

Risk Assessment: Democratic Republic of Congo Post-Laurent Kabila

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Abstract

Internal and external conflicts, as well as renewed peace initiatives, in the Democratic Republic of Congo after the death of former President Laurent Kabila are used as a frame of reference for a domestic and an international risk assessment. The roles of various actors are discussed, and the volatile situation is viewed from the perspectives of important variables. With the necessary caution, some policy recommendations are presented as a starting point of the discussion.

1. Executive Summary

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been caught up in internal and external warfare since the overthrow of President Mobutu Sese Seko's three-decade long dictatorship in 1996. This overthrow took place under the leadership of Laurent Kabila, who became president in 1997. In 1998 a war situation broke out once again between rebel movements inside the country and the government, involving as many as six neighbouring countries on different sides of the conflict. This situation continued unresolved, even in the presence of the 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, until Laurent Kabila was assassinated on the 16th of January 2001. This study specifically focuses on the post-Kabila era, especially on the internal and external conflicts and the renewed peace initiatives engaged upon this time under the leadership of Joseph Kabila, the interim President.

This study is divided into two parts. The first part examines the conflicts between the various actors along the line of five variables: the military balance-of-power, social dynamics, the political context, environmental aspects and economic dimensions. This, then, constitutes the domestic risk assessment. The influence of local and external actors is then analysed in regard to the conflict situation. The second part of the study deals with the international risk assessment and focuses specifically on the integrated character of the conflict in the DRC with reference to the impact the situation has on all the countries involved and whether or not the post-Kabila era will see a withdrawal of foreign interventionaries.

Since the focus of this study is on the new political situation with Joseph Kabila in the leader's seat, the peace process is addressed in all its facets and with reference to all of the different actors. On an international level, the United Nations' role is examined, also the role of individual countries like Belgium. On a regional level, the role of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and that of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are discussed. Other international and national actors who assist in the realisation of peace in the DRC are non-governmental organisations and human rights institutions. There are also those actors who do not assist in solving the conflict situation, for reasons of personal benefit from the abundant natural resources of the Congo, and these are also dealt with in the study.

The risk assessment, with regard to the DRC post-Kabila, should be clear on one fact the situation in the DRC is currently that of a stand off. There is no stability and the situation literally changes daily, thus creating a very volatile environment that urges extreme caution from all the parties involved in sorting out their differences in the interest of a peaceful DRC.

2. Policy Recommendations

Securing genuine peace and stability in the DRC should not only focus on the withdrawal of foreign armed forces and the disarming of rebels within the Congo, but it should also focus on the development of a new political system. For this to be realised, however, Joseph Kabila will first need to lift the ban on political activities and free all political prisoners. The DRC needs a government functioning in conformity with principles of productivity, efficiency, consistency and quality said to be the basis of economic growth (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:97-98). This seems to be on the agenda, for the OAU-designated facilitator of the inter-Congolese dialogue, Ketumile Masire, announced on the 5th of March 2001 that the peace process intended to achieve a new political dispensation for the country beginning in early April 2001.

International pressure should however be put on the former President Masire to convene the preparatory meetings for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue sooner rather than later. With regard to the format of such a new dispensation the following serve as recommendations in order to avoid a system where yet another dictator can emerge in the DRC: a presidential system as opposed to a parliamentary system, devolution of power in favour of the provinces instead of a strict federal system, and a restructured judicial system focusing on impartiality, transparency and consistency (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:98-101).

With reference to the economic consequences resulting from the ongoing civil war, note should be taken that while an end of the war will be a determining factor in the real reconstruction of the DRC, a partnership between the State and the private sector is just as indispensable, according to Kabwe (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:173-174). There is a disturbing contrast between the Congo's immense natural wealth and valuable human resources, and the current process of impoverishment. The blame for this, according to Kabwe, can be placed on the shoulders of the State, for the State considered itself to be the principal actor in development through its model of growth and distribution, a model which operates to the detriment of the private initiatives. The State should, in a process of working together as Congolese, concentrate on strengthening the macro-economic framework and on providing the essential finance to production and infra-structural sectors which form the indispensable basis of all economic activity. The domestic production of the country is almost non-existent and the state does not have the means for reconstruction. Thus, the country needs to liberalise its economy and enter into a programme of economic stabilisation and growth with principal actors such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:173-175).

In the light of the grave human rights violations that swept the DRC not only by the government forces under Kabila, but also by the forces of Rwanda, Uganda and the Congolese rebels allied to them Human Rights Watch (HRW) made the following recommendations: the new regime must end all interference with basic human rights, review those currently in prison and release those held without charge or credible suspicion of guilt, investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity, end harassment of human rights groups and declare and enforce respect for all Congolese people (regardless of ethnic or regional origin). HRW went on to insist that the UN Security Council should be called upon to name a Commission of Experts to resume an earlier enquiry, previously blocked by Kabila in 1997, into the accountability of all parties involved in the crimes committed under Kabila's authority.²

Another area that will need attention in the post-Kabila era is the role of NGO's, churches and

community-based organisations. As these entities are entrenched in their respective communities, they should, according to Katulondi, undergo a radical change in order to play a central role in the better management of society in conjunction with the corporate state (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:98-99). It is further strongly recommended that the problem of the DRC serving as a launching pad for rebel movements of neighbouring countries needs to be rectified. For if the rebel movements' sources of discontent in their countries of origin are not identified then their countries will continue to enter the DRC for reasons of forward defence (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:31-32).

3. Domestic Risk Assessment

3.1 The Military Balance-of-power

The first attempt to stop the war that broke out in 1998 came in July 1999 with the signing of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The cease-fire failed due to an absence of leadership, for the agreement relied entirely on the co-operation of the parties. Each suspected the other of a double game and used this to justify its own duplicity, especially in the absence of an international guarantor to compel compliance. 3 The conflict situation took on a whole new dimension after the assassination of President Laurent Kabila on the 16th of January 2001. This event brought the prospect of a cease-fire once again to the table in the DRC.

The United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1341 in February 2001, thereby urging the parties to the conflict to prepare by 15 May a plan for the withdrawal of their troops and to agree on a second plan for the disarmament, repatriation or resettlement of other armed groups. Kinshasa was apparently satisfied because the resolution took into consideration the Harare military disengagement agreement, which was a precondition for the cessation of hostilities as well as an effective implementation of the cease-fire conditions. These could, hopefully, lead to the withdrawal of foreign nations from the Congo. According to Patrick Mazimhaka, Special Envoy of Rwandan President Paul Kagame, the rapid deployment of Phase two of the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) will help begin disengagement. 4

Disengagement did start, as Rwandan and Ugandan forces began pulling out of the DRC in the last week of February 2001. The Rwandan pull-out of about 2 000 soldiers from Pweto in Katanga province and the return of two Ugandan battalions of about 800 soldiers, assembled at Buta in north-eastern DRC, began as scheduled according to UNITA. Rwandan President Paul Kagame, in a speech on 7 April 2001 to commemorate the seventh anniversary of the 1994 genocide, stated that although Rwanda was pulling its troops out of the DRC the pull-out would not be completed until Rwanda's security is guaranteed. 5. Allegations that the withdrawal of Ugandan forces was aimed at vote-catching in the forthcoming elections were denied by the army commander, Maj-Gen Odongo. These forces are, however, not withdrawn far from the border in most instances. 6. Uganda is meanwhile seeking permission from the UN to use Bangoka airport in Kisangani, eastern DRC, to pull out an estimated 1 500 troops which will bring the number of Ugandan soldiers withdrawn from the DRC since August 2000 to 6 500.7

The Angolan and Zimbabwean governments, Kabila's allies, responded in a notably low key to these withdrawals. After talks with the Belgian Government in the first week of March 2001, Zimbabwe

apparently refused to withdraw its troops from the Congo until it was sure that rebel movements would not fill the vacuum and that this in turn required restarting the long-stalled inter-Congolese political dialogue. 8. Angola's troops, according to Angolan defence Minister Kundi Paihama, would return home "when it's time". According to him Angola has no more than a battalion of about 300 men in the DRC. 9 President Joseph Kabila, in addressing the issue of troop withdrawals by Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia, stated that these troops were brought into the country on a request following the invasion of the country and the moment this invasion comes to an end they will return to their countries.10

Meanwhile, the fear exists that the Congolese rebels or their Ugandan and Rwandan backers could take advantage of the current confusion and withdrawal of troops to make territorial gains.

In the first week of April 2001, the political committee for the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in the DRC held its 10th session to evaluate the progress of the peace process. The committee commended the progress accomplished in the withdrawal and redeployment of troops. It approved of the concept of a three-phase operation and the timetable for phase one of the project for the disarming, demobilising, reintegration and reinsertion of armed forces as presented by the Joint Military Commission. It noted, however, that there existed some problems with the withdrawal of the Gbadolite-based forces of the Mouvement de liberation du Congo (MLC).11

3.2 Social Dynamics

The DRC has an estimated population of 50 million people, but according to the International Rescue Committee, a US aid group, about 200 000 civilians have died as a direct consequence of the fighting and 1,7 million civilians have died amid the dislocation caused by the war. 12 The war is also affecting the DRC's neighbours, with massive influxes of Congolese refugees, of whom an estimated two million are displaced. 13

According to a joint UN-NGO mission to the north-eastern Ituri Province, from 14 to 19 February 2001, fear and tension are still prevailing amongst the suffering civilian community. The Ituri region has been wrecked by ethnic fighting between the Hema and Lendu communities, leaving thousands of people dead. Other severely affected sectors of community life are, firstly, the agricultural sector where fear, flight and the systematic destruction of crops paved the way for food insecurity. Secondly, school attendance had also dropped dramatically. Thirdly, data on displacement is difficult to ascertain due to the high number of "invisible" victims, hiding in the bush after ethnic cleansing offensives.13In a call by Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, in February 2001, for renewed efforts to end the fighting, he underlined the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country, especially for women and children. For terrible crimes have been committed against women and children, such as raping women as a weapon of war and sending children off to fight in the front. 15

In assisting the displaced and war struck population of the DRC, the UN food agency, World Food Programme (WFP), pledged in February 2001 to provide a total of 134 565 mt of food to the "most needy" Congolese over a two year period.

3.3 The Political Context

Since August 1998, the DRC has been torn apart by conflict involving at a local level three rebel movements: two called Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD), one led by Wamba dia Wamba and the other by Emile Ilunga, and the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), led by Jean Pierre Bemba all of whom took part in the attempt to overthrow the late President Kabila. Internal actors that should also be brought into the peace process are the various Congolese political parties, an estimated 150 in total. The Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) with its leader Etienne Tshisekedi is the best known party in the DRC conflict, but this party was banned by the former Kabila. In Tshisekedi's Proposals to the Bush Administration and Congress, he described the decision of the Kabila camp to appoint Joseph Kabila as President as deepening the juridical and political void and further reinforcing the precariousness of power in Kinshasa. He pointed out Joseph Kabila's failure to lift the ban on political activities, his unwillingness to free political opponents and his continual arrests of political opponents and journalists.¹⁶ Other local actors include the Christian Social-Democratic Party and the Forces Novatrices de l'Union Sacree (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:35-37).

On an international level Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia joined in an attempt to back the government of Kabila (ulterior motives for intervening will be dealt with under the international risk assessment). Uganda and Rwanda intervened in the Congo in 1998 taking a stand against President Kabila and joined with those in favour of overthrowing his presidency, especially since Kabila had trained their rebel movements in breach of the mandate he had from them after they helped him get into power in 1997.

Burundi entered the DRC for similar reasons: to protect its borders from the Burundian Hutu rebel groups, the Forces de defense pour la democratie (CNDD-FDD) and the Forces nationales de liberation (FNL), operating from inside the DRC.

The political situation in the DRC took a drastic turn with the assassination of President Laurent Kabila on the 16th of January 2001. The cabinet immediately appointed the late president's son, Joseph Kabila, to lead the army and the government, thus retaining control within the existing "inner circle" and thereby also buying time for the members of that elite to make their case for leadership.¹⁷ In analysing the political change in the DRC, Reyntjens a Great Lakes analyst attached to the University of Antwerp in Belgium stated that everything depends on the succession and since there are no constitutional rules guiding this process there is a lot of speculation among those very close to the late president. Some key figures who have been closely involved in government policy making and who could have provided some continuity were: Colonel Eddy Kapend, Interior Minister Gaetan Kakudji (who may have tired of Kabila's war strategy), Education Minister Yerodia Abdoulaye Ndombasi and the current foreign minister Leonard She Okitundu (who is highly acclaimed by the international community). Yet, Kapend together with several senior military officers (all ethnic Lundas) have been arrested in connection with Laurent Kabila's assassination.¹⁸ On the other hand, Interim President Joseph Kabila dismissed the entire cabinet in the beginning of April 2001 and announced the members of his new government on the 14th of April 2001. The new cabinet saw the departure of many stalwarts from his father's day, but, notably, Leonard She Okitundu (former foreign minister) and Mwenze Kongolo (former minister of justice) stayed on in the twenty-five member government.¹⁹

Katulondi portrays the Congo conflict as a consequence of the dysfunctioning of the Congolese political system as opposed to the view that it was merely a power struggle between Kabila on the one

hand and his former allies and the Mobutuists on the other. He portrays the DRC crisis as a combination of a power struggle between the elites and the democratic aspirations of the Congolese people in a failed state (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:90-91). The aim of this struggle has been personal benefit from natural resources on both sides of the conflict in contrast to real "freedom fighting" towards a democratic dispensation where resources will be managed in the interests of the people.

3.4 Environmental Aspects

The Democratic Republic of Congo is Africa's third largest country by area, bordering on no less than nine countries. However, out of the 2 344 858 square kilometres the arable land percentage is only about 3% with a forest coverage of about 50%.

As a consequence of the civil conflict in the DRC substantial data are not available for the environment of the country. Some important environmental issues that have been identified by Country Watch include the following: poaching, water pollution, deforestation as a result of displaced populations and 1,2 million area refugees. The agriculture sector in the DRC contributes 58 percent of the Gross Domestic Product and employs an estimated 65.1 percent of labour, as stated in the GDP/Employment by Sector of Origin table. 20 This is, then, the sector that has taken the hardest blow in the war situation.

An important aspect with regard to the environment are the findings of the United Nations panel of experts on the exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the DRC as it was revealed on 17 April 2001. This report disclosed that the illegal exploitation of the mineral and forest resources of the DRC is taking place at "an alarming rate", distinguishing mass-scale looting and the systematic exploitation of natural resources as the two phases of the plundering. The report continues in noting that the conflict in the DRC has become one mainly concerning access by foreign armies to the country's rich mineral resources, a conflict which is enhanced by the lack of government control and ongoing violence²¹ The next serious security problem in the region might very well be posed by the various criminal cartels and their worldwide connections looting the natural resources in occupied territories.

3.5 Economic Dimensions

The outbreak of war on the 2nd of August 1998 created a severe set back in the country's economic kick-start programme, not only by creating a climate of insecurity accompanied by investment declining, but also by ruining the financial results of businesses. The war of liberation has turned into an economic war in which belligerents are attracted by the thought of exploiting the country's natural resources.

The belligerents in the conflict have largely financed the fighting by plundering the vast mineral wealth of Congo including copper, cobalt, diamonds and gold. Rather than the Congo's development, the country's vast mineral riches funded the war and kept Kabila in power. Over-exploitation has led to diminished mine capacity. 22

Direct consequences of the war are to be found in the fact that businesses function only at an average

of 23% of their installed capacity and monetary reform was weakened with negative effects on diverse sectors. The state was obliged to resort to monetary financing as a result of the unexpected expenses imposed by the war. State resources, which should have been directed towards national reconstruction, were redirected toward an unjust war, thus creating a real handicap to stabilisation and economic growth (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:167-174). As a result of economic failures, worsened by the conflict situation, the DRC has not paid on its debts to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in ten years, and as of 1993 the country became ineligible for further aid disbursements.²³

The late president Laurent Kabila handed out rights to exploit the Congo's vast mineral riches "to his commercial and military cronies" while ordinary people lacked the basic needs of life, and the time has come to take economic responsibility, according to a Human Rights Watch Report of January 2001.

3.6 Local Actors

Civil society, through representation by non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and churches, is a vital actor if a lasting peace is the objective. It was NGO's who, through a conference held a month after Kabila's ascendance to power, first cautioned his government. Kabila attempted to silence NGO's and continually refused to recognise them as role players. Notwithstanding these obstacles, NGO's in the DRC acquired an elevated status taking over from the state in areas such as the delivery of social services (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:40-42).

There are, however, non-governmental organisations, political parties and churches that lack an institutional system of resource allocation, for personal greed seems to surface. The rulers and representatives of these local actors exploit the socio-economic and political hardship of the citizenry to their own advantage, as has clearly been the case in the DRC (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:95-96). However, religious groups have played a positive role to some extent in attempting to find a solution to the conflict, for example, the Community of Sant' Egidio that offered to mediate between the parties (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:36).

No local peacemakers emerged from inside the Congo in the time before Kabila's assassination, for the belligerents did not trust such initiatives. If Joseph Kabila will welcome internal mediators will still have to be seen when the parties to the conflict finally sit down. Yet, NGO's and church groups should not be excluded in the post-Kabila era, but should be given a chance to give input to the peace dialogue.

International capitalism stands, as one of many obstacles, in the way of transformation in the Congo. Local actors and international mining companies built alliances exploiting Congo's minerals to gain a quick profit without investing in Congolese society. Leaders in the conflict, both from the rebels' side (by exploiting gold and diamonds in rebel-controlled territories) and from the side of Kabila's government, create serious stumbling blocks in the transformation to peace (Kadima & Kabemba 2000:96-97).

3.7 External Actors

The conflict in the DRC has been internationalised, bringing with it both positive and negative international role players.

International non-governmental organisations (INGO's) can be classified as external actors in the DRC dedicated to establishing and maintaining peace and security for the country and the region as a whole. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is such an actor in the DRC. They are preparing a contingency plan for their activities in the post-Laurent Kabila era, for they expressed their concern with the extra measures of uncertainty in an already unstable region.²⁴

Another INGO that is concerned with the conflict situation in the DRC is the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), which is dedicated to play a role in the post-Laurent Kabila era. At the end of January, they set out the challenges facing a new government in the DRC, urging the rectification of human rights abuses that swept the country under Kabila's rule as well as a focus on economic responsibility, also a previously exploited subject.²⁵ According to the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Kenzo Oshima, local and international NGO's were working in "extremely difficult conditions". For they are conducting operations without access to the most vulnerable segment of the Congolese population because of geographical obstacles, poor infrastructure and lack of adequate security.²⁶

Another very influential external actor is the United Nations, who is playing its role of maintaining peace and security in the region. The UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) is set to deploy more than 3 500 troops in the DRC. MONUC was created by the UN Security Council in November 1999 to maintain liaison with the DRC and the five regional states who signed the July 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. On 24 February 2000, the Security Council expanded the mission's mandate and size, authorising a troop strength of up to 5 537 military personnel, including 500 military observers.²⁷ The accord froze the armies in their positions but did not stop the fighting, thus the UN observers could not be deployed. After the assassination of Laurent Kabila on the 16th of January 2001, the UN Security Council, on the 22nd of February 2001, adopted resolution 1341, initiated by France, on a new peace plan according to which the initial retreat of foreign troops to 15 km should have been accomplished by 15 March 2001.²⁸ On the 6th of April 2001, the number of UN peacekeepers on the ground in the DRC reached nearly 500, according to UN spokesman Fred Eckhard. ²⁹ In the newest development to date, the government of the DRC called on the UN Security Council to hold an urgent meeting after rebels barred some 120 UN peacekeepers from being deployed in Kisangani, the country's largest city. The Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) stopped the UN peacekeepers from Morocco from deployment, demanding UN condemnation of alleged cease-fire violations by government troops and accusing the government of "delaying tactics" in order to continue to occupy and plunder the eastern DRC. ³⁰

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), as an external actor, plays the part of facilitating the inter-Congolese dialogue through the former President of Botswana, Ketumile Masire. Even though Joseph Kabila has recognised former President Masire, he has not yet appointed his representatives to the preparatory dialogue sessions, nor has he allowed for political parties to freely consult on this matter.³¹

On a regional level the role of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) comes into play. SADC extended membership to Kabila, without taking his human rights record into account, after he ordered Rwandan and Ugandan troops out. The three SADC countries of Angola, Zimbabwe and

Namibia soon afterwards intervened in the Congo conflict by throwing their support and troops behind Kabila. SADC, through President Chiluba of Zambia, attempted to facilitate peace in the region. In the post-Laurent Kabila era, SADC once again features in facilitating peace negotiations. President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa is involved in the Kinshasa dialogue and South Africa will most probably supply 165 soldiers for UN Peacekeeping. 32

The Belgian government's newly-appointed Special Envoy to the DRC is one of the external actors trying to assist positively in the peace process by identifying emergency intervention projects in health, justice infrastructure, education and the advancement of democracy. The focus of this Envoy will also fall on the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration of child soldiers as well as the proliferation of small arms in the DRC.33

4. International Risk Assessment

The current crisis sweeping the DRC has both internal and external dimensions. Internally, it was caused by the late Kabila's exclusion of political players and continued disregard of basic democratic principles. Joseph Kabila, in taking up his father's role in January 2001, expressed the will to engage in inter-Congolese political dialogue yet, he postponed the talks on lifting the ban on political activity without an explanation. Externally, the former president's fall-out with former allies, who are neighbours with a keen interest in the end-state of the DRC, gave momentum to the rebellion (Solomon & Mngqibisa 2000:31). That the conflict situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo circled out into the international sphere is and was a known fact from the outset of the war on the 2nd of August 1998. No fewer than six foreign governments have troops fighting in the DRC: Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Burundi. These countries all got caught up in the conflict for their own reasons. According to George Bloch, a political analyst with the International Crisis Group, none of the countries fighting in Congo have achieved any of their objectives, with the possible exception of Angola (who aimed to keep UNITA out of Kinshasa). 34

Rwandan and Ugandan troops invaded Congo for the first time in 1996 in a bid to overthrow dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, whom they accused of supporting Ugandan and Rwandan rebels based in his country. After installing former President Laurent Kabila in Mobutu's place, with the express mandate to keep Congo free of their rebels, they withdrew. Only to re-enter the Congo in 1998 to overthrow Kabila after the Rwandan intelligence discovered that Kabila was in fact training and arming those same rebels. The Rwandan rebel group, Interahamwe, today apparently boasts an estimated 30 000 well-trained and well-equipped soldiers in the Congo, committed to the overthrow of the Rwandan government. With the pull-out of Rwandan soldiers in accordance with the peace process, the question remains if stability in this region will surface as long as the Interahamwe forces pose a threat to Rwanda.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni entered the war to tackle his own set of rebels, the Alliance of Democratic Forces (ADF). But he also wanted to claim a share of Congo's vast mineral wealth especially gold and diamonds. For the figure of exported gold from Uganda has risen from \$12,4 million before Uganda joined the war to \$110 million after positioning deep inside the Congo. 35 As is the case with Rwanda, Uganda is also pulling out troops in the post-Kabila peace initiative, but there are speculations that senior officers in the Ugandan army might be reluctant to give up their war profits

with regard to the mining concessions held by them.

Angola entered the war because it feared that Kabila's defeat would create a power vacuum that would allow the UNITA rebels to establish bases and supply routes inside Congo.

In analysing the position of Zimbabwe under President Robert Mugabe, it has been said that they are perhaps the most eager to withdraw since their scheme to win profitable mineral concessions that would finance their intervention in Congo did not deliver profits at all, but put the country into even greater debt. For Mugabe, in committing his support to Laurent Kabila, struck a promising deal whereby Zimbabwe would provide weapons and troops in exchange for the take over of the Congo's state owned copper mining company and 37 percent of its profit. The deal was not profitable at all and, according to Zimbabwe, the war has cost the country \$100 million a year, while the International Monetary Fund estimates it at \$300 million. 36

However, in a meeting with the Belgium government in the first week of March 2001, Zimbabwe made it clear that it refuses to withdraw its troops in the absence of a guarantee that rebel forces will not fill the vacuum.

Burundi has as yet not joined the peace process and in this regard South Africa is explicitly an interventionist, for Deputy President Jacob Zuma was given a renewed mandate by regional heads of state in Tanzania, at the end of February 2001, to intensify his efforts to bring Burundi's rebels into the peace process. The African National Congress was asked by the Rwanda-backed Congolese Rally Democracy to play a dominant role in peace negotiations due to its experience on this front. 37

The death of Laurent Kabila is not viewed by all the international role players as an aid to the peace process. Former Botswana President Ketumile Masire, the designated facilitator of an inter-Congolese political dialogue process proposed under the Lusaka agreement, considered that Kabila's reported death clouded further the peace process. He commented, "The death of Kabila is not an end to the conflict, it only complicates an already very complicated situation. His death might set peace efforts back, it might accelerate them)".38

The spill-over effects of the DRC conflict, which worsened as time elapsed since the outbreak of the war in 1998, created a situation where the conflict dynamics of each intervening or neighbouring country became so interlocked that the death of Kabila did not bring automatic peace to Central Africa. For even though his son, Joseph Kabila, is reinforcing the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999 and speaks of peace, the conflicts surrounding the Congo will need individual attention to secure peace in the region.

Notes

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Chronology

1960 (30 June) Belgian Congo became the independent Republic of the Congo

1965 President Mobutu Sese Seko comes to power

1997 President Laurent Kabila comes to power after violently overthrowing the Mobutu dictatorship

1998 (2 August) War breaks out in the Congo amongst the government and the rebels, supported by different regional interests

1999 (10 July) Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement signed by the countries involved

1999 (31 August) Rebel groups signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement

2001 (16 January) President Laurent Kabila is assassinated

2001 (26 January) Joseph Kabila is appointed as Interim President

2001 (14 April) Appointment of new cabinet

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