

Democratic Republic of Congo

A Risk Assessment Brief

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Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), colonized by Belgium in 1885, became independent in 1960. Due to their interest in the vast minerals and other resources in the region, the US and Belgium backed the dictator Mobutu in overthrowing previous leader, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in 1960. Corruption siphoning off massive personal wealth, a plunge in copper prices, mounting debt (\$12 billion debt) and non-representative/undemocratic government led to enormous economic, social and political downturns for the country.

In 1994, the Rwandan genocide led to an influx of over 1 million Hutu refugees settling on the eastern border of DRC. In 1996, Mobutu was abroad due to illness which resulted in a weakening of control over the country. These factors provided the context for Mobutu's 35 year dictatorship to be overthrown by Laurent Kabila who was backed by Uganda and Rwanda in May 1997. Kabila's regime was subsequently challenged by a Rwanda/Uganda backed rebellion in August 1998. Troops from Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad and Sudan intervened to support Kabila's Kinshasa regime. Moreover, the Lusaka agreement was signed on July 10, 1999, which included terms for a cease-fire, demobilization and disarmament of all military groups and an inclusive peace process (including civil society). However, despite the signing of this agreement by all parties, sporadic fighting continued. Kabila was assassinated in January 2001 and his son Joseph Kabila was named head of state. The new president quickly began peace talks (Gaborone, Summer 2001 & Addis Ababa, September 2001) in an attempt to end the war which has cost over 2.5 million lives in the past four years.

Structural Factors

Location: Central Africa Northeast of Angola (slightly less than $\frac{1}{4}$ the size of the USA)

Military Coup: 1960 Mobutu overthrows Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba

Military Expenditure: (FY 97): 250 million; %GDP) – 4.6% (FY 97)

Total Population: 53.6 million

HIV/AIDS: 1.1 million

GDP Per Capita: \$600

Real GDP: -15%

Total Debt: 13 billion

Main Actors

At the national level there are two main groups of actors. On one side there are the rebels consisting of the RDC, RDC-ML, RCD-Goma and the MLC. On the other side, there are the government backed Forces Armees Congolaises, the Interahamwe Hutu militia and the FDD. However, it is important to recognize that these alliances are interest-driven and therefore loyalties are subject to change suddenly (i.e. Mai-Mai often shift their allegiance between the government and rebel factions).

At the international level, the Kabila government is currently backed by Angola and Zimbabwe. In turn, the rebels are supported by Uganda and Rwanda. Other international actors whose allegiance is also interest-based (i.e. in terms of DRC resources) are the United States, Belgium and France (See Annex A for more details).

Domestic Players	
Government (Joseph Kabila)	Rebels (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD))
Forces Armees Congolaises (FAC) 50,000 men	RCD-ML - Mbusa Nyamwisi (supported by Uganda)
Interahamwe Hutu Militia and Ex-Far 15,000 men	RCD –Goma – Adolphe Onusumba (supported by Rwanda)
Forces for the Defense of Democracy FDD 10,000 men	MLC – Jean-Pierre Bemba (supported by Uganda)
Mai –Mai (Few thousand men)	
International Players	
Angola – Eduardo Dos Santos 2-5,000 men	Uganda - Yoweri Musevini 10,000 men
Zimbabwe - Robert Mugabe 12,000 men	Rwanda - Paul Kagame 17-25,000 men
Namibia 2,000 men	Burundi - Pierre Buyoya

Root Causes/Destabilizing Factors

Ethnicity

The main issue surrounding ethnicity in the region is the antagonism that exist between the Hutu and Tutsi. The ethnic Tutsis, who migrated from Rwanda generations ago, have often been the target of distrust due to their relative economic success and the fact that they have maintained a closed society, rarely marrying or interacting with other ethnic groups in the region. This distrust has continually been used by DRC governments to deny nationality and other citizenship rights to the Tutsi population. These actions have further added to the resentment of Tutsis by the Hutus. In turn, the Tutsis affiliation with Rwanda and the mass genocide have contributed to their hatred of the Hutus.

Refugee Camps

The presence of over one million refugees living in camps along the eastern border of the DRC pose a great threat to security in the region since they are housing genocidaires from Rwanda. These individuals are armed militarily and are a destabilizing force in the DRC. As a result, the Rwanda government continues to infiltrate the DRC border, adding to the militarization of the conflict.

Economic

The DRC has huge untapped mineral, timber and agricultural resources. In addition, the hydro-potential of the Congo river is almost unrivalled anywhere on the continent. Unfortunately, the civil and regional war being played out on the Congolese territory have reduced the country to little more than a subsistence based barter economy. As such, much of the military activity and foreign interests in the Congo are focused on control over valuable resources such as diamonds.

Political

In addition, the Kabila government's lack of capacity to deliver even the most basic levels of social and economic development has further contributed to lack of legitimacy of the DRC leadership (see Annex B). There is an absence of truly representative institutions to channel conflict, leading to an inability to devise and successfully implement peaceful solutions in the DRC.

Peace Contributing Factors

1. Contrary to his father, Joseph Kabila has shown a willingness to continue peace talks with the main actors of the conflict (February 25, 2002 peace talks will resume in Sun City, South Africa).
2. Evidence of protracted conflict has contributed to a hurting stalemate between the warring parties since there has been no decisive winner to the conflict on the ground.
3. Regional pressure and international desire to find a peaceful solution to the Congo impasse.

Worst Case Scenario

1. Collapse of the peace process due lack of common ground resulting in renewed full-scale regional conflict (potentially consisting of up to 9 countries in the region);
2. The displacement of Tutsi rebels due to the volcanic eruption in Goma leading to ethnic clashes and an escalating cycle of reprisals, potentially resulting in genocide and the withdrawal of UN peacekeeping forces from the region;
3. Further destruction of the social and economic fabric of DRC resulting in increasing levels of poverty and disillusionment in the current leadership culminating in a coup against Kabila;

Best Case Scenario

1. Complete cooperation of Kabila's government with the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC), allowing the free movement of humanitarian agencies;
2. The successful mitigation of inter-Congolese dialogue by mediator Ketumile Masire;
3. The lifting of the ban on political parties and a pledge to hold free and transparent elections once peace and the country's territorial integrity (withdrawal of foreign troops and return and/or resettlement of refugees and IDPs) have been restored;
4. The granting of citizenship rights and benefits to all ethnic groups in DRC;
5. Lasting peace and sustainable economic and social development.

Most Likely Scenario

1. Learning from the failures of past mediation efforts, the upcoming peace conference in South Africa will deal with the reconstitution of a national army, the question of nationality, federalism and power-sharing. Although some progress will result from these talks, advancement towards peace will be limited due to interest-based positioning during these negotiations as well as a lack of international commitment to this process;
2. The volcano eruption will not have a significant destabilizing effect on the region since the Tutis will re-establish their communities with the continued aid of international humanitarian assistance;
3. Economic and social development will continue to decline despite claims by Kabila for improved living conditions and a national reconstruction plan;
4. Kabila will continue to appease all factions in an attempt to protect his political position to promote peace. However, low intensity protracted conflict will continue.