State Failure in the Congo: Perceptions & Realities

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Any new volume on 'state failure' or 'crisis' in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) runs the risk of either merely fine-tuning solid political analysis or reiterating misguided 'heart of darkness' clichés. We have accepted this challenge in order to critically analyse the abundant and sophisticated crisis terminology that has characterised scholarship on the Congo over the past two decades and to document the major shifts and developments in the Congo's political economy since the early 1990s. These shifts range from local level civil society and popular economy initiatives to the global implications of the replacement of a bipolar international system by a 'new economic order'. The regional manifestations of this new order in DRC, where cause and consequence overlap, are assassination, war, rebellion, invasion and pillage. Until the recent agreements between President Kabila and rebel leader Jean Pierre Bemba, approximately one-third of the country was occupied by either rebel or foreign forces. Even so, as we write, Rwandan forces occupy large areas notably in the Kivus and in Orientale Province.

These forms of violence translate into political exclusion, stalemate in the peace negotiations, economic decline and dramatic social crisis. Attempting to implement the Lusaka agreements signed in the Zambian capital in July 1999, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), thanks largely to its Belgian and South African supporters, has succeeded in organising meetings in Gaborone, Addis Ababa and Sun City but little more. Although agreement has been reached on 37 major issues, no real breakthrough has been achieved because the fundamental questions of who should lead the transition and how the army will be reorganised have not been solved. The prospect of co-habitation between President Kabila and future Prime Minister Bemba does not make much sense if the Rwandan-backed rebels do not accept the Sun City proposal.

Another reason we have accepted this challenge pertains to the complexity of the situation. Complexity is one of the common denominators that link all of the contributions in this issue and applies to the national and international political context, the economy, social problems and issues of identity, ethnicity and nationality. All are inter-connected which makes trying to understand Congo today according to classic analytical divisions a fruitless effort. The need to rethink our analytical framework explains the choice of contributions in the volume. A balance has been reached between Congolese and non-Congolese contributors, empirical studies based on recent field work and theoretical analysis, rural and urban Congo, government and occupied areas and grassroots initiatives and elite politics. This balance is intended to provide students with an understanding of the dynamics of recent events in the Congo while offering the theoretical basis needed to understand future change.
Economic Re-structuring

Congo rivalled Nigeria and South Africa for the economic leadership of Africa between independence in 1960 and the 1970s. Today, it is ravaged by war – and surrounded by countries that are ravaged by war. No major economic partner is tempted to invest in the region given the very real security problems caused by invading forces, rebels and a recent history of looting and destruction. The ephemeral period of economic optimism (from the mid 1960s to the early 1970s) was quickly followed by an unending economic crisis caused by numerous overlapping factors.

The prospects for Zaire’s economic development were based on massive mineral resources such as copper, cobalt, diamonds and gold. Their extraction, processing and marketing, however, requires significant capital investment and sophisticated technical expertise. Moreover, Zaire – like commodity exporting countries elsewhere in Africa – had little or no control over the price of its mineral exports on the world market. The copper and cobalt exports that constituted the country’s major sources of revenue until the late 1980s have become insignificant. A failed state is ostensibly not conducive to the industrial capitalism needed to operate the capital-intensive copper and cobalt mines. Zaire’s parastatals have consequently been replaced by new networks of diamond, gold and timber smugglers. Conversely, these networks thrive on the dismantled Mobutist system of patrimonial exploitation of natural resources and the absence of a Weberian state system with tax collectors, a functioning bureaucracy and impartial judicial system.

The debt crisis of Zaire can be attributed to excessive borrowing in the period of economic optimism. The West willingly lent massive sums to Mobutu for reasons of political expediency and due to the need to recycle petro-dollar reserves. On a national level, this arrangement had a disastrous effect on the economic development of the former Belgian colony. In most patrimonial systems, the treasury and the president’s personal accounts tend to be confused. In the Congo, however, and particularly under Mobutu, the treasury’s only function has been to fill the President’s purse. Hence Mobutu’s echoing of Louis XV: l’état c’est moi (I am the state). De Herdt gives several examples of how monetary policy was destined, not to fix inflation, but to enrich a coterie of barons ‘loyal’ to the guide supreme, as Mobutu liked to think of himself. Mobutu set an example for the rest of the population by publicly acknowledging that stealing from the state (in moderation) was not only understandable, but permissible as well. The logic is somewhat comparable to the former East German perception that those who do not steal from the state make their families suffer.

But Mobutu pushed this logic too far. He undermined the state by poisoning relations with foreign investors. The nationalisation of foreign enterprises in the 1970s marked the beginning of crisis. The state was in no position to run the copper mines and perhaps it never really intended to do so. It seems that Mobutu had no interest in long term investments, only in rapid access to capital. He needed huge amounts of money to ‘lubricate’ the patron-client relations that kept him in control. As Samset points out, diamonds provided much of Mobutu’s income. They can be extracted with very simple technology and with little capital investment. Moreover, their price on the world market has remained relatively stable, unlike other mineral resources.

Access to vast amounts of capital from diamonds also explains how Mobutu was able to keep Bretton Woods institutions at bay. He had no interest in boosting copper production, let alone in international interference in economic activities. It was easy to refuse adjustment packages at a time when anti-neo-colonial rhetoric and independista
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discourse was in fashion. Mobutu did, nonetheless, sign structural adjustment programmes in the mid 1980s. Although his regime did not suffer from structural adjustment, people did. Structural adjustment forced the government to address budget deficits by reducing expenditures in ‘non-productive’ sectors such as health, education, research and culture while increasing investments in trade and production. Mobutu respected only the first half of these conditions.

Western media continue to portray Congo as a mineral rich country that has fallen prey to ruthless exploitation by foreign groups; it was precisely the same image that brought Congo to the attention of Europeans and Americans a century ago. Leopold II of Belgium was attacked in the early 1900s because of the atrocities his agents committed to extract rubber from what was then the Congo Free State (and his personal property). Despite the fact that the foreign troops fighting within Congolese borders initially did so for security reasons (to fight UNITA, the LRA or Interahamwe), the stress is now clearly on the looting of Congolese resources: security activities have been replaced by what is ambiguously described as ‘war economy’. Gold and diamonds transit through Bujumbura and Kigali although neither Burundi nor Rwanda produce them. Samset and Smis and Oyatambwe help conceptualise what the term ‘war economy’ means in Congo today. ‘Looting’ and ‘illegality’ are extremely complex concepts that are perceived differently by different actors. Aren’t the government’s ‘invited’ allies involved in very similar economic practices as the uninvited ‘aggressors/rebels’? The government itself could be accused of ‘looting’ because in a progressive definition, any form of corruption could be considered as looting the resources of the population. Angola is ‘paid’ in petroleum for its war efforts just as Zimbabwe has been granted generous mining concession in Katanga. The strategy of the two Kabila regimes seems more about gaining economic control over the economic networks that operate within the country than about establishing authority and administration over the entire territory of the country.

Diamonds, gold, tropical hardwoods, coltan and cobalt are widely perceived as fuelling the war. Diamonds and coltan have been the subject of concern by the international political community, resulting in certain attempts to establish embargos. There is a genuine concern that Western companies are fuelling the conflict with their business and trade transactions involving minerals originating from the DRC. The Belgian Senate in this respect is conducting a parliamentary enquiry into the involvement of Belgian companies in the war. While such concerns are not misplaced, it often leads to the kind of neo-colonialist conspiracy theories of unscrupulous Western conglomerates plundering the Congo. The reality on the ground, however, is somewhat different – and far more complex. While the ‘greed not grievance’ analysis is certainly pertinent to Central Africa, it misses some important points. It minimises the relationship between mineral wealth (and other economic assets), economic development and the actors involved in conflict.

The big mining concerns have gradually stopped investing in Congo since nationalisation in 1974. They have shifted their attention to more profitable and less risky areas in North America and Australia. Nearly all mineral extraction is consequently small scale. In addition, and due to low copper and cobalt prices on the world market, there is currently no interest in rehabilitating the production infrastructure. The objective of economic actors in the Congo is quick extraction and quick gain at low cost. This also has to do with changes in the global economy (Briefing by Kennes). The only companies currently operating in the Congo are smaller companies willing to take high risks to reap eventual high earnings. Many of the networks that operate on the ground need to negotiate with all sorts of military
actors and often are involved in criminal activities. The militarisation and
criminalisation of these networks of economic extraction is an extremely dangerous
evolution. At the local level it suffocates local business and economic initiative and
has a negative impact on social relations.

The ‘greed not grievance’ interpretation led certain international NGOs to launch
campaigns to stop the purchase of minerals originating from conflict zones. ‘No blood
on my mobile phone’ was one such initiative because coltan from the Kivus in Eastern
Congo is used in mobile phones. The intense but short-lived fury over coltan also
reveals that international NGOs and institutions condemning the pillage of the
Congo’s natural resources often fail to recognise that local populations also engage in
and benefit from war economies (Jackson). The war economy is firmly rooted in their
daily lives because they are the ones who are producing coltan in Kivu or heterogenite
(a copper and cobalt alloy) in Katanga. The only economic alternative to these
‘informal’ and ‘illegal’ activities for many people is the subsistence agriculture that no
longer corresponds to their perceptions and aspirations of well-being or modernity.

These factors are crucial with respect to conflict management. Outside intervention in
war economies of this type confronts many complexities. Due to the involvement of
local populations, who have few other economic perspectives than participation in
this war economy, there is a concern that sanctions and embargos will target them
more than anyone else. Actors higher up on the ladder in these networks of economic
extraction are more mobile and thus capable of shifting their ‘business’ elsewhere. On
the other hand, the big economic gains made within the context of this war economy
are not re-invested in ways that help local communities.

The goals of the different warring factions have never been really clear and are
becoming increasingly nebulous. This can be accounted for by the multiplicity of
actors, shifting alliances, the changing nature of economic possibilities and problems
related to decoding official discourses. One thing has however remained constant and
clear since the beginning of the war: the maintenance of at least low intensity conflict
is in the economic interest of the various actors. While organisations such as ALIR
pose a real threat to Kigali, Rwanda prefers keeping this kind of opposition in check
rather than fully destroying it. The same can be said for other countries involved in
the DRC war, such as Burundi or Uganda. This makes it difficult to end the conflicts.
Those who currently possess the means to end the violence are the ones invited to the
negotiating table. And what would they be negotiating about? Who can set the
agenda? It is still not clear who to include or exclude in the current Inter-Congolese
Dialogue.

A Stateless State?
All of the problems raised above can be considered as both cause and effect of state
failure, another theme addressed throughout this volume. A weak state cannot
protect its borders, control rebel groups or manage its natural resources efficiently.
Mobutu dominated the political economy of Zaire for 32 years, adapting to changes
within the global diplomatic scene with relative ease. During the period of
‘intransitive’ democratic transition, he also continued to control the political
landscape, largely by playing opposition groups against each other (de Villers &
Omasombo). Carefully elaborated economic strategies employed by the ruling elite
were also designed to smother political opposition as explained by De Herdt.
Eventually, however, the Mobutu regime’s patrimonial and predatory networks
reached their limits. The self-destructive system consumed itself leaving only remnants of a state.

Democratic transition was supposed to be the next phase of Congolese political history but has remained illusory (de Villers & Omasombo). Internal and external actors consequently started to think in terms of a ‘stateless’ state and developed strategies to fill this vacuum. Although the Congolese themselves have replaced the Mobutist state with new forms of state-society relations, it also appears that people expect very little from the state. In the image of the country’s strongman whose health deteriorated rapidly due to a spreading cancer, Zaire seemed to have contracted the same fatal illness plunging the country into an unseen depth awaiting its final coup de grace. The words of Mobutu again in Louis XV mode: après moi le déluge reveal his own expectation of chaos.

There is clearly no absence of political life and ideas in Congo but people have yet failed to crystallise their political aspirations into concrete political initiatives. This could be related to the particular culture of la débrouille: Mobutu kept people individually and creatively occupied in search of survival so as to avoid political mobilisation. It can also be accounted for by the perception that political mobilisation is a long term investment with little chance of success. People are disillusioned about those they blame for having sabotaged the democratic transition. They have consequently turned their back on political elites and their networks. It is, for instance, noteworthy that political parties currently termed as unarmed opposition, namely civil society and the Catholic church, who were the main pillars of the National Conference, which indicated the direction of a the new political order, only played second fiddle at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue established within the

<table>
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<th>Evolution of Congolese Political Economy</th>
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<td>1975: World copper prices plummet, high inflation, devaluation of Zaïre currency.</td>
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<td>1980: Crisis temporarily lets up, inflation under control, positive balance of payments.</td>
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<td>1990: SAPs unable to redress situation, social situation tense.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997-1999: No coherent economic policy under Laurent Kabila. The economy is devoted to war effort. Resources looted by Rwandan and Ugandan aggressors – booty offered to Zimbabwe and Angola in exchange for military support.</td>
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<td>2000-2002: Kabila fils liberalises economy and re-establish negotiations with IMF and World Bank. Foreign debt approx. $9 billion. No improvement in social conditions.</td>
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framework of the Lusaka peace process. Instead, new networks came to the fore and have transformed the political arena and social life.

**Identities & Nationality**

At the present, ethnic and regional networks but also numerous churches and sometimes politically powerful prayer groups have reshaped political and economic landscape. The number of politicians who turned preachers (such as former MPR ideology guru Dominique Sakomi), and vice versa, is impressive. Ethnicity has also become a stronger mobilising factor, as demonstrated by the contribution on the Banyamulenge (Vlassenroot); whole economic networks are clearly ethnically based. Diamond digging in the border region with Angola is, for instance, forbidden terrain for foreigners and almost exclusively done by members of the Luba ethnic community. Until recently the Nande in Eastern Congo monopolised trade from East Africa to the Middle East and were instrumental in establishing what was perceived in the region as *their* university in Butembo. The *mutuelles* or solidarity networks that have helped Congolese to survive are also, in many cases, based on ethnic links.

Paradoxically Congolese in general have a very strong sense of national identity – perhaps a remnant of Mobutu's single party state system. There is no prominent political party or group that advocates fragmenting the country along the lines of the secession movements immediately after independence. As in other conflicts, moreover, Congolese identity has been reinforced by external threats. The rampant anti-Rwandan sentiment, particularly during the 'Battle of Kinshasa' in August and September 1998, is the most obvious example. The Congolese do, however, have very low esteem for the state. People clearly expect very little from the state in terms of social services. People also seem to expect little from opposition leaders. A major frustration inside Congo is that political change has not come from within but has been imported by external forces (Tshiyembe).

While solidarity systems based on identity and ethnicity may be positive mechanisms that help people adapt to political and economic constraints in Kinshasa, the ethnicity and nationality problems constitute major obstacles to peace in the Kivus. Democratic elections are on the agendas of numerous international agencies and Congolese political actors but two prerequisites have to be resolved before elections can take place. First, a population census has to be carried out. The number of Congolese are estimated somewhere between 50 and 55 million but as the last census was in 1984, nobody knows for sure. AIDS has certainly taken its toll on the population but there is no nationwide data on AIDS deaths or seropositivity rates. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) estimates war casualties to be approximately 2.5 million – again obfuscating population data.

Second is the question of who is eligible to claim Congolese nationality and consequently vote. The Banyamulenge question that of the Tutsis from South Kivu raises very serious challenges to elections at the national legislative and presidential levels. Ethnicity is also directly related to regional demands. Will Congolese institutions remain intact, will the constitution for a Third Republic, started during the hopeful moments of 'democratic transition', be pursued or will a new form of federal model be adopted along regional and ethnic lines?

The relative political void created with the restructuring of the Zairian-Congolese state also facilitated neighbouring states to export their war against armed opposition movements into Zaire-Congo. At the same time they were able to appropriate new
zones of influence in a country that has always been the object of foreign greed. In addition to economic incentives, these new actors had clear political motives to either fight the Kinshasa regime, its opponents or other rebel movements. Mobutu wanted to play king-maker in the region and although he did not succeed, he continuously manipulated politics in neighbouring countries by supporting the government or armed opposition. As a result, neighbours needed, feared and hated him. This explains the extraordinary coalition of states in the first war to topple Mobutu and the division of this anti-Mobutu alliance in the second war against Kabila.

The international community also played an ambiguous role. On the one hand, it sided with the anti-Mobutu coalition and to a certain extent supported efforts of regional strongmen to appropriate for themselves parts of an ailing state (Smis & Oyatambwe). Thus, the international community was supporting change in the DRC’s leadership while risking partition of the country. On the other hand, it based itself on the idea of African ownership and supported a mediation process initiated by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) resulting in the Lusaka agreements of 10 July 1999. However, most states misjudged one of the legacies of Mobutu: the strong feeling of ordinary Congolese to live together in one state. This patriotism, the succession of Laurent-Désiré Kabila by his son Joseph, who seemed to be more receptive to Western demands, and the growing tension between Rwanda and Uganda, brought international players to a more nuanced position. They thus put significant diplomatic efforts into the Lusaka process hoping that Congolese (and states militarily involved) would find a way out to the conflict through a political settlement.

**Political Constraints – Social Innovation**

The Congolese people have been struggling through crisis for over forty years. A brutal transition from colony to nation-state in 1960, 32 years of Mobutu’s tyranny and the hardship caused by a war that involved at different times most of the country’s nine neighbours, have all converged to impoverish the population. In terms of Human Development Indicators (nutrition, literacy, life expectancy at birth, availability of clean drinking water), the country is amongst the poorest of the poor.

People have responded to the challenges of daily survival by developing their own popular solutions. Analysis of how people get things done on a daily basis raises the question of whether or not the distinction between formal and informal economy is of any analytical value. These solutions are based most notably on the ‘parallel’ economy, innovative use of resources and space and on a host of social, kinship, community, religious and commercial networks. The way diaspora populations contribute to family needs back home, as well as how Congolese expatriates are perceived in the countries where they have settled, is addressed here by Sumata and Hirsh. These solutions are what can be considered as the legendary capacity of the Congolese for social innovation and adaptation to economic and political constraints. One could think that social institutions fall apart in times of intense social stress and transition from authoritarian rule, but in the Congo they appear to be diversifying and even strengthening. Examples that support this hypothesis pertain to the shaping of civil society institutions, class and gender formations; access to power and ‘voice’; and the roles of ethnicity and of neighbourhood and professional organisations. The Congolese are also renowned for their cultural inventiveness as witnessed in popular painting, music, fashion and use of language.
Harsh security, political and economic problems are felt throughout the country – in the occupied territories and those ‘controlled’ by the government; in urban areas and in rural ones (the urban-rural population ratio is approximately 50-50); and in the equatorial forest of the north and the savannahs of the south. The human cost of dictatorship has been dramatic. In the cities, economic and political crisis translate into the decline, absence or hijacking of municipal and administrative services, public transport problems, inadequate water and energy distribution and housing shortages. In Kinshasa, 50 per cent of the population have only one meal per day, 25 per cent have one meal every two days. Also in Kinshasa, 25 per cent of the population – and in this case it is children and women – have to walk more than one kilometre to fetch water.

In the rural areas, people survive thanks to their subsistence activities – hunting, gathering, fishing and farming. Due to the decay of road infrastructure they live in relative autarchy. Access to health care, education and administrative services is extremely limited. In the rebel held areas, basic supplies have disappeared. Medicines, batteries, petrol, soap, salt, and food are often referred to as ‘memories’. Lack of salt is not only a question of taste: without the iodine it provides, many children now suffer from goitre, a deficiency that had been nearly eradicated by the end of the colonial period. Clothing is also increasingly hard to find. Many children consequently stay home from school because they have nothing to wear. Children are particularly hard hit by crisis across the Congo where, like in most other parts of Africa, 50 per cent of the total population is less than fifteen years old. Some become soldiers like the kadogos who helped Laurent Désiré Kabila come to power. In Kivu, as noted by Jackson, militia youth claim that ‘with a gun you can eat’. Others seek their fortunes by digging for diamonds in Angola – the bana lunda. On the streets of Kinshasa, others simply live by their wits as phaseurs or sheges. Un schooled, under nourished, disillusioned, away from their families, these children are part of a lost generation.

The Future

Political science research on Africa has focused for many years on the failed state syndrome in Africa in general and Congo in particular. State systems in Africa were copied from Western values and models that were not politically, culturally and socially embedded in Africa. They corresponded neither to African ‘tradition’ nor African views of modernity in a rapidly changing globalised system. In this volume we have tried to address the fundamental question of ‘what is beyond the failed state in Congo?’ As no one in Congo or elsewhere seriously believes in a stateless society, the only solution is to rebuild the state by taking African realities into account. Many Congolese intellectuals emphasise ethnicity as one of the fundamental differences between African and Western systems. They argue that ethnic groups are far from the backward social constructions that were maintained during the colonial and post-colonial period. On the contrary, they are modern constructions upon which the new post-colonial state could be built.

Most of the attention regarding the Inter-Congolese Dialogue is focused on the settlement of the war and the various local and regional conflicts linked to it. This, however, is only part of the problem. Another major challenge is the establishment of a New Political Order (NPO), although it remains unclear what the legal basis for any new government emerging out of the ICD will be. According to Tshiyembe, the ICD should not only involve political and military elites but also intellectuals who can lift
the debate to a more theoretical level as well. Any type of state model will have to accommodate the specificities of Congolese history and culture with universal models of democracy, giving voice to both the individual (the cornerstone of Western liberal democracies) and the group (a major constitutive factor in Congolese and African political, economic and social life).

Although the social cost of the ongoing crisis in the Congo is enormous, it has helped people appropriate the sentiment of 'being Congolese'. There is a Congolese nation – plural indeed, yet with a clear sense of collective belonging and destiny. It will take a long time to heal the wounds of poverty, oppression, rebellion and war but perhaps this sentiment of 'being Congolese' can be transformed into the energy needed to reinvent the state and society.

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Endnotes

1. Bemba heads the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) group. He is based in Gbadolite, Mobutu’s village of origin transformed into a luxurious jungle retreat.

2. Litho, Seti Yale, and Bemba père were business men who amassed huge fortunes. Kengo wa Dondo, former Prime Minister, like many other occupants of key ministerial posts, did the same.

3. Most nationalised industries and businesses rapidly became bankrupt. Depleted stocks were not replenished and maintenance of productive units and infrastructure was abandoned.

4. The Katanga secession in the early 1960s was largely fomented by non-Congolese interest groups.

5. This figure is often cited in the press, reports and articles but is probably exaggerated.

Acknowledgements

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The Tunnel at the End of the Light

René Lemarchand

For those of us old enough to remember what in the 1960s was known as ‘the Congo crisis’ – soon to become the ‘endless crisis’ – the tragic singularity of the present conjuncture is perhaps less apparent than some of the contributions to this special issue on the Congo might suggest. No one who lived through the agonies of the Congo’s improvised leap into independence – followed by the swift collapse of the successor state and the break-up of the country into warring fragments – can fail to note the analogy with the dismemberment of the Mobutist state in the wake of the 1998 civil war. Then as now the former Belgian colony was faced with a crisis of statelessness of huge proportions. The challenges confronting the international community today are in a sense remarkably similar to what they were in the early 1960s. How to reconstruct a broken-backed polity, how to rebuild an army reduced to a rabble by the emergence of armed factions, how to revitalise basic human services, ensure a minimum of security and economic self-sustenance; in short, how to restore the legitimacy, territorial integrity and internal sovereignty of the state, such are the daunting challenges facing the international community. This is not meant to suggest that history repeats itself, only that historical perspectives can offer important clues to an understanding of the present.

A Legacy of Exceptionality

There is no need to invoke 'The Heart of Darkness' to acknowledge the enduring legacy of the Congo's historical exceptionality. The latter, according to James Coleman and Ndolamb Ngokwey, is 'insistently defined by superlatives':

Few other countries have suffered a precolonial capitalist exploitation so harsh, predatory, socially disorganizing, and unrestrained; a colonial system of bureaucratic authoritarianism so massive, deeply penetrative, paternalistic, and insulated from external monitoring; ... a democratic experiment immediately before independence of such fleeting brevity and politicized ethnicity; an indigenous leadership so denied of experience and unprepared for independence; an imperial evacuation so precipitate and ill-planned; an initial post-colonial period of such Hobbesian chaos, secessionism, and external manipulation; and the subsequent postcolonial agony of a protracted and seemingly interminable personalistic and patrimonial autocracy by one of Africa's most durable presidential monarchs (Coleman and Ngokwey, 1994:306).

To this litany of woes must be added the staggering human losses recorded by the International Rescue Committee: since 1998 an estimated 3 million lives have been wiped out, which, in comparative terms is roughly the equivalent of casualties sustained on 11 September on a daily basis for three consecutive years. Reflecting on 'the Congo disaster', Colin Legum observed in 1960:

Twice in its recent history – in the 1880s and again in 1960 – the Congo became a threat to world peace. It is obviously a country to watch (Legum, 1961:1).

Where the current crisis differs from its immediate post-independence antecedent is that it no longer poses a threat to world peace, only to the people of the Congo. In the early 1960s the US and Belgium did indeed keep a close watch on developments in the Congo, as Edouard Bustin reminds us, to the point of being complicit in the murder of Patrice Lumumba, then seen as the most threatening vector of Soviet penetration into the heart of the continent. Cold war responses to the Muleliste insurgency of 1964-5, when nearly half of the country ended in rebel hands, ensured the swift reconstruction of the Congolese state under the auspices of Western patrons: had it not been for the timely intervention of South African and European mercenaries and the bombing missions flown by Cuban pilots in the pay of the CIA, Mobutu’s second coming on 25 November 1965 might not have materialised. With the end of the cold war the huge mineral resources of the Congo ceased to be seen as a major stake in East-West rivalries, and for a while a light was seen to flicker at the end of the tunnel. But Zaire’s 'intransitive transition', as Gauthier de Villers and Jean Omasombo Tshonda explain, soon dispelled all illusions about the likelihood of a quick exit. For some thirty years cold war priorities helped consolidate the grip of Mobutu’s dictatorship; its termination, in the wake of the Rwanda-sponsored AFDL crusade, transformed the 'Mobutu or Chaos' alternative into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The chaos scenario was by no means foreordained, however. It was the unintended consequence of the strategic options that framed US policies for over thirty years. As Michael Schatzberg prophetically warned, some twelve years ago, it was the unshakeable conviction of US policy makers that there was simply no alternative to supporting Mobutu that made it happen: 'Paradoxically, by supporting uncritically Mobutu’s rule and affirming his 'indispensability', US policy is contributing to the chaos it has always sought to avoid. The real threat to tranquillity in Central Africa is neither the Libyans in the north nor the Cubans in the south, but the inherent instability of Mobutu’s tyranny' (Schatzberg, 1991:102). Even as late as 1991, when the
National Sovereign Conference got underway, there was little indication of a change of heart in Foggy Bottom. As the unrepentant Chester Crocker told Michela Wrong, 'If we had tried to attach 1990s governance conditionalities to Mobutu, we would have been calling for his overthrow' (Wrong, 2000:213). One wonders in retrospect whether Mobutu’s overthrow by ‘governance conditionalities’, assuming that such a scenario could not be avoided, would have had more disastrous consequences for the people of the Congo than his violent ouster by a coalition of insurgents led by the Rwandan army.

**Foreign-Linked Clientelism**

Today's crisis unfolds in a radically different international context. At stake are the strategic, political and economic interests of five African countries, that is, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Angola and Zimbabwe, each seeking to draw maximum advantage from the near collapse of the Congo state, and this with the direct or tacit complicity of local actors. The complex texture of the crisis, involving shifting alliances and conflicting agenda, are nowhere more brilliantly dissected than in Filip Reyntjens’ classic work on ‘the war in the Great Lakes’, appropriately subtitled *’alliances mouvantes et conflits extraterritoriaux’* (Reyntjens, 1999). One is tempted to see a ‘geopolitical schadenfreude’, to use Michael Hirsh’s phrase, in the ruthlessness with which the Congo’s failed state syndrome is being exploited by its neighbours (Hirsh, 2000:6). As one observer tersely put it, ‘the Congo has become a carcass being chewed at by its elite and its neighbours’ (Hottelet, 2001:9). But as the papers in this collection demonstrate, the metaphor hardly does justice to the convoluted dynamic at work in the current drama. The sheer number of political actors involved, domestic and foreign, together with the fluidity of the regional political fields and the seemingly endless proliferation of factions generated by the constant recalculation of costs and benefits adds up to a picture of staggering complexity.

A key factor behind the disintegration of the Congolese state lies in the convergence of short-term interests between different sets of Congolese politicians and their foreign allies, in short in foreign-linked clientelism. The key players are well known. The dominant faction in the east, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), is heavily dependent on Rwanda militarily, and Rwanda in turn uses the RCD as the spearhead of its economic and political penetration in eastern Congo; the Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC), while casting about for a rapprochement with Kinshasa, has yet to sever its ties with Uganda, and many of the smaller factions operating in the northeast can best be described as satellites of Kampala; as for the Kabila government, there can be little question about the crucial role played by Angola and Zimbabwe in ensuring its security or, for that matter, about the handsome dividends, economic and strategic, reaped by each state in return for their military presence on the ground.

But this only tells part of the story. Managing patron-client ties is a complicated task, all the more so in situations of chronic conflict and violence, and where presumptive patrons are competing with each other for the allegiance of local clients. Perceptions of costs and benefits are by no means fixed once and for all. Today’s loyal clients may end up being tomorrow’s enemies. A mutually profitable relation may suddenly dissolve into factional dissidence, or worse. The seemingly endless defections suffered by the RCD speak volumes for the inherent fickleness of client networks (of the 50 original founding members, only 20 are still formally affiliated to the movement). For the most recent and dramatic illustration of the phenomenon one only needs to turn to Koen Vlassenroot’s painstaking analysis of the internal tensions...
that have plagued the relations between the Banyamulenge and the RCD leadership, and among different Banyamulenge leaders, culminating in the dissidence of the Masunzu faction and the joint intervention of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and RCD troops.

**Changing Partnerships**

The case of the Banyamulenge brings into focus just how fragile local alliances can be when the demands made by the senior partner exceed the benefits expected by client factions: at the root of many Banyamulenge’s unhappiness with their Rwandan ally is the strong suspicion that they have been ‘instrumentalised’ by Kigali, that the price they paid in fighting Kabila’s troops in 1998 far exceeded the rewards to which they felt entitled. It is hard to imagine, in the light of the violent confrontations that took place in 1999 and early 2002 between RPA soldiers and Banyamulenge, that the latter were Kigali’s closest ally in 1997 and 1998. As Vlassenroot’s discussion suggests, the acute sense of ‘relative deprivation’ felt by many Banyamulenge must be seen against the background of the changes taking place on the ground. Back in 1996-7, faced with repeated threats from local Mobutist politicians, they needed little prodding to join the Rwandans and their ADFL allies in their fight against Mobutu; from 1998 onwards, however, their growing resentment of the Rwandan tutelage, coupled with Kigali’s insistent demands that they leave their traditional homelands in south Kivu and return to Rwanda en masse, fundamentally altered the terms of the partnership.

If fluidity and fragmentation are indeed key characteristics of the Banyamulenge political field this is also true of the *Mayi-Mayi* militias of North and South Kivu, and with much the same adverse consequences for the presumptive patron, in this case Kinshasa. Ironically, precisely when a major anti-Rwandan dissidence erupted among the Banyamulenge in 2002, a similar phenomenon, albeit on a much lesser scale, was taking place among the *Mayi-Mayi*, with some factions turning against Kabila to join the RCD, others joining hands with Masunzu’s ‘rebels’. Here again the context is the key. As preparations for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) got under way, and with the RCD eager to meet the demands of the civil society on its own terms, some *Mayi-Mayi* warlords did not hesitate to cut a deal with their former enemy.

The Congolese version of Jean-Francois Bayart’s *’Etat-rhyzome’* is conspicuous for its inability to effectively control its offshoots (Bayart, 1989:167). The farther away from the capital, the weaker the networks, and the more complicated the brokerage between the Kinshasa-based patron and its provincial clients. And the same is true, of course, of the clientelistic links reaching out from Kampala and Kigali to the rebel factions in the Ituri, Orientale and Kivu provinces. The RCD, Kigali’s most faithful client in North and South Kivu, appears to have lost what little legitimacy it may have enjoyed. The movement is currently split into six break-away factions (International Crisis Group, 2002:14). The Rwandan loyalists (RCD-Goma), meanwhile, continue to be the target of unmitigated hatred on the part of many Congolese, including a substantial segment of the Banyamulenge community.

**Factionalism & Ethnicity**

Factionalism cuts across ethnicity, but ethnic loyalties or sub-loyalties persist through the thick and thin of factional struggles and are often manipulated for political advantage. Their overlap adds another element of complexity to power equations. A
useful point of entry into this conceptual minefield is Crawford Young’s characterisation of ethnicity as a ‘subjective’ and ‘contextually shifting phenomenon’ (Young, 1976:38); only by taking into account the dramatic changes in the regional context can one begin to understand the sudden eruption of ethnic hatreds at specific historical moments, most prominently in the aftermath of the Rwanda genocide, and at the beginning of the 1998 civil war.

Despite the continuing factional ‘sideshows’, to this day Hutu-Tutsi polarities remain the basic referential frame, among a large segment of the Congolese population, for identifying friends and enemies. Whether ethnic identities in fact correspond to these labels is immaterial; all that is needed is for certain basic cultural or physical markers to be perceived as indicators of Tutsiness or Hutuness. As will be recalled, countless Tutsi-looking Congolese, and not a few Africans from other states, were ruthlessly assaulted and murdered by Congolese mobs in the wake of the August 1998 crisis. Tens of thousands perished in 2000 and 2001 when Lendu turned against Hema, and vice versa, in the Ituri province. Even though neither group clearly fits the Hutu-Tutsi frame, the agricultural (Lendu) vs. pastoralist (Hema) dichotomy was enough to legitimise mutual destruction.

The case of the Banyamulenge is even more telling, given that they constitute a distinct cultural entity in South Kivu, whose roots are traceable to pre-colonial times. Even though they see themselves as Congolese and firmly reject intimations of being Rwandans, to this day many ‘native’ Congolese do not hesitate to vehemently challenge their claims to being bona fide Congolese citizens. Widely perceived as Rwandan Tutsi in disguise, the Banyamulenge, writes Vlassenroot, are seen as ‘arrogant aggressors, occupying their provinces, exploiting their mines and killing their children’. Ultimately, the fate of the Banyamulenge hangs on the issue of citizenship, and this is true also of tens of thousands of ethnic Tutsi in North Kivu, who settled in the province before or during colonial rule. Unless their claims as citizens are recognised the prospects for peace will remain in doubt. Whether Tutsi communities indigenous to the Congo would be able to survive an eventual withdrawal of the Rwandan army is anybody’s guess.

**War & Plunder**

No less problematic, however, is the likelihood of a Rwandan pullout. As Ingrid Samset convincingly argues, Kigali’s security concerns are increasingly eclipsed by the huge benefits drawn from the exploitation of the Kivu’s mineral wealth. What began as a free-for-all stealing of cash and private property in the months immediately following the 1998 conquest of eastern Congo by Uganda and Rwanda, gave way a year later to a more ‘systematised exploitation’ of mineral resources. Though both are bereft of diamond deposits,

> over the last few years Rwanda and Uganda have exported diamonds worth millions of dollars ... While the combined diamond exports of Uganda and Rwanda more than doubles from 1998 to 2000, exports from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were halved.

It is from the extraction of coltan, however, that Kigali derives much of the financial wealth needed to prosecute its military operations in eastern Congo. Quoting from the UN Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, Samset goes on to note that in a period of eighteen months, from 1999 to 2000, Rwanda is believed to have earned ‘a stunning $250 million’. During the same period, we are told, Rwanda was able to double its military expenditures.
The wholesale plunder of the Congo's mineral wealth is what enables both Rwanda and Uganda to sustain their war effort at minimal cost; in effect, the Congolese are supporting the financial burden of their own occupation by foreign armies. This said, it is noteworthy that Rwanda's total cash earnings from its imperial thrust far exceed the aggregate cost of its military activities in the region, thus bringing to Kigali a 'massive economic surplus'. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that by turning a blind eye to the profits drawn from the looting of the Congo's wealth, the international community – meaning not only the European Union and the US, but the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – is tacitly encouraging a colonial enterprise in the best tradition of European imperialism.

If Rwanda is the worst offender, it is by no means the only one. Zimbabwe and Angola are also on the receiving line of diamond concessions (though Zimbabwe substantially more so than Angola); and in return for Zimbabwe's military 'cooperation', the Générale des Carrières et des Mines (Gecamines), the key parastatal on the copperbelt, has transferred a large portion of its mining rights to a Zimbabwean company run by Mugabe's henchmen in the state-owned Zimbabwe Defense Industries (ZDI).

That the presence of foreign armies on Congolese soil should generate widespread resentment of the occupants is hardly surprising. Nowhere is this more dramatically evident than in eastern Congo, where hatred of Rwanda, and by implication of all Tutsi, domestic or foreign, has taken on alarming proportions. Bishop's Kataliko's lament that 'the Congolese people are obliged to resist because our riches are being looted by foreign powers with the complicity of a Congolese elite' is no empty jeremiad. Here as elsewhere 'to the victors go the spoils', but at least some of the spoils end up in local hands. The trickle-down effect of exploitation translates into complex mechanisms of extraction and redistribution. A new type of informal economy is developing around coltan extraction, funneling profits from the diggers to the intermediaries, from intermediaries to the foreign-manned comptoirs, and from the comptoirs to Kigali and beyond.

'Coltan fever', writes Stephen Jackson, 'rapidly dollarised many relatively remote rural areas', while generating a host of secondary activities linked to the new economy – prostitution, brewing and shabeens and petty commerce of all varieties'. Tempting though it may be to conclude that there is mutual advantage in profit sharing, this is hardly supported by the evidence painstakingly gathered by Jackson: the get-rich-quick mentality fostered by the coltan fever has reversed traditional agricultural trading patterns, causing serious shortages of staple foods; the sharp drop in the price of coltan, from $150 a kilo to $25, coupled with Rwanda's reliance on Hutu prisoners to do the digging, has intensified competition and led many prospective diggers to find alternative sources of employment in joining the Mayi-Mayi militias; notwithstanding the taxes levied by Rwanda and its RCD ally on coltan and diamond sales, little or nothing of this revenue is ploughed back into social infrastructures; and for every Congolese who stands to profit from the trade, ten others are falling through the cracks. As Koen Vlassenroot has persuasively argued, the growing marginalisation of the Congolese youth is certainly a key element behind the Mayi-Mayi phenomenon; in the absence of alternative sources of employment, and with no safety net left in the traditional society, joining the militias becomes the only rational option. 'There is a clear link', he writes, 'between this new political violence and the nature of the post-colonial state, which, lacking the mechanisms to bind its citizens to the social order, produced thousands of marginalised young people' (Vlassenroot, 2000:281).
Citing David Keen’s twist on the Clausewitzian axiom that ‘war is a continuation of economics by other means’ Jackson shows the circular relationship between war-making and profit-making, one relentlessly reinforcing the other. The result has been to ‘elevate violence in a vicious circle of conflict based rapine: profits increasingly motivate the violence, violence makes the profits possible’. One only needs to recall the bloody confrontations between Rwanda and Uganda over access to diamond deposits in and around Kisangani, the similarly violent encounters between Jean-Pierre Bemba’s MLC and the Nyamwesi wing of the RCD to appreciate the point. For a more recent account of how greed and violence intersect one can do no better than quote from the UN Interim Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, of May 2002:

In the area of the northeastern DRC where two battalions of Ugandan troops are still stationed, violent armed conflict have primarily been among the three Uganda-backed Congolese rebel groups that dominate the northeast-MLC, its purported ally RCD-National and RCD-ML. Some of these rebel armies have been reinforced at times by highly fluid alliances with what have been described as Mayi-Mayi groups. In some areas Ugandan soldiers also intervened. Battles were fought over Buta, Isoro, Watsa, Bafwesende and Bunia, all endowed in varying degrees with deposits of gold, diamonds, coltan or cassiterite as well as stands of timber … Control of precious resources and customs and tax revenues, all vital to the consolidation of the highly commercialized power bases of certain individuals and groups, have repeatedly fuelled these battles. Over the course of three and a half years of conflict, various armed factions have clashed over these economically strategic areas, trading control back and forth among them (UN Interim Report, 2000:9, 10).

The same source leaves the reader with few illusions about the human toll:

Reports and testimonies indicate that civilian populations have suffered greatly as a result, with casualties, forced displacements, increased food insecurity and malnutrition. A state of generalized insecurity reigns in many areas in the Orientale Province and the Kivus, as bands of youthful ‘soldiers’ or free-floating militias attack, loot and burn villages and fields … In some areas entire communities have been forcibly displaced by armed forces so they can take control of resource-rich zones or the access roads for those zones. Military forces and militias have reportedly evicted local artisanal diggers in order to seize production or take control of informal mining sites. Other serious human rights violations, including killings, sexual assaults and abuse of power for economic gain have been reported as directly linked to military forces’ control of resource extraction sites or their presence in the vicinity of such sites (Ibid. pp. 9, 11)

How to survive in such a Hobbesian universe? Many do not. And yet, as several contributions to this volume demonstrate, where circumstances are not so lethal, as in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, the Congolese have invented their own techniques of survival.

**Survival Techniques**

Kinshasa is one of several arenas where informal coping mechanisms flourish in conditions of utter despair and rampant poverty. Keeping body and soul together requires treasures of ingenuity. ‘Getting by’, or *la débrouille*, covers a wide spectrum of activities and stratagems, hustling and peddling, wheeling and dealing, whoring and pimping, swapping and smuggling, trafficking and stealing, brokering and facilitating, in short making the most of whatever opportunities arise to avoid starvation. Conventional categories are of little help to map out the new urban jungle. Theodore
Trefon makes the point that:

*There is order in the disorder. Function and dysfunction overlap. This applies to all social and political levels, ranging from neighbourhood, professional or ethnic associations and networks to the level where political decisions are made.*

Clearly, Kinshasa does not fit the image of Hobbesian anarchy – unlike many parts of eastern Congo. But neither do they fit into the mold of a vibrant and responsive civil society.

**A Janus-Faced Civil Society**

In today’s Congo the civil society is both part of the problem and part of the solution. Its Janus-faced quality tells us why: at one end of the spectrum lurks the satanic face of the civil society - the face of the génocidaires and the rapists, the armed bands and the militias, the poachers and murderers, the camp followers and the smugglers; at the other end shines the engaging face of humanitarian NGOs, Church groups and voluntary associations, a whole array of organisations dedicated to denouncing abuses, fostering grassroots solidarities, assisting the weak and the destitute. Between them a cruel dialectic is unfolding, pitting the forces of hope against the forces of desperation and revenge. Jean-Francois Ploquin correctly emphasises the potential for renewal inherent the civil society:

*By maintaining a free flow of communication, by putting pressure on the authorities to engage in a dialogue, by drawing attention to other modes of expression than recourse to force, by weaving links between urban and rural populations and their elites, by working towards the harmonisation of differing viewpoints, by denouncing oppression and the looting of resources, by resisting attempts at balkanisation, and by reminding international actors of their obligations, civil society actors fulfil a function that is all too often set aside by the political class* (Ploquin, 2001:146).

Whether this potential can become reality is another matter. A key problem confronting almost every civil society organisation (CSO), including those which are most conspicuously lacking in civility, is that they rarely define their interests in relation to the state, such as it is, but in relation to the conflicts raging among different fragments of the Congolese state. Their stand on behalf of, or in opposition to one faction or another, or their foreign patrons, threatens their autonomy, erodes their credibility and weakens their capacity to serve as an effective vehicle for economic and political reform.

**What Next?**

If reform is unlikely to materialise from the womb of the ‘forces vives’, can it conceivably emerge from an inter-African dialogue – or from what Wamba dia Wamba, a key participant in the Lusaka negotiations, once succinctly described as ‘la palabre comme pratique de la critique et de l’autocritique sur le plan de toute la communauté’? (Wamba dia Wamba, 1984:35).

The Lusaka accords marked a watershed in the search for a negotiated solution, but its shortcomings are made painfully evident in the assessment offered by Stefaan Smis and Wamu Oyatambwe. ‘The Lusaka Agreement’, they write, ‘is silent on the question of aggression and whether the Congo’s territorial integrity has been violated’. The distinction between the Congo’s legitimate authority and the aggressors is thus
presumably dismissed as irrelevant: 'all states involved in the conflict ... are placed on the same footing and as such Lusaka runs against established rules that allow legitimate governments ... to seek and receive (military) assistance while rebel movements are prevented from such assistance'. It is with reason that they view this anomaly as the fundamental stumbling block that has plagued all subsequent attempts at a negotiated solution to the crisis, from Addis Ababa to Sun City:

This leads to the war being somehow legitimised as an attempt to push the Congolese to a dialogue ... in which the foreign countries dictate the agenda, and when the Congolese agree on a new dispensation the same foreign countries will act as guarantors of this new order.

Will the Pretoria agreement between Kabila and Kagame, on 30 July, breathe new life into the Lusaka accords and chart a new course toward peace? The joker in the pack will not be easily exorcised, for the reasons noted above. Furthermore, some of the key provisions outlined in the Pretoria pact leave one to wonder, whether, in the words of The Economist of 27 July, it is little more than 'a ploy in a well established game of bluff'. One wonders indeed by what miracle Kabila's kadogo army could round up and disarm some 40,000 Hutu 'rebels' within 90 days. Even if the mandate of the UN Mission to the Congo were altered for that purpose, it would take far more than 2,000 UN troops to do the job. Whether South African troops could be trained and deployed in time to assist Kabila's army is a moot point. Again, one must take with considerable skepticism the figure of 40,000 members of the ex-Forces Armees Rwandaises (FAR) and interahamwe now enrolled in the Rwandan Liberation Army (ALIR), given that no one has taken a count. Will Kigali renege on its commitment if 'only' 20,000 are rounded up? How to separate out the ALIR militias from the Mayi-Mayi, the Banyamulenge 'rebels', or the Burundi 'armed bands' affiliated to the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) opens up another can of worms. Will Mayi-Mayi or FDD militias qualify as 'rebels' and be turned over to Kigali, and if so what will be the consequences for peace in the east?

The broader context of factional struggles in eastern Congo has sown the seeds of a conflict that will persist for a long time to come. The deep fractures engendered by years of ethno-factional strife will not go away any time soon. Even in the best of circumstances, in the unlikely event of a Rwandan pull-out, the fate of the Banyamulenge will remain uncertain at best; Masunzu's dissidence notwithstanding, many feel that the protective shield of the RPA is their best guarantee against retaliatory massacres by 'native' Congolese. Meanwhile, the 'pax Rwandana' generates its own perverse effects, creating the very threats to Rwanda's security which help legitimise its military occupation of eastern Congo.

'Diplomacy without power is feeble, and power without diplomacy is destructive and blind', wrote Hans Morgenthau. The Congo crisis has experienced both. There are reasons to doubt that an appropriate mix of power and diplomacy will emerge from the Pretoria accords; even though it raised a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, the most likely alternative for the foreseeable future is the tunnel at the end of the light.

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An Intransitive Transition

Gauthier de Villers & Jean Omasombo Tshonda

Efforts to promote a ‘democratic transition’ in Congo go back to April 1990 when Mobutu declared the end of the Second Republic. Since then, and despite the changing regimes and conditions experienced under Mobutu and the Kabilas, father and son, the rhetoric of democratisation has had little relationship to the realities of power struggles. The authoritarianism of regimes in Kinshasa, the covetousness of the country’s neighbours, the paralysis of opposition groups, the marginalisation of civil society’s forces – all have combined to ensure that transition remains stalled or intransitive.


Très rapidement, le processus de changement s’enraye et puis s’enlise. L’affrontement politique se réduit à une compétition pour le pouvoir entre des individus et les factions (aux contours mouvants) qu’ils animent. La mobilisation sociale se fait de plus en plus selon des canaux identitaires (ethniques ou ethnico-régionaux).

L’accession au pouvoir de Laurent Désiré Kabila en mai 1997 peut être décrite comme un accident de l’histoire. Elle est le fruit d’un exceptionnel concours de circonstances, de la conjonction de facteurs internes et externes, plutôt que l’aboutissement d’un processus de changement sociopolitique. Il en résulte le caractère informe du système qui se met en place. Le nouveau pouvoir ne présente aucune consistance d’un point de vue socio-historique comme d’un point de vue idéologico-politique. La seule logique qui sous-tend le mode de sélection du personnel dirigeant est la défiance du chef de l’État à l’égard de tous ceux qui, disposant de ressources politiques propres (accumulées sous le régime Mobutu ou sous celui de la «transition démocratique»), sont susceptibles de le concurrencer.

La guerre qui se déclenche en août 1998 conduit, avec l’adoption d’une «économie de guerre» et la création des Comités du pouvoir populaire (CPP), à une radicalisation du pouvoir, mais celle-ci agrave son impuissance et accentue son incohérence. Les CPP ne correspondront ni à ce que le discours du pouvoir prétendait en faire (la réalisation de la démocratie directe) ni à ce
que l'on aurait pu s'attendre qu'ils deviennent (un instrument d'encadrement et de surveillance de la population).

Les références au marxisme-léninisme ou au lumumbisme n'ont aucune pertinence pour définir le régime de Laurent Désiré Kabila. Si l'on veut à tout prix le caractériser, on peut dire qu'il constitue une forme de populisme particulièrement velléitaire et rhétorique, masquant mal des pratiques du pouvoir empruntant à l'héritage du mobutisme.


Aucun des protagonistes de la guerre qui continue à déchirer le Congo ne se montre disposé à renoncer au pouvoir qu'il détient, à la protection que celui-ci lui assure, aux ressources auxquelles il lui donne accès. Et, le processus de déstructuration politique que l'on a pu observer dès les débuts de la «transition démocratique» n'ayant fait que se poursuivre, les oppositions non armées ainsi que les organisations de la société civile paraissent moins que jamais à même de peser sur le cours des événements. Personne n'est en mesure de dire comment s'écrira l'avenir du Congo et par qui il sera écrit.

The ‘Democratic Transition’: The Political Context 1990-1992

President Mobutu announced the end of the Second Republic and the beginning of a ‘democratic transition’ on 24 April 1990. Despite what appeared as potential for political change, the country did not embark on a process of real democratisation. Political actors did not represent the aggregate demands of the people in Zaire at the time. Society remained under-represented in the political realm. How relevant was this dramatic presidential turnaround to the people of Zaire in the early 1990s? Most of the population was exasperated by falling standards of living. They were revolted by insecurity and despotism and demanded radical change and the restitution of a state that provided basic services. When Mobutu ‘consulted the people’ in the first months of 1990, there was a widespread expression of demands and complaints. More than 6,000 reports were submitted to the authorities revealing a serious degree of anger (Ndaywel, 1998:764). At the elite level, there were also demands for more political representation and for the recognition of specific identities and interests. The elites of Shaba-Katanga and Kasai were particularly outspoken along these lines.

How were these demands expressed politically? With the re-establishment of political pluralism and civil liberties (alongside ongoing forms of repression), popular demands for change became contagious and translated into calls for democratisation and a state of law. These demands came from ‘civil society’ organisations and a wide range of political parties. Mobutu, however, was able to turn these political developments and the promising international context that accompanied them, to his political advantage. Indeed, his ‘democratisation’ speech of 24 April was little more than a tactic to control his opponents. Regional demands were also cleverly placated. During the first transitional government headed by Lunda Bululu, it was decreed (in November 1991) that all regional officials, including the regional governors, had to trace their origins to the region to which they were posted. This was a shift away from the centralised nature of the Second Republic (previously these officials had to come
from another region) and an example of Mobutu’s strategy of sabotaging an increasingly popular opposition. He organised elections at all levels as quickly as possible, allowing the institutional order of the Second Republic to be maintained with only cosmetic changes.

The question of holding a National Conference representing the ‘vital forces’ of the country raised new issues of sovereignty from the start of the transition. Although it divided the landscape between pro-Mobutu and anti-Mobutu forces, jockeying between groups undermined the real political issues. As Mobutu did not have the means to impose his political will he accepted the idea of a National Conference. Once problems related to presidential manipulation and suspension of the Prime Minister, Nguz a Karl i Bond, were resolved, the National ‘Sovereign’ Conference was held from 6 April until 6 December 1992. This ‘grand moment’ in Congolese politics lasted only eight months. The transition from the Second Republic to the still virtual Third Republic, by contrast, was endless. Three forces, each dominated by a principal actor, maintained control of the political landscape: the presidential movement of Mobutu and associated parties; the Sacred Union of the opposition that was created in July 1991 and headed by Etienne Tshisekedi; and the Catholic Church, represented politically by Mgr Monsengwo, Archbishop of Kisangani.

**Attitudes & Role in the First Phase of the ‘Democratic Transition’**

In Brussels at the end of April 1990, representatives from the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS) – the main element in the future Sacred Union – along with other political formations (such as various Lumumbist splinter parties, the party of the Katanga ‘Tigers’ and the Parti de la Révolution Populaire (PRP) of Laurent Désiré Kabila) demanded the National Conference. ‘Political formations having existed legally or de facto in the country before 24 April 1990’ and ‘independent representatives from civil society’ could participate. The Conference was supposed to assume the role of a constituent assembly. Its first objective was to designate a person responsible for forming a provisional government (Willame, 1991:90-95). Under Tshisekedi’s leadership, the Sacred Union saw forming the provisional government as its primary political objective rather than its role in the National Conference. In a declaration published in Le Soft de Finance on 31 October 1990, Tshisekedi demanded the setting up of a government of transition ‘that would decide to organise a National Conference or find another option’. For Tshisekedi and his party, it would be incumbent on this government – and not the conference – to prepare and monitor elections.

In August 1992 the National Conference, now the National Sovereign Conference (CNS) elected Tshisekedi to form this government (Mobutu had already appointed him Prime Minister on two separate occasions). Despite the large ‘radical opposition’ in the CNS, there was ostensibly not much interest in it. Tshisekedi attended regularly but never spoke. On 1 December, Mobutu dismissed Tshisekedi as Prime Minister, replacing him with Birindwa and then with Kengo wa Dondo, but he continued to declare himself the only legal Prime Minister by virtue of his election by the CNS. The Sacred Union surprisingly did not seek the presidency. It declared instead that when Mobutu ended the Second Republic, he constitutionally ‘sawed off the political branch he was sitting on’. Etienne Tshisekedi was mainly preoccupied with securing his position as Prime Minister and with antagonising Mobutu. It was a battle between chiefs – but a battle that was more symbolic than real (de Villers, 1998). The Sacred Union did little to mobilise its supporters to oust Mobutu – even though the Kinois
would have been willing to take to the streets to do so. It did not even take advantage of the official end of Mobutu's third presidential mandate on 4 December 1991. Yet, while Mobutu held on to power, the opposition government would remain paralysed (de Villers et Omasombo, 1997).

Although Mobutu accepted the National Conference, he did not accept that it should be 'sovereign' and he never attended. In his view, the constitution of the Second Republic, modified by the law of 5 July 1990, was still valid. He tried to limit the Conference's role to that of preparing the constitution of the Third Republic and the rapid organisation of elections. Mobutu was able to regain political control progressively by taking advantage of the Sacred Union's inconsistent attitude and the compromising tendencies of Mgr Monsengwo. He maintained his role of Head of State, regained the presidency of the former state-party (renamed MPR-fait nouveau) in April 1991 and appointed Prime Ministers of his own choosing. The effect of this process (see below) and of the politics of compromise.

The CNS finally started work following the Christian March of February 1992 under pressure from a huge crowd of 'demonstrators-martyrs' comprised of Christian grassroots organisations, priests and associations of lay Christians. Mgr Monsengwo presided over the CNS with Joseph Ileo, principal leader of the Christian Social Democrat Party as vice-president. The archbishop of Kisangani and the Catholic church were the dominant forces of the CNS. The Catholic Church had its own interpretation of the National Conference. Its 'ideal', as articulated by the bishops in a text dated 27 January 1992, was 'African palabre' (negotiation). The church wanted to overcome conflict through collective catharsis. A collective and individual self-examination was to help the country find its historical roots. Consensus and 'conversion' to new values would lead to a new social project. For Monsengwo and the church, the major challenge was to restore the influence that the Catholic church had before Mobutu succeeded in imposing his hegemony and 'pagan' worldview (Kabongo-Mbaya, 1992). 'The CNS is not an arena for electoral propaganda or power struggle. It should be the place where the best stones for the foundation of a new Zairian society can be found'.

Mgr Monsengwo brought the CNS to term – but not without compromise. For example, he arranged for the results of two 'sensitive' investigations about 'ill-gotten gains' and assassinations not to be discussed in the CNS plenary. The CNS achieved neither consensus nor reconciliation. In the plenary, a transitional constitution and a projected constitution for the Third Republic was adopted. This proposed new constitution envisaged a parliamentary system with limited presidential power. In the wings, however, deals were made between Mobutu, Monsengwo and CNS delegates (Loka-ne-Kongo, 1999). By the end of July 1992 they reached a 'Global Political Compromise', which was considerably different from the transitional constitution adopted by the plenary a few days later. The Compromise re-established the symbolic pre-eminence of the Head of State. 'The President of the Republic, the supreme state institution and symbol of national unity must be protected from anything that could tarnish his prestige or credibility during the transition period.'

The Compromise also established the principle of 'collaboration' between the three 'institutions of transition': the Head of State, the High Council of the Republic (the body that replaced the CNS in a modified version) and the government. Following a new compromise between Mobutu's supporters and the 'moderate opposition' led by Mgr Monsengwo, the High Council of the Republic was to do more than just take over from the CNS. It incorporated the Deputies of the National Assembly set up during
the Second Republic and became the High Council of the Republic and Parliament of Transition. A new political force emerged through this body and facilitated Kengo wa Dondo's election as Prime Minister in June 1994.

**Political Destructuring**

Tshisekedi's preoccupation with the premiership caused the opposition to lose sight of its real political objectives. Moreover, his confusing strategy disoriented supporters. 'Moses the saviour' was transformed into the 'Sphinx' without a clear political stance. His behaviour can best be explained as combat tactics between himself and Mobutu. He took advantage of opportunities to defy the president while undermining the political processes. His objective was not to overthrow Mobutu (although between 1990 and 1992 he could have rallied enough popular support to do so) but to wait patiently and let the political situation deteriorate to the point where he would emerge as the only viable leader (de Villers, 1998:29). Mobutu's position strengthened, however, due largely to the repercussions of the Rwanda genocide. In the end, Mobutu's cancer and rebellion were to become the real causes of political change.

Etienne Tshisekedi's enigmatic style, problems between the CNS and Mobutu, rivalries and betrayals within the opposition, the development of political 'entrepreneurship' with the accompanying proliferation of political parties are all manifestations of a classic phenomenon. When societies go through rapid social change, the gap between political behaviour and social aspirations widens. The process of political restructuring transformed discourses on democracy, legality and human rights into theatrical rhetoric. People were disenchanted by the reduction of politics to competition for power and by the failure to organise a political transition. In this context, mobilisation was increasingly carried out along ethnic or regional lines. The UDPS, the leading opposition party, for instance, increasingly drew its support from the Luba of Kasai. Regional and community forms of identity resulted in exclusion and extremism – notably against Kasaians in Shaba-Katanga and the Banyarwanda of Kivu (comprised of some Hutus, but primarily of Tutsis).

**The 'Regime' of Laurent Désiré Kabila: An Accident of History**

In August and September of 1996, the Banyamulenge (Tutsis from South Kivu) supported by Rwanda, started a rebellion. Shortly after, Rwanda, Uganda and subsequently Angola invaded the country. Kadogos (child soldiers) joined the movement as it spread from east to west. On 17 May 1997 Laurent Desire Kabila took Kinshasa. Kabila's foreign backers had already put him in command of the AFDL (Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo) in the early phases of the rebellion. Zaire was renamed Congo. The success of Laurent Kabila is more an accident of history, rather than the result of a socio-political process of change. It was a series of internal and external factors that led to the victory of Kabila and the AFDL. The internal factors included:

- The decomposition of the Mobutist system and particularly of the armed forces, a situation aggravated by the cancer that caused Mobutu's death on 7 September 1997;

- The blocked 'democratic transition' process and the resulting discrediting of political elites;
Political mobilisation along ethnic and regional lines that brought on, most significantly, the Banyamulenge revolt which was a 'Trojan Horse' for invasion by Rwanda and Uganda.

The external factors were:

- The opportunistic alliance between Rwanda, Uganda and Angola. The Mobutu regime had to varying degrees been involved in supporting civil wars in these three countries;

- The geopolitical ambitions of regional leaders. Kagame, Museveni, Dos Santos and Mugabe, who provided important material support to the 'rebel invaders', were all competing for a share in a dismembered Zaire.

Although Laurent Désiré Kabila was a dubious revolutionary leader and maquisard and rapidly became a political 'has been', the way that he came to power was decisive for the political history of the country. These internal and external factors determined the artificial and inconsistent nature of his regime. They made him dependent on his greedy and demanding 'allies' and hampered political engagement capable of promoting national interests.

**Who's in Charge?**

The Kabila regime lacked political and ideological coherence and substance. It was an imbroglio of poorly defined networks and factions with interests that were both overlapping and conflictual. Factions based on ethnicity and regional ties competed with factions based on shared 'political experiences' from the anti-Mobutu struggle. The ambiguous nature of Kabila's politics was made even more complex by his association with the individuals he selected to recruit and manipulate these networks and factions. Yerodia, Kakudji and Sakombi, for example, are known as idiosyncratic figures with multiple identities and complicated political backgrounds.

The only real form of logic that emerges from Kabila’s management of his political lieutenants is the will to suppress rivals. To do this, he used tactics that employed successfully by Mobutu. By multiplying initiatives and services and by reshuffling institutional appointments he was able to control power. He was also able to satisfy the political appetites of his collaborators by rotating high-ranking positions, something Mobutu had mastered. This ‘revolving door’ system meant that these collaborators went through periods of political exclusion characterised by painful and humiliating experiences such as imprisonment or legal difficulties. As Laurent Kabila distrusted anyone capable of creating political rivalry, he ‘sidelined’ the leaders associated with ‘democratic transition’, the ‘radical oppositions’ and civil society although he rehabilitated some of Mobutu’s ‘barons’.

Many of the political actors recruited by Kabila emanated from the Congolese diaspora. They were generally young and well educated or had professional experience abroad. Another category of Kabila recruits, also young, was comprised of local elites without political backgrounds, such as university professors or technocrats; others had rebel backgrounds. There was also a marked shift away from Lingala speakers from Kinshasa and Equateur (Mobutu’s region of origin) towards the Swahili speakers of Katanga. Many of the key positions in government, the armed forces, security services and public companies were given to people from Katanga – primarily the Lubakat group of Northern Katanga (Southern Katanga was not nearly
as well represented as the North). Kabila was Mulubakat on his father’s side and Lunda, from Southern Katanga, on his mother’s side.  

The August 1998 War & the ‘Emancipation’ of Laurent Désiré Kabila

On 27 July 1998, Kabila announced the dismissal of the Rwandan troops that had assisted the country during the liberation period. There was resistance on the part of the small Rwandan military contingent still present in the Congo and by Tutsis of the Congolese military. Rwanda – with Uganda’s support – intervened militarily in the Congo following this decision. This was a remake of the rebellion/invasion fifteen months earlier that brought Kabila to power in Kinshasa. The conditions this time, however, were very different.

First, the regional coalition formed in 1996-1997 against Mobutu’s Zaire came apart in 1998 while Angola and Zimbabwe shifted their support to the ‘legitimate’ authority in Kinshasa. This did not, however, mean that these actors changed their political objectives; their security, geopolitical and economic interests were the same in 1998 as in 1996-1997. The regional situation had nonetheless evolved: in 1996-1997, the regional powers hoped to take advantage of Mobutu’s fall; in 1998, war conducted (on both the eastern and western fronts) by Rwanda and Uganda meant that Angola and Zimbabwe feared exclusion from their share of the spoils.

Second, the internal rebel movement that joined the invasion by Rwanda and Uganda is now fragmented. The split can be explained by rivalry between rebel leaders and by the rapid disintegration of the alliance between the two invading countries. A third difference lies in the ‘war of liberation’ – ‘war of aggression’ dichotomy. In 1996-1997, the Congolese saw the war as both, which helps explain the massive enrolment of young soldiers in the ‘liberated’ regions, the support of local populations and the temporary support of well-entrenched social groups such as the Mayi-Mayi from Kivu and the ‘Tigers’ and ex-gendarmes from Katanga. In 1998, in contrast, the war was generally perceived as purely a war of aggression – particularly in the Kivus. However, despite this general perception, the ‘aggressors’ benefited from Tutsi and non-Tutsi support alike and were able to count on rebel movements led by Congolese political elites.

The outbreak of the war provided Kabila and some of his hard-line comrades from the liberation struggle with an opportunity to improve his popularity by playing upon anti-Tutsi racism. By eliminating his embarrassing military allies and by removing the numerous Congolese and Rwandan Tutsis that until then formed part of the presidential entourage, Kabila was able to improve his image, particularly in Kinshasa where he had been viewed with reserve. Western (and notably American) indulgence of the Congo’s aggressors was portrayed at the same time as an indication the West’s hostility to the Kabila regime. As his popularity within the Congo improved, Kabila worried less and less about his international image, an image that had never been ‘politically correct’ to start with. Playing the role of a former rebel leader turned head of state, Kabila appeared to enjoy greater political freedom to chart his own course.

A Radical Shift: the Comités de Pouvoir Populaire

The regime of Kabila père (like that of his successor) was very autocratic. Institutionally, this results from the 27 May 1997 decree6 that gives strong powers to the president. The system was set up to be ‘transitional’, destined to be replaced by
new institutions. Laurent Kabila’s attitude towards creating such new institutions can be divided into two phases. The first phase was characterised by democratic discourse: re-establishment of political pluralism, elections, a socially acceptable economic liberalism and good governance. This discourse was influenced by small elite groups from the diaspora that had rallied to the AFDL, such as the ‘Tshombistes’ from within the COKATOM (Katangese of the Diaspora). It was also influenced by the desire to establish good relations with the international donor community. This discourse rapidly evolved to take into account the twofold imperative of the war economy: defend the country and satisfy the needs of the population. This form of state-directed economic policy was brutal, destructive and unpredictable, reminiscent of the kind of patrimonialism exercised by Mobutu.

This evolution took on a new meaning when the regime set up the CPP (Comités de Pouvoir Populaire) and liquidated the AFDL in early 1999. In his inaugural declaration to the first (and last) CPP congress in April 1999, Kabila characterised the AFDL as a ‘conglomerate of adventurers and opportunists’. Theoretically created as a merger between four political rebel formations, the AFDL was in reality a group of four men who, with support from Rwanda and Uganda, each relied on informal networks of friends, allies, clients and armed factions. The ADFL was both the battlefield and the instrument for a power struggle between these four men, one that Kabila won. By August 1998, the other three had disappeared from the political landscape: Kisase Ngandu was assassinated in January 1997; Commander Masasu was executed in November 2000; and Déogratias Bugera joined the second ‘rebellion-invasion’.

The CPP phenomenon can be analysed at three different levels. Ideologically, it was a system of radical and direct democracy, probably inspired by the Jamahiriya, the People’s State of Colonel Kadhafi as described in his 1976 Green Book. It was a system of popular assemblies formed by all Congolese adults at grassroots levels (street, village and neighbourhood). These assemblies elected ‘committees of popular power’ which in turn formed higher-level assemblies. Provincial Popular Conferences brought together the members of district and city assemblies from the whole province. A People’s General Conference led by (an obscurely defined) National Directorate was supposed to be the pinnacle of this multi-layered pyramid of committees and assemblies. The members of this National Directorate were theoretically designated as ‘provisional’ members by presidential decree until permanent structures could be established.

Legally, the whole CPP system was confusing and ambiguous. In an address closing a CPP meeting on 14 November 1999, Kabila defined the CPP as ‘the expressive structures of state power assumed directly by the people at the grassroots level’. He also said they were the state’s executive structures and were ‘responsible for applying ... the government’s decisions and laws ...’. The logic that emerges from this system seems to be far more akin to the communist model of ‘democratic centralism’ than one of direct democracy.

Institutionally, the CPPs never functioned as they were supposed to. After hastily improvised elections that provided dubious results, committees were formed at the district level (commune) and in institutions of higher learning in Kinshasa and government-controlled parts of the country. These committees were formed only after the National Directorate arbitrated on power struggles between petty local notables. The Directorate was itself characterised by inter-factional rivalry. Like the structures of Mobutu’s single-party state, the CPPs were used as instruments to consolidate Kabila’s power-base and to mobilise and control the population. They
received money directly from the president to diversify and broaden his network of political clients.

In the early stages of his regime, Kabila maintained the fiction of preparing the country for real democratic transition. In contrast to the rhetoric, however, his practices proved that he never had the intention of giving up power or implementing transition. This became clear when he set up the CPPs because this creation was clearly in contradiction with the frequently repeated promise to restore political pluralism. They were not partisan structures and did not emerge through political contest (because political groups were not allowed to participate in the elections of the committees). They were, conversely, as declared by Kabila, designed to assume political leadership. In this institutional context, political parties were seriously undermined even though the President signed a decree restoring political pluralism on 29 January 1999. The conditions for registering a political party were so complicated, however, that it was nearly impossible to succeed without the help of the government.

**Does ‘Kabilisme’ Exist?**

Did Kabila and his comrades from the liberation struggle have an ideology that was deeper than mere discourse? Did they have a system of beliefs and convictions that could have influenced the form and function of state policy? Although many observers have put forward (and some continue to argue) that Laurent Kabila was attached to a worldview influenced by Marx, Mao and Lumumba, developed during his life as a rebel leader, the facts are hardly convincing. The influence of Chinese marxism was vaguely discernable in his incomprehensible discourse from the rebellion phase and in the AFDL’s Programme of Political Ideology adopted in February 1997 (de Villers, Willame et al. 1999:27 and passim). It was absent from Kabila’s political and economic practice.

Kabila’s record with respect to *Lumumbism* is more complex but hardly more convincing. He tried to portray himself as the successor of the country’s only democratically elected prime minister but, again, there is a wide gap between discourse and reality. The political and underground movement created by Kabila in 1967, after the defeat of the Lumumbist ‘rebellions’, was allegedly based on the need to correct the ideological and political ‘errors’ committed by these ‘rebellions’. Only then would it be possible to inaugurate a truly revolutionary process. When Kabila became head of state thirty years later, he made solemn reference to ‘Lumumba the national hero’ in a few speeches. While he recruited some Lumumbists for relatively important decision-making positions, he was careful not to give them too much power. The eldest son of Patrice Lumumba, François, for example, was kept at a distance because he wanted the regime to embrace a more conventional form of *Lumumbism* and consequently establish the legitimacy and political rights of its heirs.

*Lumumbism* can be defined as a Jacobin type of pan-African nationalism that advocates centralisation and unification. According to this definition Kabila is clearly not Lumumba’s ideological heir. The way he came to power checked whatever nationalist potential the new regime may have had. Even in his political discourse, Kabila never enthusiastically articulated the spirit of Congolese nationalism. While his dismissal of his Rwandan military advisors could be portrayed as a move towards nationalism, their replacement by Zimbabwean and Angolan ‘allies’ immediately counteracted it. During the two wars of the late 1990s, pan-Africanism was a parody in the Congo; the rhetoric of solidarity between African people and support of the
liberation struggles hardly masked the brutal and greedy motivations of intervening foreign forces. At the economic level, the regime made deals with foreign mining companies that clearly minimised national interests and demonstrated little preoccupation with state control of natural resource management. 

The invention and practices of the CPPs reveal to what extent Kabilism was little more than an ambiguous and confused attempt at elaborating a radical and centralised form of popular rule that resembled other examples of authoritarianism and despotism – including Mobutu’s Second Republic. Article 33 of the Zaire constitution stated: ‘The MPR is the political expression of the Zairian nation. Its doctrine is Mobutism. Every Zairian is a member of the MPR’. The notion of the ‘state of all people’ is thus apparent in both Kabilism and Mobutism. It is, nonetheless, difficult to find examples of populism and direct democracy under Mobutism, which was a highly personalised and stratified system. All legitimacy and authority emanated from ‘the father of the nation’, ‘the great helmsman’. It is likely that this model appealed to Kabila, but the conditions of his rise to power, his background and personality, the situation within the country and public opinion all prohibited him from replicating it. Despite Boissonnade’s view (1998) that Kabila was Mobutu’s ‘clone’, the only real similarities between Kabilism and Mobutism were their dictatorial political practice.

Populism is characterised by anti-elitist policies that delegitimise and exclude certain elites when a regime changes. It is also characterised by the establishment of direct relations between leaders and masses through new forms of political mobilisation (Chazan et al. 1999). Only the first of these characteristics was discernable during Kabila’s reign. The CPPs had little resemblance with, for example, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution of the populist regimes in Ghana and Burkina Faso; nor were they instruments able to mobilise the people against the political establishment (or against a ‘backward’ peasantry as in the Burkina Faso of Sankara). Kabila’s form of populism was particularly rhetorical, deceiving and inconsistent. Overwhelmed by the ills of Mobutu’s legacy, and unable either to completely renounce the utility of appearing ‘politically correct’ to the international donor community or take into account people’s expectations developed in the ‘democratic transition’ phase, the state system set up by Kabila was chaotic, incoherent and ambiguous.

The Current Impasse

On 26 January 2001, ten days after his father’s assassination, Joseph Kabila was appointed head of state by his father’s political entourage and foreign allies. The decision was condoned in Washington, Brussels and Paris. All the new president’s ‘godfathers’ had their own agendas and projects but were unified in the desire to avoid a political vacuum in Kinshasa. Given his apparent lack of political experience, they believed that the young man would be easy to influence and manipulate (Braeckman, 2001). Surprisingly, however, Joseph Kabila was able to distance himself from his father’s political attitudes and practices. To the great satisfaction of his Western benefactors, he put an end to the ‘war economy’, adopted a much more liberal law on political parties and moved forward with the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), a step towards implementing the Lusaka Peace Agreement.

There are nonetheless elements of continuity between the regimes of Kabila père and fils. Clearly Joseph, like his father, does not intend to be merely an interim president. His attitude in the painstaking process of moving forward with the ICD is one indicator of his plan to hold on to power. Although the Lusaka Agreement establishes
the equality of ICD participants (notably the Kinshasa government, rebel movements and the unarmed opposition), Joseph Kabila insists on participating as the legitimate head of state until elections are held to end the current version of democratic transition (International Crisis Group, 2001). Like Mobutu at the beginning of his version of transition, Joseph Kabila wanted elections to be held quickly, hoping to win them thanks to his position as president and his popularity. His image seems to be particularly strong in the occupied territories in the east and amongst women and the young.

People constitute another link with his father's regime. Although Joseph dismissed many members of his father's government in April 2001, some of these men (such as V. Mpoyo, G. Kakudji, A. Yerodia and D. Sakombi) are still part of the CPP National Directorate. This political body met on 19 September 2001 to prepare a special CPP congress. According to the meeting’s minutes, the head of state reaffirmed the National Directorate’s conception and orientation of government policies and rejected the notion of political liberalisation. The President of the Republic comforted the comrades, recognising the need not to cede ground to adversaries ... Even if our adversaries have grassroots support, we have the upper hand and can take the offensive when the time is right.

There is little evidence that Congolese transition has entered a ‘transitive’ phase. The unarmed opposition and civil society seem completely unable to induce change. The process of political destructuring characteristic of the early phases of ‘democratic transition’ has accelerated. Two of the three important forces on the political landscape in 1991 and 1992 are hardly recognisable today: Mobutu’s barons, vassals, allies and clients are politically and militarily dispersed; and the Sacred Union was dissolved in April 1997. The Catholic church lost whatever momentum it had in the early and mid 1990s and other ‘civil society’ forces are fighting amongst themselves for representation at the ICD negotiating table.

New ‘political actors’ continue to emerge, notably in the form of warlords, but no leader or political formation has proven capable of replacing the actors that had stimulated so much hope in the early years of the transition. Political representation, organisation and mobilisation has entered a new phase of bankruptcy. Peace and political and institutional reconstruction depends on settlement between national and foreign belligerents but none of these protagonists appear ready to give up the power they hold, to give up the protection it provides or sacrifice the resources they exploit. No one can predict how the future of the Congo will be written or who will write it.9

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Endnotes

1. For a pertinent discussion of democracy and representation see Touraine, 1994.
2. The Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR) was the single party system set up by Mobutu.
5. For a detailed description of these people, see de Villers, Willame et al., 1999 and de Villers, Omasombo and Kennes, 2001.
6. In 2000, for example, there were thirteen services responsible for internal and external security.
7. See de Villers, Omasombo and Kennes, 2001 for further details.
8. This decree has been amended many times.
9. This article analyses events up until January 2002.

References

Complex Political Emergencies, the International Community & the Congo Conflict

Stefaan Smis & Wamu Oyatambwe

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is presently confronted with the most severe crisis since its independence. It has been transformed into a battlefield where several African states and national armed movements are simultaneously fighting various wars. Confronted with this acute political emergency, the international community, which has a responsibility in promoting peace and security has given an ambiguous message. In the absence of a clear response, the Southern Africa Development Community played a leading role in the mediation process that ultimately led to the Lusaka Agreement of 10 July 1999. The agreement was, however, signed in a totally different context from the present one. Moreover, the primary objective of the Lusaka Agreement, to topple Laurent Désiré Kabila, has lost its relevance since his assassination and replacement by a (more Western friendly) government led by Joseph Kabila. With the Lusaka Agreement signed by most of the belligerents, the international community had a framework through which to channel its growing involvement. However, confronted by the signatories to the Lusaka Agreement who were not ready for peace and therefore continuously violated established rules of international law and found pretexts to not observe the agreement, the international community remained divided and unwilling to become more involved – particularly in light of the Somalia and Rwanda debacles. In the absence of this commitment, however, the whole idea of African renaissance could be put in jeopardy.

La République Démocratique du Congo est actuellement traversée par une grave crise politique et sociale, marquée par une guerre régionale qui a divisé le pays en plusieurs morceaux et menace même l’unité et l’intégrité territoriale de ce vaste pays. Plusieurs facteurs explicatifs sont à la base de cette grave crise. Au premier plan, il y a l’effondrement du régime du Maréchal Mobutu et l’effondrement même de l’État zairois; ces facteurs ont conduit au déclenchement d’une guerre qui a mis fin au régime du Maréchal Mobutu en mai 1997 et placé au pouvoir Laurent Désiré Kabila un ancien maquisard qui a pour ce faire bénéficié du soutien de plusieurs pays africains: Rwanda, Ouganda, Angola, etc. Un an plus tard (en août 1998), la coalition qui porta L.D. Kabila au pouvoir explose, et le pays plonge dans une seconde guerre; celle-ci est déclenchée par le Rwanda et l’Ouganda, (et dans une moindre mesure le Burundi), qui décident de renverser L.D. Kabila en soutenant respectivement des nouveaux...
mouvements de rébellion (en particulier le RCD et le MLC). Mais L.D. Kabila réussit à trouver du soutien auprès d’autres alliés (Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibie et Tchad) qui l’aident à repousser l’assaut de ses ennemis et à préserver un tiers du territoire national sous le contrôle du pouvoir central, tandis que le reste du pays se trouve écartelé entre de plusieurs factions armées.

L’article suivant n’a pas pour but d’expliquer le déclenchement ni l’enlisement de la guerre actuelle; il vise plutôt à analyser les attitudes de la Communauté internationale face à cette guerre. La Communauté internationale est ici considérée à plusieurs niveaux: d’abord un niveau africain ou régional, avec une analyse des efforts déployés par l’Organisation de l’Unité Africaine (OUA) et ceux de la Communauté des États de l’Afrique Australe (SADC); ensuite un niveau mondial avec un accent particulier sur le rôle joué par les Nations Unies, en particulier le Conseil de sécurité pour essayer de trouver une issue à la crise congolaise; enfin les auteurs analysent l’implication d’autres acteurs internationaux non moins importants, comme l’Union Européenne et les pays dits de la Troïka (France, Belgique, États-Unis), qui ont généralement un rôle important dans le traitement du dossier congolais.

Cette approche verticale des acteurs internationaux se double d’une lecture horizontale, et débouche donc dans une approche croisée dans laquelle les considérations politiques sont mêlées à des considérations d’ordre économique, étant entendu que le conflit congolais en lui-même a pris des dimensions à la fois politique et économiques. Car si au départ la guerre avait eu pour prétextes la lutte contre les mouvements rebelles qui menaçaient la stabilité des pays voisins (Rwanda, Ouganda et Burundi, Angola) ou la volonté de défaire le régime Kabila, la persistance du conflit et les soubresauts de la guerre ont fait apparaître d’autres préoccupations chez les différents belligérants; en particulier, et donc des facteurs économiques viennent se superposer aux prétextes politiques pour expliquer le conflit. De la même manière, les réactions des acteurs internationaux, aussi bien vis-à-vis du Congo que vis-à-vis des autres pays belligérants, ont évolué, bien que très lentement, au fur et à mesure que des facteurs moins politiques entraient en ligne de compte dans l’explication de la guerre. Ainsi, si au départ la Communauté internationale ne prenait pas au sérieux les thèses défendues par le gouvernement de Kinshasa et accusant ses voisins d’agression contre la RDC, des violents affrontements entre armées rwandaise et ougandaise dans la ville de Kisangani, ainsi que le comportement de certains alliés de Kinshasa comme le Zimbabwe, ont fini par mettre en lumière d’autres raisons expliquant la présence de ces troupes sur le sol congolais, à savoir le pillage des ressources naturelles congolaises. Depuis lors le discours de la Communauté internationale, aussi bien au niveau de l’ONU que d’autres organismes ou d’autres puissances étrangères, a sensiblement évolué pour déboucher sur la ferme condamnation de l’occupation et de l’exploitation du territoire congolais par des armées étrangères. L’avènement de Joseph Kabila, qui succède à son père L.D.

Kabila assassiné en janvier 2001, va accélérer à la fois la reconnaissance de l’occupation illégale et des pillages des richesses du Congo, et faciliter l’application d’un accord de paix signé en 1999 par les belligérants en vue de mettre un terme à la guerre en RDC. Ce changement de régime à Kinshasa, accompagné par un traitement différent de la guerre du Congo par la Communauté internationale, ainsi que les ébauches d’application de l’Accord dit de Lusaka, constituent actuellement les vrais espoirs d’un retour à la paix dans ce pays. Toutefois, il reste à déplorer que seules des considérations politiques ou économiques ont prévalu dans les attitudes des acteurs (internationaux ou nationaux) face à ce conflit, alors qu’il y a là un cas flagrant de violations du droit international face auquel aurait dû prévaloir une fermeté unanime au nom du respect des principes de loi.
Introduction

It is unquestionable that the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is presently confronted with the most severe crisis since its independence. After a first war of ‘liberation’, in which a coalition of regional players supported by Western allies, put an end to the ailing dictatorship of Mobutu in May 1997, a second war erupted a year later, turning former allies into new enemies and fragmenting the original war into a myriad of regional and local armed conflicts. The DRC has become a huge battlefield where everyone exploits the weakness and seeming absence of the state to fight various feuds. Confronted with this complex political emergency, the international community, which has a responsibility for maintaining peace and security, adopted an ambiguous attitude. Its inaction jeopardises long established legal and humanitarian principles of international relations while challenging the relevance of conflict resolution mechanisms.

This article analyses the response of the international community to the crisis in Central Africa. The authors invoke legal and political considerations and the reaction of the international community. These principles must serve as the basis for a just peace. A globalised world, still traumatised by the September 11 events, can hardly neglect such an approach. In addressing the question of the involvement of the international community, two levels have been distinguished. First, the inter-African level with the parties directly involved, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) which in reality played the primary role in proposing solutions to end the regional crisis. Second, the international level of the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU) and the principal Western partners of the DRC, particularly the so-called ‘troika’ of Belgium, France and the US.

The DRC in Crisis: State Collapse & Acute Complex Political Emergency

Independence was perceived as a new start for Congo towards state consolidation, development of a status of regional power, economic prosperity and the achievement of national unity based on a project of nation-building. Alas, more than 30 years of dictatorship characterised by institutionalised corruption and mismanagement, foreign involvement linked to cold war strategies and more recently a long war of attrition in which the progressive political opposition opted for non-violent tactics rather than armed revolution, resulted in state withdrawal from the public domain. The state no longer performed functions usually exercised by a state. It collapsed as law and order disintegrated. A great number of public services ceased to exist or had to be maintained by the population. Control over its territory slipped away from a government that became only a shadow of itself. In such a situation, termed by some scholars collapsed, failed, shadow or monopoly state (Mathews and Solomon, 2001:25-6), the DRC retained its status only on the basis of formal principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in its external affairs and by virtue of international recognition.

Closely related to state failure, but not necessarily a cause or consequence is the notion of the complex political emergency (Cliffe and Luckham, 1999). This term is used to describe a situation of grave tension, open war or chaos where efforts aimed at building peace must often be carried out in a context in which government has de
facto been replaced by multiple and competing sources of authority. In such situations, every armed clash is driven by its own logic. Peace efforts are complicated by massive displacements of population, collapsed economies, societies losing their cohesion and boundaries becoming porous.

The DRC and the whole Great Lakes Region has become a complex political emergency. The crisis in the broader Great Lakes region has rightly been described by Breytenbach et al. as 'perhaps one of the most complex and perplexing events the post-cold war world has seen' (Breytenbach et al., 1999:33). There are, indeed, foreign, international and internal wars being fought simultaneously on the territory of the DRC. All the participants seem to have their own agendas, sometimes conflicting with alliances and agreements made elsewhere (Reyntjens, 1999:231-3). Moreover, the so-called rebels are anything but a coherent group. Some Congolese rebel movements have taken up arms against the government but are also fighting each other depending on the strategies of the foreign power who control them. Others, such as the Mayi-Mayi, are supported by the Congolese government and act against foreign occupation. There are, however, Mayi-Mayi groups that work in close collaboration with the RCD-Goma and thus support Rwanda.

Similarly, while most Congolese Banyamulenge support the RCD-Goma, from the start of the second war others have rejected Rwandan control of this movement and are opposing the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and RCD troops. Still others are non-Congolese fighting foreign wars against their own government in the DRC. In such situations, different wars are fought simultaneously and depend on short-term interests. Alliances are made and broken. Populations suffer all kinds of severe human rights violations (UN Special Rapporteur, 1999, 2000, 2001; Amnesty International, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 1999, 2000). Illegal arms traffic is booming and pillage continues. In addition, unarmed opposition and civil society groups are also very divided too. This all takes place in a situation where the official economy is almost at a standstill and social services are quasi non-existent.

Restoring peace and stability in complex political emergencies demands a different approach from classical conflict resolution strategies. Answers have to be found for the numerous root causes of the conflict but also require economic recovery, the restoration of a minimal social contract, disarmament and the demobilisation, training and reintegration of former combatants, and the rebuilding of government institutions (Neethling, 2000:34; Geldenhuys, 2000). This approach is clearly more complex than the classical negotiation of a ceasefire, possibly combined with the deployment of peacekeeping forces prior to a settlement between belligerents. Rupesinghe proposes a multi-sectoral approach to complex political emergencies in which all need to be involved. He emphasises: (1) a pre-negotiation stage (2) understanding the root causes of the conflict (3) ownership of the peace process (4) identifying the actors (5) identifying facilitators (6) setting a realistic timetable (7) sustaining the effort (8) evaluating success and failure (9) identifying strategic constituencies and (10) deciding on the role of outside peacemakers and (11) local peacemakers (Solomon and Mngqibisa, 2000). Considering the situation prevalent in the Great Lakes Region, the question this article addresses is how the international community is responding to the challenge of rethinking its approach.
International Response to the Complex Political Emergency

The African Regional Level

The conflict in the DRC is primarily due to the disintegration of an alliance between several African states that had joined efforts in 1996-1997 to overthrow Mobutu. In the first place there is Rwanda and Uganda, the initiators and principal supporters of the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo/Zaire (ADFL), the movement that ousted Mobutu. They were later joined in the anti-Mobutu coalition by Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Eritrea and Burundi whilst Zambia, Tanzania, and Ethiopia supported the ADFL more discretely. Consequently, when on 2 August 1998 armies of Rwanda and Uganda turned against the regime of President Laurent Désiré Kabila, it was almost a continental coalition that disintegrated.

To understand why this happened, one has to go back to the origins of the first war (1996-1997); the second war essentially being a continuation of the first. The common intervention by Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda in Zaire can be explained by two main factors. First, there was the threat posed by the Rwandan refugee camps in the Kivu provinces and the security concerns resulting from the numerous armed groups that opposed the regimes of neighbouring countries from the territory of Zaire (Interahamwe, ex-Forces Armees Rwandaises (FAR) against the government of Rwanda; rebels of the Front pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) against the government of Burundi; and the National Resistance Army against the Ugandan government). Second, there was the weakness of the Zairian state, incapable of implementing even basic security tasks internally or internationally. If one adds to this the interminable democratic transition initiated in 1990 which fed the ranks of movements opposed to Kinshasa, and the fin de règne atmosphere felt over the whole country as Mobutu’s health deteriorated, one understands that the moment was perceived as appropriate to start a war.

However, security concerns invoked in the first war are insufficient to explain the invasion of Congo by Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian troops and the rebellion of Congolese army units opposed to Kinshasa. On the one hand, the uprising started after failed attempts to mount a coup orchestrated by military officers (such as James Kabarebe of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), then acting chief of staff of the Forces Armees Congolaises (FAC)) and political actors close to these countries (particularly Congolese of Tutsi origin commonly known as Banyamulenge). The Congolese decision to terminate military cooperation with these countries, obliging their troops to return to their country was a catalyst for this (Braeckman, 1999:346-349). On the other hand, since the rise of the ADFL it was essentially troops from these three neighbouring countries that had been assigned the eastern border regions of the DRC. They proved unable to secure their borders because other interests diverted their attention, particularly economic interests and the exercise of political power in regions controlled by them (Sénat de Belgique, 2001-2002).

Zaire’s instability made it a danger for Angola which had always protested against the support given by Mobutu (and his backers in the West) to UNITA. UNITA had important military bases in Zaire and was openly supplied through air strips in the country. In addition, numerous ex-gendarmes katangais, descendants of the Kantangese secessionists of the 1960s, had fought with the MPLA and had bases in Angola (Kennes, 1998) awaiting that moment to attack the government in Kinshasa. By supporting the AFDL, the regime in Luanda tried both annihilate UNITA military bases and supply routes and allow its allies to return to their country.
With new conflict erupting in 1998, Angola was put in a difficult position. Not having been party to the Lemera agreement creating the ADFL, Angola was not directly concerned with the collapse of that movement. However, UNITA's capacity to destabilise the country was potentially increased by a general destabilisation of the DRC. Kabila also exploited rumours that UNITA officials had been spotted in Kigali and Kampala and that military equipment destined for UNITA transited through Entebbe Airport. This explains the decisive intervention of the Angolan army in support of Kabila from the moment destabilisation threatened Angola and particularly when rebels took the military bases of Kitona and then moved to the port of Matadi and the Inga dam.

Yet the strategic importance of the DRC went beyond simple security concerns. The evolution of the war, the military strategies and the various interventions clearly brought to light the existence of other interests that explain the conflict. For instance, among the countries that chose to defend the Kabila regime, Chad, Namibia and Zimbabwe have no common frontiers with the DRC. Ideological reasons and economic interest were often invoked to justify these unexpected alliances.

**The Organisation for African Unity (OAU)**

With its commitment to promote unity and solidarity between African states, to foster international cooperation between them, to defend their sovereignty, and independence and to preserve their territorial integrity and international borders inherited from colonialism (Smis, 2000:191-213), the OAU could not remain outside the Congolese crisis. This was especially so as the United Nations hesitated to intervene in African conflicts after the Rwanda and Somalia debacles. To fulfil its task, a specific ‘Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution’ has been set up based on collective and regional approaches to internal and interstate threats to security through its organisational arm, called the Central Organ. This leads and coordinates conflict prevention and settlement efforts. But the OAU is handicapped by inadequate funding and a lack of resources, limiting any involvement in conflict resolution to mediation, coordination and supervision.

The OAU has therefore delegated to SADC the leading role while limiting itself to assisting the peace process by coordinating personal, regional and international initiatives (Parqué, 2000:352-355). At the beginning of the conflict, the OAU Secretary General invited states in the region to participate in a peaceful solution of the crisis based on the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the DRC. At the same time he emphasised the need for the OAU to coordinate all efforts (OAU, 6 August 1998). The OAU stuck to this approach during the whole process leading to the Lusaka Agreement which entrusted the OAU with a number of additional tasks in the Joint Military Commission (JMC), a body created to implement the military component of the agreement and facilitate the installation of the JMC as well as assisting the DRC to organise the Inter-Congolese dialogue. Although the OAU played a role in supervising the dispute settlement, coordinating the various regional and international organisations involved in the process, the leading role on the continent was played by SADC.

**The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)**

Tensions, ideological shifts and rivalries between key SADC players explain some of the ambiguities of the organisation’s involvement in the DRC crisis (Kornegay and Landsberg, 1999:2). Confronted with the rapidly deteriorating military situation at the
beginning of the second war (which started with the rebellion of Congolese brigades in the eastern Congolese towns of Goma and Bukavu and the simultaneous attack by the RPA and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF)), Kabila appealed to SADC to support his country. He stressed that acts of aggression had been committed against his country because Rwanda and Uganda had launched a military attack, organised the rebellion and actively supported the military campaign. The rebellion soon threatened Kinshasa when the rebel forces airlifted troops into the western military training camp of Kitona from where they advanced on the capital (see de Villers and Omasombo this issue).

On 7 and 8 August, President Mugabe, as head of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, convened a regional summit at Victoria Falls attended by the presidents of the DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe to discuss the issue and propose solutions to the crisis. The summit failed because it did not bring the parties any closer. Thus, on 17 and 18 August the defence ministers of Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe met in Harare and agreed that the Congolese government required the full support of SADC. Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia sent troops to the DRC.

South Africa, however, which at the time held the presidency of SADC, defended a different approach, advocating dialogue and negotiation. The rivalry between two of its most influential heads of state created division in SADC; Mugabe led the interventionist camp while Mandela pushed for a negotiated solution. On 23 August 1998, Mandela convened a SADC emergency meeting in Pretoria where the SADC leaders confirmed the legitimacy of the government of the DRC and called upon the warring parties to agree an immediate ceasefire pending the establishment of a political dialogue. As chairman of SADC, Mandela received a mandate to work on the ceasefire in consultation with the OAU Secretary-General.

Meanwhile, in the DRC, Angolan, Namibian and Zimbabwean armed forces succeeded in defeating the rebels in Kinshasa. Subsequently the rebels changed strategy away from Kinshasa and progressively took control of one-third of the territory of the DRC. Probably to limit division within SADC, Mandela declared on 3 September that SADC had unanimously supported the military intervention by its member states. This was later confirmed at the 18th SADC Summit held in Mauritius in September (Malan and Cornwell, 2000: 95-96). In the official communiqué, SADC 'reaffirmed its call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and commended the Governments of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe for timeously providing troops to assist the government and people of the DRC defeat the illegal attempt by rebels and their allies to capture the capital city' (SADC, Final Communiqué, 19 September 1998). The meeting also agreed to appoint President Chiluba of Zambia to mediate between the belligerents assisted by the presidents of Tanzania and Mozambique. Mandela was temporarily outmanoeuvred by his rivals in the region, in part because he was seen as being too close to Rwanda and Uganda. In the months that followed, Chiluba's diplomatic efforts made little headway. The rebel movements, heavily supported by Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, controlled eastern and northern Congo and pushed on Mbuji Mayi, the capital city of the diamond rich Kasai province and Kabila's main source of income. On all fronts, SADC troops proved to be indispensable for the defence of government positions (de Villers, Omasombo & Kennes, 2000). To legally seal their military cooperation, the SADC parties involved in Congo signed a collective Defence Protocol on 8 April 1999 from which Article 4 states:
Any armed attack against one of them shall be considered an attack against the other and that in the event of such an attack, each of them will assist the Party so attacked by taking such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force.

Other African countries also pledged their support for the Kabila regime. Chad, supported financially by Libya, sent troops, as did Sudan. Others accepted the free passage of forces and military material through their territory.

War and the search for allies inside and outside Africa were balanced by unprecedented diplomatic efforts on the continent to contain the crisis. While Chiluba was mandated by SADC to mediate, many others became involved diplomatically. Rather than contributing to solving the crisis, on many occasions they complicated the process. However, it was one such personal initiative that first made a breakthrough when Colonel Gadhafi brokered a cease-fire agreement between the DRC and Uganda signed in Sirte on 18 April 1999. The Sirte agreement provided for a ceasefire accompanied by the deployment of peacekeepers, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the initiation of a national dialogue. Although the agreement did not change the situation on the ground (only Chad withdrew its troops while Rwanda refused to implement it invoking that it was not a party to it), it paved the way for a diplomatic offensive that would culminate in the Lusaka ceasefire agreement. The inauguration of Thabo Mbeki as president of South Africa was used as an opportunity to convene a meeting on 17 June 1999 between SADC leaders and the presidents of Rwanda, Uganda, Libya and Kenya to discuss the Congo crisis. The outcome was a DRC summit in Lusaka to sign a ceasefire agreement on 25 June. After interminable discussions at ministerial level, the ceasefire agreement was finally signed by the Heads of State of the DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as the Minister of Defence of Angola in Lusaka on 10 July. The Lusaka Agreements, inter alia, provide for the immediate cessation of hostilities; the establishment of a Joint Military Commission (JMC), comprising the belligerent parties under a neutral chairperson appointed by the OAU, to investigate ceasefire violations, establish mechanisms to disarm militias and monitor the withdrawal of foreign troops; the deployment of an ‘appropriate’ peacekeeping UN mission to disarm belligerents and provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations; the withdrawal of all foreign troops within a period of 9 months; and the initiating of an ‘inter-Congolese dialogue’ intended to lead to ‘a new political dispensation in the DRC’ (Oyatambwe, 1999:221).

The almost hopeless political situation of the Kinshasa government, whose military position seemed to be compromised by the imminent fall of Mbuji Mayi, obliged Kabila to make important concessions. Thus, the agreement could be interpreted as an attempt to attain through diplomatic means what arms would otherwise impose at greater cost if war dragged on. This extremely weak position of the Congolese government, combined with considerable pressure on the Kabila regime, explain why a number of clauses in the agreement affected Congo’s sovereignty and legitimised the occupation of its territory by the Rwandan and Ugandan armies. These clauses are politically questionable and in contradiction with long established norms of international law.

Although the agreement was originally signed by the DRC and the states involved in the conflict (except Burundi), the Lusaka Agreement is silent on the question of aggression and whether Congo’s territorial integrity has been violated. All states involved in the conflict – those invited by the Kinshasa government and those not – are placed on the same footing. Lusaka runs counter to established rules that allow
legitimate governments – and the Kinshasa government had been recognised as legitimate even by the belligerent states – to seek and receive (military) assistance while rebel movements are legally excluded from such assistance (Boswald-Beck, 1985). Almost as if no legitimate government existed, the status given to the ‘good’ rebels who took arms against the Kinshasa government makes of that government an almost equal party in the conflict but also at the negotiating table and in the future political order of the state. At the same time, other armed groups opposed to the good rebels as well as to Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda are seen as ‘bad’ rebels or negative forces and are associated with the Interahamwe militia, to be consequently disarmed. Moreover, the Lusaka Agreement underscored the existence of an internal and an external dimension in the conflict but neither fully addressed the issue nor clearly separated the two dimensions when it came to propose mechanisms and solutions. The agreement did not sufficiently take into account the Kivu dimension of the conflict and consequently the explosive situation in these provinces will remain a threat to stability in the broader region unless properly addressed (Willame, 1997:37-99). In addition, the calendar (annex B of the agreement) distinguishes different steps in the peace process, interlinked to each other as if there was a clear relationship of cause and effect between the internal and external dimension of the conflict. This leads to the war being somehow legitimised as an attempt to push the Congolese to a dialogue that must lead to a new political dispensation; a dialogue in which the foreign countries dictate the agenda and when Congolese agree on a new political dispensation the same foreign countries will act as guarantors of this new order.

Despite its weaknesses, the Lusaka Agreement was signed by most parties involved in the conflict. Mediators and observers tacitly agreed that it constitutes the only basis for peace in the DRC and therefore continuously reminded all those who signed but continuously found pretexts not to implement the agreement, that they should stick to its framework. The rebel movements, which themselves increasingly showed signs of division, were successfully put under pressure by South Africa and other states to commit themselves by signing the document, President Laurent Désiré Kabila feared Lusaka for the consequences on his power and became more and more isolated. When Joseph Kabila succeeded his father international recognition and resumption of development aid was conditional on the implementation of the agreement and the holding of the inter-Congolese dialogue. Similar pressure was exercised against the patrons of the rebel movements and the allies of the Kinshasa government. Finally, the population of the DRC voiced its opposition to the continuation of hostilities and repeatedly demanded the start of the inter-Congolese dialogue.

Meanwhile, repeated ceasefire violations and lack of cooperation with the facilitator, Masire, delayed the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement (Malan, 2000:13-16). Confronted with a situation where there was neither real peace nor real war, the UN hesitated to mount a full fledged peacekeeping operation. Different initiatives to implement the ceasefire were unsuccessful even though the UN Security Council exerted considerable pressure on the parties involved in the Lusaka process. Finally at a meeting of the Political Committee in Kampala, the parties adopted a plan on 8 April 2000 for the disengagement and redeployment of forces in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement. At the same time, they agreed to a complete cessation of hostilities from 14 April 2000 (IRIN-CEA Update 900). The plan received the full support of the OAU in Algiers on 30 April at a summit of heads of state to decide on ways to implement the ceasefire agreement and hold further consultations on the basis of this new development. The communiqué issued at the summit reaffirmed the importance and validity of the Lusaka Agreement and called the parties to honour their commitments and respect the ceasefire agreement. The heads of state also expressed
their support for the Kampala disengagement plan and urged the Security Council to implement phase II of the deployment of UN forces to consolidate progress made so far (OAU Report of Activities, 2000). However, increasing tension between Rwanda and Uganda resulted in military confrontations erupting in Kisangani in May-June. Hundreds of civilians were killed and important damage was inflicted to the city during the fighting (IRIN-CEA Update 965, 12 July). The OAU Secretary General Salim A. Salim issued a communiqué stating that nothing could justify these two states fighting between themselves on the territory of the DRC. This was in total violation of the Lusaka Agreement and undermined peace efforts in the DRC (OAU Report of Activities, 2000:11-12). Different initiatives were undertaken at the African level to diffuse tension. President Chiluba held discussions with the leaders of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to find ways to settle the crisis (IRIN Update 943, 12 June). South Africa sent a fact-finding mission to Kisangani to establish causes and responsibilities for the fighting. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1304 on 16 June 2000 condemning Rwanda and Uganda. By the end of the year, parties were again ready to agree on a disengagement plan; the so-called Harare sub-plan.

The second component of the Lusaka Agreement – the organisation of the inter-Congolese dialogue – also encountered difficulties. On 14 November 1999, the former president of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, was appointed facilitator of the inter-Congolese dialogue by the OAU after extensive consultations with all the parties concerned. He then started a process of consultation in the region but, from the beginning, was confronted with a Congolese government that was unwilling to cooperate. A preparatory meeting which was due to take place in Cotonou in June 2000 to decide on the venue of the dialogue, the participants and the possible outcome of the negotiations, had to be postponed because the Congolese government refused to participate. The government argued that it had lost its confidence in Masire and demanded a new facilitator. Somewhat irritated, the OAU refused to give in to the demand, urging all the protagonists to exercise restraint and to show a sense of responsibility – especially at a moment when reports revealed that almost 1.7 million people had already died in the DRC as a result of the war or from circumstances not unrelated to the war (OAU Report of Activities, 2000:13-15).

Only after the assassination of President Laurent Désiré Kabila (16 January 2001) and his succession by his son Joseph Kabila, who seems to be more diplomatic than his father, did the Lusaka process resume. No major and direct confrontations have since taken place between the FAC and other armies involved in the DRC, although fighting continues in the Eastern provinces controlled by the RCD and Rwanda in the form of a war of proxies (Mayi-Mayi, FDD rebels, Banyamulenge, former FAR and Interahamwe militia fighting RCD troops and the RPA). Contacts were restored with the major international and region organisations while the facilitator also resumed its consultations. A successful pre-Congolese dialogue was held in Gaborone at the end of August 2001; a Republican Pact was agreed upon and it was decided to finally hold the inter-Congolese dialogue. Expectations were high for the dialogue planned for October 2001 in Addis Ababa but once again the protagonists proved unwilling to accept the terms of the Lusaka Agreement and resorted to pretexts to avoid the dialogue. Convinced that the prolongation of the diplomatic vaudeville would tarnish Africa's renaissance and recovery plans, South Africa then offered its services and proposed to host the dialogue in Sun City early in 2002. As expected, the inter-Congolese dialogue started in a minor key in February 2002 bedevilled by the ghost of Lusaka. Consequently, the focus is more on power-sharing and the position and person of the future head of state than on a discussion of a new political order in the DRC.
The International Level: The European Union & the Troika (Belgium, France, US)

Since bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with Zaire were terminated after 1991, Western countries traditionally allied to Zaire have maintained an ambiguous attitude vis-à-vis political developments in the Congo. They have made the resumption of development aid conditional on progress on democratisation although they have rarely adopted a clear and coherent language when treating the Congo question despite flagrant violations of international law by foreign countries. Individual states’ interests and agendas have determined political decisions throughout.

During the first war of ‘liberation’ countries from the European Union and those of the ‘troika’ (with the notable exception of France), distanced themselves from Mobutu and have more or less supported or agreed to its destruction. Yet the ascent of Laurent Désiré Kabila did not simplify matters because of the very nature of his regime and the unnecessarily conflictual relationship it established with international agencies. Instances of this friction included disputes with the UN and UNHCR concerning the Rwandan Hutu refugees massacred during AFDL’s progression; disagreement with the Bretton Woods institutions over economic reforms, particularly the decision of the government regarding exchange rates and the circulation of foreign currencies (Weiss, 2000:10-11); and conflicts with various humanitarian organisations about the violation of basic human rights and freedoms. At times, its ‘maoist’ or cold war rhetoric sent negative signals from the new government in Kinshasa to its potential partners. The result was that the international community refused economic assistance and also that the initiation of the war of 1998 was ‘approved’ to the extent that it might replace Kabila with a more ‘Western friendly’ regime. Nor did the alignment of Zimbabwe behind Kabila at a moment when Mugabe was in conflict with the British improve relations with the European Union, UN or the US.

Within the EU, the Netherlands, Germany and especially Britain favoured the regimes in Kigali and Kampala while the countries of the troika took a more divided position. At the beginning of the war, France seemed to favour the overthrow of Kabila. For instance, in August 1998, Charles Josselin, the French minister of development cooperation, observed that Kabila was not necessarily made for the function of president of the Republic (Le Monde, 14 August 1998) and as such justified efforts by the coalition to depose him.

The position of the French administration was still influenced by former ‘mobutists’ who had found refuge in France. A number had maintained good relationships with the Quai d’Orsay and other circles close to the Elysée. During the rise of the ADFL, France continued to support Mobutu and the restoration of ‘mobutists’ seemed to be an objective. Having understood this, the regime of Kabila progressively recruited former members of the Mobutu regime and persons considered as close to French interests; a number were granted important positions in the new administration (thus General Likulia became a minister). The normalisation of relations between Kinshasa and Paris progressively transformed France into the principal supporter of Congo, a change more accentuated with the succession of Joseph Kabila at the beginning of 2001. The position of Belgium was less consistent. At the beginning of the war in 1998 the government coalition in Belgium had almost no African policy. Belgium sent out vague and incoherent messages about the conflict to the point that people started to speak of a Belgian ‘décrochage’ in Africa (Willame, 1999:165). Belgium then wanted to be perceived as ‘neutral’ and aligned itself behind the diplomatic efforts undertaken...
by African states and international organisations. It therefore refrained from condemning the occupation of territory by foreign troops and the violation of Congo's territorial integrity. Moreover, rebels regularly travelled to Belgium where they maintained contacts with Belgian officials. The country is also accused of contributing to the continuation of the war by participating in the illicit trade in natural resources originating from the Congo (Antwerp holds a key position in the diamond trade, coltan was transported by Sabena from Kigali to Brussels, etc. Report of the UN Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources of the Democratic Republic Congo, UN Doc. S/2001/357). During the only official visit of L.D. Kabila to Belgium, he was hardly received as a Head of State: the Belgians accused him of massacring and persecuting the Tutsi and put him under pressure to negotiate with his enemies and the King refused to shake hands in public, while hardly anyone condemned atrocities perpetrated in Eastern Congo by outside forces.

When a new government coalition took office in June 1999 in Brussels, Louis Michel, the new Belgian Foreign Minister resolutely tried to negotiate a settlement by re-establishing dialogue with the Kinshasa regime and supporting the Lusaka Agreement. This new orientation of Belgian policy manifested itself in other initiatives including attempts to control the trade of natural resources originating in conflict zones. With the accession of Joseph Kabila, Belgium invested more in conflict resolution and showed its will to re-establish institutionalised co-operation with the government in Kinshasa while inviting other countries and international agencies to follow its example. Michel became the spokesperson of ‘humanitarian urgency’ in the DRC, stressing the impossible living conditions of Congolese people.

As to the US, it remained at once close to and distant from the conflict in Congo, notwithstanding a change of policy with the new Bush administration (Schraeder, 2001:142-144). The relationship between the Clinton administration and Kinshasa was tense, Congo even accusing the US of having directly encouraged the initiation of the war by backing Rwanda and Uganda. Certainly the US viewed all events in Central Africa through the lens of the 1994 genocide and consequently supported these countries financially and militarily. On the other hand, the US objected to Kinshasa’s economic policy orientations and its friendship with Cuba, China, North Korea, Sudan and Libya (de Villers & Willame, 1998:277-338). Until the assassination of L.D. Kabila, relationships between the Congolese government and the US administration remained prisoner of their mutual distrust. When Joseph succeeded his father, the newly elected George Bush was the first Western head of state to recognise him. Western states, in particular France and Belgium, were quick to receive Kabila with the honours refused his father.

Since then there has been an improvement in US-Congolese relations affecting the efforts of the international community in its search for peace in the region. However, the US position is governed by its close relations with Uganda and Rwanda and its strategic interests in the region, not least its concerns about Islam fundamentalism (Sudan) and, since 11 September, terrorism. Meanwhile, international humanitarian agencies continuously call attention to the negative effects of the war on Congolese populations: destruction, massacres, human rights violations, spread of diseases and the systematic exploitation of resources.
The United Nations

On 11 August 1998 the DRC's ambassador to the UN raised the matter of aggression by Rwanda and Uganda in the Security Council. The UN Secretary General had already voiced his concern but without stating whether principles enunciated in the UN Charter had been violated or by whom. He nevertheless pointed to the necessity to respect the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Congo. He also voiced concern about ethnically motivated persecution (mainly against Banyamulenge) and encouraged regional mediation efforts by the OAU and states in the region (Press release, 11 August 1998, UN Doc. SG/SM/6672).

The Security Council took time to react issuing only a statement in August noting that the conflict constituted a threat to regional peace and security and calling on all states to refrain from interference in each other's internal affairs. The statement also called for an immediate cease-fire, the withdrawal of foreign forces, and national reconciliation leading to democratic elections (UN Doc. S/PRST/1998/26, 31 August 1998). Little changed in the following months. Most Western powers who dominate the UN Security Council were not willing to intervene in Africa after the Somalia and Rwanda debacle and evaded their responsibility by putting emphasis on the concept of 'African ownership' in the context of the broader 'African renaissance' movement. With the exception of a number of UN Security Council statements reiterating the first and making arrangements to have UN officials as observers at meetings organised by President Chiluba, only the Secretary General took a number of initiatives but made sure that the process remained in the hands of the mediator mandated by SADC (Parqué, 2000:357-359). This aloofness cannot be explained by the slowness of the UN's bureaucracy alone. Kabila was seen as a problem for regional stability and a stumbling block for Western interests. Moreover, the countries accused by Kinshasa of aggression were considered as good pupils of liberal economic thought and their leaders espoused African solutions for African problems - a sentiment in which a number of important Western countries had put their hopes. With the Rwandan genocide in mind, these countries were seemingly judged differently (André and Luzolele, 2001:365-9).

Only on 9 April 1999 did the Security Council put weight to its previous statements by adopting a binding resolution in which, inter alia, it deplored the continuing fighting and the presence of foreign forces in the DRC 'in a manner inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations', called 'upon those states to bring to an end the presence of these uninvited forces' and ordered an immediate halt to hostilities. At the same time it expressed its support for the regional mediation process led by the OAU and SADC (SC Resolution 1234, 9 April 1999; UN Doc.S/ RES/11234, 1999). Even so, the resolution did not name the forces acting in contravention of the UN Charter though it was clear who they were. From the start, Congo claimed to have been the object of a war of aggression initiated by Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. It was because SADC countries accepted this argument that they had supported the Kinshasa regime. And, after maintaining that his troops were not involved in the DRC, Rwandan Minister of Defence Paul Kagame admitted at a meeting with Mandela (6 November 1998) that his troops had, indeed, been active in Congo from the very beginning (IRIN, update n° 540, Central and Eastern Africa, 6 November 1998).

Confronted with a reluctant UN and a regional process that was not bringing results, the Congo government also explored the path of adjudication and initiated proceedings on 23 June 1999 in the International Court of Justice. Three similar cases
were initiated: against Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. Kinshasa sought legal support for its argument that they had perpetrated 'acts of armed aggression on the territory of the DRC in flagrant violation of the UN Charter and of the OAU'. It sought their withdrawal from the DRC and compensation for damages caused. However, only the case against Uganda remains; the cases against Burundi and Rwanda were removed from the list at the request of the DRC in January 2001 because it became clear to the Congolese government that these two states would not recognise the competence of the International Court of Justice.

Around this time, regional diplomatic efforts began to bear fruit obliging the UN to react to regional plans. When SADC mediation initiatives resulted in the Lusaka Agreement, the UN Secretary General's views on the implications for the UN's role were clarified in the report of 15 July 1999 (United Nations, UN Doc. S/1999/790). The military component of the Lusaka Agreement was heavily dependent on the UN providing an 'appropriate force' in collaboration with the OAU. The Secretary-General recommended troop deployment take place in three stages. In the first phase to be initiated after the two rebel movements signed the agreement, only 90 UN military personnel accompanied by a number of civilian, humanitarian and administrative staff, would be dispatched to the region to serve as liaison. This mission would advise UN headquarters on their appropriate time to launch the second stage which would involve up to 500 military observers and associated personnel. The third stage would involve a peacekeeping mission depending on the situation on the ground.

On 6 August 1999 the Security Council authorised the start of stage I of the Secretary-General's plan through the deployment, for a period of three months, of 90 military liaison personnel and associated staff (SC Resolution 1258, 6 August 1999, UN Doc. S/RES/1258, paras. 1 & 8). Unfortunately, the government obstructed the mission from the start, withholding adequate security guarantees while insisting that the mission should only deploy in rebel-held areas preventing the mission from carrying out its mandate. In November, the mission was extended (SC Resolutions 1273, 5 November 1999, UN Doc. S/RES/1273) awaiting a decision on the start of stage II (Second Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Preliminary Deployment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UN Doc. S/1999/1116, 1 November 1999).

The Security Council gave its go-ahead for the MONUC operation on 30 November (SC Resolution 1279, UN Doc. S/RES/1279,1999) although the ceasefire had not been fully respected (troop movements were reported, especially around Mbuji Mayi and Kisangani, and a first serious confrontation between Rwandan and Ugandan troops took place in Kisangani). At the same time, the Security Council asked the Secretary-General to accelerate the development of a concept of operations for the third stage. On 17 January 2000 the Secretary-General reported a deterioration of the military and security situation and urged the Security Council to authorise a considerable expansion of the MONUC mission to 5,537 observers and peacekeepers with a very limited mandate (Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UN Doc. S/2000/30, 17 January 2000). Indeed, the 'units would not serve as an interposition force nor would they be expected to extract military observers or civilian personnel by force. They would not have the capacity to protect the civilian population from armed attack. MONUC military units would be able to escort humanitarian assistance convoys only within limits of their means and under favourable security conditions' (Ibid.)
Additional tasks, such as facilitating the eventual disarmament and demobilisation of armed groups and monitoring and verifying the withdrawal of foreign forces, said the Secretary-General, would require a larger operation (Ibid.).

The Security Council authorised the expansion of MONUC and the initiation of stage II under Chapter VII of the UN Charter which included the protection of UN and JMC personnel, installations and equipment and civilians under imminent threat of physical violence (SC Resolution 1291, 24 February 2000, UN Doc. S/1291/2000, para. 8). This could only be an unrealistic aim considering the size of the mission and the unfriendly context in which it had to operate. It seems, moreover, to have learned little from the failed UN missions in Rwanda and Somalia where it had been shown that, to be effective, the mandate should be clear and realistic and be accompanied by sufficient means to be credible (Neethling, 2000:38). In January, US Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, as President of the Security Council organised a UN ‘Month of Africa’ culminating in a meeting on the DRC (24 January 2000) during which all participating African leaders demanded the deployment of a ‘full-fledged UN peacekeeping mission’ without delay (Malan, 2000:6-7). Countries involved in the DRC demanded the UN force to be established under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

SC Resolution 1291 (2000, para. 5) stated that the deployment of MONUC depended on adequate security guarantees and cooperation from the parties to the conflict. It also emphasised that the deployment of MONUC would be subject to ‘a valid plan for the disengagement of the parties’ forces and their redeployment to JMC-approved positions.’ Although all parties to the conflict deliberately obstructed the deployment of MONUC, Kabila’s government was mainly responsible to the extent that the UN Secretary-General warned that the future of MONUC would be in doubt if the parties did not show an ‘unequivocal commitment’ to the peace process (UN Doc. S/2000/888, 21 September 2000, para. 85). He did not mask his disappointment in the Kabila regime, which refused to take the UN arguments seriously when the UN Special Envoy General Abdulsalami Abubakar travelled to Kinshasa (Ibid. paras. 7-11). Kinshasa insisted that MONUC should concentrate on forcing the aggressors out of the country and should therefore deploy only in the territories controlled by the rebels and their backers (Ibid. paras. 47-9).

Continued diplomatic pressure brought the parties of the Lusaka process to adopt the Kampala disengagement plan. Some progress was initially made in the implementation of the plan (IRIN-CEA Update 907 for the Great Lakes (Wednesday 19 April) but later all fronts reported numerous ceasefire violations and even some major offensives. At the same time, the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was seriously undermined when fighting erupted again in May-June between the RPA and the UPDF for control of Kisangani. Under considerable pressure, both countries finally accepted a ceasefire and a demilitarisation plan for Kisangani brokered by UN military observers but at the time of writing, the RCD-Goma had not yet withdrawn its troops in spite of repeated Security Council demands (SC Resolution 1304,15 June 2000; SC Resolution 1355, 15 June 2001, UN Doc. S/RES/1355, 2001; SC Resolution 1376, 9 November 2001, UN Doc. S/RES/1376, 2001 and SC Resolution 1399, 19 March 2002, UN Doc. S/RES/1399, 2002). The Kisangani confrontations have, however, changed international perceptions of the conflict.

The international community responded angrily to these confrontations. The Security Council, for instance, asked UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on 2 June to establish an expert panel on the illegal exploitation of natural resources in DRC (UN Doc. S/PRST/2000/20). According to a statement read out by Council President Ambassador Jean-David Levitte of France, the panel’s six-month mandate was to include collecting
information on all activities of illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth, including those in violation of the sovereignty of the country. The panel was to analyse the links between such exploitation and the continuation of the conflict (IRIN-CEA Update 937 for the Great Lakes (Monday 5 June). Two reports have since been released, blaming all parties involved in the DRC but mainly Rwanda and Uganda of illegally enriching themselves (UN Doc. S/2001/357; UN Doc. S/2001/1072).

The second report went as far as recommending an international embargo on natural resources and products originating from areas where foreign troops were present or from territories controlled by rebel groups. Moreover, all concessions and commercial agreements signed during the era of Laurent Désiré Kabila and by the rebel movements should be reviewed and renegotiated (UN Doc. S/2001/1072, paras. 152-9). In the same post-Kisangani revirement, the Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the Security Council to consider various measures, such as sanctions and military force, to ensure the withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan troops (UN Doc. S/2000/566, 12 June 2000, para. 79). On 16 June 2000, the Security Council noted its concern for the continuing illegal exploitation of the DRC’s natural resources and, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, inter alia, called on all parties to end hostilities and implement the Ceasefire Agreement and the 8 April 2000 Kampala disengagement plan. It condemned the fighting between Ugandan and Rwandan forces demanded them to withdraw from Kisangani, and called on all parties to the Ceasefire Agreement to respect the demilitarisation of the city. And it also demanded that Uganda and Rwanda withdraw all their forces from the territory of the DRC without further delay and that all other foreign military presence and activity in the DRC be brought to an end in conformity with the provisions of the Ceasefire Agreement (UN Doc. S/RES/1304, 2000).

Strengthened by the wording of Security Council Resolution 1304, Kabila's government argued that MONUC's mandate and the Lusaka Agreement should be revised. At the end of July the parties suspended the disengagement plan and Kabila even the whole Lusaka Agreement. Kabila argued that the Lusaka Agreement needed to be revised taking into account the Kisangani fighting and Resolution 1304. He further insisted that the 'war of aggression' and its settlement should be separated from 'political conflicts' between the government and armed Congolese fractions and therefore opted for direct negotiations with the aggressor states (UN Doc. S/2000/888, 21 September 2000, para. 13). The Security Council, however, extended MONUC's mandate and continued to press the parties, in particular the Congolese government, to lift all obstacles to a full MONUC deployment (SC Resolution 1316, 23 August 2000, UN Doc. S/RES/1316, 2000; SC Resolution 1323, 13 October 2000, UN Doc. S/RES/1332, 2000 and SC Resolution 1332, 14 December 2000, UN Doc. S/RES/1332, 2000). Concerned with the increasingly impatience of the major powers, African leaders took various initiatives pressing Kabila to reconsider his position but with only limited success. The UN observers were, for instance, only guaranteed free movement between Kananga, Mbandaka, Mbuji Mayi and Kisangani (IRIN-CEA Weekly Round-up 36 covering the period 4-8 September 2000; Fourth Report of the Secretary-General on UN Organization Mission in the DRC, para. 11) and a new disengagement 'sub'-plan was agreed upon in Harare on 4 December (IRIN-CEA Weekly Round-up 49 covering the period 2-8 December 2000).

The relationship between Kinshasa and the UN improved significantly when Joseph Kabila became President in January 2001. The major powers quickly recognised the new president, hoping that he would break with his father's intransigence towards
the international community. The new Congolese president created opportunities both for the inter-Congolese dialogue and the deployment of MONUC. The Security Council used this to pass Resolution 1341 on 22 February 2001 (SC Resolution 1341, UN Doc. S/RES/1341 (2001) welcoming positive developments in the Lusaka process and demanding further compliance with it. The French signature is again remarkable as the resolution reiterated its demand for Ugandan and Rwandan forces to withdraw and to comply with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. It further demanded the full implementation of the Kampala plan and the Harare sub-plan for disengagement and redeployment of forces within a 14-day period starting from 15 March 2001. The Security Council also expressed its support for the work of the expert panel on the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Moreover, the Security Council seemed to be more receptive to an argument by Congo, supported by France, that peacekeepers be stationed on the eastern borders of the DRC to prevent a de facto partition of the country. It also endorsed the French idea of an all-embracing international conference on the Great Lakes region in which all governments of the region and parties concerned would participate.

The resolution recognised the need to respond to the security concerns of countries involved in the conflict. Therefore, and in conformity with the Lusaka Agreements, the resolution urged all parties to prepare plans for the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement (DDRRR) of the negative forces and called for an end to assistance and co-operation with these groups. This aspect brought the mission to a new phase moving it beyond its first two stages.

The DDRRR plan is conceived as a process in which all forces in the DRC, except government forces, RCD and MLC, would be disarmed, demobilised, repatriated and reintegrated on a voluntary basis. Built on data provided by the signatories to the Lusaka Agreement but also collected independently, a media campaign targeting the groups concerned, accompanied by a number of incentives (amnesty provisions, training, etc.) must bring them to assembly areas where they will be registered, disarmed and directed to various camps depending on gender, age and combatant status. In these camps those suspected of having committed genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity could be transferred to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha. Others will receive skilled training awaiting their reintegration in their country of adoption/origin (UN Doc. S/2001/970, 16 October 2001, paras. 59-87). To show its good intentions Kinshasa assembled 3,000 Rwandan combatants in the Kamina military camp where they were handed over to the MONUC mission in mid-September 2001. The soldiers declared their willingness to return to Rwanda but also presented a number of political demands addressed to Kigali including the holding of an ‘inter-Rwandan dialogue’ (UN Doc. S/2002/169, 15 February 2002, paras. 61-63). The Congolese government also requested the Security Council to establish an international commission of inquiry to investigate the nature of the Rwandan armed groups in the DRC (Ibid., para. 9). The DDRRR division within MONUC has recently begun its work with the parties to the Lusaka Agreement, the JMC and the armed groups (Ibid. para. 57).

**Conclusion**

The international response to the crisis in the DRC is clearly dominated by the concept of ‘African ownership’ and what is colloquially known as ‘African solutions for African problems’. The general economic marginalisation of the continent and the political withdrawal of the Great Powers from conflict resolution in Africa have given
states in the region a greater manoeuvrability in regional matters. In light of the Rwanda and Somalia debacles and the liberal ideology of cost-effectiveness prevailing in Western decision-making circles, combined with the view that wars in Africa are too complex to guarantee a successful outcome, full scale conflict resolution in Africa has come to be seen as simply not worth the gamble. If this is true for Africa in general, it is certainly the case for the conflict in the Great Lakes region. This international cluster of concerns is linked to a local one: this is that Laurent Désiré Kabila, whose ascent was only made possible because most agreed that the Mobutu regime had to be terminated, did not fulfil the expectations of the regional coalition which brought him to power and the international community which supported this enterprise. This explains the tacit consensus for supporting a *révolution de palais* or a short war led by a coalition of willing states to topple the unpopular president. But those who supported this idea played apprentice sorcerers and through a number of miscalculations brought the whole region to a situation from which it will take generations to recover.

In this context the unwillingness of the West to invest in serious conflict resolution on the continent and the inability of the OAU to act, forced SADC to play a leading role in bringing the belligerent parties to an agreement that has served as the basis for all subsequent settlement initiatives. The Lusaka Agreement and subsequent initiatives have had the merit of having de-constructed the crisis in the DRC into its internal and external components. But they have failed miserably in their belief that changing the leadership in Congo and forcing the Congolese to a dialogue would solve all regional problems. The situation in the Great Lakes region is more complicated than a problem of leadership of the DRC alone or a lack of political consensus on the future of the DRC. Most Congolese will, for instance, say that almost everything was said about the future of the state a decade ago in the National Conference.

To be successful, conflict settlement must involve all stakeholders and create mechanisms that address all root causes of the conflicts. And, as a number of conflicts that are currently waged in the DRC are imported conflicts, peace in the region requires a regional mechanism that could be modelled on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. This contributed to an easing of tensions between East and West through confidence building mechanisms, development of a political dialogue, and establishment of venues for cooperation and settlement of disputes. One has, moreover, the impression that the inter-Congolese dialogue is in reality a ‘fig leaf’ masking other regional strategies. The flexibility of all the parties at the inter-Congolese dialogue is indeed so small that the question can rightly be raised whether or not the foreign powers involved in the DRC actually decide Congo’s future. In spite of the millions who have already died from the consequences of the war, foreign powers involved in the conflict are not yet ready to make compromises because, for many, war is more lucrative than peace. They still have an interest in maintaining instability and will probably come to a settlement only when they agree a common interest in keeping the DRC weak while deciding the borders of their zones of influence.

What is striking about the manner in which the conflict has been handled by the parties involved and by the international community is the almost total absence of law. Although there are clear rules on aggression, territorial integrity, sovereignty, the law of armed conflicts, the binding force of Security Council resolutions, and so on, all parties in the conflict have shown such disdain for international law that one can seriously question whether Africa has manoeuvred itself into a marginal position where the rule of law is again replaced by the rule of force. Very few involved in the
conflict seem to be conscious of law as a weapon that protects the weak because the strong have also other means at their disposal. The irony is that in international relations, Africa is generally in a weak position compared to others. This weakness in its efforts to achieve fairer trade and respect for its sovereignty is exacerbated when, at the same time, countries on the continent prove unwilling to be part of an international community ordered by a body of well defined rules. To be taken seriously in international relations one has to be serious with regard to the application of law. Otherwise there is a danger of Africa becoming a continent beyond law and, thus, a kind of *terrae nullius*, open again to neo-imperial conquest.

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European Union Commission Policy in the DRC

Roland Kobia

On 5 February 2002 the Commission of the European Union formally resumed its direct co-operation with the DRC after a ten year suspension — a consequence of the economic and political progress made in Congo over the past year. The co-operation envisaged is also meant to encourage democratisation, good governance and respect for the rule of law. Indeed, the Congolese state has been an ‘absentee landlord' for many years: anarchy and the lost expertise that have stemmed from it are both cause and consequence. Therefore, if there is to be a prospect of greater efficiency and long-term sustainability of all efforts, the conditions enabling the state to take on its traditional role again need to be recreated. The EC hopes to use the current window of opportunity employing an incremental approach in combination with other donors. It has already committed approximately 250 million euros for the next 2-3 years. For external aid to maximise its impact, preliminary conditions are needed. The EC seeks to encourage long-term development through peace-building and political stabilisation. Concomitantly, the EC supports targeted poverty alleviation strategies to help the DRC re-establish a minimal critical mass of internal development conditions, notably through institutional and administrative support. In the medium-term, the Cotonou Agreement should bring additional funds and will promote a new and stronger relationship between the EU and the DRC combining political dialogue, trade and regional integration.

Le 5 février 2002, la Commission européenne a repris sa coopération directe avec la République démocratique du Congo (RDC), après dix années de suspension, au travers de la signature d'un Programme Indicatif National sur le 8ème Fonds européen de Développement (FED). Cette décision est un signe tangible de la reconnaissance de la dynamique constructive récente mise en œuvre par les congolais, tant en matière économique que dans la recherche de la paix et de la réconciliation nationale, après des années d'instabilité généralisée. Elle se veut aussi un encouragement envers l'État à poursuivre les efforts nécessaires en matière de démocratisation, de bonne gouvernance et de respect de l'État de droit. Ce programme, appelé «Programme de Réhabilitation et d'Appui au Processus de Paix et de Réconciliation», fera la transition entre la période de suspension de la coopération et l'entrée en vigueur de l'Accord de Cotonou avec la mise en œuvre de son 9ème FED. Il a pour objectif d'aider le Congo, sur une base nationale, à retrouver le chemin de la paix et de la stabilité politique d'une part, et de la reprise économique d'autre part.

De manière concrète, la Commission européenne a voulu donner un signal et une impulsion en débloquant une masse critique de 250 millions d'euros sur 2-3 ans au travers du FED et de ses différentes lignes budgétaires. Ces fonds seront concentrés sur une série de domaines dans
Lesquels la Commission européenne peut apporter une valeur ajoutée, et s'intégreront dans le cadre stratégique global qui sera dessiné aux niveaux national et multilatéral. Ils concerneront essentiellement les objectifs de réduction de la pauvreté au travers d'actions dans les domaines des infrastructures de transport, de la santé et de l'assainissement urbain. La pauvreté est en effet un facteur qui génère et nourrit les conflits. De par la stratégie proposée tant au niveau des actions de développement et de réhabilitation qu'au niveau humanitaire (ECHO), la Commission européenne entend en outre apporter à la population congolaise les dividendes des efforts macro-économiques menés sous l'égide des institutions de Bretton Woods, dont l'efficacité et la pérennité augmenteront au gré de la prise en compte des différents paramètres du cadre systémique propre au pays, et notamment les considérations sociales.

Les fonds viseront également à revitaliser l'Etat par un appui institutionnel et administratif à certains organes étatiques et para-étatiques, aspect qui marque concrètement la reprise de la coopération directe avec les autorités publiques. La stratégie européenne devrait ainsi aider à la reprise graduelle par l'Etat d'une fonction publique traditionnelle suite à la vacance qu'a connu le pouvoir ces dernières années, ainsi qu'à recréer l'expertise technique perdue pendant cette période. Après avoir dû travailler au bénéfice de la population au travers des ONG et des organismes internationaux, la Commission européenne estime que la coopération pourrait connaître un saut qualitatif si elle pouvait se faire en partenariat avec un Etat soucieux de l'intérêt général et techniquement préparé, qui coordonne les différentes contributions afin d'accroître le ratio moyens/impact. Un tel Etat pourrait en outre attirer l'aide budgétaire dont le pays a besoin. Entre-temps, et suivant le principe «une stratégie, plusieurs bailleurs», la Commission européenne soutient la nécessité d'une collaboration étroite avec les autorités et d'une forte coordination entre les différents bailleurs de fonds, afin de maximiser l'efficience des actions qui seront menées.

Enfin, des initiatives de nature politique (soutien à la Facilitation du Dialogue Inter-Congolais, actions en matière de démobilisation et de réinsertion sociale) sous-tendront cette stratégie de réhabilitation afin d'en consolider les bases au travers d'initiatives visant l'installation de la stabilité politique et de la paix dans la région des Grands Lacs.

A moyen et long-terme, la République démocratique du Congo bénéficiera également les fonds du 9ème FED lorsque l'Accord de Cotonou entrera en vigueur, fin 2002 ou début 2003. Ce dernier consacrera également un changement majeur dans les relations entre l'Union européenne et la République démocratique du Congo, au travers d'une relation de partenariat plus étroite encore combinant le dialogue politique et la prévention des conflits, le commerce et l'aide au développement, et la coopération régionale. Ce nouveau cadre devrait permettre, en combinaison avec les autres initiatives européennes (Tout sauf les Armes) et internationales (NEPAD, OMC), à la République démocratique du Congo de s'intégrer dans le nouvel échiquier commercial mondial et d'y faire valoir ses indéniables atouts.

Introduction
Joseph Conrad would probably not recognise his Heart of Darkness; reasons for optimism exist. The EU Commission formally resumed direct co-operation with the DRC on 5 February 2002 after ten years of suspension. A National Indicative Programme (NIP) dubbed 'Programme de Réhabilitation et d'Appui au Processus de Paix et de Réconciliation' (RAPPER) was signed between the EU Commission and the Congolese government – a consequence of the progress made by the Congolese over the past year in implementing economic reforms and moving towards peace and reconciliation. It is also meant to encourage the necessary reforms to promote democratisation, the restoration of good governance and the rule of law. The programme will contribute to the joint efforts of Congo and the international
community and to the massive external assistance needed to accompany the Government efforts and restore stability and economic growth in the DRC – and more broadly in Central Africa.

While aid is necessary, it is widely accepted that development co-operation alone will not be enough to effect the necessary reforms. First and foremost, peace is needed because conflict creates and feeds poverty. The EU has therefore strongly supported the facilitation of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and, if the results are not yet conclusive, they are nevertheless encouraging. It is intended that EC country and regional strategies will have a strong conflict prevention and post-conflict focus. In post-conflict situations, external assistance has a greater impact when it is designed and delivered early, within a comprehensive strategic framework and with clear priorities of intervention. Thus, in view of the positive dynamic that has now been launched, the EU is determined to ensure that the window of opportunity currently ajar becomes a carriage entrance. For this to happen, large-scale co-ordinated intervention by all donors is needed quickly. To launch a positive impetus, the EC has made around 250 million euros available over 2-3 years. In the medium-term, the Cotonou Agreement should bring significant additional funds. Besides development co-operation, it is hoped that Cotonou will also promote a new and stronger relationship between the EU and the DRC, one combining political dialogue, trade and regional integration.

An Overview: The EU Commission & the DRC

The EC has, since the beginning of its development co-operation under the Yaoundé Convention, had a close relationship with the DRC which has been one of the major beneficiaries of EC aid in absolute terms. This aid has changed in character over time. If the fifties and sixties were marked by decolonisation and retrenchment (with aid for capital intensive investments replacing budgetary provisions to colonial administrations), the seventies saw a drive for rapid social change through industrialisation. The eighties, in turn, focused on basic human needs through rural and social development (but with a lack of co-ordination between donors). The nineties were characterised by a comprehensive approach aiming to apply the lessons of the past through greater coherence and complementarity, sectoral strategies, ownership and partnership as well as respect for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance. The link made between relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) in post-conflict situations also became more pronounced. The emphasis at the beginning of the new century is on donors co-ordination (the ‘one strategy, many donors’ principle), on political dialogue, good governance and performance.

Thus, over the years, the EU has become a major player in the co-operation process. The EU is now the main official development aid donor in the world, and the main commercial partner of most ACP countries. This applies equally to the relationship between Congo and the EU. Indeed, the EC retained its presence in the DRC even when other international donors left because of the political situation and the absence of a genuine democratisation process, particularly from the end of the eighties. However, this relationship deteriorated so badly during the latter stages of the Mobutu that co-operation between the EU and Congo was finally suspended under article 366bis of the Lomé Convention.

The suspension of direct co-operation marked the start of an era in which the EC was faced with two alternatives: either to withdraw completely from the country, or remain and try to help the population, not working directly with the public
authorities; but operating with their agreement. The EC chose the second option, the rationale being that the EU did not want the Congolese people to be penalised for the actions of their leaders. Consequently, the EC has on average injected 40 to 50 million euros per year in nominal terms in the country. It concentrated on infrastructural work (the Kinshasa-Matadi road, roads and tracks in Bandundu), on health (support for district health centres), on urban development (treatment and supply of drinking water and urban infrastructure) and on a major humanitarian aid programme (short-term relief and food aid). As partnership with the national public authorities was excluded, humanitarian aid and rehabilitation work were carried out through NGOs, the Red Cross family and specialised UN agencies.

Bypassing the State was made possible by the fact that the Congolese government itself, conscious of the urgency and need, agreed to delegate its powers as 'National Authorising Officer' (NAO) to the EC as 'Principal Authorising Officer' (PAO), which was thus entitled to take any action it considered useful in order to implement its projects. The EU Commission thus actually took over part of the functions of the government in the areas concerned. Most donors have tended to act as a substitute State, where the latter has abandoned or lost its traditional role and become an 'absentee landlord'. Today, and contrary to the philosophy of the 'Washington Consensus', it is important that the Congolese State gradually resume its normal role again, namely that of the State co-ordinating all aid inputs to increase efficiency and create the conditions necessary to attract budgetary aid. However, a transitional period is considered necessary to recreate the administrative expertise needed to implement significant injections of money through complex procedures. A calendar and an incremental rhythm have to be respected because, in such cases, a hasty quantum leap is unlikely to produce sustainable long-term benefit. This is the reason why the government of Joseph Kabila has asked the EC to continue temporarily acting as NAO for the implementation of the recently signed 8th European Development Fund National Indicative Programme (NIP). This essentially means that the EC funds are still managed and controlled in Brussels. However, the President formally appointed the Minister for Economy, Finance and Budget, Mr Matungulu Mbuyamu Ilankir as 'EDF NAO', an important step towards a resumption of normal state functions. He will have the task of gradually reviving a role put aside for years, with all the lost administrative expertise that this entailed, and will help the EC to implement the programme. If the experience proves satisfactory, it is probable that normal, full co-operation could be resumed under Cotonou, with the Congolese government taking over all tasks of the NAO. It is hoped that this enhanced participatory approach will create a greater sense of responsibility, if not property, of the Congolese people for the DRC/EU projects, thereby also increasing their long-term viability.

The Strategy of the EC vis-à-vis the DRC

Over the years, through a series of political declarations, the EU has on several occasions contemplated a gradual and partial resumption of aid co-operation with the DRC while stipulating a number of conditions and prerequisites deemed necessary for this to happen. The EU attitude is that the time for this has now come.

Background

To understand the rationale behind the resumption of EC aid to Congo, it should be borne in mind that the DRC is emerging from a dreadful decade of pervasive instability and conflict following a long period of corruption and bad governance.
Physical damage is widespread, institutions are a shambles and the socio-economic situation is appalling. Over the last year and a half though, the new Government has implemented a substantial interim reform programme, with the main objectives of eliminating hyperinflation, liberalising the economy, and initiating major structural reforms. This prompted The Economist to call the DRC 'the country which will be the most surprising in 2002', even though much remains to be done in a difficult political, economic, and social environment, particularly with regard to the withdrawal of foreign troops and the inclusion of non-signatories into the framework agreement for the transitional period which was concluded in Sun City. Although expectations of a 'peace dividend' are high in Congo, there is an urgent need to set up a social safety net to accompany the IMF structural reform package, if the political trend towards stabilisation is not to be undermined by social unrest. It is important to ensure that macroeconomic reforms do not result in the neglect of broader, systemic needs and contingencies.

The Specific EC Response in the DRC
Faced with such a situation, the EC has drawn up a strategy aimed at tackling the extremely complex circumstances of the DRC. The complexity stems from both endogenous parameters that can be dealt with internally (namely, specific factors such as the size of the country, its geographical situation, abuse of ethnic/religious/cultural differences, and its natural resources) and from exogenous factors that need a regional, or even international, approach (war, the policies of neighbouring countries, international relations, post-September 11th syndrome, and the legacy of the past). This tension has lead to a dichotomy between what the DRC is and what it could be on the basis of its assets. So, in view of the Herculean task ahead, who should do what first and how? Faced with such a puzzle, tropism is often tempting but should be avoided.

As for substance, the focus of the 8th NIP will be on 'poverty alleviation' and 'institutional and administrative support'. The EC is already engaged in the execution and preparation of an important series of interventions drawing on both EDF funds and various lines of the EU budget (BL), which complement the EDF's larger scale actions. As for the method to be used, it is considered important that it be based on the idea of enhanced complementarity by which is meant the need for a better division of labour between donors, no donor being capable of claiming excellence in every sector of co-operation. The EC has thus decided to work through an incremental approach method.

The New 8th EDF National Indicative Program of 120 Million Euros
With the resumption of direct co-operation with the state through the signature of a two-year National Indicative Programme (NIP) under the 8th EDF, the final technical and economic appraisal of the programme and projects was well advanced, paving the way for their gradual commitment in line with the evolution of the internal political situation. An important aspect of this new programme was that it looked at the DRC, in spite of its internal political situation, not as a partitioned country with differentiated interests and approaches, but rather as a single entity for the sake of policy and project implementation. Furthermore, other donors, especially the member states of the EU, were also expected to co-operate to create synergies and increase the impact of the two focal areas identified in the NIP:
Poverty Alleviation: In order to ensure coherence and continuity of EC actions, this chapter of the NIP aims to advance actions under way for several years, notably under the 'Programme d'Appui à la Réhabilitation' (CE/PAR) and the 'Programme d'Appui Transitoire à la Santé' (CE/PATS).

Transport management: The Community has acquired unparalleled experience in the construction and maintenance of transport infrastructure, for which it has the financial standing to mobilise the large-scale investment required. The EC thus aimed to carry on with road infrastructure projects, notably in the direction of Kikwit, a major food producing area. This was intended to help stabilise food supplies to the capital and stimulate agricultural activities inside the country. Close complementarity exists between this EC programme and those of the World Bank and bilateral donors (notably Belgian Technical Co-operation). Experience has shown that an improved road network also contributes to the economic and monetary stabilisation required by the IMF by stabilising, or even reducing, basic food prices; this has been recently borne out by the rehabilitation of the Kinshasa/Mbanza-Ngungu road.

Health sector: This is another sector in which the EC has considerable experience and seeks to play a key role. In Congo, the CE/PATS programme aims at the rehabilitation of primary health services by supporting first level structures (health centres). It also provides support to certain key functions of co-ordination and supervision at regional level, while contributing to strategic action at national level.

Urban development and potable water supply: As a complement to the previous point, the EC has for several years been engaged in the rehabilitation of primary social structures, particularly in the treatment and distribution of drinking water.

Institutional/administrative support: This is the chapter of the NIP that really marks the renewal of direct co-operation, as a number of public and parastatal bodies, particularly those which generate public revenues and those entrusted with the implementation of development co-operation, will receive 18 million euros. Public revenue in Congo is very low compared to what it could be, accounting for only around 5-8% of GNP. As the Bretton Woods institutions insist on equilibrium between income and expenditure in the Congolese budget, it is important to support actions that can generate more revenue. One way to do this to enhance efficiency might be in the form of an ad hoc World Bank Trust Fund, in which other donors might also participate. The other aspect of this institutional chapter is the environment; some 5 million euros will be reserved for environmental projects and institutional support to decentralised bodies responsible for this sector. Environmental concerns are frequently at the heart of local conflicts almost everywhere and, if exacerbated, can become security threats. At the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development the EU representatives placed emphasis on the sustainable management of natural and environmental resources.

Cross-cutting Actions
On top of the 120 million euros described above, the EC has released over 130 million euros for more targeted actions, often in support of the global NIP strategy. Broadly speaking, these actions can be divided into two groups, each group supporting one of the two focal areas of the 8th EDF NIP so as to ensure the coherence and complementarity of EC actions in the DRC. These interventions often overlap in their targeting and functions; some may indeed have an impact both on poverty alleviation and on institutional/administrative support simultaneously.
Cross-cutting Actions Supporting the Alleviation of Poverty

*Humanitarian aid* received an EC budget allocation of 37 million euros in 2002. With the EC Humanitarian Office’s (ECHO) biggest envelope being in Africa, the DRC is considered a priority country for humanitarian and emergency aid. Actions are wide-ranging (health, refugees, nutrition and non-food items) and cover the whole country according to need. At the same time, in view of the developments in the country, the EC is now setting up LRRD (link between relief, rehabilitation and development) options, adjusting the geographical division of labour and transforming certain humanitarian actions into longer-term rehabilitation or even development programmes.

*Refugees and internally displaced persons* are earmarked to receive 18 million euros under EDF. About 2 per cent of the population of Africa has been or is being directly affected by conflict. In the DRC, the estimated number of internally displaced persons is around 2 million, with a further 250,000 refugees from other countries. They have lost their livelihoods, are undernourished or affected by disease caused by the destruction of basic infrastructure. The EU has projects launched under articles 72-73 of the Cotonou Accord in the areas particularly affected by this problem (Kivu, Oriental Province, Katanga, Bas Congo).

*Food security and agricultural production* has been voted 6 million euros under BL and EDF. Sustainable rural development and food security are an important component of the anti-poverty strategies of the EC, which subscribes to the guidelines agreed at the World Food Summit and remains a major partner under the London Food Aid Convention. EC policy is to develop a closer link between food security policy and humanitarian aid in the context of the link between emergency and development, food security being an objective which acts both to reduce poverty and as an instrument of humanitarian aid. Various EC projects in Congo aim at opening up high production zones, at reinforcing agricultural activities and the capacities of merchants and transporters, and at rehabilitating infrastructure. Food aid is delivered both through these actions and through the ECHO.

Cross-cutting Actions Supporting Institutional/administrative Support

*Democratisation, human rights and the rule of law* receive 15 million euros under the BL. The objective is to foster democratic institutions and respect for human rights at local, national, regional and international levels as pre-conditions for sustainable development. Good governance, which includes the fight against corruption, and the rule of law are seen as critical components of any strategy to reduce poverty, and the European Initiative for Democratisation and Human Rights is an important instrument in this vital area. In Congo, a number of projects have been or are being launched in this area, notably through NGOs and the UN High Commission for Human Rights. In partnership with the latter, support is being given to the Ministry of Human Rights The EC considers itself especially well placed to support the strengthening of institutional capacities through solidarity and the Community’s integrated approach to co-operation.

*Justice* has been allocated a budget of 28 million euros (EDF). Respect for the rule of law is seen as a logical and necessary complement to human rights initiatives. A programme to reinvigorate the judiciary and administration of law (‘Programme d’appui à la Justice’) was launched in late 2001. It provides for the rehabilitation of infrastructure (courts, tribunals, furniture), support for legal instruments (legal codes, official journal, legal review) and raising awareness about justice and human rights.
This programme has a close relationship with the institutional support aspect of the 8th EDF NIP, as well as with human rights and democratisation projects.

Facilitation of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) has been budgeted 3.5 million euros (EDF and BL). The EC has, together with the South African government, been the principal financial contributor to the ICD Facilitation in order to give concrete expression to EC support for the Lusaka process, as complemented by the Harare and Kampala plans, and to the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. In supporting the internal aspect of Lusaka, the EC sees itself as contributing to political stabilisation inside the country which, in turn, should contribute to the solution to the external aspect, namely the withdrawal of foreign troops from the territory of the DRC. There will be a qualitative leap in the efficiency of projects carried out in the country if and when a sustainable peace is eventually established.

Demobilisation, Disarmament, Repatriation, Reinstallation and Reinsertion (DDRRR) has been voted 20 million euros (Intra-ACP fund). The Commission is preparing a first contribution of 20 million euros to the Trust Fund of the World Bank Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (MDRP) for a regional DDRRR process involving nine countries in the region. The MDRP will co-ordinate international assistance to help ex-combatants to return to their normal livelihoods. The total amount of the programme is envisaged to be US$500 million over 5 years. The EC is willing to increase this contribution, and is exploring ways to garner contributions for NIPs and RIPs from all countries in the region concerned with the DDRRR process.

Rapid reaction mechanism (RRM) has been voted a budget of 2 million euros (BL). On 26th February 2001, the General Affairs Council adopted a Regulation for the establishment of a Rapid Reaction Mechanism, as part of the creation of a European Foreign and Defence-Policy. This mechanism is designed to enhance the EU’s civilian capacity to intervene quickly and effectively in crisis situations for short-term actions of 6 months. Its scope draws on existing Community instruments and pursues the alleviation of crises, through human rights work, election monitoring, institution building, media support, border management, police, training and the provision of police equipment, civil protection assistance, rehabilitation, reconstruction, pacification, resettlement and mediation. Five actions have been launched in the DRC, notably for the benefit of child soldiers and street children as an early support to the DDRRR process.

The Longer-term Relationship Between the EU & the DRC: Cotonou, The Partnership Agreement

The current RAPPER program is designed to bridge the gap between the resumption of co-operation and the coming into force of the Cotonou Agreement. Once the latter has come into effect after the ratification quorum is reached, the 9th EDF Fund will allow for the deployment of substantial co-operation instruments with the DRC. To the basic remit that should be announced shortly, will be added significant funds from ECHO, European Investment Bank loans and EC budget lines. Cotonou provides the EU with new tools to overhaul its policy, thanks to a strong relationship combining political dialogue, trade and development aid, notably via regional integration.
Political Dialogue & Conflict Prevention

In a country such as Congo, political dialogue will mainly focus on conflict-resolution and prevention. This is where development co-operation and politics meet. Indeed, the new EC Conflict Policy aims at integrating specific conflict prevention provisions into traditional co-operation programmes. However, in so doing, there is a need to ensure that aid does not have perverse outcomes and, wherever possible, supports local constituencies for peace. EC Country and Regional Strategy Papers still have to be finalised for the DRC and for other countries troubled by complex conflicts (Sudan, Afghanistan and Angola). They will undoubtedly have a strong conflict prevention focus. Experience in previous post-conflict situations suggests that donor assistance has most impact when it is designed and delivered early, within a comprehensive strategic framework, with clearly identified priorities for intervention. In post-conflict situations, peace-building initiatives are essential for ensuring lasting peace. This is why the Commission is engaging at this early stage in rehabilitation activities as well as in the DDRRR program in Congo discussed above.

Trade & Aid

In addition to its traditional aid policy, the EC has espoused a ‘trade and aid’ philosophy designed to ensure that development policies and trade/investment policies are complementary and mutually beneficial. There should be a two-way effect between these two parameters of development. Whilst aid is not of itself sufficient, a critical volume of aid is nevertheless necessary; if the time is not yet ripe for trade alone, there is a need, nevertheless, to prepare the way for it. A series of measures aimed at helping ACPs to develop their economies through more intensive participation in world trade have been taken by the EC, aiming to improve market access for those countries. Apart from the General System of Preferences, the ‘Everything but Arms’ initiative for LDCs enables all products from the LDCs except arms to enter the EU tax and quota-free. Cotonou provides for the negotiation, to be launched in September 2002, of Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) with ACPs grouped in sub-regions, to conclude new WTO-compatible trading agreements, progressively removing trade barriers and enhancing co-operation. EPAs are to be development oriented and are intended to enhance the ACP’s regional integration process, notably in involving non-governmental actors (civil society and the private sector). Beyond that, the Doha Round and the International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey in March 2002 have raised hopes that the international community is ready to take concrete steps towards fulfilling its financial promises and reaching the Millennium Development Goals. Today, the Democratic Republic of Congo is not yet in a position to develop its immense trading potential. The coming years will need to be dedicated to readying the country to benefit from trade under the WTO framework.

Regional co-operation: Somehow inspired by its own experience, the EC attaches great importance to the creation of regional solidarities through a step-by-step approach. Both for the constitution of EPAs and for regional programming, ACP countries in the Great Lakes region are thus being advised to be part of regional groupings. Regional integration and co-operation not only improve the conditions under which developing countries can participate in the world economy but also can play a decisive role in consolidating peace and preventing conflict. A number of regional actions, from which the DRC could benefit, may be implemented under the 9th EDF through the Regional Indicative Programs for Central and Southern Africa, thus contributing to further regional integration in the Great Lakes area. Being part of
SADC (Southern Africa), COMESA (Eastern Africa) and CEEAC (Central Africa), it is important that Congo take a clear decision on its basic regional allegiance to benefit from the funds reserved for it. However, belonging to one regional organisation does not mean closing the door to the others. In view of the specific situation and size of the Democratic Republic of Congo, transversal and thematic co-operation (environment, infrastructure, conflict prevention) will obviously be possible with the other groups of the sub-region.

Conclusion & Perspectives

Some development theorists hold that development is not an acquired right or an automatic consequence of underdevelopment, and that each country has to find the internal conditions of its development. Applying this to the DRC, a threefold approach can be envisaged towards development. First, long-term development must start with establishing a lasting peace and political stability, with the support of the international community. Secondly, its internal development (based on its human potential and on its natural resources) should be possible, notably with the help of enhanced and more efficient external aid. Thirdly, such a recovery will enable the DRC to participate in regional integration and thereby export its newly developed potential to sub-regional and world markets through participation in international trade as a fully-fledged actor. New instruments such as the Cotonou Agreement, trade preferences, the Doha Round and the NEPAD call for a strong commitment to the DRC to ensure that it will not remain in the starting blocks and continue to be left behind. If the DRC succeeds in seizing the opportunity with which the country is presented today (and if forces around it allow it to take this opportunity), these instruments should make it possible to participate successfully in the changing world environment.

Community development policy is grounded on a number of focal themes: the reduction and eventual eradication of poverty; sustainable economic and social development; the gradual insertion of developing countries into the global economy; and respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law as a contribution to international peace. If there is a wide consensus among donors that poverty alleviation is the primary target, no single donor is capable of achieving this objective on their own. As indicated above, the EU is therefore committed to co-ordinating closely with bilateral and multilateral donors, many of which are back in Congo, some – like the Bretton Woods institutions – on a significant scale. As we have seen, in total around 250 million euros have been released by the EC for the next 2-3 years. In substance, the international community is closer than it has ever been to a global consensus on how to undertake a benevolent or effective development cooperation and so, I would suggest, the potential for real co-ordination and improved effectiveness is greater than ever. Assuming continued successful implementation of the economic programme imposed by the IMF, further progress in structural reforms agreed with the World Bank, continued political stability within the framework of UN efforts towards peace, and the commitment to reconciliation of the various interests among the Congolese themselves, the financial and human resources available to Congo should increase significantly in the short-term.

Poverty, and the exclusion and extremism that it generates and fosters, is the root of conflict and endangers the stability and security of the Great Lakes region. The EC therefore wishes to support poverty reduction strategies which embrace these various dimensions and are aimed at consolidating the democratic process, peace and conflict prevention, the development of social policies, the integration of social and
environmental aims in macro-economic reform programmes, respect for equality between men and women, the reform or introduction of an appropriate institutional framework, the strengthening of public and private sector capabilities and natural disaster preparedness.\textsuperscript{28} Faced with a Congo in dire straits, a degree of humility and a genuine co-ordination need to characterise the action of the international community. For its part, the EC is trying to maximise its impact in concentrating on activities in a limited number of areas selected on the basis of their contribution towards reducing poverty and for which its action provides added value.

So, Mr Kurtz, it seems the Democratic Republic of Congo is no longer merely walking in your footsteps.

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\textbf{Endnotes}

1. Cooperation with Zaire (as it was then known) was formally suspended on 22nd January 1992.

2. The Cotonou Agreement, signed on 23rd June 2000, contains the seeds of a real long-term partnership between the ACPs and the EU. It differs in many aspects from the Lomé Convention where dependence and unilateralism were more marked. For an analysis of the nature of the Lomé Convention in this respect, see Roland Kobia and Hervé Delphin, 'La Convention de Lomé à travers les procédures de mise en œuvre de la coopération financière et technique et du système Stabex: Paternalisme ou Partenariat?', Masters thesis, College of Europe, 1991, 87 pages.

3. In relative terms, and as for the EDF funds, Congo/Zaire has been an average beneficiary, because of the large size of its population. Moreover, the Zaire was, at a certain stage, better off economically than other African countries. Therefore, certain poorer or landlocked ACPs received more per capita. Nevertheless, and in spite of the state of suspension of cooperation, about 200 million euros have been committed under the EDF between 1995 and 2000, and 127 million euros under humanitarian aid between 1998 and 2002.

4. The EU Commission represents 10\% of global official development aid (ODA). With the bilateral efforts of EU member states, Europe accounts for 55\% of ODA and two-thirds of grant aid.

5. The Democratic Republic of Congo has traditionally had a commercial surplus vis-à-vis the EU. For the year 2000, it was 726 million euros, which was 15\% more than in 1999. However, 2001 saw a negative balance for the DRC with a commercial deficit of 154 million euros.

6. Article 366bis of the Lomé Convention has now been replaced by Article 96 in the new Cotonou Agreement.


8. Because of the vacancy of the state, donors but also civil society have \textit{de facto} acted as a substitution for the State in a series of areas to the benefit of the population. The latter has also learned to develop a 'private survival behaviour' in most sectors of life abandoned by public affairs. The Congolese government has no problem in formally recognising this situation, notably in the recent Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) completed by the Ministry of Planification and Reconstruction in February 2002, and adopted by the government. One of the three pillars of this document is mentioned to be \textit{Pilier de la Dynamique communautaire} – it recognises the fact that the civil society have been active throughout the years in which the action of the State was 'inexistent, or at least non-sensible', and therefore suggest to take stock of what has been done by them as a precedent, and formally requests the civil organisations to carry on with their work.
9. A position supported by the IMF, the WB and the US Treasury according to which the strategy for developing countries on the way to recovery should go through privatisation, liberalisation and the withdrawal of the State. This strategy was initially designed for Latin American countries and has produced certain successes in this part of the world. However, it cannot be applied dogmatically to all developing countries, as a universal ideological mould, and regardless of the specific features of the country.


12. As a short summary, the following has been carried out under the auspices of the BWI: the Government has pursued its efforts to implement far-reaching structural reforms; prices have been liberalized, except for some public services; new investment, mining and forestry codes, which reflect international best practices, have been prepared to attract foreign investors and enhance transparency. These actions are complemented by efforts aimed at strengthening the judiciary, through an EU project (CE/PAJ); the Government is also committed to increasing transparency and is preparing an action plan to fight corruption, currently widespread; the streamlining of institutions and capacity-building is under way and a reform programme has been launched to restructure, and wherever possible or necessary privatise or close, the most important public companies. Donors agree that the environment in which budget support can be provided must improve as, with the increase of revenue, the proper management of public expenditure becomes critical. An Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy has been prepared, which is based on rehabilitating infrastructure and social services, restoring a high level of broadly shared economic growth, and improving governance and transparency.


14. Economic history has extensively demonstrated that, if liberalisation and privatisation can eventually bring benefits in terms of growth and employment, they must be seen as means, not as objectives. Therefore, in any given country, strategies should not be drawn ideologically and should not either be implemented in the shortest possible timespan at any cost (particularly privatisation and liberalisation, which need several intermediary steps before successful completion). In each case, the intended measures should be well studied to match the exact conditions of the country in question, and they should be implemented only after well prepared accompanying measures at national level have been set up. In so doing, the long-term impact of the measures will be enhanced and the international community could recover a part of its lost credibility, thereby creating a necessary precedent of trust for future cases. Too many examples, even recently (Argentina, Indonesia), have demonstrated that macroeconomic reforms cannot be blindly designed, without sound consideration for the human beings – who are incidentally also economic factors – that are affected by them. The same mould cannot be used for all cases. But experience has shown that at least one point is obvious: macroeconomic recovery and social considerations (particularly employment) are not incompatible, but rather mutually beneficial in the long-run.

15. The EC budget lines are managed directly by the Commission, contrary to EDF funds which have to be presented to the EDF Committee, composed of representatives of Member States. Budget lines exist for a number of areas, such as democratisation and human rights, food security, health, etc.

16. These health actions were evaluated, and praised, by the last external report made by the Health Research for Action (HERA) institute in November 2001.

17. According to UNHCR figures – Global IDP project, quoted by World Bank, Report 23869 on 'Greater Great Lakes regional strategy for demobilization and reintegration', March 2002, p. 2. Out of the 2,250,000 persons, around 1.8 million are in the rebel-controlled areas: 760,000 in the Equator, 435,000 in South- Kivu, 415,000 in Katanga and 250,000 in the Oriental Province.
18. The RRM will operate through a separate budget line reinforced by the authority of the Commission to decide quickly on urgent interventions. The total allocation under the budget for 2001 amounts to euro 20 million and for 2002 to euro 25 million.

19. The Commission is financing several NGOs working on the social reintegration of child soldiers and street children, as an early contribution to the important challenges ahead in the area of post-conflict management. The aim is to secure the Congolese peace-process and to kick-start grassroots confidence building in the DRC.

20. At the time of writing (June 2002), 52 ACP countries had deposited their instruments of ratification, thereby reaching the minimum quorum for the ACP side (51 out of 77, or two-thirds) for the Agreement to enter into force. However, as for EU Member States, all must ratify before the Agreement can enter into force. In June 2002, five out the fifteen had ratified, eight had committed themselves to do so before summer 2002 and two will complete the procedure by the second semester of 2002.

21. In April 2001, the European Commission decided on a new strategy in the field of conflict prevention. Building on this Communication and on its own experience and views in this field, the Swedish Presidency launched the initiative of developing an EU programme on Conflict Prevention. This Programme was adopted by the General Affairs Council on 11-12 June 2001 and endorsed by the European Council at Göteborg end June 2001.

22. Duty and quota elimination has taken effect on 5 March 2001, but the full liberalisation of sugar, rice and bananas shall be completed after a transitional period. To compensate for the delay in liberalisation for these products, the EU will offer immediate and real market access to the 48 countries which the UN defines as the world’s least developed nations (LDCs), through the creation of duty-free quotas for sugar and rice, based initially on the best figures for LDC exports during the 1990s, plus 15%. These will increase by 15% each year during the interim period. The ‘Everything but Arms’ EU initiative is certainly the most generous of all existing such commercial initiatives.

23. Today, only European countries meet, and sometimes go well beyond, the 0.7% of GDP threshold (The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden). Moreover, in November 2001, the EU Development Council asked the Commission to start a dialogue with each remaining Member State on how to reach the 0.7% target. The EU took a clear and positive message along these lines to Monterrey.

24. Authors like Furtado, Galtung or Perroux have defended the ‘dependency theory’ according to which centre-periphery dialectics call for self-centred development through which each developing country finds the internal conditions of its own development; whereas Rostow, defending the ‘developmentalist’ school, maintains that under-development is only a transition towards a quasi automatic development.

25. With Cotonou, the Commission is moving increasingly towards budget support, in those cases where a country’s progress with financial management makes it possible. In addition, by moving from conditionality based actions, where donors tried to get countries to do the things we wanted, to performance-based support, the EC aims at reinforcing ownership and shifting accountability to what Governments actually deliver to their citizens.

26. The EU is strongly committed to concluding the Doha Development Agenda negotiations by the end of the 2004 deadline. The EU wants to increase coherence between the multilateral trade policy, international development and global efforts for achieving sustainable development. Therefore, the EU has pledged around 15 million euros (out of a total of 18.75) in the March 2002 pledging Conference in Geneva, in order to give Trade Technical Assistance and Capacity Building (TRTA/CB) in relation to the negotiation process of the DDA in favour of developing countries.

27. At the time of writing, several strategy meetings are scheduled by the Bretton Woods institutions and among EU partners. A Consultative Group meeting should be organised by the World Bank in December 2002, to help raise badly needed financial resources for the DRC.

Democracy & the Money Machine in Zaire

Tom De Herdt

Whether or not Mitterand's famous thesis that 'there can be no democracy without development and no development without democracy' is correct, Zaire during the 1990s was a clear case demonstrating the absence of a close relationship between development and democratisation. On the contrary, the announcement that political leaders might be facing electoral defeat could be considered as one of the most important background elements determining the climate of sauvet qui peut during the early 1990s. The dynamics of such an end-game situation are well-known in the literature on experimental game theory: only the most stubborn or naïve actors will still abstain from using all the means at their disposal to maximise their short-term interests. We document this situation by studying Zaire's monetary politics during the early 1990s. First, we describe the most impressive phenomena creating the monetary landscape: hyperinflation, monetary games, a fake monetary reform and counterfeit money. We then analyse these phenomena in connection with the dynamics of the political arena of the period and, in particular, the prospect of democratisation.
participants à un jeu coopératif commencent tous à jouer compétitif. Ceci nous amène à formuler l’hypothèse inverse, selon laquelle la perspective d’élections législatives serait justement au nombre des facteurs ayant généré de manière décisive le climat de ‘sauve qui peut’ qu’a connu le Congo au début des années quatre-vingt-dix.

Nous testons cette hypothèse en analysant la politique monétaire suivie durant cette période et en nous attachant plus particulièrement au phénomène d’hyperinflation. Le recours abusif à la «planche à billets», méthode qui caractérise ce phénomène, est le plus souvent présenté dans la littérature comme un échappatoire, un moyen adopté par un État trop faible pour trouver ailleurs un revenu susceptible de combler son déficit budgétaire. Or, si ce moyen s’avère efficace à court terme, il est bien connu qu’à la longue, l’inflation assèche le système économique. Nous soutenons en conséquence que le recours à cette méthode n’est pas dû qu’à une diminution des revenus ordinaires de l’État, mais également à un contexte d’instabilité politique où l’élite a perdu tout espoir de rester au pouvoir à court terme.


En conclusion, le dilemme auquel était confrontée la politique zaïroise au début des années quatre-vingt-dix ne se résumait pas à choisir entre Mobutu et le chaos, ni même entre la démocratie et le chaos, mais consistait à trouver un moyen susceptible de conduire le pays de Mobutu à la démocratie en échappant au chaos qu’avait provoqué précédemment l’annonce de la fin du jeu.

Since the end of the cold war, the international community has increasingly embraced the thesis that good governance and democracy are both necessary conditions for and constitutive elements of development. The thesis has been backed by a booming (mainly economic) literature on the relation between development and democracy (Mauro, 1995; Knack and Keefer, 1995; Sen, 1995; Easterly and Levine, 1997; Burnside and Dollar, 1997; 1998; Sachs and Warner, 1997, Fedderke and Klitgaard 1998; World Bank, 1999). The empirical tests of this thesis claim that democracy does not inhibit development. Intriguingly this is contrary to the arguments developed and evidence collected by ‘modernisation’ theorists a generation ago (Lipset, 1963; Myrdal, 1970), and to the ideas of some African observers who claimed that in the case of Zaire, the real choice was between Mobutu’s authoritarian rule or chaos (Schatzberg, 1991; Hendrickson, 1999).

We do not want to take sides in this debate. We do want to point out that the economic literature which specialises in studying empirical proofs of Mitterand’s thesis seems to underestimate at least two types of problems. First, it does not pay enough attention to the fact that, even in the case of a democratic regime, the ‘rules of the game’ are not solely determined by formal political institutions. All kinds of opportunities for players to partly (re)negotiate the rules of the political game while this game is being played are thus ignored (Myrdal, 1970; Migdal, 1988; Berry, 1993;
Bayart, 1994; Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 1998). Analytically, it is useful to distinguish between the rules of the game and the specific way in which political interaction, based on these rules, unfolds among a specific set of players. In reality, however, this distinction can be very difficult to make. We expect players consider it part of the game to try to reinterpret, stretch or innovate the rules in function of their own position. More particularly, many examples of democratisation can be analysed as a tactical move used by the elites in power to derive development rents from the international community (Bayart, 2000).

Further, in its eagerness to compare economic and social performance in countries with vastly different political regimes, this empirical literature does not give due attention to the process of transition from one regime towards another. Political regimes are themselves produced and reproduced by the political game at the same time as they are determining the rules of this game. The latter problem would a fortiori become of utmost importance once it has become common knowledge that the political regime in place will be changed. This is the case for Zaire after Mobutu’s announcement of the end of the Second Republic, the end of the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution. In one of his most emotional speeches (24 April 1990), Mobutu did indeed announce a period of transition towards democracy (see de Villiers and Omasombo this issue). One of the immediate results was also the formal liberalisation of the press (de Villers, 1992).

It is argued here that Mobutu’s announcement of the ‘last round’ has in itself been one of the major determinants of how the key players – including Mobutu himself – defined their strategies. The particular field of action we want to focus on is monetary policy. Elsewhere, we have already pointed out that several lethal macro-economic decisions resulted in major monetary chaos during the early nineties (Marysse & De Herdt, 1997). In this article, we consider the inflationary pressures on the domestic currency as a first measure of the regime’s performance in this field. We also argue that, contrary to earlier views (Maton & Van Bauwel, 1997; Beaugrand, 1996; De Herdt and Marysse, 1999), the explanation of hyperinflation as the mere result of a fall in ordinary state revenues is incomplete. Conversely, the way in which the fall in other revenues has been addressed reflects the typical context of behaviour during the ‘last round’? The paradoxical argument is, then, that the road to low inflation, one of the most obvious measures of ‘good governance’, seems to have been blocked by the expectation that a democratic system would soon be put in place. This thesis is further elaborated by comparing several monetary shocks, before and after the announcement of the ‘last round’.

Hyperinflation, Inflation Tax & Fall in Revenues

As has been documented elsewhere (De Herdt and Marysse, 1999), Zaire’s national currency was not only considered as a means of exchange, a unit of account and a store of value, the money in circulation was also considered as an asset liable to taxation. The importance of this so-called seignorage revenue (revenue earned by those who print money) in relation to the ordinary revenues (mainly tax revenues, but also, some non-tax state earnings such as revenue earned by state enterprises, or by selling or hiring out state property and the like) for the period 1970-1998 can be appreciated in Figure 1 (over).
During the 1970s and up to the mid-1980s, seignorage revenue varied around US$200 million each year. Compared to an ordinary tax revenue of US$800-1,000, the ‘inflation tax’ on the holders of national currency was undoubtedly significant and important. From the mid-1980s onwards, this significance increased, though it was mainly after 1990 that seignorage revenue exploded. During 1991-1994 the inflation tax even surpassed the ordinary revenues in importance followed by a period of marginalisation, in fact of both seignorage and ordinary revenues. It was only with the start of the ‘new’ war in August 1998 that the printing press was again used massively to finance the war effort.

One cannot fail to note the coincidence of the rise in ordinary and the fall in seignorage revenue during the early 1990s. The fall in ordinary government revenues at the beginning of the 1990s is partly the result of inflation itself (the Olivera-Tanzi-effect), but the major factor at play here is without doubt the fall in copper revenues (Figure 2). Indeed, at the end of 1990 the mine of Kamoto literally collapsed, leading to the provisional end of copper mining revenues.

In Figure 2 we can observe that mining revenues accounted for almost half of (ordinary) government revenue in 1988-9. Between 1989 and 1992 government revenue declined from more than US$1,000 million to less than US$300 million. Almost half of this decline was due to the dissipation of copper revenues. However, at the same time it is somewhat puzzling to note that the instrument of seignorage was not activated to neutralise a much more important fall in ordinary revenue between 1974-8. In that period, revenues mainly fell as a result of falling copper exports, partly because of falling copper prices. As can be observed in Figure 3, real prices declined by more than 50 per cent in 1975, while copper exports fell to almost one-third of their previous level.

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Another source of dwindling government revenues during 1974-8 was undoubtedly the previously mentioned attempt to 'nationalise' almost all enterprises owned by expatriates. Even if the national elite's separation from the 'commanding heights' of the economy was undoubtedly a handicap (Collier and Gunning, 1999), simply exchanging the former owners with clients of the regime was not a solution.

We conclude from the available data that *seigniorage* was indeed an important source of revenue for the Zairian government during the early 1990s as it partly offset the dwindling 'ordinary' revenues, and more particularly the quasi disappearance of revenues from copper exports. However, this co-incidence is in itself not a sufficient reason to assume a causal relation between both. First, *seigniorage* revenue has only been a temporary relief: it did indeed decline rapidly in importance after the mid-1990s. Further, it was activated only in response to a significant decline in ordinary revenue from 1991 onwards, even if the state seems to have experienced a much more significant contraction of revenue already in the mid-1970s. Thus, a mere contraction in revenue does not seem to be a sufficient trigger of hyperinflation. The last conclusion suggests that collecting *seigniorage* has disadvantages. The hypothesis would then be that, comparing the 1970s and 1990s, these disadvantages must have weighed considerably less during the 1990s than during the 1970s.

A more detailed comparison of the inflation tax with other, 'ordinary' taxes, helps identify these disadvantages. On the one hand, the inflation tax is not dissimilar to any other tax: some point may come at which the tax base is over-taxed. From that point onwards, people will massively evade the tax by moving towards alternatives, and thereby neutralise the attempt of the government to increase revenue by increasing the tax rate. This 'maximum point' of the reputed Laffer curve is easily reached in a period of hyper-inflation: the economic actors begin to 'dollarise'. Consequently the tax base of the inflation tax is absorbed. In the case of Zaire, the total amount of other currencies circulating in the country and lubricating economic transactions amounted to an estimated US$350 million. In 'normal' circumstances, it can be assumed that the public tolerates a tax on this amount equivalent to 50-70 per cent of yearly inflation. This may seem high, but it is the average inflation rate effectively tolerated during the 1980s in Zaire. In that case, the 350 Mio US$ lost, corresponds to a yearly loss in seigniorage of about 175 Mio US dollars. The 350 Mio $ is of course only an estimate. It underestimates real other currency circulation to the extent that is does not take into account the (probably) increasing importance of the unreported economy between 1986-1996. It underestimates real other-currencies-circulation to the extent that these currencies are also used for other purposes than for transacting (savings). It is an exaggeration to the extent that other means exist to
'speed up' money circulation. Anyhow, the estimate provides a clear indication of the degree to which the regime had lost control over the 'tax base' in the early 1990s. It also indicates the importance of the market in foreign currency (De Herdt and Marysse, 1999:246-8).

On the other hand, however, an inflation tax is a very particular tax because there is some irreversibility in the decline of the tax base. Once the economic actors begin to distrust national money, a mere decrease in the tax rate is not enough to restore trust. Instead, stopping inflation

would require far more than a few temporary restrictive fiscal and monetary actions. It would require a change in the policy regime: there must be an abrupt change in the continuing government policy, or strategy, for setting deficits now and in the future that is sufficiently binding as to be widely believed (Sargent, 1991 [1982]:151).

Sargent made this observation after having found that post-inflationary periods were not so much characterised by the absence of money printing as by a renewed social contract between the state and its citizens. Conversely, without such a credible change, the general public will see no reason to reconsider the national currency as a stable store of value and a useful means of exchange. Consequently, given that excessive use of the printing press triggers an irreversible decrease in the tax base, the long-term economic and fiscal consequences of the inflation-tax will be negative. The rationale for making excessive use of the printing machine, then, can only be articulated when time is discounted excessively high. According to Forrest Capie, this would be the case in fairly exceptional circumstances only, in situations where the state is seriously threatened from within (Capie, 1992). Because of this threat the existing regime is able to rationalise the inflation tax as the only means to survive into the future. If the Keynesian saying that 'in the long run we're all dead' has become a quasi-certainty, the short-term benefits of an inflation tax can fairly easily override the long-term costs of this tax.

Likewise, our argument would be that the announcement of the end of the Second Republic and democratic transition signalled the end of a regime and a future so unpredictable that every economic 'cost' realised in that future would be very heavily discounted. Note that Mobutu announced the change in regime relatively early, well before President Mitterand's announcement that 'there is no development without democracy, and no democracy without development'. As Bayart remarked, that democracy in sub-Saharan African countries was largely pushed from 'within' or 'below' rather than being a product of events in Eastern Europe (Bayart, 1994:x and xi). In any case, during the early 1990s various events contributed to a climate of a change of regime. The fact that Mobutu himself did not live in his own presidential house anymore, preferring his boat or his 'château' in Gbadolite, was another very important signal. The general atmosphere of 'rien ne va plus' is what constitutes, in our view, the single most important difference with the 1970s, when the Mobutu regime did not show any signs whatsoever of being 'threatened from within'.

It is indeed the case that the fall in ordinary revenues during the 1970s was perhaps considered as temporary because it was caused by a fall in copper prices rather than by an outright collapse in copper production. However, in this respect it is interesting to note that the collapse in copper production was not at all an unforeseeable event. The Mobutu-regime turned down a World Bank project to restore copper production, albeit on the condition of a tighter budget control of the copper producer GECAMINES. In February 1990, Mobutu's finance minister responded to this proposal thus:
The President-Founder cannot tolerate these intrusions and interventions since they defy the constitutional prerogatives which belong to him. The sovereignty of Zaire can in no way be the object of negotiation and consequently Zaire cannot accept this form of recolonisation anymore which emanates from every step taken by the IBRD (cited in Mutamba Lukusa, 1999:19).

By the end of the same year, the mining site of Kamoto collapsed, exacerbating the considerable fall in state-revenues. Was the government misinformed about the situation? This is rather improbable. More probably, it was only interested in immediate available revenue, and this would not have been the case with the GECAMINES budget being under World Bank control.

Monetary Policy Shocks: Stabilisation, Weak State or Crumbling State?
The increasing use of the printing press to compensate for the decline in ordinary tax revenues is only part of what can be learned from monetary data. Equally important are the politically induced monetary shocks that plagued the monetary system since 1967 (the introduction of the Zaire). We think the word 'plagued' is indeed appropriate here. A time-series of the ratio of currency outside banks (c) on M1 reflects these 'special' periods (Figure 4). We will use the figure as a reference to discuss them.

Operation Alpha
To begin with, the c/M1 ratio increased only moderately between 1970-1974. During the 1975-79 period it moved up steadily, from about 40 per cent to almost 50 per cent on average in 1979. By the end of that year, however, it suddenly decreased to below 30 per cent. On Tuesday evening, 25 December 1979, the Zairian government announced Operation Alpha. Inspired by the Belgian Gutt operation (6 October 1944), it aimed at demonetising high-value currency notes, allegedly held by economic agents operating in the black market or holding back their money for speculation. In other words, it was aimed at the operators of the informal sector (Kabuya Kalala et al. 1980; Buhendwa, 1996). In practice, the officially proclaimed effect was not reached: the evolution of the c/M1 ratio after 1979 does not show that the 'informal sector' was restrained. On the contrary: the ratio continued its path of systematic increase from the mid-seventies onwards up to the early nineties, notwithstanding some exceptions. Note that the official reason used by the Zairian authorities to organise Operation Alpha is also one of the basic assumptions underlying a class of methods to estimate the evolving weight of the informal sector.
Feige, 1989; Thomas, 1992; Gutman, 1977; for applications to Zaire, see Lokota, 1987; De Herdt, 1996): an ‘excess’ of currency outside banks over and above the ‘normal’ c/M1 ratio is thought to indicate the presence of an informal economy because we can assume that the ‘underground’ economy is too shy to use bank money. Indeed, bank money might talk. While we still think that this hypothesis reflects reality up to a point, the problem is that this point probably declined as informalisation increased. To begin with, the reluctance to use bank deposits will only lead to an increasing use of cash to the extent that foreign currency is no option. This is not the case, as was argued above. Second, it can be assumed that people at the highest levels of society are perhaps better placed to make potential listeners deaf than to shy away from money that talks. For these reasons, any estimation of the extent of the informal sector on the basis of monetary aggregates necessarily remains at most indicative. Accordingly, there are probably much more efficient alternatives than organising a Gutt operation in order to tax the informal sector and only this sector.

Further, a macro-economic effect that was reached was a decrease in the ratio of M1/GDP (figure 5.8.). Theoretically, such an evolution could be due to (1) financial deepening, an increasing importance of economic actors with sophisticated portfolio behaviour (with the ability to convert idle balances rapidly into value-maintaining assets), and (2) increasing substitution of national currency by foreign currencies and other value-maintaining assets. The systematically increasing c/M1 ratio indicates that if the Zairians have learned to manage their asset portfolios in a more sophisticated way, they have certainly not used the bank system to do this. Accordingly, alternative (2) is the more probable one. It reflects the confidence shock the public experienced with regard to the national currency. This shock testifies to what operation alpha primarily was: a one-shot tax on the holders of national currency.

At the same time, some evidence allows us to state that the holders of national currency who paid the tax were probably not the officially targeted fraudeurs. First, the losers can be identified in geographical terms: three working days to exchange through the official channel primarily means that the countryside is taxed; some people didn’t even know before the end of the year that they had to exchange their banknotes, and many of those who did know were not able to reach the bank within the specified time limit. Further, as the money stored in bank deposits was not touched, Kinshasa, where 86 per cent of bank money resides, was much less taxed.

Second, there were also winners. One of the most successful male money exchangers we interviewed (see De Herdt and Marysse, 1999) precisely founded his (informal) enterprise immediately after the Operation Alpha, by mediating between his grand frère, working at the National Bank at that time (and up to now), who delivered him the new banknotes, and people who had not been able to convert their money within such a short period:

I started with nothing [without any capital], and at the end of this operation which has lasted six months, I had accumulated a fund of around $15,000.

While it is difficult to understand how this type of corruption was entered in the Bank’s books, and whether this practice was very common, we can in any case conclude that the monetary reform of 1979 was not only a one-shot tax for some, it was also a one-shot subsidy for others. As illustrated by our interviewee, the direct winners were insiders or in any case connected to the politico-economic elite. The
indirect winners – those able to convert the old banknotes in new ones after the official period (our interviewee’s clients) – were probably people active in the upper layer of the urban informal sector. Who else would be both interested in and capable to contact these insiders?

Trying to understand *Operation Alpha* in terms of the eventual winners and losers, however, is inadequate. The way it was announced and realised in practice suggests a more complex reading. The officially announced objective, in itself laudable, was totally lost because of a seeming co-incidence of practical issues. Why only three working days? Why tax the whole countryside? Why not a stricter control on the returned banknotes? In this sense, *Operation Alpha* seems to be an archetypical phenomenon of an ordinary weak state whose embeddedness in a fragmented society cripples any attempt to unilaterally articulate any state policy (Migdal, 1988).

**Bindomanie**

A second interesting period is 1990-1991. During the preceding decade, the c/M1-ratio did not stopped rising, probably reflecting (1) the increasing informalisation of the economy, (2) economic regression (and therefore, the growing importance of economic actors with less sophisticated portfolio behaviour), and (3) the effect of negative real interest rates as a result of rising inflation. This evolution ended abruptly in 1992 during which deposit money exceeded cash money (c/M1 < 50 per cent). Figure 5 on the evolution of the cash-to-M1-ratio from 1990 onwards shows in fact that something unexpected was already going on by mid-1991: in the second trimester of that year, the cash-to-M1-ratio jumped abruptly with almost 10 per cent (end-of-period values), notwithstanding a slowing down of inflation compared to the two immediately preceding trimesters. This sudden jump undoubtedly reflects the government’s efforts to compensate (the most important) victims of the monetary games of the type that caused political chaos in Albania some 6 years later. In Zaire, these games were promoted via newspaper announcements and radio and television from early February 1991 onwards. Initially they promised monthly returns of around 500 per cent for people volunteering to invest their money during even shorter periods. Eventually the investment period was 2 days, during which the investment

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**Figure 5: Evolution of currency outside banks/M1, 1990-1998**

![Figure 5](image-url)  

*Source:* Own calculations based on IMF International Financial Statistics, various
was doubled. By March-April 1991 especially the economy of Kinshasa was seriously inactivated, as everyone rushed to gain money in the easiest way possible at that time. But this miraculous type of money multiplication did not last for long. By 24 of April, the most important monetary pyramid, Bindo Promotion, broke down. The other pyramids followed in the first weeks of May. From mid-June to early August, the government intervened to restitute 88 billions of Zaires to the victims, in practice, to the most powerful of them (military, elite). This amount is of macro-economic importance. It represented approximately 7 per cent of all money deposits whereas the total amount of debts accumulated during the monetary games was estimated at 4-500 billion Z (about 40 per cent of money deposits, or US$27 million) (La Référence Plus, 20 June 1991). It also marked the end of a period of spectacular one-shot bottom-to-top redistribution of wealth. The 'money pyramids' are a phenomenon very interesting in itself: on the surface, the only asset on which they thrive is 'trust', trust in others' trust in others' trust...'. One can make money through it until the moment of trust disappears. A moment which is as inescapable as unpredictable. An alternative reading would have it that, instead of trust, such pyramids exploit weakness of will. Being tempted by the exceptionally high payoffs, clients will skip ordinary rules and routines and standards of fairness. Consequently it may be that they feel guilty about participating in it, even if it has brought them financial success. This reading seems to be consistent at least with what writer/observer Lye M. Yoka tells about the Bindomanie.

The reactions of the people are ambiguous, divided between the passion of possessing and a complex of guilt. The power of money, it is known, it always related to the obsession of a fault, since, through the social logic of merit, the myth of easy enrichment is a kind of corruption of the game of competition. It is thus not surprising that, from the start of the first monetary pyramids onwards, the collective subconscious has been upset, and that it has produced, through radio trottoir, a whole mythology of being cursed: wasn't the operation Bindo-Promotion already linked from the early start to a kind of devil's pact? Even the first clients, although having become millionaires from one day to another, did express their lack of confidence by demanding a type of banknote which was not 'compromised' by the pact. In one or another way they would have detected some peculiar cabalistic signs on other banknotes (Lye M. Yoka, 1991).

What interests us most at this moment is the raison d'être of these games. It is not difficult to prove the involvement of the political elite: was it a coincidence that the monetary pyramids (1) made extensive use of party structures and public administration infrastructure to establish their organisation, (2) were based especially in foyers de tension sociale like universities and high schools, and (3) culminated precisely by the end of April, just after the day (21 April) a major manifestation was planned by a front of politically dissenting organisations?

We think Jewsiewicki (1992) is correct by answering this question in the negative. Monetary gains were inter alia a deliberate strategy to distract people, especially students, from political involvement. It should be noted that 1990 was a year of major political unrest. Swept by 'the winds of democratisation', Mobutu's announcement of the end of the one-party Second Republic and of the transition to a democratic Third Republic (24 April 1990), was undoubtedly also a means to open some perspective for the increasing internal opposition. A series of violently repressed manifestations and uprisings preceded and followed this announcement.
Though the manifestations were organised by various groups, among which the political opposition, market women, churches, etc. the uprisings led by students were politically the most important. This is illustrated by a brutally repressed uprising at the University of Lubumbashi (11 May 1990) which caused the international community to reconsider (and eventually break off) its co-operation with Zaire. It is surprising that the students who became the major martyrs of the regime by the end of 1990, at the beginning of 1991 wrote on the walls Tata azali kaka tata (a father is always a father) on the walls. On a broader level, Jewsiewicki remarks that:


The monetary games did not only make the Kinois forget about the usual laws governing income-earning, but also, at least temporarily, made them sell their political conscience.

Even if the regime seemed to have succeeded in postponing its political death to an indefinite future, it did not succeed in preventing street violence. By the end of 1991, the military initiated the first country-wide wave of looting. This was immediately followed by the Kinois at large, who saw an opportunity to finally ‘get even’ with the regime and its allies. The looting lacked a political identity however, even if the plunderers were extraordinarily selective in choosing their targets: they literally ‘cleaned up’ the MPR bosses and their allies. Houses of opposition-related and non-allied politicians were virtually left untouched. But the regime itself remained intact.

In conclusion, the Bindomanie clearly illustrates the importance of money as a good that at the same time has a significant political and ‘private economic’ character, at the cost of its public-good character. Opération Alpha could be defended in terms of state interests – or, at least, the interests of the elite in power. Many, especially at the highest levels of society, must have gained from ‘opération alpha’. Unlike the case of Opération Alpha, however, the Bindomanie lacked a public face and could not possibly have been an officially advocated state policy. Setting up money pyramids may be a highly lucrative initiative, it may also be consistent with the interests of the regime in power at a particular moment, but it can of course never be part of an official state policy. In this respect, the monetary games were comparable to hyperinflation: both can be sustained by a political rationale, but both can only be rationalised by a short-run survival objective. The Bindomanie can only be understood as a strategy of a crumbling regime to postpone the moment it will be overturned.

**Arrival of the Nouveau Zaire**

The next peak in Figures 4 and 5 occurs during the final months of 1993, a period that coincides with the monetary reform during which the Zaire was meant to be abolished, and the New Zaire made its entry (23 October 1993). The official reason for this reform was monetary stabilisation, and yet average monthly inflation reached an unprecedented peak precisely during the final trimester of 1993.

Annual inflation reached its height the year after the reform (ca. 9,800 per cent, against 4,500 per cent in 1993, largely realised during the final trimester of that year) (Figure 6, over). Moreover, if the cash/GDP-ratio remained above 4 per cent during 1991-1993, the ratio decreased to less than 3 per cent in 1994 (De Herdt and Marysse, 1999b:386), indicating a further de-monetisation of the economy (during the early 1970s the ratio cash/GDP still reached 9 per cent).
So what was this monetary reform about, if its proclaimed objective was but a rhetoric device to deflect attention? The most important real reason for monetary reform was undoubtedly that the local buying power of the Zaire gradually converged with its printing cost.\textsuperscript{11} The ordinary solution to this problem – issuing banknotes with a higher face value - was blocked since January 1993, when the newly issued 5 Mio Z-note was refused as a means of payment in the markets of Kinshasa. This refusal was in fact a clear expression of political dissent by the market women, some of whom paid for it with their lives. It was probably also an expression of loyalty towards the Prime Minister (and opponent of Mobutu, Etienne Tshisekedi) who had labelled the new banknote ‘illegal’ (but he did not control the National Bank). The refusal to accept the newly issued 5 Mio Z-note was the direct trigger of the second plundering of Kinshasa in only two years time\textsuperscript{12} And perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the 5 Mio Z-note continued to be refused in Kinshasa, though it was accepted as a means of payment in the interior at a lower rate (one-fifth of its face value).

Another ordinary solution to solve the printing cost problem was to pay government outlays by overdraft. The problem with this method was that banks ran out of cash to convert checkable deposits into cash which resulted in a huge amount of money being ‘imprisoned’ on bank accounts. Figure 5 clearly shows that, from early 1993 onwards, the cash-to-M1-ratio declined from ca. 0.5 to less than 0.3. During the first three trimesters of 1993, cash money increased with 223 per cent, whereas deposit money increased with 674 per cent. This led, \textit{inter alia}, to a black market where cheques were exchanged at a fraction of their face value. Table 1 shows that this black market set in from mid-1992 onwards, to reach a peak in June 1993 (1/170).

The declining gap between a cheque’s buying power and its face value from July 1993 onwards, probably indicates efforts by government-tied agents to buy these cheques. They anticipated what was going to happen after the reform period: the Banks would
have access to fresh money, and the deposits would become convertible again. Officially, such a possibility was excluded as some accounts were simply blocked, while others were only convertible into cash in a limited way. However, it seems that very similar networks were activated as those active during the aftermath of Opération Alpha (Maton, personal communication). In other words, convertibility of deposits into cash was standard practice. The same happened to the 5 Mio Z-notes though in this case with official approval. Though these notes circulated below face value before the reform, they became convertible into New Zaires at face value afterwards. The Bank’s governor defends this measure as un geste politique en faveur des régions qui les avaient acceptés sans difficulté (Buhendwa, 1996:66). Though it is difficult to calculate the total amount of purely speculative profits realised through these channels, it can be ascertained that most of them must have served the (Birindwa) government-tied elite.

However, the monetary reform was not only an opportunity (and probably in part a deliberate attempt) to make high speculative profits, it was also simply an ill-prepared reform. To begin with, there were huge logistic problems. The day of the reform, the smallest banknotes had not yet arrived, and therefore the smallest banknote available (100 NZ) was worth ca. $33, an amount sufficient to pay three monthly salaries of average employees in the public sector at once. Sometimes, the banks resolved this temporary issue by handing out hand-written vouchers in return for old Zaires (Mutamba Lukusa, 1999:39-40). The deficiencies in the actual realisation of the monetary reform are clearly observable in Table 2 as well. After one week of monetary reform, 87 per cent of all newly issued Nouveaux Zaires were 100 NZ notes; even by the end of the year, almost half of all banknotes were of this type. The problem was resolved fairly quickly, however. The monetary mass increased enormously as a

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1: Units of scriptural (new) Zaires against 1 cash (new) Zaire</th>
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<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
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<td>1992</td>
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| Source: Banque du Zaire 1996, Condensé d’informations statistiques 1/1996, p. 46 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Monetary Emissions, 1993 Final Trimester, in Mio NZ</th>
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<tr>
<td>Face value</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 NZ</td>
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<td>0,01 NZ</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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result of the re-introduction of the 5 Mio-Z banknotes and de facto convertibility of deposits. This triggered an unprecedented inflation (1,500 per cent in three months), which quickly reduced the initial value of the 100 NZ note, converting it into a more useful means of exchange.

Another mistake was to sub-contract the printing of money to a private, Mobutu-connected Zairo-Lebanese enterprise, EGIMEX, originally active in exports of diamond and gold. Lacking foreign currency and having accumulated a US$50m debt with the German money printers Giesecke & Devrient, the National bank was forced to choose this option (Buhendwa, 1996:167-9). EGIMEX was paid with part of the banknotes it had just printed in Brazil. This project allowed EGIMEX to reap a gross profit of around US$40m (the difference between the dollar value of the newly printed notes and the real printing cost) (De Herdt & Marysse, 1996). EGIMEX also printed several copies of the official banknotes which were subsequently injected into the Zairian economy. This so-called ‘false-legal money’ was used mainly to pay diamond exploiters in the interior. The total amount of false-legal banknotes was estimated at US$28-40 million (Kabuya Kalala, 1995:15-6), though other sources talk about 350 Mio US$ (Misser & Vallée, 1997:70). Even if we use the lower estimate, EGIMEX must have realised a one-shot profit of 70-90 Mio US$, which is another figure of macro-economic significance at a time when the official (excluding inflation tax) government budget was around 200 Mio US$ per annum. None of the persons directly or indirectly involved in this case has ever been charged by the judicial system. It is only by mid-1994 that those politically responsible were replaced.

In July 1994, Prime Minister Birindwa was replaced by Kengo wa Dondo, and the latter needed another four months before being able to replace Ndiang Kaboul by one of his allies as governor of the Central Bank. Finally, the data on the 1993-4-period reflect one of the most serious consequences of the monetary reform: not only did the monetary system prove unable to lubricate transactions via overdrafts (by mid-1996, the amount of cash in the hands of the public represents about 10 times the amount of money in deposit accounts), it also proved less and less able to lubricate transactions via cash money. From the end of 1993 onwards, the unity of the Zairian monetary zone was threatened not only because an increasing amount of transactions was dollarised (or lubricated by other, European or African foreign currencies) but also because one region (the Kasai-provinces) refused to replace the ‘old’ Zaire by the Nouveau Zaire. It may be somewhat surprising that this de facto declaration of monetary independence was never a major point of political concern. Another surprising element was that the ‘old’ Zaires continued to circulate in the Kasai-provinces up to 30 June 1998, the first day of the last monetary reform up to the present. On that date, the Nouveau Zaire as well as the ‘old’ Zaire were replaced by the Franc Congolais (with relative success, at least until the onset of a new rebellion from 2 August onwards; see Masangu, 1998). But how could this ‘old’ Zaire zone survive for so long, if the real life of a banknote was estimated at six months? The answer to this question probably also sheds a light on the first surprise: the Central Bank did not incinerate the ‘old’ Zaires. Some of the bank administrators simply used these stocks from time to time to buy dollars in the (diamond-rich) Kasai provinces (Buhendwa, 1996:140; Mabi Mulumba, 1998:595). Again, we discover fraudulent networks originating in the National Bank.

To sum up, the monetary reform of October 1993 has not much in common with other types of monetary reform worthy of that name resulting in anything but monetary stabilisation – its officially proclaimed objective. By the end of 1993, the Zairian territory comprised several independent monetary zones, thereby marking the end of
the state monopoly on issuing money. This landscape resembles the situation in 1965, just before Mobutu took power and launched his ‘Zaïre-monnaie’ (Leclercq, 1966). The fact that it was ill-conceived and that the state was not interested in repressing fraud is only part of the reason. The most important rationale underlying the reform was to re-activate the inflation tax, not to stabilise the national currency’s worth. The most important result was a further marginalisation of the national currency as a consequence of dollarisation and the fragmentation the Zairian territory in several monetary zones. To an extent, the ‘monetary reform’ of 1993 can be understood as a new opportunity for bottom-to-top redistribution, to an extent it can be understood as a series of mistakes. But we can only make sense of this monetary shock by recognising it as another strategy, designed by the regime in power, to ‘make the best of it’ in the last round before its announced death.

Conclusion

‘While the general interest is set aside’ say Misser and Vallée, ‘the machine of the state has not entirely disappeared: it is recomposed in function by private interests’ (Misser and Vallée, 1997:87). Their observation mirrors a widely held opinion about the Mobutu regime. It goes beyond the concept of a patrimonial state (Médard, 1991), a state where the Treasury and the President’s personal purse are often confused: the Treasury’s only function is to serve as the President’s personal purse.

An overview of the monetary politics during the 1990s allows us disagree. True, particular interests were always ‘served’, but it would be as dangerous to explain every move in monetary politics by personal interests as to accuse someone of murder simply because she had a motive. To begin with, the empirical data we analysed suggest that the state’s resources were also in a significant way privatised by secondary actors, whether or not in connivance with the state ruler. It is important to emphasise this as it suggests that a mere change of the political regime will not be sufficient to extinguish the type of crimes we discussed above.

Further, notwithstanding the ‘systemic’ presence of fraud and corruption, there are certain moral boundaries to behaviour which are more resistant. To wit, making optimal use of the money machine only became customary practice in the early 1990s. We argued that this boundary became untenable once the ruling regime’s position was threatened from the inside. The prospect of democratisation turned it from a stationary bandit into a roving bandit (Olson, 1993) fragmenting the very structures of the state in its wake. The real policy dilemma of the 1990s was clearly not between Mobutu or chaos, nor between democracy or chaos, but rather how to go from Mobutu to democracy by skipping the chaos of the last round.

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Endnotes

2. In experimental game theory, it has been found again and again that end-game behaviour is substantially different from behaviour in previous rounds (Selten, 1997; Fehr and Gächter, 1998).
3. According to Beaugrand, the amount of non-bank-controlled currencies rose to an equivalent of US$300-400m (Beaugrand, 1997:5). See also Ngonga Nzinga and Mususa Ulimwengu (1999) for
an alternative but in our view less convincing method to calculate ‘dollarisation’.

4. For detailed calculations see De Herdt (2000:192-206)

5. The Zairians designated him *notre voisin* at that time, ‘our neighbour, not anymore living with us’.

6. See De Herdt and Marysse (1996) for an attempt to estimate the informal sector of Zaire with this method

7. Formally, the operation was to be carried out before the year-end, but, as the banks were closed on Saturday, Sunday and Monday which meant 3 days in practice (Emizet, 1998:106).

8. Working document ‘*interviews réalisées auprès des cambistes intermédiaires*’.

9. The following draws on two independent sources: Jewsiewicki (1992), who draws on (1) local press articles and (2) interviews with the organisers and ex-clients of the games and de Villers (1992), who reconstructs the ‘bindomanie’ on the basis of press articles. To be sure, the Zairian money games were only partly based on the pyramid-like logic. At least in the beginning «fresh» wealth was invested in them, in the form of housing equipment allegedly bought to organise the summit of the *Françophonie*, which was ultimately cancelled.

10. The original mechanism can be traced back at least to Carlo Ponzi, an Italo-American living in Boston in the 1920s.

11. The printing cost of the 1mio banknote was US$0.082, while its buying power did not exceed $1.8 in August 1993.

12. *Radio trottoir* also whispers that the looting should have created a fog big enough to make credible an ‘accidental’ killing of Tshisekedi. The Prime Minister had made an appointment with the French Ambassador, but decided finally not to go. In any case, the French Ambassador was killed, and it is difficult to imagine this was only a ‘lost bullet’. Also, France *never* commented on this event.

13. One of our interviewees made himself rich at that time, by exchanging some ‘big’ banknotes for smaller ones in several parishes, where people typically contribute the smallest possible banknote during the Sunday morning mass.

14. According to Buhendwa bwa Mushaba, the governor of the Central Bank at the time of the monetary reform, EGIMEX was a Belgian firm (Buhendwa, 1996:170). Investigation by a Belgian journalist revealed that this is not true, but not very far from the truth: Mr. Kanafer, the director of EGIMEX, also owned an enterprise in diamond trade that *was* officially registered as a Belgian enterprise, notably in the circumscription of Turnhout (province of Antwerp) (Dirk Mampaey, personal communication, 1997). For further information on the case, see Buhendwa (1996:167-177) and Mabi Mulumba (1998). *Notes de conjoncture* dedicated its monthly *dossier* to the affair in March 1995. Our own account is mainly based on the excellent articles published in this periodical during the early nineties on the subject of monetary policies. For a first summary of the false-legal money question, see De Herdt and Marysse (1996).

15. Naïm Kanafer, director of EGIMEX, was reportedly also the owner of Sitcomine, a Zairian diamond-trading enterprise (Misser and Vallée, 1997:65) See previous note.

16. This, as well as Mutamba Lukusa’s (1999:39) estimate of US$1.2 billion is without doubt impossible.

17. The Bank was governed by Buhendwa bwa Mushaba from 2 April 1993 till 1 April 1994. From his account of the monetary reform, however, we learn that many of the problems related with the reform did occur after his destitution (and he even suggests this to be the cause of his destitution). His argument doesn’t seem entirely convincing, however, especially not as concerns his attempts to attribute some problems to decisions taken behind his back.
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Conflict of Interests or Interests in Conflict? Diamonds & War in the DRC

Ingrid Samset

This article explores how the exploitation of key natural resources, diamonds in particular, has contributed to prolonging the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It affirms that the motivation and feasibility of resource exploitation largely explain why external military contingents have remained active in the country since August 1998. Driving forces of war can be identified among elites of Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe, for whom DRC resources have proven decisive to sustain positions of power. Although most exploitation has been carried out at gunpoint, the use of existing networks suggests that withdrawal of forces will not necessarily stop the massive resource diversion. While a lasting resolution to the crisis needs to ensure due benefits to the local population from their resources, it also requires that stakeholders see peace as a more attractive option than continued war.

L’article explore comment l’exploitation des ressources naturelles, les diamants en particulier, a contribué à prolonger la guerre en République Démocratique du Congo (RDC). Il affirme que la motivation et la faisabilité de l’exploitation des ressources expliquent pourquoi des soldats étrangers restent actifs dans le pays depuis août 1998.

Développements récents de la théorie des conflits se sont inspirés de la nature changeante des conflits en Afrique. Le rôle central joué par les ressources naturelles dans les guerres actuelles en Angola, en Sierra Leone, dans le Soudan et en RDC a remis l’attention aux explications économiques. Les débats contemporains ne considèrent guère l’ethnicité comme la cause primordiale de conflit. On discute plutôt comment ces loyautés culturelles sont manipulées comme instruments de mobilisation, alors que les troupes mobilisées sont utilisées pour réaliser des objectifs économiques.

Comment évaluer l’activité commerciale dans un pays de guerre? Une approche purement légale à l’éthique de l’exploitation des ressources, comme l’ONU l’a proposé, s’est démontrée insuffisante. Les règlements internationaux et nationaux tendent à collider, et en RDC, les lois nationales sont évasives et largement ignorées. En plus, la perspective légale sous-estime que même l’exploitation légale des ressources peut nourrir la guerre. Une vue socio-économique se présente préférable, puisqu’elle met en point la mesure dans laquelle un pays et ses habitants bénéficient des ressources desquelles, d’après la constitution, ils sont les propriétaires.

Les ressources minérales sont clés dans l’économie congolaise, et parmi les minéraux, le diamant est plus important : depuis le début des années 1980 il a donné la source de revenu principale au pays. Alors que les dépôts kimberlites dans le sud de la RDC sont assez facile à contrôler, des dépôts alluviaux bien répandus ne le sont pas. Même si la contrebande existait avant 1998,
le déclin exceptionnelle de l'exportation officielle de diamant ces dernières années met en relief le rôle des adversaires de la guerre.

Les armées rwandaises et ougandaises ont d'abord pillé de larges quantités de ressources naturelles, et dès l'été de 1999, ils se sont orientés vers l'extraction et la production en vue de profits plus longue-terme. Bien que aucun des deux n'ait des diamants dans leurs sols, l'exportation des diamants de Kigali et Kampala a monté en flèche après le déclenchement de la guerre - alors que celle de Kinshasa a chuté. Le diamant congolais n'a pas seulement donné aux deux pays les devises étrangères fraîches ; il a également canalisé des revenus d'impôts considérables, et assisté à fournir matériaux pour la guerre comme moyen de troc.

Même si le diamant seul n'aie pas donné bénéfices nets au Rwanda et à l'Ouganda, il n'y a aucun doute que la totalité des ressources congolaises exploitées a amené une amélioration significante aux deux économies. Les produits congolais ont fait 7-8 per cent de l'exportation rwandaise en 1999 et 2000, et ils ont bien consolidé la balance des paiements ougandaise. L'exploitation a permis une forte croissance des dépenses militaires des deux pays.

Le gouvernement congolais, d'autre part, a essayé de financer la guerre par intensifier la production de francs, une mesure qui a abouti à l'hyperinflation et une augmentation d'activités contrabandières ; et par s'adresser au secteur dantataire. L'exportation du diamant a été monopolisé, les taxes imposées aux compagnies productrices de diamants ont été élevée, et des concessions ont été accordé aux pays qui ont offert son assistance militaire à Kinshasa.

Le président Kabila a donné la majorité des concessions au Zimbabwe. En addition d'un grand nombre de mines lucratives accordé en 1998, Harare a eu encore deux dépôts diamantifères de richesse exceptionnelle en 2000. En retour, le ZDF est responsable de contrôler les provinces stratégiques du sud.

Bien que l'assistance zimbabwéenne a été indispensable, le prix payé par Kinshasa est immense. Les profits tirés par le régime en accordant les concessions suggèrent, tout de même, qu'il s'est servi de la guerre comme prétexte pour accélérer l'exploitation excessive des ressources congolaises – pour pouvoir tirer des profits court-terme. Le président s'est donc rendu dépendant de troupes étrangères non seul pour arrêter l'avance des agresseurs, mais encore plus pour soutenir les revenus qui alimentent son position de pouvoir.

De leur part, le Rwanda, l'Ouganda et le Zimbabwe ont tiré des avantages significants de leur engagement militaire. L'Ouganda, toutefois, disposant d'une économie relativement forte et exploitant les ressources congolaises de manière peu militarisée, résiste moins le repli de troupes que font le Rwanda et le Zimbabwe. Parce que la guerre rend possible l'exploitation excessive de ressources, et parce que cette exploitation fait continuer les combats, l'article conclut que les adversaires, même s'il se sont mis en bataille pour gagner la victoire, finissent par aimer à maintenir la militarisation du conflit.

The Perpetuation of War Economics

Once started, armed conflicts tend to find ways of financing themselves. Certain businesses, the military industry in particular, increase profits in times of war and thus have a clear interest in continued hostility. While this has long been established in conflict theory, the 1990s saw a number of wars develop in ways that required further thinking on causal links between economics and the sustenance of war. As the persistence of conflict in Angola, Sierra Leone, Sudan and the DRC all seemed to be connected, in various ways, to the exploitation of valuable natural resources in these
countries, the variable of economic interests gained increased attention. Evidence pointed towards profit-based interests in continued warfare that went beyond arms traders to encompass warring parties, as well as co-operating private companies and political and military leaders.1

Having earlier been viewed as the unavoidable side effects of war – hardly exerting influence on the course of the war itself – economic interests are now analysed as an explanatory factor *per se*. The gaining ground of this perspective constituted a theoretical shift from the immediate aftermath of the cold war, when explanations of the outbreak and continuation of numerous conflicts had primarily been sought in culture and ethnicity. During recent years, cultural and ethnic identities have been regarded as instruments to justify and legitimise a war in the hands of powerful actors, whose true driving force consist of *economic agendas* that they hope to realise by mobilising masses to take up arms. While this hypothesis is an interesting stepping-stone for political analysis it has proved controversial and needs to be qualified. Two methodological points deserve attention.

One, to explain behaviour with reference to agendas that actors are presumed to have is analytically problematic. If a group has an economic agenda, it will normally need to keep this agenda on a low profile to promote it successfully. If the aim is to make profit out of war, potential reactions of moral indignation make it even more crucial to disguise or hide the plan. Hence it is not surprising if, when confronted with claims of economic agendas in war, a group vehemently denies their existence. Such rejection has been commonplace in reactions of parties named and shamed in UN reports on wartime economic activities in Africa. Even if denial of economic agendas in war should not be taken at face value, it does strengthen the possibility that allegations are ill-founded. Since the analysis of war in terms of agendas has to deal with hotly contested versions of the truth, substantiating causal arguments with systematic and cross-checked evidence is imperative.

Two, close scrutiny of causal links is required to bring economic agendas from a level of claims to one of a reliable explanation. If the objective is to assert an empirical connection between agendas and the continuation of war, only those agendas that end up making measurable contributions to fuelling war are important. Three links along the causal chain then need to hold. First, even though a group is involved in an economic activity during war it may not necessarily profit from it. Second, even though a group does make profits in times of war, it may not necessarily develop economic interest in the continuation of the war. Since accumulation may be counterbalanced by losses that also are incurred as a consequence of the war situation, a balance sheet of the actor’s economic activities must be drawn to conclude on whether it is interested in sustaining the fighting or not. Third, if economic interests are indeed spotted, they will not necessarily influence the war to the extent that it is continued. Connection between an actor’s interests in continued war and the ways in which such interests have been translated into effective action to keep the war going, must be demonstrated in each case.

This article will investigate how exploitation of diamonds and other resources has contributed to fuelling the war that has ravaged the Democratic Republic of Congo since August 1998. Even though this is primarily an empirical problem, it also needs to be considered in a broader ethical context. The responsibility of actors involved in exploiting the resources of a war-ridden country like the DRC should also be discussed as a matter of principle regardless of the extent to which they end up profiting from the war or keeping it going. Normative considerations are key to
vibrant debates on corporate social responsibility and on business complicity in conflict situations. A useful point of departure for such considerations is an assessment of the legality of looting and exploitation.

**Normative Approaches to Resource Exploitation**

In 2001 a UN-appointed Panel of Experts delivered two groundbreaking reports, unravelling large volumes of primary evidence, on what was termed the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth of the DRC. The Panel let extraction, production, commercialisation and exports all be subsumed under the term ‘exploitation’ (UN, 2001a:5). Such a broad definition is useful when the aim is to encompass a wide scope of resource-related activities that may have contributed to fuelling the war.

The Panel’s mandate to deal only with the aspects of exploitation deemed illegal is much more problematic. Legality is, in the first place, a contentious term. The Panel considers an economic activity as illegal if it (a) takes place without the consent of the legitimate government, (b) involves the use or abuse of power by some actors, or (c) violates the existing regulatory framework in the country or international law (Ibid.). The main problem of this approach is that economic activities regarded as ‘legal’ may contribute to fuelling war as much as ‘illegal’ activities do. What matters for analysing the continuation of war is hence not primarily an activity’s lawfulness, but whether it has helped to keep the war going or not. Focusing on ‘illegal’ activities only blurs a clear understanding of why war is sustained. Moreover, the ambiguities of the UN Panel’s definition illustrate that analysing resource exploitation in terms of legality is a daunting task. Difficulties of the legal approach to exploitation are exacerbated when applied to a crisis-ridden country like the DRC, recently caught in a whirlpool of regional strife.

First, the Panel’s definition lacks concrete criteria for classifying particular actions inside or outside the law and thus for determining what acts of resource exploitation to study. For instance, does the use of power to exploit natural resources only turn illegal at the point of a gun? And are actions that violate international law still illegal if they comply with national law or are given government consent?

Second, the ‘existing regulatory framework’ is a particularly evasive entity in the case of the DRC where the state has been literally out of function since Mobutu. This political vacuum gives rise to a number of problems if the fuelling of war is to be analysed only with reference to ‘illegal’ activities. One, in a country where an effective rule of law is replaced by tentative rule by presidential decrees what is the ‘existing regulatory framework’, and what legitimacy does it have? Two, what relevance does a regulatory framework have when no institution has been able to enforce regulations throughout the territory for years, or rather, decades? The relative irrelevance of national legislation is reflected in the pervasive informal economy, largely unregulated, which creates two-thirds of Congo’s GDP (BSC, 2001a:6).

When laws are few, shifting, little known, hardly enforced, and violated even by the government, limiting the study of war-fuelling activities to those deemed illegal misses the point. The trouble is not only that the study ignores conflict-promoting activities classified as ‘legal’, but also that it tends to assume, perhaps unintentionally, that illegal activities necessarily promote conflict. But if an activity doesn’t comply with national regulations, the problem is not necessarily the character of the activity, but that of the regulations – which may be politically biased, contradictory, or lacking.
Belgium’s senatorial commission of inquiry into the exploitation of DRC resources, set up in late 2001 in response to the UN reports unveiled potential Belgian complicity, acknowledges these problems and formulates an alternative working principle. According to its chair, ‘the commission does not distinguish between legal and illegal looting of primary resources as both can, in fact, contribute to financing the war’ (BSC, 2001b:1). It can be argued, however, that the commission’s focus on ‘looting’ (pillage) helps it ignore the intricate legality question altogether, as ‘looting’ is equivalent to outright theft. In practical terms though, looting of natural resources should be seen as only one version of exploitation. The key distinction as against more systematic exploitation, which is motivated by the probability of long-term profits, is that looting essentially aims at maximising immediate gain. Both kinds of exploitation work, however, along the same basic logic of drawing maximum benefits out of an area’s resources.

A further point of contention remains the circumstances under which exploitation, even if aimed at long-term gain, should be justified and protected by law. A guideline to clarify this question should be the degree to which a country’s inhabitants benefit from exploitation of the resources that, according to principles of justice embodied in most constitutions, ultimately belong to them.

Drawing on this perspective of popular benefit, Stefaan Marysse provides a useful definition of looting, which also sheds light on dynamics of exploitation: it takes place when ‘a part of the value of exports is invested in activities which do not benefit the country’ (Ibid. p. 8). This conceptualisation suggests the kind of economic activity that is likely to promote conflict and prolong war: namely, that which fails to benefit the country itself or, it should be emphasised, the country’s population. Francois Misser, in another testimony to the Belgian commission, highlights this view when defining looting as ‘stripping someone of the fruits of their property or their work without providing a just remuneration’ (BSC, 2002b:2).

A crucial question for further debate on the ethics of exploitation and war is, then, what such a ‘just remuneration’ should be for the groups of people concerned. Relating this debate to marxist thought on the expropriation of surplus value would be an interesting starting point for such clarifications. In the following however, we will use the approaches of Marysse and Misser as guidelines for analysing the empirical question of this article: why the DRC war has persisted since 1998. Their views inspire us to investigate how profits drawn from Congolese natural resources have been diverted from the local population to the benefit of others, and to assess how identified activities may have contributed to prolonging the war. Since data will be drawn from the exploitation of diamonds – the mineral giving the lifeline to Congolese economy – we will in the following sketch the history of the diamond sector and the mineral context of the DRC.

Minerals & Conflict in the DRC

Minerals have represented the backbone of Congo’s economy ever since the vast area was centralised by colonial power. While King Léopold II set a precedent for conflict-promoting activities through large-scale looting, the Belgian state brought exploitation into more regulated forms. Colonial discovery of massive mineral deposits paved the way for industrialised extraction, which went along with traditional artisanal production – all taxed and exported by Belgian authorities.
Among the various minerals of which Congolese soils abound, diamonds have turned increasingly vital for the national economy. While the DRC ranked as the world's fourth largest producer of diamonds in 1999, most of its diamonds are of medium quality and have been used for industrial purposes. At independence the country provided 80 per cent of US industrial diamonds, by the early 1970s its industrials made more than a third of the world's total production. From 1967 to 1974, the DRC was one of Africa's main economic powers, a position largely deduced from mineral revenue flows (Goreux, 2001:3; PAC, 2001:1; BSC, 2001a:3).

From 1974, however, with the hike of oil and collapse of mineral prices, the eruption of war in neighbouring Angola and the transfer of foreign-owned mining enterprises to people of the president's entourage, mining production fell drastically. The Zairisation policy forced skilled foreigners to give way to locals who, due to a variety of factors, failed to keep up productivity. Ridden with contradictory signals the policy gave rise to inflation and the growth of an informal economy, as well as large-scale corruption. Economic crisis deepened when taxes soared on mineral exports, a move that spurred smuggling and deviation of trade to neighbouring countries. As production and income crumbled, the state eventually did too and gave way to more arbitrary rule of an emerging class of elites close to the presidency.

Even if popular discontent with the deplorable situation grew steadily, mineral exploitation was only in one context directly related to armed confrontations. In the most mineral-rich region of the country, today's Katanga, secession attempts in the late 1970s were violently suppressed – as similar efforts earlier had been under the Belgians. The two Shaba wars also sparked further implosion of copper- and cobalt-producing Gécamines, formerly the country's engine and the world's sixth biggest mining company (BSC, 2001a:3f; Daito & Lumbi, 2001:2). When President Mobutu liberalised the diamond sector in the early 1980s, the jewels soon provided the country with its main source of income. While Congolese mining across the board was hit by plunder, mismanagement, infrastructural and technical problems as well as declining world market prices, diamond production was a relative exception. Price developments were less disastrous, and after artisanal production of diamonds was legalised in 1981 it grew rapidly and reached a level of 70 per cent of diamond exports in 1998. Yet industrial production of diamonds did not escape the declining trend of

| Table 1: DRC Production of Minerals & Metals, 1989-1995 |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Copper            | tons | 422,500| 336,704| 236,071| 137,318| 48,312| 33,609| 33,946|
| Zinc              | tons | 54,043| 38,204| 28,316| 18,830| 4,153| 2,515| 4,516|
| Cadmium           | tons | 9,311| 9,881| 8,621| 6,127| 22| 3,631| 3,967|
| Cadmium           | tons | 224| 127| 124| -| -| -| -|
| Silver            | kils | 25,660| -| -| -| -| -| -|
| Cassiterite       | tons | 2,282| 2,176| 1,625| 1,018| 1,002| 897| 793|
| Tin               | tons | 1,643| 1,567| 1,171| 733| 722| 646| 571|
| Gold, incl. artisanal | kils | 2,485| 5,224| 6,131| 2,525| 1,502| 780| 1,180|
| Zinc              | tons | 8,911| 9,956| 8,652| 4,567| 4,534| 4,882| 5,679|
| Diamonds, MIBA    | 1000 carats* | 8,638| 9,991| 10,598| 8,934| 10,616| 11,377| 18,345|
| Diamonds, artisanal | 1000 carats* | 8,638| 9,991| 10,598| 8,934| 10,616| 11,377| 18,345|
| Tin               | tons | 69,908| 78,255| -| -| -| -| -|
| Wolframite        | tons | 16| 17| 17| -| -| -| -|
| Coltan            | tons | 42| 34| 57| 28| 4| 2| -|
| Monazite          | tons | 175| 124| -| -| -| -| -|
| Oil               | 1000 barrels | 9,780| 10,678| 9,699| 8,212| 8,308| 8,972| 10,087|

Index of production, 1990=100

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copper</td>
<td>106.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: The DRC Ministry of Mining; referred to in Daito &amp; Lumbi, 2001. *1 carat = 0.20 gr.</td>
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the 1980s and early 1990s, as is illustrated by Table 1. In 1994, the deepening of the crisis combined with pressure from the World Bank led to privatisation of the entire mining sector, allowing international companies to enter the stage and acquire lucrative concessions.

**Fighting for Diamonds**

The attractiveness of Congo's diamonds for purposes of political power derives not only from their pivotal economic role and high value, relative to other minerals, but also from their extraordinarily widespread distribution. Alluvial diamonds can be found in a myriad of rivers criss-crossing the vast land, extraction requires little prior knowledge or technical equipment, and the lightness of the stones facilitates transport and commercialisation. While the accessibility to diamonds throughout the enormous area complicates central political efforts to control their exploitation, it facilitates funding of insurgencies.

An important share of DRC diamond revenue is still deduced from industrial exploitation, centred in the city of Mbuji-Mayi in southern Kasaï Orientale, where deposits have traditionally been mined by the parastatal La Société Minière de Bakwanga (Miba). While geographical concentration makes these kimberlites easier to defend and control, extensive technical and material requirements render them troublesome to run profitably for newcomers and, in fact, for anyone under circumstances of war, which disturbs the flow of imports and exports.

Although regulations within the diamond sector were disturbed by the first Congolese war of 1996-97, the sector was perhaps the only remaining sphere of DRC society where national legislation still applied and was widely respected prior to August 1998. The 1981 liberalisation laws excluded foreigners from artisanal extraction and only invited them as buyers. Consequently more than three-quarters of diamond income stayed within the country. Illegal exports, however, are not covered by these statistics. Some estimate the value of illicit diamond exports to US$300-400 million per year, corresponding to roughly half the value of official exports. In general, fraudulent exports throughout the 1990s are thought to be worth two to three times the value of official exports, corresponding to a stunning six times the total budget of the DRC (BSC, 2001a:8; Daito & Lumbi, 2001:9; BSC, 2001b:8).

Even if diamond smuggling predates 1998, Table 2 still demonstrates that official exports of diamonds, as well as of other natural resources, suffered from a remarkably

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**Table 2: DRC Exports in Million US$, 1995-2000**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diamonds</td>
<td>730.1</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>464.5</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>752.8</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>879.0</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>520.1</td>
<td>70.9</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobalt/copper</td>
<td>305.3</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>261.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>285.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>214.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>122.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>211.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>174.8</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>97.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>16.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>288.3</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>150.3</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>114.8</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>118.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>90.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>102.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>140.6</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>113.5</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>111.4</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,562.9</td>
<td>1,546.6</td>
<td>1,448.9</td>
<td>1,422.2</td>
<td>733.9</td>
<td>388.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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sharp decline subsequent to the eruption of war. From 1998 to 1999 diamond exports fell by 40 per cent and the sum of all Congolese exports, which had remained stable for four years, was halved. The decline was even sharper in 2000.

It is improbable that production of all of Congo’s natural resources could have been simultaneously reduced by 50 per cent from one year to the next. We will discuss later how government trading in natural resources may have contributed to fuelling the war, but will, in the following, question the extent to which the ‘missing’ or unofficial diamond exports may be linked to the armed conflict.

Whereas Table 2 introduced exports, Table 3 accounts for production of diamonds in the DRC. They both shed light on the year of 1998, when the DRC Ministry of Economy valued exports a US$879m (Table 2) whereas production should have realised US$661m (Table 3). It is probable that this divergence was due to the considerable volume of artisanal diamonds smuggled in from Angola and exported as diamonds originating from the Congo, though obviously not recorded as DRC production.

Caution should also be exercised when interpreting numbers provided in times of war, especially by a government engaged in that war. It is possible, for instance, that the ministry have somewhat overestimated the value of 1998 exports, in order to make subsequent, wartime decline catch the eye. The DRC authorities have much to gain from evidence to support the hypothesis that their adversaries have been exploiting the country’s resources on a massive scale, and therefore should be unilaterally condemned. But how strong is the evidence?

Data of the UN Panel Reports do confirm that the war has been fuelled by exploitation of the DRC’s natural resources, but not that such war-prolonging exploitation is exclusive to Kinshasa’s adversaries. The patterns of resource exploitation of the two major camps will in the following be analysed separately, with a focus on diamonds and on major actors such as Rwanda, Uganda, Congo’s government and Zimbabwe.

### Rwanda & Uganda

Following their 1998 conquest of the eastern DRC, the armies of Rwanda and Uganda, helped by Congolese soldiers in the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), spent a year practically emptying stockpiles of money and valuable goods found in the occupied territory. In this phase of large-scale plunder, the acquisition of diamonds was relatively less important than coltan, timber and coffee. The loot was transferred to Kampala and Kigali from where some of it was exported. Dispossession was presumably encouraged, sometimes organised and co-ordinated, by high-ranking army commanders of Rwanda and Uganda, with the consent of key officials.

in their respective governments (UN, 2001a:9). Since August 1999, when lootable resources in conquered territories were exhausted, anti-Kabila forces increasingly became engaged in extractive and productive activities. Soldiers, local people and foreigners were assigned by the occupiers to extract the resources deemed attractive.

While gold and coltan have dominated, diamonds have certainly made their mark in this phase of systematised exploitation. Diamonds cannot be found in the soils of Uganda and Rwanda, and authorities of both countries confirm that they have no production of this mineral. Yet over the last few years, both countries have exported diamonds worth millions of US dollars. From 1997 to 1998 Ugandan exports were multiplied by 12, and remained on a high level over the two ensuing years. By October 2000, Rwanda's export of diamonds had reached a level 90 times higher than during the entire year of 1998. Table 4 quantifies Rwandan and Ugandan exports since 1997, and compares them with DRC levels.

While the combined diamond exports of Uganda and Rwanda more than doubled from 1998 to 2000, DRC exports were halved. In absolute numbers though, the hikes of Uganda and Rwanda are smaller than DRC reductions. Whereas Congolese exports by 2000 had lost US$458m of their 1998 value, Ugandan and Rwandan exports combined had merely grown by some 1.6m. Although only a minor share of the fall of Congo's diamond exports has been recaptured by Uganda and Rwanda, it is beyond doubt that the influx of millions of US dollars drawn from looting, producing and re-exporting DRC diamonds transformed the balance of forces in Kigali and Kampala. Have diamonds come to stimulate sustained or intensified military engagement?

Part of the answer lies in the extent to which diamonds have contributed to financing the war effort, in terms of paying up for military equipment, food, wages and medicine. Beyond ensuring a considerable revenue flow in foreign currency, evidence affirms that diamonds have also been used in exchange for needed imports.

In 2000, for instance, when Rwandan diamond exports exceeded US$1.79m, exports of diamonds from the area controlled by their Congolese partner, RCD-Goma, reached a level of US$15.3m (Dietrich, 2001a:1f). This gap of some US$13.5m worth of diamonds demands explanation. While part of it probably lies in the diversion of exports to Burundi, Uganda or the Republic of Congo, another is the use of barter (UN, 2001a:32). While the exact significance of barter is hard to quantify, these data give us a closer idea. Since the shortage of valid cash necessitates other forms of paying up for required material, and arms traders may need to cover their tracks through money laundering, the use of diamonds as a means of payment appears to benefit insurgents and co-operating traders alike. As a third avenue, beyond providing foreign currency through exports and military equipment through barter, diamonds have benefited Rwandan and Ugandan authorities by ensuring vital tax revenues.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>1.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda/Rwanda</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>3.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>752.8</td>
<td>879.0</td>
<td>520.1</td>
<td>210.5**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 1998 to 2000, purchasers of diamonds in Rwanda-controlled DRC areas had to pay an average 5 per cent of the diamond value to the military administration. This levy has funnelled an annual average of US$2m to Rwanda, which exceeds the value of diamonds exported from that country any year. In 2001, however, Kigali pushed its luck and tripled the tax level. Purchasers now forwarded 15 per cent of diamond value, out of which one-third was kept by the RCD-Goma and two-thirds taken by Rwanda. Not surprisingly, the hike led to a reorientation of diamond trade towards Uganda, the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. As a result, 2001 statistics display a stagnation of Rwandan diamond exports, whereas Uganda tripled its sales to a level of US$3.8m (UN, 2001b:11f).

To illustrate the broader importance of DRC resources for Rwanda’s economy, however, it should be noted that Rwanda has reaped most fruits from its exploitation of coltan. The UN Panel estimates Rwanda to have earned a stunning US$250m from DRC coltan only over the 18 months from 1999-2000 when world market prices reached an all-time pinnacle. In total, the export of all products looted from the DRC grew to a level of 8.4 per cent of total Rwandan exports in 1999, and remained as high as 7.1 per cent in 2000. These enormous values involved in the re-exportation have, according to André, allowed Rwanda to double its military expenditure (BSC, 2001b:9), and thereby to fasten its grip on occupied areas of eastern Congo.

Given that the economy of Uganda is stronger than its southern counterpart, its re-exportation of Congolese goods has mattered proportionally less. Anyhow, partly due to taxes on DRC minerals providing Uganda with some US$5m a month, exploitation has significantly improved the country’s balance of payments. In fact, increased revenues from taxing and exporting DRC resources coincide with a considerable GDP improvement in 1998, which was sustained in 1999. While donors limit the level of Uganda’s military budget to 2 per cent of GDP, the overall economic growth allowed an actual expansion of that budget. DRC resources have thus indirectly spurred the growth in Uganda’s military spending, which in turn has facilitated Ugandan control in the vast areas across the western border.

As the war has allowed Rwanda and Uganda to draw important benefits from DRC diamonds, through re-exportation, barter and taxes, both countries have developed vital stakes in continued exploitation of Congo’s resources. But does continued exploitation hinge on sustained military presence? Since Kampala and Kigali have structured their DRC activities differently, their strategies diverge. Rwanda’s exploitation has been carried out under tight supervision by troops on the ground. If forces are to be withdrawn completely, the Rwandese therefore risk losing control of this crucial new source of income. Uganda, on the other hand, has to a greater extent let activities be carried out by proxies and through networks predating 1998, requiring a weaker presence of troops. Despite actual Ugandan withdrawal throughout 2001, therefore, structures that permit Ugandan officers, partners and rebel leaders to continue to profit from resource exploitation remain intact (UN, 2001b:20).

The DRC Government & Zimbabwe

On his way to Kinshasa in 1996-97, President Laurent Désiré Kabila forged new alliances by renegotiating existing mining concessions and cancelling others. While Kabila needed to gain control of this key sector, he had trouble freeing himself from his structural predicament of having been supported and sustained by foreigners.
Failing to establish the web of local Congolese partners and clients he needed, Kabila was unable to gain the upper hand (BSC, 2002a:6; Sherman, 2001:26).

A prime illustration of the president’s weakness relative to the industry’s strength is the ease of the enormous diamond of 266 carats, bought by Ngoyi Kasanji, head of the Congolese Diamond Federation (FCD). As Kasanji got to Kinshasa to resell his diamond, he was arrested by Kabila’s security guards who took it from him. The president’s efforts to sell this huge stone failed, however, as the FCD and other sector authorities instructed buyers not to accept it from him. Kabila ended up having to get back to Kasanji, who sold the stone to an Israeli buyer (BSC, 2002a:7; Monnier, et al. 2001).

This striking inability of the country’s political leader to set the agenda bears witness to the diamond sector’s supreme independence and sublime organisation. The late president’s deceitful authority is crucial to understand his counterproductive wartime policies vis-à-vis the mining sector. By August 1998, Kabila had ruled for only a year and hardly ensured reliable sources of income to sustain his regime. Finding itself in a desperate need of income to curb the insurrection, the government recursed to speeding up production of Congolese francs. A consequent loss of the currency’s value paved the way for hyperinflation, increased smuggling and consolidation of the informal market. Over two years, half the value of the country’s budget was lost (BSC, 2001b:11). Locating other means of funding gained in urgency and the diamond sector, still providing most of the country’s income, was targeted. The Kinshasa regime has attempted to use diamonds to finance the war in three distinct ways, which we will analyse separately:

- By setting up a monopoly on exports,
- By taxing key companies more heavily, and
- By distributing concessions in exchange for military assistance.

**Monopolising Exports**

In mid-2000, the government awarded a monopoly of diamond exports to Israeli International Diamond Industries (IDI). Evidence suggests that sellers perceived IDI prices to be below-market value and therefore sought to sell their diamonds from other countries instead. During the months following monopolisation, diamond exports from neighbouring Republic of Congo tripled. Moreover, sources reveal that whereas the contract stipulated a US$20m bonus to the government, IDI only paid US$3m. The government probably earned less from the deal than expected (Dietrich, 2001b:2; UN, 2001a:33), and cancelled the contract in April 2001. To justify re-liberalisation, it merely reasserted the rationale of the monopoly: to increase state revenue and check fraudulent trading. Monopolising exports had obviously not succeeded in achieving these objectives.

Indications have emerged, however, that the government hoped co-operation with IDI would also promote agendas more directly related to the war. While needed foreign currency was hardly forthcoming, the granting of attractive deals such as the diamond monopoly gave Kinshasa the occasion to demand compensation in other forms than money. Nkere Ntanda Nkingi, upon signing the contract on the government’s behalf, affirmed that ‘the Israeli army would train the Congolese anti-smuggling unit’ and that ‘IDI is the only company which could offer us such a deal and that is one of the reasons why we chose them’ (Dietrich, 2001b:6). IDI as well as
Congolese and Israeli authorities denied this, and Nkingi was later imprisoned 'for unspecified reasons'. Sources further suggest since 1998 IDI had attempted to gain ground in Congo’s diamond sector, and that the company's director had ties to Israeli army generals (Ibid., UN, 2001a:33).

**Taxing Producers**

The late president, seeing his assumed authority of the diamond sector fading and foreign companies bringing operations to a halt because of the war, came to target the coffers of Miba, the country's major diamond firm. While company structures were already falling apart, Kabila's appointment of a loyal official, formerly provincial governor of Kasai, as Miba's head didn't improve productivity. It did, nonetheless, improve Kinshasa's access to what was left of the company's resources.

From 1999 to 2001, the proportion of non-industrial diamonds of total Miba production declined from 4 to 1.8 per cent. Evidence suggests that these most valuable stones have fed not only Miba officials, but also government representatives. Since August 1998, the government has claimed 30-40 per cent of Miba earnings, regularly taking hold of millions of US dollars. Such disproportionate levies have also been imposed on other mining companies: Gécamines, for instance, found itself stripped of a third of profits earned in 1999 and 2000 (UN, 2001b:9,15; UN, 2001a:33).

**Awarding Concessions**

Since Zimbabwe has been a crucial alliance partner to the DRC, and the one most heavily involved in economic activities, diamond concessions given to this country will be investigated in some detail. To compensate Harare for its substantial troop assistance to stage off the attack from the east, the late president Kabila granted a number of mining concessions in the Kasai provinces at an early stage of the war. In late 1998, the Zimbabwean venture Operation Sovereign Legitimacy (Osleg) entered into a partnership with Congolese Compagnie mixte d’import-export (Comiex) to exploit awarded resources. Among shareholders were top political and military officials of both countries. Their contract gave Osleg

> the resources to protect and defend, support logistically, and assist generally in the development of commercial ventures to explore, research, exploit and market the mineral, timber, and other resources held by the state of the Democratic Republic of Congo (GW, 2002:1; UN, 2001b:17).

The partner company called Cosleg engaged Oryx Natural Resources to provide the needed capital and technical expertise to exploit the concessions. Mining profits were to be shared as follows: Oryx 40 per cent, Osleg 40 per cent and Cosleg 20 per cent (UN, 2001a:34). Hence, Zimbabwe could draw at least 50 per cent of mining profits as it controls the entire turnover of Osleg as well as half of Cosleg's. Nonetheless, Cosleg and Oryx pressed Congolese authorities for better concessions than those already awarded, notably of diamonds. At the turn of the new decade, they finally acquired the right to exploit two of the country's richest diamond deposits, Tshibwe and Senga Senga, for the forthcoming 25 years (UN, 2001b:10). Since 2000, Harare has exported DRC diamonds through South Africa (Ibid. p.11), ensuring vital flows of foreign currency to sustain crisis-ridden Zanu-PF.

To give an idea of the magnitude of the awards, it is worth noting that the previous concessionaire of the Tshibwe kimberlite was De Beers, one of the world's largest
diamond companies based in South Africa, now finding itself forced out of its joint venture with Miba by Zimbabwean interests. Some have argued that Sengamines, the company set up by Cosleg and Oryx to exploit the two exceptionally promising concessions, will replace Miba as the DRC’s major diamond producer (BSC, 2002a:5; UN, 2001b:10).

In return for dominating this remarkably powerful position, Zimbabwe’s primary responsibility is to keep tight military control of the strategic mining sector in the south, historically a core area of secessionist attempts. With Zimbabwe consolidating its economic stakes in this region, this military task has largely become as important for Harare as it is for Kinshasa.

While Zimbabwe is dominant among alliance partners in the Congolese diamond sector, Namibia and Angola have also demanded compensation in the form of diamond concessions. At the same time as the Tshibwe and Senga Senga concessions were given to Zimbabwean interests, a Namibian company got a diamond concession in Tshikapa. Luanda’s more recent efforts, as mentioned by the vice-minister of mines to president Joseph Kabila in January 2002, aim at acquiring diamond concessions across the Angolan border in the DRC (BSC, 2002a:5f).

Has Resource Exploitation Perpetuated War?

Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and the DRC government have all succeeded in their attempts to use diamonds as a means to finance the war. The degree to which diamonds in particular, and DRC natural resources in general, have perpetuated their military activities is still variable.

Rwanda, Uganda & Zimbabwe

Evidence affirms that for these three countries the war, officially fought for other reasons, has allowed substantial inflows of natural resources and foreign currency; without the armed conflict, these would not have been forthcoming. But have DRC economic activities gone beyond financing the parties’ warfare, and provided a net benefit to the three countries? Rwandan, Ugandan and Zimbabwean armies have drawn economic advantages in the DRC from exchanging appropriated natural resources for military equipment, from imposing taxes on economic activity in areas under their control, and from re-exporting appropriated goods. For Rwanda, the case is convincing that advantages have gone far beyond financing the war. The clearest indication is that re-exportation of Congolese resources provided 7-8 per cent of Kigali’s foreign earnings in 1999 and 2000. As barter and taxation supplement this accumulation, it is most probable that Rwanda’s DRC involvement has been more beneficial than costly. In 1999-2000, revenue from re-export of coltan alone provided all Rwanda needed to wage its war across the border (UN, 2001a:29f). This demonstrates that other resources, such as diamonds, have provided Rwandan authorities with a significant surplus.

In Uganda, DRC resources have directly contributed to growth of GDP and of the military budget. In addition to benefits generated by means of barter and taxation, the re-exportation of Congolese goods has ensured substantial revenues. While diamonds exports rocketed from US$0.2m in 1997 to US$3.8m in 2001, other resource flows reinforce this pattern. From 1998 to 1999, for instance, gold exports doubled and coltan exports more than tripled, while Uganda produced no coltan and its small
production of gold declined (Ibid. p.20). Since Ugandan exploitation has required less ground forces, there is little reason to doubt that Kampala has also drawn net benefits from its warfare. Nonetheless, mainly due to the greater size of the country’s economy, profits from DRC exploitation have been relatively less important than they have for Rwanda.

Since Zimbabwean stakes are linked to longer-term, systematised exploitation, benefits have probably not materialised as swiftly as for the ‘non-invited’ countries. Profiting from kimberlites such as Tshibwe, for instance, requires the time-consuming exercise of setting up the required technical, financial and commercial infrastructure. Although diamond profits may have been relatively low so far (BSC, 2001a:10), the probability is high that revenues will be picking up considerably. The fact that Zimbabwean economic engagement in the DRC extends far beyond diamonds, to encompass lucrative sectors such as cobalt, timber and transport, makes Harare’s prospects even brighter (UN, 2001b; GW, 2002). Moreover, regardless of the exact level of current income generated in the DRC, its importance to Zanu-PF cannot be overstated. Facing broad opposition as well as a spiralling economic crisis, DRC resources provide one of the few reliable sources of income – on which embattled Zimbabwean leaders increasingly depend to adhere to power.

Beyond the question of net benefit, the structure of exploitative activities also determines the stakes involved in the continuation of war. While war would make further exploitation easier for Kampala, its use of pre-existing networks to access Congo’s resources reduces its stakes in its continuation. For Zimbabwe and Rwanda, on the other hand, economic stakes are both higher and more dependent on continued military presence. Complete troop withdrawal would severely hamper the two countries’ efforts to sustain income from their exploitation of DRC resources. While Zimbabwe can hope for Kinshasa’s continued assistance, there is no guarantee that it will be forthcoming if the Zimbabwe Defence Force (ZDF) leaves. The RPA can be even more certain that resource-derived revenues will wither if it pulls back. Harare and Kigali authorities can, therefore, be regarded as important driving forces for the continuation of DRC war.

The DRC Government
The government in Kinshasa has tried to keep contenders at bay by resorting to a range of devices. Although a government is formally entitled to use the country’s resources to defend itself against aggression, the question is whether acquired resources have served purposes beyond covering the expenses incurred by hostilities.

Wartime policies targeting the diamond sector have channelled crucial benefits to the Congolese regime. Diamond exports and taxes on Miba have been key to sustain the influx of foreign currency to fund the war effort. Diamonds have also provided a direct avenue, parallel to the intermediary of US dollars, to meet military requirements. Miba stones appropriated by regime officials have, at the end of the day, few other exits than being exchanged for military assistance. The IDI contract is one illustration of the attempts to sustain military support with diamonds.

Zimbabwe is a case in point, which raises questions on the correspondence between Kinshasa’s ends and means. Harare was not only given the two most promising diamond areas, but also a range of other lucrative projects - including the world’s largest logging concession (GW, 2002:3). Did the DRC really have to allow loss of
control over such vast resources – only to guarantee military support? Was the war the sole reason why concessions were ‘looted by the authorities’, as Gorus puts it (BSC, 2002c:5)?

Since September 1998, there has been no imminent threat that adversaries would overthrow the regime. Although Zimbabwean troops have been vital to keep eastern advances at bay, Harare’s disproportionate rewards raise questions on the interests of the Congolese government. When awarding diamond concessions, it made sure that Zimbabwean benefits would coincide with its own profits through Comiex, dominated by top echelons of the DRC administration. Congolese authorities, caught in the quagmire of conflict, have hence tried to get out of it not by resisting external exploitation of the country’s resources, but by encouraging and joining this exploitation.

While the use of its own resources to confront aggression may be necessary, Kinshasa has moved beyond what it required to defend the country. In return for needed external assistance to stop the attack, the government has not only sacrificed massive natural resources, but developed economic interests in the continued presence of external troops – to secure its own share of the country’s resources. Paradoxically, state authorities have come to depend on other state armies to benefit from their own resources. Moreover, due to the lack of legitimacy of the military presence of foreign forces, Kinshasa seems to be increasingly dependent on this external military assistance to curb popular dissent and sustain its profits from resource exploitation. A question of increasing salience is therefore how interested Congolese authorities actually are in demilitarisation.

**Conclusion**

For over three years, the war has facilitated and reinforced diversion of natural resources beyond Congolese control. While the total value of wartime looting is estimated to be 5 per cent of the Congo’s GDP, calculations show that in the Mbuji-Mayi region, where the DRC alliance partners have their key concessions, roughly 20 per cent of exports yield no local benefit. The corresponding diversion for coltan in the eastern areas, where Rwandan and Ugandan contingents dominate, is 50 per cent (BSC, 2001b:86). These statistics reflect the intimate relationship between resource exploitation and war, phenomena that seem to be mutually reinforcing. Simply put, war facilitates excessive resource exploitation, and excessive exploitation spurs continued fighting. The circumstances of armed conflict, which suspend norms of sovereignty and democracy, are used by internal and external actors alike to justify and facilitate excessive exploitation. In turn, wartime exploitation seems to inspire belligerents to intensify their economic activities, as they realise that resources are good for more than funding the war. Since this exploitation demands military control, economic stakes end up nurturing the interests of adversaries to keep the war going. While the initial aim may have been military victory over an identified enemy, the case of the DRC shows that adversaries can end up sharing a common aim in sustaining stalemate.
Figure 1, drawn from causal dynamics uncovered in the Congolese case, shows how the feasibility and motivation of resource exploitation are linked both to triggering and prolonging armed conflict. Triggering and sustaining war require motivation, at the level of agency, as well as feasibility at the structural level. Natural resources, which in themselves are neutral, can make both the sparking and continuation of war feasible, and motivate actors to take up arms and keep fighting – if they expect and receive resource-derived benefits. In other words, resources can motivate and make feasible the invitation and perpetuation of armed conflict. While the expectation of feasible and profitable resource exploitation contributes to explaining why war is triggered, perpetuation of fighting is linked to the experience of successful exploitation.

Combined, the feasibility of exploitation and the factions’ motivation to exploit resources make the persistence of war easier to understand. While war may be triggered by a conflict of interests, abundant resources eventually trap belligerents in a most uneasy alliance where interests in continued militarisation converge.

This eventual convergence of interests among so-called adversaries raises the question of losers. Beyond comparison, those who have lost the most in the DRC war are the bulk of the Congolese population. As a result of the war at least 2.5 million people have died, many more have been displaced, and in the east a large majority has been severely undernourished (Ibid. p.11). While natural resources have been looted and over-exploited, human resources seem even more seriously affected. Promising developments underway, such as the Kimberley process to regulate the trade in diamonds as well as moves towards peace in Angola, are therefore most welcome. Yet close monitoring of these endeavours is needed to ensure that the merger of political, economic and military power, at the root of people’s grievances and suffering, is fundamentally challenged.

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Endnotes

1. Key trends in this debate are reflected in the volumes of Berdal & Malone (2000), Sherman (2001) and Taylor (2002). On personal motives and corruption among individual politicians, generals and business people, much is written in press reports and by organisations such as the UN, Global Witness and Transparency International. The existing abundance of material on the individual component is one reason why this article does not go into it. Moreover, the dynamics between relevant group agents and structures, structures that these groups are both shaped by and try to reshape, seem to explain more of the creation and perpetuation of economic agendas in conflict than investigating the behaviour of individuals.

2. Forums of such discussions include: the Global Compact policy dialogue of the UN (www.unglobalcompact.org); the Economics of Civil War, Crime and Violence project of the World Bank (www.worldbank.org/research/conflict); the Economic Agendas in Civil Wars programme of the International Peace Academy (www.ipacademy.org); the Economies of Conflict programme of the Fafo Institute for Applied Social Science (www.fafo.no/piccr/ecocon.htm), and various campaigns by NGOs like Global Witness (www.globalwitness.org).

3. The scale and scope of diamond smuggling across the border from Angola to the DRC is well documented in Filip de Boeck (2001), ‘Garimpeiro Worlds: Digging, Dying & “Hunting” for Diamonds in Angola’ in ROAPE 90:28, December; as well as in de Boeck’s contribution to the volume edited by Monnier et al. (2001).

4. The calculation assumes that DRC exports of the 2nd semester of 2000 were the same as those of the 1st semester, giving a total 2000 output of US$421m.


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The Political Economy of Sacrifice: 
*Kinois* & the State

Theodore Trefon

With approximately 6 million inhabitants, Kinshasa is the second largest city in sub-Saharan Africa – and one of the poorest. The residents of the Congolese capital (the *Kinois*), like people throughout the country, have been struggling through a multi-dimensional crisis for over forty years. Security, political and economic problems are dramatic, largely because the post-colonial state abdicated from its role as provider of social and administrative services, transforming itself into a social predator. In response to these constraints, the *Kinois* have developed remarkably creative people-based ‘solutions’ to address the challenges of daily survival. In contrast to what has become a tradition of condemning the inability of the Congo/Zaire authorities to ‘manage the country’ according to Western perceptions of how states should function, this article argues that state-society relations in Kinshasa are not always as poorly organised as outside observers tend to believe. There is order in the disorder. Function and dysfunction overlap. This applies to all social and political levels. The *Kinois* have entered into a new phase of post-colonialism by combining global approaches to local problems while blending ‘traditional’ belief systems and behaviours with their own unique forms of ‘modernity’. They have proven themselves remarkably clever at mobilisation for economic survival thanks to new forms of solidarity and thanks to accommodation with the international community, which is increasingly ‘acting on behalf of the state’ in many areas of public life. Conversely, the *Kinois* seem to have failed at transforming political discourse and desires into political mobilisation.


Au contraire de l'opinion générale qui veut que les autorités du Congo/Zaïre sont incapables de gérer le pays selon les normes occidentales, voire rechignent à le faire, le présent article tend à démontrer que les relations État-société à Kinshasa ne sont pas aussi désorganisées que les observateurs étrangers les perçoivent. L'ordre règne dans le désordre; fonctionnements et disfonctionnements s'y chevauchent. On relève ces paradoxes à tous les échelons sociaux et politiques, dans tous les réseaux associatifs qu'ils soient de quartier, professionnels ou ethniques jusqu'au niveau des décideurs politiques. Le Kinois est entré dans une nouvelle ère post-coloniale. Rejetant, de manière sélective, l'héritage du colonialisme belge, il mêle
approches globales et problèmes locaux, alliant croyances et comportements traditionnels avec sa conception personnelle de la « modernité ». Nulle part ailleurs dans le pays, personne ne rivalise avec le Kinois. Il est unique, particulièrement quand il est amené à parer l’adversité en inventant des stratégies quotidiennes de survie. Paradoxalement, 32 ans de dictature et de crise, y compris une longue période de transition dominée par la guerre, les pillages et la rébellion, l’ont aidé à concevoir de nouvelles réalités politique, économique, culturelle et sociale.

Le Kinois s’est montré remarquablement ingénieux dans sa mobilisation pour la survie économique en utilisant les réseaux commerciaux, communautaires, religieux ou de parenté. Il a même réussi à exporter ses activités « informelles » bien structurées au-delà des frontières, partout en Afrique et en Europe. Bien plus, malgré des contraintes politiques et économiques énormes, il poursuit sa lutte pour améliorer sa qualité de vie. L’ambiance est en effet un élément très important dans la vie quotidienne à Kinshasa. Les autorités ont aussi dû apprendre à s’adapter, à s’accommoder des priorités de la communauté internationale. Bailleurs de fonds et ONG agissent de plus en plus pour compte de l’État dans de multiples secteurs de la vie publique.

Par contre, malgré son inventivité pour sa survie physique, sociale et culturelle, le Kinois se montre atrocement incapable de transformer le discours et les attentes politiques en une mobilisation politique. La mobilisation pour le changement politique est perçue comme un engagement qui dépasse les exigences du combat quotidien. Il requerrait encore plus de sacrifices sans garanties de succès. Ce comportement permet d’expliquer l’insuccès du Dialogue Inter-Congolais et de la mise en œuvre des Accords de Lusaka.


Mais le Kinois n’attend, cependant, pas grand chose de l’État. L’évolution du discours politique dans la transition post-Mobutu n’a guère amélioré ses conditions de vie. L’État post-colonial modèle qui devait lui fournir des services sociaux s’est plutôt avéré être un prédateur social. La piétre mise en place d’institutions démocratiques est ressentie par la population comme une stratégie politique délibérée destinée à maintenir les réseaux de pouvoir en place, au détriment des priorités sociales et économiques. L’État semble s’être plié au cannibalisme social, la société étant sa propre proie.

Sous Mobutu, les mécontentements étaient rarement évoqués car toute contestation à caractère politique était brutalement réprimée. Aujourd’hui encore, les plaintes et critiques sont peu souvent dirigées contre la classe politique par le Kinois. Elles le sont contre la société ou Dieu lui-même. La multiplication des réseaux de solidarité est sa seule protection parce que la solidarité qui est devenue une nécessité se substitue à la confiance légitime attendue par les autorités.
Bien que des africanistes occidentaux ont fait progresser le débat sur la question de savoir si la post-colonie a ou non réussi en tant qu’entité politique, l’attention accordée aux stratégies inventées par les populations de ces Etats-nations n’est pas encore suffisante. Le Kinois est vraiment particulier : il n’attend que peu des autorités politiques, d’une part, et, d’autre part, il a fait de réels progrès, grâce à son organisation sociale très personnelle, dans la réinvention du modèle d’Etat-nation post-colonial.

Constraints & Invention

Since the early 1980s, ‘collapse’, ‘oppression’, ‘illusion’, ‘bankruptcy’, ‘corruption’ and ‘criminalisation’ have become unavoidable terms when referring to the Zaire of Mobutu and subsequently, the Congo of Kabila père and fils (Turner, 1981; Callaghy, 1984; Young, 1984; Young and Turner, 1985; Braeckman, 1992; Leslie, 1993; Weiss, 1995; Bustin, 1999a; McNulty 1999; Lemarchand, 2001). These works focus on the ‘failure’ of sub-Saharan Africa’s largest state, attributing it to deep-rooted historical processes, cold war politics, aggressive industrial capitalism and personality cult. This state crisis terminology is representative of a continent-wide examination of the (in)appropriateness, and future survivability, of the Weberian nation-state model for the African post-colony.¹

In contrast to what has become a tradition of condemning the inability – or unwillingness – of the Congo/Zaire authorities to ‘manage the country’ according to Western perceptions of how states should function, this article argues that state-society relations in Kinshasa are not always as poorly organised as outside observers tend to believe; there is order in the disorder. Function and dysfunction overlap. This applies to all social and political levels, ranging from neighbourhood, professional or ethnic associations and networks to the level where political decisions are made. The Kinois (which is how the residents of Kinshasa call themselves) have entered into a new phase of post-colonialism. Selectively rejecting the legacy of Belgian colonialism, they combine global approaches to local problems while blending ‘traditional’ belief systems and behaviours with their own unique forms of ‘modernity’. They are not a generation behind their counterparts in cities in neighbouring countries. In many respects they are a generation ahead, especially when it comes to adapting to adversity by developing strategies to deal with daily survival issues.² Paradoxically, 32 years of dictatorship and crisis - and subsequently an unfinished transition period largely dominated by war, pillage and rebellion – has helped them invent new political, economic, cultural and social realities.

The Kinois have proven themselves remarkably clever at mobilisation for economic survival thanks to trade, community, religious and kinship networks. They have even succeeded in exporting their well-structured ‘informal’ activities beyond their borders to elsewhere in Africa and Europe (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 1999; 2000). Moreover, despite monumental political and economic constraints, they keep up the struggle to improve their quality of life. Authorities have also learned to adapt. This is witnessed in the way that they have accommodated themselves to the priorities of the international community. Donors and non-governmental organisations are increasingly ‘acting on behalf of the state’ in many areas of public life. To do so, however, they need to rely on qualified Congolese working in state institutions. This counters the argument that the Congo state does not exist – a point developed below.

In marked opposition to their inventiveness for physical, social and cultural survival, the Kinois have proven themselves abysmally inapt with respect to transforming
political discourse and political desires into political mobilisation. While economic survival was tolerated under the Mobutu dictatorship, political mobilisation was not. Moreover, mobilisation aimed at inducing political change is perceived as a long-term commitment transcending the demands of daily combat. It would require ever more sacrifice, but provides no guarantees of success. This attitude helps explain the failure of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and implementation of the Lusaka Accords.3

Kinshasa, to paraphrase Thomas Turner, seems to be 'permanently on the verge of insurrection' (Turner, 1981). Insurrection, however, has not yet fully taken place. The people of Kinshasa have, nonetheless, taken to the streets on numerous occasions during the years of Mobutu's version of 'democratic transition' and subsequently during the presidency of Laurent Désiré Kabila. Notable examples include the lootings of 1991 and 1993 (Devisch, 1995a), the Christian March of 1992, days of generalised strikes known as journées de villes mortes, the welcome of the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques de Libération in May 1997 and the subsequent 'rebel' and Tutsi hunt during the invasion of August and September 1998 (Yoka, 1999:119-125). Although some of these demonstrations were indeed violent, the relative non-violent behaviour of the Kinois in these situations is paradoxical. It can perhaps be explained by the fact that the Congolese have the bloodbaths of the post-independence rebellions and the two Shaba wars in their collective memory and are not ready to risk that degree of bloodletting again (de Villers and Omasombo, forthcoming).

Research Space

Most political scientists study the post-colonial state by looking at large geographical spaces or political entities ranging from the African continent as a whole, to geographical regions (such as West Africa or Southern Africa), and sometimes linguistic spaces (such as French-speaking or Lusophone Africa) or sometimes individual countries. Attempting to understand political dynamics and social evolution by looking at a specific urban population, although a valuable analytical tool, is an uncommon approach in political science. Urban anthropologists, notably with respect to 'the modern Western city', have made some progress in doing so, although Ulf Hannerz's plea more than twenty years ago 'to seek further illumination in the political economy of urbanism' has not been sufficiently heeded (Hannerz, 1980:79). In the case of Kinshasa, studying urban dynamics is important for three main reasons.

First, even though Mobutu was fond of repeating that 'Kinshasa n'est pas le Zaïre' the evolution of the city is intimately linked to the political economy of the country as a whole. Revenues generated by the copper mines of Shaba or the diamond fields of Kasai were controlled by a Kinshasa-based political elite. The capital's predominance in terms of infrastructure, administration, employment, investment, services and image is overwhelming (de Maximy, 1984; Pain, 1979, Gondola, 1997). Mobutu made some attempts to transfer the seat of power from Kinshasa to Gbadolite, his native 'mini-Versailles-in-the-jungle', but was unsuccessful. The political will of the dictator was unable to match the uncontrollable dynamics of the megapole's expansion.

Second, like Jeffery Herbst (2000), we can consider that the degree of political control in Africa decreases in relation to the distance from the capital city. Herbst attributes this to low population densities (in the pre-colonial period), enabling people to migrate in order to avoid political oppression. Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan (1997) explain in a study of rural Central African Republic that 'the state stops 12 kilometres from the capital'. Land tenure practices in the Kinshasa hinterland support
this hypothesis because traditional authority — *le droit coutumier* — is just as important to local populations as modern law with respect to access, usufruct and ownership of real estate (*cadastre*). In the Zaïre of Mobutu, huge parts of the country were beyond the effective reach of any form of state authority — a situation which has been exacerbated today due to war and rebellion. This reality is encapsulated in the title of Roland Pourtier’s (1997) article ‘Du Zaïre au Congo: un territoire en quête d’État’ (‘From Zaïre to Congo: a territory in search of a state’). The state — and of course foreign occupying forces — manifest themselves primarily in areas where rent-generating activities are possible.

A third factor is simply a demographic one. An estimated one out of ten Congolese live in Kinshasa. With its approximately 6 million inhabitants (DDK, 1998), it is the second largest city in sub-Saharan Africa (after Lagos). It is also the second largest ‘French speaking’ city in the world (even though only a small percentage of Kinois speak French correctly). It is more populous than 25 out of 56 African countries — a contrast admittedly exaggerated by the very small African island countries (United Nations, 2001).

The ‘creation’ of Kinshasa goes back to the early 1880s. During the Leopoldian period, Leopoldville was a cluster of small villages. In the colonial period, the European city, surrounded by black townships, was organised to serve the needs of the Belgian ‘civilising mission’. The spatial segregation of black and white districts was as strictly controlled as was migration from village to town. The early post-colonial period was characterised by very rapid demographic growth — peaking at 9.4 per cent in 1970 (Bruneau, 1995:105). The growth rate has subsequently halved to approximately 4 per cent (UN, 1997:159). Like most other African cities, Kinshasa’s current morphology derives from colonial planning. There is the former *ville blanche* which is the commercial and administrative district (where white expatriates still reside — and as a kind of historical revenge, many expatriates working in the diplomatic corps or NGO community are obliged to live there for perceived security reasons); there are the planned townships or *cités planifiées* (these are settlements which were occupied in the immediate post-independence ‘first-come first-served’ frenzy for land); and third, the ‘anarchic extensions’ in the southern and eastern zones of the periphery which are interesting examples of urbanisation without urban planning.

Oppression, Crisis & Sacrifice

The crisis that hit Kinshasa and the Kinois in the early 1980s, transforming what was once *kin la belle* into *kin la poubelle* (Kinshasa the beautiful, Kinshasa the dump) cannot be dissociated with deep-rooted historical processes. A key component of such processes was *patrimonialism*. The Congo Free State mapped out in Berlin in 1885 was King Leopold’s personal property. The Belgian monarch exploited it ruthlessly and with impunity (Willame, 1972; Emerson, 1979; Hochschild, 1998).

A second factor was Belgian paternalism. The Belgian colonial system was based on the triumvirate of church, administration and large corporations and justified itself in terms of its ‘civilising mission’. It concentrated on the relative material well-being of the population and basic primary education. The obvious limits of this mission were the complete absence of political responsibilities. No elite leadership had been trained. All important decisions emanated from Brussels. Even the European settler community in Congo enjoyed no political rights. Paternalism did not start breaking down until the early 1950s. A. A. J. van Bilsen’s 1956 30-year plan for ‘emancipation’ was considered by the Belgian colonial authorities as being completely unrealistic.
Amongst the first Belgian intellectuals to openly speak about 'emancipation', van Bilsen was viewed in Belgium and by Europeans in the Congo as a revolutionary dreamer.

Third, the abysmal lack of political preparation led to one of the African continent's most brutal post-colonial transitions. The major political events were the mutiny of the Force Publique only a few days after independence; secessionist attempts, notably in Katanga, but in Southern Kasai as well; failed UN intervention; the Kasavubu-Lumumba rivalry and the subsequent assassination of Lumumba (De Witte, 2001); the West's desire to maintain control over the Congo's mineral wealth (Bezy et al. 1981:83-111) and to contain perceived Soviet expansion (Legum, 1961; Vanderlinden, 1985). These factors led to the coup d'état of 25 November 1965 that was to mark the beginning of a 32-year-long dictatorship (Chomé, 1974).

A fourth factor can be summarised as the Mobutist predatory state. The Congo-Zaire post-colony abdicated from its role as provider of basic social and administrative services, rapidly transforming itself into a social predator (Schatzberg, 1991). Mobutu, like King Leopold, exploited the Congo and its resources as if they were his personal property. Because of cold war politics and Western capitalist interests, Zaire received nearly unconditional support – particularly from Washington, Brussels and Paris. Until the fall of the Berlin wall, the West backed a regime characterised by violence, nepotism, personality cult of the 'supreme leader' and a host of other human rights abuses (Braeckman, 1992; Wrong 2001). Liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique were manipulated by Mobutu who also played upon the 'me or chaos' syndrome (Stockwell, 1978; Bustin, 1999b). While the utility of Zaire-as-buffer zone was somewhat of a myth, the mineral wealth of Shaba/Katanga was, and remains, very real, despite the near collapse of GECAMINES. The West was also very interested in recycling its petro-dollars. This led to the financing of a number of mega projects such as the Inga Dam and the Inga-Shaba high-tension line (Willame, 1986). To attract Western investments and to diversify his international support, Mobutu played one backer against the other. The Congolese people are still suffering to meet debt repayment schedules elaborated in the form of structural adjustment programs related to these mega projects.

These processes, combined with the shrinking of state resources due to mismanagement and corruption, are the root causes of sacrifice in Kinshasa today. When anthropologists refer to 'sacrifice', they usually do so in the context of ritual and religion, emphasising the word's literal meaning: 'to make sacred' (de Heusch, 1985:1-17). The use of the term in this article is much more prosaic: it pertains to the hard Kinshasa reality of 'doing without'. People do without food; they do without fuelwood; they do without primary health services; they do without safe drinking water. They also do without political participation, security, leisure or the ability to organise their time as they would like. Parents are not only forced to decide what child will be able to go to school in a given year, they also have to decide who shall eat one day and who shall eat the next. In Lingala, the noun used to express sacrifice – tokokufa – literally means 'we are dying'.

When we look at the public health statistics, Kinshasa should be a vast dying ground. Those that have not died of AIDS, should be dead from starvation. Those that have not died of hunger should be dead from either water-bourne diseases, or simply exhaustion, because due to transportation problems, people are forced to walk very long distances. These are the daily sacrifices that the Kinois are forced to make. The vast majority of households in Kinshasa (comprised of approximately seven
individuals) dispose of less than $50 per month – just about enough to cover the food bill. Many families have less. Ritual sacrifice encounters the sacrifice of poverty when parents accuse their children of being witches in order to change the course of their ‘bad luck’ (De Boeck, forthcoming).

**The Kinshasa ‘Bargain’**

The popular political philosophy of the *Kinois* is largely dictated by addressing immediate and basic needs. In order to do so, they have invented *la coop*, a diminutive of the French word ‘cooperation’. When a *Kinois* says *na kei kobeta coop*, it means ‘I’m going to strike a deal’, or ‘I’m going to work’. *Na kei kobeta coop* is on the lips of millions of *Kinois* every morning, even though it has been many years since the idea of work has meant a secure, salaried job in the formal economy. For the vast majority of the *Kinois*, ‘work’ is any small job, activity or opportunity that provides enough francs to buy food or pay for collective taxi fare. Work entails ‘breaking stones’, *kobeta libanga*: the notorious forced labour imposed on the people of what was then the Congo Free State during the late Leopoldian period to build the Kinshasa-Matadi rail line. Today, *kobeta libanga* means being fearless, daring to take any risk, doing the physically impossible and the morally unimaginable. It implies trickery, ‘wheeling and dealing’, acting as a go-between or bargaining. In English the word ‘bargain’ best captures the practice and spirit of *la coop*.

The Kinshasa bargain is an agreement between two or more parties that provides a return. It can be solicited by a ‘beneficiary’ or imposed on a ‘victim’. Anyone who is in need of either a good or service, or who needs to resolve a problem is invariably the ‘client’ of a go-between. This applies to dealing with a civil servant in order to obtain an administrative document, buying a bag of cooking charcoal or manioc or ‘simply’ hailing a taxi. Given the overwhelming precariousness of life in Kinshasa people have been forced to depend on, i.e. ‘bargain’ with, others. All the *Kinois* are subject to this system that takes place in all sectors of daily life cutting across the entire social spectrum. Those that try to evade this form of solidarity are quickly brought to order, usually by trickery but sometimes by force. Like in formal economies where ‘tax evasion’ is sanctioned, evasion of paying a ‘solidarity tax’ is also sanctioned. This is a kind of urban variant of the ‘levelling process’ that regulates relations between individuals and their clans in traditional acephalous societies.

‘Bargaining’ Kinshasa style entails disregarding moral values such as honesty, respect or altruism. The emerging (a)morality in Kinshasa dictates that it is better to ‘sell your soul to the devil’ than to be scrupulous. Cunning is required to meet immediate needs. Durkheim’s theory of anomy appropriately describes this situation (Durkheim, 1991). Anomy is a situation whereby moral, cultural and legal norms are abandoned or transformed creating a social crisis. An imbalance exists between the desire to attain social values such as success, prestige, or power, and the objective means available to people to attain these values. This generates the sentiment that socially unacceptable behaviours such as fraud, violence or corruption are necessary to meet vital needs. As a response to the anomy that characterises the Congo on the state level, new forms of social organisation such as the Kinshasa ‘bargain’ emerge on the level of relations between individuals.

The process of acculturation brought on by colonialism and contact with the Western values, particularly in urban areas is one way of accounting for the disappearance of ‘traditional’ forms of solidarity. Economic crisis and poverty are other determinants contributing to this attitudinal and behavioural shift. Another explanation relates to
the mid-1970s Mobutist doctrine of ‘return to authenticity’. This MPR (Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution) creation had the effect of undermining individual initiative because the MPR claimed to be responsible for all Zairians ‘from cradle to grave’. This was a bizarre and perverse adaptation of the paternalistic policies practiced during the colonial period. Some of Mobutu’s aphorisms proclaimed at popular rallies during the apogee of his power reveal how the ‘supreme leader’ perceived civic morality. This perception is epitomised by his famous declaration yiba, kasi mingi te (steal, but don’t steal too much). Another landmark political speech, one that foreshadowed massive nationalisation of large and small foreign-owned companies, officially launched the ‘fend for yourselves’ fashion (débrouillez-vous) that has never lost its currency in Kinshasa.

This political context helps explain the relative (but not exclusive) dishonesty of la débrouille phenomenon that has already been written on extensively by mainly Western political scientists: Jackson (2001, this issue), economists – Marijesse and De Herdt (1996), De Herdt and Marijsse (1999) and anthropologists such as De Boeck (1996) and MacGaffey (1986). It is not uncommon to hear a thief caught ‘red-handed’ say: ‘if I don’t steal, what am I going to eat?’. The need to procure food for oneself or the family is frequently the explanation given to account for the multiple forms of la débrouille. The means – corruption, theft, extortion, collusion, embezzlement, fraud, counterfeiting and prostitution – justify the ends: survival!

The collective social values and practices characteristic of rural life in Congo have given way to the demands and contradictions of a market economy in which the individual is central. Attitudes and behaviours have evolved due to the degree of crisis and specifically the difficulties in finding cash-earning employment. Always looking for new ways to cope, poverty is psychologically transformed into ‘despair solidarity’. While the Kinois are able and willing to extend psychological support, financial and material constraints limit this solidarity to a pragmatic system of exchange. People help each other primarily if they can expect something in return. Debt, whether in the form of a loan, a service rendered or a favour, is expected to be redeemed at some point.

The nearly universal recourse to faith in the face of the despair and suffering caused by poverty is prevalent in Kinshasa. One of Kinshasa’s most famous Christian singers, Eva Mbikayi, sings in a popular song: naboyi souffrance (I deny sufferance). Suffering takes the form of hunger, poor health, and physical debilitation, just as it takes the form of psychological stress resulting from the complexities of survival ‘here and now’ and uncertainty about the future. The psychological constructions elaborated to ‘deny’ this suffering are indicative of the remarkable capacity of the Kinois to not ‘give up the fight’ for survival. Whether or not the Kinois deny or accept suffering is difficult to ascertain. The relevant point is that they act to reduce these forms of suffering. These psychological constructions and actions even help to achieve well-being, which is an often overlooked or underestimated dimension of contemporary social dynamics in Kinshasa. Adherence to the ever-increasing number of revelation churches presided over by all sorts of pastors, preachers, and prophets is one dimension of this quest for well-being. The Jesus of the Belgian missionaries was replaced by the doctrine of Mobutism. When Mobutism failed, hope in Jesus took on new meaning. The fact that churches may be filled on Sunday morning does not, however, mean that the Kinois believe that God alone can help them mitigate their survival problems. Religious soul-searching must not be confused with material problem solving: hence the perpetual need to ‘bargain’. The overlapping of religious
sentiment and pragmatic survival preoccupations is capture by Eva Mbikayi who sings in characteristically Kinshasa style: *Eloko na sengi yo longola mosika na ngai pauvreté. Ngai na lingi lisusu mobola te ngo Jésus, ngo papa, bateya ngai prospérité. Nkolo sunga mpo nazua ava na se ya mozinga* (help me chase poverty away. I don't want to be poor anymore, Jesus, my father. You told me about prosperity. Let me have it here and now!).

**Invention in the Vital Service Sectors**

The implications of dictatorship and the stalemate of the two Kabila regimes have resulted in a severe crisis in the vital sectors upon which most urban populations tend to take for granted. Paradoxically however, the relative (but not total) abdication of the state from these sectors has resulted in a process of ‘indigenisation’. This refers to the ways which the Kinois have entered into a ‘post’ post-colonial phase by using their own – opposed to imported - resources, networks and ideas to adapt to adversity. The process has contributed to the ‘unwhitening’ of the post-colonial political economy and social system. Public health is increasingly co-managed by the World Health Organisation – along with competent Congolese staff. At the same time, however, there is a marked shift away from western-style health care toward a syncretic form of healing based on faith systems and traditional pharmacopeia. The education system which basically free until the 1980s is now ‘privatised’. Parents struggle to pay for school fees even though the image of the university diploma is increasingly tarnished. Few parents can afford to send all their children to school at the same time. Most families are forced to sacrifice the education of some of their children, other families alternate years. This explains why many finish secondary school when they are already in their late 20s. Few however do finish school: in the past few years, approximately 120,000 high school diplomas were granted per year. In a country of somewhere approximately 55 million people, half of whom are under the age of 15, the number is shockingly low. The two examples developed below – food security and water procurement - are intended to demonstrate the mechanisms of invention in face of political and economic constraints.

**Food Security & the ‘Rurbanisation’ Process**

Power, prestige and status in Kinshasa increasingly derives from the ability to eat or the ability to distribute food, or money for food, to others. Up until the 1980s, approximately 15 per cent of the national budget was devoted to the agricultural sector. Today that figure is less than 2 per cent, an insignificant sum when compared to the total official state budget. Hunger and malnutrition has become a very serious problem. Approximately 50 per cent of the Kinois eat only one meal per day. 25 per cent eat only one meal every two days (Ministère de la santé publique, 1999:47). Food expenditures represent between 50 per cent and 70 per cent of household budgets (Marijsse and De Herdt, 1996). Belgian families, for reasons of comparison, devote 16 per cent of their budgets to food. Although it is difficult to establish whether or not Mobutu deliberately kept his people hungry as a political tool, the situation convincingly reflects Sylvie Brunel’s analysis of hunger and politics:

*The people who control food supplies are the people with the power. Keeping certain segments of the population in a chronic state of hunger is a way of manipulating them because the effort devoted to daily survival hampers their capacity to organise themselves and fight for political change* (Brunel, 2002:72, author’s translation).
Despite the war which has cut the city off from its former supply areas in the provinces of Equateur and Orientale and despite the decay of the road infrastructure, a famine situation has never developed. Food security now is not much worse today than in 1997 because important supply changes and innovations have taken place. Most importantly Bandundu has replaced other food supply sources and now provides between 80 to 90 per cent of agricultural produce for Kinshasa. River transport along the Kwilu has replaced road transport because of the poor quality of the roads and the inadequate number of lorries and pick-up trucks. It is now estimated that at least 150-200 locally made wooden boats ply the Congo river from Kinshasa to Bandundu and Kasai. River transport of food owes its expansion to commissioning agents (*des agents commissionnaires*) who: bulk goods to be sent to a particular destination; group travellers together and arrange for their transportation; and facilitate communications because they have cell phones. This is very useful in sending and receiving money in lieu of the banking sector. The work of these agents is based on trust, ethnicity and social capital. It can be viewed as a people-based response to a failing state and formal private sector involvement.

Other innovations include what can be termed ‘rurbanisation’. This is the phenomenon of practicing rural subsistence activities in an urban-style landscape (Trefon, 2000a; 2000b). The explosion of urban and peri-urban agriculture is a notable example. Any casual observer can see that manioc is planted all over the city. Although this is a significant contribution to household food supplies, people complain that eating *pondu* – manioc leaves – without the salt or oil they have to buy, is not very appetising. Similarly, animal husbandry has also expanded considerably. Aside from the goats which can be seen grazing along the Boulevard du 30 Juin (the Champs Elysées of Kinshasa), the increasing number of shops in Kinshasa which sell animal feed is a reliable indicator of small-scale breeding for family consumption and sale. Above, reference was made to the dense movement of people from the *cités* towards the former *ville blanche* every morning. But there is also a massive movement of people from these *cités* towards the outskirts of Ndjile, Masina or Kimwenza. A common sight in the morning is the outward movement of men and women with hoes and machetes – in the evening they return with agricultural produce and fuelwood. It is significant that men participate in activities that were until only recently strictly gendered and carried out by women.

The ‘rurbanisation’ of Kinshasa can also be viewed in terms of a linguistic paradox. In Lingala, the word ‘city’ does not exist. The word *mboka* signifies village and *mboka ya mondélé* which translates as the ‘white man’s village’, is used to refer to the city. The popular language still opposes what was formerly the European city with the African *cité*. People still say, ‘I’m going to town’ when they go to the centre of Kinshasa (to work, take care of administrative or banking problems or to shop) and ‘I’m going to the *cité* when returning home.

Another form of innovation in the food security sector is the way the Congolese authorities negotiate with – and manipulate – the international donor community into acting on their behalf. This is a strong counter-argument to those who claim that the Congo state does not exist. In practise, the efforts of bi-lateral and multilateral donors and the thriving NGO sector, depend considerably on people working in state administrations. Authorities do not have funds to carry out projects. They are, however, involved in their implementation. Political appointees obviously changed after 1997 but a surprising number of technical and administrative staff have held onto their positions. Bureaucracies are surprisingly stable despite the fact that salaries are often unpaid or paid only after long waits.
Last but not least, important changes in cropping patterns have taken place over the last decade, notably in Bandundu and Bas-Congo. There is a notable increase in the production of cowpeas which have become an important source of vegetable protein. There is also more and more millet found in the dry savannas of southern Bandundu. In the inland valleys of Bas-Congo, such as around Mawunzi, and in the Kwilu region of Bandundu, rice production has increased. There has also been a sizeable increase in the production of maize in Bandundu which is shipped to Kinshasa and to Kasai provinces. The maize produced now in Bandundu makes up for the loss of maize supplies from Equator province.

Water

The water sector in Kinshasa, like food procurement, is characterised by sacrifice and innovation. Approximately one-third, or approximately 2 million Kinois, do not have access to the public distribution network. Throughout the city, 25 per cent of families have to walk more than one kilometre per day to fetch water (Ministère de la Santé Publique, 1999:55). In the district of Kisenso for example (which can be considered as either a newly urbanised district or a semi-rural one), people have to walk two and a half hours per day for water (Oxfam/Great Britain, 2001:31). They have drastically reduced their consumption of water because of its cost in terms of money, time and fatigue. Tap water, when available, is reserved for drinking, washing food and then for cooking. Rain, river or well water is used for personal hygiene, laundry and washing the house. Water is always recycled: it is never wasted.

To compensate for the water board’s13 limited service, the Kinois have adapted various types of supply strategies. People dig wells and collect rainwater in whatever kind of containers are available – even using discarded plastic motor oil bottles as canteens. They also go to rivers where water is free, or to the parcelle4 of a family member. Another option is buying water from individuals who are connected to the distribution network. Getting the water home is the next ordeal. Depending on the volume of water and the distance home, different techniques are adopted. It can be carried in pails on the head (by women, girls and boys), rolled in wheelbarrows (by older boys), put in barrels and rolled along the ground (by men), or transported by car or taxi (by men or women).

Early in the morning, women and children gather their pails and start queuing at springs or public taps for what they call 'water duty' (likelemba ya mayi). Families sometimes rotate this water duty: one morning one mother will be responsible for the chore, the next day it will be someone else’s job. In contrast to this pragmatic solidarity, long waits can also seriously strain relations: high population densities in the poorer neighbourhoods create huge crowds at places where water can be found. People argue and fight over whose turn it is next.

The quality of water from all of these sources is poor and it is consequently recommended to boil it for 30 minutes in order to eliminate bacteria. Boiling water, however, raises another serious dilemma because practically all families in Kinshasa use charcoal as the primary source of cooking fuel. But access to charcoal is just as difficult as it is to water. Women thus have to make difficult strategic choices of how to use their limited sources of charcoal and consequently prefer using it to cook food opposed to boiling water. Despite the prevalence of water-borne intestinal diseases, boiling water is not perceived as being a priority. Bacterial contamination also develops when water is stored in containers that are not regularly cleaned. While basic hygiene dictates that these containers be sterilised, few households do so. People
do not want to use their precious water to wash a container. The same attitude applies to carbon filters. These filters should be scrubbed and washed regularly and the carbon element needs to be replaced periodically. If not, serious diseases such as typhoid fever, cholera, hepatitis A, or diarrhoea can result. In this context, it is not surprising that 30 per cent of all registered medical visits in Kinshasa in 2000 were water related (Oxfam/Great Britain, 2001:31). Despite public health efforts carried out mainly by international humanitarian groups, people remain largely unaware of the relationship between unsuitable drinking water and disease.

The state's management of this theoretically public service is indisputably insufficient. Yet, the state performs the double role of, one, providing some service and, two, collaboration with the international community in the latter's involvement in infrastructure maintenance, development and investment. Unable to deal directly with water processing and distribution, authorities, as mentioned above concerning food security, have negotiated with the international community to act on their behalf. The Congo state has delegated a part of its responsibilities to international, bilateral and non-governmental organisations that have both the financial means and the technical savoir-faire to bolster the deficient water board.

The most important international actors are the International Committee of the Red Cross, the European Union, OXFAM/Great Britain, and OXFAM/Quebec. Congolese ministry authorities dealing with inter-sectoral problems of energy, planning, reconstruction, public health, public works, urbanisation and habitat all collaborate with these international agencies. As outside assistance tends to be based on short to mid-term agendas (influenced by political decisions and availability of funding), the international community remains dependant to a large extent on Congolese ministerial authorities and water board staff. Despite their precarious economic position these people are elements of relative stability in their sector. Thus, while the state may well be weak or corrupt, circumventing it is not an efficacious option for donors or NGOs. The case is clear for the water sector but the same argument can be made for other development sectors as well.\footnotemark

**Being Kinois**

Despite all of the city's problems, Kinois still consider their city to be the capital of pleasure seeking potential: ambience. This potential helps people evolve in a world beyond that of despair and sacrifice. The sentiment of ambience has completely erased the colonial perception equating Leopoldville with a 'city of temptation' (un lieu de perdition). When the capital was still called Leopoldville, residents did not have a meaningful name for themselves. The term Leopoldvillois did not have much currency and never commanded much respect. Evolué the term bestowed upon 'civilised' blacks until independence was a coveted social promotion – but one reserved for a small minority.\footnotemark Evolués were also cynically called mindele-ndombe which also translates from Lingala as 'white blacks'. Lipopois ('Lipopo' was the Congolese transformation of Leopoldville) was a name that had some resonance in the indépendance cha-cha euphoria, but again, was never adopted to a significant degree. Most people, at least up until 1971 when Mobutu 'zairianised' city names, put their ethnic or regional affiliation first. Citoyen was another label bestowed on members of the new Mobutu version of the nation-state, also with a limited (and short-lived) degree of self- or collective respect.
Being *Kinois*, however, is another matter entirely. Referring to one's self as a *Kinois* is a sign of prestige. In contrast to a generation ago, today, people clearly put forward their belonging to the human tribe known as *Kinois*. They are, however, simultaneously or alternatively, *Kongo*, *Pende*, *Yaka* or *Ngbandi* when for reasons of social, political or economic opportunism, it is convenient for them to shift from one identity to another. Kinshasa is an 'ethnic mosaic'. All of the country's approximately 300 ethnic groups are represented in the capital.

The overlapping and multiplication of identities has helped *Kinois* counteract the negative effects of political oppression and economic constraints because it broadens their solidarity networks. Under Mobutu, knowing Lingala and belonging to the Ngbandi ethnic group, facilitated access to sinecure public service jobs and political power through the MPR. When Laurent Kabila assumed power the Lingala-speaking Ngbandi were replaced with Swahili speakers from Shaba - Kabila's region of origin. The use of Swahili on the national currency is representative of this shift. This overlapping is a very important dimension of 'being *Kinois*' and extends beyond ethnicity to all kinds of other networks, for example neighbourhood, professional or religious ones.

The construction of *Kinois* identity is based in large part on the cleavage between those who are *Kinois* and those who are not. *Makokiers* is a derogatory term used for people living in rural Congo – the 'country bumpkins'. This negative image can be explained in part by the centralised nature of Mobutu's Second Republic (1965-1990). It is also a universal phenomenon of constructed urban identities: *monter à Paris* is how the French describe having succeeded in 'making it to Paris', in the same way that folk from New Jersey view crossing the river over to New York as upward social mobility. On the opposite end of the spectrum is *Miguel*: the nickname given to Europeans or whites in general. Today, the world of *Miguel* is associated primarily with money - and the status, education, health care or technology it can provide. For a very interesting historical account of how Congolese perceived whites, see Jewsiewicki (1993:43-62). Two other interesting denominations used by the *Kinois* to describe the 'other' are: *bamapeka* (migrants who pretend they are 'real' *Kinois*) and *bawuta* (strangers). The *Kinois* have amalgamated these two worlds, syncretising the global and the local – what De Boeck (1996:100) describes as 'transitional spaces and interconnecting strategies'.

Another identity cleavage that has taken form is that between *mwana-quartier* (neighbourhood kid) and *mwana-mboka* (son of the country). The latter epithet was used by Mobutu in the spirit of 'return to authenticity' (along with *citoyen* and *citoyenne*) and supplanted the 'unauthentic' titles of Mister and Misses. The valorisation of the neighbourhood as a vital social space, in contrast to the city at large (*mwana-kin*), and in sharper contrast to the country as a whole, supports Devisch's hypothesis of the 'villagisation' of Kinshasa (Devisch, 1995b; 1996).

*Kinois* identity is also manifested across a broad cultural spectrum. Fashion, referred to as *la SAPE* (*Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes Élégantes*), use of Lingala slang, popular painting and notably music are important forms of cultural and political expression. Music, for example, has contributed to the emergence of an urban civilisation and transethnic national conscience (Tsambu, 2001). It also enhances the image of the *Kinois* well beyond their borders (White, 2002). When a singer like Werrason *le roi de la forêt* fills the Bercy stadium in Paris, his success is appropriated by all Congolese.
The Congo State: What can you expect?

There are multiple levels of expectations from the Congo state. The international community for example (represented by the World Bank, the United Nations or Belgium's 'Africanist' Foreign Affairs Minister Louis Michel) continues to invest in the post-colonial ideal of a legitimate central authority that will respect its commercial agreements and bi-lateral accords or establish a debt repayment schedule. The political establishment of Joseph Kabila – including of course its Angolan and Zimbabwean 'allies' – expects continued access to neo-patrimonialist forms of extraction and exploitation.

The Kinois themselves, however, expect very little from the state. The evolution of political discourse in the post-Mobutu transition has not improved their living conditions. The post-colonial state model that was designed to be a provider of social services has transformed into a social predator. Lack of progress in putting democratic institutions in place is considered by the people as a deliberate political strategy aimed at maintaining incumbency to the detriment of social and economic priorities. The state is perceived as having accommodated itself to the process of social cannibalisation, society being its own prey.

Under Mobutu, discontent was rarely voiced because anything closely resembling political contest was brutally silenced. In the wake of this situation, complaints and criticism, are still rarely directed against political authorities by the Kinois. They are directed against society itself or God. A political implication of the dynamism and multiplication of solidarity networks is the 'protection' it provides to whatever group is in power, because reliance on solidarity has replaced reliance on government. While Western Africanists may have made some progress in the intellectual debate whether or not the post-colony has failed as a political entity, not enough attention has been given to the strategies invented by the people who live in these nation-states. As this article has attempted to demonstrate, the Kinois constitute an interesting case study for two primary reasons: one, they expect very little from political authorities and two, thanks to their unique form of social organisation they have already made significant progress in re-inventing the post-colonial nation-state model.

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Endnotes


2. Some of the terms used to describe these strategies are 'adaptative' (Tshilemalema 1986) 'survival' (Nzongola 1986) 'coping' (Newbury 1986) and 'resilience' (De Boeck 1996).

4. Like all statistics from Congo, demographic figures need to be considered with considerable reserve. The last population census was carried out in 1984, so figures are based on extrapolations that do not necessarily take into account major demographic influences like AIDS, war casualties or migration of people fleeing war and crisis in the Kivus.

5. Gombe, Limete, Ngaliema and Binza.


7. Ngaliema, Selembao, Mont Ngafula, Kisenso.

8. Lingala is one of the four vehicular languages spoken in Congo. Lingala slang is the most commonly used language in Kinshasa.

9. Parts of this section are based on Nzeza, forthcoming.

10. Figures provided by the Rectorat, University of Kinshasa.

11. The national budget this year is $330 million, which is less than half of that of the city of Douala (Cameroun)! In 1996 it was $300 million (Délégation, 1998:9).

12. For a detailed study on innovation in the food security sector in Kinshasa see Tollens (forthcoming).

13. Regideso (Régi des Eaux) is the Congolese water board.

14. A parcelle is a house lot. In Kinshasa, however, it is not uncommon to have many households sharing space and resources on a single lot.

15. For more information on the crisis and innovation in the water sector, see Maractho (forthcoming).

16. Evolues were mainly urban Africans who had received some education, spoke French and had renounced polygamy. They were to constitute the emerging middle class encouraged by Belgian policy makers in the late colonial period.

17. Approximately 40 per cent of people living in Kinshasa are members of the Kongo ethnic group.

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Citizenship, Identity Formation & Conflict in South Kivu: The Case of the Banyamulenge

Koen Vlassenroot

The objectives of this exercise are threefold. First, through a case-study of the Banyamulenge ethnogenesis, I demonstrate that this ethnicity was never constructed in a vacuum, but in a 'pre-imagined' field. The 'creation' of a Banyamulenge identity illustrates perfectly that ethnicities are ongoing processes of continuous change. Ethnicities are dynamic processes that result from the confrontation of a community with its socio-economic and political environment. Contrary to what local political and social leaders like to believe about their followings, the existence of a Banyamulenge identity is not the result of pure invention. I illustrate how historical events gave meaning to the content of this identity. Second, a close look will be taken at the different internal dynamics within this community to reach a better understanding of the real content of this ethnogenesis. While the Banyamulenge in Uvira were undoubtedly subject to exclusion, widespread ethnic resentment and violence, their marginalised position is also due to a lack of coherent leadership and internal division. An inquiry into the reasons why the Banyamulenge community, even today, still lacks any coherent leadership that is capable of improving the position of their community is crucial. Finally, as recent local history in Uvira suggests, I show that political exclusion tends to be the key to conflicting identity formation. In the case of the Banyamulenge, it seems that their claims to political participation not only had the effect of hardening the boundaries between different identity groups, but also had facilitated the shift to massive violence as an enticing strategy of control and resistance. This work is mainly the result of extensive fieldwork in and around Uvira and Bukavu, complemented by what was learned from the few printed sources that exist.

Le présent article reconstitue l'histoire des conflits violents qu'a connu le sud Kivu (province de la République démocratique du Congo), tels qu'ils sont vécus par la population locale dite Banyamulenge. Sur base de témoignages, nous mettons en évidence les circonstances qui ont incité ces pasteoralistes tutsis à se créer une identité distincte de celle des autres immigrants rwandais; nous analysons ensuite les motifs qui -au nom de cette identité nouvelle- les ont convaincus d'adopter l'action massive et violente comme mode de solutionnement des problèmes (mise à l'écart de la sphère politique, exclusion sociale) qu'ils rencontrent depuis toujours au sein de la société congolaise.

Comme le montre avec éloquence l'exemple des Banyamulenge, la création d'une identité ethnique n'est pas une solution de pure circonstance concoctée à la va-vite au gré des
événements mais bien une disposition pré-existante, susceptible de se révéler au moindre prétexte. Aussi, et contrairement à ce que certains politiciens et chefs locaux se plaisent à croire, l’identité Banyamulenge n’a pas été construite sur un vacuum: nous illustrons à quel point les événements historiques ont donné du sens au contenu de cette identité. L’ethnogenèse Banyamulenge confirme également que l’ethnogenèse est un processus dynamique: celle-ci peut être comprise comme le résultat d’une confrontation entre une population humaine et un environnement social, économique et politique en perpétuel changement.

Notre étude de cas montre enfin que le fait d’interdire à une communauté toute participation à la vie politique se révèle être un facteur déterminant fortement la formation d’identités conflictuelles. A ce titre, il apparaît que la revendication exprimée par les Banyamulenge en terme de participation politique n’a pas seulement eu l’effet de renforcer le découpage entre groupes identitaires mitoyens, mais qu’elle a également facilité l’adoption de la violence massive comme stratégie de contrôle et de résistance.

Ce constat se fonde sur une série d’interviews effectuées auprès de personnages emblématiques du groupe Banyamulenge: celles-ci nous ont conduit à nous intéresser aux dynamiques internes de cette communauté, véritable clé de compréhension du contenu de cette ethnogenèse.

En effet, si les Banyamulenge de l’Uvira ont bel et bien fait l’objet d’exclusion, de ressentiment et de violence de la part des ethnies voisines, leur position marginale est également due à l’absence de leadership cohérent et aux divisions internes qui en découlent. Il s’est dès lors avéré crucial de rechercher les raisons pour les quelles ils n’ont pas réussi, jusqu’à aujourd’hui, à pallier la position fragile qu’occupe leur communauté dans la région.

Pendant les années 1970, de jeunes Banyamulenge ont eu la chance d’aller à l’école, mais cette dernière n’a pas réussi à former une élite capable de défendre les intérêts de leur communauté et de générer des changements. On constate au contraire qu’une part d’entre eux a obéi à la «logique congolaise» qui suggère de multiplier à l’infini les opportunités d’enrichissement personnel, quel qu’en soit le prix; les autres sont restés trop divisés et ont souffert d’une incapacité chronique d’harmoniser leurs stratégies politiques.

Il faut ajouter à cela -et dans un contexte régional particulièrement chahuté- les visions politiques discordantes soutenues par les différentes factions armées Banyamulenge. En effet, tandis que les uns -souscrivant à une logique offensive- soutiennent la campagne militaire de la RCD, d’autres préfèrent se réfugier dans les hauts plateaux afin de protéger leur communauté qui, faute d’alliés, s’y retrouve complètement marginalisée; de même, une frange marginale de leurs combattants choisit optent pour un ralliement à l’armée patriotique rwandaise. De l’avis des leaders politiques et militaires Banyamulenge, le fait de collaborer avec ces mouvements aux intérêts politiques aussi divergents comporte un risque majeur d’enlisement du conflit, dans la mesure où ces alliances contribuent à aggraver la situation d’isolement social et à détériorer davantage le climat d’insécurité dont souffre leur communauté.

Ceci nous mène au constat suivant: l’histoire conflictuelle qu’a connue la communauté Banyamulenge est en grande partie l’expression d’un processus inachevé d’émancipation, handicapé par un manque criant de leadership politique.

**Introduction**

Many observers wrongly reduce what is happening in South Kivu to a revival of ethnic hatreds. The conflict in South Kivu, however, has to be explained as the
outcome of an intensified process of renegotiating the political, social and economic space. At a time when existing economic, administrative, and social patterns that had defined this space were increasingly unstable, subject to external penetration, and unable to offer clear contexts within which people could make daily and life-choices, ethnicity often became an excuse for political action and violence. Through the manipulation of ethnicity, political actors tried to cover their real political and economic agendas. Given this observation, our understanding of the exact role ethnicity plays in the present conflict in eastern Congo requires that the political and economic agendas of the different political actors involved in the conflict are integrated in the analysis.

It would be misleading, though, only to focus on the behaviour of political leaders. These elites do not hold a monopoly over the manipulation of ethnicity for political action. At a grassroots level, ethnically motivated action and violence may also be presented as the solution to political, economic or social exclusion. A good illustration of this 'bottom-up violence' is the self-defence campaign of the community of Tutsi-settlers in South Kivu, which before the end of the 1960s was known as part of the larger 'Banyarwanda community' ('those coming from Rwanda') living in eastern Congo, but changed its name to 'Banyamulenge' ('those coming from Mulenge') as part of their claims to local social and political rights. As this example demonstrates, grassroots populations may participate in violence because they are mobilised to do so, but may also embrace it for different particularistic reasons. In the end, both bottom-up and top-down violence based on ethnic ideologies reproduces ethnicity. Interpretations of violence from the past become an easy pretext for yet another cycle of violence and ethnically motivated action. On the one hand, both discourse and political or military action based on these interpretations risk entrenching the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' even more firmly. On the other hand, analysis of the true dynamics of the conflict and reconciliation efforts tends to become a very difficult task, as there is no longer any local agreement on the interpretation of historical events.

Yet, there is an additional reason why I find it essential to shed light on the recent history of South Kivu from a different perspective and reconstruct this history viewed from the position of the Banyamulenge. Even though this community has played a prominent role in local and regional events since the start of the Kabila-led AFDL rebellion in October 1996, there is a lot of misunderstanding about their legal and social position. Although this confusion can partly be explained by the complexity of the Rwandan question in eastern Congo, it has also turned into one of the main dynamics of the present conflict. The uncertain position of the Banyamulenge community is but one result of clashing notions of identity (identity based on ethnicity versus identity based on residence). This is why, in order to get a better understanding of the present DRC conflict, the issue of citizenship needs some specific attention. The citizenship issue has to be understood as one of the main challenges of future peace efforts.

The First Banyamulenge Settlements

Politicians often refer to history when they want to demonstrate (or deny) the validity of political claims expressed by collective identities, while for journalists and academics, history often serves as a guideline for the explanation of current events. How misleading both exercises can be is perfectly illustrated by the political and academic debate on the legitimacy of the claims by Banyamulenge leaders that their
community is a full member of Congolese society and, thus, should enjoy full political rights. Two issues dominate this debate: the moment of arrival of these Banyamulenge settlers, and their exact numbers. For those rejecting the Banyamulenge claims, there was no Congolese Banyamulenge community before its self-proclamation. For Banyamulenge leaders, exactly the same arguments constitute the most important elements of their nationality claims. Of course, the scarcity of written evidence and the partiality, incompetence even ineptitude of some journalists help both groups in the construction of their discourse. Therefore, it might be wise to start with an historical account.

The roots of the first Banyamulenge settlers in South Kivu are subject to much debate. Most sources diverge on the date of the first arrival of Rwandan pastoralists in South Kivu (Hiernaux, 1965; Depelchin, 1974; Weiss, 1959) but there is agreement that a large group of Tutsi pastoralists had put down roots in South Kivu by the end of the 19th century. These Tutsi pastoralists first settled in the Ruzizi Plains but soon established themselves around Lemera and created the Mulenge village, named after the neighbouring mountain (Kajiga, 1956; Depelchin, 1974; Kagame, 1972).

Upon their arrival in Mulenge, the Tutsi settlers were confronted by local Kingdoms, which prevented them from establishing their own customary system of land control. Access to grazing lands was conditioned by their acceptance of the existing traditional order and by their becoming subjects of the local traditional authorities. The Mwami of the Fulero, for whom this new population meant an additional source of wealth, gave these pastoralists grazing land for their cattle in exchange for the payment of an animal tribute. In 1924, however, Mwami Mokogabwe collected these tributes with too much enthusiasm, forcing the Tutsi pastoralists to flee his excesses. They requested the Belgian colonial administration's permission to move as far as the Itombwe region (Depelchin, 1974), which provoked Mokongabwe to raid their cattle (Bishikwabo). For this semi-nomadic and very isolated population, migration toward Itombwe announced a shift towards a more sedentary life-style. However, resettlement did not proceed as smoothly as expected, as the local population did not welcome new immigrants. During the entire pre-colonial period, two types of conflict hampered peaceful coexistence. First, the pastoral mode of life seriously clashed with the original agrarian societies of Itombwe because of a different use of the available economic space (arable farming versus stockbreeding) and so seriously disrupted the existing modes of exchange. As cattle were the local representation of wealth, the introduction of cattle privileged the Tutsi pastoralists over their neighbours. Their dominant economic position based on the tenure of cattle, provoked a second type of conflict: these economic relations provoked the development of an ideology of 'natural' superiority of the Banyamulenge in relation to the rest of the local population (Muzuri, 1983:35). The social and cultural isolation of the Tutsi settlers even reinforced these sentiments. In combination with their economic wealth, this isolation was explained by other ethnic communities as a lack of willingness to fully integrate. Clashing social identities and incompatible life-styles would thus eventually result in open conflict; from the start they impeded peaceful coexistence between the Banyamulenge and their Bavira, Babembe and Bafulero neighbours.

Belgian colonial rule had an additional impact on relations between local communities, because it drastically changed their territorial organisation and introduced new ways to use the available economic space. Both elements led to the restructuring of rural society. In theory the Belgian version of indirect rule was simple: in an attempt to integrate and control the local population and their traditional authorities, those considered indigenous were entitled to their own 'Native Authority'. In the case of
Itombwe, however, the Belgian colonial rule was based more on trial-and-error than a deliberate strategy to organise its colony territorially (Weiss, 1959). To halt the mobility of the local population, the Belgian colonial administration, at the beginning of the 20th century, introduced the system of petites chefferies, to a large extent based on the pre-colonial political order. Newly appointed chiefs headed these new territorial units. For the Banyamulenge, this meant that they were granted control over several of these petites chefferies. In the second phase of colonial rule, however, these small territorial units coalesced into larger units.

In 1933, however, the autonomous chefferies ruled by Banyamulenge were abolished. This increased the isolation of the Banyamulenge since they were denied their own chefferie and became simple subjects of the indigenous chiefs and were treated as foreigners. The Banyamulenge, however, continued to claim their own territory. In 1944, for instance, a Banyamulenge leader unsuccessfully requested a centralisation of all Banyamulenge localités in the Bavira chefferie into one Banyamulenge chefferie.

By the end of Belgian colonial rule, the Banyamulenge population was living in three different zones (Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga) and was ruled by several indigenous chiefs. Although this limited their political influence at the local level, it did not prevent them from retaining some form of local autonomy with regard to the colonial administration.

**The Rebellion of 1964**

This social and political situation of the Banyamulenge community would drastically change when the Mulele rebellion, which had started in western Congo, also spread to the eastern parts of the country in April 1964 (see Verhaegen, 1966; Weiss & Verhaegen, 1987; Willame, 1964; Masson, 1965). For the Banyamulenge population, the rebellion, better known locally as the Simba rebellion, excised their political awakening. Contrary to the Rwandan Tutsi refugees that had left their country as a result of the Rwandan revolution of 1959, only a few young Banyamulenge felt attracted by the ideological discourse of the rebel leadership. First, the revolutionary slogans of the ‘Armée Populaire de Libération’ (APL) never succeeded in stirring up a political consciousness among the very isolated, grassroots Banyamulenge population who felt more attached to their cattle than to ‘the arena of politics’. Second, the Banyamulenge were not very keen on the egalitarian discourse produced by the Simba, especially where their herds were concerned. For the Banyamulenge pastoralists, the ideology of the APL came down to Kugabana inka n’ababembe (the free distribution of their cattle with the Babembe) (Muzuri, 1983). Those who eventually joined the rebellion did so mainly because they hoped this would safeguard their families (Verhaegen, 1966).

Only after the defeat of the APL in the Ruzizi Plain and Uvira did the Banyamulenge become really involved in the conflict between the Simba rebels and the government forces. In search of a safe heaven, the Simba of Bafulero, Babembe and Bavira origin drew back to the Haut Plateau, where the majority of the Banyamulenge population were living. Soon after their arrival, however, the herds of the Banyamulenge encouraged many rebels to raid their cattle and impose taxes upon the local population, which turned the rebellion into an ethno-military campaign against the Banyamulenge (Gerald-Libois & Verhaelgen, 1966). For the first time since the start of the rebellion, the conflict shifted to an open confrontation between Babembe and Banyamulenge, especially after acts of plunder and terror by the Simba had driven the Banyamulenge to the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC). Those
Banyamulenge youngsters who had originally joined the rebel-movement now turned against it and helped the ANC create a humanitarian corridor to let the Banyamulenge population escape to the Ruzizi Plain and Baraka. The ANC also distributed arms among the civil Banyamulenge population. Young volunteers, who had already set up their own militia (the so-called guerriers) and knew the region well, were trained by the ANC and sent to the Haut Plateau to push back the Simba. This ANC strategy proved successful allowing the Banyamulenge population to return back to the Haut Plateau. The APL was defeated and broke into a multitude of groups that roamed the countryside in Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga until their last camps were destroyed in 1982.

In origin, this rebellion could be explained as an outcome of a local conflict between a new class of political leaders, who represented the post-colonial, modern state, and the customary chiefs, who represented the pre-colonial tradition. In South Kivu, the outcomes of this rebellion were twofold. On the one hand, it seriously disturbed local ethnic relations. On the other hand, it gave direction to the future political debate. The rebellion, which in its origins presented itself as an unambiguous liberation-movement, in reality had less to do with nationalistic and socialistic ideals than with short-term personal interests. At different levels, political leaders were mainly concerned about their personal accumulation of wealth. Given the existing socio-economic relations, the Banyamulenge were those who had the most to fear for they were considered the wealthiest community of the region. Although the Simba rebellion was not originally driven by an ethnic agenda, it had the effect of consolidating existing ethnic antagonisms that later on would become easy to exploit by local political entrepreneurs. In this sense, it is interesting to compare the different explanations of the origins of the conflict offered by the leadership of local ethnic communities. For the Babembe and Bafulero, the turn of the Banyamulenge to the ANC was an unforgivable expression of collaboration with the enemy. For the Banyamulenge, the looting of their cattle by the APL-rebels forced them to solicit protection from elsewhere. Whatever explanation comes closer to the real causes of ethnic resentment, the Simba-rebellion brought ethnically motivated violence to the very centre of events.

From the end of the rebellion, local ethnic resentment would start to dominate the political realm, most of all because the rebellion not only ended in a curse upon the Banyamulenge population, but, paradoxically, at the same time it announced their socio-political awakening. For many young Banyamulenge, their enrolment in the ANC meant the start of a military career. As compensation for their war efforts on the Haut Plateau, the central government also offered them full access to education, social services and employment opportunities. The result was the formation of a new politico-military Banyamulenge elite and a socio-political emancipation of the entire Banyamulenge community that became well aware of its own identity and its delicate position within Congolese society. First of all, a need was felt to change its name in order to distance themselves from the recently arrived Rwandan Tutsi refugees and to claim political rights. Second, the best way to reduce their dependency on other ethnic communities, was to create their own ‘collectivity’, which would allow them to institute their own customary structures. Of course, other communities feared this growing influence of the Banyamulenge community and tried to prevent their further political emancipation preventing their political participation.
The Political Awakening

After the Simba rebellion had provoked ethnic tension and violent conflict, local incidences of ethnic resentments continued to dominate the social realm. A first proof of the persistence of conflict was the competition between a new politico-military Banyamulenge elite and the old traditional authorities that had been reinstated after the ANC-victory. The calling into question of their citizenship by local political authorities forced the Banyamulenge to develop a strategy to guarantee their access to the political realm. An important element of confusion was the presence of the Rwandan Tutsi-refugees that settled in the region after 1959 and the Burundian Hutu-refugees that arrived in large numbers after the genocide of 1972 in Burundi. As local politicians repeatedly referred to these refugees in order to demonstrate that the Banyamulenge were foreigners, a number of Banyamulenge leaders felt a need to distance themselves from these recent arrivals and changed the name of their community. The term in use before (Banyarwanda) connected them with Rwanda and expressed the foreign nature of their origins. The term Banyamulenge, on the contrary, linked them to the place where they first settled and offered them an indigenous identity. Yet, this attempt to distance themselves from Rwanda was viewed by the rest of the population as an attempt to camouflage their real identity.

The situation was exacerbated by the election in 1970 of the first munyamulenge to the Conseil Législatif. The election of Frederic Muhoza Gisaro meant the end of their politically marginalised position and was the start of a process of growing political awareness and of the socio-political promotion of the Banyamulenge community. Although it is said that Gisaro’s election was mainly the result of the support he had from the entire protestant population around Uvira, after his election he primarily aimed at the promotion of his own community. He tried to convince the Banyamulenge pastoralists to change their semi-nomadic life-style for a sedentary one and to establish identités de base in order to facilitate their access to education. Also, he picked up an old claim of the Banyamulenge community to have their own customary power through the creation of the Collectivité des hauts plateaux d’Iombwe. As could be expected, Gisaro’s hopes for a territorial administrative zone was considered a direct threat to the customary position of power held by the Bafulero, Bavira and Babembe. At the end of the discussion, consensus was reached on the institution of an autonomous localité (locality, or the lowest customary level) in Bijombo. The next point of discussion was the nomination of the administrative authorities of this new territorial unit. For the Bavira, access to positions of authority was strictly limited to members of the royal family so the Banyamulenge, who were considered foreigners, were totally excluded. After the central government had sent a mission of reconciliation, also on this issue a compromise was found and a Muvira customary chief was appointed as the head of the newly created localité of Bijombo (Muzuri, 1983).

The discussions that preceded the formation of the localité of Bijombo were a perfect illustration of the nature of the local political debate. On the one hand, it demonstrated a continuity of the rivalry between a new class of political leaders and the exploiters of tradition, the customary chiefs. On the other hand, it made obvious that reference to ethnic identities had become the guiding principle of politics. The ethnic cleavage consolidated during the Simba-rebellion again dominated local political discussion. For the Banyamulenge, the institution of an autonomous administrative entity in Bijombo came to be a crucial element of their political awakening, for it seemed to confirm their Zairian identity and, at least in Bijombo, would have put an end to their dependent position with regard to access to land. The
other ethnic communities experienced the claims of the Banyamulenge as a serious threat to their socio-political position.

**The First Banyamulenge Elite & their Search for Integration**

The Bijmbo issue illustrated the explosive nature of the local political situation around Uvira. It has to be acknowledged, however, that the marginal political position of the Banyamulenge at that time was less the result of the strategies of exclusion developed by their political opponents than of their political incompetence. Even though Gisaro had become a member of the Conseil Législatif and some Banyamulenge had been enrolled in the ANC, a socio-political Banyamulenge elite, capable of promoting the interests of their community, remained absent. Contacts with their neighbours in most cases were still limited to economic exchanges. Things would only start to change when the first generation of young Banyamulenge completed their university studies and the Protestant churches on the Haut Plateau started promoting the socio-economic development of this community. These churches are of particular importance for the Banyamulenge, as more than 90 per cent of the community are Protestant. The first Swedish Protestant missionaries arrived in the Haut Plateau from Uvira and Lemera between 1930-1940. These churches later became united in the Communauté des Eglises de Pentecôte en Afrique Centrale (CEPAC). Later on, these Swedish missionaires were joined by their Norwegian colleagues, whose churches today are better known as the Communauté des Eglises Libres Pentecostistes en Afrique (CELPA). In the 1960s, a group of Banyamulenge joined the Methodist churches, which are today called the Communauté des Eglises Libres Méthodistes au Congo (CLMC). The main difference between these churches, however, was their territorial base. CEPAC mainly united the Protestants living in Uvira, CELPA those living in Mwenga and the Bushi, and CLMC concentrated its activities in Fizi. At the end of the eighties, some Banyamulenge had concluded that some of these churches were discriminating against the Banyamulenge community and had instituted a new church, which today is known as the Communauté des Assemblées de Dieu au Congo (CADCO).

The first serious problems arose after the death of Gisaro in 1980. During the elections of 1982 and 1987, resentment of the growing political influence of the Banyamulenge for the first time fuelled challenges to their legal status. On both occasions, the central committee of the ruling party rejected the Banyamulenge candidates because of their 'dubious nationality', even though they were allowed to vote. As a reaction, the Banyamulenge voters refused to take part in the ballot while in different parts of the Haut Plateau, ballot boxes were smashed or destroyed.

The next important event was a mission of identification in the early nineties aimed at identifying all indigenous persons living in South Kivu. In 1989 it was decided to institute an exercise to identify 'foreigners'. The objective of the Mission d'Identification des Zaïrois au Kivu was to carry out an on-the-ground verification of the nationality rights of all Kinyarwanda-speakers, and to settle the citizenship status of the Banyarwanda in North Kivu and the Banyamulenge in South Kivu. It was not until two years later that the mission become operational. Once again, local members of the smaller autochthonous ethnic groups tried to manipulate the registration process in an attempt to defend their positions to the disadvantage of the Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge who, in several regions, were refused access to national citizenship and were not given Zairian identity cards.
At that time, a new elite of young, well-educated Banyamulenge decided to take up the case of their community. The schooling process that had started after the end of the Simba rebellion, had produced a first generation of Banyamulenge holding university degrees by the beginning of the eighties. As was the case for most educated Zairians, so too for these Banyamulenge, professional opportunities did not match their educational opportunities. Some left Zaire to become teachers in Bujumbura or Kigali. Others were attracted by the upsurge of independent grassroots development initiatives deployed by young educated Zairians elsewhere in South Kivu and returned to Uvira or the Haut Plateau, where they set up a number of local development initiatives. These projects gave a new direction to the emancipation of the Banyamulenge.

In the early stages, it was mainly the Protestant churches of CADCO that supported these local development initiatives. In 1985, some leading members of this new class of educated Banyamulenge invited all Banyamulenge students to the Itombwe Plateau to discuss strategies that needed to be developed for the further promotion of their community. On that occasion, these students decided to work out an alternative strategy based on grassroots development initiatives. One of the initiators of this process, Müller Ruhimbika, in 1992 instigated the Groupe Milima, which wanted to promote the development of the rural population in Itombwe. In order to increase its influence on the internal debate of local civil society, at the same moment another group of young Banyamulenge decided to establish a new development association (l’Union des Groupements des Eleveurs et Agriculteurs de Fizi or Ugeafi) that mainly focused its activities on the development of the southern Haut Plateau (Minembwe). Groupe Milima and Ugeafi were very successful in establishing close contacts with European development organisations and Protestant churches, and started working in partnership with international NGOs. These partnerships offered them some useful opportunities to distribute their political messages in cases of intensified political competition.

The effectiveness of their communication skills was soon to be demonstrated. From the very start, the activities of both groups were not limited to local development programmes. Groupe Milima and Ugeafi leaders were convinced that the development of their community also depended upon a ratification of their citizenship status and on full access to land. When both the Kinshasa government and local political leaders in the beginning of the nineties put the nationality rights of the Banyamulenge into question, these two development associations distributed several memoranda in which they tried to prove their Zairian background and called for the implementation of the nationality law of 1981. According to their interpretation, this law gave them full political rights because they had settled in Zaire before 1885. Strangely enough, the nationality law of 1981 was also the starting point for their political opponents to demonstrate that the Banyamulenge could not claim any citizenship rights because in 1885 there was no ethnic community called 'Banyamulenge' living in Zaire.

After the announcement of the democratisation process by Mobutu's government, local politicians not only rejected the political claims of the Banyamulenge but also started an open campaign against their presence. Groupe Milima and Ugeafi, in response, made use of their international contacts to inform the international community about the precarious situation of their people. During the events of 1994-1996, they were able to send their memoranda directly to human rights groups in Europe and the US and to attract the attention of the entire international community. Nevertheless, international attention to the case of the Banyamulenge in 1995 and
1996 could not prevent a worsening of their position in South Kivu. Most of the memoranda written by Banyamulenge leaders had the opposite effect of what they aimed at and were depicted by local leaders as proof of their expansionist intentions. Even where the Banyamulenge *mutuelles* (mutual aid groups) in Uvira, Lubumbashi, Bukavu and Kinshasa strongly opposed the policy of local authorities (such as the District Commissioner in Uvira), their actions were closer to shouts in the desert than to well-organised resistance. Their campaigns brought about an increasing awareness of their position at a grassroots level but did not result in any improvement of their situation. On the contrary, the letters sent by Banyamulenge representatives to the local authorities and international human rights groups only encouraged these authorities to straighten out, once and for all, the Banyamulenge question. For the District Commissioner of Uvira, these documents were ample evidence that *Groupe Milima* and Ugeafi were nothing more than political instruments of the Banyamulenge. In August 1996 he even banned *Groupe Milima* and issued a warrant for the arrest of one of its leaders, which was followed by the arrest of other prominent Banyamulenge.

An alternative strategy to improve the position of their community was coming from Rwanda. In search of an alternative to their marginalised position in South Kivu, a group of Banyamulenge youth had left the Haut Plateau to be enrolled into the RPF forces as early as 1991 (Willame, 1997). This recruitment increased after the Rwandan genocide and the consequent refugee crisis. For the former Rwandan regime, these refugee camps had facilitated the re-deployment of its political and military activities. By 1995, the old genocidal government was able to re-establish itself and changed its name to the ‘Government of Rwanda’ in exile while the Interahamwe militia and the former Rwandan army were re-instituted in these camps. From the refugee camps, these extremist elements started small-scale incursions into Rwanda without being prevented by the host regime. It is precisely this position of the Mobutu regime towards the former Rwandan army and the Interahamwe militias that provoked the formation of a regional coalition aimed at making Zaire safe for its eastern neighbours. The new Rwandan regime was well aware of the opportunity the threat to the Banyamulenge was offering and trained and sent a force of Congolese Tutsi to eastern Zaire to defend the Banyamulenge community. The 1991 Banyamulenge recruits became intermediaries for an enlarged recruitment of young Banyamulenge, which started in 1995. Although most of the older Banyamulenge strongly disagreed with the recruitment of the youth, these intermediaries continued their efforts. In March 1995, a first group of new Banyamulenge recruits received military training; by June 1995, this training included several hundred Banyamulenge (Dorsey, 2000).

The fate of the Tutsi-populations in North Kivu was the ultimate argument for the Banyamulenge recruits and the RPA to set in motion a long-prepared military intervention in eastern Zaire. In 1996, the North Kivu conflict had begun to spread to the south. Popular demonstrations and an increasing number of incidents involving the harassment of Banyamulenge by the FAZ and youth militias, indeed, had turned Uvira into a zone of insecurity. Bembe militia, supported by FAZ soldiers and Interahamwe factions, had started attacking Banyamulenge villages, killing local residents and forcing those who survived to flee. During the first weekend of September 1996, some FAZ factions had broken into several churches, arrested local priests and missionaries and looted cars, equipment and documents. A few days later, the offices of *Groupe Milima* had also been looted while, during the following days, the FAZ arrested significant numbers of Banyamulenge, all at the instruction of the local District Commissioner.
According to some Banyamulenge leaders, in July 1996, a first delegation was sent from Kigali to the Haut Plateau to inform the population about preparations for a military operation aimed at stopping further attacks by the Zairian Army on the Banyamulenge community. It is believed that the visit of the delegation from Kigali was the first time the Banyamulenge-population had heard about what their youth, in co-operation with Kigali, were preparing. This is not to say that community leaders were not informed about the intentions of the RPA or involved in the preparations of the intervention before this date. Some Banyamulenge who had returned to Rwanda after 1994, together with Tutsi from North Kivu in Kigali had constituted the Alliance des Peuples, a political movement headed by Déogratias Bugera and closely related to the RPF. A few weeks after the visit of the first delegation, some 20 RPA recruits of Banyamulenge origin infiltrated from Rwanda onto the Haut Plateau in order to prepare a military intervention and to further inform the population of their intentions. At the end of August 1996, they were joined by an additional 50 to 100 armed Banyamulenge-recruits but on their way to the mountains were discovered by some elements of the Zairian Army in the Ruzizi Plains. This was the first confrontation between armed Banyamulenge (who would later become AFDL soldiers) and the FAZ and the unofficial start of the AFDL campaign.

**Failed Strategy**

What originally was explained as an armed rebellion by a few hundred young Banyamulenge to reclaim their nationality rights and to save their families from violent persecution, soon resulted in a concurrence of both regional and local interests and the formation of the AFDL liberation movement led by old-time rebel Laurent-Désiré Kabila. For the RPA, the very insecure position of the Banyamulenge was a perfect excuse to put an end to the threat that was coming from the refugee camps in Zaire and to achieve a more sustainable internal and regional security (Dorsey, 2000). For the Banyamulenge, the AFDL-rebellion came down to their final emancipation because it gave them full access to military and political positions of control. Once the AFDL had liberated Uvira, Bukavu and Goma and consolidated its military control, it inaugurated a new administration. On that occasion, several Banyamulenge were assigned to influential positions within the provincial administration of South Kivu.

Even if the Banyamulenge community with the help of the Rwandan Patriotic Army strengthened their political position after their participation in the AFDL insurrection, the Banyamulenge soon realised that their situation had improved very little. First, Kabila's favourites proved to be very short-lived. Although they were given full access to the administration for the first time in their existence, the Banyamulenge were still waiting for the recognition of their citizenship rights. Even if Kabila verbally promised during his visit to Bukavu in February 1998 to grant the Banyamulenge Congolese citizenship, no official document confirmed this intention.

The second consequence of the 1996 insurgency was the increasingly isolated position in which the Banyamulenge found themselves. On the one hand, there was a general lack of confidence on the part of autochthonous Congolese communities. On the other, there was the desire of the Banyamulenge to end the alliance with Kigali. The Banyamulenge found themselves between hammer and anvil, as it were, because any acceptance as full Congolese by the autochthonous parts of the population depended on their willingness to break off their privileged relationship with Kigali. Yet, for their own security, the Banyamulenge were still reliant on the support of the RPF. Even if the AFDL's military success was spectacular and popular support in the early stages
of its rebellion substantial, the position of the local population shifted opposition when they saw the AFDL turn into a spearhead of what they feared was a Tutsi occupation. As the Banyamulenge were identified with the ‘Rwandan occupation’, the already very tense ethnic relations in South Kivu worsened with the success of the AFDL rebellion. Their strong position in the local administration, their occupation of houses that used to belong to Congolese politicians or businessmen, and their participation in the settling of scores with other ethnic communities or local opponents, all increased the rift between them and the rest of the population. Some feared that the AFDL campaign was part of a strategy to create a regional ‘Hima empire’, others thought that the RPF wanted to annex Kivu. As a consequence, any attempt to negotiate between different communities became very arduous because of ‘anti-Tutsism’ that since the AFDL campaign, was even stronger. The majority of Congolese saw Banyamulenge or Rwandese Batutsi as ‘arrogant aggressors, occupying their province, exploiting their mines and killing their children’, which hampered, if not made impossible, any reconciliation effort.

Most Banyamulenge community leaders realised that their association with Kigali had resulted in a greater rejection of their community by other Congolese, and that there was no option other than distancing themselves from the Rwandan authorities. Already by the end of 1996, sentiments of mistrust were being expressed by the autochthonous communities against the Banyamulenge, which later turned into open hostility. Yet, there was an additional reason to detach themselves from Kigali. Soon after the beginning of the AFDL campaign, it became obvious that the RPA and the Banyamulenge forces did not share the same objectives as regards the future of the Banyamulenge community. Most of the Banyamulenge leaders were convinced that Kigali wanted their community to leave Congo and be reinstalled in Rwanda. It is believed that already at the end of October 1996, some RPA officers confirmed Banyamulenge leaders in Uvira with the idea of a collective migration to Rwanda. As a reaction, some Banyamulenge and some Tutsi from North Kivu asked their leaders to quit the AFDL in order to start a new, independent movement. The migration plan was again discussed at a meeting in Butare between the RPA and Banyamulenge leaders in December 1996. It is said that on this occasion, the RPA tried to convince the political and military Banyamulenge leadership to bring their families to Kibuye (Rwanda), an idea rejected by most Banyamulenge leaders.

The possible motives behind such a deportation plan, however, remain unclear. It is said that it would have allowed the RPF to increase the number of Tutsi in Rwanda and to keep the Banyamulenge recruits under their control. Others believe that the RPA wanted to deport the Banyamulenge to Rwanda for safety reasons and then send this community back to Zaire, mixed with Rwandan Tutsi in order to guarantee their control over South Kivu. A third explanation was that a number of RPF-leaders that had lived in Uganda as refugees saw themselves as the true leaders of the Tutsi diaspora living in the region. This argument makes some sense as it is believed that the RPF leadership did not know the Banyamulenge at all. The only members of this community they ever met were young Banyamulenge that had joined the RPF. These youth were considered members of the Rwandan Tutsi diaspora living in Zaire for whom Rwanda was their real homeland. It would explain why the resistance of the Banyamulenge to an RPF-control took Kigali by surprise. After the Butare meeting, Banyamulenge elders were invited to Kigali to discuss their relations several times, while the RPA also sent several delegations of Banyamulenge soldiers to the Haut Plateau to convince their community to return to Rwanda. Yet, instead of doing so, these soldiers used these occasions to express their distrust of the RPA. In reaction, the
RPA arrested an important number of Banyamulenge officers and imprisoned them for several months.

Most of the Banyamulenge soldiers were also frustrated by the fact that they were only allowed to inferior positions within the new Congolese Forces (FAC). The mutiny of 300 Banyamulenge soldiers in February 1998 in Bukavu can be explained as a reaction of some Banyamulenge commanders to the dominance of the RPA. The direct cause for it was the Banyamulenge’s refusal to be moved to positions in Kasai and Katanga out of fear for the security of their community. The intention to disperse the Banyamulenge soldiers was seen as part of a hidden strategy of the Rwanda Chief of Staff of the FAC, James Kabarebe, to further weaken the Banyamulenge armed elements. In response, Banyamulenge soldiers emptied the arms depot at Camp Saio (Bukavu), and retreated to the Haut Plateau to reorganise.

On the eve of the second rebellion in August 1998, Banyamulenge community leaders were expressing strong concerns about their weakening position. On the one hand, relations with other ethnic communities had suffered because of their participation in the AFDL campaign. On the other hand, their association with Rwandan forces had proven to be an erroneous strategy. The fact that this community had lost an important number of its youth in the war, nevertheless contributed to the growing sense of susceptibility and once again led them to Kigali. Even though most of the Banyamulenge leaders tried to distance themselves from the Rwandan authorities in order to counter the rejection of their community by other Congolese, they also understood that they were still dependent on Kigali for their own security. When Kabila expelled the foreign troops from Congo in July 1998, Banyamulenge leaders immediately travelled to Kigali to discuss how the security of the Banyamulenge soldiers could be guaranteed and how they could defend themselves against the attacks of other Congolese forces. In its reaction against Kabila’s decision, the RPA came up with a solution. It was during the same meeting that Kigali tried to win their support for a second military campaign in Congo.

It was no great surprise, when on 2 August 1998, a second rebellion in two years began in Eastern Congo. Although this insurrection has been presented as a second Banyamulenge revolt, its impetus came from Kigali. For security reasons the Banyamulenge soldiers had no option other than to support the new military campaign, although most members of this community openly rejected the RCD insurrection. On the one hand, they once again feared being used by Kigali. On the other hand, it was expected that the presence of some Banyamulenge leaders in the RCD government and RCD army would have a further negative impact on their status in Congo. Two weeks after the start of the RCD rebellion, Banyamulenge leaders met in Bukavu to discuss their future strategy. It was the first expression of their distrust of the RCD (Ruberangabo, 1998).

While it became clear that there was a strong sense of vulnerability within the community, this meeting once again revealed its total lack of leadership, which only encouraged internal dissension. After the start of the RCD rebellion, at least three different tendencies could be identified. A first group joined the RCD and was very closely linked to the RPF. For most Banyamulenge, however, these RCD members were driven by opportunistic motives and were no longer considered as true leaders of their community. Civil society leaders living in Bukavu represent a second tendency. Although they rejected the RCD rebellion, they do not openly express their distrust out of fear for their own security situation. In order to distance themselves from Rwanda, these Banyamulenge have tried to organise a dialogue with other
Congolese communities. A last group openly opposes the RCD. Since 1997 some Banyamulenge have been looking for support in Bujumbura, where some of their leaders, such as Muller Ruhimbika and Joseph Mutambo, have created the Forces Républicaines et Fédéralistes (FRF) in July 1998, a political movement that is strongly opposing the RCD rebellion.

The Banyamulenge military leadership also became strongly divided after the start of the RCD rebellion. Although the 222nd Brigade in Bukavu (which started the armed rebellion together with the 10th Brigade in Goma) included a large contingent of Banyamulenge troops, the Banyamulenge forces at present are also strongly divided. On the one hand, Banyamulenge forces are said to be the most active elements of the RCD army. On the other hand, an increasing number of Banyamulenge that originally fought within the ranks of the FAC forces joined the more informal militia groups on the Haut Plateau, in order to better protect their own community. A third group, which included some high-ranking Banyamulenge soldiers even joined the Uganda-supported and Wamba-led RCD fraction and are now fighting within the ranks of Jean-Pierre Bemba’s forces.

In May 2000, different rumours even suggested that some Banyamulenge armed elements were recruited by the former Burundian president Bagaza to become part of the ‘Coalition des Patriotes Burundais’.

Two factors help to explain why different groups of armed elements are to be found within the Banyamulenge community. First, several high-ranking soldiers learned from the first rebellion that the security situation of their community had not improved and preferred to stay close to their families instead of fighting along the frontlines. Second, the ongoing dispute with the RPA made another group of Banyamulenge soldiers turn their backs on the RCD military. A number of them looked for support in Kampala, while others retreated to the Haut Plateau where they joined the guerillas. The original mistrust driving the Banyamulenge away from the RPA forces, turned into open hostility after the start of the RCD insurrection. In May 2000, rumours were spread that the RPA was arming the Mayi-Mayi and mobilising other communities to attack the Banyamulenge to force them to return to Rwanda. In August 2001 proof surfaced that the RPA was indeed supporting certain Mayi-Mayi groups. The objectives of this support, however, were not to isolate the Banyamulenge but jointly to attack Interahamwe positions. Most observers agree that RPA forces are not intervening in cases of joint attacks of Mayi-Mayi, Interahamwe and FDD forces. This is further proof that the RPA only wants to isolate them. In April 2000 Lemera was attacked by Mayi-Mayi, FDD and Interahamwe. According to internally displaced persons from Lemara that I talked to in the Ruzizi Plain, only the Burundian army supported the Banyamulenge forces in resisting this attack.

In January 1999, growing mistrust between the RPA and Banyamulenge soldiers in Uvira finally turned into armed confrontation. Although it is believed that the involvement of Banyamulenge in the massacre of Makobola was the direct cause of this skirmish, the confrontation has to be understood as the outcome of a personal conflict between RPA commander Major Kapfizi, and Masunzu, the local Banyamulenge commander who was opposing RPA control. On 30-31 December 1998, several hundred people had been killed in Makobola by RCD forces during a confrontation between RCD forces composed of Banyamulenge soldiers and a coalition of Interahamwe, FDD and Mayi-Mayi militia. In an attempt to restore peace, senior RCD officials decided to arrest, and transfer to Goma, some of the Banyamulenge military commanders involved in the counter-attack. The
Banyamulenge believed that the RPA tried to scapegoat them for the Makobola incident. The RPA decision to discipline and withdraw these Banyamulenge forces and integrate them into a new military unit was the main factor in the armed confrontation between both forces in Uvira. During the confrontation, some of the Banyamulenge commanders involved in the Makobola massacre retreated to the Haut Plateau to escape further disciplinary action.

By the beginning of 2002, a further confrontation between different Banyamulenge forces could no longer be avoided. Masunzu, the overall commander of the RCD forces on the Haut Plateau, was forced to accept the authority of Commander Safari (who was also a Munyamulenge). It was believed that Masunzu’s replacement was part of a broader strategy to once and for all deal with the opposition of parts of the Banyamulenge community against the RCD and the RPA control. In January 2002, a number of young Banyamulenge soldiers who had left the RCD forces and found refuge in Bujumbura, were arrested and deported to a military camp near Goma. For Safari and other RCD members of Banyamulenge descent, this RCD action against Masunzu was the ideal occasion to settle some personal scores. Masunzu retreated to the Haut Plateau, accompanied by a few hundred former RCD recruits of Banyamulenge descent, and started to organise his resistance against the RCD. From the perspective of the RCD (and the RPA) Masunzu’s resistance was part of a larger strategy led by the FRF. They sent troops to the Haut Plateau to deal with this military opposition. The result was military confrontation and further division of the Banyamulenge community. Clan solidarities had the effect of exacerbating this internal division. Family members of the FRF leadership were harassed, while others who were living in Bujumbura and were believed to be members of this opposition movement were arrested or were forced to go underground. In April 2002, the situation became extremely grim. On the one hand, the RPA itself sent soldiers to suppress and neutralise the Banyamulenge mutineers, which displaced most of the Banyamulenge population. In addition, the Rwandan regime invited a number of Banyamulenge leaders to Kigali where they were asked to decide once and for all about their true identity (Congolese or Rwandan). On the other hand, Masunzu’s resistance against the RCD-RPA coalition has led to a fast and loose coalition with some Mayi-Mayi groupings that jointly fight the ‘occupation forces’.

Meanwhile, the presence of a large group of armed factions on the Haut Plateau creates an additional cause for concern. Although the defence of their community was originally provided by the guerillas, as traditional power networks disappeared, since 1998 no one is able to control these armed factions for whom the current state of disorder offers a unique opportunity to gain some advantages by the use of force (Ruhimbika, 2001). As can be witnessed in other communities, the traditional elders often complain that they have lost their influence on the younger generations who have opted for a logic of violence and thereby reject the authority of these elders.

**Conclusion**

The Banyamulenge are a perfect example of ethnogenesis. Although their name never appears in the colonial archives, they are no pure invention but are the result of some of their leaders shifting the basis of their identity from the ethnic to the territorial. The attempts to prevent the Banyamulenge from gaining access to the political realm goes a long way to explain their marginalised position. The absence of their presence in colonial and historical records became the core element of the campaigns of local politicians to prove the non-existence of a ‘Banyamulenge tribe’ on Congolese soil.
Even though the existence of a culturally and linguistically distinct community of Tutsi pastoralists living on the Haut Plateau can hardly be ignored, it was never treated as such, either by the colonial administration nor by the independent Zairian state. On the contrary, the Rwandan origins of most of its members have provoked much debate on the issues of when and why these Banyamulenge moved to South Kivu.

The analysis, however, discloses that this observation only accounts for part of the explanation. A closer look at the internal organisation of the Banyamulenge community suggests that, aside from their foreign origins, their pastoral and semi-nomadic lifestyle, and the absence of a modern elite help to explain why they never really participated in local political and social life. The history of the Banyamulenge community could be read as an expression of an incomplete emancipation process, characterised by a total lack of political leadership. Even if a large number of Banyamulenge was given access to education during the seventies, it did not result in the formation of a Banyamulenge elite capable of defending the interests of their community and bringing about change. On the contrary, some of them only attempted to consolidate their own opportunistic interests. Others are extremely divided and are not capable of presenting a coherent political strategy. In this regard, an additional source of concern is the extreme discord of the armed elements within the Banyamulenge community. While some still support the military campaign of the RCD, an important number of them retreated to the Haut Plateau in order to protect their community and now find themselves in a very isolated position due to a lack of allies. For both political and military leaders, the existing distance from the RPA forces and RCD administration risks increasing their social isolation, deteriorating security and lack of protection.

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Making a Killing: Criminality & Coping in the Kivu War Economy

Stephen Jackson

Over the last four years, the eastern Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have seen the precipitous rise and fall of a lucrative economy based on artisanal mining of tantalum ore. In some ways building on older patterns of survivalist economics in Congo, it also represents a radical mutation of livelihood strategies responding to an economy profoundly destroyed by colonial and post-colonial neglect and greed, and more recently by five years of vicious war. That war has itself capitalised on the country’s vast mineral wealth, progressively becoming ‘economised’, in that profits increasingly motivate the violence, and violence increasingly makes profits possible for all belligerents.

This article details the tantalum commodity chain from its base in the forests and uplands of the Kivus to global markets. Through an exploration of popular rumour about economic activity it also traces how the war has radically altered conventional Congolese attitudes to the survivalist tradition of ‘fending for yourself’, from perceptions of the heroic to perceptions of criminal domination by ‘foreigners’ and ‘Congolese traitors’. Yet if there is criminal gain from tantalum on the part of Congolese and foreign actors, tantalum mining has also become a critical mode of survival for many at the grassroots. International action against the ‘war economy’ in the Congo must therefore be careful to punish the real villains.
Si les protagonistes du conflit ont recours à la violence, c'est autant pour assurer l'accès aux gisements miniers que pour piller les stocks constitués par d'autres; de même, des alliances commerciales inattendues - mais néanmoins profitables - ont été conclues entre factions, ceci en dépit des rapports d'inimité qu'elles entretiennent officiellement.

L'article examine en détail les effets de cette économie de guerre sur les moyens d'existence du peuple. Il en ressort que la 'fièvre du Coltan' a déclenché une dollarisation rapide de l'économie rurale, accompagnée d'une distorsion économique et d'une déstabilisation des prix des produits et des revenus de l'agriculture. Pendant les deux années que dure le boom, l'inflation frappe encore plus durement les campagnes que les zones urbaines. La région connaît un exode massif de jeunes gens qui abandonnent leurs occupations agricoles pour se consacrer à l'extraction minière, et en subit les conséquences aux niveaux économique, social et - finalement en fin de compte - politique. De nombreuses activités économiques secondaires, telles la prostitution, la vente d'alcool et le petit commerce fleurissent autour des sites minières. De même, une frange couche entrepreneuriale d'intermédiaires, opérant au départ de manière indépendante, s'insert dans la chaîne de production.

Pendant ce temps, guidés par des intérêts individuels ou collectifs, les autorités de la RDC et leurs commanditaires rwandais engrangent des millions de dollars par an, fruit du prélèvement de licences d'exploitation et de taxes ainsi que de leur implication directe dans la chaîne de production et de vente du minerai.

A l'aube de l'année 2001, la chute – tout aussi soudaine – du prix du tantale (qui retrouve sa valeur antérieure sur le marché global) a le même effet déstabilisant: le choc se ressent immédiatement à la base, alors que les ouvriers mineurs ne trouvent plus ni travail, ni marchés où écouter le produit de leur labou. Tandis que certains retournent chez eux et se remettent à cultiver, les autres choisissent de poursuivre la 'chasse aux dollars' par d'autres moyens et viennent notamment gonfler les rangs des milices qui terrorisent le Kivu.

Cet article détaille la chaîne de production du tantale, depuis son extraction en forêt et dans les hauts-plateaux du Kivu jusqu'à sa négociation sur le marché mondial, et trace un portrait dynamique du phénomène cycle de croissance et défaillte d'un secteur d'activité.

De plus, en explorant les rumeurs populaires ayant trait à l'activité économique, il montre également à quel point la guerre a altéré de manière radicale l'attitude adoptée antérieurement par les congolais, dans l'esprit du mot d'ordre présidentiel: 'Débrouillez-vous!' Les perceptions relatives à l'homo economicus sont ainsi passées de l'image du héraù deployant des trésors d'ingéniosité pour subvenir aux besoins de sa famille à celle du citoyen 'agi', subissant une domination criminelle orchestrée par des 'étrangers' et des 'traîtres à la Nation'.

C'est en renversant les figures nominales usuelles que la rumeur populaire circulant au Kivu s'insurge contre ce vol éhonté du patrimoine national, et l'étiquette de 'crime économique'. De même, alors que la faculté typiquement congolaise 'd'acheter ou de vendre quoi que ce soit' était autrefois célébrée, le Kivu connaît aujourd'hui une circulation fréquente de tracts anonymes maudissant ceux qui 'vendent la terre de nos ancêtres'. En sus du pillage, voire du 'viol' du patrimoine national (les richesses de 'Mère Congo') et de son éparpillement par-delà les frontières, ces tracts justifient le 'projet criminel' qui, en dernière analyse, contribue à affecter l'intégrité territoriale de l'ensemble du Congo.

En mettant surtout en cause les 'Rwandais', soit une catégorie indistincte amalgamant détenteurs de la nationalité rwandaise (en particulier des militaires) et locuteurs du Kinyarwanda, ces accusations exacerbent le sentiment de haine qu'éprouvent les congolais à l'égard d'un groupe déjà passablement marginalisé.
Enfin, si des intermédiaires congolais et des acteurs étrangers tirent effectivement un profit 'criminel' de l'exploitation du tantale, l'extraction de ce minerai est devenu un mode critique de survie pour une part importante de la population. Il est en conséquence utile nécessaire que les pressions exercées à l'échelon international contre l'économie de guerre que connaît le Congo veillent à punir les véritables coupables.

'Our Riches are Being Looted!'

In his Christmas 1999 address, the late Msgr. Kataliko, controversial Catholic Bishop of Bukavu (capital of South Kivu Province, on the DR Congo's eastern frontiers with Rwanda) preached that:

The Congolese people are obliged to resist, because our riches are being looted by foreign powers with the complicity of a Congolese elite.

The Bishop was immediately expelled by the Rwandan-backed Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD) rebels, then and now in control of the Kivus. A string of anonymous tracts followed, amplifying his words, demanding boycott of 'Rwandan'-run businesses, non-payment of taxes, and cessation of economic activities like mineral exploitation which 'only serve to kill Congolese'. They denounced a profoundly economic 'lust' to 'dismember' the Kivus on the part of Rwanda, Uganda and their allies in the war since 1998. One 1999 tract accused the USA of:

helping the international bandits from Rwanda, Uganda, and some sons of the D.R. Congo to rape the country and loot Tantalum and Niobium minerals from Eastern D.R. Congo to be used in the US computer industry.

Two related epithets for the Kivu provinces, employed equally by academics and local actors, evoke the connections between violence and profit this paper explores. The first, 'la poudrière' (the powder keg), suggests a region where rebellion and violence are frequent, touched off by the merest spark of resentment (Mugisho, 1998; Willame, 1998). The second the 'far-west' (Wild West) of Africa (Lumbi, 2000; cf. De Boeck, 1999 on Africa's 'Klondike'), suggests a lawless, mineral-rich frontier zone, long a locus of rapid wealth accumulation through smuggling to and from former Zaire (Vwakyanakazi, 1991; Callaghy, 1984), embodying the wiles of what the Congolese call 'Systeme D' — the informal economics of survival through inventively 'fending for yourself' (se débrouiller).

But if 'fending for yourself' on the margins of legality in the DRC has long been seen as heroic (De Boeck, 1999), this paper suggests a profound recent alteration in popular attitudes to one major sector of Systeme D in the Kivus: that of artisanal mineral exploitation, specifically that of tantalum. This radical shift has come about because of the increasingly intimate relationship between dominance of mineral extraction and the course of the bloody war in the DRC which has so far claimed more than 2.5 million lives (International Rescue Committee, 2001). Keen's twist on the well-known Clausewiczian maxim is that today, 'war ... is a continuation of economics by other means' (Keen, 1998). In the Kivus, mineral wealth is exchanged for drugs and guns (International Commission of Inquiry, 1998) as well as considerable personal and collective gain, elevating the violence in a vicious circle; profits increasingly motivate the violence, violence makes the profits possible.
Analysts have remained uncertain about applying the moralising categories of 'illegality' and 'criminality' to 'informal' economic activity in Africa (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999; De Boeck, 1996; MacGaffey, 1986, 1991; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000; VwakyanaKazi, 1991). However, war in the Kivus has reversed how Kivutiens themselves speak of extractive economics in their province. The resentment of economic 'lust' on the part of Rwanda – or some Rwandans – underlying the present dismemberment of the Congo, has led rumour to label exploitation of the Kivu's mineral wealth as, itself, 'criminal', seeing the riches of the Congo as having been 'looted', 'annexed' and recolonised by foreign powers with assistance from Congolese 'traitors'.

Situating the Kivus

The long, slow rotting from within of Mobutu's Zaire permitted the Kivus to build a degree of political and economic autonomy during the 1980s and 1990s (Streiffeler, 1994). However, ethnic polarisation in the Kivus was on the rise, first with the 'Inter-ethnic War' of 1993 – fuelled by Presidential divide-and-rule politics, local rivalries for customary leadership and growing resentment against elite monopolisation of international aid flows (Zex-Kongo, 1999) – and then with the knock-on effects of the 1994 Genocide in neighbouring Rwanda. Two national 'wars of liberation' quickly followed, both rooted in the Kivus' convoluted mixture of communal violence, political machination, raw sensitivity about borders and contested national identities, the freeze/thaw, on-again off-again actions of aid, and, not least, the enormous mineral and agricultural wealth of the provinces. In the first, starting from the Kivus in 1996/1997, Mobutu was overthrown by the Alliance des Forces Democratis pour la Liberation du Congo/Zaire (AFDL), a hastily assembled alliance of groupings 'led' by successor President, Laurent Desire Kabila. Even before Kabila reached Kinshasa, foreign mineral concerns concluded lucrative mining concessions with him, financing his climb to power and consolidating their position to profit from it (Willame, 1999).

A year later, a new rebel movement, the RCD erupted again from the Kivus, backed by Kabila's former allies, Uganda and Rwanda. With Zimbabwe, Angola, Chad and Namibia weighing in on the Kabila side (the late Laurent Kabila having been assassinated and replaced, quasi-monarchically, by his son Joseph), the fighting stalemated in an effective and bloody quadripartite partitioning of the country: Ugandan-controlled, Ugandan-aligned, 3 Rwandan-controlled and Kabila-controlled. Despite mounting popular resistance to RCD rule (seen by many Kivutiens as 'puppets' for the Rwandan government), the Kivus remain a rebel stronghold. From this position, the abortive rebellion has, in effect, become the vehicle through which elite networks reap the harvest of Kivutien mineral wealth unhindered. The level of daily violence remains enormous, as the various contending powers juggle insincere negotiation with deplorable violence.

'Systeme D'

Mobutu's Zaire had a guiding principle: 'Debrouillez-Vous!' ('fend for yourselves!'). Economic activity outside the formal, legal sphere was already significant at independence, 4 particularly in the Kivus (Streiffeler, 1994; MacGaffey, 1991). However, Zaire's collapse under Mobutu and the thoroughgoing 'criminalisation' of the post-independence state itself (Schatzberg, 1988; Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999) forced tremendous inventiveness about making-do. With typically sardonic wit, Zaireans coined a rich wealth of names for this: 'Article Quinze', 5 the satirical
Describing everyday survival strategies, Congolese will often say ‘nous vivons mystérieusement’ ('we live mysteriously'), ‘nous vivons dans l’air’ ('we live in the air').

Systeme D is enormously various: young men photocopy by the sheet on street corners; trader women smuggle spirits, perfume, tobacco or mere milk across borders; people buy manioc flour in bulk and hawk it to neighbours; young men migrate from their fields to scratch for diamonds on the Angolan/Congolese border or for gold, tin or, most recently, tantalum in the Kivus. Congo-Zaire's so-called 'second' economy so eclipses the official 'first' that De Boeck is justified in asking what use is 'distinguishing between formal and informal or parallel economies when the informal has become the common and the formal has almost disappeared?' (1996:91). Congolese economics radically destabilises all categorical polarities – first/second, real/surreal (MacGaffey, 1991), formal/informal (De Boeck, 1996), official/unofficial, legal/illegale (Hibou, 1999:80), criminal/legitimate – a subset of the larger 'crisis of meaning' in postcolonial Congo in which the boundaries between fact and fiction, substance and appearance, signifier and signified 'have imploded or are subverted' (De Boeck, 1996:92).

The highly ambiguous and complex relationship between Systeme D and the Zairean state – resistance/collusion? – underlines the worthlessness of such polarities. One genesis story has Mobutu winkingly baptism 'débrouillardise' himself, urging the population to 'fend for yourselves!' in a 1970s political speech. His sly encouragement of economic activity outside official circuits created a safety valve for discontent, encouraging Congolese to identify coping mechanisms which kept them too busy 'to offer an overt threat to the state' (MacGaffey, 1991:37).

Meanwhile, Mobutu's injunction gave licence for everyone from lowliest state functionary to those at the apex of power in the Présidence to engage rapaciously in Bayart's 'politics of the belly': 'accumulation of wealth through political power' (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999:8; Bayart, 1993). But Mobutu's state was Janus-faced, operating through a 'dialectic of oppression' in which the power alternately smiles, snarls (Schatzberg, 1988:1) and predominantly winks (see Werbner, 1996; Mbembe, 1992). The President encouraged Systeme D, but also ringingly denounced it, as he notoriously did in a November 1977 oration, as 'le mal Zairois' (the Zairean disease): 'everything is for sale, everything is bought in our country' (Callaghy, 1984:190). Such post-colonial ambivalence was instrumental and strategic, mimicking Mobutu's patrimonial political style, which alternated grace and favour with coercion and punishment (Schatzberg, 1988; Chabal and Daloz, 1999).

Ordinary Congolese engagement with Systeme D has been just as ambiguous, exhibiting 'connivance' and the 'myriad ways in which ordinary people bridge, trick, and actually toy with power instead of confronting it directly' (Mbembe, 1992:22). On one hand, informal economic activity afforded economic survival and an apparent partial escape from heavy-handed officialdom. People increasingly penetrated 'spaces previously occupied by the imploding state and the regime' (De Boeck, 1996:97). On the other, Systeme D also meant exposure to the light fingers and needy pocket books of state functionaries: unremittingly unpaid, but empowered to gate-keep economic activity, often accompanied by violence. 'Nous vivons mystérieusement' can also be read as ironic commentary on the Janus-state's ability to appear atrophied and yet for its actors to remain profoundly, cruelly relevant in the lives of street hawkers, smugglers, market women.
Commentators have remained, on balance, optimistic about the room-for-maneuvre that *Système D* offered Congolese. It has been celebrated as an arena for economic survival, but also for embryonic class resistance or neo-bourgeois emergence (MacGaffey, 1991:10); for self-empowering women ‘evading male control’ (MacGaffey, 1988); for ‘development without the state’ (Streiffeler, 1994:63); and for trickster entrepreneurship (Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999) in which cunning is accentuated as social value and the pursuit of prestigious lifestyles and elevated status as aesthetic (Bayart, 1993; Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999; Mbembe, 1992; Werbner, 1996; De Boeck, 1999), frequently a transnational one (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000; White, 2000). In sum, *Système D* has been seen as a space of new politico-cultural as well as economic possibility, one in which ‘people are taking matters into their own hands’ (MacGaffey, 1991:39) and where the quest for status, superiority, self-identity and ‘savoir-vivre’ (De Boeck, 1999:192-196) rework long-standing cultural tropes of resourcefulness and guile. This narrative of increasing state withdrawal from intervention in economic and administrative affairs describes the Kivus from particularly early on. Nzoli, a senior Kivutien civil society figure told me in 1999:

*You should realise that we don’t look west [towards the capital, Kinshasa] here, and we haven’t for some time ... Like it or not – and many don’t particularly like it these days ... we look east [towards Rwanda and Uganda].*

Commentators concur: Kivu has long been isolated, somewhere the state’s writ ceased to run (Callaghy, 1984:187); where extreme, accelerating inaccessibility catalysed smuggling networks (Streiffeler, 1994:66); a region amongst the most ungovernable in Congo even before Mobutu (Willame, 1997:46). By the mid-1990s, the Zairean state had long since become ‘nothing more than a decorative trompe-l’oeil which poorly concealed its paralysis’ (Braeckman, 1999:36).

Due to prolonged, increasing isolation in the Kivus, ‘débrouillez-vous!’ became understood as an injunction to get by without the state, to engage in ‘self-development’ through constructing not only ‘parallel’ economic livelihoods but even parallel infrastructural and welfare support mechanisms (Streiffeler, 1994). *Système D* came to be seen as legitimate not only for the individual but for the Kivus as a whole. ‘Non-state’ economic activity in the Kivus, ‘even if it appears to deprive the state of precious resources, ... returns them to society in many ways’ (Vwakyanakazi, 1991:69).

Needless to say, the Kivus were never entirely ‘non-state’. For one thing, a small number of Kivutien Rwandophones played prominent roles in Mobutu’s early governments and were material beneficiaries of his later policies of economic ‘Zaireanisation’? But the broad narrative of the Kivus’ disconnection from the rest of Zaire and their long-term economic linkage to Rwanda, Uganda and on to the Gulf States and even the Far East (MacGaffey 1991; Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 1999) is undeniable. Further, whatever the realities, Kivutien perceptions of *Système D* through the eighties and nineties were of an arena of escape from the predatory dialectics of Mobutu’s regime.

**‘Coltan Fever’ & the Tantalum Commodity Chain**

With the advent of civil war in the Congo these attitudes have profoundly altered. Once seen as heroic entrepreneurs, those who excavate for mineral wealth in the RCD-controlled eastern half of the war-partitioned DRC are now depicted in underground discourse as complicit with ‘economic crime’ by ‘foreign bandits’. What follows here
is a case study of this change, traced through the rise and fall in the political economy of ‘coltan’: tantalum ore which for the last years of the 1990s was the object of a feverish ‘gold rush’ in the Kivus.

An extremely heavy and moderately rare metal found in the Kivus in the form of ‘coltan’ (colombo tantalite) mixed with ‘cassiterite’ (tin oxide ore), tantalum finds its uses in rocketry, satellite engineering armaments and, particularly mobile phone manufacture. As a result, the world price for tantalum increased precipitously (almost ten-fold) over recent years before crashing just as precipitously at the beginning of 2001:

![Tantalum: World Price Movements 1996-2001](image)

Cassiterite has been mined in the Kivus for decades (Vwakyanakazi, 1991:62) along with gold, diamonds, tungsten, cobalt and other precious minerals. Despite long-term awareness of considerable tantalum reserves – Lumbi (2000:7) estimates 450,000 metric tonnes in the DRC. Until ten years ago tantalum’s presence in the Kivus was largely ignored until advances in technology coupled with an escalating world price made it enormously profitable to separate from other metals. Subsequently, two successive wars in the Kivus made tantalum exploitation possible as never before.

Tantalum ore is mined by hand in a number of zones in the Kivus: the upland pastures of the Masisi and Kalehe, and in Maniema and Walikale, in the eastern verges of the great equatorial rain forest that carpets Congo’s centre. In late 2000, during the boom period, I journeyed to Walikale with my colleague Juma to see ‘coltan fever’ for myself. In Walikale Centre, young men carrying wok-like metal pans on their heads were setting off on the three day’s march into the forests to scratch out the ore with hand tools and pan it. So great was the exodus from the fields to the forests that a serious knock-on effect on food insecurity was noted (Institut POLE, 2001). Juma told me:

*about 90 per cent of the young men are doing this now. You hear about a hill with deposits and off you go to negotiate with the owner, a local chief, to pay a percentage to him. Of course, with the forest areas so cut off from everyone, no road and all, the exploiteurs are completely at the mercy of the buyers.*
Little money was making it back to the town of Walikale. The few vehicles in town were rusted jalopies. But small planes would arrive twice a day to upload valuable sacks of raw ore.

The *exploiteurs* were spending two to three weeks in the forest slowly scrabbling together a kilo or so of ore to sell. Some then walked back to the market in Walikale Centre to sell there. Others remained, swapping coltan for goods and services brought to the forest by intermediaries.

Jean, a motorbike taximan worked as an intermediary, based in Walikale. Getting into coltan 'requires *magot*, financial resources, he told me. Jean began taxi driving for an uncle with a vehicle idle in town. With the profits, and some more his uncle gave him, he got hold of a *parcelle* of land and grew some manioc and vegetables. Trekking into the forest, he swapped this produce with *exploiteurs* for coltan. Selling that on again in Walikale Centre, he bought an old motorbike and started as a *moto-taxi*. After a while, he sold that motorbike and bought more coltan - this time about US$500 worth. With this he bought a metric tonne of manioc flour in Bukavu and brought it back to the forest where he exchanged it for $1,500 worth of coltan. With the proceeds he bought the new motorbike with which he transported me around Walikale. He intended to go back to the coltan fields 'as soon as possible: next week if I can!'

Violette was an intermediary at the next level. A prosperous-looking woman, we met boarding the small cargo plane ferrying us from Walikale to her home town, Bukavu, with more than a metric tonne of coltan and cassiterite packed in neat, tiny and impossibly heavy white sacs. Violette's mother was Rwandan, her father Congolese: Violette considers herself Congolese, but said that because she is 'morphologically Rwandan-looking' she has 'a lot of trouble about this in Congo, particularly at present'. She began as a coltan intermediary after her husband, also Rwando-Congolese, was killed by an angry anti-Rwandan crowd in Kinshasa in the early days of the 'First Liberation War'.

Violette would regularly fly to Walikale with a large financial stake assembled from friends, neighbours and investors. She needed a large stake because her margin was small, buying in Walikale market at about $25 a kilo, paying $1.50 per kilo air transport and some further kickbacks, before trying to sell in Bukavu at about $30 a kilo at the commercial *comptoirs*. Unfortunately, the final price varied with the ore's quality and density, only accurately assessed with expensive spectrometry machines: 'the Rwandans have recently installed such a machine in Walikale but I won't use it because it deliberately under-values the ore!' As a result, Violette would guess at the true value of the ore on offer. Just before I met her she had lost $4,000, but she hoped this time to clear that debt, returning with 500kg on a capital outlay of about $12,500 borrowed from friends and colleagues. Reflecting on her life, Violette echoed the spirit of *débrouillez-vous*:

*It's a pleasure when you make some profit, to know that you have done this yourself, even if you put your life in danger always. Even if the war ended and the president tried to put a stop to this commerce, I would find a way to continue!* 

The other intermediaries, Violette said, are all from the Bashi ethnic group around Bukavu. The Bashi, historically, are considered culturally and linguistically 'close' to Rwanda, even if precolonially at war with the Rwandan state (Newbury, 1989; 1992). Though Congolese, they are seen as foreigners and 'almost Rwandans' by local people in Walikale, their control of intermediary trade resented. The taint of 'foreignness'
and quasi-Rwandanness they carry adds to the general, building resentment towards things ‘Rwandan’ in the Kivus.

In 2000, intermediaries I talked with estimated two-thirds of the ore being mined in the Kivus exited straight to Rwanda by plane for processing and export, while one-third was being purchased, analysed and processed at commercial *comptoirs* in Bukavu and Goma.\(^{13}\) These *comptoirs* are the final Central African link in the commodity chain. Large numbers of Congolese workers laboriously crush, wash, separate and grade the ore. A small laboratory assays purity levels, determining the price to the preceding layer of intermediaries (the *comptoirs* in Goma operate as a cartel with fixed purchase prices geared to purity levels). The coltan and cassiterite are separated and packed in oil drums, ready for export and final sale on the international market – buyers in London, Brussels and Amsterdam are the predominant destination, but increasingly on the internet one can find cryptic advertisements posted to bulletin boards such as the ‘Embassy Network’:

*I want to buy larger [sic] amounts of coltan if you can offer at very good price very urgently (Recherche grande quantite de coltan a prix bas tres urgent [sic]).*

**Coltan’s Linkages to the War Economy**

Enormously lucrative, coltan is intimately linked to the ‘economy of war’ (Le Billon, 2000) in the Kivus. Ahmed, a middle-aged expatriate hydraulic engineer, ran one of ten or so *comptoirs* in Goma operating during 2000. He confirmed what Kivutien popular opinion strongly resents: even if the *comptoirs* have a highly international mix of financial interests behind them, all the *comptoirs* in Goma are Rwandan-connected, whether in terms of representation or ownership:

*The US comptoir is protected by Rwandans, the Egyptian one is associated with Rwandans, and the German one has Rwandans employed there. You can say the same for all of them! … The Tutsi in the Masisi are exploiting the stuff there and shipping it straight to Rwanda or through their brokers in Goma on to Rwanda. This part of the Congo is just being treated like a Rwandan company!*

The substance of these findings, if not quite their tone, was later echoed in the controversial UN Panel of Inquiry Final Report on ‘Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources’ (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001). As the following table, based on official Rwandan statistics (almost certainly underestimates), suggests, Rwandan ‘production’ of tin, tantalum, gold and diamonds rose suddenly in 1997, the year that Rwandan troops were first deployed on Congolese soil. The figures have continued to increase.

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*Sources:* Coltan, cassiterite and gold figures derived from Rwandan Official Statistics (No. 227/01/10/MIN); diamond figures from the Diamond High Council (All figures originally appeared in the UN Panel of Inquiry Report, 2001. All 2000 figures are to October).
rise with the second war from 1998 to the present. Rwanda is not known to possess any of these four minerals on its own territory in any quantity.

For tantalum, the UN Report is very specific:

*Most of the coltan extracted by civilians and prisoners is sold to intermediaries (civilians or soldiers) who in turn sell it to comptoirs, some of which are controlled by the Rwandan military. The quasi-totality of this coltan is sent to Kigali, and generally stored in facilities owned by the Government* (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001: paragraph 129).

In fact, for a brief period between the end of 2000 and early 2001, the link between the RCD/Rwandan military and the coltan business was more intimate still. On 25 November 2000, the RCD imposed a strict monopoly on coltan buying and selling, replacing the comptoir system. Control of the monopoly was assigned to SOMIGL (*Société Minière des Grands Lacs*). Two of the four SOMIGL partners were from RCD/Goma itself. A third, Madame Aziza Gulamali is a half-Burundo-Congolese, half-Asian businesswoman from Bukavu. Her always-controversial career has included management of the Sportsman cigarette factory, controller of two comptoirs in Goma and Bukavu, and major financial backer of the (Hutu) *Front pour la Défense de la Démocratie* (FDD) rebels in Burundi led by Léonard Nyangoma. Her selection by the (Tutsi-aligned) *Rassemblement Congolaise pour le Démocratie* (RCD) raised eyebrows in the Great Lakes and added weight to the view that Rwanda’s interests in eastern Congo had less and less to do with political security imperatives and more and more with profit. The SOMIGL monopoly did not endure, however, being peremptorily abandoned in April 2001. Bonaventure, a Coltan dealer in Burundi, explained:

> She [Gulamali] had said she was going to pay a million dollars a month in taxes, I think, to the rebel government. And that was a lot of money, so she wanted to reduce the price to pay to the diggers, to the people who bring it, and they did not appreciate that, so instead of selling at a low price, they would go and sell it to Kigali or wherever ... They smuggled it! The people who decide upon giving Madame Gulamali the monopoly, they are the rebel big shots, because they have 'eaten' something, gotten something, whatever, but then the actual people who have to enforce it are the small soldiers by the roadside, on the borders, who have to make sure that the coltan doesn’t go out of the Congo. And those guys are hungry, so hey! You pass with your 100 kilos, you give them $50 and they say 'Ciao!' From the RCD perspective such smuggling was 'illegal', contravening their ‘legal’ establishment of SOMIGL. However, very few Congolese accepted the ‘legality’ of the monopoly decree itself, seeing the RCD’s presence and its ‘criminal’ economic exploitation of the Kivus as the fundamental ‘illegality’. With the monopoly’s abandonment, arrangements returned to the *status quo ante*, with everyone from lowly diggers to comptoirs paying operating fees to the RCD.

What was the total value of the coltan trade at the height of the boom? What proportion accrued to Rwandan and RCD accounts? Finally, can the assertion that this trade fuelled the war in the DRC be sustained? During my visit to Ahmed’s comptoir, a shipment of 96 oil drums at 750kg per drum was readied for departure. This *comptoir* moved a similar quantity about every ten days. Annually, the *comptoir* grossed about $4.2m, with another three doing similar business. Along with a number of smaller *comptoirs*, this makes for a total of about US$30m annually. Ahmed estimated twice as much coltan left directly for Rwanda as passes through Kivutien hands. Rwanda admits to coltan exports of 122 and 83 tonnes in 1999 and 2000 respectively. However, other estimates suggest the Rwandan army, through Rwanda
Metals, exported 100 MT a month over an eighteen-month period (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001: paragraph 130). At an average world price of approximately $200 per kilo during this period, this makes almost $17 million a month in profit assuming that the coltan was bought for $30 per kilo from intermediaries such as Violette.

In 2000, Ahmed’s comptoir paid RCD authorities $7,500 for its operating licence, with an additional 0.75 per cent net to the Department of Mines and 7 per cent to the Office of Control in ‘customs duties’, both under RCD direction. With the addition of ‘overtime’ and other costs for these two departments which the comptoir is obliged to underwrite, direct payments to RCD-controlled services ran at about 10 per cent, or an estimated $3m per year. Post-SOMIGL, comptoir licence fees increased to between $15,000 and $40,000 a year, with intermediary licences at several hundred dollars apiece (arrangements for diggers remain somewhat ad hoc with local authorities and chiefs). In addition, all comptoirs depend on Rwanda banks for cash dollars, who charge a commission of 3.75 per cent and are in a position to manipulate the exchange rate to their advantage.

A number of investigations link the coltan trade to the highest levels of Rwandan and Ugandan political circles (Lumbi, 2000; Institut POLE, 2001; UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001). And, as Ahmed argued,

that’s just the coltan and the cassiterite. What about the coffee, the diamonds, the gold? What are they doing with the tungsten as well? The coffee [also a top smuggling item] is really top quality, particularly the arabica, even though it was a bad year for the price outside. So they are making a lot of money!

One can add the cobalt, the rubies and semi-precious stones that Violette displayed, the tropical hardwoods, the coffee, tea, papaine (tropical plant derivative) and all the other commodities of which Kivutien rumour incessantly whispers. There is a perniciously symbiotic relationship between the economic activity and the violence: Lumbi (2000:4) calls the Kivus a ‘vast hub where traffickers in diamonds, drug-money launderers and arms-dealers meet’. The UN Panel of Inquiry is equally blunt:

Here lies the vicious circle of the war. Coltan has permitted the Rwandan army to sustain its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The army has provided protection and security to the individuals and companies extracting the mineral. These have made money which is shared with the army, which in turn continues to provide the enabling environment to continue the exploitation.

Violence provides the mechanism for the economic exploitation of the Kivus by elites at home and in neighbouring Rwanda. In turn, part of the massive economic profits underwrites the military operations. The rest of the profits are spirited out of the country: the RCD, in the four years it has held power, has not supported even basic health or education to the Kivutien population. Poverty, morbidity and mortality for ordinary Kivutien have risen enormously. Amnesty International has repeatedly asserted that in the Kivus ‘under the pretext of fighting their opponents, all parties to the conflict are killing, looting and extorting on a massive scale and subjecting the entire population to terror and misery’ (Amnesty International, 2000). All the while, multi-million dollar trans-border flows have continued.
Economics of War & Mutations in Economic Livelihoods

Congo exemplifies an increasingly common trend: the economisation of conflict. It would be too much to assert that the two successive rebellions began with explicitly economic motives. The belligerents had expressed political goals, whatever one thinks of them. However, since its outbreak, the second conflict has become successively more and more economic in its scope, means and ends. In contrast to the recent totalising analytical trend – ‘conflicts are more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance’ (Collier, 2000:91) – by ‘economisation’ of conflict I mean a process through which conflicts progressively reorient from their original goals towards profit, and conflict actors capitalise ever increasingly on the economic opportunities that war has opened up. Meanwhile, for ordinary Congolese, one of the many devastating impacts of an ‘economised’ war has been profound mutation in livelihood strategies already imperilled after decades of neglect and abuse under Mobutu.

Visible examples have emerged during the conflict in the Kivus of political and military imperatives subsumed to economic ones. The RCD’s split into separate ‘Rwandan’ and ‘Ugandan’ wings owed as much to mineral deposits as to ideology. The same can be said of clashes between Rwandan and Ugandan troops, RCD rebels and Mayi-Mayi militias, in and around mineral areas. The fight to control Congo as a whole has given way to military strategies on the part of all actors to dominate the natural resources, whether minerals such as those in the Kivus ‘coltan belt’ (UN Panel of Inquiry Final Report, 2001: paras. 173-180) or Kinshasa’s shady military-commercial alliance with the Zimbabwean Army to exploit ‘the world’s largest logging concession’, almost 33 million hectares of Congolese hardwood forest (Global Witness, 2002). A ‘win-win’ situation for all belligerents (UN Panel of Inquiry Final Report, 2001: paragraph 218) has emerged in which politically perverse but economically rational alliances are forged. Mayi-Mayi militias and RCD rebels, political enemies, nonetheless collude to mutual economic advantage, accessing weapons from the same dealers and selling coltan to the same comptoirs. It is in more than one sense, then, that Rwandan President Kagame described this as ‘a self-financing war’.

How have ordinary Kivutiens’ livelihoods changed in response? First, while urban areas have long been dollarised, ‘coltan fever’ rapidly did the same as well to many relatively remote rural areas:

> It’s been dollarisation completely [up around the coltan areas] - and without reference to the market; 300 CF per dollar, a beer sold for $3 etc. When you have dollarisation there is always a rise in prices and there is a gravitation of all kinds of other activities towards the mines (Michel, local researcher, Goma).

Coltan areas saw rapid growth in prostitution, brewing and shebeens, and petty commerce of all varieties around the dollar economy. Localised environmental impacts, such as mudslides, have been devastating to lives and livelihoods (Institut POLE, 2001). Traditional agricultural trading patterns reversed: Kibabi, an area in Masisi previously known for its supply of beans to the provincial capital of Goma, became a major coltan centre. Beans journeyed to Goma markets from southern areas instead, traded on at inflated prices to Kibabi for consumption by coltan miners and others. At the height of coltan fever, a sharp decline in food security in the Masisi was felt as young men quit agricultural production to chase dollars. The following chart indicates enormous inflation in dollar terms for manioc, another staple, over a
two year period (in Congolese francs, the effect was dramatically worse: hyperinflation saw prices rise from 20 CF to 1772 CF between January 1999 and March 2001 in Goma). Still more strikingly, 2000, during which tantalum’s world price soared and ‘coltan fever’ raged, saw manioc’s dollar price in the rural market of Sake, Masisi overtake the price in Goma. Since manioc is normally grown across the Kivus, this strongly suggests that production of manioc in the Masisi had fallen sharply with the explosion in coltan and was being imported to normally productive areas.

After the Fall ...

All this was before tantalum crashed in early 2001 as precipitously as it had risen a little over a year before. Global demand contracted with the global economic downturn beginning in early 2001 and accelerated by 11 September. Meanwhile, supply side conditions eased at the same time through forward contracts concluded between the Sons of Gwalia — a significant Australian tantalum producer — and major market players. The price shock was immediately felt all the way down the commodity chain, with drastic effect in rural areas of the Kivus. First, the contraction in the margin between producer prices and the international market forced many intermediaries to the wall. By April 2001, Bonaventure in Burundi was telling me:

No, I’m not getting almost anything from the DRC at the present ... The Congolese ... fight on the price, they need a big price which I can’t pay. I’ve got my prices which I want to apply, they come with crazy prices; hey, I want you to pay $120!, which I can’t. ... There are some traders that come from Congo that ... want to sell to me at a high profit. But crossing the border and all that, they pay so much money and bribes and I prefer not to deal with them any more ... Let’s say they are people from Bukavu; those from Bukavu are people who buy coltan from Walikale ... and you know very well that there are no roads in Congo so you gotta fly to go and get it, pay for your flight, pay for your cargo, bring it to Bukavu, then from Bukavu you put it in a car, bring it to Bujumbura, at the border you have to pay bribes and all, it gets expensive ... I can’t make the price the Congolese intermediaries are looking for, and so I don’t buy from Congo any more.

Source: Data Analysis: dollar prices calculated on the basis of fortnightly exchange rate collected by FAO/Goma in the same markets. Trend curves fitted using exponential trend estimation with $R^2$ values as indicated.
By 2002, Violette from Bukavu had gone out of business altogether:

*Even my neighbour, the comptoir, has closed. I gave up shortly after I saw you – I think I made, perhaps, two more trips. I lost $13,000 dollars when the price collapsed ... when the Australians pushed out their product. The business continues, but it is only the Rwandan government that buys now. Even the diggers are giving up because they can’t make a profit at the price that is being imposed.*

Aside from intermediaries squeezed out of the commodity chain, Violette also hints at an enforced ‘rationalisation’ of production begun even before the global price fall. Increasingly, diggers in rural areas were being employed by players to operate mines for them. In areas close to urban centres these continue to be largely private actors – richer farmers and local business people. In more remote, less secure areas, military actors – both RCD and the diffuse militias operating loosely under the title Mayi-Mayi – dominate production, purchasing, or target mines for violent attack (A.S.P.D., 2001). On guarantee of anonymity, several human rights organisations in Goma also confirmed in 2001/2002 that forced labour is being used by Rwandan troops to mine tantalum under their control. The increasing involvement of the Rwandan army in primary extraction has driven out many diggers who earlier entered the market entrepreneurially. One local NGO described the ‘rationalisation’ very forcefully:

*To begin with, when coltan was starting to boom, this had a good impact for the peasants because they could both dig and sell, and get a little something. But now that the military have taken the monopoly to buy ... So the peasants can no longer sell to anyone else ... The bulk of the intermediaries have disappeared and there has been a real crunch where the diggers now come into contact directly with the military buyers. The buyer organises the diggers, he takes them to a particular part of the forest, he pays their taxes for them, takes their coltan, gives them some kind of a receipt, takes the stuff saying 'I will test it in Bukavu and let you know'. Then he comes back and just dictates to them: 'You had 10 per cent, you had 15 per cent etc.' In the past the buyer or the seller might lose through not knowing the quality of the product. But now it is really the buyer who has all the advantage because he knows very precisely the quality but the seller has no idea.*

What has been the impact of this ‘rationalisation’ on local economies?

*Now in Kibabi, the price of coltan has really fallen and people are starting to abandon it again ... There is a system of control now and it is not everybody that can get involved whereas before there was a laissez-aller, everybody could get involved. Now, if you don’t have the paperwork you can’t do it. So those who abandoned agriculture, after the drop in prices, they are starting up again in agriculture (Pierre, local NGO official)*

Not every youth simply returns to agriculture, however:

*The taste for dollars has definitely arrived and coltan has also promoted banditry. Once it really started then the militias would definitely target you as a business person, a seller, a digger and so on. If you were involved in coltan it was certainly assumed that you would have dollars. This would include Mongoles, Interahamwe, Mayi-Mayi, local defence, even the army. Certainly, Hutu militias would attack Hutu people involved in coltan. The same soldiers who guard the population during the day attack the population during the night and then the Interahamwe or the Mongoles also get the blame (Director of a local NGO).*

Ferdinand, another NGO official, described the limited options unemployed miners now have:
With the fall in the price of coltan, some people have gone back to agricultural production. Some, however, who already had gained some money have tried to set up as merchants in soap, clothes etc. which they try to sell in the rural areas. But also we are in a territoire which is high-risk, and so there would be quite a few cases of people joining the militias at this point. Because at the beginning there was some evidence of it happening in the other direction: people leaving the militias to get involved in coltan ...

But many still dig for coltan. In April 2002, in Kishanga mine in the Masisi, more than thirty young men were arduously working the same heavily excavated riverbed that ran through what remained of their fields. In groups of four they dug and sluiced the stony earth to extract dull, dark grey tantalum ore. One group of four men I spoke to reckoned they might collectively extract 2kg a day. These days, they would sell that for about $5 per kilo compared with $8 a kilo in the past. Now or then, this amounts to little more than a subsistence wage. Asked whether the coltan price fall would mean a return to agriculture, the chief of the village said:

_We can't go back to the way things were before coltan, because before we had cows and goats, but since the war there have been none. Each family used to have maybe 15 cows. Now we have none._

So devastated have rural economies become, so eroded are people's survival margins, that some of Kivus' markets now open not in the mornings, as traditionally, but in the evenings, to give people time during the day to earn some money. For many diggers, even after the crash in price and the rationalisation of production, coltan remains the only survival strategy in response to a local economy profoundly destroyed by war.

**Criminality vs. Coping in the War Economy**

Kivutiens see foreign interests driving the present violent RCD occupation of the Kivus. That they further view these interests as motivated by profit has, as I suggested earlier, complicated how _Système D_ is viewed, introducing a tension between those whose basic economic survival depends upon such activity and those with the (relative) luxury to protest against it. In particular, where mineral exploitation was formerly seen as the acme of _Système D_ 's survivalist wiles, now there is huge resentment against its control by Rwanda and Rwandans and its underwriting of the war. The news magazine _Référence Plus_ (2000) quoted an unnamed Kivutien thus: 'The Rwandans are looting from us, they are stealing our riches from us and we are left with nothing!'21 A popular tract reproached Kivutien merchants that 'the money you are putting in the banks only serves to kill your children, your brothers!'22

While academic debates about terms like 'illegality' and 'criminalised' for economic activities in Congo continue, the popular discourse of resistance uses these very terms _itself_ to describe the war economy. Anonymous tracts persistently speak of 'criminal' Rwandan actions, of their 'criminal' plan or project', and denounce Rwanda's 'economic crimes'. They view mineral exploitation as a gendered violence towards the rich resources of Mother Congo, 'raping' and 'dismembering' the national patrimony across borders and ultimately collaborating in the dismemberment of the Congo as a territorial entity itself. Illustrating this new 'illegitimacy', Kivutien rumour picks up but inverts the older tropes of _Système D_. When exhibited by Congolese in the _Système D_ of the past, trickery is celebrated as wile, guile and skill in playing the system. But in the Kivus today, trickery and duplicity are the motifs that rumour relates to the 'true/hidden nature' of the Tutsi/Rwandan, a nature which causes these poisonous tracts to demand that 'IT'S NOW OR NEVER THAT YOU GO
Where the Congolese ability to ‘buy and sell anything’ was celebrated in *Système D*, the tracts now consistently denounce the ‘cursed sellers’ of ‘our ancestors’ land’ who collude in ‘economic crimes’ and ‘criminal projects’. The tracts are suffused with fear and disgust for selling and buying: ‘the traditional chiefs ... have been bought’; certain chiefs ‘who are well known, are seen around, mobile phones in their hands, lavishly maintained by Rwanda’. Scores of ‘shady’ (or ‘maggoty’) merchants (commerçants veux) have been purchased already in a catalogue of loathing for those ‘selling’ the Congolese birthright.

Those Congolese involved, directly or indirectly, in extractive economic activity are threatened with reprisal, ordered ‘no longer to export to these countries the products of our country: coltan, gold, cassiterite, wood, palm oil, manioc flour, vegetables etc.’ All air companies involved in the shipment of ore or other contraband are threatened to ‘close your doors: last warning and mise en garde’.

In sum, rumour aims to intimidate and police an economy seen as profoundly ‘criminalised’ through its domination by Rwanda. In this respect, its revulsion for ‘coltan fever’ has been not dissimilar to the strong international calls for embargo against tantalum exports from Central Africa because of their intimate connection with the war (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001: para. 221). But both are insufficiently nuanced to the harsh realities of life in the Congolese war economy. Elites, both Congolese and foreign, have made and continue to make a killing from the war’s ‘vicious circle’ through which tantalum, timber and all the other war commodities are exploited through military control itself financed from these illegal profits. At the same time, however, the economic capacity to cope of large numbers of ordinary Congolese itself depends more crucially than ever on involvement in ‘illegal’ or marginal economics.

The following conclusions must thus be reached. First, international reactions to the war economy in the Congo cannot be based on overly simple calls to boycott particular commodities without great risk of harm to already critically exposed rural livelihoods. Second, instead, the short term goal must be a delinking of extractive economics from both the financing and the objectives of all parties to the war. Third, longer term, responsible economic governance for Congo’s enormous economic resources must be guaranteed explicitly within the framework of any overall peace settlement for this divided country. Finally, and meanwhile, the international community should keep careful watch on the rising and explosive tide of ethnic resentment towards Congo’s rwandophone communities. As an examination of Congolese rumour demonstrates, this resentment, simmering in the Kivus over the last four decades, has risen proportionately to the popular sense of Congolese grievance that their ‘riches are being looted’. As too much experience in Central Africa and elsewhere in the world has indicated, ‘greed’ and ‘grievance’ (Berdal and Malone, 2000) compounded together make for a violently explosive mix.

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Endnotes

1. 'Le peuple congolais est obligé de résister parce que nos richesses sont pillées par des puissances étrangères avec la complicité d'une élite congolaise'.

2. Though subdivided administratively into three 'provincettes', North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema, I will use the term 'Kivus' here to refer to the larger geographic space around Lake Kivu -- one of Central Africa's 'Great Lakes' -- that borders onto Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

3. The Ugandans effectively control territory under the wing of the RCD 'Aile Ilungu'. However they are also closely aligned to the MLC forces led by Jean-Pierre Bemba, a former Mobutiste who controls much of North-Western Congo at the time of writing.

4. In 1964, just five years after independence, according to McGaffey (1986), 10 to 12 million carats of diamonds -- some 81 per cent of official production, were being exported illegally from Congo.

5. Underlining its economic and cultural centrality, Pepe Kalle, one of Zaire's biggest music stars, satirised this instinct in his 1985 hit 'Article 15, beta libanga'. From the lyrics: 'Qu'on soit jeune ou vieux / On est tous en face d'une même réalité: la vie difficile / Le cauchemar quotidien / Que faire, sinon se référer à l'Article 15 / 'Débrouillez-vous pour vivre / À Kinshasa'.

6. In this regard, see particularly the UN Panel of Inquiry's difficulties finding a workable definition of 'illegality' (2001: paragraph 15).

7. It also raises much broader questions about the relationship between such dualistic categories and structures of power globally, which go beyond the scope of this paper.

8. It is important here to underline, as Bayart repeatedly does in his discussion of 'la politique du ventre' and elsewhere, that there is nothing unique to Africa about corruption. Collectively, however, Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999:xvi) do suggest that over the longue durée, there may have emerged a uniquely African style of corruption. This is one which is adept at extracting rents from a position of dependence rather than of dominance -- whether this has been in the context of the slave trade, colonialism or indeed of development assistance. Making-ends-meet from a subaltern position demands and calls into being an aesthetic of trickery and what Chabal (1996:46) appositely styles the 'Caliban syndrome' through which 'Africans have learned to speak the language we [in the West] want or need to hear'.

9. The programme of 'nationalisation' of mineral wealth and colonial agricultural plantations which, as Hibou notes (1999:71), in fact resulted in one of the most sudden and extensive transfers of such assets to the President's cronies.

10. Due to the highly fragmented nature of the global market in tantalum, indicative average prices are, in fact, extremely difficult to calculate. The figures presented here are roughly determined averages based on raw figures drawn from the US Geological Survey (USGS), Mineral Commodity Summaries, February 2000, and a further interview with USGS staff which, itself, drew from spot prices in: Metal Bulletin, Ryan's Notes, and Platt's Metals Week. While the figures themselves must be treated as inexact therefore (some sources reported a spot price high at end 2000 of US$365), the underlying trend of a precipitous ten-fold price increase during 2000, and ensuing fall almost to the status quo ante is not in doubt.

11. The ten or so commercial 'syndicates' which are the sanctioned buyers of the mineral ore. Comptoirs purchasing a variety of minerals were legalised by Mobutu during his 'economic liberalisation' phase (see Vwakyanakazi, 1991).

12. Newbury (1989, 1992) shows just how interlinked (but never politically unitary) Rwandan and Kivutien historical trajectories have been. That Bashi are seen as 'foreign' by the Nyanga in Walikale illustrates a prevalent Kivutien mechanism through which local interethnic rivalries (here Nyanga/Bashi) become conflated with stereotypical culture bloc ('forest culture' versus 'lake culture') and national (Rwandan / Congolese) identity dichotomies all too frequently and violently. In turn, the stakes in these rivalries are often further elevated through resentments
towards ‘trader’ ethnicities such as the Nande in North Kivu (Streiffeler, 1994) or the Bashi from South Kivu.

13. This estimate – and it can only be an estimate, under the circumstances – was provided to me by a number of informants left anonymous here. The UN Panel of Inquiry Report (2001: paragraph 130) argues similarly: ‘Most of the coltan extracted by civilians and prisoners is sold to intermediaries (civilians or soldiers) who in turn sell it to comptoirs, some of which are controlled by the Rwandan military. The quasi-totality of this coltan is sent to Kigali, and generally stored in facilities owned by the Government. A good portion goes to Rwanda Metals and the rest is exported directly by some professionals.’

14. The calculations here closely follow those of the UN Panel of Inquiry Report (UN Panel of Inquiry, 2001: paragraph 130). However, the figure that they use, of $200 per kilo on average, appears a little high by contrast with the figures presented in the graph earlier in this paper. The discrepancy is likely to be accounted for if the level of purity of the ore is factored in: in the earlier graph 60 per cent purity; in the UN calculations, higher, after further refinement.

15. Amongst the many factors, being precise about amounts and values is almost impossible. As much coltan is exported as cassiterite (the two are almost indistinguishable to the layperson) in order to evade heavier customs duties.

16. The present research did not reveal to what extent the two-thirds of the ore leaving directly for Rwanda for processing is subject to the same impositions.

17. ‘... un trafic intense des ressources minières (le diamant et l’Or essentiellement) qui génère non seulement les moyens importants pour financer la guerre mais qui procure aussi de juteux profits aux Officiers supérieurs ainsi qu’aux hommes d'affaires ougandais et rwandais impliqués dans ce trafic’ (Lumbi, 2000:1). This claim is followed-up with lists of individuals and companies, international and local, alleged to be involved in various aspects of war-related trade.

18. Evidence in fact shows the degree to which Rwanda’s war expenditure in the DRC far outstrips the official budgetary provision made for defence in the national accounts (UN Panel of Inquiry, paragraph 109).

19. Kivutiens speak of the trading of beans to Kibabi with the same kind of astonishment as might greet the export of sand to the Sahara.

20. Congolese Hutu militias.

21. ‘Les rwandais nous pillent, nous volent nos richesses, et nous, nous n’avons rien!’

22. ‘Les sous que vous faites entrer en banque ne servent que de tuer vos enfants, vos frères’.

23. ‘C’EST LE MOMENT OU JAMAIS QUE VOUS RENTREZ D’OU VOUS ETES VENUS!’ (Capitalised in the original tract).

Bibliography


Remembrance of Sins Past: Unraveling the Murder of Patrice Lumumba

Edouard Bustin

The assassination of L.D. Kabila, forty years to the day after the 1961 murder of Patrice Lumumba, revived memories of the fate of the Congo’s first (and only) democratically elected leader, but in Belgium, the case of Lumumba’s assassination had already been re-opened by a solidly documented exposé challenging what had for some time been the ‘official version’ of the murder. Written by Ludo DeWitte, this account identified those members of the Belgian establishment whom it saw as having deliberately engineered Lumumba’s overthrow and ‘final elimination’. Its publication directly led to the creation of a parliamentary commission of enquiry whose final report was released in November 2001. Much of the investigation took the form of an examination of archival and testimonial evidence. Most witnesses were not seriously challenged, and cross-examination was usually gentle and ineffective. Yet, considering the perceived need to achieve some form of national consensus, the enquiry cannot be dismissed as a whitewash. The report concludes that ‘certain members of the Belgian government and other Belgian participants were morally responsible for the circumstances leading to the death of Lumumba.’ The commission also identifies what it correctly views as dysfunctions in the decision-making process that prevailed in 1960-1961. Reactions to the report suggest that, for many of those involved in those violent events, stereotypes and cold war clichés die a reluctant death.

La coincidence (mais en était-ce une?) qui a voulu que Laurent Désiré Kabila fût assassiné à la veille du quarantième anniversaire du meurtre de Patrice Lumumba a été remarquée par la plupart des Congolais qui n’ont pas non plus mangé d’observer combien les réactions des milieux occidentaux faisaient montre, à quarante ans d’intervalle, des jugements cyniques ou racistes envers deux hommes dont la carrière pouvait effectivement présenter certaines analogies. La mémoire de Kabila, en tout cas (comme d’ailleurs celle de Lumumba) s’est ainsi vue mythifier aux yeux de ses compatriotes pour qui l’ambiguïté qui avait entouré son accès au pouvoir avait été largement rachetée par sa décision de rompre avec ses «parrains» rwandais et ougandais – avec les résultats que l’on sait.

Ce n’est pas uniquement par hasard que les destins de Kabila et de Lumumba se trouvaient ainsi liés, car le renversement de Mobutu en 1997 avait contribué à réveiller en Belgique le fantôme du leader charismatique dont l’exécution dans des circonstances atroces avait secoué la conscience internationale. Après un foisonnement d’ouvrages consacrés à Patrice Lumumba dans les quatre ou cinq années suivant son assassinat, une version consensuelle où le flou artistique se mêlait à l’indifférence s’était imposée dans la société belge – la seule, à vrai dire, où le sort de Lumumba pouvait encore soulever l’intérêt – et avait été en quelque sorte «officialisée» en 1990-91 avec la défense d’une thèse doctorale
La chute de Mobutu (qui y avait évidemment été impliqué) devait permettre de ré-ouvrir ce dossier mal clos et ce fut, pour l’essentiel, l’œuvre du sociologue flamand Ludo De Witte, dont l’ouvrage (publié en 1999 et presqu’aussiôt traduit en français puis en anglais) remettait en cause la responsabilité directe et l’action délibérée de certains dirigeants belges – avec la complicité plus ou moins active des grandes capitales occidentales ainsi que des milieux ouvriers et même de Baudouin I et de son entourage. Le retentissement de l’ouvrage de De Witte fut tel qu’il allait provoquer la mise en route d’une enquête parlementaire sur l’assassinat de Lumumba (enquête dont les fruits ont été rendus publics en novembre 2001 sous la forme d’un rapport d’autant plus volumineux qu’il est bilingue) mais bon nombre de détails repris par De Witte avaient déjà été révélés par d’autres (Vandewalle, Soete, etc.) sans toutefois que ces révélations parcellaires bénéficient d’un retentissement comparable. Sans doute les circonstances se prêtent-elles aux remises en question: non seulement la fin du régime Mobutu ou l’inefficacité de la Belgique au Rwanda mais aussi les divers scandales qui avaient récemment secoué la Belgique (notamment les trafics pédophiles révélés par l’affaire Dutroux) avaient amené l’opinion publique à réclamer une transparence accrue.

Malgré son caractère polémique, le travail accompli par De Witte, sur la base de documents récemment ouverts, était suffisamment convaincant pour que l’enquête parlementaire ne puisse éviter de soulever des questions délicates. Toutefois, le souci d’éviter que l’enquête ne prenne un tour partisan devait amener la commission à faire une large place à ce qui pouvait surnager des diverses versions « officielles » et à négner les témoins survivants. Pour l’essentiel, le rapport présenté donc une version composite et nuancée des circonstances ayant mené au renversement et à l’assassinat de Lumumba et conclut à une « responsabilité morale » de la Belgique qui permet d’écarter toute responsabilité personnelle ou directe de telle ou telle personnalité politique (vivante ou défunte). Sans doute ne pouvait-on s’attendre à un verdict plus tranché et l’on peut même saluer le courage qui s’est traduit par les « regrets » et les « excuses » exprimés, au nom de son pays, par le ministre belge des Affaires étrangères, ainsi que par la décision de financer à Kinshasa une « Fondation Lumumba », mais il ne faudrait pas en conclure que le rapport parlementaire puisse être considéré comme le dernier mot sur la question ni que les recommandations qu’il formule représentent autre chose que des vœux pieux.

L’ouverture et les conclusions de l’enquête s’inscrivent vraisemblablement dans un souci de normalisation des relations entre Bruxelles et Kinshasa, mais les remous qu’elle a suscités dans l’opinion publique ou dans certains milieux politiques attachés à une vision diabolisante de Lumumba prouvent assez que le fantôme de Lumumba est loin d’être complètement exorcisé. Il en va d’ailleurs de même pour la réaction de certains acteurs étrangers et même pour les milieux universitaires belges dont l’objectivité pourrait être indirectement mise en cause. Derrière la mort de Lumumba se profilent, comme en filigrane, plusieurs de ces clivages (ethniques, idéologiques) propres à la société belge qui contribuent depuis quelques années à l’éniéttement et à la recomposition de son paysage politique.

**Introduction**

When Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated on 16 January 2001, no one in the Congo failed to notice that the murder occurred, by what many refused to view as a coincidence, on the eve of the fortieth anniversary of the assassination of another tragic figure in the former Belgian colony’s violent history – Patrice Lumumba. Indeed, Kabila was scheduled to preside the next day over the commemoration of the
death of the man whose brutally truncated career had electrified millions of his
countrymen including the then obscure 21-year old Kabila. If the choice of that date
for Kabila’s assassination was fortuitous (as in Lumumba’s case, the official inquiry
has thus far failed to provide all the answers),1 the perpetrators must have overlooked
the symbolism it inevitably carried for a traumatised populace, and the prestige it
would posthumously confer upon a man who, from the dubious background of a
checkered career, had grown to heroic proportions in the eyes of most of his people,
first by freeing the Congo from Mobutu’s faltering grip (even if this was largely as a
tool for other players), and later by repudiating those who saw him as a pawn, thereby
becoming a symbol of Congolese pride and patriotism.

Although many may be tempted to read the parallel between the two men as another
illustration of Marx’s aphorism about the two Napoleons,2 Kabila and Lumumba may
have more in common than meets the eye. Both rose to fame from inauspicious
backgrounds, and under improbable circumstances; both tried to escape the grasp of
those who sought to manipulate them, and both paid with their lives for their
defiance.

The ill-disguised satisfaction voiced in Western capitals after the death of the two men
– not to mention the barely veiled racism of the commentators – echoes a chillingly
similar tone of cynical arrogance, untempered by the lapse of forty years. French
Foreign Minister Hubert Védrine off-handedly described Kabila as ‘a picturesque
despot’. In Belgium, former Prime Minister Mark Eyskens immediately commented:

La mort de Kabila n’est pas surprenante. C’était un homme extrêmement néfaste pour son
pays. Il l’est devenu beaucoup plus rapidement que Mobutu. Il fut finalement pire que
Mobutu et au moins aussi corrompu.3

Only five weeks earlier, the same Eyskens (son of Gaston Eyskens, who held the
Premiership at the time of Lumumba’s assassination) had declared, in an interview on
the Flemish-language state television channel VRT:

In his times, Lumumba was considered a Communist, with so many deaths on his
conscience that a consensus to eliminate him developed in the West. He may be compared
with men such as Milosevic and Saddam Hussein today. Had he remained in power, it
would have been a catastrophe for the Congolese people.4

The analogy between Kabila and Lumumba may well stop here, however, and it
seems doubtful that Kabila’s memory (or the riddle of his murder) will remain as
vivid and emotionally charged as was the case with the man whose meteoric career
and martyrdom reverberated around the world. Yet, to many Congolese, the parallel
is obvious, as illustrated by the following comments collected in Kinshasa by
Alphonse Maindo Monga Ngonga:

[L.-D. Kabila] n’a ni attendu ni eu besoin des élections pour jouir d’une sanction populaire
positive, à titre posthume. Ses assassins ont fait avancer sa cause et réalisé son rêve, qui
était aussi celui de son prédécesseur: devenir un héro et marquer durablement l’histoire
congolaise’. ‘Après Lumumba, le seul compatriote qui n’a redonne la fierté et la dignité de
Congolais, c’est Mzee Kabila. C’était un nationaliste. Il est mort pour avoir osé dire non aux
Blancs, aux puissants … Kabila assassiné est devenu un héros populaire adulé, faisant
oublier sa gestion politique calamiteuse et suicidaire. Le meurtre de Mzee a transformé
l’ancien maquisard devenu en 1997 président de la RDC en un digne martyr de
l’impérialisme international sur les traces de Lumumba.5
Indeed, as Marx noted further in the same passage quoted above:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language.

Hide & Seek: Reconstructing Lumumba’s Murder

Reasonably accurate – if not fully documented – accounts of Lumumba’s life and death began appearing within weeks of his murder, and books devoted to him went on being published for several years thereafter. Some were merely anecdotal, many were openly partisan, but all reflected the passionate reactions evoked by the charismatic leaders, as well as by the transnational conspiracy that loomed behind his gruesome execution.

But while Lumumba’s legend never really faded – especially since the brevity of his public life and the disastrous sequels of his failure nourished endless speculations about the alternative scenarios that might have developed, had he lived, serious research on the late Premier remained in limbo over the next twenty-odd years, during which time the rise and decline of the Mobutu regime were the focus of dozens of generally competent and increasingly critical studies. Significantly, the Mobutist version of perestroika, starting in 1990 with the repudiation of the single-party state, soon followed by a deeply flawed and ultimately aborted ‘transition’ process, rekindled public interest in Lumumba’s fate (and Mobutu’s part in it). In the first blush of its elusive power, Zaire’s ill-fated ‘Sovereign National Conference’ commissioned an inquiry that soon turned into a political football and reached no clear resolution. Concomitantly (and thanks in part to the opening of state archives in Brussels), new research had been initiated in Belgium. It soon became clear, however, that the subject of Lumumba’s death or, more accurately, the identification of those responsible for it, had lost none of its explosive charge. Indeed, the first scholar to take advantage (if rather selectively) of freshly released documents was Jacques Brassine – a man who had been a junior member of the Katanga secessionists’ team of Belgian advisers, and had later remained closely linked with Belgian policymaking circles. First submitted as a doctoral dissertation, and later published in a more popular version co-authored with a conservative journalist, his account of Lumumba’s murder was both sanitised and exculpatory. Almost simultaneously, a second, far more balanced account (yet one that dealt squarely with Lumumba’s shortcomings) had been produced by a noted scholar affiliated with the University of Louvain-la-Neuve as well as with the Afrika-Instituut/Institut Africain, Belgium’s premier centre for African studies.

It remained for a less establishment-linked scholar to take a more gloves-off approach to the accumulated materials once the now totally de-mystified Mobutu regime had sunk under the weight of its decades of corruption, mismanagement and bloodthirsty arbitrariness. First published in Dutch in 1999, then in a French version, and lately in an English translation, the book unleashed a storm of domestic controversy in Belgium, and was overwhelmingly responsible for the Belgian parliament’s decision to establish an official commission of inquiry into Lumumba’s assassination.
The attention generated by De Witte's book must be read, at least in part, in its domestic Belgian context. A powerful grassroots urge not to let sleeping dogs lie—contrary to a national tradition to sweep embarrassing or divisive issues under the rug—had been unleashed in 1996 by the discovery of a pedophilic network linked to the death and/or disappearance of several young girls (the so-called 'Affaire Dutroux'). Belgium's failure to adequately respond to the 1994 Rwanda genocide—though in no way comparable to France's—had also prompted an extensive and soul-searching parliamentary inquiry in 1997. The inglorious disintegration of Mobutu's regime (from which the Belgian government had been virtuously keeping at arm's length for some years) also created a favourable climate for the re-opening of some long-buried issues.

Or so they seemed. In fact, one reason why De Witte's book, explosive as it was, was quickly given credence in Belgium is that, for anyone who cared to hear, some faint but insistent voices had long been telling stories that disturbed the comfortable official version of Belgium's role in the 1960 Congo crisis—stories that were all the more believable (at least to those who read them) because they essentially confirmed what the Belgian public had believed or suspected all along, even if they had been placed, over the years, in a rationalised Realpolitik perspective. The richest and most illuminating accounts were those that flowed from the acerbic pen of the late Col. Frédéric Vandewalle, former head of the colonial intelligence service, then coordinator of Belgium's military assistance policy to Katanga.

While corseted by an unapologetically colonialist outlook, Vandewalle's insights are valuable not only for their blunt frankness, but also for the fact that he refused to embrace the sanctimonious half-truths and the cynical disinformation distilled by his (mostly civilian) associates. Vandewalle thus openly dismisses official statements (or carefully planted leaks) to the effect that the July 1960 outbreak of the 'Congo crisis' was, somehow, the effect of a Lumumba-led 'conspiracy', as well as the magnitude, or even existence of a 'Soviet threat' in the Congo at the time (a view also expressed, albeit behind closed doors, by the then US Ambassador in Kinshasa). Vandewalle also shows unexpected understanding of the cathartic value—and, to that extent, of the political 'appropriateness'—of Lumumba's eloquent denunciation of colonialism in the Independence Day speech that caused such consternation in Belgian conservative circles and earned him their undying hatred.

It may well be, as De Witte suggests (p.4), that Vandewalle's openness partly reflects the self-satisfied arrogance of a Machiavellian schemer who, with the battle safely won, yearns to display his backstage tricks for a limited audience. The mass of documents which he deposited at the Tervuren Museum (where De Witte consulted them at length) indicate, at the very least, that there were a lot more beans the maverick Colonel could have spilled, had he had the time and the inclination to do so.

Another, more modest yet equally central protagonist, Gerard Soete, had for his part spilled most of the beans he held in a little-noted book published in 1978. In that confessional (yet by no means apologetic) account, Soete, a police commissioner serving at the time in Katanga and later retained by Mobutu, describes in gruesome detail the destruction and eventual disposal of the bodies of Lumumba and his two associates, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito.

The fact that Soete's book received rather limited attention at the time of its appearance was probably due in part to the fact that much of what it 'revealed' had been, in truth, fairly common (if unproved) knowledge in Belgium for quite some
time. Word-of-mouth accounts differing only on points of detail (who had dealt Lumumba the final stab – or was it a final bullet? – in what house exactly had the assassination taken place? had the acid used to dissolve the bodies been supplied by the Union Minière or by Katanga’s department of public works?) began circulating in Katanga, in Kinshasa and in Belgium almost from the moment of Lumumba’s death. By the 1970s they had sedimented as a subtext to the constructed ‘official version’, which suggested that the murder was the product of personal and/or ‘tribal’ – or even ‘atavistic’ – animosities among Africans, and that although individual Belgians might have had a hand in the assassination as ‘instruments’, or ‘under orders’ from African officials, the Belgian government itself shared no responsibility in the liquidation of the Congo’s Prime Minister, even if it had (along with other Western powers) welcomed his ‘elimination’ from the political scene.

Such was the discourse (later refurbished by Brassine (under scholarly veneer) that Ludo De Witte now set to challenge and, if not to destruct, at least to deconstruct. Yet the attention the book gained – as well as the hostility it triggered in some official circles – were not due so much to the fact that it accurately fingered those who had been involved in carrying out, or covering up Lumumba’s murder (their names were by and large known), as to his ability to convincingly identify a chain of command linking the perpetrators to the very apex of Belgium’s political hierarchy, including the late King Baudouin and his immediate entourage. The Belgian citizenry’s sense of outrage, however, had lately been excited by a number of scandals involving (across party lines) several government officials – the Dutroux case being only the latest – and thus De Witte’s book was not greeted with any real sense of shock but, more damningly, with a widespread acceptance of its utter plausibility.16

To the average citizen, the book’s most disturbing aspect, perhaps, was the way in which it emphasised the Belgian establishment’s direct responsibility and predominant role in Lumumba’s murder, to the detriment of the comfortable, if unofficial version surreptitiously promoted among influential circles that, whatever Belgium’s involvement may have been, the United States (or, more pointedly, the CIA and its local station chief Lawrence Devlin) had been the real instigator and orchestrator of the assassination.17

De Witte, however, hardly lets the United States off the hook, even if his prime target is the Belgian establishment (or, rather, some of its past or current members). He makes no bones about the fact that Lumumba’s assassination (sometimes euphemized as ‘removal’ or ‘elimination’) had been discussed, recommended, plotted, attempted, ordered or authorised at various levels of the US governmental structure, up to and including the White House, or that similar views, goals and plans were being concomitantly entertained at equally high levels of the UN hierarchy, of Her Majesty’s government or (more ambivalently) of Gaullist France’s réseaux. The evidence he offers on that score is not particularly new, but it is solid and should by now be familiar to informed American (or even British) readers. De Witte’s major contribution, however (aside from the political fallout he caused in his native country), lies in his thorough – though possibly not always impartial – use of Belgian archival materials. The story he tells is entirely credible and unlikely to be seriously shaken by any future ‘revisionists’, not only because it effectively weaves together an array of documents, testimonies or confessions whose validity has been independently established, but also because his scrutiny of the personalities, motivations and idiosyncrasies of key members of Belgium’s establishment (perilously subjective though such an undertaking may be) carries a strong ring of truth – at least with respect to those among them who are, in some degree, known to this reviewer.
De Witte's effectiveness in placing the prime responsibility for Lumumba's murder squarely in the Belgian establishment's doorstep may have the perverse effect of comforting those past or current members of other Western policy circles in their contention that, notwithstanding their aversion to the man, Lumumba's blood is not on their hands. This is the view still offered by Lawrence Devlin (who joined Maurice Tempelsman's diamond-dealing business after retiring from the CIA). In her otherwise informative book, Michela Wrong uncritically accepts Devlin's contention that 'I just never felt it [assassination] was justified with Lumumba. I was hoping the Congolese would settle it among themselves, one way or another' (p.80). Michael Hoyt, another American official who had been posted in Kinshasa in 1962, was content to accept one colleague's dismissive version of the murder in 1964 when he was transferred to Kisangani (then Stanleyville), where he would shortly gain fame for being held hostage by Congolese rebels:

*During cocktails, David talked about when Lumumba was sent by ... Kasavubu and ... Mobutu to the Katanga in 1961, where he was killed by Tshombe's men ... 'He was almost dead when the plane arrived in [Elisabethville]' David said ... 'They were loaded on a truck and that was the last seen of them'.*[^19]

For their benefit and for our edification, De Witte has added to the Anglo-American edition a five-page preface which briefly, but convincingly recalls the extent to which the United States, Great Britain and the UN were complicit in the conspiracy to liquidate the Congolese statesman. De Witte even manages (for the first time, I believe) to put a face and a name on the secret agent recruited in Europe by the CIA and sent to the Congo in November 1960 to eliminate Lumumba – Moïse Maschkivitzan, a stateless person born in 1910 in Antwerp and hitherto identified only as QJ/WIN in the 1975 Church Report and in the declassified CIA documents. As for Britain's involvement (no less bloody-minded for being indirect) it is more fully documented in Alan James' dispassionate *Britain and the Congo Crisis, 1960-1963.*[^20]

H.F.T. Smith (the future head of MI5), though convinced, like several of his Foreign Office colleagues, that it was 'unlikely' that Soviet bloc troops would be committed to the Congo,[^21] nevertheless favoured 'the simple [solution] of ensuring Lumumba's removal from the scene by killing him'.[^22] In his memoirs, Harold Macmillan, for his part, refers to Lumumba as a 'Communist stooge' and a 'witch-doctor'.[^23] Much of Britain's Congo policy during this period, however, focused on secessionist Katanga, on behalf of which a combination of British corporate groups and (white) Rhodesian personalities carried on active lobbying.

Aside from this preface (and an added chart identifying the 'international actors'), the English-language edition is only slightly different from the French-language version – which the translators seem to have used in preference to the Dutch original. What has been (literally) lost in the translation largely consists of fragments, factual details and authorial views that would be relevant to, and understood by, Belgian or even French readers, but were presumably viewed by the publishers as too arcane for an American (or British?) audience. Instances of such 'particle loss' are, for the most part, inconsequential, and detract little from the book's overall argument. Some can, nevertheless, be deplored, even if they concern relatively minor details. Thus, while describing the aristocratic parentage of Count Harold d'Aspremont Lynden (whom De Witte singles out as the true initiator of Lumumba's murder), the English-language version (p.43) omits to mention that his father Charles – characterised in the French-language edition (p.103) as 'archi-conservateur' – had in the late 1930s tried to bring Léon Degrelle's Rexist (fascist) party back into the fold of the Catholic Party from which it had been spawned.

[^18]: "Unraveling the Murder of Patrice Lumumba" by De Witte
[^19]: "During cocktails, David talked about when Lumumba was sent by ... Kasavubu and ... Mobutu to the Katanga in 1961, where he was killed by Tshombe's men ... 'He was almost dead when the plane arrived in [Elisabethville]' David said ... 'They were loaded on a truck and that was the last seen of them'."
[^20]: "Britain and the Congo Crisis, 1960-1963"
[^21]: "The Simple Solution of Ensuring Lumumba's Removal from the Scene by Killing Him"
[^22]: "Harold Macmillan's Memoirs"
[^23]: "Lumumba as a 'Communist Stooge' and a 'Witch-Doctor'"
Similarly, the Verso edition fails to include a reference to the memoirs of the then Prime Minister, Gaston Eyskens, who tartly remarks on ‘the unimaginable pretentiousness’ of the members of Belgium’s high aristocracy – including the same Charles who, as a member of the Senate, had publicly denounced his son’s predecessor at the department of African Affairs (and fellow member of the Catholic party), August De Schrijver, for having exposed the King to Lumumba’s ‘insults’. Even though Eyskens’ memoirs appeared only in 1993, one is inclined to surmise that Count Harold’s selection as Minister in charge of what was then clearly Belgium’s most explosive problem (as well, perhaps, as his earlier selection as Eyskens’ chef de cabinet adjoint) may have been strongly urged, not to say forced, on a reluctant Prime Minister by the entourage of King Baudouin – still embittered by the ‘humiliation’ he had suffered from Lumumba, and whose household was headed by Harold’s kinsman, Grand Maréchal de la Cour – Gobert d’Aspremont-Lynden.24

Other ‘lost fragments’ also contain additional (though not essential) information on members of Belgium’s establishment, while yet others merely prune the author’s tendency to repeat himself, and thus correspond to a form of editing that should have been performed earlier. Competent though this sort of editorial work may have been, it did not catch every ‘bug’ in the French version: thus, on pp. 37 and 43, two ambiguous and seemingly contradictory versions of the kinship links between Count Harold (who died in 1967) and ‘Lord Chamberlain’ Gobert – who is whose uncle/nephew? – simply reproduce the same confusing passages found on pp. 91 and 99 of the Karthala edition.25

Much of the debate generated by De Witte’s book (notably in the early rounds of parliamentary hearings) focused on the specific meaning of the term elimination définitive – the outcome which, in a telex dated 6 October 1960, Harold d’Aspremont-Lynden’s subordinates in the Katanga-based Mission technique beige (Mistebel) were instructed to follow regarding Lumumba, and which he described as ‘the principal objective to be pursued in the interest of Congo, Katanga and Belgium’. D’Aspremont-Lynden, it should be noted, had served as head of Mistebel (commonly viewed as the shadow government of that secessionist province) until 2 September 1960, when he was named Minister of African Affairs, whether as a reflection of pro-Katanga sentiment at the royal palace, or as a way for Gaston Eyskens to soothe Baudouin’s sullen resentment by taking on a well-known ‘hawk’ – and a well-connected one at that.26

Questions were raised as well as to the significance of the telegram d’Aspremont-Lynden addressed on to the Belgian consulate in Elisabethville (Lubumbashi) on 15 January 1961. This imperative message urged Moïse Tshombe’s secessionist government to arrange for Lumumba to be transferred to Katanga as soon as possible. Even if the aristocratic Count Harold refrained from using such crude words as ‘execution’ or ‘assassination’, his moral responsibility as well as that of those who, further down the line, assisted with the deed is hardly disputable. In the words of Belgian journalist Colette Braeckman, ‘the blood of Lumumba continues to haunt Belgium and the Congo’.27

A particularly nagging issue centres on the degree to which Belgium’s late King Baudouin was informed of (and tacitly approved) the plan to ‘eliminate’ Lumumba. In the preliminary findings of the parliamentary commission of inquiry, one encounters a disturbing reference to a memorandum of 19 October 1960 whose author, Major Weber (a Belgian officer then serving as Moïse Tshombe’s chief of staff) details in no uncertain terms the tenor of a meeting in which Tshombe and Mobutu, flanked by
their expatriate advisers, concurred that Lumumba – who was already under house arrest at the time – should be ‘neutralized, physically if possible’.

This document – the authenticity of which is unchallenged – was not only read, but annotated by Baudouin who refrained, however, from informing the Belgian cabinet of the existence of a plan to liquidate the Congolese leader. One can only speculate on the reasons for the King’s silence, but the most plausible explanation is probably the fact that the cabinet (or, at least, some of its members) was not only fully aware of, but actively involved in the macabre plot. In the eyes of Gui Polspoel and Pol Van Den Driessche, two Flemish investigative journalists whose October 2001 book, *Koning en Onderkoning*, deals with the secretive politics of the royal entourage, Baudouin’s failure to register even a pro forma disapproval hardly comes as a surprise in view of his unyielding animosity toward Lumumba. ‘One cannot’, Baudouin noted in the margins of the October memorandum, ‘allow the achievements of the past eighty years be destroyed by the hate-filled policies of one man.’ His brother Prince (now King) Albert had, for his part, had bluntly stated a few weeks earlier: ‘The responsibility for the Congo crisis rests on a single man – Lumumba’.

**Parliament Takes a Hand**

Given the apparent involvement of several of Belgium’s most important – or self-important– personalities in the blood-chilling scenario, one must acknowledge the courage shown by the parliamentary commission of enquiry, or else cast a tolerant gaze on its obvious reluctance to look for skeletons in some of the Belgium’s plushest closets. The motion to set up the commission was put forth in the lower house (House of Representatives) by a group of seven MP’s representing the different components of the country’s ‘Blue-Red-Green’ coalition government. The House Committee on Foreign Relations unanimously approved the motion on 2 February 2000, and the investigating commission was set up on 23 March in a plenary meeting of the House. A crucial decision was made at that time to make the commission ‘non-partisan’ or, more accurately, to include among its fifteen members representatives of the two language-based Christian Democratic opposition parties, *Christen Democratisch en Vlaams* (CD&V) and *Parti social-chretien* (PSC) – a move designed not only to allow it to speak on behalf of the entire nation, but also to avoid any suspicion of partisan scapegoating, since the coalition cabinet in power at the time of the Congo crisis was led by the Christian Democrats who had by then regained the control they traditionally held over the Ministry of ‘African Affairs’ (formerly known as the Colonial office) after a four-year interval (1954-1958) during which a Socialist-Liberal coalition had been confronted with their obstructionist reluctance to take part in the formulation of a non-partisan decolonisation policy. While this effort to avoid rekindling past divisions was indeed laudable, it also meant that the investigation was likely to follow a consensus-seeking approach and avoid fingerling specific decision makers who (though most of them were now deceased) still had influential living associates, followers or descendents – or, for that matter, members of the royal family. The fact that the hearings were being held forty years after the events being investigated also meant that none of the commission members (and indeed few MPs) had been professionally or politically active at the time, and that their knowledge of the circumstances then prevailing in Belgium or in Africa was, at best, second-hand or indirect.

Much of the actual investigation, in fact, took the form of an extensive (but nonetheless ‘selective’) examination of archival and testimonial evidence, a task...
performed by a small group of 'experts' appointed by the commission. Of the four 'core' members of that group, only one had any real background knowledge of the colonial and decolonisation periods. Three adjunct experts (two of them specialising in international law, one in encryption) also lent part-time assistance. The commission's final report (p.16) also acknowledges the 'assistance' supplied to its four main 'experts' by Jean Omasombo Tshonda, a professor at the University of Kinshasa, and the only Congolese associated (other than as a deposed witness) with the investigation. The contributions of this highly knowledgeable of (and prolific writer on) the Congolese political scene, however, were carefully restricted. He met only briefly with the official 'experts' and was not allowed to work with them or to accede the archives they chose to consult. Indeed, the commission apparently agonised over whether to resort to Omasombo's expertise – could a Congolese be 'objective'? – and finally opted, as he wryly puts it, 'for the formal inclusion of an 'African' as window-dressing (pour le décor), that is, without a real part to play ... to represent Congolese perspectives and sensitivities in a purely symbolic mode'.

While instructive, the commission's public hearings (some were held behind closed doors) show the degree to which most of the surviving protagonists still cling to what might be termed the 'modified official version' (the one presented by Brassine). Twenty-two witnesses (five of them Congolese) were heard in public sessions, five (including one Congolese) were heard in camera, and five (including one Congolese) were interviewed privately. Though all had been, to some greater or lesser extent, involved in various capacities and at different levels with the many facets and policy vectors surrounding Lumumba's overthrow and assassination, a number of key protagonists were unaccountably not called upon. Some, like Etienne Tshisekedi, whose alleged responsibility has consistently dogged his sinuous political career, would undoubtedly have been disinclined to appear; others were ignored and, of course, most of the chief actors (Belgian or Congolese) were dead.

Witnesses were presented with a list of questions (some open-ended, some more specific) or statements on which clarification or qualification was sought. Many of the answers were predictably evasive, self-exculpatory, and occasionally irrelevant. Several witnesses read or recited prepared statements, or otherwise drifted into tangential matters. Most were not seriously challenged, and cross-examination was usually gentle and ineffective. The only witnesses whose veracity was directly challenged were Albert Ndele and Victor Nendaka, and both managed to run circles around their questioners.

Among the Belgian witnesses, those (twenty-two out of twenty-five) who were positioned somewhere along the chain of command were allowed to argue that they were following orders, or that such instructions as they had received did not specifically refer to the 'physical' elimination of Lumumba. When pressed, they frequently resorted to a plea of forgetfulness of the sort made famous by Ronald Reagan during the US congressional hearings on the Iran-Contra scandal. Whether European or African, most witnesses recurrently suggested that the only actors capable of providing full answers were those who were now (fortunately?) deceased, and whose motivations were, by definition, unknowable.

The sense of frustration one often feels in reading these testimonies comes in large part from the fact that they are not reproduced verbatim, but summarised in indirect style by the rapporteurs (or by those working under their authority), with the occasional insertion, between inverted commas, of a few words presumably uttered by the witness. By default, the best (though possibly subjective) account we have of
the information discovered in the course of the hearings comes from the stories filed, day after day, by reporters for Belgium’s major daily newspapers, some of which, however, like the conservative Catholic *Libre Belgique*, had a record of virulent hostility to Lumumba combined with unqualified devotion to the Belgian royal family (warts and all) and, in that order, to the Christian Democratic politicians who had dominated the cabinet and Belgium’s policy throughout the crucial period of the Congo’s ‘decolonisation’ and collapse. Journalists, of course, had no access to the testimony of the twelve witnesses (over one-third of the total) whose testimonies were collected, in whole or in part, either in closed sessions or outside the precinct of the congressional hearing rooms – and sometimes collected, it should be added, by only one or two investigators. Answers or evidence offered by these witnesses are included only in the most abbreviated form (or simply not at all) in the commission’s final report, even though the questions submitted to them are tantalisingly presented in full, as in the case of the public witnesses. Among those ‘classified’ testimonies are those of two major Congolese personalities whose direct and personal involvement with Lumumba’s fate has long been known: Justin Bomboko (Lumumba’s Foreign Minister, and later head of the ‘College of General Commissioners’)*33* and Jonas Mukamba, who was personally entrusted with the ‘delivery’ of Lumumba into the hands of the Katanga secessionists and was subsequently made head of the giant diamond-mining concern Forminière (later Miba) in his native region of Kasai.*34*

The appropriately named ‘synthesis’ of the hearings is thus significantly different from (and less illuminating than) what one might expect from, say, a US Congressional hearing. Indeed, it occupies only 146 pages of the report’s 988 pages – or 73 out of 494, keeping in mind that the Dutch and French versions appear in facing columns on every page – representing less than one-sixth of its length. Much of the rest, and by far its most substantial part (647 bilingual pages, or two-thirds of the total) consists of the *Rapport des Experts* – a report-within-a-report, as it were, to which might be added the five appendices (pp. 845-988), particularly Omasombo’s 40-page monograph, which should by right have been included in the ‘experts’ account, were it not for its author’s awkward status on the margins of that team.

**The Heart of the Matter**

That ‘report’ then, or Part II of the overall document, represents the fullest and, from a non-Belgian perspective, the most informative portion of the whole investigation. By its length, style and design, it stands out as a book – and therein lies a problem. With its catchy chapter and section titles,*35* it fairly begs for best seller status, as if it meant to compete with the commercially published accounts by De Witte, Brassine and Kestergat (or Willame) by purporting to offer the ‘last word’ on Lumumba’s murder and Belgium’s part in it. As if to settle an argument between squabbling children, it strikes a middle-of-the-road, ‘adult’ pose between De Witte’s accusatory and Brassine’s exculpatory versions, acknowledging that ‘wrongs’ were committed, but suggesting that these were understandable – perhaps even excusable – under the ‘circumstances’. There is, of course, some validity to that view, and the report has the merit of raising uncomfortable questions, as well as of airing a few (but not many) important bits of new evidence, but its central intent visibly remains to offer a compromise narrative to which both sides can be reconciled, even if grudgingly. In doing so, it seems to this reviewer that the ‘experts’ account vindicates De Witte’s version rather than Brassine’s – at least implicitly – and, indeed, too much damning evidence had already been unearthed (by De Witte, by Vandewalle, by Soete, by Willame, and indeed by Brassine himself) for the genie, or the ghost of Lumumba, to be forced back into the bottle.
While this extensive centrepiece makes, perhaps, the best reading for an informed general public, it is to the final section (Part IV, pp. 828-844) that we must turn for what is, or should have been, the most intriguing, and most delicate challenge faced by the commission’s fifteen MPs, the determination of the extent and nature of Belgium’s responsibility, as well as the recommendations called for as the outcome of the inquiry. Considering the perceived need to achieve some form of national consensus on these highly sensitive issues, the conclusions of the report are, in the main, courageous and cannot be dismissed as a whitewash. To be sure, the rapporteurs avoided singling out specific individuals, but in doing so they ended up indicting the ‘system’ and, in many ways, the entire Belgian establishment while self-consciously (and not always convincingly) labouring to come up with extenuating circumstances. As a preamble to its conclusions, they warn:

*When reading, thinking about and discussing this case, it should be recognised that people will always tend to analyse and comment on the facts from their current perspective on the world and current institutions.*

The period investigated runs from 1960 to 1961. Although the fundamental principles of democracy and international policies were also valid then, it is useful to look at the historical context because from certain points, the standards, ethics and norms of international politically correct thinking were different then, than they are today. Circumstances in Belgium were different then. Belgian politics, institutions, the elite and the media functioned differently then, than they do nowadays.

The international situation was also radically different. We should not forget that the events occurred during the cold war. Every action taken by a country or its leaders was noted and analysed, sometimes to an absurd degree, in the light of the international situation and the fight against communism. The reports of the national security and intelligence services and also the reports of the council of ministers and the media clearly illustrate this.

It is also important not to forget the political climate and media coverage of that time. Belgian public opinion had been confronted for days, via written and audiovisual media, with reports of tragic events of murder and rape, coming from refugees who had fled, forced to leave all their possessions behind. In wide sections of the population, one person was held responsible: Patrice Lumumba. The population demanded a very strong response from the government.

Briefly glossing over the hasty ‘decolonisation’ process, they admit, almost as an afterthought, and without offering any explanation, that ‘the Belgian government deemed a speedy independence necessary in order to protect Belgian interests against foreign influences’. Though it may have only an indirect bearing on Lumumba’s assassination, this matter is not without importance. Probably influenced by business circles (and perhaps by the apparent ‘success’ of General de Gaulle’s gambit to cushion the independence of France’s African territories by a web of bilateral ‘cooperation’ agreements), the Belgian government’s startling decision to abandon its earlier timetable for a seemingly reasonable transition process spread over four to five years in favour of an ‘instant decolonisation’ gamble to be completed in a matter of months had been almost stealthily announced in parliament (where it went virtually unnoticed) in the final days of 1959 – before the January 1960 convening of the ‘Round Table’ conference in which the terms and timetable of the transition to independence were supposed to be the subject of a negotiation between Belgian and Congolese
delegates. Whether or not they suspected a cynical plot to ensure that such an ill-prepared hand-over would guarantee the need for extensive Belgian tutelage of an ostensibly ‘independent’ Congo, several key African delegates were alarmed by the prospect. Thus, while they realised that they could hardly argue publicly for a postponement of independence, Lumumba and Kasa Vubu privately approached Belgian authorities to suggest that the transition process should be extended under an interim ‘provisional government’, only to be told that Belgium’s commitment to quit the Congo on 30 June 1960 was irrevocable.\textsuperscript{37} One can only speculate what the Congo’s (and Lumumba’s) future might have been if this suggestion had been accepted, but this is not (understandably) the sort of question the rapporteurs were expected to raise.

Given the terms of its mandate, the commission also refrained from casting more than a cursory look at the role of the US or of the UN. ‘It is not the intention of the commission’, the rapporteurs note,

\begin{quote}
\textit{to [underestimate] the American or UN interventions. They are simply referred to when significant in explaining Belgian attitudes or actions.}
\end{quote}

Various witnesses, it should be recalled, had broadly hinted that the US, and more specifically the CIA, might have had a hand in – or at least planned – Lumumba’s murder (a view also expressed by De Witte), but while Washington’s concerns and reactions are briefly touched upon in the ‘historical’ portion (Part II) of the report (see pp. 120-122, 129-130, 219-222, 243-244, 404), this line of inquiry is not pursued in the concluding section, which (understandably) focuses exclusively on Belgium’s responsibilities. On this score, the report’s conclusions are measured, but precise, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

\begin{quote}
[Lumumba] was called a Satan by some, and honoured as a true people’s hero by others ... Indeed, it is a fact that he was the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the Congo. ... Not only the Belgian government, but also many other governments and many layers of Belgian and Congolese society were campaigning, some in a more co-ordinated fashion than others, to bring about Lumumba’s downfall \textbf{politically} [emphasis added] ... (F)rom the beginning, the Belgian government showed little respect for the sovereign status of the Congolese government ... In order to finance the policy against the Lumumba government, the Belgian government [resorted] to so-called secret funds ... This money [ca. Euros 6.7m. at current value] was used to support the opposition press and politicians, to finance radio campaigns ... and undercover operations ... It is impossible to find the origin of this sum ... During the second half of August ... the Belgian General Consulate in Brazzaville played an important role in encouraging the opposition or in providing logistic support. At that same time, Prime Minister Eyskens asked President Kasavubu, via his advisor Jef van Bilsen, to sack Lumumba.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Pressure from US diplomats and the UN was an important factor in the deposition of Lumumba ... After having given its support to the deposition of Prime Minister Lumumba [the Belgian government] was eager to prevent him from returning to power ... The first and most important measure in relation to this, insisted upon by the Belgian government, was the arrest of Lumumba ... Mobutu took action to arrest Lumumba on 10 October ... in exchange for a Belgian promise to provide technical and military support to the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC). The Belgian government was opposed to all possible forms of reconciliation, direct or indirect, between the Congolese leaders ... It is absolutely clear: there were plans to kill Lumumba [details of those plans follow].
\end{quote}
During that same period there were – besides three American – also Belgian 'plans' aimed at the physical elimination of Lumumba ... Belgian officials helped with the execution of certain plans in Brazzaville and Leopoldville. (T)here was no trace of an order or action to rescind these plans; no disciplinary measures were taken against the officials – diplomats, officers or security agents – who knew about these plans or participated in them... A Member of Parliament pointed out to the Ministers who were involved in a debate in the Commission of Foreign Affairs on 13 December 1960 that there was a possible threat to the life of Lumumba in Katanga ... Minister [d'Aspremont Lynden], being the head of the Belgian Technical Mission (in Katanga) should have been able to make a good personal assessment of the state of mind of the Katangan leaders and the risk to Lumumba of his transfer there ... [T]he Head of State (King Baudouin) received an indication that the life of Lumumba was in danger ... No signs of disapproval or concern were given (...) about the possible physical elimination of Lumumba. No evidence has been found that either the government or the competent ministers were informed of this letter.

The rapporteurs take pains to indicate that ‘there is no evidence ... that [Belgians seconded to the Katanga government] were involved with, or consulted during the decision-making process, which eventually led to the execution’, adding however that: ‘neither are there any indications that actions were taken to prevent the execution.’ Lumumba, they insist, ‘was killed on the orders of the Katangan authorities’, but ‘at no time, did the Belgian government protest ... against the unlawful execution ..., nor did they express regret or disapproval in relation to it.’ With near-schizophrenic concern to avoid a direct accusation of specific individuals, the rapporteurs attempt to limit their indictment by stating:

No single document, of which the commission is aware, indicates that the Belgian government or a member thereof gave the order to physically eliminate Lumumba; The investigation does not show that the Belgian authorities premeditated the murder of Lumumba when it attempted to transfer him to Katanga; It is very clear, though, that the physical safety of Lumumba was of no concern to the Belgian government. It deemed the safety of Lumumba less important than other interests; By not considering the possible risks of the transfer, not asking guarantees for his physical safety or insisting on humane treatment and a trial, the Belgian government and especially the Minister of African Affairs showed a lack of forethought and a lack of respect for the constitutional state.

only to conclude that ‘certain members of the Belgian government and other Belgian participants were morally responsible for the circumstances leading to the death of Lumumba.’

Public attention has focused (critically or approvingly) on this admission of ‘moral responsibility’, which some saw as a form of equivocation or even hypocrisy, but the commission had been given investigatory rather than judiciary authority (consonant with separation of power principles), in addition to which criminal action against deceased persons would obviously have been without merit. The true (and fitting) mandate of the commission, however, was that which related to the formulation and execution of public policies, and called not only for the ascertaining of political responsibilities, but also for a prescriptive assessment of what must be done to avoid the repetition of whatever malfeasance had been committed.

In this latter respect, the commission’s recommendations, while not exactly earth-shaking, are nevertheless reasonable and pertinent. The commission thus identifies what it correctly views as dysfunctions in the decision-making process that prevailed in 1960-1961. These include ‘a lack of transparency ... and co-ordination between the
different Ministers who were involved with Congo policies', as well as an uncertain
distribution of power between different cabinet members, with the minister of African
Affairs encroaching on the jurisdiction of the Foreign and Defence departments
(especially where Katanga was concerned) and with individual diplomats and
officers taking directives from d'Aspremont-Lynden outside normal hierarchical
channels. The commission also notes that the government eluded the control of the
Parliament as well as that of the Auditor’s Office by diverting and using funds for
secret, ‘reprehensible’ purposes. Furthermore, the government violated its obligation
under §4 of UN Resolution 290 (IV) of 1 December 1949 ‘to refrain from any direct or
indirect action intended to jeopardise the freedom, the independence or the integrity
of any state, to incite any State to internal struggle’, as well as – by delivering weapons
and supporting different parties in the Congo conflict – the UN resolution of
20 September 1960. The report also comments adversely on the ambiguous roles
played by those expatriate officials who, though serving as advisers to Congolese
ministers, ‘reported directly to the Belgian State Security or other services’. Rather
more gingerly, the rapporteurs observe that Belgian officials serving in Katanga
(under Mistebel or its successor, the ‘Bureau-Conseil’), used ‘for their own benefit’
financial advances and other facilities offered by the Union Minière.

Cynics may see such censorious strictures as no more sincere that Captain Louis
Renault’s famously indignant ‘I’m shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on
in here!’ (in Casablanca), but politicians (especially when passing judgment on their
peers) seldom come out as avenging angels. Perhaps the most delicate portion of the
investigation was that which dealt with the late King Baudouin’s rather unsavory role
in the making of Belgium’s Congo policy, generally, and (somewhat more indirectly –
or, better said, covertly) in Lumumba’s ‘elimination’. This is heavily mined terrain in
Belgium, where criticism of the monarch (and, by extension, the royal family) remains
an enduring taboo – partly because some of these monarchs (such as Leopold II, or
Baudouin’s own father, Leopold III) were, precisely, not above reproach, but mostly
because, in a country whose ‘national’ identity has largely been shattered, the
monarchy is seen, or at least presented, as the only surviving symbol of Belgian
unity.38

While wrapping its findings in bland, precautionary language, the commission
nevertheless found that a conflict had developed between the King and the
government ‘regarding certain aspects of Congo politics’. ‘In certain cases’, the report
goes on, ‘this conflict led to the fact that the Head of State took independent action’,
and that, having obtained ‘important information’ (about plans to murder Lumumba),
he ‘probably’ failed to inform the government of it. Strong stuff indeed, by Belgian
standards (and, one suspects, by British standards as well) – and it should be noted
that access to the royal family’s archives was reportedly not provided without some
(understandable) reluctance.

Yet, for all its effectiveness in identifying major problem points in the policy-making
process, the rapporteurs were disappointingly vague in their suggestion of concrete
remedies. The report’s conclusions sanctimoniously stress the need for Parliament ‘to
be correctly and completely informed at all times’, and finds it ‘desirable’ to ‘develop
a formula for informing Parliament, in extreme cases, about an action of the
Government without jeopardising confidentiality’. For this purpose, its recommenda-
tion that the House Intelligence Committee must ‘pay special attention to the
efficiency of the intelligence services’, and that ‘this monitoring must be performed in
a permanent and efficient basis’ seems little more than a pious wish.
With respect to the King's role, the rapporteurs merely refer to 'the constitutional stipulations and customs concerning the role of the Head of State', and more specifically, to the undisputed provision (common to all parliamentary monarchies) that 'every action of the Head of State that could have a direct or indirect political influence' should be ratified by a cabinet member so as to ensure, they add somewhat redundantly, that the King's 'political interventions or initiatives will not conflict with foreign or domestic government policies'.

**Mixed Reactions**

The commission's least directly 'political' recommendations are those inviting the government to 'develop the required initiatives in order to retrieve, make an inventory, structure and safeguard the archives of the different federal national institutions, especially those of the Head of State, by means of an appropriate allocation of financial means and members of staff', and urging 'a re-definition of the rules regarding access to documents under government control' — a goal likely to be applauded by anyone who has tried to consult Belgium's colonial archives. In this felicitous mood, the commission also recommends 'stimulating multidisciplinary and international historical research into the colonial and post-colonial eras', so that, on the basis of 'objective, scientifically obtained factual materials', political circles may acquire a synthetic understanding enabling them to 'come to terms with the past'.

Brave words indeed, and an achievement devoutly to be wished, but the reactions to the Commission's report (in Belgium or abroad) suggest that, for many of those involved in the violent events of that period — as well as, more regrettably, for those who, in the next generations, formed opinions of the Congo based on ready-made popular, oral or second-hand sources — stereotypes and cold war clichés die a hard, reluctant death. The first negative reactions, naturally enough, came from Belgium. While conservative newspapers such as *La Libre Belgique* noted, with quiet satisfaction, that consensus had been achieved only at the price of maintaining 'a certain ambiguity' in the allocation of responsibility, others expressed approval for the reappraisal of Lumumba's role and character, and for the indictment (however implicit) of former members of the country's establishment. Other, more discordant voices were heard. Marc Eyskens (whose opinions of Lumumba and Kabila have been quoted above) predictably saw the report as 'an incomplete, one-sided account of the facts, in which only part of the truth has been disclosed'.

A parallel reaction, but coming from a wholly different angle, was voiced by those who deplored the commission's timidity and suggested that, for all its cathartic value, the enquiry had been designed to clear the path for a resumption of Belgium's influence in the 'new' post-Mobutu Congo. Writing in *Le Soir*, Ludo De Witte not only listed the report's many blind spots, but also noted that Kabila's murder, by paving the way for a weak regime dependent on the West, had diluted Belgium's need for full disclosure as a token of goodwill. And, while naturally reaching different conclusions, both De Witte and his opposite number Brassine strangely concurred in deploring the fact that the commission had ignored some key sources supporting their respective interpretations. Brassine, for his part, continued to deny that Belgium carried any responsibility (whether 'political' or 'moral') for Lumumba's murder. 'In truth', he said bluntly, 'we didn't give a tinker's damn about Lumumba. No one shed a tear on his death'.

Jean-Claude Willame, a somewhat more dispassionate observer, had earlier commented that the commission 'could not evade a number of traps, ambiguities and
interferences' and that, through the report, Belgium had, in the final analysis, 'settled accounts with individuals, not with its past'. And, echoing a point also made by De Witte, Omasombo added:

*By essentially basing its work on 'documents', the commission meant to confer upon itself a certificate of objectivity. This was largely illusory. The experts sorted out the documents and citations in the light of specific viewpoints and/or interests. The text of the report reduces history to a chronological enumeration of events.*

Both the cathartic and political values of the exercise were evident (but in what proportion?) when Foreign Minister Louis Michel, responding to the House debate, expressed 'on behalf of Belgium' his 'deep and sincere regrets' and his 'excuses' to the families of the victims and to the Congolese people for the 'irrefutable share of responsibility' incurred by Belgian officials as well as for their 'apathy and cold indifference' toward the fate of Lumumba and of his two associates. To the surprise of many, Michel then went on to announce the creation of a 'Lumumba Foundation' to be financed by Belgium, but based in the DRC for the worthy but vague purpose of preventing conflicts and supporting good governance and the rule of law.

Though Belgium’s political establishment and mainstream media broadly welcomed Michel’s initiative (a bit grudgingly in some cases), some venomous comments were predictably heard from those circles directly implicated by the report. Thus, Arnoud d’Aspremont Lynden, whose testimony in defence of his late father had been heard by the commission, pronounced himself ‘disgusted’ with the Foreign Minister’s apologies which, he claimed, amounted to ‘making a man guilty of genocide into a hero’.

Popular reactions were rather more hesitant, ranging from indifferent shrugs to bafflement or even outrage, and reflecting the degree to which the nation had internalised the officially constructed version of the Congo’s decolonisation crisis and subsequent political history.

### Expanding Ripples

Stereotyped visions of Lumumba, of the Congo (and indeed of Africa) still abound, of course – and not just in Belgium. Indeed, the tired, overworked (and often de-contextualised) ‘Heart of Darkness’ clichés are, if anything, more ubiquitously found among English-speaking columnists, media pundits and self-styled ‘experts’. And while Belgium’s admission of guilt and its half-hearted repentance were generally applauded abroad, and notably (if predictably) in the Congo, some foreign reactions and comments reflected the unreconciled vision and defensiveness of some diehard ‘cold warriors’ as well as their unreconstructed adherence to simplistic or polarised views of Africa and the Congo.

Some, it seems, are still struggling to put Lumumba’s ghost to rest: in a panel discussion that followed the Washington premiere of Raoul Peck’s ‘Lumumba’ on 25 July 2001, former Reagan Defense Secretary/National Security Adviser and Carter Deputy CIA Director Frank Carlucci called the film a ‘Third World anti-American propaganda piece made for the sake of making some money.’ Carlucci, who was second secretary at the US Embassy in Leopoldville in 1960, claimed he was ‘out of the loop’ when a meeting attended by US Ambassador Clare Timberlake, Mobutu, and President Joseph Kasavubu discussed Lumumba’s fate. Carlucci said he informed his superiors in Washington that Lumumba was not a communist, but let them know Lumumba had ‘a lot of communists around him’ and that he personally harboured some ‘very leftist views’. While admitting that Washington ‘toyed’ with the idea of
assassinating Lumumba, and that poison was delivered to the CIA's Leopoldville station chief Larry Devlin, Carlucci defended the CIA's actions because the agency, he said, was acting on Eisenhower's ambiguous order to 'remove Lumumba'. It was never clear, he claimed, that Eisenhower meant assassination. Notwithstanding the accumulation of evidence to the contrary, Carlucci even referred to the now largely discredited UN Report that claimed to have found no evidence of foreign involvement in the assassination of Lumumba.48

Coming to Carlucci's assistance, the ultra-conservative (and Belgian-born) columnist and former editor of Newsweek Arnaud de Borchgrave inadvertently documents the vital role played by Carlucci during the 1960 Congo crisis, in the course of a ranting denunciation of Lumumba during which he unreels all the scurrilous rumours that circulated at the time about him, asserting that 'Washington's fear of an African Castro was not unfounded' while simultaneously insisting that 'Lumumba was ready and willing to turn over his country to a shady capitalist named Dettwiler'.49

In his zeal, de Borchgrave insists (ignoring the commission's report which was released a week later) that Lumumba's murder was wholly devised and executed by Africans, while admitting that 'the former Belgian colonial masters were pleased and approving [and] so was official Washington.' And, to support his contention that the suggestion of Carlucci's involvement is nothing more than 'twaddle in all its unrationed (sic) splendor', he reminds us that 'neither the Church nor Pike congressional intelligence committees ... found any evidence of CIA involvement in the murder of Lumumba', overlooking the fact that Mr. Carlucci (whom the docudrama, in any case, depicts as declining to cast a vote on the grounds that 'the US does not interfere in the affairs of sovereign states') was not, at least ostensibly, with the CIA at the time, even if he later served as deputy director of that agency. Mr. Carlucci must have felt, nevertheless, that his denials might not fully exonerate him, and managed (by threatening a lawsuit against Peck and the film distributor's, Zeitgeist) to have his name 'bleeped out' in the version of Peck's film that was released in March 2002 on US television by the HBO cable network.50

While the tremors caused by the Belgian parliamentary investigation have had, on the whole, few repercussions abroad (owing in part to the commission's tactful choice to concentrate almost exclusively on Belgium's role), ripples of controversy have unexpectedly reached into some usually placid circles, including academic precincts. In an interview conducted on 23 April 2001, the noted expatriate Belgian historian Jan Vansina referred in scholarly but nevertheless scathing terms to his Belgian colleagues, and more generally, to Belgian colonial historiography, about which he offered his views on what his interviewers identified as its three main currents, namely 'positivist academism', 'imperial historiography'(mostly concerned with biographies), and a third group writing 'from a deep-felt sense of indignation mainly about the abuses during the early colonial period'. The first, and most 'established' group, Vansina opined, proceeded from the premise 'that historians must not become involved with moral assessments. Historians cannot be judges.' The reaction of Stengers (the most prominent representative of that group) 'was that it was of no use to judge something that occurred 70 years earlier, because one is not familiar with the moral standards of that period.' By contrast, Jules Marchal51 'shows that the abuses in the Congo Free State could be said to be immoral according to the standards at that time.'

The interview triggered a spirited response from Jean-Luc Vellut (University of Louvain-la-Neuve) who took exception with Vansina's suggestion that 'positivist
history', taken as representative of Belgian historiography, had ‘connived to organize silence around the most brutal aspects of the colonial nexus’, and had shown itself ‘impervious to an ethical approach to the past’. While agreeing that ‘naive positivist visions of knowledge hold sway over much of historical production in Belgium’ and that ‘Belgian historians who took part in the reactivation of Africanist historiography in the 1960s kept violence at the periphery of their narratives’ (a limitation of which he finds evidence in Vansina’s best known works), Vellut contends that ‘to present the generality of professional historians of his days as accomplices in a cover-up operation is to take a step too far’. Vansina’s views, he argues,

will please the advocates of a stricter anticolonial line in our assessment of the modern history of the Congo. The eruption of the holocaust paradigm is significant here, especially now that the history of the Free State is presented as ‘l’holocauste oublié’, in the words of the French subtitle to Hochschild’s book. ... Renewing with Hannah Arendt’s fleeting essay on colonial imperialism, the Congo becomes a proto-Nazi experiment. In this literature, as a rule Joseph Conrad is shamelessly recycled to serve as an incriminating witness. Vansina is too subtle a scholar to join this chorus, but he clearly wants to collect some benefits from a position of fellow traveller in exile (...) in tune with a dominant mood in ‘Africanist’ debate. We are once again entering a melancholy cycle as we are reminded that historiographies know their Schumpeterian cycles: nostalgia and eulogy are succeeded (or preceded) by ‘black books’, and so the process unfolds. Now the mood is to renew with the abolitionist tradition, to denounce the evil, to bring the liberating word and to paternally put the African in the debt of the liberal West.32

The fact that this academic sparring centres on the colonial era (and, more specifically, on its ‘Leopoldian’ period, from which the Belgian state self-consciously, if not altogether successfully, always tried to disentangle itself) confirms that, for better or worse, Belgium’s convoluted relationship with the Congo or, one might argue, the Western world’s relation with Africa at large – cannot be conveniently separated into discrete compartments, or by some convenient ‘colonial/post-colonial’ watershed. In Belgium, following the release of the parliamentary commission report, voices were heard (even from some who denied its conclusions) calling for a critical study of the political and business establishment’s ties to the Mobutu regime. Similar calls might well – but thus far have not – been raised in other countries, and the charade of ‘national reconciliation’ currently unfolding in Kinshasa, with its rehabilitation of ex-Mobutists and assorted ‘technocrats’, suggests that many skeletons will yet rest undisturbed in unopened closets.

Meanwhile, as part of a motley crew of transnational operators, Belgian actors remain deeply involved in various traffics (arms, diamonds, coltan, etc.) that contribute to the evisceration of Africa and to the accumulation of anonymous victims.33 And thus, a tortuous, bloodstained thread may, after all, span the four decades separating Lumumba’s murder from Kabila’s assassination.

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Endnotes


2. ‘Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce ... the nephew for the uncle’. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, New York: International Publishers, 1963, Chap. I.


4. ‘De Zevende Dag’, 12 December 2000. The interview in question was triggered by the reactions to Ludo De Witte’s book discussed below. Eyskens’ chumminess with Mobutu is amply recorded in the 1997 Belgian television (RTB) documentary ‘Notre ami Mobutu’.


6. Karl Marx, Ibid.


8. An exception should be made for the 1975 Church Report (US Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities, *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leader*, 94th Congress, 1st session). Madeleine Kalb also made use of declassified documents in *The Congo Cables. The Cold war in Africa – From Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York, 1982). For Belgian exceptions, see below.


12. Adding to the revulsion caused by this sordid case were the popular suspicion that Dutroux was being protected by some ‘highly-placed persons’, and the inept handling of the prosecution, which delayed a formal indictment until 15 March 2002. A few days later, Dutroux was sentenced to a 3-year prison term for unrelated felonies committed in 1992-1993.


15. Gerard Soete, *De Arena. Het Verhaal van de moord op Lumumba* (Bruges: Raskijn, 1978). Soete was later interviewed by Brassine, and by a number of television journalists when the circumstances of Lumumba’s assassination again became a ‘newsworthy’ issue. Much of his account was incorporated in Raoul Peck’s recently released film, *Lumumba* (2000) in which the 39-year old Haitian-born director (who lived for a while in post-independence Congo) offers an impassioned but carefully documented view of the final year of Lumumba’s life – a view which, though re-enacted for the screen, is nevertheless fuller and better researched than his 1992 documentary film on the same subject (*Lumumba: La Mort du Propheète*).

16. By contrast, Adam Hochschild’s derivative *King Leopold’s Ghost* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998) hardly caused a ripple in Belgium because it told a story with which readers were already familiar – unlike, apparently, their American counterparts who made the book a bestseller, even though the story had originally been told (more accurately and more compellingly) by English-language writers such as Roger Casement or Mark Twain.

17. This is a line still adhered to by some of the minor protagonists whose testimony was heard by the Parliamentary Commission (see ‘Les ‘Katangais’ belges chargent les Etats Unis’ in: *La Libre Belgique*, 2 July 2001). In their damage-control efforts, other, more senior protagonists (or their descendants) preferred to adhere to the ‘Brassine version’ – including Brassine himself – while key surviving Congolese politicians involved with deciding Lumumba’s fate shrewdly charged their deceased colleagues (Tshombe, Munongo, et al.) ... and tended to exonerate Belgium (where, it should be noted, most have chosen to retire).


21. James, p.56

22. Ibid. p.63

23. Quoted, Ibid. p.62


25. The confusion may have originated in a mistranslation (from Dutch to French, and later from French to English) of the term *neef* which, in Dutch, is sometimes used indifferently for ‘nephew’
or 'cousin'. In actual fact, Gobert was Harold’s uncle. A reference to Harold in the introduction is also credited in the index to another member of this admittedly much-ramified family (in this case his father Charles).

26. The existence and tenor of the 6 October telex fired off by d’Aspremont-Lynden less than five weeks after leaving his post as Belgium’s proconsul in Katanga to assume control of Belgium’s Congo policies were first mentioned and quoted by F. Vandewalle, in his ‘Mille et quatre jours . . .’, III, doc. No. 65.

27. Some Belgian officials and politicians (including cabinet members) were, it should be noted, less sanguine about the Katanga secession (see Claude Roosens, ‘La Belgique et la sécession du Katanga’, in Lanotte, Roosens & Clément (eds.), La Belgique et l’Afrique central, pp.107-132). Thus, while d’Aspremont-Lynden was assisting with the creation of an army (gendarmerie) for the breakaway province, Foreign Minister Pierre Wigny, for one, was trying to negotiate a rapprochement between the central government and Katanga (ibid. p. 119) – a task undoubtedly made easier for the suave Wigny once the two rival regimes had become accomplices in Lumumba’s murder.


29. These colours stand for the Liberal (Blue), Socialist (Green) and ‘environmentalist’ (Green) ideological ‘families’, but Belgium’s political spectrum, long similar to that of the UK, has become increasingly complex over the past twenty years as a result of the deliberate separation of traditional ‘ideological’ parties into autonomous language-based wings, and of the emergence of explicitly ethnic parties in Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels, as well as of two (also language-based) ‘green’ formations (‘Agalev’ and ‘Ecolo’). In addition to its ‘Blue’, ‘Red’ and ‘Green’ components (each consisting of two regional segments), the coalition also includes the moderate Flemish ethnic party VU&ID (Volksunie & ID 21) itself a combination of two groups, and two ‘francophone’ groups (FD & MCC) linked with the Brussels-based affiliate of the Liberal (Blue) ‘family’. The complexity of the party system (and that of related acronyms) has dramatically increased since September 2001, with no fewer than a half-dozen groups being renamed, splintering, or becoming extinct (with some belonging to the traditionally dominant Christian-Democratic ‘family’ even dropping the ‘Christian’ label from their official appellation). For a brief inventory of such changes, see Dirk Vanoverbeke: ‘Le Grand écart des partis du Nord et du Sud’, Le Soir (Brussels), 25 May 2002.

30. Jean Omasombo Tshonda, ‘Commission Lumumba: difficile regard sur un passé in Forum BVA/ABA, no. 22 (March 2002) p. 10-13. [http://home-4.worldonline.be/~ababva/forum/]; Omasombo’s contribution to the report appears (pp.930-969-Annexe 4) in the form of a condensed version of two detailed studies devoted to the organisation and functioning of the ‘Collège des Commissaires Généraux’, the hastily assembled group of Congolese university students (most of them then residing in Belgium) who served as a makeshift ‘cabinet’ during the interim period separating Mobutu’s first takeover (20 September 1960) and the ostensible restoration of ‘civilian rule’ under Premier Cyrille Adoula in February 1961 – three weeks after Lumumba’s assassination.

31. Two of those 32 witnesses were successively deposed in mixed conditions. In addition, the commission also heard (but not under oath) members of the Lumumba, Tshombe, Okito, Mpolo and d’Aspremont-Lynden families, as well the two authors Ludo De Witte and Jacques Brassine (the latter, by virtue of the official position he held in Katanga at the time of Lumumba’s murder, was also heard as a sworn witness.


33. And later still tied, through a network of intricate alliances and marriage links, with several key members of the Mobutist and anti-Mobutist establishments

34. Before and after serving as Commissaire général à l’Intérieur – and thus in charge of police and security matters – in the ‘College of General Commissioners’, Mukamba had worked closely with Albert Kalonji, leader of the copycat secessionist État minier du Sud-Kasai, centered on – and instigated by – the Forminière mining house, but fuelled also by the ethnic particularism and sense of victimisation of the Kasai Baluba. Kalonji’s bitter hostility to Lumumba (which had led him to
‘Mobutu’s Disease’: A Social History of AIDS in Kinshasa

Brooke Grundfest Schoepf

The social history of AIDS in the Mobutu era provides a window through which to view the consequences of gender and class inequality. Official and popular responses to this epidemic of fatal sexually transmitted disease reveal the interplay of structure and agency, political economy and culture. While the present crisis of the state and civil war in eastern DRC have pushed gender issues off the political agenda, the prevalence of sexual violence, and consequently, increased levels of HIV and AIDS, makes gender relations central to peace and development.

Introduction

The social history of AIDS offers a window on the living conditions and popular constructions of society by those at risk of disease. Disease epidemics generally erupt in times of crisis and AIDS is no exception. An epidemic is an essentially social process, the spread of micro-organisms shaped by political economy and culture. AIDS is unique in several respects. Interrelated biological, sociocultural and economic factors make it difficult to prevent through vaccine development or through behaviour change.

The spread of AIDS is directly linked to poverty, to class and gender inequality, to migration in search of cash, to wars and to medical neglect. Throughout the continent, poor women and children experience most severely the effects of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and the deepening crisis. In Zaire, as elsewhere in the region, economic crisis and the structure of employment inherited from the colonial period contributed to the feminization of poverty and consequently to the spread of AIDS.¹

These conditions worsened across Africa for the past quarter century as the virus spread without being recognised. In the 1980s, Mobutu’s Zaire was considered by many to be a worst possible case scenario. Unfortunately, it was a harbinger, not an exception. This article examines the interrelated factors that have propelled the
epidemic in DRC. I draw upon research conducted with colleagues in the CONNAISSIDA Project that charted the growth of AIDS awareness in Kinshasa and other cities between 1985 and 1990.

Analysis of stored bloods from the Belgian Congo found the earliest sample with HIV in blood taken from a man living in Kinshasa in 1959. Recent testing in several laboratories has confirmed this early date. Molecular genetics showed that the virus already had diverged from what must have been an ancestral strain.

By the 1970s physicians in the Congo began seeing increasing numbers of cases of what later became defining diseases of the AIDS syndrome, including the rare cryptococcal meningitis in 1979. This is also the period when epidemic tuberculosis was noted in poor urban families and partial treatment may have given rise to resistant strains. HIV-1 was undoubtedly present in small amounts in fairly isolated rural populations at least from the 1950s. By the 1980s, it was concentrated primarily in the cities. Once in the big city, it spread quite rapidly. The blood of pregnant women in Kinshasa drawn in 1970 found 0.25 per cent with antibodies to HIV; by 1980 prevalence had reached 3 per cent, and by 1986 had more than doubled again.

Epidemiologists looked for some change in the environment that might have led to increased virulence and/or transmissibility of the virus to explain its rapid expansion. HIV is just one among newly emerging viruses that move from animals to humans (zoonoses) in a qualitatively new global environment that includes a complex mix of social, technological and ecological changes. The ability of the virus to proliferate and to adapt rapidly may also have contributed to increasing its virulence. Urbanization, male labour migration and disruption of families, with attendant prostitution were pinpointed. These processes date from the slave trade, colonial conquest and mise en valeur through brutal exploitation. It took decades for population to recover from the early drain. Following World War Two, however, population in the Congo increased exponentially. Kinshasa was a city of just half a million people in 1959. By 1985 it had grown to more three million, and current estimates place the population at more than five million (WHO, 2001).

Much of the increase was due to migration from the countryside. In the 1960s people fled violence as Mobutu, with the help of foreign mercenaries, sought to impose his rule by quelling struggles for a 'second independence' following the murder of Patrice Lumumba. In the 1970s, peasants fled desperate rural poverty and obligatory crop planting quotas tantamount to forced labour. Women and girls, especially, resented being harnessed to family cash crop production for which they received no reward. With little formal education or other special skills, female migrants were forced into the lowest levels of the 'informal sector,' as unskilled workers for petty commodity producers, or as domestic workers for employed women. Wages in the sector were abysmal; mounting economic crisis in the late 1970s drove down real earnings still further, to the level of 1959. Many women had recourse to sex with multiple partners for sheer survival or to supplement their wages. In the 1980s, cities contained as many women as men, but women constituted only four per cent of formal sector workers. An estimated 40-60 per cent of urban men were without stable waged employment. As many were too poor to found families and provide for their support, women raised children without male assistance. The number of unemployed has since risen, due to the destruction of the formal economy in the 1990s. Then as now, unemployed men, and the majority of women without special job qualifications or political connections, resorted to informal sector occupations. These include petty trade, food preparation, market gardening, sewing, domestic work, artisanal mining,
smuggling, and prostitution. These occupations yield very low incomes for most of those who practice them. Produce trade and smuggling take place over long distances within DRC and across its borders. Women who are politically protected can earn high profits; they can sometimes avoid the multiple partner sexual relationships that regularly accompany such trade. But most of the profits of such illegal ventures accrued to politically powerful men. In the 1980s, women informants who formerly relied upon steady contributions from male sex partners or from their extended families reported that these sources had dwindled since others, too, are hard-pressed to make ends meet. Sexual patron-client relations and strategies that maximised women’s returns became crucial to survival. Very poor families put their daughters out to prostitution. Increasing numbers of young women supplemented their wages with recourse to sex with multiple partners.

To say these things publicly in the mid-1980s was politically unpopular. A common view among the (male) bourgeoisie at the time was that the extended family helped the poor ‘get by.’ A number of intellectuals rejected CONNAISSIDA’s critique out-of-hand as insulting to national honour. Many of their wives knew better. They commented that often the men were themselves consumers of the sexuality of young women: students, dependents in their households, and others with scant resources who sought their protection and support.

**A Critical Question**

Many sceptics have asked, if HIV originated in Central Africa, why was AIDS not identified earlier? The Congo covers a huge territory the size of Western Europe, or of the US east of the Mississippi River. Biomedical diagnostic capacity was extremely rare, concentrated in Kinshasa, and even that failed to reach the majority of inhabitants. The Mobutu period was a period of virulent neglect of public health services. As in the colonial period, rural health care was left, in the main, to religious missions and ‘traditional healers.’ Half the health budget went to just one hospital in Kinshasa, mainly to pay salaries; those served were likely to live in the five surrounding zones. By the 1970s much of the existing health network had broken down, exacerbated by Mobutu’s attack on the churches which had provided the majority of services in rural areas. The government system suffered from ‘leaky pipelines’. For example, antibiotics supplied by WHO against tuberculosis were siphoned off for sale in private pharmacies.

While malaria was the leading cause of death, especially in children, tuberculosis was a major killer of adults, second only to pregnancy-related mortality in young women. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) were a major reason for consulting health practitioners, but effective biomedical treatment was unattainable by the poor majority and multi-drug resistant strains proliferated. These would have served as a multiplier for risk of HIV transmission, by favouring genetic changes that allowed the virus to escape attacks by the immune systems of infected individuals. The increasing scale of sexual networking in the 1970s may have afforded an opportunity for the emergence and spread of more virulent strains of HIV. Or it may have begun earlier, during the period of the rebellions, the ‘struggle for a second independence’ in the mid-1960s, when violence and population displacement would have favoured increasing transmission and rapid reproduction of the virus.

Not until 1980 were donors able to convince Mobutu’s personal physician to collaborate in establishment of a national primary care system. Managed by foreign (mainly religious) NGOs that had survived the purge, the health zones attempted to
create a strong rural presence and a backup system of referral hospitals, moving progressively across the country. The various vertical preventative maternal-child health programmes, such as childhood vaccination, nutrition education, growth monitoring, pregnancy risk screening and family planning, formed the core of the donor-supported primary health system. Men, unmarried young women and women who were not mothers had no place in the system (see the ROAPE Health Issue No. 27, 1986).

In this period, reproductive tract infections that gave rise to infertility seldom were treated biomedically, despite the tragedy the condition meant for many women. Miscarriages and congenital defects that resulted from STIs commonly were blamed by men on the women's sexual transgressions. It may be that African leaders were embarrassed to address the STI problem, and that moreover, Western donors' avoidance on the grounds of antibiotic expense actually was a passive form of population control. In point of fact, STI treatment is quite cost effective. Once a health infrastructure is in place, it costs just pennies per case to avert a congeries of serious conditions.

Social Epidemiology in Kinshasa

In 1985, the international biomedical research group, Projet Sida conducted a population-based survey in Kinshasa. They found HIV in 5 per cent of blood samples taken from 5,099 healthy residents of all ages. The rate in women aged 15 to 29 was double the general rate; among those age 15 to 24 years, nearly six times more women than men were infected. Not surprisingly, poor, young, unmarried urban women were at highest risk. Virtually no children 5 to 14 years were infected. This confirmed the epidemiologists' hypothesis that heterosexual transmission was the principal mode of infection.

A small sample of sex workers in Kinshasa's central entertainment district tested in 1985 found 27 per cent to be infected. Only 8 out of 85 women reported regular condom use. In 1988/1989, a wider survey of 1,233 sex workers in Kinshasa that included many very poor sex workers found 35 per cent seroprevalence. Thirty-six per cent of poorer prostitutes working from their homes or in hotels, but only 24 per cent of street prostitutes were infected. The latter were younger, better educated, more knowledgeable about AIDS, reported fewer clients and charged higher fees. They were more likely to perceive themselves to be at risk, and three times as likely to use condoms with clients. These 'elite' prostitutes also had fewer sexually transmitted infections, which, as noted above, increase risk of acquiring HIV by three to five times. Investigators reported that despite relatively good knowledge of AIDS and STIs, regular condom use was low, reported by only 12 per cent of the entire sample.

As the population-based survey had discovered, commercial sex workers were not the only women at risk. In 1986, seroprevalence among 6,000 women delivering at the public Mama Yemo Hospital was 5.7 per cent as were 8 per cent of mothers attending a well-baby clinic nearby, while among 2,574 women at two private hospitals, the rate reached 6.7 per cent. Women at the latter hospital tended to be in less advanced stages of disease, and fewer of their infants were infected.

Seroprevalence among male managers in two large enterprises studied in 1987 posed a considerable risk to their wives: 4.6 to 6.8 per cent of these men were infected. Rates among their wives were 3.3 to 5.7 per cent; the highest levels were found in the
younger women age 20 to 29. Seroprevalence among women employees in this age group was higher still: 16.7 per cent of young female hospital workers and 11.1 per cent of female textile factory workers tested positive in 1987. Most were single and were paid below-subsistence wages.

Seroprevalence studies of women giving birth in rural towns in the lower Congo (Kimpese) and the east (Arua) showed a relationship between trade & AIDS. The wives of traders were more likely to be infected than wives of men in other occupations. Ethnographic research on long-distance trade in the southeast found men traders ‘seldom slept alone’. They were likely to have several wives or consorts in the towns along their routes. These women and children provided traders with an identity, and a reason for being in the town. Wives stored goods, made trading contacts and obtained permits using local kinship and patron-client networks. Some of the wives were monogamous, others consorted with several men.

In sum, all blood samples tested found that young, unmarried women were at highest risk for HIV. They included not only women who depended on sex work for a living, but those employed in formal sector occupations. The epidemiology also showed that married women were being infected by their husbands. Later research found that many girls are infected at first coitus, when they are induced or coerced into sex with older men, among whom infection rates are higher than in young men.

Men’s risk increased with income. Managers were much more likely to be infected than were manual workers, among whom 3 to 4 per cent were infected. Risk behaviours included extra-marital sex, sex with a prostitute, and a history of STIs. It required intensive counselling of couples in which only one partner was infected to remain married, especially where the wife was the infected partner. Moreover, a study of these ‘discordant’ couples found that when the man was infected but not the wife, he was less likely to use condoms than if she was the infected partner. A more recent study shows that seroprevalence rates at the factory have declined. Unfortunately, the samples are not readily comparable. Nevertheless, declining prevalence in the face of harsh economic stress indicates that, as news of AIDS spread, men were able to reduce their risk by remaining faithful to their wives, and by using condoms with wives who had been infected prior to marriage.

By 1998, antenatal clinics in Kinshasa registered rates between 4 to 6 per cent, despite a 1992 peak of nearly 10 per cent. Stable infection prevalence, or ‘endemicity,’ indicates that new infections occur at a rate just sufficient to replace those who die from AIDS. Incidence among younger women rose while it declined among those 25 and older. Infection spread slowly among younger women as older ones died or ceased bearing children. In some other areas of the Congo, data from surveillance sites shows that infection prevalence appears to have stabilised there as well. These figures must be regarded with some skepticism, as UNAIDS, which broadcasts ‘success stories’ in its annual reviews of the global AIDS situation, has not mentioned Zaire or DRC among them.

Even 5 per cent infection prevalence among adults in a city of 5 million people represents an enormous load of disease, an estimated 225,000 adults and 25,000 children living with HIV and AIDS. Adults who die in their prime leave orphaned children to be cared for by kin, a burden that many poor people’s extended kin networks cannot bear.
'Mobutu's Disease': Popular Representations in Kinshasa

In the mid-1980s Zaire appeared to be in the centre of the epidemic. Greatly exaggerated figures were bandied about, despite the evidence of epidemiology. Fallout from the publicity had predictable consequences. Since the disease syndrome was associated with homosexual men ('perverts'), prostitutes and 'promiscuity', the first response from officials and intellectuals was denial. English-speaking colleagues joked about the Three Ps, parallel to the Four Hs in the US. Emphasis on heterosexual transmission, published in scientific journals and sensationalized in the mass media, supported some critics' contention that AIDS was being blown out of proportion by Western governments.

Popular constructions of AIDS at first denied it was 'real.' Beginning with university students in Kinshasa in 1985, then spreading elsewhere, the acronym for AIDS was given a humorous meaning. AIDS (SIDA, in French) was dubbed a *Syndrome Imaginaire pour Décourager les Amoureux*, 'an imaginary syndrome to discourage lovers'. People were aware that many westerners stigmatized Africans for 'having (what westerners, poor benighted things, considered) too much sex, and too many children.' Belittled by word play, the potential danger of the epidemic could be denied, and its implications avoided. This dismissive construction was elaborated and spread along the *radio trottoir* in numerous other countries across Africa. Since some rich and powerful men widely reputed for their sexual exploits apparently were unaffected, people said that AIDS could not be too serious in Kinshasa. Numerous popular jokes reinforced this denial.

Then credible information began to appear. In May 1987, a cassette of advice, *Keba na Sida* ('Beware of AIDS') recorded by the popular musician, Franco, played around town. Prodded by international donors, the government information campaign began soon after, with an OXFAM-funded leaflet. Popular drama, including the *Theatre de Chez Nous* performed radio and television dramas using humour rather than fear. As news of the deaths of prominent men spread, people started talking more about AIDS. Still, relatively few people made realistic assessments of their own risk or reported changes in their sexual lifestyles.

Ideas regarding transmission and prevention, disease origins and etiology varied widely and changed over time. Urban élites, who had access to television, international publications, and friends in the health professions were most informed. On the other hand, most people's knowledge was sketchy, and misinformation common. For example, the media told of insect transmission and, despite later disclaimers, people continued to cite it. Few people were aware of the risk of transmission from mothers to infants.

Advice to 'stay faithful to one partner' was impractical for many and misleading for those whose partners already were infected. Advice about safer sex – condoms – was extremely limited and seldom cited by the public. The mass media campaign did not inform the public about the slow action of the virus. Scepticism also was related to unfamiliarity with 'people with AIDS' (PWAs). How could a new disease just erupt? Some healers claimed it was 'an old African disease' which they knew how to cure. Women and youth, especially, suspected that churches and government officials sought to control their sexuality. When AIDS was recognised as real, it was declared to have come from 'elsewhere'. Not only in Africa, but elsewhere in the Third World, American military men, businessmen, and sex tourists were considered plausible sources.
By late 1987, many women in Kinshasa were aware or suspected that they were put at risk by their spouses. Since AIDS already affected the general population of sexually active adults and adolescents, narrowly focused prevention strategies were not likely to stop the spread of infection. Instead, because they associated AIDS with the stigma of prostitution, they increased the denial of risk and impede realistic prevention measures. Advice to ‘avoid prostitutes’ was heard, but just who is a prostitute? Some working class men believed themselves to be free of risk even while they engaged in risky behaviour. For example, two garage mechanics in their twenties said: ‘AIDS is not a danger for us, because we are too poor to travel to all those foreign places. Anyway, our girlfriends are young and healthy schoolgirls.’ Many men sought out young girls whom they believed to be free of infection.

At the same time that most HIV prevention interventions targeted low-status and stigmatized groups, wealthy and powerful high status men were rarely mentioned. Yet, as holders of the ‘triptych’ of masculinity, seniority and renown, such men possessed the means to attract (and discard) multiple sexual partners. They could have triggered an early sea-change in situations that put women and children at risk. Instead, many denied their risk and their responsibility. The Zairian cabinet minister, who in August 1986 told me that ‘I just don’t want to think about AIDS’, expressed a commonly held view. In June 1987 another minister took home a copy of the OXFAM leaflet distributed at a cabinet meeting. He placed it on his wife’s night table, but avoided discussion. His wife wondered if he was indirectly accusing her of infidelity.

As the epidemic went on, deaths from this ‘long and painful illness’ mounted in Kinshasa. By late 1987, the popular imagination began to reflect the epidemic’s economic roots. Another phrase built from the acronym expressed the evolving understanding of AIDS’ (SIDA’s) social epidemiology: ‘Salaire Insuffisant Depuis des Années’. In anglophone Africa the same causal relationship was expressed as ‘the Acquired Income Deficiency Syndrome’. That is, although still a ‘disease of women,’ AIDS came to be widely understood as a disease brought on by poverty, unemployment, and the strategies that poor women commonly adopted for survival.

Women’s poverty deepened and became more widespread in the Mobutu period. Although discrimination in employment was illegal, managers of many large firms preferred to hire men ‘who would be more committed to their work.’ Women’s labour in biological and social reproduction was perceived to interfere (field notes Lubumbashi 1976-78; Kinshasa 1981, 1985). Consequently, only 4 per cent of the formal sector workforce was female, and women were forced to rely on the ‘informal sector’. Those who ‘made it’ often derived their start-up capital through either paternal or sexual clientship networks (Schoepf and Walu, 1991). Poor women were in the least profitable activities, or in low-wage occupations, such as domestic service. Moreover, ‘with everyone selling something, who is left to buy?’ as more than one informant pointed out.

The Mobutu period was notorious for the ‘consommation’ of young women’s sexuality by powerful men who made themselves wealthy through myriad forms of corruption. The term ‘eating’ is applied to both sex and embezzlement, another hallmark of the era. An entry from my Lubumbashi journal will illustrate the regime’s tenor:

The Social and Political Sciences faculty were apprised by the Dean that we were not to admit women students to our classes. They were being confined to their dormitory rooms for insubordination, as they had refused to serve during a visiting presidential visit. Everyone present understood that ‘to serve’ meant not only to prepare and serve food but to provide...
sex to the men who accompanied the President. The young women wrote in protest to the Rector (a Bishop) in Kinshasa. According to the Dean, Monseigneur le Recteur Magnifique had replied that in the future, virgins would be exempted. Most of the faculty (all male except for one other American woman) laughed. My lone protest was dismissed by the Dean with reference to the Mobutist doctrine of 'authenticité': 'Madame, you do not understand our African customs' (field notes, Lubumbashi 1987).

In his view, I was asking the Dean to violate the Mobutu Doctrine of authenticity in the name of an ethnocentric construction of human rights. The young women were minors, both as young people and as women, without rights to be heard. They could have no voice in setting human rights standards; nor could they propose different views of authentic traditions. Shortly after this incident, I accompanied a woman student on a visit to her cousin, the wife of a city official. We told her what had happened.

'Oh, yes', she said, 'That is the rule, not the exception. When Mobutu and his suite arrive, the wives of officials are always called to 'serve' his retinue. Husbands look the other way. One thinks it could be dangerous to refuse.'

When I gave a public lecture at Radcliffe College in 1989, a Zairian graduate student in international relations who had married into the family of a cabinet member was present. During the discussion he pointed to the need to emphasise Mobutu's responsibility in setting the pattern, and legitimating it on the grounds of 'authenticity.' When he later visited my home with his family, we quipped that AIDS should be called 'Mobutu's disease'. Casting AIDS in this manner made it evident that, as women in Kinshasa knew from the outset, focus on the power of wealthy men would be a better starting place for controlling the pandemic than a focus on poor women.

Mobutu, of course, had help from western governments which brought him to power and kept him there. While they may have lamented his domestic policies, geopolitical aims allowed them to demonstrate indifference to the plight of the Congolese people. Despite his corruption they kept him in power against the demonstrated wishes of the people, until he and his cronies threatened the profitability of the transnationals that had ruled the Congo's economy since the Free State. In the 1980s Economic Recovery and SAP measures set out to re-create profitable conditions for capital by reducing the share accruing to labour. The regime's corruption involved the corruption of morals throughout the society; women and their sexuality were targeted in special ways. My own government condoned this under the guise of cultural relativism. For example, the US Ambassador found the language of a 1985 report on gender relations that noted pervasive sexual harassment in government institutions too strong. He asked me to change it to 'sexual hampering'.

Agency & Protection

In mid-1987, women with multiple partners, whether they identified themselves as sex workers or not, reported difficulty obtaining condom protection from steady partners. For many, condoms carried a moral implication: they signified protection for men against diseased women. As had been the case with the contraceptive pill in the 1970s, condoms were rejected by many young women who protested 'I'm not a prostitute!' Non-use signified trust and commitment, even though relationships, while monogamous, might be short-lived. Many women were disarmed by Government's public health message that faithfulness to a single partner provided
protection from AIDS. Such advice was still being given across Africa well into the 1990s, especially by churches.

CONNAISSIDA used ethnographic data to design consciousness-raising workshops based on participatory empowerment training methods such as role-plays. These enabled people together to find ways to resist HIV risk. We began with local officials to elicit their cooperation, then worked with a network of very poor prostitutes who sought to protect themselves and dependent children. The women’s new negotiation skills and knowledge raised their status in the neighbourhood. Leaders of a churchwomen’s organization in this working class quarter believed that the majority of husbands had sexual relations with other women, thus exposing faithful wives to HIV. They also pointed to abandonment, divorce and widowhood as circumstances forcing women without other resources into commercial sex work. When they learned of the risk reduction workshops with sex workers, they invited us to their church. Requests from other community groups followed. The experiments shed light on women’s agency and its limits in initiating culture change. Small groups of workmates invited CONNAISSIDA to hold workshops during their lunch breaks. The men devised ways to use their clan associations and neighbourhood networks to promote protection.

When it learned of these workshops, the Catholic Archdiocese of Kinshasa designated four weekly meetings of its 1,000 local ‘base community’ groups for discussion of AIDS. The lay animateurs who lead each group of 25 to 40 members received guidelines in Lingala developed by Dr. Rukarangira, Co-director of CONNAISSIDA. The text advised that although the church considers extra-marital sex a sin, transgressors should use condoms rather than risk their lives. This practical stance contrasted with that of several other churches which, although they accepted condoms for contraception by married couples, taught that AIDS is a ‘divine punishment’ and that only ‘sinners’ are at risk. However, Dr. Walu and I discovered that men who led discussions in the base communities, convinced that: ‘authorizing people to use condoms encourages immorality’, refused to relay the condom advice. Control issues, especially over the sexuality of young women, took precedence over protection. The Archdiocese was unwilling to take the further step of sponsoring consciousness-raising workshops for these lay leaders, and soon after, the Pope condemned condoms. Nevertheless, the message of risk was clear to many women. Some became involved in prayer groups where they developed concerted efforts with the clergy to keep husbands at home.

A US non-profit organisation, Population Services International (PSI), began a condom social marketing project, to which CONNAISSIDA members contributed research and marketing expertise, targeting young men. PSI began distributing attractively packaged condoms to Kinshasa pharmacies in November 1987. Instead of messages promoting fear and stigmatizing sex with prostitutes, their publicity made stylish and popular. The brand name, Prudence, became a synonym for condom. The symbol on the brown package, a leaping leopard, projects power; the accompanying slogan proposed protection ‘for the man sure of himself’. This neutralised the political issue of population control, which some intellectuals charged was at bottom of Western governments’ concern. The result was to empower men to use condoms in casual sex, both to protect from disease and unwanted pregnancy.

Condom use spread rapidly among young educated men, first, mainly in encounters with women defined as prostitutes, and then as confidence grew, with casual partners. Acceptability spread from the elite to the working class. Sales of Prudence in
Kinshasa rose from just 20,000 units in the month of October 1988, to 300,000 per month in June 1989 and by 1990, totalled 9 million. PSI expected to sell 16 million condoms nationwide in 1991. Still, condoms seldom were used in stable relationships invested with meaning, or even in regular dating situations. Poor men could not buy enough condoms for regular use, and some rinsed and re-used them. While social marketing stresses cost recovery, these men needed free supplies.

Projet SIDA established a free clinic for sex workers in Matonge, a popular entertainment district, with HIV testing and counselling, condoms, and STI treatment. Infection prevalence among the prostitute cohort fell as those infected early in the epidemic died, and incidence of new infections among those who reported highest condom use declined. The project also provided counselling to workers in the large firms where they studied seroprevalence.

Many men became aware of the dangers of the bar culture, where drink often led to unsafe sex. By 1990, bars in Kinshasa were reported virtually deserted, in contrast to those in the port of Matadi where les Prudences had not yet arrived. I am unable to say how long this lasted, nor how the women made their living without clients. These projects ceased activities in 1991, when FAZ (Forces Armees Zairoises) rioted in Kinshasa and international donors withdrew support. PSI transferred the brand name successfully to Côte d'Ivoire and other francophone countries.

Behaviour change cannot stand alone, however, in the face of unmet health needs. As foreign donor support for primary care ended, facilities were obliged to rely upon user fees. These were linked to curative care, and preventative activities severely curtailed. Treatment for STIs was costly and inaccessible to most. Subsequently, civil wars destroyed much of the health infrastructure in eastern Congo, as facilities were looted and burned by soldiers, but reports from western DRC are scarcely better. No biomedical services at all were available to 70 per cent of the population. Given the burden of disease from AIDS and associated infections, including many forms of active tuberculosis which can be transmitted to others in the family, the dearth of health services of reasonable quality is extremely serious.

**The Congo's Second Epidemic**

The stable HIV prevalence in Kinshasa does not extend over the whole of DRC, where in 2000, only five sites were testing blood, in contrast to fourteen sites in 1992. In Lubumbashi, where just 3 per cent of pregnant women seen in the government's Sendwe hospital were seropositive in 1989, nearly ten per cent were infected in 1999. In the northeastern regional town of Bunia, the rate was 6 per cent in 1997. It is probably considerably higher at present. The situation in Kalemie is worse: over one-third of healthy-looking blood donors were found HIV positive; in Bukavu's general hospital one-third of adult men, over half the women and more than one-fourth of children tested positive (WHO, 2001). The true situation outside of these limited sites with small sentinel surveillance samples from people of unspecified socioeconomic status is unknown. The civil wars, and mass population displacement, with anarchic violence, rape, hunger and deprivation, have undoubtedly increased HIV levels.

A survey conducted by the International Rescue Committee in five zones of Eastern DRC in 2000 found extremely high levels of mortality in young children due to violence, malnutrition and infectious disease. Only 12 cases of AIDS were reported. I would expect, however, that some of what are reported as deaths from 'malaria' (fever), diarrhoea, and respiratory conditions, are actually due to AIDS. In view of the
shame and stigma that adhere to entire families, and absence of diagnostic tests, under-reporting is to be expected. The same year Medecins Sans Frontieres also surveyed villages where attacks on civilians were reported from all sides. Fifteen per cent of families interviewed in frontline areas reported they had suffered from violence, and 13 per cent said that one or more family members had been sexually abused. This is almost certainly an undercount, given the shame and stigma that surround rape, as well.

A 2001 report by WHO did not mention rape or gendered sexual torture, but noted a probable increase in HIV due to 'troop movements and displacement in recent years'. An observer is quoted: 'I can hardly think of a better vector than tens of thousands of young men with hard currency roaming around the country' (p.3). Readers of Victoria Brittain's Briefing in this issue will not find it difficult to think of a better way to spread HIV, since transmission is enhanced by open wounds, especially the tearing of vaginal tissues. Nevertheless, whether as rape or as or 'survival sex', sexual relations with members of military and paramilitary gangs, already widely infected, is sure to spread HIV. Fresh urban epidemics and widespread dissemination of the virus in rural areas of eastern DRC and across the equatorial forests may be expected.

Just as the war is a regional problem, so is gender violence. Rape was 'a weapon of war' in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Interviews with survivors found that most women and girls experienced some form of sexual torture, including the gruesome mutilations reported by Brittain in this issue. In the aftermath of genocide, the huge camps serving Rwandan refugees and the genocide forces from mid-1994 to late 1996 placed many women in the camps and in the surrounding villages in eastern Kivu at the mercy of armed 'genocider' extremists. These men used their power to deny food to women and children; men who had grown accustomed to sexual violence. Girls and women were obliged to trade sex for food rations and other supplies that should have been theirs by right. Women were raped on their way to the latrines at night. High seroprevalence among the FAR army was observed from 1989, according to a French consultant interviewed in October of that year. The refugees' return to Rwanda raised rural seroprevalence to 11 per cent, from pre-genocide rural level of about 3 per cent. Thus, the international community that failed to intervene to halt the genocide, and failed to remove armed criminals from the camps, is responsible for the expanded HIV epidemic in Rwanda.

In light of what occurred in Rwanda, one may expect to find similar or higher seroprevalence among survivors in eastern Kivu and in the northeast, where former Interahamwe and FAR remnants have joined the government army. In northern Equateur Province, prevalence may resemble or exceed that in Central African Republic, which UNAIDS placed at 12 per cent in 2000.

I would expect much higher HIV prevalence rates, too, in the desperate ambiance of the coltan mining camps, as well as in logging camps and plantations that still function. In these sites young men do hard, dangerous work for low pay and are tempted to spend what little they get on women and girls who bring them sexual and domestic services. For both ideological and security reasons they are the least likely to be served by NGO health units, many of which have religious origins and may consider STIs and AIDS as 'diseases of immorality', their prevention not worthy of concern in an overburdened health facility. Adolescent clinics for sexual and reproductive health are critical, but young people will not come if it means having to listen to a sermon. None of the NGO reports I have reviewed indicate that any
particular measures to prevent HIV have been adopted by health centres or community organisations.

The eastern Kivu mountains were a region of high TB prevalence in times past. Malnutrition, mass displacement, lack of clothing and, especially, HIV are sure to raise levels of active tuberculosis further still. Interruption of care may have promoted emergence of antibiotic strains. The reports, including that of WHO, upon whom the responsibility for TB control falls, are silent about this, too.

Humanitarian NGOs supply services and support to health centres and hospitals on an *ad hoc* basis and violence often hampers their operations (Merlin, 2000; UNDP/Tufts conference, Boston April 2002). Some are able to violate cost recovery principles in order to serve vulnerable people. Local health committees function in some areas to identify the most needy (IRC, 2002). These are laudable efforts in a complex emergency. Foreign NGOs, however, are no substitute for a national health system, such as that which began to be forged in the 1980s. The entire system will have to be rebuilt.

**Conclusion**

In sum, AIDS in Kinshasa provides a window through which to understand gender relations and poverty in the Mobutu era. Epidemiological research indicated the gender dimensions of sexual risk that were perceived by many women out of knowledge of the forces constraining their lives. Not only sex workers, but many young women of childbearing age were at high risk, as were girls, many of whom were infected at first coitus. Socialised for subservience to dominant males, without economic independence or social autonomy, most women could neither refuse sex nor negotiate condom use with their partners. Class differences in risk existed but were not always what might be expected due to gender inequality, and to the ways that the regime deployed sexual patron-client relations. Husbands' wealth and power did not protect their wives. *Au contraire*, for while the poorest were most vulnerable, many elite women could not address protection issues with their husbands.

At some levels gender relations are subject to negotiation, but women's efforts to improve their condition take place in circumstances not of their own making. The poisoned legacy of pervasive inequality in the Mobutu era constitutes an enormous challenge. Powerful and wealthy men could have reduced levels of AIDS risk by exerting leadership, and changing their own practice. The failure of leadership prompted the designation of AIDS, first dismissed as an 'Imaginary Syndrome', as 'Mobutu's Disease'.

Public health action can help to improve these circumstances or can render prevention more difficult. The importance of public health offering free, effective, respectful treatment of sexually transmitted infections is clear. Biomedical discourse mediated by the mass media and public health campaigns can enhance or retard acceptance of the need to combat the spread of STIs and AIDS.

A second epidemic is in progress in eastern DRC, silent and virtually unnoticed in official reports. AIDS risk is greatly increased by sexual violence now pervasive in the climate of anarchic insecurity that accompanies the civil wars. This is the Congo's second poisoned legacy of the Mobutu era. An aftermath of the international dereliction of duty with respect to genocide in Rwanda, international support must help to rebuild the Congo. After peace is established, and as rebuilding health and
economic infrastructures gains momentum, the legacy of gender ideology and practices will have to be challenged and changed. Action-research on AIDS with women and men in Kinshasa gives an indication of how this might be done drawing upon knowledge ‘from below’. Thus engaged, people can ‘re-invent’ culture.

CONNAISSIDA’s ‘political economy and culture’ approach to AIDS derives from methodological advances made in the study of African societies over the past quarter century. It proposed a contextualised understanding of how macrolevel political economy affects sociocultural dynamics at the microlevel – including the political ecology of health, cultural constructions of disease and social responses to the epidemic.

The multiplex crisis of the state has pushed ‘women’s issues’ to the rear, yet this chapter indicates that they are basic issues of African social and cultural survival. The rapid spread of HIV among women is patent evidence that the informal sector cannot be relied upon to create development undermined by regression of the formal sector. Because AIDS is propelled by class, age and gender inequality, it underscores the need for equitable, sustainable development to reduce the rapid global spread of HIV. The epidemic is emblematic of the process of capital accumulation that drains resources away from the villages and poor urban quarters, upward to national ruling classes and outward to world markets. Because the impact of AIDS is so devastating, the complex realities of HIV prevention might be used to initiate far-ranging dialogues about the consequences of persistent inequality.

Brooke Grundfest Schoepf is a medical and economic anthropologist (Ph.D. Columbia University, 1969) with research and teaching experience in Zaire from 1974-1990. In 1985 she and a group of colleagues began research on popular constructions of AIDS in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi and ways to empower people to resist HIV/AIDS. The CONNAISSIDA Project continued until 1990, and may soon be revived.

Endnote

1. This analysis was developed while the author led the CONNAISSIDA Project in Kinshasa from 1985 to 1990. See the general bibliography in this issue for references (pp.635-653). CONNAISSIDA members included Professor P.N. Payanzo, Dr. A.n. Rukarangira, Dr. V.E. Walu and C. Schoepf. Many of the social issues we explored in what was then Zaire are examined in the AIDS issue of ROAPE (2000) edited by Bujra and Baylies and will not be reprised in detail here. While this article is based on field and library research, it also includes material from diaries kept during sixteen years of the Mobutu period (from 1974 to 1990). Biomedical references are available on ‘Medline’ and have been omitted to save space.


Debates

The Crisis of the Nation-state in Central Africa: A Theoretical Introduction
Saskia Van Hoyweghen & Stefaan Smis

That Central Africa in general and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in particular is undergoing a phase of dramatic change, even crisis, can hardly be contested. The crisis, which affects the whole region, is multi-dimensional: social, economic, political and even ecological. When considering economic relations, we cannot overlook the economic marginalisation of the African continent (especially since the second half of the 1980s). On a political level, we are not only confronted with instability and (even violent) conflict, but more worrying, the entire dissolution of state institutions. Concerning the causal relationship between the 'failure' of the state and the economic crisis there is of course much controversy. Some argue that processes such as globalisation have contributed to the economic marginalisation of Africa and indirectly to the undermining of the African state. Others place emphasis on the malfunctioning of the state itself and its poor record of (technocratic) governance as the main cause for the economic disasters that have hit the continent. However, reducing all conflict to its materialist source is too simplistic.

It is misplaced and often even dangerous to make sweeping statements about the nature of the state in Central Africa. Some states have clearly imploded and exist only on paper by the grace of international recognition. Other states in the region, such as Rwanda appear to be strong, able to effectively control their populations. While the latter have the capacity to act repressively vis-à-vis their populations, they fail miserably when it comes to carrying out other tasks. The strength of the state has to do with recognition and acceptance of its authority independent of repression. Ideally the relationship between state and society is based on a set of mutual rights and obligations convincing the actors involved of the mutual benefit of a common state project. There are nevertheless striking commonalities between the states of the region. The process of informalisation and de-institutionalisation of politics is now generalised to such an extent that Central Africa is essentially confronted with a crisis of social structures and government. It can hence be argued that the most important hallmark of the current crisis is the fragmentation of authority. Whole regions have ended up in a situation where it is no longer clear who has authority over what. The boundary between the public and the private sphere has become completely blurred.

Addressing the current question of the state in Africa requires a difficult balancing act between empirical and normative levels of analysis. In this introduction, we will offer some theoretical reflections on the origins of the crisis of the nation-state – reflections which will hopefully contribute to a better analysis of developments in the region.

On an empirical level, it is clear that Central Africa's turning point was not independence but the 1990s. With this in mind it is of crucial importance to stress that the changes in Central Africa are not a return to the past – a view commonly
maintained within certain popular circles. However painful, the current transitions in the region are a reaction to modern developments, leaving behind the remnants of the (neo)colonial state and searching for a new status quo. We therefore need to look for the rationality of developments of the last decade without ignoring their enormous social and human cost. The question which we will address here deals with the role of the state in these profound processes of change. In particular, if countries in Central Africa are shaking off the colonial legacy in terms of state organisation, how are they seeing the foundations of this new post-colonial state. This brings us to the normative level of analysis which is best left to the populations involved. A whole new generation of African thinkers are at the moment defending the notion of a new state that takes into account the African context in which it has to operate.

**History & Socialisation of the State**

In order to grasp the debacle of the state in Central Africa, it is necessary to begin with an historical perspective. On the one hand, we cannot deny that the modern nation-state is a product of western colonialism. With the exception of Rwanda and Burundi, which were more or less centralised states before the colonial period with territories corresponding *grosso modo* to the current borders, the other states in the region are conglomerates of previously existing polities. They only became modern states through colonial consensus. In this context it is crucial to bear in mind that the colonial territories were but territories for the extraction of economic surplus and were not reflections of western states. (Why the imperial powers deemed the annexation of African territory and the setting up of states necessary at one point in history is very interesting, but would lead us astray). Suffice to say that in order to meet the globalist aspirations of European capital in search of new markets, the installation of formal bureaucracies was needed in Africa more than any other continent. As Ellis explains, the 'rule of law' was needed to create a clear context in which to invest and extract economic surplus. Dealing with a myriad of chiefs and other political entities through processes of ongoing negotiation was simply not practical. Only from the 1960s onwards was territorial annexation no longer necessary since new technologies of control were at hand (Ellis, 2001). The administration, economy and infrastructure of the colonial territories were all geared towards this primary goal: the extraction of economic surplus. It is worthwhile noting that the road and rail infrastructure in colonial Congo was developed to support the export of natural resources and not to connect cities and markets in the interior. Even though the current transport infrastructure is in a state of near total decay, this situation has had an important impact on the development of Zaire, hampering not only economic, but also political integration. It must therefore be made very clear that if one speaks of the failure of the state, it is not the failure of a Western state (or the idea of the Western state) but the failure of the colonial model which has survived political independence.

The ultimate goal of colonisation, namely the exploitation of the territory, was of course not possible without popular participation. The population needed to be inserted in a (cost) efficient way into the new economic order: the order of a capitalist market economy. From this perspective, there was no room for the creation of a real sense of citizenship based on rights and duties vis-à-vis the state. We should not forget that the establishment of the colonial state rested on violence and military supremacy. It was also maintained and legitimised on the basis of violence and a *de facto* situation of dominance. Consequently, the colonial state sought its legitimacy within itself and was responsible only to itself for its actions. It virtually denied
that a situation could develop of mutual rights and duties between state and population. Only certain individuals (mainly selected on the basis of race) could make claims on the state, for example, for acquiring an export or trade permit. To put it crudely and making use of a metaphor used by Achille Mbembe, the relationship between the colonial state and its population can be compared to the relationship between a pet and its master (Mbembe, 2000); the hierarchy between both is always maintained, even though some affection may develop. The master legitimises his position as superior because he claims to know what is better for the pet. Colonial rule was essentially the same; its relationship of dominance over and violence towards its subjects was justified on the basis of the self-proclaimed superiority of the white race and the delivery of enlightenment and development (to what was called the 'heart of darkness'). Whatever the magnitude of suffering experienced in Central Africa today, it is worrying to see this metaphor re-appear, accompanying the suggestion that Africa is returning to the past.

We should not, on the other hand, consider the colonial state as a completely alien construction. First of all, the idea of a state was not new to Africa and second, the concept of the modern state was embraced by particular sections within African societies from very early on – sections who could benefit one way or another from the new status quo. Some could escape traditional hierarchies by taking a job within the new structure and, through the monetary circuit, climb the social ladder in ways that would otherwise not have been possible. Apart from the creation of a new elite, 'traditional' power also underwent major changes. The colonial state treated customary rule as traditions frozen in time. By regulating the customary field or bringing it into the sphere of the rule of law (Ellis, 2001), it destroyed the subtle checks and balances of local systems of power. The most notorious case here is no doubt Rwanda-Urundi. The simplification of the system of chieftaincy paved the way for an ethnicisation of power with dramatic long term consequences which could hardly have been foreseen at the time.

Colonial authority was, despite its exploitative character, accepted and integrated under certain circumstances. After all, from independence onwards, an alternative political trajectory could equally have been followed. Despite the anti-colonial rhetoric of a Lumumba or Mugabe, the struggle for independence was directed against the people in power not the political system they had put in place. On the contrary, the colonial system of rule was socialised; in other words, it became socially accepted. Until recently, Africa was rarely confronted with conflicts that spanned state borders. The colonial map of Africa remained more or less unchanged (despite a few exceptions) and the majority of Africans have not questioned the nation-state logic. Until the 1980s conflicts were mainly of a 'civil nature', that is, fought out within the boundaries of the state. They were very rarely about secession, but were struggles directed at gaining a hold over the state, as the seat of power and the door to control over the economy. Hence the many coups d'état.

The Patrimonial State

The end of the colonial period was for long represented as the beginning of the era of African nationalism, presenting an ambitious project of nation-building, development and democracy. In reality however, much of those projects remained elite ambitions or sometimes just elitist propaganda. The colonial power structures remained essentially unchanged along with the resultant exclusion of the subject. There was simply a change of personnel at the top, erasing the question of race. During the early post-independence period politics was an interplay between the formal and the
informal, the institutional and the patrimonial. On the one hand, the period was marked by the setting up of large bureaucracies and technologies to control the population while power actually resided in personalised networks. In practice, the state also remained the central focus for the private accumulation of wealth, reforming national economies into patronage networks for political elites, and severely damaging the productive side of the economy - failing to result in any form of development. Instead of investing in a project of development that served a collective good and creating an independent and efficient bureaucratic state apparatus, the ruling elites tried to manipulate the material benefits of state-sovereignty to reinforce their own political authority. Political power is not accumulated through the ballot but through 'buying' a network of supporters. These so-called clientelist networks not only formed the essence of political life, but also determined social relationships in general. These practices could easily be termed corrupt but are to a large extent socially accepted since they are not dissimilar to more 'traditional' forms of reciprocity and solidarity. The state thus became socialised as a distributive state: its authority was accepted on the basis of what it could distribute. In this way, a reversed logic developed; it was not through economic power as such that political influence was acquired but rather the other way around - through access to the state. This practice was not only common at the national level, but also at the local level.

Instead of investing in economic development and the development of an independent and efficient bureaucratic apparatus, elites tried to manipulate the material benefits of state power and transform them into political support. This state sovereignty was not based on an internal legitimacy but on external recognition, which was only used to attract additional resources from outside. This was an especially fruitful tactic during the cold war. Indeed we can not ignore the role and consequences of the former imperial powers during this period. Moreover, describing the post-independence period of the 1960s and 1970s as neo-colonial is far from the mark. In this period, Africa was considered an excellent place for investment and quick gain. The costly mistakes of the money lending institutions have directly contributed to the debt crisis which emerged from the mid-1970s, when it became clear that Africa would not follow the development path of Asia.

The informalisation of politics has, however, undermined the state itself. The non-productive policies damaged the economy and the lack of investment in developing the capacity of state institutions created a context in which the state had trouble recycling itself as a system. Those who needed the state have ironically contributed to its destruction (Reno, 1998). But changes in the global economy have also contributed to the crisis which had Africa in its grip from the mid- to late 1970s. Economic scarcity has made it impossible for national elites to invest both in the formal (welfare) and the informal. It is often said that Africa is the only continent which has 'missed the boat' of globalisation. Besides this being a one-sided view of globalisation (because in the field of ideas, migration, cultural creativity etc. Africa makes real contributions), Africa is linked up to the world economy in novel ways; more in particular via the informal and illegal economy such as trade in second hand goods and unusable products such as industrial waste and expired products. Due to the participation of the African state elite in these networks, the distinction between formal and informal economy is difficult to maintain.

The End of the Patrimonial State: Towards a New Order?

Since the end of the 1980s, as a matter of convenience associated with the end of
the cold war, patrimonialism came under growing pressure as a ‘normal’ political praxis. As has already been pointed out, this was due to ever scarcer material resources but also due to the new conditionality of external aid. In all African countries this situation forced a renegotiation of the status quo between the elites themselves and the middle class. Until recently, stable countries such as Ivory Coast, Kenya or Tanzania saw that the new economic situation caused political unrest that was becoming more agitated. This isn’t only related to economic decline as such but also to the wave of prescribed privatisations by the international money lenders which, in a patrimonial context, will only lead to renewed tension.

The majority of Central African states have been independent for over three decades but we should have no illusions that, under the current circumstances, anything like a Weberian model of the state or a Western style democracy is going to develop. In the case of Rwanda or Burundi it is not at all clear whether a democratic model, based on the principle of majority versus minority, will lead to renewed ethnic tension and conflict. The Congolese state, however, has since imploded – its void not necessarily reflecting the absence of political life. Interestingly, the war has increased nationalist patriotic feelings amongst the population yet the political aspirations of the Congolese have failed to materialise in a political context. Its territory is currently controlled by competing internal and external forces to such extent that new forms of government have developed around new centres of economic activity.

When dealing with the war in Congo, much of the literature and the media focuses on the plundering of Congo’s resources by warlords, foreign governments and multinationals. What is often forgotten or ignored is the fact that we are faced with a whole new economic dynamic involving large parts of the population. On the one hand, many ordinary people who had dropped out of the regular economy now earn a living directly or indirectly from the war economy. There is a large discrepancy in the value of the Congolese Franc existing between the government and rebel held zones, which has reoriented money flows and related smuggling and all warring factions control cities and major transport routes; the brousse is left to the local people and ‘smugglers’. While the official state borders of Congo are indeed a fiction, all sorts of new borders have developed – without them, smuggling would not be possible. It is clear that the economic dynamic behind these conflicts demand a whole new style of conflict management in comparison to traditional negotiations. On the other hand, a war economy must not be considered as ‘business as usual’ even if the local population participates. The profits of the war economy are not re-invested in the community. Cultural relativism should not be abused to deny the aspirations and basic dignity of millions of people. Peace, democracy and human rights are universal aspirations which ought to be seen as the real issues at stake and given priority in any conflict management strategy.

The most worrying aspect of the current crisis is not economic but political. We are not just confronted with an increasing struggle over scarce goods but a struggle over who has the right to divide these goods. From the crisis in Central Africa, a new social and political order will no doubt eventually emerge and it will again become clear ‘who has right over what’ – especially in regard to the right to exploit the mineral resources that are fuelling this crisis. For the moment the rule seems to be ‘first come, first served’. Moreover, both government and rebels legitimise the exploiting of natural resources by stating that they are the legal public authority of the area under their (military) control and that they are therefore entitled to contract business with whom-
ever they desire. This is of course not limited to countries in crisis such as the DRC. Even in a stable country such as neighbouring Tanzania, President Mkapa, made a remarkable statement recently by refusing to consider the demands for compensation by farmers from Shinyanga whose land had been confiscated for mining activity. According to Mkapa, the profits of the mining industry would be of greater benefit to the wider public (debatable since we are talking about foreign ownership). It is even ironic given the huge wave of privatisations Tanzania has instigated since the socialist course set out by former President Nyerere was abandoned.

However, the ‘who has right over what’ dilemma often manifests itself in a more violent form. The citizenship and nationality question which has surfaced in many countries is a key illustration. In order to have access to, for instance, arable land in a context of scarcity, particular arguments are developed in order to exclude certain groups. Such groups are branded as foreigners; their right of access denied. This is the case for semi-pastoral groups in many societies, but also for migrants in Tanzania and the Banyamulenge in East Congo. Mamdani has termed this the crisis of post-colonial citizenship. While most analyses of violence in the post-colonial period have focused on the concept of ethnicity, Mamdani brings race back into the picture. Anyone who has followed the events in Central and East Africa closely can vouch for the fact that the so-called ‘politics of indigeneity’ have become a powerful factor in political developments (Mamdani, 2001).

If one is really interested in understanding the logic and dynamics of the conflicts that have affected the region over the past 10 years, it is time we abandoned the idea of an Africa incapable of adapting to our notions and perspectives of good governance/government. Maybe Western definitions and models of state ought also to be examined critically. Maybe it is time to reflect on how Africans fill in notions such as political and social organisation, identity and authority. To limit oneself to a study of the dysfunctioning of the state can only give rise to a very incomplete picture. The book *Africa Works* by Chabal & Daloz (1999) caused a major stir. They argue that African political systems should be analysed and approached at face value and not as failed imitations of Western political systems. *Africa Works* however also faced major criticism. Can we just ignore the enormous social cost and macro-economic disaster that patronial politics and war economies have caused? Can we just brush aside the aspirations of millions of Africans for durable peace and a more democratic society where basic human rights are respected?

All of this poses a scientific challenge to African scholars. On the one hand, it has become clear that there are no universal models of political evolution. On the other hand, we should not return to the kind of cultural relativism theories – an ‘us versus them’ perspective which was common in colonial times. There is a need for new models to describe and analyse developments in order to generate a better understanding of the dynamics that rule African societies. We have a very limited view of how power in Africa is generated, let alone perceived. Theories with a focus on the dysfunctioning of political systems neglect the fact that Africa is living its own modernity, however painful the transition may be. And perhaps in the case of the DRC, darkness is not without a glimmer of hope when Congolese have expressed time and again their desire to live together as a unified but diversified nation-state. Maybe the birth of a new system based on the will of the people and referring back to the quasi consensus attained at the *Conférence Nationale* is no longer a vain aspiration but one in a process of self-realisation. But at what cost?
A New Political Order in the DRC: The Challenge of 'Multinationalism'

Mwayila Tshiyembe

This essay does not attempt to analyse the failure of the state in the DRC from Mobutu to Kabila. Nor does it attempt to deal with Africa’s first continental war from its beginnings in 1996 (Tshiyembe, 1999a & 2000a). But more modestly, it situates itself within a post-war perspective, where scenarios for durable peace demand of the Intercongolese Dialogue (ICD) the realisation of ‘a new political order in the DRC’,1 in the spirit of the Lusaka Agreements. The Congolese elites are obliged to call upon the authority of the intelligentsia, wherever they are and whatever they do, to propose and debate the different aspects of such a new political order. Only then can an informed Congolese public compare different proposals and make an ‘enlightened’ choice. Seen from this perspective, the new political order is primarily a scientific challenge and only subsequently a political one. This essay shall therefore endeavour to sketch the structure of a future state from within the framework of a new political order.

A Theoretical Perspective

It does not take a scholar to recognise that the DRC is a social and political mirage, a legal fiction maintained only by international law. The DRC is neither a state, nor a republic or democracy, but on the contrary, an empty shell, moulded into a polity designed by colonial logic. Those who govern and those who are governed are confronted with a two-fold obstacle in their parallel paths. On the one hand, with dreams of constructing a nation-state, those in government ignore the inherent history and culture of unification and homogenisation implied by the Western state model and thus also the

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Endnotes

1. Young remarks though that for the military control of the vast territory of the Congo, the Belgians only needed 20 000 troops, and that the real coercive power must therefore be put into perspective. The question whether the colonial state was weak or strong is source for much debate among scholars (see Herbst, 2000, Beissinger & Young, 2002)

2. Well meant campaigns by certain NGO’s to stop the trade in coltan are therefore shortsighted.
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impossibility of reproducing the latter within the contexts of their own plurinational society (Badie & Smouts, 1995). On the other hand, those who are governed, in search of a sensible state model, cry out relentlessly for recognition. But this call is not so much for a unified and homogenous body corresponding to a European state but rather for one that encompasses a diversity of sociological nations or ethnicities, individuals or citizens, each claiming its right to political and legal recognition. It is a call for a state marked by differentiation and segmentation. The neglect of this social call by the Congolese authorities and intellectuals alike is one of the root causes for the crisis of legitimacy and representation which has brought the country to ruin.

The denial of this double trajectory of political history, and the resultant ‘clash of civilisations’ have resulted in a situation of chaos. In other words, the Congolese crisis has opened up a political void. When Congo is to emerge from this chaos, the form of the new social, economic and political order is far from certain. This is not merely an internal problem but a regional problem since new regional powers have emerged, each eager to fill the void left in the wake of the collapsed Congolese state. Nevertheless, any solution must be founded upon a new political order from within, of which both the individual and the ethnic group must form the main pillars of legitimisation. The challenge therefore consists in the creation of a multinational state model (Tshiyembe, 1999b & 2000b) or what may be deemed a post-national state.

When we look at the political history of Congo, we are confronted with divergent conceptions of the state. On the one hand, we have the Kingdoms of the Kongo, the Luba, the Empires of the Lunda, the Kuba; on the other hand, there are the autonomous local governments among the Azande, Yaka, Anamongo, Shi, Fuliro, Nande, Pende and Tshokwe. The first correspond with what has come to be known as a segmentary state qualified as such by foreign observers in an effort to highlight inherent innovations and the extreme fluidity of institutions in comparison with the European state model (Coulon, 1998). The second form the grounds of the invention of politics and law in ‘stateless’ societies. What remains then is the rationalisation of the double culture of the traditional state and stateless societies in the light of the analytical tools of comparative politics (Badie & Hermet, 1990). Thus may we lay the foundations for a democratic model, anchored in history and culture (the particular), but linked to neo-republicanism and neo-liberalism (the universal).

In a society where fragmentation is considered an obstacle to the full expression of power, the movement which resolves antagonism between the ideology of the judicial state and the ideology of republican humanism is the same as that which reconciles the antagonism between the redistribution of riches (Smith, 2001) and the recognition of distinct identities. Along similar lines, any form of disagreement, the affirmation of the right to differ, even conflicts such as secessions and rebellions, all contribute to the creation of a new social and political order because they express, in their own way, the search for the redistribution of political power. Even when the official government regards rebels as criminals (Zorgbibe, 1975) this, too should be seen as a democratisation of the struggle for power. In other words, it is on this level of reflection that we need to refine the conditions for a new republican and democratic pact.

**The Post-national Republic**

On the one hand, the new republican pact is nothing more than a projection into the future of the segmentary state already present in the collective memory, with a view to forming a post-national political community. Its premise is that the separate representation of nations and citi-
zens prevents the pursuit of personal interests by those who claim to rule in the general interests of the public. Belonging to a group identity is not a legitimate pretext for excluding certain people from filling government posts, nor does it inhibit an individual's sense of collective spirit. As such, national identities need no longer be the victim of strategies of denial (liberalism) or substitution (republicanism) (Dierkhoff, 2000). The new republic therefore borrows from neo-republicanism the idea of a federal state; federator of diversity and governor of equality between citizens and nations. However, the multinational republic rejects the founding ideal of the state; master of development and social security, monopolisor of politics, society, culture and the economy.

**Grassroots Democracy**

The new democratic pact, on the other hand, awakens the collective memory of the stateless society, thus giving legal protection to national, cultural, linguistic and religious freedoms, while reinforcing the autonomy of regional governments, municipalities and traditional chiefdoms. In this light, the state derives its legitimacy from the mutual consent of the nations (multinationality) and its citizens (citizenship). Multinationality describes the judicial and political sphere which awards the founding nations of the post-national state their legal status. The multination, of which the state is a derivative, is the political space of the foundation and mediation of a new democratic pact, legally binding each of the nations to the state through a common respect for both equality and difference. Thus defined, the idea of the multination should be reflected in a dual system of representation: the nations in a 'House of Nations' on the one hand and citizens in a 'House of Citizens' on the other. The rights of the nations – in particular the right to political existence, the right to vote, the right to resist oppression (not to be confused with the right to secession) – are in turn ascribed to the multination. Citizenship, on the other hand, is the space of political and legal freedom, testimony to the link of the individual with the state. It is, however, not the state that appropriates the citizen, but the citizens who constitute and give form to the state. A grassroots democracy thus rejects the irreconcilable opposition between individual and community. It accepts the individual and the community to which he belongs as two faces of the same reality, or two sides of a set of scales privileging on one occasion the individual, on another the community or both at the same time. This approach to the problem proposes a radical conceptual split between the supposedly ahistorical legal theories of the constitutional state on the one hand (Chevalier, 1992) and the sociological theory of the state on the other, including the patrimonial state (Medard, 1991) or the 'politics of the belly state' analysed elsewhere (Bayart, 1988; Tshiyembe, 1998).

**From the Point of View of Legal Theory**

One of the main principles of the nation-state is that there is no law beyond the judicial rules stipulated, sanctioned and guaranteed by the state. The theory of the multinational state, however, prescribes that the state should no longer exercise a monopoly:

- **over the production of law** (Rouland, 1988; Vanderlinden, 1996): the challenge consists in reconciling the two rights at the same time as traditional and modern legality;

- **nor over identity**: the identity produced by those comprising the state is nationality, whereas the identity produced by the state is citizenship. We ought not to confuse the two;

- **nor over sovereignty**: sovereignty is the capacity for mutual action, motivated by nations and citizens
alike, but in service of the state. The very idea of sovereignty presupposes the distribution of this capacity for mutual action over both the nations and citizens that constitute the state (Badie, 1999);

• **nor over politics**: when the state is considered a creation of civil society, pluri-national societies surrender to it a proportion of political powers and responsibilities while maintaining a share for themselves. For the state is neither the sole producer of meaning nor the sole provider of social security;

• **nor over territory**: as space, and thus a fluent network of exchange, territory is the federation of terroirs and the management of its resources is shared by citizens, peoples and the state. Moreover, in Congolese politics, there is no correlation between territorial and political space (Badie, 1995);

• **nor over ideology**: as a structured ensemble of representations of the social world, the ideology of the multinational state is patriotic humanism. The state is the seat of human rights and the rights of peoples, whatever their nationality, religion, culture, homeland, etc. while nationalism implies the philosophy of action of the peoples whose land it governs.

**From the Point of View of Social Theory**

The state is at once a product of society (a political, social and cultural fact) and a single social actor having its own history at its disposal. Its foundation is the constitution of a post-national political community and a project for a democratic society at whose service physical violence obtains its legitimacy and legality. This legitimacy stems from the state’s mission to protect people and goods, its institutions and territorial integrity against any threat. Without this dialectical link, the monopoly over physical violence is but a brutal and illegitimate force at the service of despotism, as 30 years of Mobutu have shown. In addition, the multinational state is not a form of domination by force and ruse (Machiavelli), by capital (Marx) or by consent (Weber), although power remains the stake of what are often mortal struggles. The multinational state is, on the contrary, the capacity for mutual action, motivated by the challenges that form the collective destiny of both nations and citizens alike.

The link between the citizen and the state needs to be clarified first before any projects issued by the state can be lent meaning; for instance, the army would otherwise be but a mercenary force at the service of one man. Citizenship is not just a legal fact. Its significance is beyond definition in terms of civil or political rights; it represents more than just the right to vote. Since the accession of the ‘citizen consumer’ (Laterre, 1997), it is in addition a social fact determined by its access to economic, social and cultural resources. After countless years of war, economic pillage and mass unemployment, the issue of citizenship remains a challenge for the DRC. But the latter cannot be addressed prior to the creation of new forms of citizenship, in their economic, social and cultural aspects. This project necessarily presupposes three fundamental changes.

First, we should abandon the idea that the state can and will cater for all these rights. Its means are becoming increasingly limited. Congo’s resources are sufficient for private initiatives in the field of economic, social and cultural rights. Second, an incentive partnership must be created within which the solidarities of the state, the nations and citizens are included in a new policy of redistribution. Third, the individual and collective actor alike are to be called upon to invent a Congolese
capitalism from the informal but very real economy. It is essential that a culture of work and creativity be stimulated. For centuries, people have engaged in labour without salary and have created their own work. Why passively wait for outsiders (NGOs, the international community, etc.) to generate income? It is only at the cost implied by these initiatives that the state, nations and citizens can become agents of their own future.

The Institutional Level

Institutions are the product of society. They are resources at the service of one goal: the project of grassroots democracy. As the embodiments of a vision, institutions cannot be created ex nihilo. The critique of institutions therefore presupposes the prior invention of a social project, and second, the creation of institutions which manage this project. In other words, institutions are agents of integration, representing the key moment of social transformation, the mediation between citizens, nations and the post-national state. From then on, the new governance expresses itself through a three-pronged presidential regime, bound through integral federalism to the renewal of legislative, judicial and local and regional powers.

New Governance: a Three-pronged Presidential Regime

From Leopold II to Kabila, the DRC has known rule by one man but never by a government. The three elected heads of state, namely Patrice Lumumba (1960), Moïse Tshombe (1965) and Etienne Tshisekedi (1992) never succeeded in taking up office. The DRC needs a true government, one which, like any democratic government, needs to respond to two requirements (Duhamel, 1993): the governing requirement (which supposes an assigned, effective, durable and directed power) and the deliberating requirement (which supposes a controlled, contested, precarious and limited power).

1) Clarification of Responsibilities: The type of government closest to the Congolese mentality is probably that of a presidential regime and this for three main reasons. First of all, it allows for a direct identification between the governor (the president elected through universal suffrage) and the governed (citizens and nations). Second, it presupposes the poly-centrality of the political, economic and cultural fields within a culture of segmentation. Third, the responsibility of the head of state is to be directly engaged with the country, which he governs alone or with the assistance of a Prime Minister.

2) The Autonomy of Local Government: The strategic coordination of the three levels of autonomous government (the governments of the regions, the municipalities and the traditional chiefdoms) is specific to the new form of Congolese government. The latter consists largely in bringing together the various local governments and their assemblies in the spirit of federal politics, based on a principle of subsidiarity. However, the actual autonomy of the regional and communal governments, one of the major innovations of the Congolese presidential regime, resides in the principle of the 'republicanisation' of traditional power, in transforming the democratic values already present in traditional local autonomous governments, thus meeting the requirements of a federal organisation of state power. According to this principle, the reconciliation of tradition with modernity is essential. This process of social reproduction requires the revival of the traditional chiefdoms as spaces in which specific ethnic groups exercise their power. Three mechanisms are presupposed in order to realise this revival.

First, the rehabilitation of the traditional chiefdom implies the reinstatement of its government and assembly. Second, the chiefdom must acquire a status on a par with the municipality and the region as local collectivities. Third, it must be given access to the necessary resources guaran-
tecting its viability, namely in the fields of primary health care, primary education, registry of births, deaths and marriages, rural development (farming, fisheries, forestry and water resources) and maintenance of road infrastructure. On the other hand, the new governance relies upon a form of neo-federalism or integral federalism based on the autonomous participation of all levels. In addition to the classical principles of separation, autonomy and participation, integral federalism is a new way of distributing powers, dictated by the three-fold recomposition of internal geo-politics around the nations, citizens and terroirs (Croisat, 1995). Its efficacy lies in the post-national state as the apparatus of different nations and citizens, dispersed over different terroirs. Consequently, the rationality and authority of political action can only be effective if power is exercised first in function of nations and citizens and only then in function of the locality of the terroirs. The regions, municipalities and traditional chiefdoms thus become political spaces of co-management, uniting various peoples under a common destiny. Only then can the political, economic, social and cultural future of the autonomy of collective localities be secured (Entretiens, 1999).

3) The Dual Representation of Nations & Citizens: Nothing defining a presidential regime prohibits the delegation of certain powers to the jurisdiction of a parliament. Nevertheless, a new Congolese parliament can only become a reality once the following conditions have been met.

First, we must break the vicious cycle of the crisis of representation that has undermined the post-colonial state by clearly distinguishing between the representation of nations (the House of Nations) and the representation of citizens (the House of Citizens). With this goal in mind, the challenge is to optimise voting rights, allowing each village community to designate its own representatives who are in turn united in an electoral board. These representatives would then participate in the free and democratic election of the representatives of the nations. This structure would again be reflected in the election of the federal parliament, as with the communal and regional assemblies. Second, the rehabilitation of the legislative process demands inspiration from the debating culture of L’Arbre-a-palabre. Apart from introducing traditional values (such as tolerance, diversity of opinion, respect for one’s opponent, free speech, open debate and so on) into the field of political custom, the aim should be to favour the quality of the laws over and above their number. Third, government and parliament ought to be obliged to submit every vital question concerning the future of peoples, citizens and the state to a process of debate by petition or referendum. Fourth, the traditional principle of the fallibility of the majority can effectively contribute to the renewal of grassroots democracy by underlining how majority decisions are not always the most rational or just. Open recognition of this fallibility can only guard the post-national republic against a crisis of deadlock in the event of a minority or parliamentary opposition claiming exclusive control over governmental policy.

Corruption, the abuse of social goods and embezzlement of public funds show the ineptness of the majority when in public office. This does not mean the majority should be divested of its right to govern. On the contrary, it is important to maintain the separation between the right to govern and the right to control governmental management. The balance of power between government and governed now appears to even out as both take on new roles. Within grassroots democracy, the majority gains by governing and the minority wins through its control of government. This win-win situation is conditional, of course, on the establishment of a charter of opposition, stipulating rights and duties applicable to all within a democratic state.
4) Constitutional Democracy & the Constitutional Court: It is stipulated in all previous Congolese constitutional projects that 'the judicial authority is independent from the legislative and executive authority' (cf. Article 128, §1 of the Sovereign National Conference (SNC)). This organ was supposed to guide Zaire through its period of democratic transition by drafting a new constitution; see DeVillers & Omasombo in this issue). It is therefore contradictory to subject the process of justice to the domination of legislative and executive powers. In the SNC, not only is the executive and legislative authority capable of nominating and revoking the judicial authorities but, what is more, the President of the Republic is the guarantor of the independence and impartiality of justice (Tshiyembe, 1996).

The most efficient way of avoiding the capricious blurring of this line of division between legislature and the judiciary is through an existent judicial tradition embodied in the Council of Elders. This institution was erected by the peoples of Congo as an independent system of justice according to which judges were appointed on the basis of two objective criteria: namely, representation (among all the lineages of the different peoples, stateless or not) and efficiency (moral honesty and exemplary intellect). The presence of these judges at the core of political space served as a reminder to the governors (emperor, king, prince) that the authority of the ancestors was not reducible to one person and that nobody should thereby be above the law. In other words, this institution is founded upon the very search for the source of popular legitimacy, by which emperor, king, prince and judge are united under a common purpose.

With this in mind, the reinvention of constitutional democracy in the DRC has at least two dimensions. The first dimension relates to modernising the legitimacy of the ancient political order. Such a modernisation is in the direction of availing suspicion regarding the 'government of judges' (François, 1993), through the establishment of transparent selection procedures. Judges elected to the Constitutional Court by universal suffrage should be chosen from professors of law, magistrates, judges and lawyers. The second dimension relates to the prerogatives of this political order. It needs to have authority over all higher jurisdictions including those of the courts and tribunals. Charged with safeguarding the independence and impartiality of justice, the Constitutional Court surveys, regulates and controls judicial authority, deciding on the nomination and promotion of magistrates of civil and military jurisdictions. The administration of justice, however, remains the prerogative of the government.

5) Bipolarisation & Recomposition of Political Forces: Based on the culture of the pre-colonial state and the autonomy of the local governments of stateless societies, two ideological strands have developed through the process of decolonisation from 1956 to 1960.

The first strand is populist (Meny & Surel, 2000) and centralist rather than nationalistic, propagating the need for a strong central state, as embodied in the periods under Lumumba, Mobutu and Kabila. Each leadership was in turn affected by the constraints of the national and international environment and by the capacity of the respective political actors to face the challenges of their time. But the least one could say is that the balance of Congolese populism has, on the whole, been negative. In fact, with the exception of Patrice Lumumba who did not have the chance to govern, the 32 years of Mobutu’s, and the four years of Kabila’s reign, have revealed the emptiness of this populism, meanwhile undermining the virtues of republicanism and democracy.

The second strand is liberal and federalist. Its affiliation is constitutional (Consti-
tution of Luluabourg of 1964 and constitu-
tutional project of the SNC of 1992), even
if its emblematic figures were Joseph Kasuvubu and Moïse Tshombe (Young, 1968). While generally esteemed, the liberal and federalist strand has never been applied in the DRC. The first attempt was destroyed by the coup d'état of Lt. Gen. Joseph Désiré Mobutu (24 November 1965), bringing to an end the electoral victory of the CONACO cartel (Conven-
tion Nationale Congolaise), directed by Moïse Tshombe. Its second attempt met the same fate with the election of Étienne Tshisekedi (30 November 1992) by the SNC. Tshisekedi, leader of the UDPS (Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social) and of the so-called Union Sacrée (USORAL – Union Sacrée de l’Opposition radicale et Alliés) was dismissed from his position by president Mobutu a few months later.

It follows that this ideological polarisation describes the fault line for the recomposition of Congolese politics. The proliferation of political parties was essentially rendered ineffective as they were deprived of resources (Braud, 1992). Integral multi-partyism must therefore be maintained. Laws can define the need for the internal democratisation of parties, the transparency of their management and their free formation on the impetus of ideas and political projects. Along similar lines, their public financing needs to be awarded on the basis of objective criteria, such as a minimum of 5% of the electorate. The fear of an overabundance of parties is unjustified. Suffice to organise a majority ballot in one or two rounds in order to sift out the majorities in national, regional and local elections. In other words, the efficacy of government should depend on the organisation of the ballot not the number of parties involved.

6) New Governance & New Rationality:
The new governance is based on a conception of power as 'the conduct applied to the conduct' (Foucault, 1992), a form of reaction to the open and indeterminate actions of others. It goes without saying that the act of incorporating others within a field of possibility; namely, action, conduct and behaviour demands a strategy determining the means and degree of rationality required to meet this objective. Henceforth, the government is a ‘group at work’ (Duguit, 1927) and not just ‘a power that commands’.

Subsequently, the optimisation of public policy between federal, regional and local levels, private and public partners, demands multi-sectorial mobilisation and the strategic delegation of tasks. And this in two directions: the formation of government and the installation of the civil service. The formation of government is divided amongst five tasks of strategic co-ordination: namely, Human Resources, Natural Resources, Free Enterprise, Territorial Development and the Regulatory State. Henceforth, the number of ministers (less than 20) and their hierarchisation (minister of state, minister) will depend on the above mentioned functions of strategic co-ordination. For example, the first strategy implies the creation of a Ministry of Human Resources, charged with national education, research and development, technology, labour and civil service, youth and sports (Tshiyembe & Bukasa, 1992).

As for the creation of the local and federal civil service in the DRC, its significant place within the foundation of the post-colonial state must be stressed. By way of illustration, the Congolese crisis of 1960 saw the replacement of all European members of the administration inherited from the colonial period in a matter of months, resulting in the subsequent administrative deadlock in the DRC because of the non-existence of Congolese training. In spite of attempts by Mobutu’s regime’s to crawl back up the slope in 1967, its efforts were annulled in 1970 with the preferential allocation of civil service positions to party members in the name of the so-called ‘unity of com-
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mand'. When L.D. Kabila chased Mobutu from power in 1997, the death warrant had already been signed for the civil service or what was left of it. There can be no creation of a valid democratic state without the creation of its administration (Thoenig, 1996), which constitutes its means, thereby concretising its mission.

First and foremost, we need to restore the dignity of the state functionary and agent. The profile of the new civil servant should therefore be laid out in a new statute. If the enormous potential of this country is to be realised, the DRC will require a civil service capable of meeting its similarly significant needs.

Conclusion

The political prospective of which the discursive elements have been presented in the form of an ideal-type, depends on a different sociological and judicial theory of the state (Troper, 1994). This state model is reflective of a society where meaning is produced through ongoing deliberation between participants of equal standing and not by appeal to a transcendental or metaphysical referent. We are thus concerned with demotic constitution which can be translated as the principle of reflection on the foundation of a new political order corresponding to the composition of society. This focus upon the human composition of the state is simultaneously the object of a specific branch of constitutional law, namely demotic constitutional law (Prélot & Boulouis, 1992).

The challenge of this reflection consists in finding a balance between the heterogenous and pluri-national character of this society and the need for a democratic state. It follows from the analysis that the post-national state is the model for political reconstruction in and for Congolese society (Akindes, 2000), capable of filling the lack of an auto-institutionalising engagement of the major problematic of political invention. All this has been at the service not only of constituting a post-national state, nor of merely incorporating power within a legitimate legal and political statute. It has also been an attempt to erect and define the triangular structure State-Nations-Citizens, in which citizens and nations are the primary constituent powers, the irreducibly dual source of the legitimacy of the state and likewise the motor of public life (hence the distinction between direct and indirect democracy). It is thus as much a process of unveiling through which we may rediscover each other, return to our own creativity (Bilan, 2000) with an eye to what we may learn from others.

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Endnotes

3. The defence of human rights is not incompatible with collective autonomy, nor with civic virtues and one’s immersion in communal social customs.
4. Grassroots democracy is defined here as a political model which consists of different levels of competence and authority. The different levels each have their own competences but they are not organised in a hierarchical fashion. It is therefore different from a decentralised state where authority to the local level is still granted from the top down. In a grassroots democracy the situation could be defined as the inverse: the aspirations at the basis of society inspire the different levels of authority.
5. Terroirs, referring to the ‘homelands’ of the nations.
6. The concept of governance has been in and out of fashion since its developmentalist usage by the international financial institutions, in particular the IMF and the World Bank, and has covered a wide array of different things. In this essay, the concept of governance is used in the Foucaultian sense: «the conduct of the conduct».
7. Kasavubu as leader of ABAKO demanded independence on the basis that the Kingdom of
Kongo already had plenty of experience with running a state. Tshombe declared independence of Katanga on 14 July 1960.

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A Research Note on Congo's Nationalist Paradox

Pierre Englebert

The Paradox

Precious little is redeeming about the state in Congo. Created as a foreign enterprise of exploitation, it reproduced as the instrument of an extractive colonization system, in turns violent and paternalistic. Once independent, it provided the stage and the reason for five years of sheer chaos and three decades of brutal arbitrary rule, predation and economic ruin, before collapsing at the end of the 1990s into civil wars marked by ethnic polarization, displacements, plunder, deprivation and death. Yet Congo endures, and the Congolese profess unusual fervor in their attachment to it. Their support for its territorial integrity and its failed institutions is stronger even than their powerful commitment to democratic principles and it stands in contrast with the lack of material benefits that the state has ever provided the larger mass of them. This is Congo’s nationalist paradox.

The apparent willingness of the Congolese to embrace their arbitrarily imposed territory and to avoid challenging their failed and predatory state institutions begs inquiry. What explains the permanence, if not the rise, of a nationalist discourse among the heterogeneous people of Congo and general public alike? Why do 90% of them reject the idea of partition of their country? Why the enduring allegiance to the state when the institutional void should beckon new experiments with collective action?

Predation, Security & Institutional Resilience

To a large extent, Congo’s failed institutions are kept alive because they serve as resources for individuals at many levels of society. Ministries, state agencies, provincial administrations and other bureaucratic instruments of the state, whether in government or rebel territory, are maintained by state elites, their employees and citizens in general because they derive private benefits from them irrespective of these institutions’ capacity to perform their initial public functions. These benefits mostly come in the form of reciprocal predation. Anyone with a state office, or part of a state office, can market it and extract resources from fellow citizens, while others, not directly associated with the state, can also benefit from these practices.

This is probably most obvious in the field of customs or border controls where individual extractions are most visible. It can also be seen in the multiplicity of state agencies in charge of security, which are used to extort resources from citizens by offering to reduce the harassment they suffer in exchange for payments. Through some multiplier effect, these practices benefit a large number of intermediaries who make a living as ‘facilitators,’ sellers of the ubiquitous stamps that make documents official, street-side copiers of all the required paper work, handlers who negotiate the many check-points at airports, and so forth. People’s capacity to use the weak state as an instrument of predation is thus a crucial element of the logic of its survival and reproduction. Congo’s old institutions never die, they just become private resources.

At the heart of this process is the lack of clear empirical distinction between predators and prey dominant and dominated. Many people benefit from the system in some ways and contribute to its reproduction, although as a country all of them end up arguably worse off for it. This approach presumes that Congo’s current situation is not merely one of chaos, but represents some sort of short-run equilibrium, at least for some people. It also assumes that the state does not stand in sheer opposition to society, although it was created that way, but that most
people participate in the predation that surrounds it and have developed a vested interest in its preservation. Somehow, the Congolese have adjusted so well to the arbitrariness of their state and become so dependent on it that they want to maintain it.  

Yet, the failed state is not just an instrumental resource for predatory human relations. It also represents an intrinsic resource to individuals at the bottom of the social hierarchy. For grassroots Congolese, who may fall out of these networks of reciprocity and find themselves systematically on the victims' side of history, the state remains a resource to the extent that it offers a minimum level of certainty about public life, the opportunity to form relatively stable expectations about where power and resources lie, and a measure of reduction of the transaction costs of daily life.

Political uncertainty, warlords, insurgencies and the like, on the other hand, complicate and endanger their existence. State stability is therefore an intrinsic resource for people who have to struggle for survival because it represents an anchor in their volatile and vulnerable lives. This helps account for the widespread nationalist sentiment among the population and for its strength at a time of failing statehood. To some extent, the idea of Congo's grandeur is all that remains to a people that has been dispossessed of its wealth, its peace and much of its dignity. Far from contradicting their misery, the nationalist discourse further reinforces for the Congolese that their own state may lie at the roots of such dispossessions.

**Nationalism & Sovereignty**

The value of state institutions as resources (their capacity to become instruments of predation) is dependent on the sovereignty of the state. International sovereignty gives state institutions substance, as state agents rely, in the imposition of their authority, on the internationally recognised status of their power. Sovereignty serves thus as institutional gold standard – the guarantee of the exchange value of state institutions on the private market for resources – and allows failed institutions to outlive their formal functional existence. Whereas one would expect separatist or alternative institutions of collective action to arise in their stead, no such process takes place – beyond associative life, which does not challenge the state – for these institutions, deprived of the power of international recognition, would require substantial use of force to become reliable instruments of predation.

Congolese identity, the imagination of Congo and of the Congolese nation, serve as ideological foundations for the reproduction of the state, denying legitimacy to alternative scenarios and confining political action either to factions fighting for control of the state itself, or to the non-threatening realm of 'civil society.' By reinforcing the reproduction of an internationally sovereign structure, the nationalist discourse guarantees the predatory potential of Congo's institutions. By maintaining and reproducing the weak but sovereign state (incapable of supporting itself), it also provides the rationale for continuing aid flows and perpetuates the necessary structure of (relative) contract and insurance guarantees, which the vast majority of foreign investors require. These aid and investment flows, in turn, provide the funds that finance networks of patronage throughout the state and magnify the returns to sovereign statehood. Global cultural norms of statehood and global flows of aid and investment condition and constrain therefore the strategies of self-determination of the peoples of Congo, leading them to privilege an imported nation-state discourse (essentially a reproduction of the colonial 'Congolization' of their societies) despite its failure to allow for the expression and emancipation of their cultural diversity.
The vibrancy of local cultures and their desires for better control of their destinies remain real, however, expressed in the routine invocation of equally routinely repressed federalist aspirations by most groups in society. Unable to find any institutional outlet, these pent-up cultural aspirations surface in what the Congolese refer to as the plague of 'tribalism', a compound of ethnic-based clientelistic social relations and local ethnic polarization and violence. 'Tribal' clientelism provides a mode of access to state institutions; ethnic polarization a mode of exclusion of 'the other'. Either way, these strategies never translate into a broader agenda of self-determination, as they enhance rather than challenge the failed and predatory institutions they pursue. And so Congo goes on, a violent, arbitrary and alienating creation, with no sustainable challenge from the large diversity of peoples, cultures, and resources it contains, stifling over and over again the political expression of competing identities and providing the context for a low-level development trap, an endlessly failing but never quite fully failed state.

**War, Self-Determination & the State-as-Resource**

From this perspective, Congo's current civil war is not a struggle for liberation, self-determination, or even secession, despite persistent paranoias (and propaganda) about Rwanda's irredentist agenda in the East. The Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) and the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD-Goma) are little more than instruments of access to the state by groups that have been excluded from its prebends. The MLC was formed by Mobutuist clients whom Laurent Désiré Kabila isolated. The RCD is mainly under the leadership of Banyamulenge elites, Congolese Tutsi from South Kivu who fell out of grace with Kabila when he expelled Rwandan forces from Congo in the summer of 1998. The MLC's overwhelming interest in regaining access to state power was illustrated by the agreement between its leader, Jean-Pierre Bemba, and Joseph Kabila in the margins of the Sun City Inter-Congolese Dialogue in April 2002. The same is true of the RCD whose rebellion is an exercise in repositioning rather than self-determination. These groups use a nationalistic discourse as ideological justification for their objectives. In the words of RCD-Goma Secretary-General Azarias Ruberwa:

> We want a united Congo. There are more advantages to a united Congo than a partitioned Congo. *We have never thought of secession. [...] Let's create a Congolese nation because it does not exist yet.*

How are we then to explain past instances of separatism in Congo's history, from the secessions of Katanga and the 'Great Mining State of South Kasai' in the early 1960s to the drives for autonomy of Shaba and Eastern Kasai in the 1990s? The answer lies in the strategies of power-maximization by Congolese elites. Although the country's natural wealth may be concentrated in peripheral regions, the limited likelihood that any secessionist movement would be internationally recognised usually reduces the appeal of local separatist strategies of power. Separatism becomes a credible option, however, when the sovereignty of the central state is challenged from outside or when the economic returns to sovereignty depreciate. This happened in the very early years of independence when it was not yet clear how livable post-colonies would be, and when political chaos in the capital led foreign powers to consider other options than backing the state as a whole. It also happened in the 1990s when Mobutu's failure to convincingly democratize and his recourse to violence against opponents led the West to marginalize him and cut off virtually all aid flows to his regime. In times like these, it makes sense for local elites to capitalise on the weakening international status of the state and ex-
experiment with local strategies of power and access to resources. Secessions can thus be expected if the potential return of local resources, in the absence of international recognition, outweighs the potential return of resources associated with control or partial control of the national state. The embrace by the West of Mobutu's and Kabila's takeovers in 1965 and 1997 respectively put an end to opportunities for local strategies of self-determination and brought the Congolese back around their state.

Despite claims about the state-diluting effects of globalization, the sanction of international recognition continues therefore to constrain the realm of possible actions for the Congolese. Global cultural norms relating to what constitutes acceptable statehood and international flows of aid and investment promote Congolese nationalism by conditioning recognition and its attendant benefits on territorial integrity. It is this very recognition that gives the Congolese state its residual power despite its feebleness below functional capacity, and that benefits the reproduction of local patterns of domination, predation and ultimately, poverty.

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Endnotes

1. This 'briefing' summarizes an argument on which I am currently working for a forthcoming paper, part of Oxford University's Queen Elizabeth House Carnegie Project on 'Global Economic and Cultural Dimensions of Self-Determination in Developing Countries.'


3. See, for example, Denis Tull, 'A Reconfiguration of Political Order? The State of the State in North Kivu (DR Congo)', paper presented at the XVIII. International Biennial Conference of the African Studies Association in Germany (VAD), Hamburg, May 23-26, 2002, for evidence of how the RCD-Goma has maintained local administrations as instruments of patronage in the territories it controls.


Calvary of the Women of Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Victoria Brittain

In the eastern DRC, the traditionally low status of women, the long series of wars with the proliferation of armed groups, dramatically worsening economic conditions, collapse of the state, extremes of brutality against women which have become a norm, have brought women to a situation of acute crisis which threatens the very texture of society for the future. Chantal's story is a microcosm of women's experience in this part of DRC.

Chantal (not her real name), was in a UNHCR transit centre in Goma, in the east of the DRC. She was waiting, in a state of high anxiety, to return to her native Rwanda later in the day with a group of another twenty women and dozens of tiny children and babies. Shaded from the heat under a big tent they sat in orderly lines on wooden benches while the babies crawled between their feet. The women wanted to talk to us because they had been told we had just come from Rwanda and perhaps we could tell them how things were there and whether they would be cared for, or, as they feared, despised and ostracised for their years in DRC.

Chantal, like all the others, was wearing a dirty tee shirt, a tattered cloth tied as a skirt, and broken rubber sandals. At first sight she could have been any young strong village woman, farming on Rwanda's high, steep hills, walking to market, carrying water and wood for miles, sending children to school for the promise of a better life for the next generation. But her face was absolutely blank and her eyes black pools of pain which stared ahead as she described her last five years deep in the forests of eastern DRC with a group of Interahamwe militia – the genocidaires of 1994 who fled Rwanda to DRC with many of the military leaders of the regime ousted by the Rwandan Patriotic Front. The Interahamwe took tens of thousands of women with them. Some may have been their families, but many were human shields, or porters, or sex slaves.

In the last few years many of these women, with their children, found their own way back to Rwanda, fleeing lives of desperate harshness in the hills and forests of Masisi for an unknown future at home. Chantal wanted to describe how her life with the Interahamwe had been: 'we ate when we went to villages and killed the people so we could take their food; we walked and walked in the forest carrying very heavy loads of what we took from their places. Often there was fighting. Every man raped me.'

What is unusual about Chantal is that she wanted to tell about what happened to her. In almost all cultures in the third world, husbands, families, villages, typically reject women who have been raped, so most rape victims have kept quiet about their ordeal when they could. The tragic reason that Chantal could say she had been repeatedly raped is that she had already lost everything and everybody she was ever attached to since the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 turned her life upside down and started her on the years of exile now about to end. According said one UN official in the area:
People are living through a extraordinary drama here in Eastern Congo – from Peto down near the Zambian border right up to Aru, on the Sudan/Uganda border – it’s a black hole where no one is safe and where no outsider goes. Women take a risk when they go out to their own fields, or on a road to a market. Any day they can be stripped naked, humiliated, raped in public. Many, many people no longer sleep at home, though sleeping in the bush there is little security. Every night there is another village attacked, burned and emptied. It could be the Mayi-Mayi – a traditional local militia – or the Interahamwe, or the regular army, or deserters from any group, no one knows, but always they take women and girls away, sometimes they come back after a few days, sometimes they don’t.

Women are not only raped, they are publicly humiliated by being raped and undressed in front of their children, they are abused with rifles forced into their vaginas, tortured with peppers in their genitals, while pregnant women are beaten on the stomach to promote a miscarriage, according to many accounts gathered by local human rights groups.

The militias steal everything, including the seed the peasants would use for their next sowing; sometimes young people come to Goma from the villages begging for clothes so that they can give them to the militias when they come so they won’t strip them naked (UN official).

Absence of the State

Years of social and economic collapse in the former Zaire have left the eastern part of the country long accustomed to being cut off from state power and resources. Kivu – long regarded as a bastion of opposition – has not known a day of peace since 1993 when violent clashes over land broke out between ethnic groups. But the waves of war that began in 1996 with the coming to power of President Laurent Désiré Kabila, backed by the armies of first Rwanda, later Angola, with some verbal responsibility claimed by Uganda, served to cut it off further. The infrastructure of roads, railways, schools and hospitals had decayed well before the wars. The rebel Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD) claims to control a significant part of Eastern Congo, including most of North and South Kivu and has appointed governors and other administrative officials. But the RCD has been riven with in-fighting and has splintered into at least four groups. RCD-Goma, the biggest of them, has failed completely to establish itself as a competent civil authority in South or North Kivu.

In a telling example of how random is their assertion of authority even in Goma town, Human Rights Watch cites a case when as a result of a personal appeal to an advisor of Bizama Karaha, head of RCD Security and Intelligence, a 15 year old girl abducted by an RCD official for eight days was then produced within two hours. The girl, Grace, was abducted after school in Goma on 15 October 2001 and held by the official who she had seen once or twice at a neighbour’s house. She was raped several times. Grace’s mother paid several hundred dollars in transport and telephone expenses for RCD security personnel to locate her daughter over the eight days but with no result. The relatively happy ending of this incident contrasts with repeated reports from individuals and human rights groups of the pointlessness of making any reports to the authorities on attacks on women when nothing is ever done. ‘What would be the point in making a report? The man would never be punished, no one would bring the woman medical or psychosocial help because it does not exist here, and, worst of all, often husbands and families would reject the wife and she’d be stigmatised as a prostitute,’ said one human rights worker in Kivu. Into this vacuum of authority a variety of credible, though very under-funded, human rights
researchers and lawyers groups have emerged as a modest resource for the population.

**Military Fragmentation**

Civilians in the area have been caught in the midst of a repeating pattern of attacks and reprisals between the combatants in which often the only the local churches have been witnesses. Eight foreign armies and eight or nine indigenous militias with shifting alliances have completely militarised the country. Here in the east RCD troops and Rwanda’s RPA are on one side, and a shifting cast of militias including various groups of Mayi-Mayi, Burundi rebel groups FDD and FNL, former Interahamwe, and troops of the former Rwandese national army (ex-FAR) allied with Kinshasa on the other. For civilians it is extremely difficult to accurately ascribe responsibility to one group or another, as deliberate confusion and blame of the other side is a tactic of several groups. Human Rights Watch suggests that some victims, witnesses and others simply attribute crimes to members of those groups they themselves dislike. According to one Congolese lawyer the RCD regularly attributed crimes to groups opposed to them. ‘Whenever there is something bad they blame it on the Mayi-Mayi or the Interahamwe.’

Some patterns have emerged however. For instance, the Mayi-Mayi (like the Interahamwe who held Chantal) tend to hold abducted women for long periods. Reports from women who returned from long periods with the Mayi-Mayi, for instance in the forests of Shabundu describe the most primitive of conditions. The men are filthy, often dressed in skins and feathers, full of fleas, food is extremely scarce. RCD soldiers are notoriously undisciplined and have no concept that attacks on women are serious offences. And in this male-dominated atmosphere, opportunistic crimes against women including robbery and rape are carried out as often by robbers, local youth, police and other officials as by armies.

**Violence Against Women & the Destruction of a Society**

Rape is a largely untold story of this war. Refugee women from Rwanda, like Chantal, local Congolese women in the rural areas and in the towns, girls as young as seven, grandmothers, are equally victims. And rape is one element in the rapid destruction of the society’s life patterns because of the way it destroys families and communities with the rupture of trust and the poison of shame. Family members and neighbours were often forced to witness the rape of mother or daughter, shame overwhelms grief and their families usually, though not always, rejected the wives and daughters afterwards. The scale of the victimisation of women in eastern Congo by rape in the last few years may even have dwarfed historical precedents for mass rape in war.

Rape and other forms of sexual violence have of course always been associated with war, with women’s bodies considered as booty. Victorious armies over centuries have raped women as part of the intoxication of triumph and as intimidation and demoralisation of the defeated society. In World War Two, German soldiers raped as they occupied Belgium and France, and Soviet soldiers raped in revenge as they moved west to take Berlin. The feminist historian Susan Brownmiller in the classic work on this subject has differentiated various kinds of goals behind this violence, such as that of the Germans, and to a similar extent for the Japanese, where it played a serious and logical role in the achievement of their ultimate objective: the total humiliation and destruction of ‘inferior peoples’ and the establishment of their own ‘master race’. In addition, Brownmiller sees sexual violence in wartime as an aspect of the communication between males. ‘In this analysis, men rape women
to dominate and humiliate other men who are seen as their enemy.

All these elements are present to some degree in the case of eastern DRC, and women's lack of status and autonomy makes them very easy victims. In addition there is the growing absence of men in the villages, which has left women unprotected. Men who are not in one or another army have been increasingly attracted into the chancy work of digging for diamonds or coltan – the key ingredient for mobile phones – which takes them far from home. The increasing insecurity has increasingly driven the women left behind off the land in recent years. No village has been spared rape, theft, abductions. The various militias' attacks on women have been both in the context of raids on the villages for looting, and in attacks related to coltan. Women tell of having been driven out of their area deliberately to clear it for coltan mining, or of being attacked because their husbands and sons had left home to go to the coltan mines.

One doctor in Bukavu reported to Human Rights Watch that he had never seen evidence of such a level of brutality as among his patients: women with parts of their genitals cut off with a razor blade, women shot in the vagina after rape.

'I have the feeling that if you are born a woman in this country you are condemned to death at birth ... why are we silent about this?

Shabunda town 200 miles southwest of Bukavu, almost surrounded by river and deep forest has been hotly contested between Mayi-Mayi, who control the forest, and RCD forces since 1998. Half the population of 32,000 fled the town to hide in the forest. But with the vast majority of households headed by women, the Mayi-Mayi easily preyed on them, stealing the charcoal they made, the food they gathered, and frequently abducting them. Many women here have recounted how they felt caught between the Mayi-Mayi and the RCD, suspected by each of having cooperated with the other, and often suffering harsh reprisals. Neither the forest nor the town was safe. Rape has been appallingly commonplace. Though most unusually for the region women here speak openly about their experience. This may be because there is a support group of 500 women who have been raped.

In Mwenga, a village in South Kivu, a group of women paid even more heavily for a night visit from the Mayi-Mayi. The following day troops from the RCD, nominally in control here, buried 15 of them alive after raping them in what has become a dismal cause célèbre though still formally denied by the RCD. At least one woman survived to testify. According to researchers in the area there are still 'many cases of women being buried alive – they are accused of being witches, or of complicity with various armed groups, giving them medicine or food.'

An accusation of witchcraft here can be fatal to a woman even without being linked to the war. One researcher described young women turned out of their own families and burned as witches so they would not have to be fed. The story of Rose Basekankole is only exceptional in having been recorded. Rose was arrested in April 2002 after allegedly having appeared in a dream to the child of a neighbour, taking him to hell and ordering him to bring her his father. Rose was arrested by soldiers, tortured, and had her genitals burned. She was imprisoned, released after an intervention by a local women's human rights group, re-arrested by the intelligence service, and tortured again. She admitted to being a witch in the hope of the beatings stopping. But she was beaten again, by soldiers and the population. She was finally released to her home, but the soldiers prevented anyone from visiting her and she died a week later.
Women Displaced

Displacement has disrupted the lives of at least 80% of rural families who have fled their homes in the last five years. Over a million people are estimated displaced in just North and South Kivu – half those displaced in the whole DRC. Like the women’s group that tried to save Rose Basemankole there are others who intervene in other women’s crises. A modest training centre called ANAMAD, Association Nationale des Mamans pour l’Aide aux Désérités is one of the highlights of Goma, exhibiting a spirit of ingenuity and responsibility in marked contrast to the irresponsibility of the RCD. In makeshift conditions women were learning to embroider, or to raise rabbits for food or trading. Under the trees in the compound hundreds of women had crowded in, hearing there were visitors. They were dressed in faded cotton wraps, usually with no head ties, and many looked very thin, with greyish, unhealthy skin. Some held up placards reading, in French and English, ‘We are abandoned’, ‘We are hungry’, ‘We have been raped’. Their choir sang in Swahili to a guitar and drum,

We want our human rights, I want to see my husband who has gone to the war, I want to work in my fields and go to the market, I want my lost family, I want to be in school and not to be forced into the army.

ANAMAD is a voluntary initiative by a number of middle-class, educated women in Goma, some teachers, some social workers, who have stepped into the vacuum of a non-functioning state. The UN’s World Food Programme gives them some food, and the Red Cross some medicines. The organisers’ education, new clothes, perfect French, were in sharp contrast with the absolute deprivation of the women they were working with. One after another the displaced women got up before the crowd, keen to share their stories of how they had lost everything and been reduced to utter destitution. Again and again they named the Interahamwe militia as those who had brought terror to their villages. Their stories were the mirror image of Chantal’s.

My family were all burned in the hut, but I got out and ran away ... We were displaced and living in a camp when we were attacked one night, they burned my eight brothers ... They held me down while they tried to cut off my leg while others killed my husband next to me.

Women told of attacks which had taken husbands, children, parents. They showed machete wounds that had nearly severed a leg, an arm, even a neck, and fingers burned away.

Some women have fled from attacks like these deep into the forests. In the area around Bunia where there has been constant insecurity for more than two years, and where six Red Cross workers were killed in early 2001, there are women who were living there so devoid of all resources that they had been naked for two years or more. They would not come out of the forests to ask for help because they felt so ashamed, according to the first UN team (MONUC) to fly into Bafwasende by helicopter.

Economic Realities

In North and South Kivu, the rural economy has contracted as women have been driven from their fields by fear. Others who made a living from charcoal burning in the forests have been equally terrorised away from what had been their livelihood. A UN study indicated that the majority of people in North Kivu are living on $0.20 a day. ‘Coping methods are crumbling.’ Displaced women from the hills and forests of Masisi and Walikali outside Goma spoke of lives haunted by fear and hunger. Even before the volcano eruption, which sent rivers of lava into the town in late 2001, these women talked of living hand to mouth with host fami-
lies in town that take them in for days or weeks, but cannot support an extra burden for longer. In their previous lives these women were farmers. The only jobs available to them in Goma are carrying loads such as firewood. Many women suffer miscarriages because of the heavy weights, but continue with the work nonetheless. 'The loads are heavy to carry, the carts are too heavy to pull, I'm suffering with constant pain,' said one woman who had recently lost a baby.

One researcher told us of cases they had recorded where displaced women were so desperate that they had sold their little girls of 10 or so as maids for $3. 'These children are then ill-treated, given so little food that we have seen cases of kwashiorkor, and of course they never see a school,' said one Congolese researcher. The same researcher had found cases of young village girls as young as 13 and 14 in prison accused of theft, but had found they were displaced girls from the countryside who had been forced into prostitution but had not earned enough to satisfy the women they were working for. They were then denounced as thieves and imprisoned by their employer's powerful friends in the police force.

Many women described how prostitution had become the only way to feed their children. Young women described how sex with teachers became the only way to stay in school when the family could not pay school fees (a phenomenon widely reported in many other very poor African countries). Widows of soldiers usually manage to hold on to a shelter at least for a while by staying on in military camps as prostitutes. Human Rights Watch calls this 'survival sex', and suggests it provides a context in which abusive sexual relationships are more accepted.

**Conclusion**

The future of this region, and with it the future of the DRC, hangs on more fundamental things than the various peace processes mediated at great expense by outsiders. The key interventions will be in three vital sectors that are in catastrophic shape: health, education, and justice. In all three only the re-establishment of the state by the paying of salaries of professionals in these fields can begin a turn around.

This is a country where the vast majority of people eat less than two-thirds of the calories a day needed to maintain health, and where 70% of the population are without access to health care. No statistic speaks louder of how unequally this affects women than that 42,000 women will die in childbirth in a year.

The virtual collapse of a formal economy and of the state, mean that people – specifically women, who were the backbone of the rural economy – have become so poor that sex has become part of their economy. It is practically the only currency they have. Helen Epstein's work in Mozambique's rural areas has revealed the important connection between poverty on this scale and the rise of HIV/AIDS. The connection between war and poverty is well known from many examples, not only in Africa. But Eastern DRC can be seen as an archetype of the vicious circle of war, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

The most effective long-term intervention will be education. Nowhere is the transforming effect of girls' education more needed by a society. Nearly half the female population of DRC is illiterate, and the gap in school attendance between boys and girls is very wide, particularly in rural areas such the Kivus. The record since independence has been scandalous – as in every other area of infrastructure and human development – but the Kivus in the last few years have seen dramatic de-development.

As in all cases of flagrant, systematic and brutal war crimes, especially against women, there will have to be a reckoning before the society can be reconstituted.
The complete impunity which the RCD authorities tolerate— not to say their participation in many crimes of violence— makes them no different from other Congolese military such as the forces of Joseph Kabila or Jean-Pierre Bemba, and on a level of culpability with the worst of the Mayi-Mayi and Interahamwe. However long it takes, the women of eastern DRC will one day have to be given a chance to express publicly what they have lived through. The Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal for the Trial of Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery took half a century to be organised, but has been key to a new understanding of one part of World War Two. The women of DRC deserve no less.

**VB’s note:** I sought no interviews on rape because of the risk of re-traumatising women. All responses quoted were unprompted.

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**Footnotes to the Mining Story**

*Erik Kennes*

Thoughtful political science analysis of the plunder of Africa’s natural resources is increasingly being taken hostage by journalistic interpretations and NGO reporting and ‘expert’ commissions. This is particularly true with respect to the DRC. Recent reliable evidence from the Congo is scarce and research policy tends to be dictated by policy agendas. As a consequence, two crucial analytical considerations are often masked. One pertains to regional power politics. The vacuum left by the death of president Mobutu was filled by the Congo’s neighbours. Their operations have not resulted into a clear new balance of forces, even if Angola, South Africa and Uganda seem to be the new regional patrons. Diplomatically, Tanzania is an essential ‘behind the scenes’ player. Because of its mining economy successes, its role may become increasingly important in the future.

By neglecting this political aspect of crisis, there is a danger that the model (developed mainly by William Reno) for Liberia and Sierra Leone will be applied to Central Africa. Internal rebellion against a central government is the first phase of this model. In response, both groups of actors link up with international patrons and companies to strengthen their position. Both parties in the conflict are thus externally legitimated. Conversely, the war that started in 1998 in the Great Lakes region was not an internal rebellion—it was masterminded and executed by the Rwandan Popular Front (RPF).

The functioning and evolution of the international mining sector is the second point that is often overlooked. This sector has gone through fundamental changes over the last two decades and is now fully integrated in to a globalised economy. It operates primarily according to economic logic, which explains why it is much less involved in Central Africa than many local actors tend to believe.

By not taking this perspective into account, analysis tends to highlight conspiracy theories whereby mining companies finance wars for profit. Many reports confuse criminal and criminalised activities with the ordinary workings of a formal mining economy. As a result, they make dubious recommendations about punishment of individuals and murky companies instead of trying to develop measures that could profitably link up the economies on the local level with the global economies—for the benefit of both.

**Evolution in the Mining Sector**

In 1996-97 during the AFDL march towards Kinshasa, some commentators saw ‘globalisation’ as the culprit for the war. Big companies, more powerful than nation-states and in pursuit of ruthless profiteering were perceived as dictating
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the political and military agenda. They argued that ‘big business’ was financing the Alliance to secure their interests. This is surprising, however, because few sectors had already attained such a degree of globalisation even since the very beginnings of their operations. Metals and minerals were among the very first commodities whose prices were fixed at a global level. In the colonial period this global market had a limited number of buyers and sellers. Supply and demand was predictable, and as a consequence, so were prices and investment decisions.

The situation changed at independence with the emergence of an important third actor: the nation-state. These new entities depended heavily on revenue from the mining sector for establishing legitimacy. The outcome of the struggle between government and producing companies depended on the relative margin of manoeuvre they each enjoyed in a given period. During 1970, a fourth actor was added: the big development banks who were able to add finance and guarantees for mining projects.

The 1980s and 1990s, however, saw a constant decline in real terms of the prices for base metals which made the mining sector less attractive for investors. The more risky sections of mining companies such as exploration were consequently shed. New smaller companies run by highly competent personnel that had been dismissed by the larger companies took on the risky operations associated with exploration.

While the exploration risk is very high and the chances for success very low, potential earnings can be enormous. Once a discovery is made, it can be sold to a major company who is capable and willing to exploit a concession. Some huge profits have been earned in this way. In 1996, speculators Robert Friedland and Jean-Raymond Boulle sold the jackpot discovery of an enormous nickel deposit at Voisey’s Bay (Canada) to Inco, which is a major company. The huge profits made by Boulle enabled the company to engage in speculative exploration work in Congo. Speculation reflects a fundamental change in the world economy. The mining industry was caught up in the whirlwind of the economy of finance. With the pressure of growing liberalisation of commercial and financial markets, the mining industry had to raise part of its capital on the stock market. The imperative of rapid profitability for the stakeholders forced the mining companies to look for rapid and secure profits. The competitive advantage is conferred by flexibility and ability to operate on a worldwide level. In other words: de-localisation.

For speculative purposes, rhetoric often prevails over reality. Enron was not the only speculative balloon: in 1996-97, the Canadian company Bre-X led every important actor in the mining sector to believe that it had discovered fabulous gold reserves in Indonesia. In May 1997 it was ascertained that no gold at all was present. This scandal shook the mining sector from the top to the bottom.2

In Africa, the pressure of globalisation in the mining sector contributed to the final breakdown of the formerly existing model of integration of mining interest into the nation state structure. This model was one of a long term engagement of major companies with the government of a country where a de facto monopoly was granted to the company. The company bought security and was not really forced to keep up with international developments. It was easy for a company to link up with the country’s informal elite networks.

This radically changed during the 1990s. First, the state structure itself crumbled in many instances. As it had been reduced to a purely formal construction, struggling for survival, the state became a partner dominated by an elite faction willing to sign any agreement — even
though it had become incapable of fulfilling its obligations because of the developments briefly described above. The mining companies had to look beyond their traditional footholds and were forced to become players on a global level, thereby cutting their long-term links with former partners.

The fundamental issue here is pure common sense. A serious mining company will not consider a war ridden country as its primary option for engagement and investing except if it has no other choice. Therefore, it seems very unlikely that a company would finance the war in Congo. This may seem obvious but it is a view that is not always accepted by actors on the ground.

**Consequences for the Mining Sector in Congo**

The opening up of the mining sector in a context of institutional decay had important consequences. First, because of the under exploitation of many concessions and deposits, much exploration results are available at little or no cost. Together with the availability of new technologies for exploitation, many deposits became profitable again. Second, with the end of apartheid, the mining sector in South Africa was opened up. This meant that the traditional closed structure of the mining houses (characterised by close integration between finance, production structures and management contracts with subsidiaries) was gradually abandoned in favour of a global liberalisation. The apex of this development was the move by Anglo American (still the biggest mining company in the world) from South Africa to London. The aim of Anglo is obviously to become a global player, trying to break into the Northern American market. It had previously been barred because of US anti-trust regulations.

This does not mean that the African continent is without importance for Anglo. The company juxtaposes African opportunities with the broader picture at world level. Anglo can thus associate with junior companies for exploitation of promising deposits (as happened with the huge gold deposit Sadiola Hill in Mali, with the junior Iamgold) or invest directly in a country, as happened with its decision to engage in Konkola Deep Mining in Zambia. This last project clearly illustrates the de-localisation process. After an initial decision in 2001 to invest in the huge copper/cobalt deposit of Konkola, a project which can influence the future of the Zambian copperbelt, Anglo decided to withdraw in 2002. It thereby left the Copperbelt in disarray and without many further options but to sell its most valuable deposits for a fraction of what they are worth. Anglo’s decision was based on the steady fall of the copper price on the world market and the huge investments needed in Konkola. In this context, a state can acquire a comparative advantage by its infrastructure and its institutions. This advantage is definitely lacking in Congo.

The Belgian Congo was a prime example of a closed system where mining companies and administrative structures exercised hegemony in close collaboration. This made considerable investments in the economic and social sectors possible after the World War Two. After independence, the Congolese state tried to control this structure by its nationalisation in 1967. The Congolese and Zairean state, however, never developed the necessary management capacity and merely used the mining sector (especially the Gécamines) as its main source of revenue. The Zairian state transformed gradually into a conglomerate of personal and clientelistic networks. This general label, however, covered different types of realities. It is possible to put the types of patrons on a continuum: on the one side, the ‘legitimate’, redistributing type, who is necessarily commanding a huge informal clientele network. On the other, the pure plunderer, appointed by the presi-
dent, whose network is limited to patrons at a lower level but as members of the governing elite.

The 'democratisation' movement during the 1990 fragmented a number of patron-client networks. Due to the cutting off of international aid and the implosion of the formal economy, it was increasingly difficult to make these networks function. A programme of liberalisation begun in 1981-82 led to enormous growth of artisanal mining, mostly in diamonds and gold. This informal economy had internal mechanisms of functioning that gave it a high sociological density which made it very difficult for outsiders to penetrate this informal economy. It was possible though for patrons with access to commercial networks abroad to control crucial points of entrance into the informal circuits.

In 1995-1996, the government embarked on a programme of limited privatisation of parts of the mining sector. Several major and junior companies tried to bid for the most interesting concessions. In some instances, junior companies succeeded in outbidding larger actors. Most of the contracts that would shape the mining sector in Congo for the two years to come were signed in August 1996 under the Mobutu regime. When the AFDL army swept over the country, it did so in an exceptionally favourable international environment for mining investment. The large international availability of risk capital, the prospects for a political renewal and the active promotion and support of Canadian companies by the Canadian government resulted in a massive arrival of mining company representatives in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. Representatives of purely speculative enterprises (such as America Mineral Fields) had an interest in creating the illusion of US support at the highest level. This helps explain why rumours immediately circulated about a US-led takeover of Congolese minerals and resources. It also boosted the shares of

junior companies listed on Canadian stock markets.

The new mining administration appointed by President Kabila in 1997-98 was not able to control the sector and direct it towards more productive objectives. In the name of a 'fight against monopolies', smaller concessions were awarded but often to companies that were not very trustworthy.

A crucial element is the recruitment of the new political elite by the Kabila regime, consisting mainly of former rebel comrades or technocrats from the Congolese diaspora. None of the new generation belonged to the clientelistic structure crystallised during the Mobutu regime. This would not have been dramatic if efforts were made to create a viable state structure. The country, however, was not run in a systematic manner and Kabila often gave the impression that he ran the country as he had managed his guerilla movement in the East during the 1970s and 1980s.

The result from this very confused situation was that the major mining companies withdrew and waited for better times to come. Junior companies were often unable to find funding for their projects. In 1998-99 many projects consequently collapsed. The wave of globalisation had withdrawn from the country. Companies like Anglo preferred to invest in stable countries such as Mali or Tanzania. Barrick Gold had a huge concession in the North-East of Congo (Kilo Moto) but choose not to develop it yet. This evolution was proof that a free market does not develop as a force of nature but is the product of an institutional structure. What should have been a paradise for free marketeers with a virtual absence of state structure turned into a nightmare. Regional interests became predominant and the dark side of globalisation forcefully emerged with the war that started in 1998.
Military Commercialism & Global Criminalisation

With the war that started in August 1998, the movements one could identify as consequences of globalisation in the formal mining sector turned their back on the Congo. Instead, a newer development inside the state structures in the region forcefully became apparent.

The colonial state was based on its army and bureaucracy. As the bureaucracy imploded, the army alone remained as an organisational structure. This army came to embody the sovereignty of the state – as witnessed most notably in Rwanda. Instead of a private security organisation taking over functions of state power, the state itself in its most forceful manifestations (the army) became privatised. This process, aptly called ‘military commercialism’ by Chris Dietrich, is exemplified by the cases of Angola, Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Uganda. However, in each case, this commercialism was never a cause but a consequence of military involvement. Michael Nest has suggested that the Zimbabwean business involvement was a consequence of the opportunities offered by military logistical structures and government-to-government contracts. Nest’s reasoning can be generalised: the first motivation for involvement of all the regional power players was political and strategic. It became economic when their armies got stuck into the quagmire of the Central African war.

Key actors who have an interest in a situation of disorganisation are those who are able to create a monopoly – such as traders and transporters. Many essential actors (such as Billy Rautenbach or General Zvinavashe of Zimbabwe) in the ongoing plundering of the Congo were transporters in the past. Traders such as Glencore are actively involved in activities that assure a steady flow of production (as in the Mkana/Mufulira mining project in Zambia with First Quantum).

This leads to a situation whereby military networks – not the state – become intermediaries between the local and the global levels. The numerous pre-existing and sometimes highly structured informal trade networks were not created by military involvement, although they have been controlled by them. Very few military groups are engaged in trading themselves. They do however try to exploit the existing networks for their own profit by controlling essential points of access such as airports and trading posts in order to levy taxes. Although a multitude of practices exist, the military officers mainly try to control the top level of the pyramids. Often the former patron of a network is taken away and replaced by a figure at a lower level in the pyramid who will be loyal to the military who set him up. In other cases a local patron is controlled by a military structure. The cases where military officers are directly involved in exploitation are rare.

This type of situation, exacerbated by high levels of insecurity and violence, is a disincentive for many mining companies to get involved when alternatives are available. The boom in coltan prices at the end of 2000 and the first months of 2001 was the result of the existence of a bottleneck on the world market. A temporary shortage of colombo-tantalite had to be filled by any means, including buying coltan from the network of artisanal diggers controlled by armed forces. Whenever the companies had the opportunity for a regular and steady flow of production elsewhere, they turned away from the Congo. Depending on supplies from war zones is not good business practice.

This rejection of ‘global’ business has detrimental consequences because it deprives international political actors of leverage. Important parts of the mining sector in Congo may be uninteresting for ordinary business but remain a source of wealth for military and criminal activities. As the criminal economy incrusts
itself in the region, the pre-existing informal economy links up with the 'dark side' of globalisation. The same type of structures come to function for an area of economic activity that is increasingly beyond control of the international political actors, sometimes (as in the case of Liberia) leading to a totally criminalised political structure.

The Way Ahead

What can be done about the undeniable plunder of the Congo’s resources? Beyond the commercial interests state and sub-state actors may have, there is an important political and strategic aspect to be addressed. It should be possible to regulate commerce by trade and business agreements. Conversely, Mayi-Mayi movements cannot simply be regarded through a Liberian or Sierra Leonian lens. While they may be involved in self-feeding violence, combating Rwandan troops is an essential motivation for their action. The key point will be to offer these groups new economic and business opportunities.

Second, it is useless to blame companies or actors of criminal activity before reorienting existing networks of exploitation and trade towards productive objectives. Some questions need to be answered before: how can these networks be linked up with ‘legitimate’ economic activities and how can new safeguards between the local and the global level be set up and how can monopoly positions by military actors be eliminated? The reintroduction of formal mining companies in the region depends on a context whereby legitimate authority with some capacity for negotiation and implementation of an agreement is provided for. Perhaps some inspiration can be taken from a company as First Quantum in Zambia: it evolved from a junior company to a mid-level operator through investments made in the region. As First Quantum cannot afford to leave suddenly – as Anglo American did – it becomes a more reliable partner.

This leads us to the third element. The main problem in all regions in the Congo is the destruction of networks of social cohesion. How can informal economy networks be reintegrated into a stable sociological structure? One possibility might be the reintroduction of traditional authority. Once a traditional chief is made co-responsible for the well-being of his people, a nucleus of sociological density may be reconstituted. This will offer possibilities for a process of social healing, where not only conflict solution can be addressed on a local level, but where criminal elements of the Mayi-Mayi may be the object of social stigmatisation. The informal networks of trade may thus, at the local level, be reintegrated into structures of legitimacy.

Endnotes

1. Gauthier de Villers (avec Jean Omasombo et Erik Kennes), ‘Guerre et politique. Les trente derniers mois de L.D. Kabila’ (août 1998 - janvier 2001), Cahiers Africains n° 47-48, p. 18-21. This is not to say there was no internal dissent or discontent, but the popular support for the second ‘rebellions’ was very limited and dwindled away as the war continued.
5. See Le nouvel ordre politique et les enjeux économiques du conflit en République Démocratique du Congo, Rapport du groupe d’expertise congolaise de Belgique, Tervuren, p. 64.
8. I am fully aware that chiefs are part of the problem in the Kivu region because of their policy of land distribution. But one can only try and find workable solutions. In the present situation there are no optimal or even good solutions. I am grateful to Mr. Mwando Nsimba for inspiration with these proposals.

Congo: Revisiting the Looking Glass

Carole J.L. Collins

This Briefing analyses economic developments and trends in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), within the context of recent political and military manoeuvres and the current human rights situation.

Peace on the Horizon?

On 30 July 2002, Joseph Kabila, president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Rwandan president Paul Kagame signed a United Nations/South African-brokered peace agreement intended to resolve their conflict. The two governments’ specific undertakings to end hostilities and their inviting the United Nations (UN) and South Africa (RSA) to monitor the accord’s implementation raised hopes that peace might be on the horizon.

But things are rarely what they seem in the DRC. All parties to the conflict say they want peace – but most of the belligerents still want it on their own terms. By mid-August 2002, observers were asking if peace, or merely another chapter in the Congo’s regional war, was at hand. While devoutly hoping this may be a first step towards peace, many fear the accord may merely be a marriage of convenience or ‘PR’ exercise by two politically weak parties to the conflict. Skeptics of the accord are many. They include South African analysts who feel Mbeki backed an imperfect accord in an effort to boost the credibility of African leaders’ stated commitment to conflict resolution embodied in the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). They also include ‘Les Kinois’, those living in Kinshasa, who have seen Kabila Sr. and Jr. pull out of peace processes before. Also skeptical are many in the Kivus, where Rwanda has long resisted pressure to end its military presence and where Ugandan and Rwandan military officers have been extensively involved in looting the DRC’s natural resources. All of these saw earlier hopes for peace dashed by the failure of the more inclusive Lusaka Peace Accord of 1999. Many fear this is just another political manoeuvre between but two of the Congo’s multiple belligerents in this complex regional conflict.

Several positive developments following the signing of the July 30 accord raised modest hopes that it might ‘take’ and move Congo clearly down the path to peace. Among these were:

- A reported decision by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in mid-August to order the total and immediate withdrawal of UPDF soldiers still in the DRC, though some will reportedly remain along the DRC-Uganda border to prevent inter-ethnic fighting in Ituri province spilling into Uganda;

- A reported new willingness of Kabila to begin negotiations with the RCD-Goma and his naming Vital Kamhere (assisted by two deputies, Mupapa Say and Seraphin Ngwej) in mid-August as the DRC government’s commissioner-general in charge of following up the Great Lakes peace process. (Kamhere, from South Kivu, previously worked as a deputy on Kinshasa’s relations with MONUC. Some say he was the main broker of the Kabila-Bemba power-sharing agree-
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ment. He reportedly served as an aide to several Mobutuist ministers before 1997).

- An August 9 agreement by RSA and the UN to establish a joint secretariat— with two UN and four RSA officials—to implement the July peace agreement.

The main strength of the July 30 accord, according to one former envoy to the region, is that it puts 'a process and mechanism in place, affirmed by the two key parties, to finally force some decisions about how to deal with the security issue, ... now its resolution will no longer be a function of Rwandan unilateralism, but rather ... of a decision of the parties working collaboratively with the international community.'

Security concerns have been the stated reason (and pretext) for Rwanda's continuing military presence in eastern Congo. But its presence has worsened local ethnic conflicts, dislocated hundreds of thousands of people, and led to widespread human rights abuses and looting of the DRC's natural resources. (The latter has been extensively documented by the UN Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of D.R. Congo in their mid-May interim report; in mid-July the panel's mandate was extended to 31 October 2002 to allow for completion of this report.) Since one-time allies Rwanda and Uganda (now at loggerheads) launched their effort in 1998 to overthrow the Kinshasa regime, then headed by Laurent Kabila, conservative estimates by the International Rescue Committee and the Center for Disease Control as well as others are that over 2.5 million Congolese have died from the direct and indirect effects of the war. Sceptics of the likely success of the accord note it has several key flaws, including an unrealistic 90-day timetable that virtually all agree cannot be met, since there is no agreement yet on:

- What nation(s) will provide troops to disarm the genocidaires (though South Africa has offered some)?
- Who will finance these troops in disarming the genocidaires and for how long?
- What UN or other mandate these troops will have to do so?
- Who exactly is considered a genocidaire and how many there are (Kinshasa and Kigali have long differed over estimates)?

The bulk of ex-FAR and Interahamwe Hutu armed units which had been based in DRC government-controlled areas near Kinshasa returned to eastern Congo around May 2001 (though several individuals and smaller units reportedly continue to serve in Kabila's army). Thus it is unclear how Kinshasa can disarm those now based in the Kivus, provinces ostensibly 'controlled' by the Rwanda-backed RCD. This may in turn give Kigali wiggle-room to delay troop withdrawals.

Perhaps most importantly, the accord fails to outline how the concerns of the many other parties to the Congo's conflict, armed or unarmed, will be addressed. These parties include external belligerents (Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe), internal ones (including Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC, RCD-Goma, RCD-ML and its various splinters, the Mayi-Mayi militia and the Banyamulenge) and civil society (NGOs, students, the church and political parties). Civil society in particular was largely sidelined at the Sun City talks, which adjourned in April 2002 with a power-sharing agreement between Kabila and Bemba over who would occupy which ministerial posts. Without a comprehensive, more inclusive and democratic power-sharing agreement involving broad sectors of Congolese civil society (as well as other armed groups), the climate of mistrust and uncertainty prevailing in the DRC is likely to con-
continue and undercut any political momentum generated by the July accord.

Some analysts believe the July accord reflected the political weaknesses of its two signatories, both of whom saw it as a means of buying themselves both time and more political support. The Kabila government, which walked out of initial Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) talks in October 2001, may hope to expand its limited political base and build popularity through appearing to bring peace closer. Rwanda’s government, in turn, has been under growing international pressure to withdraw from eastern Congo. In June, two representatives of its government and ruling party reportedly sparked scathing criticism from both NGOs and US State Department officials — many heretofore supporters of Rwanda’s security concerns — at a Woodrow Wilson Institute forum in Washington, DC.

Perhaps most worrying is the potential of the accord, in shoring up two belligerents’ political positions, for making them less willing to compromise with other parties to the conflict, and for motivating these others to resort to violence to defend their interests. Although Kabila announced some willingness to open talks with the RCD-Goma, there were other indications that he might be less willing to accommodate their concerns or move to implement his agreement with Bemba’s MLC. While the Congolese Catholic bishops initially backed the Kabila-Bemba accord, they have more recently pushed for inclusion of RCD-Goma in order to ensure a viable peace process. There is some evidence, however, of growing conflict in the Kivus and Ituri provinces since the accord was signed.

Situation in the East

Anti-civilian violence has been endemic for the past eight years in the vast territory of eastern Congo now under the ostensible control of the Rwandan-backed RCD-Goma and factions of the Uganda-backed Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC) and RCD-ML. But several conflicts have worsened in recent months, and in the couple weeks following signing of the accord:

- In Kisangani, an attempted mutiny among RCD soldiers, and the response by forces commanded by RCD-Goma, led to the deaths of an estimated 200 civilians, soldiers and local police. An August 19, a Human Rights Watch report details credible reports of summary RCD-Goma executions of soldiers and civilians whose mutilated corpses surfaced in the rapids on the Tshopo river. Catholic clergy as well as civil society leaders and activists became explicit targets of RCD violence.

- In Goma, human rights and peace activists have continued to be harassed, detained and arrested for their human rights activities, most recently in May after meeting with a US embassy representative and a member of a US House Africa subcommittee staff delegation.

- A recent Human Right Watch report (The War Within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo) documents horrific abuses directed against women, particularly the frequent and systematic use of rape as a tool of war by combatants on all sides in the Kivu conflict.

- In the northeast Ituri province, conflicts over land between Hema and Lendu ethnic groups have flared during the past four years as each has sought military support from the Ugandans and/or splinters of the MLC or RCD-ML rebel groups. Those who have borne the brunt of the fighting are civilians, thousands of whom have been killed or displaced. More than 500 people may have died in late spring, early summer of 2002.
In early August, over 200 people, mostly women and children, may have been hacked to death in and around Bunia, a mere 25 miles from the Uganda border. The fighting reportedly pitted Lendu militia and RCD-K-ML rebels (headed by Nyamwisi) against ethnic Hemas and the Ugandan army, which in the past backed the RCD-ML. Another RCD breakaway group, the RCD-National led by Roger Lumbala, in August also accused the RCD-K-ML (Nyamwisi) of attacking its positions northwest of Bunia, reportedly over control of the gold-mining town of Isiro.

Both the RCD-K-ML and RCD-N supported the April Sun City accord between Kabila and Bemba, reached in April at the end of the inter-Congolese dialogue in South Africa. Under that agreement, current DRC President Joseph Kabila would retain his position, while Jean-Pierre Bemba, leader of the Ugandan-backed rebel Mouvement de liberation du Congo (MLC), would serve as prime minister.

Some believe the military conflict between the RCD-K-ML (Nyamwisi) and RCD-N may reflect proxy manoeuvring by Bemba (reportedly a strong backer of RCD-N) and Kabila (whom many assert is backing the RCD-K-ML).

- Even as the UN Security Council was debating the peace accord of 9 August, RCD-Goma accused Kinshasa of violating the pact by renewing its support for Rwandan Hutu militias.

Rwandans vs. Banyamulenge

Perhaps no conflict in the eastern Congo surpasses in irony the current military campaign being waged in South Kivu’s highland between Rwandan and RCD-Goma military forces and those of the Banyamulenge, Congolese Tutsis whose harassment by Mobutist and Hutu forces was cited by Rwanda as a major reason for their military intervention in the autumn of 1997. Although the Banyamulenge for many years allied themselves with the RCD-Goma and Rwandan security concerns, a significant number, increasingly disturbed by Rwandan looting of Congolese resources and heavy-handed abuse of civilians, began to distance themselves from the RCD. Many Banyamulenge serving in the RCD military began to mutiny or desert, accusing it of serving foreign (Rwandan) interests, not Congolese, polarizing their relations with fellow Congolese and undermining their long-contested claim to Congolese citizenship. The Rwandan army reportedly dispatched 1,500 troops in April to Gasinda in an effort to squelch a two-month-long mutiny by Banyamulenge troops led by Commandant Patrick Masunzu.

It is hard to imagine why Rwanda, unable up to now to successfully pacify Rwandan Hutu armed forces in the Kivus threatening Rwanda’s security, would dedicate so many military resources to fighting fellow Tutsis. Some sources say a main reason was that disaffected Banyamulenge troops had entered into dialogue with Mayi-Mayi ethnic militia on forging a united front against RCD-Goma and its Rwandan backers. Such an alliance would represent a strategic challenge to Rwanda’s military dominance in the region. Because of the isolated nature of the area, detailed information on the conflict and its impact on civilians has been limited.

Policy Challenges in the Months Ahead

To maintain any political momentum generated by the July peace accord, a number of policy challenges will need to be met, including:

- Strengthening the role, mandate and performance of UN forces in the DRC, both to monitor and halt human rights abuses (rather than, as happened last May in Kisangani,
standing by while civilians and UN-trained police were killed), disarm *genocidaires* and maintain an effective security curtain along the DRC-Rwanda border. This will entail persuading donors – including a reluctant Bush administration – to finance a significant increase in the number of MONUC human rights monitors and peacekeeping troops. It will also require giving MONUC a Chapter 7 mandate.

The Bush Administration has been reluctant to do either. At a recent Heritage Foundation meeting in June 2002, Bush’s National Security Adviser on African Affairs, Jendayi Frazier, indicated the Administration would oppose boosting the UN military presence in eastern Congo until there was peace there, clearly reflecting a Chapter 6 view of the UN role in the DRC. But if that stance is maintained, who will disarm the *genocidaires*?

**• Reducing, if not ending, human rights abuses in the Congo.** Many observers welcomed the US government’s decision to extend to the DRC its ‘Rewards for Justice’ initiative to arrest the organisers of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. But the US remained publicly silent on the need to bring to justice Rwandan- or Ugandan-backed perpetrators of violence against civilians in the Kivus. The public announcement of the ‘Rewards’ initiative, right after the massacre of civilians in Kisangani in May, particularly outraged Congolese in the Kivus. While US officials feel they have exerted more pressure on Kigali to withdraw in recent months, many Congolese interpreted its public silence on Kisangani events as evidence that the US continues to back Rwanda.

**• Restarting a more broadly inclusive Inter-Congolese Dialogue that does not marginalise civic society in deference to armed groupings.** Although the Sun City talks achieved consensus in several substantive governance areas, this was subordinated and ultimately sidelined by the squabbles over ministerial posts among those commanding military forces. The ICD also has been dogged from the start by a lack of donor resources to fund participation by all the 350 participants envisaged. Unlike civil society groups, however, those with military forces have had little trouble financing their participation at ICD talks in Addis or RSA, either through looting resources or through funds provided by Mobutists who seek a political comeback. Indeed Mobuists reportedly finance all politi-cal groups with military forces, including the Kinshasa government, RCD-Goma and Bemba’s MLC. Several reportedly participated in the Sun City talks as a step towards political rehabilitation (and one Mobutist has since announced formation of a political party in exile).

**A Fragmented Economy**

The DRC remains one of the poorest countries in the world (150 out of 174 as regards per capita annual income). Its immense (but unrealised or ill-used) resources mock the broad impoverishment of most Congolese, especially those living outside its urban areas. The war has been the crucial factor undermining the Congo’s economic recovery. ‘During the civil war between 1997 and 2000, the DRC’s) real GDP declined by 5.9% a year’, according to the African Development Bank’s annual report. Despite some stabilising of the country’s political and security situation and the government reaching an agreement with the IMF, the report noted, ‘the decline continued in
2001 when output fell by a further 4.1%.' A November 2001 EIU report indicates DRC exports dropped to US$760m in 2000, or 46% of what they were in 1996. Copper, which once earned the DRC hundreds of thousands of dollars of export earnings, in 2000 brought in only $45m (and cobalt a mere $97m).

Assessing the DRC's economic health is complicated by the de facto military partition of the country by Kinshasa, the Ugandan-backed MLC and the Rwandan-backed RCD-Goma. Each has worked to consolidate its economic control – and extraction of income – from the area it controls, seriously complicating if not undermining efforts at national economic reconstruction. It has also led to significant regional variations in economic conditions. More recently RCD-Goma proposed introducing a new currency in the regions it controls.

**Resource looting:** The economy of the Kivus has been extensively disrupted and distorted by the war and Rwandan and Ugandan appropriation of local revenue and natural resources. Millions of Kivutians literally have only rags or nothing to wear and little or no food. Most children have no access to education or health care. The educational system is in an ever-deepening crisis as most schools have no books; teachers are paid a few dollars a month at most, taken from contributions from parents. Close to 70% of the children in the occupied territories have not been able to go to school at all (IFRC, 24 July 2002).

A recent report by Christian Dietrich, 'Hard Currency: The Criminalized Diamond Economy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its Neighbours' (available on the web site of Partnership Africa Canada at: http://www.partnershipafricacanada.org or the French version at: http://www.partenariatafriquecanada.org) describes how, within a context of ongoing strife, chronic instability and corruption, diamonds (and other valuable natural resources) have generated a parallel economy enabling hundreds of thousands of miners and middlemen (and their families) to survive. But when directed through illicit channels, these diamonds and other valuable resources have helped finance government strongmen, criminal networks, rebel movements and warlords.

Dietrich notes the continuity between how the Zairean state under Mobutist rule survived on the strength of informal networks that overlapped with criminal syndicates and the structures of a growing war economy as Laurent Kabila's rebels and their external supporters gained momentum in eastern Zaire in late 1996. Kabila's May 1997 arrival in Kinshasa, the capital of a nation that now existed only in abstract form, marked the emergence of a new clan of predators.

Diamonds have provided key sources of finance to all major groups with military forces, including the MLC (through its control of mines in Equateur province) and RCD-Goma (through its control of mines around Kisangani).

As detailed in the May 2002 preliminary report of the UN panel of experts on resource exploitation in the DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi – all of which have troops occupying parts of eastern DRC – have all profited from looting of gold and other precious minerals, diamonds, coltan (an ore used in manufacturing cell phones), timber, and elephant tusks. Civil society sources in areas controlled by RCD-Goma also report direct collection of tax revenues by Rwandans.

The UN report documents 'commercial networks put in place by Ugandan army commanders' and others. It also identifies MLC leader Jean Pierre Bemba and RCD-ML leaders John Tibasima Ateenyi and Mbusa Nyamwisi as 'conduits' for this
illegal trade. The immense scale of diversion of resources, the UN report notes, is revealed by statistics on Uganda’s diamond exports, which tripled in the eight months before the report’s release in May. A DRC government official in April estimated that the DRC government is losing US$400m in diamond earnings due to fraud. Rwanda has been particularly implicated in the plunder of coltan, which was selling for about US$600 per kilo in January 2001 and is mined under exceedingly harsh conditions. A Danish researcher reports that, despite Rwanda denying involvement in this plunder, a National Bank of Rwanda letter shows that Rwanda exported seven times more coltan in 2000 than it produced.

The UN report also details how Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, all allies of the Kabila government, have profited from the war through exploiting resources and signing lucrative contracts with the DRC government. Joint Zimbabwe-Congo diamond mining and timber ventures, controlled by Zimbabwe Gen. Zvinavashe and senior Zanu-PF officials, may have helped finance the doubling of Zimbabwe army pay in January 2002 and helped fund President Robert Mugabe’s election campaign. The director of Global Witness, a UK-based human rights group, characterized Zimbabwe as a ‘modern-day carpetbagger’ whose opportunistic exploitation of DRC resources has now become necessary to keeping the Mugabe government afloat.

The UN report moved Belgium to establish a special commission to investigate alleged involvement of Belgian and non-Belgian companies in illegally trading DRC natural resources and explore how to halt such activities, which many argue is fuelling continuing war in the region. A Belgian NGO campaign, ‘No Blood on My Mobile’, which spotlights coltan’s use in portable phones, has mobilized public awareness of such looting. It also moved the Ugandan government to set up its own commission to investigate charges of involvement by Ugandan military commanders. The Commission has had to subpoena several of the latter to induce them to testify.

**Kinshasa-led reconstruction efforts:** Since Kinshasa remains the internationally-recognized seat of the DRC’s national government, it has had an undeniable edge in defining national economic priorities and getting a lock on international aid monies.

In December 2001 Belgium hosted a World Bank-organized donors’ meeting to explore the DRC’s current economic prospects. As early as 2000 the World Bank had begun exploring how to provide economic incentives for regional peace through, for the first time, backing a region-wide reconstruction plan. The December meeting discussed both the Congo’s current economic prospects and what measures donors might take to support the peace process, specifically the disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reinstallation and re-insertion of combatants into ordinary economic life (known commonly as ‘DDRRR’).

In spring 2002 the DRC government launched a three-year $1.7 billion ‘emergency program’ for economic reconstruction to repair roads, water, transport, and urban infrastructure in order to attract foreign investment, developed in collaboration with the World Bank. Under the plan, scheduled to end in 2005, the DRC program would also invest in education, health, agriculture and social security. But to succeed, DRC central bank governor Jean-Claude Masangu Mulongo said in a 5 June Reuters interview, will require a ‘full and comprehensive solution on the political front.’

Mulongo claims the government has achieved recent success in cutting inflation down to 8% in the 12 months ending in May 2002 from 632% in the year ending May 2001 (the high level reportedly due to Laurent Kabila’s penchant for financ-
...ing the government deficit through printing money). But revenues are still very low, in great part because of the impact of the ongoing conflict on mining exports. Noting ‘mining is no longer a key revenue earner’ despite the Congo’s immense mineral wealth, Mulongo said revenue from Gecamines had virtually evaporated and the DRC was losing $35 million a month in smuggled diamonds, but that a recent government deal on diamond certification before sale in Brussels and prospects for peace in Angola would hopefully raise government revenue from the mining sector.

As regards efforts to reduce corruption, in August 2001 President Kabila dismissed directors of most parastatal companies, reportedly due to an audit that documented widespread mismanagement and possible corruption. But he left in place Jean Charles Oketo, the head of MIBA (the state diamond mining company) and widely believed to have siphoned off large amounts of MIBA earnings. The EIU reports popular protests against his corruption in the DRC’s industrial diamond mining capital of Mbuji-Mayi, home to MIBA.

In September 2001 the DRC government suspended pay to more than 21,000 ‘ghost’ civil servants put on the country’s payrolls by corrupt government employees and ministers, a practice particularly widespread under Mobutu’s rule. State employees in most parts of Congo earn between $2 to $20 per month, so many must supplement their incomes by working several jobs or soliciting bribes in order to survive. Some Kinshasa civil servants say they were not paid during most of 2001 (and civil servants in the rebel-held east have gone unpaid for three years).

In February the DRC government proposed a new mining code offering lower taxes and other incentives to foreign investors. The code, which requires parliamentary approval, would cut income tax rates from 50% to 30%, turnover taxes from 22% to 9%, and scrap all taxes on minerals exports. In April, however, participants in the Sun City talks approved a resolution urging that a parliamentary commission be set up to review all mining deals and other contracts signed with foreign investors and governments following the fall of Mobutu, in particular those granted to Zimbabwe. Such a commission would be asked to ‘examine the validity of economic and financial conventions signed during the wars of 1996 and 1998’ (Reuters rendition of French text), whether they respect the DRC’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and whether they have led to ‘illicit financial gain.’

Meanwhile, ordinary Congolese continue to suffer from the economic disruptions of the war. Local workers, paid in local currency, bear the brunt of the costs of inflation. Foreign aid has been sporadic and late in arriving, and despite a few bright spots – e.g. the reopening of stretches of the Congo river to commerce – many companies have shut down, laid off workers or suspended workers’ pay. Unrest has grown as workers protest their loss of income and students riot over rising tuition costs.

**Lifting Congo’s debt burden:** A key drag on the DRC’s economic recovery is its $12 billion in foreign debt (US$9bn of that representing unpaid arrears) accrued largely during the years of Mobutist kleptocratic rule. Several recent developments, however, have raised hopes that this burden of debt might be significantly reduced:

- In early 2001 France and Belgium agreed to help clear some of the DRC’s arrears through providing a co-financed bridging loan. South African banks also moved to help finance DRC oil imports.
- In July 2002 IRIN sources reported the African Development Bank...
(ADB) granted the DRC government US$43m and lent it another $15m, resuming ADB lending halted 5 years earlier due to non-payment of arrears. In June, the ADB also approved a mechanism to clear almost $800m in DRC arrears owed the bank (representing almost 60% of the DRC's total of US$1.4 bn in loan arrears owed and including around $40m in overdue debts owed African Development Fund, the ADB's soft loan branch, at end 2001).

• Also in July, World Bank President James Wolfensohn, in Kinshasa to announce a $450-million grant to the DRC, urged that 80% of its foreign debt be cancelled, preferably by the first three months of 2003. This would cut its external debt from US$12bn to US$2bn.

Most Congolese believe the DRC's foreign debt, most of it contracted under Mobutu's rule, is illegitimate, contracted by an unelected leader and used for purposes they did not choose and from which they did not benefit. And they would welcome cancellation of this debt.

Most are deeply skeptical, however, about the value of the IMF program currently being implemented by the DRC government. 'We know the IMF exists, but we don't really know what it does', Dina Kaleka, a student in Kinshasa, told Reuters in April. 'We know it gives money for development, but there doesn't seem to have been much development here. What happens to the money?' Added another resident:

it's almost better if the IMF doesn't give us money because then we get big debts and we have to pay them back and the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the population. ... What we really need are free and fair elections so we can choose responsible leaders who can work for us instead of us working for them.

And, as a western diplomat noted to Reuters:

how many people will be affected by this IMF program, which has no immediate social merits? ... the problem is, there's no safety net. Similar programmes in other African countries have led to revolt.

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International NGO advocacy on the Democratic Republic of Congo

International NGOs have become more assertive in urging their governments to more actively pressure for an end to the Congo war and ensure that resources flow to those affected by the war.

In November 2001, two European NGO networks – Concertation Chrétienne pour l'Afrique Centrale (CCAC) and Reseau Europe Congo (REC) – facilitated a meeting of European parliamentarians to better harmonize their DRC strategy. Discussion focused on developing a common EU approach to the crisis (e.g. placing priority on responding to the humanitarian crisis in the eastern Congo) and identifying ways to monitor and counter the plunder of Congolese resources.

On July 30 members of the US-based Advocacy Network on Africa wrote US Secretary of State Colin Powell urging more forceful US public diplomacy in seeking to end human rights abuses by armed groups in the DRC and reach a comprehensive and more inclusive inter-Congolese consensus on the process of transition to democratic rule. Several have formed an informal Congo Working Group to better focus advocacy efforts with Congress and the Bush Administration. Still other US-based NGOs with on-the-ground operations in the DRC have been meeting regularly on how to support civil society participation in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.

Several London and New York-based NGOs have also begun meeting to explore how they might utilize the expected late October release of the UN's final report on looting of the Congo's natural resources and other forms of wealth to build momentum for inter-national measures to monitor and eventually halt such pillage.
Laurent Désiré Kabila
C. Kabuya-Lumuna Sando

Laurent Désiré Kabila was born in Jadotville (Likasi) on 27 November 1939 of a mulubakat father and a lunda mother. His father, 'Taratibu' Désiré Kabila was a post office clerk from Ankoro (Kabula). By the time 'Taratibu' retired in 1952, he was assimilated with the évolues because of his close relationship with the colonial administration. He had not, however, obtained the formal évolué status. He then settled down in the surroundings of Ankoro where he was appointed 'head of sector' (chef de secteur) of Kamalondo by the colonial authorities in 1958. Laurent Desire Kabila had mostly remained with his mother in Lubumbashi to study. He very probably went to Kinshasa for his secondary school but never went beyond a first or possibly second year. He returned to Elisabethville to work in various places. To compensate for his lack of formal education, Kabila was an obstinate reader. In 1960, he went to work for his father as a secretary. It was in this context that he learned about territorial administration and the problems of the rural populations. His own political opinions, however, were radically opposed to his father's. Laurent's sympathy for the Mouvement National Congolais/Lumumba (MNC/L) and Balubakat was irreconcilable with his father's Conakat membership.

When Moise Tchombé proclaimed the secession of the mineral rich province at independence, Laurent Désiré Kabila was living in the countryside in North-Katanga. Opposed to secession, he embraced the nationalist theses of the Lumumba coalition consisting of the Balubakat (directed by Jason Sendwe) and the MNC of Patrice-Emery Lumumba. He became deputy commander of a youth group (Jeunesses Balubakat) driven by anticolonialism and a rejection of Europeans and the fight against secession.

The declaration of the secession of Katanga was a personal test for Kabila. His mother's kin tended to support Tchombe who was also a lunda and his father, like most traditional leaders in Katanga, also supported secession. Laurent could not prevent the arrest and assassination of his father by a band of young Balubakat belonging to the same group he was in charge of. Despite the political ideas of his parents the young Kabila pursued his nationalist beliefs and activities.

Following a car accident in which Kabila was responsible for some fatal injuries, he fled to Manono where he took part in the activities of the Balubakat and Lumumba's coalition – specifically the anti-Tshombe government of North Katanga set up by Mwamba Ilunga. It was Mwamba who had noticed Kabila's dynamism and, perhaps, his leadership capacity. Kabila had the status of 'intellectual' amidst a movement and a region where very few people had access to formal education. His wit and intelligence have never been contested – like his authoritarian character. The Popular Republic set up by Antoine Gizenga in Stanleyville (Kisangani) supported the rebel activities of the Balubakat in Manono (North Katanga). It is probably through contact with Manono-based UN forces from other third world countries that Laurent Kabila developed his personal version of 'radicalised nationalism'.

The Katangese gendarmerie led by Belgian officers reoccupied most of the Balubakat territory in Northern Katanga. The government in Kinshasa and the Gizenga government organised a national reconciliation in August 1961 but this did not end the Katanga secession. The political relationships within the Balubakat movement started to shift by then. On the one hand, Jason Sendwe, national chairman of the Balubakat, had become closer to the legal forces, which then supported the central government of Kasa Vubu and Cyrille Adoula. On the other hand, the provincial leader of the
Balubakat, Prosper Mwamba Ilunga, was somehow closer to the MNC/L party. Laurent Kabila was obviously closer to Mwamba but as member of a group of young activists he was kept at a distance. In September 1962, Laurent Kabila became head of cabinet of Ferdinand Tumba, minister in charge of Information in North-Katanga, before being co-opted as a deputy in the provincial assembly for North Katanga in November of the same year.

On the private level at this time, Laurent Kabila settled down in Albertville and had a daughter. Family life was short-lived however: he quickly gave up this first family for his political activities – and for many other wives.

At the end of the Katanga secession in January 1963, the governmental forces started to track down those of Lumumba. Antoine Gizenga, who symbolised Lumumba’s heritage, was imprisoned. President Kasa Vubu closed Parliament in September 1963. The frustrated nationalists took refuge in Brazzaville from where they created the National Council of Liberation (NLC). Laurent Kabila attended a meeting in Brazzaville in November 1963 where he was appointed secretary-general of Social Affairs, Youth and Sports in the CNL/shadow government. In January 1964, Christophe Gbenye (the president of the NCL) asked him to join Gaston Soumielot to open a military front in Kivu (in the Ruzizi plain Maniema and North-Katanga). At that time, Jason Sendwe was the provincial president of North-Katanga. The Balubakat was already torn between the legal tendency of Sendwe and the more lumumbist tendency of Mwamba Ilunga.

In May 1964, Kabila organised a coup against Jason Sendwe with the help of local youths and traders mainly from the Holoholo tribe who were his close political aides. It was unsuccessful and Kabila fled. The rebel troops coming from Fizi and Uvira led by local commanders were persuaded to take Albertville in June. Neither Kabila nor his close comrades were directly involved in this second occupation of the city. Nonetheless, they took advantage of the situation and were quickly co-opted into the shabby new leadership structure. Jason Sendwe himself was killed in the fighting. The rebellion did not go further than the Albertville region and Northern Katanga was partly left out of the major rebellion movement of 1964-66. Governmental forces led by major Eustache Kakudji arrived to retake Albertville. Some accounts claim that Kakudji, who came from Ankoro and who had previously supported Kabila’s anti-secessionist operations in 1961, let him escape. A more likely view is that Kabila had already left the city to embark on trips to China, Eastern Europe and other African countries to seek support.

This was to mark the real beginning of the future president’s life of a rebel bush leader or maquisard (see de Villers and Omasombo this issue). The rebel movement had captured Stanleyville, the third most important city in Congo. But by the end of November, the city was recaptured by Congolese and Belgian forces: important supply routes for the rebellion were thus cut off. This left the area where Kabila was active as the only important entry point for supplies through Kigoma in Tanzania. The rebels benefited from support from the Tanzanian authorities and from China. Kabila’s control of this supply route made him an important figure in the rebellion structures. By the end of November he was appointed Foreign Affairs Secretary of State to the NCL and ambassador plenipotentiary to Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. He settled in Kigoma with his close aides and tried to direct the rebellion at the other side of the Lake Tanganyika in Congo. He tried to maintain his position inside the CNL-structures. On 24 April 1965 he was named second vice-president of the Supreme Council of the Revolution. From April to November 1965, a group of Cuban military under the direction of
Che Guevara crossed the lake to help set up an organised rebel force. Lack of training and motivation, however, and the absence of leadership (Kabila always abroad) made this task impossible. When Kabila ordered the surrender of the rebel base of Kibamba because of attacks by the Congolese ANC army, he lost external help for the rebellion. He was heavily criticised for this decision from both the inside and from abroad.

According to some interpretations, Laurent Kabila and the NCL tried to add a communist dimension to their version of nationalism and fight against the central government, which was perceived as the valet of imperialism. Given the cold war context and the extent of the internal conflicts within the various rebel groups, their defeat was foreseeable. Kabila had not yet proven to be a competent and efficient leader. He went back to basics by following political education sessions in China in 1966. After his return to Congo he sought for ways to apply what he had learned in the form of a new and independent rebel movement. In December 1967, after having returned to those still existing pockets of resistance, he created his own party – the Party of the Popular Revolution (PPR).

The maquis tried to establish itself from 1967 to 1975. Kabila created a small autonomous fiefdom with its own forms of social organisation, administration and even currency. Due to persistent actions by the government army, the PPR did not succeed in going beyond its original borders and its reputation remained very local, which greatly frustrated the PPR leaders. It was only in 1974 when one European and three American students were taken hostage that people remembered the existence of the maquis. This hostage affair was the beginning of the end for the PPR: Tanzania withdrew its support and Mobutu stepped up his attacks against the maquis. This broke the military backbone of the PPR.

Kabila settled down in Dar es Salaam where he founded a new family. Twins were born in 1971 – including Joseph Kabila. He finally left the maquis for good around 1978. Meanwhile, he devoted most of his time to his various commercial activities. After Kabila left, the maquis gradually became a peaceful movement for illicit trade.

In the late 1970s Kabila’s PPR was increasingly associated with political struggle abroad opposed to the dictatorship of Mobutu, possibly because of the military defeat of his movement on the ground. He attended a meeting organised by Belgian Maoists in Brussels (1979) and in 1982 participated in an anti-Mobutu peoples’ court in Rotterdam. His political action was hardly more successful than his guerilla activities, mainly because of his authoritarianism and refusal to cooperate. Nonetheless, two armed attacks, Moba I and Moba II at least proved that there was still an armed opposition within Zaire. Those attacks (in 1984 and 1985) also marked the disintegration of the maquis of Hewa Bora – the name of its capital (‘excellent atmosphere’ or ‘pure air’). Shortly after a bloody defeat, internal quarrels and a huge deception in the leadership of Kabila forced the majority of the officers of Hewa Bora to rebel against him. For the next ten years Kabila put aside politics and devoted himself to his trade activities while living in Tanzania and Uganda. Still, he maintained contacts with armed rebel groups in need of leadership.

Kabila tried in vain to take part in the National Conference that was set up by Mobutu in the early phases of ‘democratic transition’. On 6 December 1993 he allegedly published an open letter in which he expressed the view that democratisation with Mobutu and his allies would only be a parody and that the elimination of president Mobutu – necessarily by himself – was imperative. This corresponded with the geo-strategic priorities of Congo’s neighbours and the
interest of the international community at large. Laurent Désiré Kabila emerged as the right man to lead the new political order largely as a matter of chance. With the support of presidents Museveni and Kagame, Kabila created the Alliance of Democratic Forces of Liberation (ADFL), with Ngandu Kisase, Massassu Nindaga and Deogratias Bugera. The former was an old militant of the Lumumba movement; the two latter were very close to Rwanda through their origins and their political ambitions. On 31 October 1996 the forces of the Alliance, massively supported by troops from Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, attacked Bukavu and Goma. This marked the beginning of the fantastic odyssey that brought Laurent Désiré Kabila to power in Kinshasa on 17 May 1997. He had by then become the president of Alliance after the ‘mysterious’ death of Ngandu Kisase (see de Villers and Omasombo this issue).

Once in power, President Kabila portrayed himself as a nationalist leader formed in the spirit of the maquis. In reality, however, he was intransigent and strictly controlled the process of change. He could do little more than apply the model he had learned in the PPR maquis because he had never mastered any other political model. He alienated other political groups and distanced himself from the population who perceived him as being too close to his Rwandan allies. Moreover, he frustrated the Western world by his obstinate ‘nationalist’ views. He became increasingly unpredictable. When he tried to distance himself from his Rwandan and Ugandan patrons, a second war broke out on 2 August 1998. Despite support from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, Kabila was forced to sign the Lusaka Peace Agreements and accept the principle of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. Intransigent until the end Kabila persisted in sabotaging the implementation of the Lusaka Agreements. Ultimately, he alienated even his ostensibly closest allies. On 16 January 2001, in his Marble Palace office, Laurent Désiré Kabila was assassinated by his own bodyguard. He was succeeded by his son, major general Joseph Kabila.


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**Migradollars & Poverty Alleviation Strategy Issues in Congo (DRC)**

*Claude Sumata*

This briefing examines the motivations of agents and analyses the idea of risk-sharing behaviour in the absence of insurance or intertemporal markets in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Migration might provide a shelter against uncertain income prospects when financial markets ‘malfunction’ or do not exist. Labour migration tends to improve economic welfare of the destination countries and immigration may alleviate unemployment and provide inputs such as remittances and skills. Migration can also act as a mechanism for income redistribution and as a source for resources for families with migrants. International migration has had an overall positive impact on poverty alleviation in DRC. Remittances facilitate, to some extent, local entrepreneurial activity.

*Cet article essaye d’appréhender les motivations des agents et d’analyser le comportement de partage de risque en l’absence des marchés formels d’assur-ance, en considérant le cas du Congo/RDC.*
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Review of African Political Economy

processus migratoire constitue un abri contre des perspectives incertaines de revenus lorsque les marchés financiers sont dysfonctionnels ou inexistants. La volonté de diversification du portefeuille des actifs financiers des agents est à la base de la migration d’un ou de plusieurs membres de leurs familles. L’immigration demeure au centre des préoccupations de la famille directe du migrant du fait des ressources sup-plémentaires espérées. La migration internationale tend à améliorer le bien-être socio-économique des pays des-tinataires. L’analyse tend à cerner le rôle primordial de la migration comme mécanisme de redistribution de ressources et comme source de revenus pour les familles des migrants. La migration internationale a un impact global positif sur l’allègement de la pauvreté de nombreux ménages du Congo.


Cet article porte essentiellement sur les comportements d’épargne d’immigrés congolais en Europe (France, Royaume uni et Belgique). D’abord, nous allons souligner l’importance du contrat implicite liant le migrant à sa famille par le biais des transferts des ressources consécutives. Ensuite, l’impact de l’environnement macro-économique sur le processus de migration internationale au Congo sera abordé. Enfin, nous analyserons les déterminants de la migration congolaise en considérant les conséquences économiques du phénomène, avant de constater dans quelle mesure les transferts des ressources des migrants peuvent alléger la pauvreté des leurs familles et contribuer à la promotion des entreprises.

Introduction

One way to reduce risk for households in the absence of insurance markets is to allocate their labour to diversify sources of income. In Congo-Kinshasa, the local possibilities of diversification of activities are scarce due to hyperinflation and political crisis. In this context, strategies to diversify income may take the form of international migration. Hyperinflation has destroyed the main channels of productive activity making external migration a major adjustment mechanism.

The idea that risk sharing drives the process of migration in developing countries has long attracted the attention of researchers (Stark & Levhari, 1982; Lucas & Stark, 1985). This Briefing focuses mainly on the Congolese immigrants in France, UK and Belgium and their contribution to the development of their country. I then underline the link between migration and remittances and explore the impact of the macroeconomic environment on the migration process in Congo. I also examine how remittances may alleviate poverty and to some extent finance small-scale business.

Migration & Remittances

Tables 1 and 2 indicate that international migration has increased and official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries has fallen. It seems that

| Table 1: ODA as a Percentage of Government Expenditure |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| % | 0.85 | 0.82 | 0.80 | 0.71 | 0.60 | 0.59 |

remittances accounted for between $70 and $75bn per annum during the early 1990s (Van Hear, 1998). This amount is a significant proportion of world financial flows – $75bn is 50% more than ODA (World Bank, 2000). Remittances to developing countries represented approximately $550bn between 1988 and 1999, which is around $46bn per annum during this period.

Congolese nationals who live abroad are able to save money and make transfers home on a regular basis. These remittances, and the migration that make them possible, are the result of family strategies to diversify household income. Members of households in Africa tend to be more willing than elsewhere to invest in the education of (usually) the first born boy. Recent studies (Papademetriou & Martin, 1991; Durand et al. 1996) indicate the positive effects of remittances from international migration.

Migrants’ households seem to have a higher propensity to consume than households without migrants. There is some evidence to demonstrate that resources from migration tend to stimulate economic activity by increasing to some extent the levels of employment and investment.

### The Myth of Europe or Poto among the Congolese

The mythical representation of Europe as a new Eldorado or Mikili in Congolese society has been evident for some time. Music has also contributed to the legend by elevating a visit to Europe to the rank of a religious pilgrimage. Consequently, the return to the homeland is significant as migrants, mikilists or miguelists, are judged by material signs of enrichment. It also plays a key role by providing the opportunity to those who have been in Europe to present their achievements. Nevertheless, with the rapidly changing technicalities of transfers (Western Union and/or mobile phones for instance), migrants can contribute financially to the budget of the family at home without actually travelling home.

Diasporas can now stay in close touch with the family left behind as a result of improved international communications and media networks. With large-scale industrialisation and vastly improved methods of transport and communications, households are frequently motivated to migrate. In a globalising world, international migration is seen as the main source for investment of capital and western countries are seen as the places to go in order to escape from the cycle of

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Workers’ remittances (US$m)</th>
<th>Compensation of Employees (US$m)</th>
<th>Total (US$m)</th>
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</table>

local poverty. Congolese migrants have sustained attachments to home through transnational practices as trade and remittances play a crucial role in this context (MacGaffey & Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000).

In order to understand the socio-economic impact of migration it is necessary to analyse the remittance process. As the major reason behind migration to western countries was economic during the 1980s and 1990s, this strategy may be interpreted in two ways. The first was to satisfy personal ambitions and the second was the need to fulfil family obligations. With a worsening political and economic environment in Congo-DRC, it seems that most immigrants remit money in order to help parents, rather than the prospect to inherit, as emphasised by Lucas and Stark (1985) in the case of Botswana. The main reasons for remittances are the following: buying or constructing residential properties, supporting parents, supporting brothers and sisters, supporting other relatives, buying or setting up a business. Most migrants do not have the opportunity to launch a business in Congo-DRC: this strategy is too risky with a weak return on investment. It is also the case that the majority of migrants are not confident that the recipients of money sent home put the funds received to ‘appropriate use’. It is difficult to analyse the scale of remittances as the transfer of money tends to flow through different channels and most of them are ‘unofficial’. Aside from the transfer of money, the flow of in-kind transfers and gifts is also important.

**The Dynamics of Goods & Money Transfers**

There are many channels to remit goods and money and most remittances are not channelled through official transfers. One way to remit without major cost seems to be the use of services from relatives travelling to the homeland. Congolese migrants arrange unofficial transfers of goods and money in this context, but this is a high risk strategy with no guarantee that items arrive safely. Since the 1980s, individuals living abroad could remit through private agencies (both formal and informal) run by agents in Congo and especially in Kinshasa to ensure the smooth transfer of goods and money. The intermediaries are contacted by telephone and invited to act when an operation is required and given the appropriate information for identifying the recipient. The fees for this transaction are about 10% of the amount transferred.

Official banks are not generally involved in these financial transfers. However, some individuals may remit through banks even if this is costly and slow and there is a high risk of loosing money because of the use of official exchange rates. The means of transfers available within the official channels are limited and the absence of postal orders by mail personnel also motivate the use of unofficial transfers.

**The Impact of Macroeconomic Environment on Migration Process**

The depreciation of the Congolese currency and the dollarisation of the economy make the possession of foreign currencies a hedge for many families in Congo/DRC (Sumata, 2001a). In this context, Congolese face the tyranny of the parallel markets for foreign currencies and inflation. Hyperinflation, speculation and political instability mean that the value of the dollar is unpredictable. In Congo-Kinshasa, economic, political and social pressures have convinced individuals to leave their home country. Prolonged economic recession has been characterised by massive inflation, decreasing job security and declines in real income. Congo's external debt rose dramatically during the 80s reaching US$12.5bn by 1997. The rate of hyperinflation in Congo-Kinshasa reached 23,773. 1% per year by 1994. The situation remained catastrophic
in 2000 with a GDP of $3.9bn compared with $10bn in the previous decade. Inflation remained 511%.

Congo’s government revenue fell by 84% in 1989-1994 – the result of an eroded tax base, widespread tax evasion and the collapse of state mining. The total value of GECAMINES (the main company mining copper) exports, equivalent to 60% of total national export revenues in 1990, declined from $1,300m in 1990 to just $176m in 1994. The copper mines on which the country depended for two-thirds, some $1bn, of its exports, have been flooded. Diamonds became Congo’s principal source of foreign currency of about $32m in 1993, but three-quarters of its total are smuggled.

The decline in income and purchasing power pushed individuals out of Congo. The real value of wages was constantly eroded by the corrosive impact of hyperinflation even though the government had attempted the indexing of salaries. There is evidence that individuals are now more willing to leave their home to settle abroad permanently (Takeyuki Tsuda, 1999). About 1.7 million people have fled the country in the past five years. And goods transferred home and remittances tend to play a key role in keeping kinship ties close as well as providing a major channel of investment, due to the shortage of financial resources within the formal sector. In fact, the financial system is almost inoperative with rates of interest reaching 200%. Congolese’s foreign exchange parallel market for instance had traditionally been largely supplied by remittances of Congolese migrants either directly during holidays or via their families and relatives.

During the 1980s and 1990s the former Zairian economy witnessed the expansion of an active parallel economy (MacGaffey, 1991; Cour, 1989; Sumata, 2001a). The foreign sector of the economy was at the forefront of these parallel economic activities, encouraged by a system of mis-invoicing, smuggling and diversion of remittances from Congolese migrants to the parallel market for foreign exchange. According to the Governor of the Central Bank of Congo there was about $700m within this parallel channel yet only $8.6m as bank reserve in all the commercial banks in 1999.

The main supply of foreign exchange through the banking system is provided by diamond exports. Yet only around 20% is channelled through the official system, leaving the parallel economy to deal with approximately 80%. It is wise to point out that remittance flows seem to follow the same pattern, its importance as a source of foreign exchange calculated by the ratio of remittances to macroeconomics variables such as imports or exports; however, data on this is patchy. Remittances channelled through official channels represent approximately 20% of total remittances with the remainder transferred to meet the supply and demand for foreign currencies in the parallel foreign exchange market.

The share of imports financed through the parallel market (about 70% of total imports) seems to be very high both as a consequence of the bankruptcy of the formal banking system and the persistent shortage of foreign currencies. As foreign exchange was rationed administratively and limited to a small portion of population, the remainder – including individuals, officials, commercial and state enterprises – were supplied by the parallel market. These paid necessary imports and to ensure basic activities due to the dollarisation process characterised by negative interest rates. Even though widespread shortages of imported commodities did not emerge, price adjustment occurred generating the dynamics of hyperinflation during the 1990s. Under these conditions, foreign currencies seem to be more attractive as a hedge against inflation.
This partially explains the high scale of the parallel economy in Congo-DRC ensuring a continued deterioration in the external accounts and capital flight, as a significant flow of remittances remains in the unofficial channels. This phenomenon has led to the development of unrecorded activities by encouraging investment of largely unproductive outlets and inventory speculation. It seems that the informal financial sector is, in this context, the main source of credit to micro enterprises due to the shortage of liquidity within the formal banking system. In fact, the role of formal banks in financing micro enterprises in Congo-DRC is modest.

The inefficiency of domestic financial markets do not allow households in Congo-Kinshasa to borrow and insure against negative contingencies in the official sector. This has increased the impact of the informal financial markets and their role as 'a lender of the last resort'. However, the dynamics of hyperinflation, especially during the 90s, destabilises both formal and informal financial markets by insuring the development of parallel exchange markets which has a negative effect on the price level. This makes Congo-Kinshasa a fertile ground to study migration as a means for diversifying risk when the credit and insurance markets are malfunctioning or absent.

As migration is an opportunity for the household to diversify risk, it can occur even when wage and unemployment differentials are insignificant. The strategy is that households excluded from the formal financial markets and unable to gain access to credit and insurance markets may minimise risk by using their income to allow migration of their members and, in this context, may be a response to asymmetric information. Households concerned about their relative social status are more likely to be subject to relative deprivation and migration tends to be the main channel to improve their social rankings at home. One of the salient points of the migration process is the fact that first-comers can generate an externality by facilitating the migration of new migrants. Migrants from specific developing countries congregate in particular western countries to take advantage of the experience of earlier migrants.

**The Congolese Migration Process to Europe**

As a result of worsening economic conditions in the 80s, Congolese people were more willing to migrate to more prosperous countries of Belgium, France, UK and South Africa. Households could not survive economically in Congo-Kinshasa during the recession and migration was a way to improve their standard of living. It is apparent that the possibility of relatively high-paying jobs in Europe became a powerful economic incentive for migration when faced with the economic crisis and hyperinflation at home.

Migrant workers in the host country are willing to endure the type of degrading jobs that they avoided at home, usually unskilled and shunned by local workers. They are also less affected by the social degradation of low-status work because they gain an income that gives them substantial purchasing power at home. More importantly, a migration-system approach might help to understand transnational economic and historical connections between sending and receiving countries. Individuals tend to minimise risk by choosing societies that have close relationships with their own country. In the case of Congolese migrants in Belgium, the colonial link seems to be the key factor.

Despite the independence of Congo-Kinshasa from Belgium in 1960 Belgium has been actively involved in Congolese society up to the 90s. The substantial amount of foreign investment, transfer of capital and trade between the two countries has
strengthened the political relationship. It seems that the domestic cultural perceptions of the economic benefits of migration tend to play a crucial role in the Congolese migration process confirming its acceptability as a strategy for economic survival.

**Congolese Immigrants in Belgium**

Before 1980, immigration to Belgium was negligible. Congolese travelled to Belgium on a temporary basis, mostly as students, civil servants or tourists. Immigrants to Belgium during the 80s were mainly middle class seeking work and better pay as the economic opportunities and prospects were limited at home. Since 1990, the unprecedented level of political and socio-economic crisis was a fertile ground for continuing immigration. The civil war in 1996-1997 intensified this process when all strata of Congolese society dominated the ‘new’ wave of immigration. Wealthy individuals who purchased properties in Belgium were willing to immigrate. Yet the new dynamics tend to show that both rich and poor had no choice but to seek political asylum. In May 1997, as President Laurent Kabila came into power in Congo-Kinshasa, some of the former dignitaries of President Mobutu’s regime and their families emigrated to Belgium.

**Congolese Immigrants in France**

Congolese emigration to France started during the second half of the 70s as a result of declining economic opportunities in Congo-Kinshasa. Among the first were students seeking an improved education. Immigrants who came to France at that period to pursue their studies or to work could get an unskilled job easily. They could also apply for asylum and gain some resources, which were substantial compared with what they earned at home. Congolese musicians also helped build the image of ‘Parisiens’ which could work and invest at home. The flow to France increased in the 80s as the wealth of those who returned to Congo increased. Some successful Congolese acquired lorries and *kombi* (small vans) used to transport people and goods in Congo-Kinshasa, especially in Kinshasa. Congolese immigrants like many others from Africa, created their own businesses in France during the 90s as the risk to return home tended to decrease. Most entered the small and middle-level trades of food and agricultural products; some entered the import/export trade between France and Congo-Kinshasa. They also invested in businesses to sell textile and beauty care products. Other Congolese investment went into services such as shops, restaurants and video shops and agencies to send money and small goods home.

**Congolese Immigrants in the UK**

The inflow of immigrants and refugees from the DRC to the UK started around 1989. The number of Congolese asylum seekers and refugees rose drastically during the 90s. Applicants from the DRC represented 5% of the total of those granted ‘exceptional leave to remain in the UK’ in 1998. According to the Home Office (UK), the number of applicants for asylum increased from around 4,000 a year during 1985-1988 to 46,000 in 1998; the number continued to rise in 1998 and 1999 despite the introduction in February 1996 of DSS (Department of Social Security) benefit restrictions to asylum seekers. Asylum applicants to Western Europe increased in 1998. Belgium for instance, saw an increase of around 10,000 applicants in 1998 – double that of 1997.

A number of Congolese immigrants who had arrived in the UK came from other European countries including France and Belgium. It seems that the Shengen Convention of 19 May 1990, the main purpose of which was to tighten immigration requirements in Europe, helped divert Congolese immigration into the UK because Britain did not sign the agreement. It was to some extent against this back-
ground that many Congolese resolved to emigrate to the UK.

**Remittances & Poverty Alleviation**

The experience of Congolese in the 1990s illustrates the close link between remittances and the alleviation of poverty. Mismanagement, political instability and civil war transformed the economy into one heavily dependent on money transfers from Congolese nationals living abroad. Nevertheless, a large part of these remittances were not channelled through the official system and the authorities failed to create a series of concessional schemes.

The evidence regarding the use to which migrant savings are put is quite controversial. The amount that migrants save depends on the level of their income and necessary expenses for subsistence, accommodation, and transport. Some analyses emphasise that only a fairly small proportion of savings is allocated to productive investments. It seems that savings are largely spent on ‘conspicuous consumption’ to raise the status and comfort of migrants and their families. As observed above, a considerable portion of savings is used for house construction or land purchase. This kind of expenditure has been condemned by many researchers arguing that migrants’ savings and remittances could be used in a more productive way and that remittance spending may cause structural distortions such as inflation.

Russell (1992) has examined the uses and consequences of remittances and indicates that the distinction between consumption and investment expenditures is rather superficial. In fact, it seems that spending on housing, consumption, and services such as education and health may create employment and produce positive multiplier effects as well as reduce the need for government expenditure on infrastructure, subsidies, and services. More importantly, expenditures on housing may serve not only to raise the status of immigrants and their families, but also provide them with a better access to other local resources. International migration may therefore tend to improve economic welfare of the destination countries.

The flow of remittances from immigrants to their families and relatives amount to a significant percentage of exports in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1990s: 117% for Cape Verde and 83% for Eritrea. Between 1990 and 1996, Malians living abroad remitted approximately $110 million, representing around 25% of exports. Remittances from the Ghanaian diaspora represented the fourth largest source of foreign currency for the government in 1992. Immigrants also play a crucial role in regularly funding hospitals, home communities and ‘alma maters’ through the donation of equipment and money, benefiting not only individuals and local communities but also the government of Ghana (Manuy, 2000).

International migration has had an overall positive im-

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**Table 3: Remittances to Africa (US$m)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Workers' Remittances</th>
<th>Compensation of Employees</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>2,998</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>3,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>3,119</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>3,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>3,589</td>
<td>1,043</td>
<td>4,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3,423</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>4,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>4,838</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>5,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>4,846</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>5,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4,684</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>5,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5,383</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>6,364</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>5,464</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>6,392</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>6,389</td>
<td>905</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6,492</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>7,310</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5,993</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>6,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>68,173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** IMF Balance of Payments Statistics. Annual.
pact on poverty alleviation in DRC with remittances facilitating local entrepreneurial activity and representing a major inflow of capital for micro enterprises. Kinshasa’s transport system has already received important investment from Congolese citizens living abroad. In Kinshasa for instance, the amounts were more significant than elsewhere in Congo-DRC, as the number of families with migrants was significant and the immigration process continues. (Overseas remittances tend to be a huge part of informal financial markets in the Kinshasa area.) Congolese immigrants in Europe seldom return home even if their contribution to the family members’ revenues seems to be important.

**Conclusion**

The Congolese government should encourage immigrants to send their remittances through banks and not through the unofficial system that has promoted the development of the parallel market. The Congolese Franc, however, needs to gain strength against the dollar in order to persuade migrants that sending money through normal banking channels is not less advantageous. The Congolese government, therefore, needs to implement a significant economic reform programme with a key element devoted to the exchange reforms encouraging greater inflows of remittances through the official channels. The economic contribution of the diaspora and the subsequent flow of remittances could be further oriented to reverse the catastrophic dynamics of a mineral based economy lacking essential physical infrastructure. The design of future policy should aim to achieve a significant increase in the share of remittances brought through official channels, in addition to enhancing export performance.

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Peace Agenda 2002

9 January: President Kabila requests UN to take stricter measures to respect Lusaka Accords.

13-15 January: Joseph Kabila, Jean-Pierre Bemba and Adolphe Onusumba meet in Blantyre, Malawi in the margins of a special SADC (South African Development Community) summit.

4-18 February: Third informal consultation in Geneva after those in New York (November 2001) and Abuja, Nigeria (December 2001). The meeting brings together representatives of the DRC government and the rebels in preparation of the official summit between Joseph Kabila, Jean-Pierre Bembe and Adolphe Onusumba. The summit, however, did not take place.

25 February-19 April: The Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) takes place in Sun City, South Africa. Partial Agreement between Kinshasa and the MLC of Bemba, which confirms the Presidency of Kabila and awards Bemba the post of Prime Minister during a transitional period. The RCD and some other parties reject the agreement.

27 April-7 May: Mission of the UN Security Council to 8 African countries.

14 May: According to eye witnesses and MONUC (United Nations Organization Mission in the DRC), a revolt against the local authorities and the RCD (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie/Rally for Congolese Democracy) in Kisangani is violently repressed. MONUC estimated at least 200 casualties.

26 May: The signatories of the Sun City Accord start the draft of a Constitution.

28 May: The DRC lodges a complaint with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague against Rwanda for its massive human rights violations and armed aggression. The DRC demands that the ICJ considers Rwanda guilty of the genocide of more than 3.5 million Congolese and demands provisional measures be taken against Rwanda. On 10 July the ICJ rejects the request but said that its ruling did not affect the overall case against Rwanda.

14 June: The UN renews the MONUC mandate for another year but a decision regarding its reinforcement is postponed.

30 July: Memorandum of Understanding signed by Joseph Kabila and Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda in Pretoria, South Africa on the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the territory of the DRC and the dismantling of the ex-FAR (Rwandan Armed Forces) and Interahamwe (Rwandan Hutu militia) in the DRC.

9 September: Joseph Kabila and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda sign an accord in Luanda, Angola, for the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from eastern DRC and a normalisation of relations between the two countries.

16 September: Addressing the UN Security Council in New York, President Kagame announced that Rwandan troops would begin their pullout from neighbouring DRC ‘in approximately one week’s time’.

18 September: Approximately 800 troops of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) begin their withdrawal from the DRC from the eastern city of Kindu.

Compiled by Saskia Van Hoyweghen and Theodore Trefon.
Reviews


The Congo: From Leopold to Kabila. A People's History forms part of the current wide scientific debate on the legacy of colonialism, democracy, governance, the rule of law and development in Africa. The book comprises eight chapters.

Nzongola asks two main questions: Did the Congolese people make any progress in their efforts to be liberated from both colonialism and neo-colonialism in all its forms and be able to freely determine their own destiny and use their bountiful natural resources to improve their living condition? He answers in the negative, as people in the Congo have only experienced violence and violation of their rights since the establishment of their country in 1885.

The main aim of this book is to analyse the democracy movement in the Congo, which is a struggle sustained by the popular classes for political freedom, economic prosperity and improvement of living conditions. He classifies the history of democracy movements into four periods: resistance to colonial rule, resistance to the neo-colonial state, resistance to Mobutu's dictatorship and resistance to the new tyranny brought on by Laurent Kabila and the associated foreign occupation.

National Liberation Movement Before Independence

After the foundation of the Congo as a free state, national democracy movements were aimed against Belgian rule and the colonial state based on political oppression, exploitation and crimes against humanity committed by the Leopoldian system of primitive accumulation. The liberation movements were led by four main social groups: peasants, middle class civil servants, unruly segment of the informal sector that resulted from post-war urbanisation and formal workers, as the Belgian Congo had the third largest number of wage-earners in Africa.

Nzongola exposes the debate on the worst horrors and human rights violations committed in the Congo during the reign of Leopold II, something that remains largely unspoken internationally. These atrocities led to the first worldwide human rights campaign of the twentieth century, initiated by American journalists, American missionaries, and a Nigerian businessman, Hezeckiah Abdraw Shanu, who lectured on the Congo in Belgium, England, France and Germany in 1894.

The rapid economic growth created by post-war modernisation, Nzongola argues, played an important role in the rise of a second type of mass nationalism and struggle against the Belgian rule in the Congo. The emergence of intellectuals, the creation of a new political class of natives and the organisation of skilled and unskilled workers in urban areas created a new and strong type of popular resistance to oppression and claim for economic and social justice. An alliance arose between the rural masses, peasants and local literate petty bourgeoisie to fight against the Belgian colonial system and for independence.
One of the most important aspects of political struggle in the Congo before independence analysed by Nzongola was the birth of the independence movement in the late 1950s. He explains how the mass protests on 4 January 1959, with the slogan ‘immediate independence’, sounded the death knell for Belgian colonialism there and initiated radical new claims and struggles for independence. The violence and death caused by this protest, the international context characterised by claims for independence elsewhere in the third world, the independence of some African countries and the Algerian war, obliged the Belgians to negotiate independence.

The Democracy Movement After Independence

For Nzongola, national liberation movements and struggles in the Congo after independence continued because all postcolonial leaders of the country broke their anti-colonial alliances with the popular masses and have failed to fulfil Congolese aspirations for more political freedom, economic and social development.

He focuses on three different periods: the first Congo crisis between 1960 and 1965; the Mobutu era; and the struggle for multiparty democracy since 1990. The defeat of colonialism was a great victory for local people, especially for the rural and urban masses. Unfortunately, their hopes were betrayed. Therefore, a new kind of struggle was launched, this time against their compatriots to get what they called ‘the second independence’. Under the cold war, they realised that their enemies were both inside and outside the Congo. Nzongola analyses the first Congo crisis by highlighting the role played by different secessionist movements backed by Belgium in the provinces of Katanga and South Kasai; the mutiny of the army of 10 July 1960 and the large and ambitious peace keeping operation undertaken by the UN at that time. Then, he describes the second independence movement as the first major resistance against postcolonial state in Africa. This was organised between 1963 and 1964 by a popular alliance of workers, peasants, unemployed urban youth, students, lower civil servants and radical nationalist leaders. The people fought for freedom, democratic rights and better social and economic conditions. The Congolese called this struggle a ‘second independence’ to make sense of the crisis of decolonisation and to carry on with the struggle for genuine independence in the Congo originally launched by Lumumba. The masses labelled their new officials as ‘liars’ and ‘new whites’ and vowed to fight for improved living conditions. For Nzongola, the failure of the second wave of democracy movement resulted from the leaders of these movements being neither revolutionaries nor democrats, but corrupt, tribalistic and nepotistic.

Mobutu & Kabila Regimes

Nzongola’s analysis of the Mobutu regime describes how Mobutu considered the Congo as his personal possession by privatising the state and its assets for his own benefit and that of his relatives, cronies, followers and clients. During his 32 years in office, Mobutu held absolute power, using dictatorship and personal rule to exploit the country and its people.

Nzongola explains how Mobutu’s externally-backed regime became kleptocratic, using his power to plunder the country, using money as an instrument of power to control the country, creating misery for ordinary people, who faced ferocity, gross violations of human rights, assassinations, extra judicial executions, massacres of unarmed civilians and other atrocities, and most dramatically – the demobilisation of the masses democratic movement.

Mobutu’s regime weakened with the struggle for multiparty democracy. People started to fight against Mobutu’s
dictatorship and reign of terror from the late 1960s. Initially, the Catholic Church led the democratic movement in Kinshasa. At the same time, two main externally based movements fought Mobutu and in the late 1970s they were relayed by politicians, the civil society, and students.

By the early 1980s, a third period of the Congolese democracy movement emerged with a 52-page letter sent to President Mobutu in December 1980 by a group of 13 members of parliament demanding political reforms. Jailed, tortured, and banished to remote detention centres in the countryside, these politicians continued to fight for democracy.

By the 1990s, Mobutu was losing his grip on power and, on 24 April 1990, he announced the end of the one party state and the return to pluralist democracy. The great achievement of this struggle was the organisation of the Sovereign National Conference (CNS). Unfortunately, the CNS failed to achieve the goal for which people gave it their full support, as Mobutu was constantly interfering in its organisation. All institutions established between 1990 and 1996 to manage the transition to a multiparty system of democracy failed to do so by the time a civil war erupted in the east of the country in September 1996.

The Ugandan and Rwandan-backed civil war in 1996 allowed Laurent Desiré Kabila to proclaim himself head of the Congolese state on 17 May 1997 after the departure of Mobutu into exile. Nzongola goes on to analyse how backed by Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, Laurent Kabila rose to power with nothing on his agenda to govern the Congo. Without any autonomous and credible organisation or a coherent political vision, Laurent Kabila drove the country once again into dictatorship and tyranny by closing all political spaces and by banning all political parties and activities. Nzongola analyses how the ongoing civil war started in August 1998, with all its currents consequences, including 3 million deaths.

Conclusion

The main point for this book is that since 1908 and particularly after the mid-1950s, the Congolese people have fought for freedom and waged major struggles for democratic changes and improvement of their living conditions. Nzongola has highlighted the fact that human beings everywhere have a permanent aspiration for freedom and a better social, economic and political life. Therefore, it is a necessity for any people under any form of oppression to fight for political demands for a new social project. For Nzongola, all democracy movements in the Congo have failed because of their weaknesses, the weakness of the political culture among its leaders and the constraints of the international political environment. In talking about post-independence regimes, he mentioned the fact that the Mobutu regime was central to the destruction of the Congo and the collapse of the state.

The Congo: From Leopold II to Kabila. A People's History is one of the best books on Congolese political history, covering a period of more than a century. Nzongola analyses in depth the real roots of the Congolese predicament. His analysis of the main periods of political history, his explanation of the 116 years of external interests in the Congo, making the country a prime candidate for imperial ambitions and the envy of looters of all kinds, enhances the depth of the book. The author has demonstrated with courage how the Congolese wealth has enriched the country's rulers and their external political allies and business partners who have supported non-democratic regimes by reinforcing networks of corruption and lootings.

Nzongola is right in asserting that democratisation of the political life in the Congo is the only way that will allow the country to start a real process towards
freedom. However, through the book, he mentions that the Congolese people struggle and resist to oppression and dictatorship because of their need for freedom and the need for the improvement of their social and economic situation, which mean development. Moreover, at the beginning of the book, he wanted to know if the Congolese people were able to use their bountiful natural resources to improve their living conditions. Unfortunately, throughout the book, he said little about development and how a democratic regime in the Congo can develop its people, as nowadays, governance and development are strongly linked. People who are mostly interested in the daily understanding of links between democracy, governance and development remain unsatisfied, as few tools have been provided to improve their ways of practising development.

The author pinned too much hope on the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, which has just failed to unite all Congolese people, and to reach a peaceful solution for the future of the country. Nzongola has studied Congolese politics for more than a generation and was deeply involved in the work of the CNS. During that period, he witnessed how Mobutu and his followers (who constituted the majority of negotiators during the Inter-Congolese Dialogue) frequently ripped off the real opposition. Now the inter-Congolese dialogue has collapsed and the crisis continues. As a leading Congolese scholar in his field and one of the few Congolese who have effectively acted as academic, activist and participant to the Congolese political debate, he could have foreseen the collapse of the dialogue and suggested effective solutions to end the crisis.

Finally, based upon his understanding of the Congolese political situation and previous failures of all democracy movements, it would be better if he suggested how the Congolese people should continue their struggle and resistance to all forms of oppressions.

King Congo
Victoria Brittain

For 30 years, Mobutu terrorised Zaire and butchered his enemies, all the while indulging his vanity with a personal film crew. The footage is the basis of a chilling film: *Buy, Buy, Money, Money, Diamonds, Money, Money*. That's what it was all about, according to one of Mobutu's former ministers who was an enthusiastic interviewee for this extraordinary expose of Africa's most baroque monarchical regime. Nothing you knew about Mobutu's venal reign in the Congo, which he remade as Zaire: the murder of...
the nationalist prime minister Patrice Lumumba, the long co-operation with the CIA, the assassinations and the crushing of political life, prepares you for the interviews and archive footage in Thierry Michel’s film, Mobutu, King of Zaire.

Mobutu Sese Seko, once a journalist, loved to be on camera and had a film crew at hand for private occasions as well as public. Some of his friends must be regretting that since this film went on release in Belgium, France and eight French-speaking African countries.

In his glory days, Mobutu and his first wife, Marie Antoinette, were honoured at the White House first by Richard Nixon, then by George Bush. He drove in an open-topped carriage with the Queen, was close to King Baudouin of Belgium and liked to emphasise that a mere month separated their birth dates.

Behind this story of absolute power and how it corrupts absolutely, are those who conspired to get it for their man and to keep it for him. Astonishingly, several of the key westerners who played these roles were prepared to discuss this openly on film.

Mobutu was shrewd enough to understand what he had done in eliminating Lumumba and neatly rewrote history making him into a national hero a mere five years later. It was one of the propaganda manipulations that wiped out the collective memory of the Congolese, allowed dictatorship to flourish, and laid the foundations for the political chaos that envelops the country.

Mobutu’s competence was in another sphere. Intrigue was his speciality. His associates describe how he trapped President Giscard into saving his regime by sending French legionnaires to put down the rebellion in Kolwezi in 1978.

And, in a more intimate sphere, several of his close circle relate how Mobutu systematically slept with the wives of ministers and officials in order to emasculate their husbands, as well as to secure inside information on their plans and opinions. And if sex was not powerful enough, there was always gris gris, the magic of the marabouts who Mobutu increasingly relied on.

The other great resource of his life was his family. Mobutu’s private life was never private because of his fascination with the cameras, which recorded his exotic home life. After the death of Marie Antoinette he married his mistress, with whom he already had several children, and took her twin sister as mistress.

His Belgian son-in-law, Pierre Janssen, describes how harmonious the threesome was, and on film there are the twins, Bobi and Kasia, beaming either side of their man at table, while their little girls, eternally in party frocks, climb up and down on papa.

Even at the funerals of two of his children there are the twins weeping together over the open coffins as Mobutu produces his hankie. At ceremonial occasions you see Madame, but which one is it? They are identical, no one could tell them apart, except perhaps Mobutu.
Bibliography: The Democratic Republic of the Congo (former Zaire)

Compiled by Chris Allen

This listing covers material published from 1990 onwards, and has been compiled with the very welcome help of contributors to this issue, but without access to major libraries. As a result there will be missing items, and some of the references are incomplete. I have tried to be as complete as possible as far as books and pamphlets, and materials by Congolese authors, are concerned.

The period covered is 1990-2002, with the exception of a number of recent studies on events before then that are particularly salient now: Lumumba, the role of the UN, and ethnicity and citizenship. Many of these items will be found listed under the heading ‘History 1960-1990’in the index. The index otherwise is by broad disciplinary headings, with one exception; since over half the items fall into the Politics category, this has been roughly subdivided.

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