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The War Economy in the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Sagaren Naidoo

The demise of the Cold War certainly ended ideologically driven superpower military confrontation. Consequently proxy wars fought in the furtherance of east-west rivalry have also terminated. These dynamics of international security have, however, not meant an end to bloody conflicts. Africa in particular has experienced a significant increase in conflict since the collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result, scholars of peace and security, in the absence of Cold War dynamics, have become preoccupied with providing answers for the longevity and proliferation of conflicts. An approach that has been gaining momentum in recent years attempts to provide economic reasons for the continuation of warfare. Put differently, the proliferation of wars after the Cold War has "encouraged or freed up economists to consider more intimate relations between such conflicts and other variables within their models"[1]. Subsequently, economic motivations in generating and sustaining predominantly intra-state conflicts have become central to a growing discourse on 'war economies'.

In addition to literature that has propelled the discourse on 'war economies', the focus in recent years by the United Nations (UN) on the economic dimensions of Africa's protracted conflicts reflected the growing realisation that the relationship between war and economics can no longer be ignored from analyses of conflict[2]. The UN panels that investigated violations of Security Council sanctions against UNITA rebels in Angola and the civil war in Sierra Leone contributed greatly to exposing the role that diamonds played in fuelling these conflicts, and thereby influenced the 'conflict diamonds' campaign. More recently were reports by the UN panel of experts that investigated the exploitation of resources and other forms of wealth in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). All three reports produced compelling evidence that linked the continuation of the conflict with the exploitation of the country's resources[3].

Complementing the findings of the UN reports was a project undertaken by the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD)[4] that provides a comprehensive and balanced analysis of what can be termed the political economy of the DRC conflict. This publication is a compilation of three commissioned papers that examines the relationship of the war that arose from the overthrow of Mobutu Seso Seko, and the exploitation of the Congo's rich natural resources. Since the papers were based primarily on 'desktop research', much of the publications contents are in the public domain and may, therefore, appear at times repetitive, especially given the publication of the UN reports. However this publication provides a broader context for the findings of the UN reports by firstly critically analysing the theoretical conceptualisation of the linkage of war and economics. Secondly, this publication exposes the interests of foreign and external forces that have ignited and fuelled this conflict. Thirdly, and similarl to the UN reports, this publication examines the economic motivations of the internal and regional players in becoming party to 'Africa's World War I'. Finally, it argues for the type of political leadership and governance structures that are required to end a 'war economy' in the DRC. The result is a publication that provides a vivid and sobering contextualisation of the DRC's contemporary history.

1.1 Linking war with economics

During the Cold war the link between economics and war was restricted to determining the cost of the aggression waged and monetary estimates of the destruction incurred. However, within the past decade "economics has come to 'rule' the social sciences to the extent that it is now legitimate to discuss all social endeavour solely in terms of the economics of self-interest"[5]. Accordingly scholars of peace and conflict have begun grappling with more 'intimate' links between war and economics. The Clausewitzian doctrine that war is but politics by another means has been extended to argue that war

is but economics by other methods[6]. As a result, 'war economies' or 'resource wars' have gained significant prominence on the international security agenda.
According to Michael Klare, the international security agenda in the post-Cold War era has experienced a "strategic shift in its geography"[7]. Klare argued that whereas the Cold War-era divisions were created and alliances formed along ideological lines, economic competition and access to vital economic assets now drives international relations[8]. However the pursuit of a causal link between conflict and the exploitation of natural resources has produced a misleading conceptualisation of 'war economies'. Firstly, in its common usage the term war economy has come to depict a recent phenomenon of conflict or warfare. Secondly, attempts to define a 'war economy' have focused exclusively on the internal or domestic actors of a conflict to the exclusion of the external forces and its foreign architects.

The need to provide answers for the perpetuation of armed conflicts in the absence of Cold War dynamics has stimulated a simplistic link between war and economics to imply a new type of warfare characteristic of the conflicts raging in the developing world, in general, and in Africa, in particular. But the "presence of economic motives and commercial agendas in wars is not so much a new phenomenon as a familiar theme in the history of warfare"[9]. David Moore appropriately commences Chapter Two by cautioning the reader against an uncritical digestion of the argument that the relationship between war and economics is a recent phenomenon that explains the continuation of conflicts. The growing discourse on 'war economies', Moore observes, is subsequently "blind of the relationship between capitalism's birth and violence"[10].

Indeed the "argument that current violent conflicts [in Africa] are driven by an unprecedented degree of *greed* and profit as compared to other time periods or wars, remains largely untested" and unfounded[11]. This then supposes a hidden and deliberate intent within the 'war economy' discourse to fiendish belligerents, especially in Africa, since western governments and "public relations experts of the world's transnational corporations would blanch at the possibility of linking the concepts of 'war' and 'economy' in their society. They therefore link it to the 'other' in the borderlands of their empire"[12].

Flowing from Moore's argument is the suggestion that strong and developed economies that were created through the brutal and violent systems of slavery and colonialism, must also be termed 'war economies'. The South African apartheid economy, for example, must not be excluded from such a conceptualisation, given the legislated violence and low intensity warfare that was used to build the economic heartland of Africa. However, broadening the conceptualisation of 'war economies' to appreciate the level of violence inflicted on the enslaved and colonised to produce capitalism's birth and evolution for the benefit of the North's development, can lead to an overloading of the term.

Richard Jackson argued that contemporary conflicts or 'war economies', are also related to the maintenance and growth of the developed economies of the North. In his words, "many current conflicts are deliberately created war economies" in which neo-colonial and post-Cold War methods – devoid of any ideological baggage – are used by the North to maintain their "systems of profit, power and protection"[13]. In the case of the DRC, the anti-Kabila war, as argued by David Moore and Dani Nabudere (in chapters two and three), had arisen from the need by western governments to maintain their monopolisation of space technology, defence systems and the production of "mobile phones and computers, common tools for the modern European lifestyle"[14]. According to Klare:

> Because an interruption in the supply of natural resources would portend severe economic consequences, the major importing countries now consider the protection of this flow a significant national concern. Accordingly, security officials have begun to pay much greater attention to problems arising from intensified competition over access to critical materials[15].

But in characterising the economies of the developed North as 'war economies' because of having benefited, and continue to do so, from 'resource wars', almost all national economies become 'war economies', both in the North and the South. As a result there is no clear distinction between the exploiter and the exploited.

Accordingly, in his introductory discussion of Africa's conflicts, Moore provides a theoretical examination of the contention that arises from "reducing the study of war to a single determinant, economics"[16]. But while Moore tries to restrict the notion of 'economics' to its proper niche, the 'market', he is at the same time compelled to substantiate the claim that there are indeed material roots to the conflicts tearing Africa. As a result Moore argues that the phrase 'political economy' captures the multitudinous aspects of such conflicts much better than does the narrowness of the term 'economics'. Nevertheless, the term 'war economy', in its common usage, "has been used to conceptualise the sustainability of an intractable conflict through the expropriation and exploitation of a country's resources by the warring parties"[17].

Implicit in the understanding of 'war economies' is this preponderance of weak or collapsed states as being a fundamental characteristic of such conflict. Attempts to conceptualise or define 'war economies' have equally stressed that such conflicts are essentially civil wars fuelled primarily by economic interests of local actors. As correct as this is may be, "such wars are never entirely internal in character"[18]. Moore has accurately argued that those narrow definitions of 'war economies' have "placed the immediate parties to the war in charge of their own destinies, refusing to privilege the manipulations of imperialist states and multi-national corporations (MNCs)"[19]. The emphasis on such wars as being solely civil in nature diverts attention from the external forces and dynamics to such conflicts. In other words the systemic dimensions of these wars, created by the involvement of foreign governments, multinational corporations and even individuals, are often lost in the label 'civil war'. Indeed, "the crystallisation of war economies within 'weak' states can only be understood within a broader global context"[20].

Moore's introductory analysis, therefore, argues that the 'war economy' discourse focuses almost exclusively on the *domestic* or *local* warlord without any inquiry into the 'connivance' of MNCs or western governments that sustain these charlatans – a collaboration that warrants the label of *international warlords*. Consequently, Africa's 'warlords', that have been studied extensively by such scholars as William Reno, "look strikingly similar to many of the buccaneers and brigands who helped start capitalism in its homelands. But those aspects of capital's history are removed as it maintains its current aura of respectability"[21]. It is this systemic explanation for the DRC conflict that this publication explores in detail.

The argument that economic motivations are the primary causes and origins of contemporary civil conflicts have been described no more particularly than by Paul Collier, the Director of the Development Research Group at the World Bank. Initiating the *greed* versus *grievance* debate, Collier has argued that *greed* is the principal cause of contemporary conflicts and that warring factions have an economic interest in both initiating and sustaining wars[22]. For Collier, civil wars are a result of rebel groups competing with national governments for the control of natural resources and primary commodities, rather than any political, ideological, ethnic or religious *grievance*[23]. Simply put, those who take up arms in the pursuit of justice or democracy are nothing but charlatans in pursuit of self-enrichment.

Although some of Africa's conflicts certainly depict this reality, "economic agendas account less for the origins than the longevity or persistence of violent conflict" [24]. According to Don Hubert, a distinction needs to be drawn from the outset between the search for resources in order to continue fighting and the accumulation of resources for its own sake[25]. He therefore argues that:

> Self-supporting armies are one thing; a self-sustaining economic rationale for war is quite another. Obviously in practice these distinctions are seldom neat or clearly identifiable, and the motivation for fighting can easily change over the course of the conflict. While the origins or root causes of war may in fact lie in some genuine sense of grievance, over the course of the conflict greed can become a more prominent motivating factor. Since all warring factions need resources in order to continue to fight, and in the absence of foreign patrons they must be secured independently, it is surely a relatively small step to use existing methods for new ends.[26]

Collier's thesis contains, therefore, certain limitations and shortcomings. The most glaring of which is that his findings are based on 'civil wars' and confined to the operations of local rebel movements without examining the commercial activities of national militaries in inter-state conflicts. Collier has, therefore, ignored the "increasing utilisation of national militaries as tools for private financial gain by the political and military elite"[27]. This publication in explaining the political economy of the DRC conflict, has undertaken to expose how the deployment of armed forces from neighbouring countries was strategically used to control and exploit the Congo's natural resources. More critically, Collier presents his findings as being devoid of external variables. In other words, Collier does not consider the actors that constitute the demand-side for the commodities that rebels appropriate. For Moore, this 'greed' school of interpreting Africa's wars focuses on the 'honey-pot' effect of mineral resources to the bee-like instincts of African warlords without suggesting that the same honey-pot attracts foreign governments and their respective multinational corporations[28]. Although the greed argument offers a strong basis for understanding the economic interests of local rebel movements, its negation of the external economic forces and national militaries from the equation, limits its value for critical analysis and policy formulation on the DRC conflict.

Moore's chapter finally confronts the challenge of examining the global, regional and local dynamics of the DRC war. He incorporates his critical examination of the linkage of war and economics in his attempt to reassess the roots and consequences of the conflict. Thus the rest of his chapter is devoted to explaining how the war affected the economics of everyday life in most parts of the DRC, as well as the 'intrigues' of the rebel movements, their leadership and foreign governments and multinational corporations that were behind them.

1.2 Economic motivations for Mobutu's removal

The war that began in the DRC in August 1998, was a consequence of the nature Mobutu Seso Seko's removal. Externally planned and executed, Mobutu's overthrow was undertaken primarily to ensure the internal security of the DRC's neighbours – Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Angola – and to secure the mineral interests of western governments and their mining companies. The Mobutu regime was overthrown least because of the need for a democratic government in the Congo. However, analyses of Mobutus's removal, especially those produced in the early stages of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo-Zaire (AFDL) rebellion, portrayed the military take-over as an event conducted solely for internal and regional interests.

In other words the overthrow of Mobutu in 1997 was justified for two main reasons. Firstly, from a regional perspective Mobutu was regarded as the main supporter of opponents of his neighbouring governments. The most detrimental was his support for the remnants of the former Rwandan Hutu government of Juvenal Habyarimana and its military, the ex-FAR, and the Hutu extremist militia known as the Interahamwe, many of whom are responsible for carrying-out the 1994 genocide. In addition, Mobutu's longstanding relationship with the UNITA rebels and his support for the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) justified the involvement of Angola and Uganda, respectively, in his overthrow. Secondly, Mobutu's blockage of the democratisation process that emanated from the 1992 National Sovereign Conference (NSC) resulted in the leadership of local non-armed opposition championing his removal even more vehemently.

Although these were well-founded reasons for his removal, it was international economic interests that provided the wherewithal for Mobutu's ousting. This dimension for his removal is, however, often excluded from analyses of the DRC war. Complementing the latter part of Moore's chapter, Dani Nabudere commences chapter three with the argument that to understand the origins and sources of the DRC war, one must unpack the real forces that continue to exploit the natural resources of the Congo. For Nabudere these forces are the *New Angolo-American Conglomerates* that are continuing to maintain the balance of power together with their African agents through a series of alliances and networks, in their favour and against the interests of the native people of the DRC[29]. Nabudere's chapter also locates these forces within the context of the global economy and the effects it has had in generating internal regional, ethnic and racial hatred in the DRC and Africa's Great Lakes region.

By the mid-1990s, Mobutu's erstwhile western allies, in particular the United States (US) finally rejected his kleptocratic reign in what he named Zaire. The embarrassment that Mobutu was creating for the US could no longer be tolerated. Moreover, although western mining companies had almost unimpeded access to the former Zaire's riches, Mobutu's nationalisation and mismanagement of the mineral economy made the business climate increasingly unpredictable. According to Nabudere "although clearly a puppet of western interests, Mobutu had over the years developed a certain arrogance in dealing with the west. He consistently refused to privatise the mineral economy, preferring to leave the bulk of it in state hands, which in effect meant leaving it under his own personal control and that of his close cronies"[30]. As early as the mid-1980s the US through the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), began demanding that Mobutu dismantle the state mining companies and open them for liberalisation. This, for Nabudere, was the new period where economic liberalisation and privatisation was the new creed, against the old-style nationalistic policies. The toppling of Mobutu in his words was, therefore, "part and parcel of installing a new generation of leaders who accepted the new creed of globalisation"[31].

Pierre Baracyetse has argued that it is the transformation of the world mining industry over the last decade that has fuelled the mining transnational corporations demand for the privatisation of state enterprises[32]**.** Compared to the 1970s, a period characterised by the nationalisation of industrial sectors, especially those linked to the exploitation of natural resources, the 1990s witnessed a reverse movement, one that entails the privatisation of a country's resources. Accompanying this phenomenon is the fact that "mining resources in other countries of the world have already been heavily exploited, not to say exhausted, and those, which are being exploited, are associated with tremendous costs. As a result, the great financiers of this world and hunters of mineral resources, have their eyes targeted on Central Africa where discovered mineral deposits are still virgin or ill exploited"[33].

Indeed the DRC is a 'geological scandal'. As far back as World War II, the US obtained uranium from the Congo for the Manhattan (Atomic Bomb) Project. Some of the uranium ore of that time was extremely rich in the metal, certain lumps containing extraordinarily high concentrations of 75 per cent. These were exceptions; today, certain uranium ores in Canada are said to contain as much as 25 per cent, but more normal are concentrations of 0.2 per cent - e.g. in Russia or in Namibia where the ore extracted contains just 0.03 per cent concentration[34]. In the eastern DRC, presently under the control of the rebels, deposits of copper, cobalt, silver, cadmium, gold and above all, coltan are of exceptionally rich concentrations.

A study carried out by the National Centre of Geological and Mine Research (CRGM) in 1994, found the soil in the Ituri region (eastern DRC) to be so rich in gold that with modern extraction methods it is possible to get pure gold at a ratio of 6-7 kg/ton[35]. According to specialists, the OKIMO concession which is situated around the city of Mongbalu on the border with Uganda, contains estimated reserves of between 2,000 and 3,000 tons of gold, worth between 20 and 30 billion US dollars. In certain places the concentrations reach the astronomical figure of 18 kg of pure gold per ton, as compared to an overall global average of 11 grams of gold per ton[36]. Specialists estimate that when the rich copper and cobalt mines of Katanga (in the south-east) are later depleted, the eastern provinces will be the motor of the economy and constitute that which is already being designated 'the useful Congo' by western MNCs and governments.

To ensure their investments and unwavering access to the most lucrative mineral deposits, Baracyetse argues that these financiers need a customised economic and financial policy, that of privatisation, and the co-operation of political actors or 'rebels', "which are associated with them and sometimes even created by them"[37]. The geopolitical stakes of the international mining companies in the DRC, therefore, constituted the critical basis for the overthrow of Mobutu. So as the regional quest to remove Mobutu ripened, based on security concerns and ambitions for a Tutsi empire, mining conglomerates found the appropriate alliance with Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda to lead a military campaign to oust the Congolese despot. The alliance also, very critically, entailed the involvement of multinational companies that were directly linked to high-ranking politicians from western countries. The two main new Anglo-American mining conglomerates that stood at the heart of this alliance were American Mineral Fields Inc. (AMFI) and Barrick Gold Corporation.

AMFI is based in Hope, Arkansas, and chaired by Mike McMurrough, said to be a personal friend of former US President Bill Clinton. As Nabudere notes in his chapter, AMFI directly financed the ADFL's military campaign to remove Mobutu by, for example, putting at the disposal of Kabila its hired corporate jet. In return AMFI secured the copper-zinc mine at Kapushi in Katanga (Shaba) province, regarded as one of prime copper-zinc mines in the world, even before the AFDL captured Kinshasa. However, the relationship between the AFDL rebels and AMFI extended beyond copper and zinc to involve space technology. David Moore points out in his chapter that one of the biggest hopes when Kabila marched from the borders of Rwanda to Kinshasa was a US $ 60 billion contract to construct the orbital platform in replacement of the Russian MIR station. Although sixty countries, with many more enterprises and industries participated in the bid, the contract was awarded to AMFI. The special alloys in the composition of numerous pieces of this space contraption requires enormous quantities of rare and precious metals, such as cobalt, niobium, tungsten and coltan, all of which are present under Congolese soil. Cited by Nabudere, is an Executive Intelligence Review (EIR) report which revealed that the Barrick Gold Corporation, headed by former US president George H.W. Bush and former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, was also formed just before the out break of the AFDL rebellion[38]. Nabudere argues that the invasion of eastern Congo by the combined forces of Rwanda and Uganda behind the AFDL rebels, prepared for a take-over of Congo's gold rich eastern territory by Barrick Gold Corp.

Furthering the economic interests of their mining conglomerates in Mobutu's removal, has been the involvement of western governments. A report by the *New African*, argued that "the interests of the US, Britain and their European allies were being served by the Ugandan and Rwandan occupation of the Congo"[39]. The same report revealed that a US military base in the Bugesera district of Rwanda was used to train the Rwandans to fight in Congo. An earlier report by the British daily, *The Independent*, argued that "Rwanda's military operations in the Congo, being far above its means, was secretly funded by the CIA"[40]. According to Wayne Madsen, the US ran the war in the DRC from 1996 [41]. Madsen argued that the AFDL rebels and their Rwandan allies, in their march to topple Mobutu, reached Kinshasa in May 1997 largely due to the technical assistance provided by the US's Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). The US provided (Laurent) Kabila's rebels and Rwandan troops with 'high-definition spy satellite' photographs that permitted them to plot courses into Kinshasa that avoided encounters with Mobutu's forces[42].

Hence, Laurent Kabila, the spokesperson turned leader of the AFDL, became the president of the DRC through an externally contrived plan that backed regional states to replace a devalued Mobutu. Consequently, the Kabila regime was expected to be amenable to the economic, political and security interests of western governments and regional states. This agenda involved availing the country's enormous mineral riches for exploitation by mainly Belgian, Canadian and US-based mining conglomerates, while at the same time allowing Rwanda and Uganda to take charge in Kinshasa[43].

1.3 A regime change gone wrong

Despite pretensions that all was well within the AFDL that toppled Mobotu, it soon became clear that tensions were brewing between Kabila and his patrons. Once at the helm of the new DRC, the Rwandans and Ugandans began to play more of a sovereign role. Kabila (Snr.) was increasing sidelined from important decisions affecting especially the eastern provinces. At the same time, Nabudere maintains, an anti-foreigner nationalist sentiment began to emerge amongst the Congolese people. The feeling was the strongest against the Rwandese forces and the so-called Banyamulenge community who were responsible for killing many Congolese that were seen to be former Mobutuists.

Feeling he was being held hostage, Kabila (Snr) tried to establish space for himself. Nabudere has argued that when Kabila (Snr.) refused to award the Banyamulenge, Congolese citizenship – because of the anti-Rwandese and anti-Banyamulenge sentiments – and publicly denounced the plunder of diamonds, gold and timber by both Rwandese and Ugandan forces, Uganda and Rwanda began to complain about his 'unpredictability'. They accused him of helping the Intarahamwe and not doing enough to honour his part of the 'deal' in declaring parts of the DRC territory as being that of Rwanda.

As Kabila began to feel that his security was at risk he was forced to rely more and more on the Congolese, especially his own ethnic group, the Baluba, to ensure his personal security. In July 1998, Kabila's Baluba security guard botched an attempt by the Rwandese to have him assassinated. At same time a rebellion by the Banyamulenge against his government was taking place in the South Kivu province[44]. When Kabila purged his government and military of the Rwandans and Ugandans for trying to kill him, the stage was set for a fully-fledged second 'rebellion' by the 'Banyamulenge' Tutsis to have him ousted.

It was, however, clear that in order to wage this second 'rebellion', both Uganda and Rwanda needed a Congolese 'cover' or 'face'. Nabudere argues that the use of the Banyamulenge 'rebellion' alone as justification for the new offensive was seen to be problematic as a propaganda ploy. What they required was a 'broad alliance' of all Congolese groups that wanted to fight for 'democracy' against Kabila's 'dictatorship'. Having moved very quickly to occupy Goma, Bukavu and Uvira, they declared a rebellion in the name of the Banyamulenge and other disgruntled Congolese groups on 2 August 1998. What they wanted was a well-structured organisation that could take over the propaganda work while the Banyamulenge, Rwandese and Ugandans fought on their behalf. This is what led to the creation of the 'rebel movement' called the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD). The reason given for the new 'rebellion' was that Kabila was a dictator just like Mobutu, and that he was supporting the *Intarahamwe* and the ex-FAR, that was responsible for the Rwandan genocide.

Kabila's death knell was, in fact, sounded when he reneged on deals made with the MNCs that were behind his installation as president of the DRC. Moore notes in his chapter that Kabila's cancellation of mining concessions made with multinational companies while he was making his way to Kinshasa was enough for their host states to give the green light to Uganda and Rwanda to turn against him. In particular, when Kabila reneged on mining contracts awarded to AMFI and Barrick Gold Corporation, which were contracted to even before he could assume the presidency of the DRC, he committed an unacceptable offence. Therefore, as Madsen has observed, one of the major goals of the Rwandan-backed RCD rebels, was the restoration of mining concessions for western mining companies[45].

The RCD and its regional backers chose to pursue a full-scale war against the Kabila government attempting to topple his regime in the same way they had toppled Mobutu. Their calculation was that

Kabila could be overthrown in a matter of weeks. This influenced their strategy of airlifting whole battalions of Rwandese and Ugandan troops to take over Matadi port and the Inga dam in the south west of the country. It was alleged that aircraft from the US undertook the airlifting of these troops. The effort failed as Zimbabwean, Angolan and Namibian troops intervened and prevented Kabila's overthrow. Subsequently, what started out as the removal of Mobutu, one of Africa's longest standing despots, transgressed very quickly into what became a protracted, all out African imbroglio, dubbed "Africa World War I"[46].

In prescribing the type of political leadership and state structure required to end the externally induced conflict in the DRC, Roger Kibasomba argues in chapter four that the Rwandan and Ugandan invasion could not have occurred if the Congolese people, society and institutions were 'securitised'. In other words, for Kibasomba, the RCD rebellion even though it was created and sponsored from outside, would have been unthinkable if the majority of Congolese citizens had benefited from the distribution and allocation of national wealth and political power. Kibasomba argues that kleptocratic, nepotistic and predatory behaviours in the Congolese leadership systems since independence stem from the systematic erosion of institutional foundations that are supposed to drive democracy and good governance in the DRC. Such leadership produced the failure of the political, economic, social and military structures of the DRC state which in effect led to the insecurity affecting the Congolese people. Indeed both Mobutu and Laurent Kabila enjoyed excessive presidential powers. However, Kibasomba warns that the armed opposition that arose to 'check and reduce' Kabila's presidential powers must be carefully examined. The rebellion led by the RCD, he argues, was clearly unpopular, clouded with hidden agendas, counter-productive, opportunistic and prone to self-destruction.

1.4 Kabila to Kabila[47]

As the war to remove Laurent Kabila from power dragged on, the military situation pointed increasingly toward a stalemate. The result was the carving up of the DRC into three zones of military control. The western and southern part of the country came under the control of the Kinshasa government and its Southern African Development Community (SADC) allies. The Rwandan government and its RCD allies occupied the eastern part of the country while the northern region was taken over by the Ugandan government and its Movement for Congolese Liberation (MLC) allies.

Although the war was directed at Laurent Kabila's removal, his assassination on 16 January 2001 was ironically carried out by his inner-circle. His intransigent and erratic behavior that eventually turned his friends against him was firmly rooted in his 1960s pseudo-revolutionary style of governing. The swift monarchial style appointment of Joseph Kabila, as the DRC's new president was not without controversy and protest. Joseph Kabila's assumption of power at the age of 29 aroused widespread concerns about his political maturity and capacity to address the challenges he faced as head of a fragmented state which was embroiled in a war of unprecedented proportion and complexity.

Economic realism that informs international relations in a post-Cold War era was never appreciated nor understood by Laurent Kabila. Unlike, for example, the Angolan government that deals with its former enemy, the US, over its oil resources, Laurent Kabila failed to grasp the economic prudence that underpins the need for a constructive, albeit cautious, engagement with external forces that contributed greatly to Congo's woes. In the aftermath of his death, Joseph Kabila and his new government undertook a radical turnaround of relations with the relevant international economic actors.

Unlike his father's erratic blockage of Western mining conglomerates under the guise of checking imperialism, Joseph Kabila's first step was to renew Kinshasa's economic relationship with heavyweight MNCs that were set on obtaining the country's mineral wealth. It is therefore no coincidence that Joseph Kabila's international acceptance was attained only after he made the necessary assurances to the Corporate Council for Africa, the World Bank (WB) and the US oil cartel on his trip to Washington just a week after his father was gunned down. Needless to say Kabila Jr promised these foreign constituencies free and fair elections, and more importantly, a liberalised economy and a new investment code to improve the climate for foreign business.

It came as no surprise, therefore, when AMFI announced in late April 2001 that the new DRC government had approved its US$300 million deal for the Kolwezi copper-cobalt tailings project, potentially the largest direct investment in post-Mobutu Congo. Moreover, it was of great relief for companies to learn that they no longer required a presidential approval for mining titles, a responsibility that had been transferred to the mining minister. But Joseph Kabila's economic reforms did not end there. His legalisation of the US dollar and the devaluation of the country's over-valued franc surely pleased mining companies and traders that were eager to resume their business in the Congo.

As a reward for the new DRC government's economic turnaround, Western governments were expected to urge their allies, Rwanda and Uganda, to withdraw from the occupied zones. This was, however, conditional on Joseph Kabila's termination of support for the Rwandan genocidaires operating from eastern Congo. A change of heart toward Rwanda and Uganda was certainly felt when the UN released a report charging them with the illegal exploitation of the DRC's natural resources. In the forefront of this reconfiguration of policy by Western governments toward the Kinshasa authorities, stood lobbyists like US-based Cohen and Woods International (CWI).

CWI was employed by Laurent Kabila to repair Congo's image in the US. The plan proved unsuccessful simply because Kabila (Snr.) refused to open up the economy, renew mining contracts and co-operate with the international economic actors. CWI may have convinced the Bush administration that with the 'right' leadership now in Kinshasa, the US can look forward to predictable relations with the DRC government, and thereby require less of the rebels to further its interests in the Congo.

1.5 Balkanisation and plunder

Indeed, Laurent Kabila's autocratic rule legitimised the existence of the rebel movements. However, he was killed and replaced by a more internationally accepted government, only after the rebels' legitimacy was secured. As a result external interests that benefited from the rebellion against Kabila (Snr) could not nullify the rebels' existence even after the new DRC government was meeting such interests. Consequently, the rebels retained their recognition as legitimate opposition forces having equal status as the DRC government. This concretised the de facto partitioning or 'Balkanisation' of the DRC, which was, however, not to the dismay of foreign governments that have vested interests in the Congo.

According to Madsen, the appointment of Walter Kansteiner as the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs provides some insight about the intentions that the US had for the Great Lakes region. Kansteiner in a paper on the then eastern-Zaire, written for the Forum for International Policy in October 1996, called for the division of DRC and the Great Lakes region 'between the primary ethnic groups, creating homogenous ethnic lands that would necessitate redrawing the boundaries'[48]. Madsen maintains that Kansteiner argued for the creation of separate Tutsi and Hutu states in central Africa. The creation of a Tutsi state in eastern Congo, Madsen notes was "exactly what Rwanda, Uganda and their American military advisers had in mind when the plan to remove Mobutu was implemented in 1996 – the same year Kansteiner penned his plans for the region"[49]. In Madsen's words:

> Four years later, Kansteiner was still convinced that the future of the DRC was 'balkanization' into separate states. In an August 23, 2000 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article, Kansteiner stated that the 'break-up of the Congo is more likely now than it has been in 20 or 30 years'. Of course, the de facto break up of Congo into various fiefdoms has been a boon for US and other western mineral companies. And I believe Kansteiner's

> previous work at the Department of Defense where he served on a Task Force on Strategic Minerals – and one must certainly consider coltan as falling into that category – may influence his past and current thinking on the territorial integrity of the DRC. After all, 80 per cent of the world's known reserves of coltan are found in the eastern DRC. It is potentially as important to the US military as the Persian Gulf region[50].

In chapter four Kibasomba argues that ethnicity and the uneven distribution of resources in the DRC necessitates a unitary system operating with strong federal principles. The DRC, he stresses, needs presidential executive leadership that delegates many duties to the elected local and provincial authorities with the capacity to promote development initiatives, and private and public sector partnerships. To remedy the chief weaknesses of a unitary system and to promote democracy, the presence of strong local governments and the existence of an effective opposition cannot be overemphasised. However, Collette Braeckman maintains that the "exploitation of mineral wealth from the Congo by neighbouring states, with support from their non-African allies, is clearly incompatible with the idea of rebuilding an effective central government"[51]. She correctly points out that this agenda fits in very well with the argument, frequently advanced in the US, that the Congo is ungovernable, too big and too diverse. Braeckman notes that according to this argument the DRC should break up, opening the way for a very loose federation of provinces or constellation of micro-states which would have special relationships with the adjacent countries (Rwanda and Uganda) rather than a central government[52].

But is the DRC really too big to be governed? The DRC is Africa's third largest country. Yet the two countries that are bigger, the Sudan and Algeria, have not attracted similar arguments in spite of a protracted war in the Sudan that has basically dissected the country. Nevertheless, as the DRC remained de facto partitioned, mining companies benefited from the three separate zones of military control. The mineral exploiters and companies operating from Rwanda and Uganda concentrated on pillaging gold, diamonds and increasingly coltan from the eastern Congo, in particular the Kivu province. According to a report by the *New Congo Net*, evidence underscored how important the occupied zone is to businesses working out of Kigali (capital of Rwanda)[53]. The report argued that minerals were moved from the Rwandan occupation zone in the DRC to companies in the West through relationships based in Kigali and elsewhere, including the USA, to support very high technology programs that are, in some cases, ahead of the state-of-the-art. It named the Banque du Commerce du Developpement et d'Industrie in Rwanda, the Banque National de Paris (BNP), B&L Trading International Ltd. of Dublin, and Kenrow Inc. of Maryland, USA, as being involved in a deal to develop coltan and other key minerals obtained from the Rwandan occupied zone in DRC. In addition the report noted that H.C. Starck of Goslar, Germany, examined mineral samples and found them to have high contents of coltan and other key minerals essential to some of the most advanced technologies of our time. (The final report of the UN panel of experts investigating the exploitation of the DRC's resources identified H.C. Stark as part of the elite network in the Rwandan-controlled area.

Uganda's intervention in the Congo had been timeously linked to the economic rewards reaped from its occupation of Congolese territory. Foreign gold mining companies, in particular Barrick Gold Corp., registered in Uganda, are involved primarily in prospecting and very little with mining itself. However, Uganda's gold exports have been soaring. Reports of official figures revealed that sales reached US $110 million in 1998, compared to only US $35 million in 1997. A Ugandan government document revealed that only two percent of all the country's gold exports were from domestic sources. Statistics from Congo's Central Bank shows that the DRC annually exports 300 kg of gold. However, according to the same statistics, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda are exporting 3, 4 and 10 tons of gold, respectively, per year. All this gold, the Central Bank claims, originates from the DRC and leaves the country clandestinely.

The link between the exploitation of resources and the war became so acute that the consequences, especially regarding the more than 2.5 million deaths of innocent Congolese, could no longer be ignored by the international community. Subsequently, the UN established a panel of experts to investigate the links between the continuation of the conflict and the exploitation of the country's resources by the warring parties. In their first report, the UN panel identified two phases in the illegal exploitation of the country's resources. The first was mass-scale looting while the second was the systematic and systemic exploitation of the DRC's rich natural resources by the warring factions. The report characterised mass-scale looting as stockpiles of mineral, coffee, wood, livestock and money being illegally exploited in the territories 'conquered' by the armies of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. These resources were taken and either transferred to those countries or exported to international markets[54]. Systematic exploitation, the report argued, "flourished because of the pre-existing structures developed during the conquest by the AFDL", while the systemic exploitation referred to Rwanda and Uganda using these existing systems of control created during the AFDL rebellion to channel extracted resources[55].

A glaring limitation of this UN report was its restricted examination of the forces that constituted the systemic dimension to the exploitation. In other words while the UN panel identified that the illegally exploited resources were being exported to international markets, they confined their explanation of the systemic dimension to the regional and neighbouring countries without drawing any connection to foreign based MNCs that are central to 'international markets'. Put differently, the UN panel failed to identify the source of the demand for these resources and the buyers to whom the Rwandans and Ugandans were selling these resources.

In the absence of determining the external actors and beneficiaries of the illegal resource exploitation, an addendum to the first UN panel report, recommended the imposition of a moratorium on the purchase and import of certain precious commodities from the DRC. This recommendation was, however, 'shot down' by the representative of the US to the Security Council, who argued that the moratorium would be unenforceable and advised that it would be more effective to control exports of natural resources by means of existing internal mechanisms[56]. Importantly, for the *greed versus grievance* debate, the addendum argued that a wide array of interests has ensured that the war in the DRC remains a self-financing and self-sustaining affair. In other words, while parties to the three-year conflict in the country may have been originally motivated by security concerns, they have remained in the DRC largely for economic gain.

During this time the Belgian-based International Peace Information Service (IPIS) released a report titled: *Supporting the War Economy in the DRC: European Companies and the Coltan Trade*, in January 2002. The report revealed the names of European companies trading in coltan originating from the DRC which directly contributed to the financing of the war. Some of the companies it listed as having commercial dealings in eastern Congo and Rwanda, were: Cogecom and Sogem (a subsidiary of Umicore, formerly Union Miniere) of Belgium, Masingiro of Germany, Chemie Pharmacie Holland of the Netherlands and the Swiss off-shore company Finmining. The report argued that these companies were among those that provided the demand and even instigated the mining of such strategic minerals. Consequently, some of these companies, the report argued, have played an important part in the continuation of the war by co-operating directly with the rebels and their Rwandan and Ugandan allies.

The final report of the UN panel attempted to expose the international and foreign beneficiaries of the DRC's illegally exploited resources. Published on 16 October 2002, it named the United States, Germany, Belgium, Kazakhstan and even South Africa as leading buyers of these resources. Crucially for an understanding of the possible solution for this 'new scramble for the Congo', the final UN report argued that although the regional conflict had diminished in intensity, the overlapping micro-conflicts that it provoked continued, for example, the conflict in the Ituri region. The report further stated that criminal groups linked to the armies of Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe and the Government of the DRC have benefited from such micro-conflicts. Critical for the peace process, however, these "groups will not disband voluntarily even as the foreign military forces continue their withdrawals. They have built up a self-financing war economy centred on mineral exploitation"[57].

1.6 Conclusion: The Way Forward

From 1998 to 2002, the DRC war has claimed the lives more than 3,5 million Congolese, an outrageous number of deaths that has not been classified as genocide. Most of the victims were innocent civilians. Although disease and famine were contributing factors, the majority of these deaths were the result of actual war crimes committed by the rebels and their regional backers. However, international media failed to direct the world's attention to this human catastrophe. Although there can be no quick fix solution to this war, the continued genocide of Congolese compelled an urgent enforcement of peace.

To produce a resolution to any war or conflict one indeed has to understand the sources and 'logic' of such violent aggression. But if economic gain is the driving logic for armed conflict, "the very basis for a resolution through negotiation is undermined and the search for a political settlement may be futile"[58]. Don Hubert accordingly asks if conflicts are "becoming neo-medieval struggles between warlords, drug barons, mercenaries and militias who benefit from war and have found it their only means of making a living, of what value will be efforts to resolve conflicts between them peacefully? Not only will these groups oppose a negotiated settlement; even more challenging to traditional thinking on war and peace, they may not even want to win"[59]. For Hubert, the challenges for policy makers and peace brokers are, therefore, stark given that a war provides the legitimacy for various criminal forms of aggrandisement while at the same time the necessary sources of revenue to sustain the war. Of most concern is the realisation that "warring parties need more or less permanent conflict both to reproduce their positions of power and for access to resources"[60].

The DRC war indeed fits this sobering approach to resolution of conflicts that are economic driven. This is especially true in view of the UN panel's findings that "the departure of foreign forces will do little to reduce their economic control of the DRC's natural resources"[61]. The final UN panel of experts report argued that the Governments of Rwanda and Zimbabwe, as well as powerful individuals in Uganda, have adopted other strategies, many of which involve criminal activities, for maintaining the mechanisms for revenue generation and resource exploitation once their troops have departed. The UN report stated that:

> The [recent] departure of troops should not be interpreted as a sign of Rwanda's willingness to reduce its considerable involvement in the evacuation of valuable resources, to reduce the level of armed conflict or to diminish the humanitarian crisis in the region. Economic exploitation in its various forms will continue, relying on a less conspicuous armed force and alternative strategies for carrying out the exploitative activities. Rwanda has put in place economic control mechanisms that do not rely on an explicit presence of its Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA). For example, it replaced Congolese directors of parastatals with businessmen from Kigali to ensure a continuation of revenue from resources. This proves that the Congolese, who formed part the Rwandan backed RCD, were never trusted by the Kigali administration in the first place. In addition the UN report noted that Rwanda also replaced the local currency with the Rwandan Franc while RPA battalions that specialised in mining activities remained in place, though they ceased wearing RPA uniforms in an effort to guise their commercial activities. The Panel's sources also reported that RPA undertook an operation to obtain a large number of Congolese passports so as to give an appropriate identity to RPA officers who continue to be stationed at strategically important sites in the DRC [62].

Rwanda justified the continuing presence of its army in the DRC by claiming to be tracking down the forces responsible for the 1994 genocide. However, the UN panel confirmed reports that the Rwandan political and military authorities were actually collaborating with the so-called *genocidaires* that they claimed to have been pursuing. For example, the panel was in possession of a letter, dated 26 May 2000, from Jean-Pierre Ondekane, military chief of the RCD-Goma rebels, that urged all his army units to maintain good relations "with our *Interahamwe* and Mayi-Mayi brothers", and further, "if necessary to let them exploit the sub-soil for their survival"[63].

So of what value are peace efforts aimed at resolving the DRC war, if evidence shows that the warring parties indeed are maintaining a virtual permanent state of conflict, both to reproduce their positions of wealth generation and for access to resources to continue fighting? Are we witnessing the beginning of a Cyprus-style division of the DRC? What would the implication for peace be in the Great Lakes and southern African regions? To answer these pertinent questions, or at least provide some kind of qualitative response, one would need to review the peace initiatives undertaken to find a solution to this war. Scepticism about a resolution of this war has been mainly based on the violation and break down of the number of peace agreements that were signed. For some observers of this war, the duration of the peace process is far too long and seemingly endless. But as the concluding chapter of this publication argues, in addition to the economic motives for the war, other factors, in particular, the emergence and subsequent fragmentation of different armed groups and the huge number of political opposition parties that have not had their political base tested, serve to frustrate efforts aimed at a political resolution.

The concluding chapter offers a more optimistic look at the peace processes that began with Lusaka Cease-fire Agreement. It argues that although economic agendas of foreign forces are vital to understand the source or 'logic' of this conflict, peace initiatives correctly championed an end to the bloodshed and the withdrawal of foreign forces, before attempting to address the plunder of DRC resources with trade embargoes, for example. In other words, the peace process remained convinced that the Congolese needed to assume control of their country through a political settlement which entailed the setting up of an all-inclusive transitional government in order to terminate the illegal exploitation of the country's resources for the enrichment of a few. With a democratic government in place, the institutional foundations that cement and drive democracy and good governance, as argued by Kibasomba in chapter four, will produce the structures that the DRC state requires to provide the much needed security for its people. The conclusion of this publication argues that both the recommendations of the UN panel of experts as well as the approach of the South African-led peace process, should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. Rather they form part of a likely solution to this conflict.

In short, the complexity of this conflict warrants a multi-dimensional approach to a resolution. While a resolution ought to have been supplemented with trade embargoes on the sale and purchase of minerals originating from the DRC, there needs to be regional level peace processes in the neighbouring countries as well as the institutionalisation of the mooted Great Lakes Conference[64]. Parallel to this process is the need at the national level for the implementation of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and the Pretoria Agreement and the subsequent operationalisation of the transitional government.

End Notes

1 C Cramer, "The Economics and Political Economy of Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa", Centre for Development Policy & Research Discussion Paper 1099, University of London, 1999, pg.2.
2 The UN panels were: a) the panel of experts investigating violations of Security Council sanctions against UNITA rebels in Angola; b) the panel of experts investigating links between diamonds and arms trafficking in Sierra Leone; and c) the panel of experts investigating the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the DRC.
3 The UN produced three reports: the first in April 2001; the second, an addendum, in November 2001; and the final one in October 2002.
4 The Institute for Global Dialogue is an international affairs and foreign policy research organisation based in Johannesburg, South Africa. See www.igd.org.za
5 see second chapter by David Moore.
6 Ibid.
7 M Klare, "The New Geography of Conflict", *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2001.
8 Ibid.
9 M Berdal & D Malone, Introduction, in M Berdal & D Malone (ed.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Lynne Rienner, Ottawa, p 1.
10 see second chapter by David Moore.
11 see J Cilliers, "Resource wars – a new type of insurgency", in J Cilliers & C Dietrich (ed.), *Angola's war economy,* ISS, Pretoria, 2000, p2.
12 See Moore, op. cit.
13 R Jackson, "Conflict Resolution in Africa: Intervention, Indifference and Indigenous Solutions". *African Affairs*, vol 100 no 399, 2001, p 322.
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15 Ibid.
16 Moore, op cit.
17 S Naidoo, "the role of war economies in understanding contemporary conflicts", *Global Insight*, Issue No. 2, September 2000, pg 1.
18 M Berdal & D Malone, Introduction, in M Berdal & D Malone (ed.), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, Lynne Rienner, Ottawa, p 2.
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20 Ibid.
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22 P Collier, "Economic causes of civil conflict and their implications for policy, *World Bank*, 15 June 2000, http://www.worldbank.org/research/conflict/papers/civilconflict.pdf.
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28 see second chapter by David Moore.
29 see chapter three by Dani Nabudere.
30 Ibid.
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32 P Baracyetse, "The Geopolitical Stakes of the International mining companies in the DRC", *Buzet*, Belgium, December 1999.
33 Ibid.
34 B Bosongo, "Aggressors want Congo's gold". ATMA, Belgium. 1998.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 P Baracyetse, op cit.
38 J Steinberg, "George Bush's 'Heart of Darkness': Mineral Control of Africa". *Executive Intelligence Review*, January 3, 1997.
39 B Ankomah, "Congo: The Looters from Abroad", *New African*, May 2001.
40 Quoted in *New African*, March 2001.
41 Wayne Madsen is an American investigative journalist and author of: "Genocide and Covert Operations in Africa 1993-1999". In May 2001, Madsen testified before the US Congressional Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights Committee on International Relations of how the US, from 1996, ran the war in the Congo.
42 See Cover Story: How America runs the Congo war, *New African*, September 2001.
43 See S Naidoo, 'What Price Peace in the DRC?', *Global Dialogue*, vol. 6.2. 2001.
44 This happened when an attempt to disarm them earlier in that year proved unsuccessful. The Banyamulenge had been trained and armed by RPF/A and were used in the fight to topple Mobutu on the understanding that they would gain Congolese citizenship. After the victory, they refused to be led by military commanders from other parts of Congo.

45 W Madsen, 'America's covert operations in the Great Lakes Region', 2001. www2.minorisa.es/inshuti/madsen2.htm
46 Former US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, described the DRC conflict as 'Africa World War I' during her address to the Security Council meeting on the DRC on 24 January 2000.
47 This section is drawn from S. Naidoo, 'What Price Peace in the DRC?', *Global Dialogue*, vol. 6.2, 2001.
48 W Madsen, op cit.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 C Braeckman, "Partition Poses as Protection: Carve-up in the Congo", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October, 1999.
52 Ibid.
53 NCN, 'Budding and intriguing minerals business to obtain key high technology rocks from the Rwandan zone of the occupied DRC'. 1999. www2.minorisa.es/inshuti/businb.htm
54 see First Report by Panel of Experts, www.un.org/News/dh/latest/drcongo.htm
55 Ibid.
56 IRIN, 2001. 'DRC: UN confirms continued exploitation of DRC's resources', NAIROBI, see www.irinnews.org
57 See Final report by the UN panel of experts,
58 See D. Hubert, op. cit.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 See Final UN Report on the illegal exploitation of the DRC's resources.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid. Although the Mayi-Mayi are not responsible in any way for the Rwandan genocide, their firece resistance to the Rwandan/RCD-Goma occupation of their territory, rendered them a primary enemy for the Rwandan military.
64 The October 2002, UN report, for example, recommended punitive measures, to curb the illegal exploitation of the country's natural resources by criminal organisations and persons. These included the imposition of financial restrictions on 29 companies based in the DRC, Belgium, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and a travel ban on 54 individuals. In other words securing peace requires limiting, if not terminating, the benefits that some derive from the continuation of war.