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**THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO:
FROM INDEPENDENCE TO AFRICA'S FIRST WORLD WAR**

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1. Introduction

At independence it was known as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Soon after independence President Joseph Désiré Mobutu Sese Seko named it Zaire. Recently, following the overthrow of President Mobutu by the forces of the Alliance of Democratic Forces of the Congo (Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération - ADFL) led by Laurent Désiré Kabila and backed by the forces of Rwanda and Uganda, it regained its name at independence, Democratic Republic of Congo. This ex-Belgian colony has undergone exceptionally tragic experiences in recent times. Vast (roughly the size of non-Russian Europe) and rich (it can produce 80 per cent of the world's industrial diamonds, plus tin, copper and cobalt), it has been the scene of barbarism and brutality for five years. At stake are not only the government in Kinshasa, but also the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the country and the stability of the entire Great Lakes.

On 16 January 2001, President Laurent Kabila was assassinated. The assassination came as a surprise to many external and internal observers, since President Kabila gave the impression of being in control of affairs at least in the zone held by his government. During his short stay in power many people went as far as comparing him to President Mobutu. Many feared a return to a kind of Mobutuism without Mobutu.¹ But few people saw Kabila's antagonistic attitude towards the west, his inability to create minimum democratic conditions for the people within his area of control and his reluctance to implement the July 1999 Lusaka Accord as strong enough reasons to predict his eventual downfall. The question of who was actually behind the assassination remains unanswered, but whatever the reason, there is wide recognition that President Kabila prolonged the uncertainty of the future of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Laurent Kabila came to power in a country destroyed by 32 years of President Mobutu's kleptocratic and authoritarian regime, and was seen as a saviour who would take the country out of its political, economic and social difficulties. This hope, however, faded quickly when Laurent Kabila, despite promising democracy, named himself president and ruled by decree. He monopolized all executive, legislative, and judicial powers. Nevertheless, the fact that the DRC has been subjected to two major armed rebellions, the first against President Mobutu, the second against his successor, in the space of less than a year, should drive home one conclusion: "the malaise driving forward the Congo crisis was generated by more than just the failure of Kabila (Sr.)'s government to keep promises."²

The civil war in Congo is a reflection of the country's past colonial experience since it was first opened up to Western exploitation by the explorer Henry Stanley. When the great imperial grab for Africa started in the 1880s, there was a general unwillingness to see the Congo fall into the hands of any major power, so it was handed over to King Leopold as a personal gift, making him sole lawmaker and owner of a territory the size of Europe. King Leopold has gone down in history as perhaps one of the most despicable of all colonialists. Successive governments, from the Belgian administration to the regimes of Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent Kabila did nothing to seriously

¹ Schatzberg, M.G., Beyond Mobutu: Kabila and the Congo, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1997, p. 71

² Mamdani, M., South African Initiative in the Congo Crisis, Special Bulletin, Association of Concerned African Scholars [Harare], No. 53/54, October 1998, p. 20

restore the dignity of the Congolese people. “Mobutu was put in place, and kept there, by Western interests”,³ led by the United States.

Laurent Kabila was put in power by distinctly African interests, though with US backing, namely Rwanda and Uganda, that were the mainstay of the first rebellion of 1997.⁴

The second rebellion, which started on 2 August 1998, only seven months after the successful first one, was supposed to be quick and narrowly focused. However, Rwanda’s and Uganda’s intervention was quickly blocked by Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, with lesser involvement from the Sudan and Chad, who all sent in troops to help Kabila’s government and to advance their narrow strategic interests. Besides the presence of these national armies, at least 12 irregular armed groups, including rebel groups and militias, are active.⁵ The West Nile Bank Front, Uganda National Rescue Front II, the former Ugandan National Army, the Burundian Defence Forces for Democracy, the former Rwandan Army (Ex-FAR), the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and Allied Democratic Front (ADF), both of Uganda, as well as the Angolan rebel movement UNITA are some of the insurgent groups operating in the DRC. It is probably the most complex war that Africa has had to grapple with since its post-colonial battles.⁶ Because of the multitude of countries and rebel groups involved the war has been termed Africa’s “First World War”.

Efforts to bring peace to the DRC culminated in the signing of the Lusaka Accord by all parties involved physically in the war. However, the Accord remained just a piece of paper as belligerents continuously violated it. But the death of Laurent Kabila has brought changes. Kabila’s reluctance to implement the Lusaka Accord was considered by many as the main obstacle to peace. His abrupt disappearance from the Congolese political scene has therefore eliminated the main cause for the continuation of hostilities. This war, which has lasted three years, has sent many Congolese citizens to neighbouring countries as refugees. It has also displaced many more internally, and increased the suffering of the population throughout the territory.

Analysis of the events reveals clearly that the present crisis has its roots in the way Europeans operated in the DRC. Considering the society left behind by the Belgians, it was obvious that chaos and uncertainty would characterize the immediate post-independence period with serious effects on the economy. Indeed, few Africans were prepared to take over the reins of government in ways other than through imitation of their former overlords. The experience that Congo had of colonial government was in the nature of authoritarian regimes that broach no opposition. The machinery of the state was viewed as the sole route of access to wealth and, in the final analysis, the authorities relied upon armed force to maintain their hold. President Mobutu used the same methods to perpetuate his dominance over the Congolese people. Signs were there that President Laurent Kabila was following the same route.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Kabemba, C., Central Africa: Mediating Peace Where There Is None, *Conflict Trends*, Issue 3, September 1999, p. 23

⁶ Reyntjens, F., The Second Congo War: More Than a Remake, *African Affairs*, No. 98, 1999

The process of exploitation of the resources of the vast Congo territory pushed Belgium to look to the wider region for the supply of labour, especially for the Katanga mining industry. It naturally turned to the vast population of Kivu, Rwanda and Burundi, Zambia and Kasai province.⁷ But the population of Rwanda constituted the main reliable source. However, these immigrants from Rwanda, because of the colonial system which organized people according to their origin and tribe, did not become integrated with the indigenous Congolese despite the fact they have lived together for many decades peacefully. Indeed, Belgian policy did not favour integration of different ethnic groups.

Additionally, colonial legislation was not clear on the issue of the status of the population of Rwandan origin in Congo, and at independence, legislation dealt only with election-related problems and failed to address the citizenship question of what had become an extremely diverse population. One must bear in mind that the citizenship of this population is one of the causes of the current conflict in the DRC. In 1960, Congo hastily gained its independence while major issues remained unresolved, issues that would sooner or later generate serious conflicts among the populations of the Great Lakes region.⁸ The Belgian colonizer succeeded in establishing the three countries, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, without a clear vision of a nation. The more than two hundred Congolese ethnic groups and the three ethnic groups that are found in both Rwanda and Burundi progressed separately without real integration. The unique common denominator between them was their servitude to the same administration. Colonial prescriptions gave rise to the distinction between settlers and natives among those living in the colony. This prescription continues in post-independence Congo.

2. Governance of the DRC During the Mobutu Era

After five years of political instability, Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu took power on 24 November 1965. He quickly asserted control over the state. Like the Belgians before him, Mobutu reverted to a form of strong centralized and oppressive administration. By hanging in public four former ministers from the first Republic in an affair known as the Pentecost Plot, Mobutu clearly sent a message to the Congolese people that opposition to his programme would not be tolerated.⁹ He took advantage of the political chaos of multiparty democracy that had prevailed during the first five years of independence, to progressively dismantle the institutions of the first Republic and to abolish the constitution. He totally ignored the fundamental law, the first Congolese constitution based on multiparty democracy. The 1964 Luluaburg constitution suppressed the parliamentary regime and gave exclusive ownership of the soil and subsoil to the Congolese State. In 1967, he modified the Luluaburg constitution, introducing a two party democracy system. In 1970 he further consolidated his power by introducing the one party system which fused together the Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution - his political party, and the State.

⁷ Baleme, N.K.A., *Bantu Ethnic and Traditional Realities in Focus of Central Africa*, Libreville: CICIBA, 1999, pp. 28 and 101

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Leslie, W.J., *Zaire: Continuity and Political Change in an Oppressive State*, Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1993, p. 32

During that process President Mobutu put in place a package of political mobilization around an artificially created ideology. He quickly became a semi god. Other political leaders had no choice but to join him or go into exile. He had the power to appoint, dismiss, restructure and install governments as he wished without any consideration of the constitution that he had been modifying unilaterally. Nigel Rodley, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, wrote, in his annual reports to the world body, that “methods of torture used in countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo during President Mobutu’s reign included extreme physical beating, breaking of limbs, electric shocks, sexual abuse, deportation and execution.”¹⁰ Psychological techniques included deprivation of salary, food, sleep and light. All these inhuman methods were monitored by the Army, the Garde Civil, and other security forces as well as by prison officials. The Washington Office on Africa presents a non-exhaustive list of mass torture and killings undertaken by the state power between 1965 and 1992.¹¹ Prisons like Makala in Kinshasa, Kasapa in Lubumbashi, Buluo in Likasa, Angenga and Ekafela in Equator Province as well as Luzumu in the Bas Congo have seen thousands of innocent people tortured and murdered. It is unlikely that the number of people who have disappeared at the hands of the secret services will ever be accurately determined.

President Mobutu was among the last of Africa’s long-ruling leaders to give in to the pressure for political reform on the continent. In 1990 when he announced an end to the one party state, his 26-year grip on power was severely weakened by a broad coalition of opposition groups and external pressure.¹² But he continued to resist change by ordering troops to disperse demonstrators and by arresting opposition leaders. Despite all the manoeuvring, a National Conference took place and was attended by more than 4,000 delegates.¹³ Although he had agreed to the National Conference taking place, Mobutu rejected the notion that it could claim sovereignty over the country’s affairs. When this strategy failed, he went to the other extreme, creating as many political parties as possible in an effort to divide and rule. Three months after the National Conference, the government had registered 381 political parties.¹⁴ But most of them never advanced beyond an embryonic stage of development. Very few attempted to extend their reach to other provinces and rural areas and to other ethnic groups. It is useful to note that all political parties in Congo are ethnic related, coming from the colonial cultural associations. The result was that President Mobutu, a tactical genius, continued to dominate Zairian politics until the rebellion of 1997 that overthrew him. The paradox that emerged during the Mobutu era was that the masses were the ones which were demanding democracy and a state regulated by rights. The predatory ruling class, on the other hand, deprived of credibility and thus deprived of the possibility to operate on a regional and international level, sought in vain a national legitimacy by resorting to vulgar populism.

¹⁰ Quoted in news item in *The Washington Post*, 5 April 1996

¹¹ Washington Office on Africa, *Zaire: A Nation Held Hostage*, Washington DC, June 1992, pp. 21-6

¹² When on 24 April 1990 Mobutu announced the democratization of the country, a broad opposition coalition emerged, variously drawing support from dissatisfied regional elites, excluded politicians and army officers, businessmen seeking fair access to state resources, trade unions, professionals, scholars, civil servants churches, media and youth.

¹³ *Africa News*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1991

¹⁴ Kabungulu, N., *La transition démocratique au Zaire: avril 1990 - juillet 1994*, Kinshasa: CIODOS, 1995

Unlike in 1960, the country in the 1990s has developed a civil society and a public opinion that wanted to participate in the wave of democracy which was sweeping the world. The Sovereign National Conference increased the pressure for a weakening of the dictatorship. It is important to point out that the internal opposition forces pledged to maintain the principle of non-violence, while Mobutu resorted to violence. His ally and long term supporter, the USA, could not rescue him. The “Mobutu or chaos” assumption did not hold in the post Cold War era. The best the US administration could do was to push for a peaceful transition. As President Mobutu’s legitimacy dwindled, he ruled increasingly through coercion, mainly via the army. His repression units engaged in clashes with the opposition leadership and the population on several occasions. Notable among these are the attack on University of Lubumbashi students on 11 May 1990; the week following 23 September 1991 when frustration erupted into a week of rioting and looting in Kinshasa by the Zairian armed forces, which later moved to all major cities; the episode on 16 February 1992 when security forces opened fire on church parishioners who were engaged in a peaceful protest, killing at least 33 people; and the riots on 28 January 1993 over a currency dispute, with the death toll estimated at between 300 and 1,000. In this latter incident the French ambassador, Phillippe Bernard, was also killed.

But it was President Mobutu’s ability to procure resources from the international community that was critical to the maintenance of this increasingly dysfunctional political entity.¹⁵ During the Mobutu era, Congo was known for its systematic and institutionalized corruption. This unfortunately led the entire society into a unique patron-client network. Like the office of President Mobutu, government ministries, departments and other institutions were made up of a plethora of advisers, mostly from the minister’s native tribe. This meant that when the President decided to replace or discharge a minister, it implied the withdrawal of privileges from an entire tribe which had been protected by that powerful figure in government. In the same way, the rise of a man to a government position was considered as the President extending privileges to an entire tribe.

On the economic front, the situation was no different. A decade after independence, the economic resources of the country remained exclusively in foreign hands. President Mobutu decided to embark on what he claimed to be a quest for economic sovereignty and economic development by putting back the resources into Congolese hands. Three main policies were put in place to make sure that this happened: economic development by concentrated industrialization, focus on agriculture as the engine of development, and finally “Zairianization”.

The policy of economic development by “focal node” or “pole” lasted from 1965 to 1980. The government chose three poles, Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kisangani, around which heavy industries were to be located to drive the economy. Ambitious and ultimately disastrous development projects during the early 1970s were constructed and financed through external borrowing.¹⁶ For example, the steel mill of Maluku with an investment cost of US\$250 million never operated at more than 10 per cent of its capacity. By 1980 the plant had closed. The radio-television complex cost US\$185 million. But the complex is in bad condition and the radio broadcasting never reaches beyond 150 km. Another example is the Congolese international trading center in Kinshasa with an investment

¹⁵ Kabemba, C., *Whither the DRC? Causes of the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Way Forward*, Policy: Issues and Actors, Vol.12, No. 1, Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 1999, p. 9

¹⁶ Leslie, W.J., pp. 104-6

cost of US\$120 million. But the building has been deserted by businesses. Another strategy was to make agriculture the engine of development. Agriculture in the words of the government was the “priority of priorities”. It was supposed to reduce the importation of food which was taking the bulk of the country’s foreign currency. Unfortunately, the government failed to realize its objective. It never allocated more than three per cent of the state budget to the agriculture sector. Then came the policy of Zairianization. In order to lead the economy into autonomy, Mobutu announced in a speech before the National Legislative Council on 30 November 1973 that the government intended to seize all the small and medium businesses in foreign hands to complement earlier efforts to exert state control over the mineral resources of the country. The policy of Zairianization was hastily conceived and poorly implemented. Approximately 2,000 businesses were appropriated by the state. The bulk of the companies went to individuals at the top of the regime’s hierarchy. These included President Mobutu himself and members of his family. The disastrous effects of Zairianization became visible very soon, just a few months later when most of the businesses in the hands of Congolese went bankrupt.

The political economy of the DRC under Mobutu was simply kleptocratic and viewed by some observers as a pyramidal system based on patrimonial redistribution. The process began on top with the relatively small presidential clan linked to President Mobutu through family or personal ties.¹⁷ These rulers and officials aimed at maximizing their personal wealth and the welfare of their clan and close supporters and have to a large extent disregarded national social welfare. They occupied positions in hierarchically established structures, in which the paramount chief (President Mobutu), along with his various sub-chiefs and a variety of other administrative and military officials, exercised a type of political leadership in which they had genuine power, frequently life-and-death power, over others. This forced each concerned person to use his position in government institutions and parastatals to advance and protect the interests of his tribal constituency. From then on, recruitment and appointment to governmental positions, allocation of land, scholarships and public service accommodation etc. no longer depended on objective criteria. Rather everything depended increasingly on favouritism based on family and ethnic relations.¹⁸ “Those who benefited most in the Mobutu era were some natives of Equator, particularly the Ngbandi people”,¹⁹ Mobutu’s own clan. This political economy was continuously and carefully redefined. It consisted of transforming the public resources of Congo into private wealth while using bribery and violence to suppress any movement for change. This kleptocratic system came to be termed *le mal Zairois*, a term used by President Mobutu himself to describe the system he helped put in place. One outside observer describes Zaire as a “personally appropriated state”, noting that during the 1980s President Mobutu’s wealth was estimated to be about the same as the whole national debt.²⁰

There were four types of financial flows that helped to enrich President Mobutu, his family and associates. There was first the cover-up payments by foreign governments, including the US; second, the use of the Congolese treasury as a personal account; thirdly, export revenues from Congolese mineral and natural resources and lastly foreign aid and investment funds. The President,

¹⁷ Kabemba, C., *Whither the DRC?*, p. 35

¹⁸ Baleme, p. 82

¹⁹ *Le Potentiel* [Kinshasa], No. 466, 16 May 1994, pp. 1-8

²⁰ Filatova, I., *Democracy Versus State: The African Dilemma*, in Solomon, H. and Liebenberg, I. (eds.), *The Consolidation of Democracy in Africa: A View from the South*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers, 2000, p. 14

his family and associates misdirected, over the years, up to 40 per cent of the government's operating budget, up to 50 per cent of mineral export revenues and up to 50 per cent of the government capital budget.²¹ Attempts to reform the financial system in Congo ended in utter failure. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sent Erwin Blumenthal, a senior banker, partly at the behest of a close friend of President Mobutu, under the Carter Administration, to monitor the Congolese central bank and promote financial integrity. Blumenthal left Congo frustrated, declaring that the corrupt system in Zaire, with all its wicked and ugly manifestations, its chronic mismanagement and fraud would destroy all endeavours for change.²²

The regime went to the extent of counterfeiting Congolese currency to buy foreign currencies on the black market. Lebanese interests printed some of these counterfeit notes abroad, especially in Argentina, while Congolese and Lebanese businesses printed others locally under the protection of the big man.²³ If the full history of Congo's foreign borrowing is ever reconstructed, it would be likely to show that most of the very heavy national foreign debt was stolen or squandered after it was borrowed. This reality is known not only to Congolese, but also to lenders themselves who, despite this fact, continued to give the government more money. One issue that created tension between President Laurent Kabila and the foreign governments and international financial institutions was his refusal to pay back the Congolese debt on the basis that it never benefited the Congolese people.

Obviously it is no secret that the Mobutu regime was sustained and protected by Western powers especially the US and France. To illustrate the level of confidence the US had in Mobutu, this is what President George Bush had to say, "Zaire is among America's oldest friends and its President Mobutu one of our most valued friends and so I was honored to invite President Mobutu to be the first African head of state to come to the United States of America for an official visit during my presidency."²⁴ France and the US based their foreign policy towards the country on the premise that Zaire without President Mobutu would be in chaos.

The special close relationship between the US and Zaire was forged during the Cold War and maintained over the years, even in times of revolutionary rhetoric or displeasure at US criticism of Mobutu's domestic policy. Successive US administrations considered Zaire and President Mobutu as a friend. This was shown on several occasions. For example, during the Shaba I war (1977), Mobutu played the communist card, citing Zaire's strategic importance to justify the need for Western intervention. Mobutu was astute enough to recognize that Soviet-Cuban military adventures in Africa, especially in Angola, gave him a great deal of room to manoeuvre without risking alienating the US completely. During his long reign, Mobutu was a realist and extremely pragmatic when necessary. Given his country's enormous strategic mineral resources and its strategic position right in the heart of Africa, Mobutu knew better than anybody else the value of the cards he was holding and he played them every time very well. Successive US administrations firmly supported Mobutu. Roger Morris, who handled African affairs for the National Security Council during the Johnson and

²¹ Mokoli, M.M., *The Transition Towards Democracy in Post-1990 Zaire: Contradictions and Dilemma*, London: International Scholars Publications, 1997, p. 123

²² See Burns, J. and M. Huband, How Mobutu Built Up His \$4bn Fortune, *The Financial Times*, 12 May 1997

²³ Mokoli, p. 124

²⁴ Kelly. S., *America's Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire: How the United States Discovered Mobutu, Put him in Power, Protected Him from His Enemies, and Helped Him Become One of the Richest Men in the World and Lived to Regret It*, Lanham Md: American University Press, 1993, p. 1

Nixon administrations has estimated that the Congolese ruler received close to US\$150 million in bribes and secret payments from the CIA during the first decade of his regime.²⁵

Internally, President Mobutu was a master at opposing one leader, tribe, or ethnic group against another in order to get what he wanted. Two examples will serve to illustrate the huge damage this caused in the country when it comes to human rights issues. The first was the ethnic conflict between Kasaians and Katangese of 1991. In this conflict, President Mobutu used Gabriel Kyungu Wa Kumwanza, one of the three leaders of the National Federation of Convinced Democrats and Governor of Katanga Province, to politically weaken Etienne Tshisekedi Wa Mulumba, who had been named by the National Sovereign Conference as Prime Minister-elect responsible for leading the transition. For Kyungu, it was impossible to accept a non-Katangese in this role, since the Kinshasa government had sufficiently exploited and impoverished the Katanga province over the years and it was time for this part of the country to put its future into the hands of its own sons, the real Katangese.²⁶ The message was clear enough and so powerful as to threaten non-natives in Katanga. In the process, national unity in Zaire was also threatened. The message was even more strongly felt by Katangese who considered that their contribution to the national budget, at times amounting to 70 per cent, should have counted towards special treatment from the government. In June 1993, nearly 75,000 persons of Kasai origin were displaced from Likasi and lived in extremely precarious conditions in improvised camps, awaiting an uncertain departure to their problematic province of origin. Many deaths were reported in camps and in trains during the repatriation process. This process was only halted when President Mobutu was sufficiently convinced that Tshisekedi's power was seriously weakened.

Another case of exploitation of ethnic conflict concerns the Banyarwanda (also known as Banyamulenge) and the indigenous Congolese in Kivu. Stripped of their citizenship, the Banyarwanda peasants are also denied land rights, as the indigenous groups claim the land they occupy and use as ancestral land. The land question is at the heart of the conflicts that have shaken both South and North Kivu. Before the genocide in Rwanda, thousands of people died in inter-ethnic violence in 1992-1993 in North Kivu. Instead of finding ways of resolving the crisis in a responsible manner, the Zairean authorities added fuel to fire with xenophobic appeals, while soldiers and military officers became implicated in arms trafficking on both sides. In September 1996, the South Kivu Deputy Governor stated in a radio broadcast that if the Tutsi Banyamulenge did not leave Zaire within a week, they would be interned in camps and exterminated.²⁷

Today there is open conflict between the Banyarwanda and the other tribes while over the years they were living in relative harmony, although the first big confrontations between the Banyarwanda and other tribes involved 80 per cent of the population of Rutshuru, Masisi, and Goma during the period 1961-1964.²⁸ The problem of the nationality of this group of Rwandan origin was badly handled during the Second Republic. There are serious contradictions between the many legal texts that tried to deal with the problem. While the Luluaburg constitution itself is clear on the matter, stating in Article 6, Paragraph 2, that Congolese citizenship is granted as from 30 June 1960, to any person

²⁵ Mokoli, p. 128

²⁶ Baleme, p. 91

²⁷ Nzongola, N.G., Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, *SAPEM* [Harare], November 1996, p. 5

²⁸ André, C., Dupont, P, Lunanga, L, *et al.*, Conflits au Kivu, antécédents et enjeux, *Aspects historiques et dimensions juridiques* Vol. 1, December 1996, p. 12

with an ancestor belonging to one of the tribes established in Congo before 18 October 1908, this Article has had many interpretations which have created a stalemate with many laws and Acts being put in place contradicting each other.

While the claim that ethnicity is the be-all and end-all of African politics is overstated, it would certainly be a key factor in political allegiances in the DRC and the challenge would be how to manage it. This is not to say that ethnic grievances are the only cause of conflict. In fact, focusing solely on them could lead to half solutions. However, the conflict in the DRC, as many others on the continent, is the product of the unsatisfactory relationship between government and society, and any lasting solution requires the former to become more attuned and responsive to the latter. This task requires a thorough knowledge of grassroots social dynamics and this knowledge is only acquired by involving people in the affairs of the state. Since 1997 the institutional structures of Congo have been the very reflection of the structures of a post-colonial state in the middle of acute crisis, a state that in effect ceased to exist in 1989. The structures indicate a double crisis; institutional and identity-related, with a ruling class which came back from exile and which, while they have replaced the local “Mobutists”, have installed an authoritarian regime resembling to the point of total convergence the decadent “mobutocracy” of the previous regime.²⁹ Laurent Kabila’s regime lacked any societal link in a country where a parallel society had developed during Mobutu’s time. These institutions are also the expression of the rupture between the state, which is prisoner of elites who are not very creative politically, and the impoverished masses.

3. Mobutu’s and Kabila’s Zaire/DRC in the Context of Great Lakes Politics

There was a great lion in the land devouring the people; now the lion is dead the people devour one another (African proverb)

3.1 Mobutu’s Regional Geo-politics

The DRC, with an area of 2,344,000 km square, is the third largest country in Africa. Its neighbours are Congo-Brazzaville in the west and northwest, the Central African Republic in the north, Sudan and Uganda in the northeast, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania in the east and Zambia and Angola in the south. These countries constitute the Congolese political monospace, which can be divided into three geographical zones: the Great Lakes states (Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zambia); the states of the Congo River Basin (Angola, Congo-Brazzaville and Central African Republic); and finally Sudan and Uganda. All significant political events in one of these countries have a direct impact on the stability of the DRC, and conversely, any unrest or conflict in the DRC is immediately felt in these bordering states.

The external forces that dismantled the Mobutu regime came from his principal ally, the US, exploiting its converging interests with Rwanda, Uganda and Angola. The Kabila insurgency started in eastern Congo during October 1996, when Laurent Kabila was recruited by Rwanda and Uganda to lead the rebellion to give it a Congolese face. Kabila was chosen because of his opposition to President Mobutu which dated back to the 1960s. But the root of the insurgency lay in President

²⁹ Tshikala, B., We Must Exploit the Present Retreat of the International Community, *Newtown Zebra* [French Institute of South Africa], 1998

Mobutu's unscrupulous regional politics. During his long stay in power he was seen as the "godfather" of Rwanda and Burundi, intervening in these countries when it suited him and using the same divisive methods as he employed to dominate his own people. His regime held back the entire people of Central Africa and used Congolese territory as a base of violence, intolerance and destabilization in the region. He went even further by supporting the apartheid regime of South Africa.

The Tutsi minority Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), which was made up of Rwandan Tutsis in exile throughout the Great Lakes region following the abolition of the Tutsi monarchy at independence in 1960, decided in 1990 to seek a return to power and invade the north of Rwanda. Mobutu's army and French forces rescued the Rwandan majority ethnic Hutu government from the Tutsi rebel advance. Negotiations were engaged in, but in 1994 they reached deadlock. On 6 April 1994 a plane carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi was shot down. Extremist elements in the Hutu military launched an organized campaign to ethnically cleanse the country of Tutsi and moderate Hutu.

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda gave President Mobutu an occasion to exploit its consequences in order to recoup his slipping power.³⁰ He tried, with the help of the French, to reorganize the remaining military elements on the basis of a commitment to support the armed Rwandan refugees (the ex-FAR, *interahamwe* militants, etc.) to retrieve power in Rwanda from the RPF regime.³¹ To the French, President Mobutu, the dying Western gendarme, still appeared as the essential force necessary to solve the regional conflicts. In other words, the cause of the problem was presented as the solution to the problem. If left unchallenged, President Mobutu would therefore continue to destabilize the region: Angola (through Jonas Savimbi and UNITA), Rwanda (through the perpetrators of the genocide), Uganda (through the opposition movements). As the Rwandan President, Paul Kagame, put it, "we have to look at the problem in a broader context. When the conflict started, the [*interahamwe*] were armed in broad daylight in Tingi Tingi [refugee camp] in the presence of the UN and non-governmental organizations. This situation was creating a perpetual political threat to Rwanda."³² The question then is why Uganda and Angola became allies to Rwanda in the first rebellion. According to Paul Kagame, Rwanda asked the Ugandans and Angolans to share the responsibility, "... there was actually a sharing of burden, though we bore the main burden".³³

The Ugandan view was shaped very much by the experience of direct Tanzanian involvement in the war that removed Idi Amin in 1979. The situations were comparable. President Mobutu had acquiesced in turning border camps for Rwandan refugees into armed training camps for the proponents of 'Hutu Power', while Idi Amin had invaded the Karega region of Tanzania. When Tanzanian forces pushed him out, the question arose, what next? Should the next step be for them to push forwards to Kampala, thus overthrowing the dictatorship? Or should they leave matters to Ugandan groups opposed to Amin, giving them as much material and political assistance as the

³⁰ Wamba-dia-Wamba, E., Protracted Political Crisis, Wars and Militarism in the Regions of Central Africa and Great Lakes, unpublished paper, presented at Centre for Policy Studies conference, South Africa, February 1998

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Mamdani, M., Why Rwanda Admitted to Its Role in the DRC, *The Mail and Guardian* [Johannesburg], 8-14 August, 1997

³³ *Ibid.*

situation called for? However, this alternative involved a risk: if you hit a dictator but still let him recover would that not be inviting a second and more lethal strike from him?

In the case of Angola, President Mobutu had made Zaire a transit route for arms destined to UNITA from the US. As such he was regarded as a reliable ally in the fight against the expansion of communism on the continent. In exchange for his valuable service, his regime could depend on external military support. After Jonas Savimbi lost the elections in 1992, President Mobutu's troops participated directly in the city sieges that laid waste to human lives while destroying the productive capacity of Angola.³⁴ No doubt a strong, united and stable Angola was a threat to President Mobutu. When the opportunity arose, President Eduardo dos Santos did not hesitate to accept Paul Kagame's plan to get rid of President Mobutu. Moreover, following the 1994 genocide of Tutsi, when Rwanda decided to enter Zaire in pursuit of the *interhamhawe* and ex-FAR, they found Washington well disposed to sacrifice their old friend, President Mobutu. Despite this tacit acceptance by the US of Rwanda's intervention in Zaire, there was still the genuine fear that complete disengagement would lead to bloodbath.³⁵ But the coalition that saw Angola under President Dos Santos and the Tutsi pushing to settle old scores was unstoppable.

Directly or indirectly, President Mobutu supported militarism in Burundi. The armed opposition to President Buyoya's military regime had, particularly the FDD/CDD (Forces de défense de la démocratie/Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie), its headquarters in Zaire. This does not mean that Mobutu did not support the Burundi regime. However, due to developments linked to the effects of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the *coups d'état* in Burundi and the increased ethnic conflict fomented by Mobutu's geopolitics, the Burundi regime found itself on the side of the Banyamulenge insurrection.

In October 1996, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération - AFDL), commanded by and composed mainly of Tutsi military forces from Paul Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA), along with Tutsi refugees from Zaire and some Congolese exiles, all under the titular leadership of Congolese exile Laurent Kabila, crossed into Zaire from Rwanda and Burundi.³⁶ While marching west across the vast Zaire, divisions of this army wreaked terrible vengeance on the Rwandan Hutu exiles encamped since 1994 in eastern Zaire. The intervention by the South Africa President, Nelson Mandela, to help resolve the conflict peacefully failed. President Mobutu was overthrown in 1997 and later died in Morocco. The war in DRC grew directly out of the regional politics of the Mobutu era.

3.2 Congo under Laurent Kabila

The victory over Mobutu was an epochal and great victory. Yet it is not clear who really won and benefited from the victory. Under the leadership of the AFDL, the victory did not generate vigorous debates among its members, nor among the population at large, on what sort of society, state and institutions to build and how to do so to safeguard future generations from falling under another dictatorship. Instead another dictatorship was emerging. Under Laurent Kabila, the conditions that gave rise to the Mobutist type of leadership did not disappear. However the decision to start a second war can not be attributed to President Kabila's undemocratic tendencies. Under pressure

³⁴ Mwesiga, B., *The Crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, Harare: SAPES, 1999, p. 25

³⁵ Hendrick, B., *Mobutu or Chaos*, 29 April 1999, <http://www.marekinc.com>

³⁶ *Ibid.*

from the international community, especially the US, Laurent Kabila agreed, soon after assuming power, to hold elections within two years. With this prospect it was not necessary to take up arms. The second rebellion has created an inter-state as well as an intra-state conflict, in which foreign intervention has played a part. The causes of the war are both structural and conjunctural. Some causes prove to be external to the DRC and others internal.³⁷

Firstly, the security problem on the border between Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and eastern Congo is seen as a reason for the war. Neighbouring countries feel that their security is at stake because rebel forces targeting them operate from Congolese territory, and therefore they need to cross the border to pursue their enemies. This was also one of the main objectives of the first rebellion that ousted President Mobutu from power. The AFDL aimed to prevent the camps of eastern Zaire from being used as a political and military base for the former Rwandan government and armed forces; to eliminate and disperse members of the *interahamwe* and others who had been responsible for the 1994 genocide; and to drive the mass of exiled Rwandans back to their country of origin and thereby bring them under the effective supervision of the government in Kigali. Rwanda and Uganda have maintained that under President Kabila these elements not only continued to operate in the DRC but did so with the blessing of the government they helped to install.

Secondly, the weakness of the Congolese state is conducive to external intervention. The war in Congo was preceded by a break up of the state and the loss of legitimacy of the Mobutu government. Indeed, in weak states where sovereignty and territoriality are difficult to uphold, the pressure increases from internal and external actors who take the opportunity to advance their particular positions.³⁸ The lack of a strong national army, the permeability of borders, the bad functioning of the administration and chaotic running of public affairs by successive governments and regimes, have emphasized the weakness of the Congolese state in the face of internal and external pressures and ambitions. The relationship between strong and determined actors and weak and divided ones is illustrated by the actions of the Tutsi-led Rwanda in West Central Africa.³⁹ It was the weakness of the Mobutu state that persuaded Rwanda and Uganda, joined by Angola and Zimbabwe, to challenge the regime in Kinshasa and install Laurent Kabila as the new president in May 1997.

Thirdly the rebellion, which started in August 1998, was preceded by the determination of President Kabila to assert his independence vis à vis his foreign backers Rwanda and Uganda, who continued to maintain their military presence in the entire Congolese territory, showing little sign that they were prepared to let the Congolese deal with their internal problems. After the easy overthrow of President Mobutu, Rwanda and Uganda nourished ambitions to make Congo their protectorate. However, for the majority of Congolese, the presence of these troops was not welcome. By July 1998, President Kabila had realized that the Congolese people would not tolerate the large numbers of Rwandan soldiers and foreigners throughout their government, and he therefore ordered them to leave the country. A few days after being asked to evacuate their troops Rwanda and Uganda

³⁷ Declaration of the Congolese Civil Society for Peace Plan in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kinshasa, January 1999 (unpublished document)

³⁸ Väyrynen, R., Regional Conflict Formations: An Intractable Problem of International Relations, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1984, pp. 337-59

³⁹ Wallensteen, P. and Sollenberg, M., Armed Conflict and Regional Conflict Complexes 1989-97, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 5, September 1998, p. 625

launched an attack to overthrow the Kabila government. Although successful in their previous action, against President Mobutu, the second rebellion illustrates that this kind of action from across the border does not necessarily succeed.

Fourthly, the lack of democracy or legal restraints on the use of force in the region is a major reason for conflict not only in the DRC but also in the other countries of the region. Virtually all the governments in the region have come to power by forcibly removing the previous governments and have remained in power by the use of force against the numerous armed resistance movements that face them. As such the culture of using force as a legitimate and even preferable way of changing unacceptable governments and staying in power, has unfortunately become deeply entrenched in the region.

For the DRC, a critical question would be to understand why Laurent Kabila lasted only three years, while Mobutu Sese Seko was able to hold on for more than 30 years. President Mobutu, obviously, had inherited a functioning infrastructure and economy, enjoyed thorough support within the security forces, was well connected in Kinshasa, and had strong backing from the US and other countries such as France and Belgium. By contrast, Laurent Kabila inherited a completely devastated and dilapidated infrastructure and economy and relied for his security on extremely unpopular foreign troops from Rwanda and Uganda. And, perhaps, as important as anything, he did not possess President Mobutu's personal capacity for pragmatic survival.

4. The Death of Kabila and the Prospect for Peace

The death of President Kabila, who was regarded as the principal obstacle to the implementation of the Lusaka Accord, had the potential to either push the country into total anarchy or to speed the process of peace. The killing of a head of state always raises severe concerns, especially in the Great Lakes region where the killing of the head of state has more than once led to even greater tragedy - witness the death of President Habyarimana of Rwanda, which led to the genocide of 1994. In Kinshasa people are convinced that troops loyal to the late President Mobutu were ready to invade the DRC capital from Congo-Brazzaville after the death of Laurent Kabila.⁴⁰

Laurent Kabila was followed as president by his son, Joseph Kabila. Zimbabwe's President, Robert Mugabe, at a meeting of Zimbabwean, Angolan, and Namibian leaders in Luanda in January 2001, said that the alliance wanted Joseph Kabila to be more flexible than his father in seeking a settlement for the DRC conflict.⁴¹ The son is optimistic that peace will soon be found. "I see peace on the horizon", he said in Lusaka during the first DRC peace summit after Laurent Kabila's death. However, hope for a speedy implementation of peace faded when Rwanda and Uganda refused to attend the meeting, which nevertheless went ahead under the leadership of President Chiluba, the Southern Africa Development Community's (SADC) chief mediator. A plan for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the DRC was adopted. This meeting was an important platform for the new Congolese President, enabling him to put into practice what he preached to the West during his visit to France, USA, Belgium and the UN soon after his inauguration as President of DRC. Joseph Kabila promised to cooperate with the UN and implement the Lusaka Accord. This was a major departure from his father's policy, which was based on unfriendly relations with the UN. Not only

⁴⁰ Street interviews, Kinshasa, April 2001

⁴¹ *The Star*, Johannesburg, 23 January 2001

did he agree to implement the Lusaka Accord, allow the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force and allow an inter-Congolese dialogue to take place, he went further in accepting the former President of Botswana, Sir Ketimire Masire, as the facilitator of the inter-Congolese dialogue.

But the refusal of President Kagame to attend the Lusaka summit was causing serious, legitimate worries. Despite the fact that Rwanda has started a partial withdrawal of troops to comply with the Lusaka Accord, it is still doubtful if Rwanda and Uganda will totally remove their troops from the DRC. The reading of the situation on the ground is that, the late President Laurent Kabila's recalcitrance on the peace process suited President Kagame's and President Museveni's expectation of continuing to keep their troops in the DRC. While President Kabila was seen as an obstacle to peace, his actions were actually benefiting his enemies since it afforded them the right to continue with their military presence and exploitation of DRC resources.

Despite the publicity generated around the withdrawal of troops from their front lines, peace is far from being achieved. In the case of Rwanda, until the *interahamwe* are arrested, disarmed and repatriated to Rwanda, it is not likely to withdraw; at least not totally. In the case of the Congolese government, the inter-Congolese dialogue cannot proceed with foreign troops occupying half of its territory. In the Congolese perception, Rwanda and Uganda could do everything in their power to disrupt President Joseph Kabila's plan to bring peace to the DRC:

Les rebelles et leurs parrains dont la franchise n'est pas leur point fort, vont s'agiter dans tous les sens pour empêcher Joseph Kabila de continuer à la quatrième vitesse la recherche d'une paix sincère et définitive en RCD. Qu'est que Kagamé et Museveni peuvent ils faire pour détourner le président congolais de l'objectif qu'il s'est fixé, à savoir, de mettre rapidement fin à la guerre et de poursuivre l'oeuvre de la construction commencée le 17 mai 1997?⁴²

In Kinshasa the recent refusal by Rwanda to allow the UN peacekeeping force's plane to land in Kisangani was seen as one such tactic to delay the peace process. It would also allow Rwanda to continue exploiting the resources of the DRC.

5. The Future of the DRC

There exist two possible solutions to the DRC conflict as there are to any conflict. The first would involve a continuation of hostilities, which could culminate in a military victory.⁴³ The second would be a diplomatic or negotiated settlement. Both solutions have been attempted simultaneously in the DRC. While fighting to achieve a military victory, the belligerents have also been involved in diplomatic initiatives to settle the conflict peacefully.⁴⁴ These initiatives culminated in the signing of the Lusaka Accord on 10 July 1999. The heads of state of the DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe first signed it, while the rebel groups declined to sign the document, although the

⁴² On peut circuler de Kisangani a Kinshasa, de Goma a Lubumbashi, *L'Avenir* [Kinshasa], 26 March 2001

⁴³ Kabemba, C., The Democratic Republic of Congo: The Quest for Sustainable Peace, in Kadima, D. and Kabemba, C. (eds.), *Whither Regional Peace and Security? The Democratic Republic of Congo after the War*, Pretoria: Africa Institute, 2000, p. 28

⁴⁴ Some of these initiatives include the Pretoria summit, the meeting of the Non-aligned Movement in Durban, the two Victoria Falls summits, the Mauritius-SADC, the Lusaka and Windhoek meetings.

Movement for the Liberation of Congo (Mouvement de libération congolais - MLC) and the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) eventually agreed to do so on 1 August and 31 August 1999 respectively.⁴⁵ The Lusaka Accord provides for the cessation of hostilities between belligerent forces in the DRC. It stipulates that all air, land and sea attacks must cease within 24 hours of signing, as well as the movement of military forces and all acts of violence against the civilian population. The forces were to disengage immediately.⁴⁶

The Lusaka Accord constitutes a very complicated plan for peace resting on six essential elements.⁴⁷

- That the sovereignty of the DRC within its present frontiers and that of its neighbours is agreed upon.
- That an all-inclusive process will be undertaken by the Congolese in order to establish a new political order.
- That the parties agree to cooperate in addressing the security concerns of each state.
- That the agreement specially calls for the disarming of militia groups in the DRC.
- That all foreign forces withdraw from the DRC.
- That a peacekeeping force under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter be established to ensure implementation of the Agreement.

The Lusaka Accord places great responsibility on the shoulders of two bodies: the “neutral facilitator” who will organize the internal dialogue which is supposed to produce a “new political dispensation” and the UN which, in collaboration with the OAU, is supposed to deploy a peacekeeping force to “ensure implementation” of the Agreement.⁴⁸

Laurent Kabila’s death might have been a blessing in disguise. President Pierre Buyoya of Burundi said that “the death of Kabila could be a springboard for peace in the Central Africa region.”⁴⁹ Kabila’s death has put pressure not only on his allies and the Congolese Government but also on his enemies, Rwanda and Uganda, to speed up the peace process. Already, the troops from these two countries have started withdrawing from their front lines in compliance with the UN resolution. Given these apparently encouraging developments, how could this conflict be expected to develop towards a conclusion? Two broad scenarios could unfold. First, the peaceful disengagement already started is not completed and war continues. The continuation of hostilities could culminate in a military victory for one side, or a prolonged stalemate with no side able to defeat the other militarily. In the event of such a stalemate, the *de facto* dismemberment of the Congo continues.⁵⁰ Secondly, a negotiated settlement, and therefore a successful, albeit bumpy, implementation of the Lusaka Accord proceeds. But while each of these two scenarios has its own options and probabilities, neither guarantees lasting peace in this troubled country.

⁴⁵ United Nations, Secretary-General, Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Preliminary Deployment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, S/1999/790, 15 July 1999

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Weiss, H., War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Current African Issues* [Nordiska Afrikainstitutet], No. 22, 2000, p. 1

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19

⁴⁹ *The Citizen* [Johannesburg], 22 January 2001

⁵⁰ Kabemba, C., *Good Guys and Spoilers: The Lusaka Accord and Prospects for Peace in the DRC*, CPS Policy Brief, No. 14, Johannesburg: Centre for Policy Studies, 1999, p. 1

5.1 Scenario 1: Successful Implementation of the Lusaka Accord

The Lusaka Accord, since it was signed in 1999, has failed to yield tangible results. It achieved very little, because the main parties failed to seriously commit to its implementation. The death of Laurent Kabila created a heightened risk of breakdown in Kinshasa and threatened escalated fighting among the major intervening armies. However the opposite has happened so far. First, since the death of Laurent Kabila no fighting has been reported between the belligerents. For the first time, the Lusaka Accord cease-fire is being respected. Second, Rwanda and Uganda have started pulling back their troops from the positions occupied before Laurent Kabila's death. The UN has already deployed a contingent of 600 troops in DRC. These are very significant steps which have again raised hope that peace is possible. If, at least for a while, we choose - perhaps somewhat optimistically - to believe that peace is going to be achieved, what must be done for democracy to emerge in the DRC?

The democracy movement in Congo is a struggle for political freedom and economic prosperity. That these two go hand in hand has never been in doubt. The character of Belgian rule as a colonial trinity of the state, the Catholic Church and the large companies as well as the continuation of economic exploitation, political repression and cultural oppression (under neo-colonialism) has defined the status-quo.⁵¹ Therefore, the independence of 1960 and the current struggle for multiparty democracy have, as a common denominator, demanded an expansion of rights politically and a better life socially and economically for the Congolese people. The Lusaka Accord outlines both military and political measures to bring peace to the Congo. The aims of the dialogue would include the organization of democratic elections, the formation of a new army and the establishment of a state administration throughout the country. There are groups which would have to play a key role to ensure that transparency is respected and that power is not shared between armed groups to the detriment of the population. These are the churches, the political parties and other organizations within civil society.

5.1.1 The Churches

They remain the most widespread and effective organizations in the Congo. The Catholics are the most numerous (claiming a following of 57 per cent of the population). The Roman Catholic Church exerted a predominant influence in the social and educational life of the colony. But the Protestants and Kimbanguists also run efficient national networks.⁵² A number of observers have noted that the ecumenical movement is quite advanced in Congo, assuring good cooperation between faiths. However in recent years because of President Mobutu's ability to manipulate the churches, they have not played an important role in the political sphere. They remain major potential players, however. For example, the Catholic Justice and Peace movement has considerable influence, which it is capable of wielding when conditions ripen.⁵³

⁵¹ Nzongola, N., The Democracy Movement in Zaire 1956-1994, unpublished paper, presented at the Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, Toronto, 3-6 November 1994

⁵² La Gamma, R., Report, Assessment Mission to the Democratic Republic of Congo between July 1-21, 2000, sponsored by International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) (unpublished document)

⁵³ *Ibid.*

5.1.2 *Political Parties*

All political parties and political activities are banned both in government and rebel held zones. The Laurent Kabila government's premise was that opposition politics are intrinsically treasonous in a time of war. However, the son has promised to free political activities. When this is going to happen is still not known. The current situation is in contrast to that of the first years of the 1990s during which a weakened President Mobutu was pushed to allow political activities which opened the doors to a National Conference. But political parties in Congo do not have a democratic tradition. They have no plan for the reconstruction of the Congolese state and economy. Their discussion usually resolves around the advantages of their sharing or taking power.

In fact, Congo has a problem when it comes to considering the quality of its leadership. They all too often show selfishness and are preoccupied with short-sighted concerns with regard to democracy, the public good and national interests. Congolese politicians seek power through whatever means are deemed expedient. Already René Lemarchand, writing in the 1960s, confirmed this reality when he commented that the "typical attitude of Congolese politicians is to use their own tribal bases as stepping stones to positions of leadership".⁵⁴ This fact has led some observers to conclude that Congolese political parties are nothing more than a manifestation of personal ambitions of self-seeking individuals. Despite all this, political parties would have to be brought into the negotiations at the same level as the government and the rebels.

5.1.3 *Civil Society*

The rest of civil society (for churches and parties belong to civil society) and the Congolese population expect one thing from politics. The expectation is centred on the rights of the people to vote for the leaders who would govern them. They therefore need to take part in the negotiations to make sure that the well being of the Congolese are put at the centre of discussions. This would ensure that the views of ordinary Congolese - on the future form of the state, regulatory provisions and the redistribution power - are incorporated in the final outcome of the discussions.

Unfortunately even the most optimistic analyst would agree that the task of undoing President Mobutu's legacy will be an onerous one. Universal adult suffrage of one-man one-vote has only really been applied once, during the fairly contested elections held in May 1960 soon after independence. None of the elections held afterwards met the qualifications of being free and fair. For obvious reasons, they were bluntly rigged in favour of Mobutu.

The next question is, what kind of state would be reconstructed in post Mobutu-Kabila Congo? This question underlines the importance of the inter-Congolese dialogue.

Four other issues would have to be discussed. First, an equitable redistribution of resources is necessary to prevent conflict. The Congolese economy is in a very bad condition, with a drastically reduced environment conducive to capitalist socio-economic development and sustainable democracy at the grass roots level. Most Congolese arrive at their workplaces around 10 a.m. and leave by 1 p.m. The population at large have given up the notion of hard productive work, and would rather follow a law of least effort by relying on prayer, begging, robberies and lootings.

⁵⁴ Lemarchand, R., *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964, p. 213

It would be important in the immediate term for any future government to equitably redistribute what little resource is at hand. Equally, it would be important to review the structural imbalances in terms of economic resources within the country. By this, I mean the way in which the distribution of development resources is highly skewed, with one part of the country benefiting from a significant concentration of resources while other parts are marginalized.

Secondly, the integration of refugees and the internally displaced would have to be high on the agenda. The lack of respect for international norms of human rights and the lack of education among those fighting lead combatants in the DRC to attack civilians, to loot and pillage, and especially to rape women of any age and status.⁵⁵ Displacements from the warring territories to relatively calmer areas expose babies and children to death through dehydration, because of the long marches on foot, or because of housing problems when they reach their destinations. To date, around one million people have been displaced, of whom around three-quarters are women and children.⁵⁶ The prevailing insecurity has led to thousands of Congolese crossing borders into neighbouring Tanzania, Zambia, Central African Republic, Uganda and sometimes Angola. Thousands of others are displaced internally.

Anne Marie Mukwayanzo tells the story of displaced women who fled eastern Congo after having travelled more than 2,000 km on foot, before finding a place where they could hitch a lift. She reveals that on the route, there were many children who could not yet or no longer walk, as well as women who gave birth and then were forced by their husbands to abandon their babies. A particularly harrowing account was that of a woman, in labour for two days, who was finally cut open by her husband with a razor blade in a desperate attempt to save her life. Sadly, he could not stitch her up again after delivering twin daughters, and he thus abandoned all three.⁵⁷

In June 2000, the International Rescue Committee released a report claiming that 1.7 million “excess deaths” have occurred in the occupied area over the past two years due to the absence of medical care, the uprooting of millions and also military massacres of civilians.⁵⁸ Recent statistics from the International Rescue Committee and from UN organizations estimate that 2.5 million Congolese have lost their lives in the occupied territory as victims of direct and indirect aggression. The UN Coordination Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs and the European Office of Humanitarian Aid refer to the situation in the East of Congo as catastrophic. They estimate that 2.1 million people have been displaced and that nearly 400,000 Congolese are refugees.⁵⁹ On 22 March 2001, the Rome based Catholic missionary news agency, MISNA, reported that Rwanda was now operating concentration camps in eastern Congo in which slave labourers brought from Rwandan prisons are being forced to work in underground mines to gather Congo’s precious resources for sale to US and other foreign corporations. This was immediately denied by Rwanda.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Mukwayanzo, A.M., *The Impact of the War on Women and Children*, in D. Kadima and C. Kabemba (eds.), *Whither Regional Peace and Security*, Pretoria: Africa Institute, 2000

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 117-18

⁵⁸ La Gamma

⁵⁹ *L’Observateur*, 9 April 2001, President Joseph Kabila’s speech at the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights

⁶⁰ Associated Press [Kigali], Rwanda Denies Using Forced Labor for Congo Mining, 23 March 2001

While UNHCR could always get access to refugees in the host country, it is difficult to reach the internally displaced. The biggest problem is the lack of access to the areas of relative safety to which the people are fleeing, especially in the eastern part of the country where most of the militia groups operate. It is possible that if the Mai-Mai, for example, reject a peace deal they are not signatories to, UNHCR would have to get security clearance in the zone held by that group. This is a potential impasse that would have to be resolved. So the possibility of having groups which stay outside the peace process is going to be a constant threat to the lives of UNHCR workers. It would also introduce the risk of hostage-taking. Indeed the fighting has encouraged the growth of ethnic militarism and the east of the country has already been transformed into a patchwork of warlord fiefdoms.

Thirdly, the disarmament of armed groups would also have to be prioritized. In subordinating the re-establishment of peace in the Great Lakes region and in the DRC to the demilitarization and disarmament of the Mai-Mai militias and Interahamwe, the Lusaka Accord has put the cart before the horse. The Mai-Mai phenomenon is typically Congolese. It constitutes an urgent response to a feeling of insecurity resulting from the potential or actual, supposed or real threat to the lives of the DRC's native people.⁶¹ Therefore, the implementation of such an operation seems to be a gamble in the absence of militia groups being drawn into the Lusaka Accord (although Jean-Pierre Bemba's Front pour la libération du Congo - FLC - has reportedly incorporated some Mai Mai into a potential security framework.⁶² At the time of submitting this report, it seems that Bemba's plan has failed with heavy fighting between his soldiers and the Mai-Mai.) Because the militias were not part of the Lusaka negotiations, the Accord, which emerged, is ignorant of their importance. It would thus be unlikely that the Mai-Mai combatants would respect the decisions conceived and elaborated without them.

As far as the *interahamwe* are concerned, nobody has ever come up with an approximate number. And to disarm them one has to locate them. For as long as Rwanda has been involved in fighting in the DRC, there has never been an occasion when *interahamwe* were made prisoners of war. This raises serious doubts regarding the theory that they are involved in the fighting. This might in fact be a self-fulfilling prophecy by the Rwandan Government. The argument here is not that the *interahamwe* do not exist. However, they may not be as strong as reported. Furthermore, they are not only located in the DRC. Because of the permeability of borders in the region, these people have been able to move to other countries. In 1998 for example, a UNHCR's Geneva spokesman said that "some 1,400 Rwandans were being screened by the UNHCR in Luau but disappeared"⁶³ following the intensification of clashes between government forces and the rebel movement UNITA. The same Hutu are also found in Tanzania, Zambia and many other parts of the African continent. This simply means the disarmament would have to include all these groups since they are a potential danger to the security of Rwanda in the long term. Today, however, the target is those *interahamwe* who are in the DRC, who are the immediate threat to the security of Rwanda.

⁶¹ Mutambala, A.B., Should the Mai-Mai Militia be Disarmed? in Kadima, D. and Kabemba, C. (eds.), *Whither Regional Peace and Security*, Pretoria: Africa Institute, 2000, p. 149

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Quoted in *Angola Peace Monitor*, Vol.4, No. 10, 2 July 1998, www.anc.org.za/angola/ [accessed 25 June 2001]

Disarmament would only be effective if governments in the region invest more of their energies in domestic political reconciliation efforts, which in the end offer the only means of convincing the rebel fighters to return home.

Fourth, the citizenship impasse of the Banyamulenge would have to be resolved. Since 1960, with the independence of Congo, this section of the population has been denied Congolese citizenship. As long as one section of the Congolese population - in the persons of Tutsi-Congolese - are treated as stateless and are refused nationality and right to live in the country one could not envisage the end of civil tensions in the near future. A war situation might continue to prevail.

5.2 Scenario 2: Negotiations Fail

Despite - some would say because of - the death of President Kabila and withdrawal of Ugandan and Rwandan troops from some of their positions, the war might in fact continue. The implementation of the Lusaka Accord involves enough contradictions and dilemmas, which if not resolved, might perpetuate a war situation in the DRC. The contradictions are the result of the different interpretations of the nature of the crisis by the DRC Government and Rwanda. For the DRC, “the crisis arose from an act of aggression perpetrated by Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda, whose soldiers had been involved in the combat”.⁶⁴ For the other three countries, especially Rwanda, “the crisis was a purely internal Congolese affair”.⁶⁵ Rwanda argues that its involvement is purely for reasons of its own security.

Since the war started Rwanda and Uganda have maintained that they would never pull out from the DRC until their security problems are addressed. In terms of the Lusaka Accord, the *interahamwe*, who constitute a threat to the security of Rwanda, must be disarmed and regrouped. In terms of the Lusaka Accord, all the parties to the agreement would have to locate, identify, disarm and assemble all members of all armed groups in the DRC and all the countries of origin of these armed groups must take steps necessary for their repatriation.⁶⁶ This is an unachievable goal. The inability to disarm, regroup and repatriate these armed groups to Rwanda is then a continuing threat to peace. Indeed, it would not be an easy task to do so especially with a reduced UN peacekeeping force.

And there is a tacit acceptance in the Accord that until such time, Rwanda would remain on DRC territory. However, according to the United Nations Resolutions 1304 “Uganda and Rwanda, which have violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, must withdraw all their forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo without further delay, in conformity with the timetable of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the 8 April 2000 Kampala Disengagement Plan.”⁶⁷ The same resolution requests that other parties in conformity with the same timetable reciprocate each phase of withdrawal completed by Uganda and Rwanda forces.

⁶⁴ Organization of African Unity, Secretary General, Report on the Crisis in the Great Lakes Region, CM/1980(LXV)(a), Addis Ababa, 1997

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ United Nations, Security Council, Letter ... from the Permanent Representative of Zambia [covering the] Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, S/1999/815, 23 July 1999, Annex A, Chapter 9.1

⁶⁷ United Nations, Security Council, Resolution 1304 on the Democratic Republic of Congo, S/RES/1304 (2000), 16 June 2000

What this means concretely is that if Rwanda and Uganda do not withdraw their troops the probability of the Kinshasa government and its allies considering military action remains high. What this also means is that as long as the political conflicts in neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi are not resolved, the war in the DRC might indeed continue. The paradox in these two countries of a Hutu majority which is a political minority, and a Tutsi minority which is a politico-military majority, admits of no solution, since the two ethnic groups' perceptions of political power are diametrically opposed. Given the obscurantism of extremists on both sides, the only way to defuse the situation is to establish multi-ethnic or multi-national states in which both Hutu and Tutsi have the status of bi-national ethnic groups and are guaranteed the inalienable right to live on the internationally recognized territory of Rwanda and Burundi.⁶⁸ This would involve institutional arrangements ensuring that all the powers of the state were shared proportionally between the two ethnic groups and that the republic wielded state sovereignty.⁶⁹ This, in fact, is where the Swiss experience of cantons might also be made an option in arriving at a solution of "majority rule with minority security". In the same way that peace in the DRC would impact positively on the search for a sustainable arrangement in these two countries, peace and democracy in Rwanda and Burundi would also reduce the level of conflict violence in the DRC.

The major complication to peacemaking efforts in the DRC is the assertion that there is no war in Rwanda, Uganda, and until recently, in Burundi. This narrow definition of war and peace tends to argue that war and peace in the Great Lakes region depends on the end of war in Congo. The main issue is whether the Lusaka Accord remains a viable framework and whether other alternative sub-agreements within Congo and among the regional armed interveners are not also urgently needed.

5.2.1 Possibility One: Military Victory for the Rebels

While this was the most plausible scenario at the beginning of the rebellion, the situation changed dramatically as the war continued. Two reasons militate to this. First, as long as the Kinshasa alliance with Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia remains strong, chances for the rebels and their backers to win is very minimal. The Kinshasa government's defeat would not be tolerated by its allies. This would also mean their defeat. The death of President Kabila was expected to alter the relations between Kinshasa and its allies and the chance of rebel victory increased once more. This expectation was born from the fact that the relationships between these countries were personalized and with Kabila's death the alliance was set to get weaker. If this had happened Rwanda, Uganda and the Congolese rebels would have utilized it to launch an offensive. It is estimated that Rwanda has 25,000 soldiers and Uganda 10,000, while MLC troops are estimated at 12,000 to 15,000, the RCD-Goma at least 12,000 to 15,000, and the RCD-ML around 3,000 soldiers.⁷⁰ These expectations proved wrong when Kinshasa's three allies expressed their commitment to continue their presence in the DRC until such time as Rwanda and Uganda withdraw their troops. Indeed, soon after Kabila's death, in an effort to show solidarity and demonstrate their intentions, the allies - Zimbabwe and Angola - reinforced their troop presence in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Tshiyembe, M., Ambitions rivales dans l'Afrique des Grands Lacs, *Le Monde diplomatique*, January 1999

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ United Nations, Secretary General, Letter to the Security Council [transmitting] Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo, S/2001/357, 12 April 2001, pp 27-8

⁷¹ *Business Day* [Johannesburg], 23 January 2001

Secondly, the political and military divisions in the rebels' ranks have detracted from their ability to secure an outright military victory. The rebellion is marked by fragmentation, a feuding leadership, the absence of ideology and the absence of respected local followers. What assurance could Rwanda and Uganda have that the Congolese leader they would install in Kinshasa would not turn his back on them as did President Laurent Kabila? This is highly possible. A rebel victory would not automatically bring peace to the DRC. First, the fragmented insurgency's ability to govern and to be accepted remains questionable. Before the death of President Kabila the Rwandans and their RCD allies made an inroad into government territories in the Katanga province by capturing Pweto, an important border town. At this stage it appeared that the Kinshasa government and its allies were finding it difficult to withstand the advance of Rwanda and the rebels and a bloody battle was then expected in Lubumbashi. Nevertheless, the fighting in Lubumbashi would have been a fight for the hearts and minds of Congolese. A pyrrhic victory in Lubumbashi would have further tarnished the rebels' political image.

The war in the DRC is a complex one not because of the fighting between the government troops and the rebels but more so because of the divisions which have occurred within the rebellion. At least three rebel groups have been operating in the country since 1997.⁷² The Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) was the largest group, but split into two factions. One is led by the original leader, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, based in Kisangani and backed by Uganda. The other, led by Adolf Olusumba, has its headquarters in Goma, Kivu and is backed by Rwanda. The third rebel group, the Mouvement de libération congolais (MLC) is led by Jean-Pierre Bemba and operates mainly in the north of the country. This group is also backed by Uganda. The RCD-Kisangani has seen some serious transformations, when Ernest Wamba dia Wamba's leadership was contested by a newcomer, Mbusa Nyamwisi, and dia Wamba was forced to operate outside Kisangani. According to Nyamwisi, "Dia Wamba was overthrown."⁷³ A new movement, Le Front pour la libération du Congo (FLC), was later created by Uganda as an alliance between the MLC and RCD-Kisangani, under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Bemba.

There were also repeated clashes between the forces of Rwanda and Uganda in Kisangani. These clashes reduced the ability of the rebellion to win the war against the government, and politically the reputations of Rwanda and Uganda's leaders and the Congolese rebels have plummeted. The fighting between Uganda and Rwanda in Kisangani made clear that their security interests, which they were supposed to protect in the DRC, are not the only motivation behind their invasion. A recent UN report shows without doubt that economic interests rank even higher in their strategy in the DRC. The UN findings further legitimizes President Laurent Kabila's claim that those countries are simply aggressors, an argument he repeatedly used to persuade the Security Council to condemn the aggression and to demand the immediate withdrawal of the invading forces.⁷⁴

⁷² Tandeka, N., The Future of Peacekeeping in Africa, *Africa Insight*, January 2001, p. 35

⁷³ Fighting Erupts for Control of Congo Rebel Movement, *Business Day* [Johannesburg], 7 November 2000

⁷⁴ United Nations, Secretary General, ... Report of the Panel of Experts ...

5.2.2 *Possibility Two: Military Victory for the Government Forces*

If Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda continue to maintain their troops in the DRC, this possibility is highly unlikely. The alliance of Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and the Kabila government has done conspicuously little to exploit the divisions described above and crush the rebellion. Even in the presence of a divided rebellion, this alliance has failed to make inroads into rebel territory. Instead, the rebels, especially the RCD rebel movement, have been efficient in seizing territory from government forces, thanks to the fighting spirit of the Rwandan soldiers.

The unwillingness of President Kabila's allies to launch a bloody ground offensive against the rebels, despite the number of their well armed soldiers - Zimbabwe has deployed about 11,000 troops or a third of its entire army,⁷⁵ while those of Angola number about 3,000 and the Namibian presence is limited to 2,000 troops⁷⁶ - leaves little chance of a total military victory against the different rebel factions. The rebels occupy half the territory. Moreover, a military victory for the government forces would not enhance prospects for democracy in the DRC, as the Government would operate from a position of greater strength thereafter.⁷⁷

5.2.3 *Possibility Three: Fragmentation of the DRC*

In the absence of either of the previous alternatives, the fragmentation of the DRC is a distinct possibility. This means a situation in which neither side can win the war, or the peace accord cannot be implemented, and the DRC remains occupied by different armed groups.⁷⁸ There is already a *de facto* partition of the DRC into four different zones. But the question is if there is the possibility of a formal or legal process that could be used to divide the country. Many people have called for this option, arguing that the DRC is too big and that it would be in the interest of its people if it were divided. This position has met serious opposition from the Congolese.

There exists strong nationalism among Congolese and a consequent belief that their country is indivisible and should retain its current borders. This contrasts with the crisis in the Balkans, where the constituent parts of the former Yugoslavia have separated. In the DRC, through the success of a shared national educational system and administration, and enhanced by Congo's well-known national music and culture styles, none of the current Congolese forces in the DRC is fighting for secession. However if the territorial integrity of the DRC is not secured, balkanization will continue. There are strong indications that the stability of the country's nine neighbours would be threatened by partition. Inter-state relations in the region are marked by cross-border diffusion of wars, violence, massacres, disorder and insecurity, and illicit international traffic of arms, all linked together in a chain of influence, extending from Somalia to Angola via Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Kinshasa and Congo-Brazzaville. All these countries are engaged in chronic wars of ruthless self-destruction and self-alienation.

⁷⁵ Kabila, Mugabe in Talks on Ending War, *Citizen* [Johannesburg] 11 January 2000

⁷⁶ United Nations, Secretary General, ... Report of the Panel of Experts ... p. 28

⁷⁷ Kabemba, C., *Good Guys ...*, p. 2

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

6. The Role of the International Community in Rebuilding the DRC

The primary responsibility for conflict prevention within countries must lie with the government and the people of the country which must act to redress the factors that can lead to conflict and build a fabric of national solidarity. However, the DRC government, the civil society groups and the region would not be in a position to ensure that all that is required to keep peace would be established. For this reason, the international community would have to contribute to maintaining and building a sustainable peace in the DRC. The first priority is to enforce implementation of the Lusaka Accord and restore the territorial sovereignty of the DRC so as to achieve regional security. The scale and potentially destabilizing consequences of this nearly continent-wide war makes it critical for the international community to find a way to press more effectively for peace and stand ready with significant resources to intervene if a process gains traction. But, the role of the so-called international community in most African conflicts has, at best, been clumsy and, at worst, been totally counter-productive. In most cases, the national interests of the intervening powers, rather than the interests of the people of the country in conflict, have determined the nature of the involvement. One important facet would be for the international community to support morally, financially and logistically the facilitator for the inter-Congolese dialogue, Sir Ketumile Masire.

6.1 UN Peacekeeping

The international community must ensure that peace returns to DRC by forcing the belligerents to implement the Lusaka Accord, which remains the only peace plan on the table. Today the question is not anymore whether a peacekeeping mission is necessary. The question is only what kind of peacekeeping is needed. The scale of the conflict, the ongoing massive human rights abuses, the potential for genocide and the threat of expanding conflict that would further destabilize the region are compelling reasons for a strong peacekeeping force in terms of men and logistics. A Chapter 7 force would require at least 80, 000 to 100, 000 soldiers to monitor the extensive DRC borders with all its nine neighbours. But the Security Council in its resolution 1291 authorized that the UN Observer Mission in the DRC (MONUC) be constituted of 5,500 peacekeeping troops only.⁷⁹ This number fell short of the expectations of the Congolese. The UN subsequently decided to reduce this number to 2,500 troops. While this decision might well have been informed by serious consideration, peace can only come if all foreign troops withdraw peacefully, and security mechanisms are put in place to disarm and regroup all informal armed groups. Despite the fact that the UN peacekeeping force does not correspond to the complexity of the conflict, its deployment should be seen as “essential to building confidence among the Lusaka signatories to implement what they agreed upon.”⁸⁰

The DRC has seen some of the continent’s worst violence and threatens to be a source of protracted instability as well as a platform for conflict between and within neighbouring states if the international community fails to consider realistically what is required to bring peace there. There is still a big question if Rwanda would agree to withdraw totally from the DRC. When the UN demanded that Rwanda withdraw its troops from DRC, it reacted angrily, blaming uncertainty of the

⁷⁹ Lauria, J., Strident Kabila Again Attacks SA as UN Ponders Force, *The Star* [Johannesburg], 26 January 2000

⁸⁰ Richard Holbrook quoted in Barber, S., Sensing Trouble in Congo, US Wants to Put SA on the Line, *Business Day* [Johannesburg], 3 January 2000

UN response in the deployment of a peacekeeping force.⁸¹ There is therefore need to reconcile the Security Council Resolution 1304 (2000) with the Lusaka cease-fire agreement. This might call for a de-linking of the disengagement and withdrawal of foreign troops and the disarmament of armed groups within the inter-Congolese dialogue from one another, in order to permit each to achieve maximum progress.

6.2 Humanitarian Aid

There will also be a definite need for humanitarian aid. The very essence of humanitarian action is preventive. It starts with preventing inhumane conditions. Today the DRC and the Great Lakes region are in need of humanitarian aid. One critical problem that faces the international community is the refugee crisis. Each war that breaks out is more violent than the last, and every population displacement that occurs is described as being unprecedented in its scale, speed and degree of human tragedy.⁸² The refugee crisis in the Great Lakes encompasses refugees not only from the DRC but also from Rwanda and Angola. There would not be many difficulties that the UNHCR would encounter in the repatriation of Congolese refugees back to the DRC. The problem is the proposed force which should facilitate the delivery of humanitarian relief assistance and the return of refugees who are in the DRC to Rwanda. These refugees are not just innocent people. They include agents who took part in the genocide of 1994 in Rwanda. The extremely important exercise of separating the genocidaires and the bona fide refugees would be a challenge. This would require that the force that would be involved be neutral.⁸³ However in the face of the humanitarian catastrophe currently unfolding in the DRC, the UNHCR could design a new humanitarian framework that would be in line with the recommendations of the Joint Military Commission to tackle this emergency, for instance by establishing a separate humanitarian operations office under a UN Director for Humanitarian Operations in the Great Lakes, responsible for the formulation and coordination of strategy for relief operations in both rebel and government areas in the DRC and neighbouring countries. Here the focus should not only be on alleviating suffering but also on building self-reliance. The UNHCR should encourage relief organizations to prioritize engagement with the local community, support of a survival economy, and strengthening of indigenous capacities. Moreover, for sustainable development, any strategy would have to take into account conflicts linked to land ownership especially in the east of the country. This approach is less likely to contribute to conflict than the simple provision of relief supplies.

6.3 Regional Security Initiative

The conception of a mechanism that would resolve conflict in the region, between and within these states, would have to be inspired and start off from a correct diagnosis. The war in the DRC is not only about security, it is also about economic interests. There is a need to find a system of regional security cooperation that would include proposals for economic cooperation between the countries of the region. It was in the wake of violence in the region that in September 1976 the Heads of States of the then Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi decided to create the Economic Community of the Great Lakes States (Communauté économique des pays des Grands Lacs - CEPGL). Under this

⁸¹ *The Sowetan*, 22 January 2001

⁸² Crisp, J., Africa's Refugees: Patterns, Problems and Policy Challenges, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2000, p. 157

⁸³ Organization of African Unity

accord, the Heads of States agreed to consult each other regularly on security matters in the region. This approach worked for some time and helped significantly to minimize conflict in the region. It would be necessary to revive such an organization, taking into account the new dynamics. Such an organization would alleviate the political, security and economic fears of the vulnerable populations of the region. Revival of the CEPGL should be accompanied by the resuscitation of the Inter-State Security Commission for the Great Lakes. In fact, the Joint Military Commission could become the catalyst for this dimension which would institutionalize the safeguarding of everyone's security interests. Otherwise, in order to comprehensively address the challenges of inter and intra-state conflicts within and surrounding the DRC, thought may be given to establishing an ad hoc OAU Commission on Peace and Security in Greater Central Africa. It would work closely with UN institutions in stabilizing this vast region that affects not only Congo but all surrounding countries affected by DRC's problems which, in turn, are exacerbated by their problems as well.

7. Conclusion

The greatest challenge to a resolution of the Congolese war remains the fact that six separate disputes are being waged on Congolese territory and the fact that the internal Congolese conflict has been forcefully linked to the internal problems facing the other countries, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Angola. The war has not yet produced any winners or losers. If the war does produce a victor, the field will be free for the imposition of another dictatorship and the culture of violence will become even more deeply ingrained in Congo. However, the death of President Laurent Kabila and his replacement by his son Joseph Kabila has momentarily decreased the level of fighting between the belligerents. It has created space for the tentative implementation of the Lusaka Accord. It seems peace has been given a chance by the belligerents. But, for how long? Here the withdrawal of foreign troops, especially those considered by the Kinshasa government and the Congolese people as invaders, is necessary for the peace process to continue. Furthermore, the success or failure of the coming round of the proposed inter-Congolese dialogue would be critical. The first steps towards peacemaking for the Great Lakes region consist of accepting that elitist and statist solutions have completely failed in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda as well as in the DRC. All are, without exception, in a situation of war and violence, and it must be accepted that reconciliation (not militarism and triumphalism) is the cure.

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