Tutsi opposition in exile in Uganda led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front under the leadership of Paul Kagame and backed by Uganda carried a military coup d'état, overthrow the ruling Hutu regime and on July 4, 1994 took control of the capital Kigali and seized power. In this process, they went after and killed thousands of Hutus suspected of taking part in the genocide. Close to two million Hutus fled into neighboring DRC to seek refuge from the onslaught creating a mammoth humanitarian crisis and setting the stage for the destabilizing violence in the east of the DRC. Since then, Rwanda is said to have crossed the border on several occasions to pursue remnants of those accused of involving in the genocide. They have even gone ahead to arm DRC's ethnic Tutsis in their campaign against the Hutus. It is this platform supported by Uganda and Rwanda that would prop up exiled DRC rebel leader Laurent Desiree Kabila to launch his rebellion that would eventually oust Mobutu in 1997.

Laurent Kabila Rebellion and the end of Joseph Mobutu Reign

After living in the jungles for over 30 years; Laurent Desiree Kabila, a former Katanga rebel leader and a onetime foot soldier of the Lumumba's nationalistic movement resurfaced as the leader of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), an alliance of four Congolese rebel political movements and militias supported by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. The alliance, made up mostly of ethnic Tutsis as Kabila himself, started in South Kivu in the eastern DRC. It was a direct response to Mobutu's decision to expel all Tutsis, including ethnic Tutsis of Congolese origins from DRC. The move sparked the "First Congo War" and officially jump started the ending of Mobutu's regime. Mobutu was sick and received treatment for prostate cancer overseas. This went on for a long time. Capitalizing on Mobutu's absence, the ADFL quickly established a base and grabbed large swaps of territory in the eastern provinces. The rebellion faced very little resistance from a very disillusioned and demoralized Zairian army who virtually abandoned their post and fled as the rebels advanced. The rebels seized important mines and the proceeds from the sales of mineral were used to strengthen their financial viability and gave them more motivation to match on. The rebellion also created a huge humanitarian crisis as hundreds of thousands of Congolese were displaced from their homes as refugees.

In 1997, many villages, towns and cities were consumed by the rebellion. Kisangani was the first major city fell in March, Mbuji-Mayi, the country's leading diamond city followed in April, and Lubumbashi the copper capital followed a couple of days later.¹⁷ Former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa attempt to negotiate a cease-fire between Mobutu and Kabila failed

¹⁷ Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the glory of monsters*; Public Affairs, (New York, 2011), 125

because the rebellion had captured over 80% of the country, and several top military officers had deserted Mobutu. In the meantime, Mobutu received a special envoy from US President Bill Clinton in the person of Bill Richardson bearing a letter asking him to step down. This call coming at time when Cold War had ended, signaled the end of US support to the Mobutu regime. On May 15, 1997 the tides turned against Joseph Mobutu when one of his top General Donat Mahele, with the help of the US Ambassador to the country opened up communications with the advancing rebel leader in a bid to avoid a bloodbath in the capital city. General Mahele informed Mobutu that his security was no longer guaranteed. At this point, the ailing president reluctantly agreed relinquish power¹⁸ and went on exile the next day. This marked the end of Mobutu's reign, paved the way for Kabila to declare himself president and changed the name of the country from Zaire to Democratic Republic of Congo.

(c) Internationalization and Escalation of the Violence

One will think the fall of Mobutu's dictatorship and its aftermath would ushered a new beginning for the DRC. But that did not pan-out because the rebellion that brought Laurent Kabila to power, quickly turned against his rule because he failed to fulfil the promises that he had made to the people. This failure became the source of increasing violence and instability that has remained in place for decades. Barely a year after Kabila took over power, Rwanda and Uganda again propped-up another rebel leader, Jean Pierre Bemba, who with the help of the Banyamulenges joined forces and staged a rebellion that almost reached Kinshasa the capital.¹⁹ Fortunately, Kabila regime was saved by the intervention of troops from Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia. In the midst of this internationalization of the war, the situation was further complicated by the emergence of a myriad of armed ethnic groups drawn and renegade militias (Mai-Mai) profited from the chaos and were responsible for criminality and human rights abuse. These groups included the notorious Lord's Resistance Army of Joseph Kony.²⁰ Other groups that operated in the DRC included; the Army for the Liberation of Rwanda, the Republican Rally for Democracy in Rwanda, the National Alliance for the Liberation of Uganda, the Mai Mai the Kata Katanga, the M23 Movement, and the Interahamwe. These armed groups set up a complex web of criminality that paved the way for the looting and pillaging of minerals, and the formatting of sectarian violence. Additionally, senior official military of the DRC's were also involved in the control of mines, the looting and pillaging of minerals.

¹⁸ Ibid., 161

¹⁹ Reuters, Congo urges neighbors to avoid rebellion, Aug.4,1998 -<http://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/congo-urges-neighbours-avoid-rebellion>

²⁰ Ledio Cakaj, The Enough Project 'This is our land' Lord's Resistance Army attacks in Bas Uele, northeastern Congo. www.enoughproject.org/ 'This is our land now'

Despite attempts for a peaceful settlement, notably the July 1999 Lusaka agreement between the six warring nations, and the mobilization of 5, 500 UN forces to monitor a ceasefire, Kabila was assassinated on January 16, 2001, by a boy soldier who was a member of his security detail.²¹ He was succeeded by son, Joseph Kabila Kabange who was one of the military commanders in the rebellion.

Since taking over power, the younger Kabila has with some degree of success made many efforts to forge peace and stability to the DRC. These efforts have not stamp-out the sporadic violence by armed rebel groups including the groups that continue to create havoc in the eastern part of the country. In 2004 intense fighting broke out between the DRC's army and militias of the RCD-Goma in Ituri and North and South Kivu. It resulted in the killing of hundreds of ethnic Tutsis. The clashes by the Hutu militia displaced hundreds of thousands of Tutsis included ethnic Congolese who were indiscriminately targeted.²² This situation provoked the wrath of the Tutsi led government in Rwanda who threatened to launch military action against the Rwandan Hutu refugees settled in the region. The violence was relentless. In 2005 nine UN Peace Keepers who were on patrol in the Ituri region were abducted and killed by unidentified gunmen.²³ The UN Peace Keepers (over 4, 500) retaliated and the resultant was more than 50 militias killed. Throughout 2006, 2007 and 2008, the clashes between CNDP renegade soldiers and allies of Rwanda General Laurent Nkunda and Bosco Ntaganda (also known as 'The Terminator') faced up against the UN peace keepers with great intensity in North Kivu resulting in more killings and displacement of refugees. Meanwhile, in the capital Kinshasa, troops loyal to Jean Pierre Bemba clashed with DR Congolese military. In November 2009, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights described the violence committed in North Kivu as "war crimes".²⁴ In 2010, the ADF-NALU a Ugandan rebel group operating in North Kivu targeted the local population; prompting more than a hundred thousand people to flee. At the same time UN agencies reported mass rape of women in the region, and another when Angola expelled Congolese migrants back to DRC.²⁵ As frantic efforts towards peace and stability were being made, things escalated again in late 2012 when the M23 movement captured the city of Goma paradoxically with little resistance

²¹ Stuart Jefferies, The Guardian – Revealed: How Africa's dictator died at the hands of his boy soldiers, February 10, 2001. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/feb/11/theobserver>

²² Global IDP Project, DR Congo: Renewed fighting, killings, rape slow down IDP return and causes new displacement, July 29, 2005.

<http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wCountries/Democratic+Republic+of+the+Congo>

²³ BBC, Congo Ambush kills nine UN troops, February 25, 2005 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4298061.stm>.

²⁴ Navi Pillay, Possible war crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Huffington Post, November 10, 2009. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/navi-pillay/possible-war-crimes-in-dr_b_282985.html

²⁵ Gabriella Casanas, UN: Wartime rape no more inevitable, acceptable than mass murder, CNN (August 13, 2010). <http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/africa/08/12/un.wartime.rape/index.html>

from the DRC's troop or the 22,000 man strong UN forces in the country.²⁶ This paints the picture of the despicable and senseless violence, instability, pain and sufferings that the valiant people the DRC have been going through for more than half a century.

Analyzing of the Violence in the DRC

Several factors have contributed to the tragedy in the DRC. One can argue that Mobutu's long reign and dictatorship sowed the potent and dangerous seeds of the violence that has ravaged the country. Aided by the USA and other western powers, Mobutu built a personality cult. Throughout his reign, Mobutu failed to build sustainable governing institutions. He and his family owned most of the businesses and government finances. Through their network of friends, Mobutu chose the winners and losers. His reign was all about himself. He never thought of grooming a successor or building sustainable institutions. The system of state craft was one that was design to die with Mobutu. It is such a system that has culminated to violence elsewhere in Africa.

Another issue that stands out as one of the main causes of this conflict was the porous borders of the DRC. The nonexistent of a nation-state coupled with a weak central government in Kinshasa offered perfect incentives for neighbors to invade and exploit minerals. Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda used this pretext to enter into the conflict. Rebel groups also seized on this over site to plot against their national governments. For example, the Lord Resistant Army of Joseph Kony; was pushed out of its original base in Uganda, and took refuge in the DRC, where his movement illegally benefited from the proceeds of minerals and wildlife as well as a territory for it to operate with ease.²⁷

The artificial borders that were drawn and dictated by colonialism created ethnic conflict as people of different ethnicity were forced to live together. This has been the source of most of the conflicts in Africa toady. Ethic vector was at the heart of the conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. The Tutsis are mostly nomadic cattle rearers, while the Hutus are mostly farmers. The conflict between the two groups often stemmed from the fact that Tuisis cattle trespassed into Hutus farmland and ate and destroyed crops. In the Ituri region of eastern DRC ethnic coexistence has become a lightning rod as well. In the past, it has been the prime cause of

²⁶ BBC News, M23 rebels capture DR Congo city, November 20, 2012. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20405739?print=true>

²⁷ Keith Sommerville, African Arguments: Africa's Borders: porous, unprotected and blocking trade and economic development. February 12, 2013. <http://www.africanargument.org/2013/02/12/africa's-borders-porous-unprotected-and-blocking-trade-and-economic-development-by-keith>

violence in in the DRC.²⁸ This was equally true of the violence erupted in Mutarule in the eastern DRC on June 6, 2014 when 33 civilians were massacred over farmer/grazer conflict.²⁹

Some have asserted that the DRC is suffering from the resource curse syndrome, which is a phenomenon common in most Africa countries. The resource curse refers to a system characterized by devastating levels of corruption, lack of public accountability, abject poverty, and economic, political and social deprivation.³⁰

Consequences of Violence in DRC

The cost and consequences of the violence in the DRC has been astronomically high. The human suffering, loss of lives and the dilapidation of natural resources is on a scale that can never be fully accounted for.

(i) Millions dead in Africa's longest "Civil War"

A 2008 Report by the International Rescue Committee and published by the New York Times, indicated that between 1997 and 2008, an estimated 5.6 million DRC died directly and indirectly war-related reasons. The report asserted that most of those killed were of them children.³¹ Furthermore, In September 2008, the US Government Accountability Office, in a report to the Congress estimated that about 4 million Congolese dead between 1997 and 2004.³² In the midst of these revolving figures about the exact number of deaths that the war in the DRC has claimed, a DRC human rights advocate Vava Tampa lashed out about the indifference of the world powers to the atrocities and the human toll of this war.

The wars in that country have claimed nearly the same number of lives as having a 9/11 every single day for 360 days, the genocide that struck Rwanda in 1994, the ethnic cleansing that overwhelmed Bosnia in the mid-1990s, the genocide that took place in Darfur, the number of people killed in the great tsunami that struck

²⁸ Displaced boy, Fataki, Ituri, Ethnic land disputes fanned, November 25, 2002.<http://www.irinnews.org/report/70762>

²⁹ Kris Berwouts, African Arguments, and The Mutarule Massacre: conflict from below in eastern Congo. June 18, 2014. <http://africanarguments.org/2014/06/18/the-mutarule-massacre-conflict-from-below-in-eastern-congo-by-kris-berwouts/>

³⁰ Terra Lawson-Remer, Joshua Greenstein, Africa in fact: Beating the resource curse in Africa: A global effort. August 2012. <http://www.cfr.org/africa-sub-saharan/beating-resource-curse-africa-global-effort/p28780>

³¹ Lydia Polgreen, NY times, Congo's death rate unchanged since the end of war. January 23, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/23/world/africa/23congo.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

³² US GAO, GAO-10-1030, and DR Congo: U.S Agencies should take further actions to contribute to the effective regulation and control of the minerals trade in Eastern DR Congo. September 2010. Pp4. www.gao.gov.

Asia in 2004, and the number of people who died in Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- all combined and then doubled.³³

These deaths do not include those that occurred under the brutal dictatorship of the Mobutu, and definitely not the millions who died in the violence of colonization.

(ii) Goma: the “Rape Capital” of the World

Raped was weaponized in the DRC. Various militia groups raped women and young girls with impunity. In the eastern part of the DRC, militias and warring factions used vulnerable women as instruments of war. These groups raped young girls and women as an act of war. This has earned the region the dubious distinction of “rape capital of the world.” Although in August 2009, Hillary Clinton, the former US Secretary of State visited Goma in and promised a \$17 million package that was geared toward the assistance to victims of sexual violence, the rape of young girls and women only escalated. For example, mass rapes were a daily occurrence and even worse the rape of 2-year old girls was routine.³⁴ Furthermore, in August, 2010, members of the three militias, the Mai-Mai Cheka, the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR), and elements close to Colonel Emmanuel Nsengiyumva³⁵ raped 300 people including 235 women, 52 girls, 13 men and three boys in the eastern town of Luvungi and its neighboring villages. The UN was appalled by the brutality of these dehumanizing and senseless crimes, described them as “extraordinarily coldblooded and systematic.” In November 2010, mass rapes were also reported when Angolan authorities deported Congolese refugees back to the DRC. In Nakiele, in the South Kivu province, between June 11 and 13, 2011, UN agencies in the region reported that members of the Congolese forces raped 121 women and on June 20 another 170 women were raped.³⁶ The DRC government denied responsibility for these crimes but instead blamed the rapes on renegade Colonel Kifarur Niragiye, (who was charged with duty of integrating the national army) and his group of 100 soldiers who had defected from a training camp. Denis Mukwege a gynecologist working in the eastern DRC revealed that he has treated over 30000

³³ Vava Tampa, CNN, Why the world is ignoring Congo war, Tuesday November 27, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/11/27/opinion/congo-war-ignored-vava-tampa/index.html>

³⁴ Charly Kasereka, France24, Rape and Prostitution: the plight of refugee women at a DR Congolese Camp. April 15, 2013. <http://observers.france24.com/en/20130415-rape-prostitution-refugee-women-dr-congo-camp>

³⁵ BBC, DR Congo’s rapes ‘defies beliefs’ says UN. September 24, 2010. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11407180>

³⁶ The World Post, Congo Rapes: At least 121 women assaulted by troops last month, says UN agencies, July 1, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/07/01/congo-rapes-women-assaulted-troops-un-_n_888466.html

cases of rape victims. He gave details accounts of groups of women who had been sexual assaulted, and deployed the endemic nature of rape as a weapon of war.³⁷

(iii) Refugees and Displaced People

The civil war in the DRC greatly contributed to forced mass migration and displacement of large number of people. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that more than 500,000 Congolese have been displaced by violence and many were seeking refuge in other African countries. Although the US government committed to the resettlement of up to 50,000 of these displaced persons in 2015, the situation created a humanitarian conundrum on how to resettle these mostly vulnerable population.³⁸ In March 2013, Rwanda alone hosted more than 70000 DRC refugees and its Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugee Affairs indicated that they had maxed-out their capacities.³⁹ Additionally, the Ugandan Red Cross reported that another 70,000 and that mark shift shelters were over flooded. This is only part of the tragedy. In November 2014, Refugee International estimated that there were a staggering 2.6 million internally displaced persons in the DRC and more than 200,000 them were living in spontaneous sites.⁴⁰ This situation was very costly, thus forcing the UNHCR to appeal to the international community for addition aid of close to \$70 million.

(iv) Recruitment of Child Soldiers

The use of child soldiers in the civil war in the DRC has been palpable and widespread within the ranks of the militias involved in the fighting. This violets a UN convention that forbids the recruitment and use of persons under the age of 18 of age as child soldiers. It is estimated that about 10 percent or 30000 child soldiers are in the DRC. These children are forced to commit atrocious and heinous murders. For example, a 15- year old was made to 'kill a family, cut up their bodies and eat them'.⁴¹ The international community stared to prosecute the perpetrators of these crimes. Thomas Lubanga, one of the notorious warlords who used of child soldiers in his rebel army between 2002 and 2003 was tried and convicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes. Others are still on the run

³⁷ BBC Outlook, Denis Mukwege: The rape surgeon of the DR Congo, February 19, 2013.

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21499068>

³⁸ Alyssa Eisenstein, UNHCR Washington, Congolese refugee women rebuilding lives in the United States, October 29, 2014. <http://www.unhcrwashington.org/media-news/latest-news/congolese-refugee-women-rebuilding-lives-united-states>

³⁹ IRIN, Congolese refugee camps in Rwanda 'Full', March 27, 2013.

<http://www.irinnews.org/report/97742/congolese-refugee-camps-in-rwanda-full>

⁴⁰ Refugee International, DR Congo, November 2014. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/where-we-work/africa/dr-congo>

⁴¹ SOS Children's Village, Child soldiers in DRC. <http://www.child-soldier.org/child-soldiers-in-drc>

(v) Pillaging of Congolese Natural Resources

One of the gravest consequences of the violence in the DRC, has been the systematic looting, pillage and dilapidation of its natural resources by all the countries, militias and even members of the Congolese army. This has led some to argue that the war in the DRC is a struggle over the control of the vast minerals reserve of the country. In April 2001 UN Security Council investigated and accused some nations, individuals, and multinational corporations of complicity in the looting of Congo's resources. The report accused Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda for participating in the looting and the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the DRC, an accusation they rejected.⁴² Additionally, Security Council's reported listed the names of 54 powerful military and civilian individuals including Emmerson Mnangwaba the speaker of the Zimbabwe House of Parliament, James Kabarebe, an ethnic Tutsi and Chief of Staff of the Rwandan military, James Kazini, Chief of Staff of the Ugandan army, Katumba Mwanke, a powerful minister in the DRC government, General Vitalis Zvinavasha of Zimbabwe, Retired General Salim Saleh of Uganda and Victor Bout, a Ukrainian arms dealer, described as 'the merchant of death' and is serving time in the US for arms smuggling and terrorism. Finally the report included the names of more than 85 corporations including Anglo-American, Barclays Bank, and De Beers Diamond Company.⁴³

(vi) Poverty and Disease

The civil war has subjected the people of the DRC to an unprecedented level of poverty and underdevelopment. The country occupies the bottom position on world's Human Development index. UN and World Bank statistics, indicate that the DRC has 13% of the world's hydroelectricity power potentials that could be generate power to supply most of the continent. Yet only 9 percent of the more 71 million people of the DRC have access to electricity. This lack of electricity causes serious problems for the functioning of the economy because data collection is limited. For a country the size of Western Europe, it has only 2794 km of roads are paved. The per capital income is below \$320 compared to \$11,000 for the rest of the world. The DRC's infant mortality is 111.7 per 1000 compared to 41 per 1000 for the rest of the world and life expectancy is 47.8 years compared to 69.4 for the rest of the world. Of the estimated 5.6 million people who have died because of the war and violence, about 50% died because of the lack of treatment of treatable diseases including malaria. The delivery of services to the population has been practically nonexistent because scarce resources are now used by the government to pay for logistics, and maintain the military.

⁴² Anup Shah, Global Issues, The Democratic Republic of Congo, August 21, 2010.

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/87/the-democratic-republic-of-Congo>

⁴³ BBC, Sanctions urged for Congo plunderers, October 21, 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/2345727.stm>

CONCLUSION

The political history of the DRC has been characterized by constant bloody changes in governments. The heads of government have been civilians and/or military persons with very little and/or no experience in civil administration. The result has been constant mismanagement, coups, and civil unrest. Military leaders and even politicians, who had their own agendas, have been reluctant to increase funding for human resource development and institution-building capacity. Successive governments seldom pursued the same set of policies and seldom held the same views on economic development. Consequently, there have been sharp fluctuations in sectoral fortunes. Agriculture was favored in the pre-1950s; in the 1960s through the early 1990s the emphasis was on mining; and in the late 1990s and 2000s the focus has been civil war, peace efforts and need for institutional reforms.

These shifts in policies and priorities by governments have been disruptive to the performance of all the various sectors. The civil war in the DRC illustrates a dangerous interplay of powerful forces that went beyond the comprehension and expectation of many of the actors involved. Undoubtedly, minerals in the DRC are vital not only to the maintenance of power and patronage but to the successful implementation of political strategies. It is an undisputed fact that minerals especially, diamonds are as good as cash. Diamonds are durable and easy to conceal and can easily be exchanged for currency around the world. Thus, it is not surprising that attempts to control mines have been at the core of the conflict in the DRC. Mineral exports are the major source of foreign exchange earnings in DRC. However, the smuggling of minerals since the 1960s has been a major source of conflict among various ethnic groups in the country.

Successive governments in Kinshasa failed to regulate the exploitation of minerals largely because of the quest for personal enrichment, political mismanagement, and ethnic politics dividing politicians, military leaders, and citizens. These conditions paved the way for rival groups to seek control of political power. Control of the mines has been a constant source of conflict in DRC. The inability of governments and politicians to manage the exploitation of minerals has inevitably been seen by various factions inside and outside as tacit approval to engage in illicit activities and trade. The result has been civil conflict and the longest civil war on the African continent. Selfishness, which has been the preponderant characteristic of DRC's ruling elite, has spawned a particular mind-set among disenfranchised groups in the country.

Neighboring states, including Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, encouraged and supported various ethnic groups in the DRC. During the civil war these countries became major centers for massive mineral-related criminal activities, with connections to guns, drugs, and money laundering

For more than two decade, the civil war in the DRC brought misery and suffering to its citizens. The war destroyed the social fabric, weakened the economy, and left administrative structures

and institutions in a fragile and decaying state. An effective solution to address the conditions created by the war cannot be arrived at until the factors that created the climate for hostilities are addressed. It is vital to reconstruct institutions and structures that are needed to educate the people of the DRC on the administration and structures of government. A careful definition of the role of the military must also be crafted. International assistance is absolutely imperative to develop a system in which the rule of law and not the power of the barrel is supreme. Therefore, the international community must be committed to institution building. Without such assistance there is a greater probability that the security of the DRC could deteriorate into another disaster and perhaps even escalate into a regional war.

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