Democratic Republic of Congo 2018 Conflict Risk Diagnostic



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Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Background

In 1960, the DRC gained independence from King Leopold II and Belgium after nationalist uprisings in now called Kinshasa. The newly independent Congo quickly became plagued with scandal, corruption, and civil conflict. In 1965, Joseph Mobuto becomes President in a coup d'état, renames the Zaire, and remains in power for 32 years. In 1994 the Rwandan genocide had a significant negative impact on Zaire as Rwandan Hutus, including genocidaires enter the Eastern DRC. In 1996, Rwandan-backed, Congolese Tutsi rebels capture most of eastern Zaire and in 1997, capture the capital of Kinshasa during the First Congo War. "Laurent-Desire Kabila is named President of the newly renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo. iv However, there is no lasting peace. The following year Kabila demands that his Rwandan army backers leave the country and less than a week later, Rwandan and Ugandan backed armies begin the Second Congo War. President Kabila receives support from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola. The six countries involved sign a peace accord in Lusaka, Zambia in 1999. vii In 2001, President Kabila is assassinated by a bodyguard, and his son, Joseph takes office. viii In 2003, Joseph Kabila was sworn in as interim president and official elections were scheduled for 2005. The following year, the first free elections were held and Kabila wins a runoff president elections. In 2011, presidential elections give Kabila another term, however, this vote received both domestic and international criticism and opposition over the results. Xi While violent clashes continue in the east, dozens are killed in protests in 2015 against changes to electoral law that would allow Kabila to remain in power. XII Opposition over elections erupted again in 2016, when President Kabila signed a deal to delay elections until 2018. Xiii Meanwhile, violent conflict continues in the eastern DRC, and some 1.7 million had to flee their homes in 2017 alone. xiv

Conflict Risk Assessment:

Conflict Risk Diagnostic Indicators Key: (+) Stabilizing factor; (-) Destabilizing factor; (±) Mixed factor

Very High Risk

- The level of democracy is declining due to President Joseph Kabila's refusal to hold constitutionally mandated elections since August 2016^{xv}. Elections scheduled in December 2017 were not held, they have been rescheduled for 2018.^{xvi} Violent protests have erupted in response, with the state responding by force. ^{xvii}
- President Kabila has remained in power since 2016, illegitimately extending his regime's durability by defying the constitution which only permits the president to serve two five-year terms. xviii
- The Freedom House index characterizes the DRC as not free, with a score of 17/100 (with 100 being the most free. This has declined two points from last year, and one point from five years ago. Opposition party members report being intimidated and face restrictions on their movement. The state violently suppresses citizen protests against the regime's resistance to elections. The state also restricts communication by shutting off internet and messaging services during protests. Individuals experience significant infringement upon their right to life and security during state crackdowns, at least 40 people were killed and 500 arrested during protests in 2016^{xx}, 120 were arrested and 40 killed in December 2017, while 6 more were killed in January of 2018^{xxi}.
- The Freedom House index finds that the press is not free at a score of 82/100 (with 100 being the least free). This score declined four points in the last year, following five years of improvement. Foreign media outlets have been banned from working in the DRC since November 2016. Journalists and media outlets who cover protests or controversial events are subjected to illegitimate prosecution, harassment, and attack, particularly by security services. **XXIII*
- + DRC's control over corruption is improving but still very low according to the World Bank's Governance Indicators. In 2016 it ranked in the 8th percentile with 0 being the worst score. However, this is an improvement from the 2nd percentile in 2011. **iii

Democratization

Direction: Declining

± The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was colonized by the Belgians in the 1800s, and remained under Belgian rule until 1960, when it gained its independence. However, the newly independent state remained extremely fragile, and retained high levels of violence and human rights abuses from the former colonial administration. xxiv

- ± A successful military coup in 1965 bestowed power on General Mobutu, who then granted himself "full powers", stamped out his opposition, and ruled singlehandedly until 1997. ***
- ± In 1996-1997, an armed rebellion led by the AFDL (Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo, Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo) managed to overthrow Mobutu. This rebellion was also supported by Angola, Rwanda, and Uganda. This is when conflict levels peaked, leading to approximately 34,530 deaths that year alone.
- However, further clashes broke out between the new government, led by president Laurent Kabila, and the RCD (Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie, Congolese Rally for Democracy) and the MLC (Mouvement de libération congolais, Congolese Liberation Movement). The next three years saw the next three highest conflict death rates respectively, with 13,884 in 1998, 8019 in 1999, and 7537 in 2000. **xix**
- When Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001, his son Joseph Kabila assumed leadership and remains president today. He was elected for a second term in 2012, but has extended it unilaterally past its constitutional end, causing further unrest today. xxx,xxxi
- The current security situation is deteriorating. Opposition stronghold-groups in the Greater Kasai region and in both Nord-and-Sud Kivu are clashing with both each other and the government, driving current conflict. xxxiii
- More than 1.7 million people were displaced in the DRC in 2017 alone, with an additional 922,000 displaced the previous year. Of those, ACAPS estimates 1.4 million were internally displaced. Over time, refugee totals from DRC total 4.1 million people. XXXXV
- Further compounding displacement problems, DRC is handling an influx of refugees from Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan, which ACAPS estimates to keep increasing. xxxvi
- As of September 2017, there were 85,400 South Sudanese refugees and 167,300 CAR refugees in the DRC, up from 53,900 and 96,000 respectively the previous year. Neighboring conflicts continue to have the potential to cause further refugee movement.

Risk Assessment:

The history of conflict in the DRC remains a driving factor of the current conflict trends, though the various actors have changed over time. Constant challenges for political power in the form of coups have repeatedly engendered intra-state conflict. The regime's refusal to hold elections is the primary driver of conflict. President Kabila's has employed authoritarian measures and violent force to suppress opposition voices, citizens and media. The state has increased its use of repressive tactics since 2017, and is anticipated to continue into 2018 without holding elections. XXXXVIII

High Risk

Economic Performance

Direction:

Improving

- + Low commodity prices caused a sharp decrease in both FDI and trade, but as these prices increase, both FDI and trade will also likely increase. xxxix
- Fall in GDP, GDP per capita and GDP growth rate. GDP Growth rate crashed around 2.5% in 2017 after averaging at 8% for the past five years. xl
- Extremely high inflation, which has exceeded 43% this year, the world average is around 3.3%. xli
- In August 2017, the Congolese Franc had depreciated by 52% in the past year. XIII
- In July 2017, the IMF said it will probably be unable to bail out the DRC's economy unless the government breaks the political impasse. $^{\text{xliii}}$

Human Development

+ Access to improved water source (% of population with access): DRC rate rising at approx. 51.9% average over the last 5 years, using available data (52.4% access in 2015, latest year, compared to 90.91% at world level for 2015)^{xliv}

Direction: Improving

- + Access to improved sanitation facilities (% of population with access): DRC average of 28.1% in the last 5 years using available data, with a 2015 level of 28.7%, compared to 2015 world level of 67.5%. xlv + Life expectancy at birth, total years: DRC last 5-year average of 58.4 years, with a 2015 level of 59.1, compared to a world 2015 life expectancy of 71.8 years. xlvi
 - Mortality rate, neonatal (per 1,000 live births): DRC 5-year average of 30.02, with a 2016 level of

Armed Conflict

Direction: Declining

History of

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28.8, compared to a world 2016 level of 19.1. xlvii
± Maternal mortality ratio (national estimate, per 100,000 live births): DRC 5-year average of 850, with 2014 level (latest available data) at 850. World level not listed. xiviii
+ Prevalence of HIV, total (% of population ages 15-49): DRC 5-year average at 0.84, with latest level in 2016 at 0.7, compared to world 2016 level at 0.8. xlix
+ Students in primary education: DRC 5-year average at 12,713,435 (of population of 78.7M people), with latest level, 2014, at 13,534,625 students. World level not applicable.
+ Children in employment, total (% of children ages 7-14): DRC latest and only available level at 41.39% in 2014. I
+ The majority of the DRC is Christian, with 50% Catholic and 20% Protestant. The Kimbanguists, Muslims, and indigenous beliefs account for 10% each.
- There are an estimate of over 200 different ethnic groups in the DRC and the Mangbetu-Azande make up about 45% of the population. liv
However, there is a large population of Tutsi along the Eastern border with Rwanda. These Congolese Tutsis received external support from Rwanda in the 1990s after approximately 1.2 million Rwandan
Hutus fled into the eastern DRC, include genocidaires, after the Genocide. There are also a multitude of Mai Mai, who are ethnically based local militias who have shifting alliances. Vi
+ DRC is a member of numerous international and regional organizations such as the UN, WTO, IMF and the AU among others. vii ± No intensification of ongoing interstate disputes with Uganda, Angola, Congo and Zambia viii The sixtle and t
- The civil conflicts in neighbouring countries of Central African Republic and South Sudan are intensifying, and the political conflict continues in Burundi, posing security risks to the DRC. It's
- Smuggling routes through Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda allow for the illicit transit of weapons and natural resources ^{lx}
- Some armed groups operating in the Eastern DRC have links with Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, creating a destabilizing effect. xi
Although economic performance and human development present an upward trend, their deteriorated condition still presents a significant risk for conflict. Economic indicators are generally worsening, however, the medium-term outlook looks moderately favorable with slow economic recovery due to a rise in commodity prices. However, a fall in commodity prices or further political instability will disrupt the fragile stabilization trend. Furthermore, despite slight improvements over the last five years in both access to clean water and sanitation, the DRC remains well below world levels. The humanitarian situation is expected to be made worse by the continuation of conflict and the further mass movement of people. Additionally, population heterogeneity and international linkages are currently stable, but underlying tensions may exacerbate conflict conditions. Ethnic tensions remain high, particularly in the eastern DRC where rebel groups are active. Furthermore, interactions with neighboring states are generally tense. There's a great deal of movement between largely unpatrolled borders of people, smuggled goods and arms. With conflicts increasing in intensity in neighboring countries, the region will continue to destabilize, likely having a negative impact in the DRC.

Moderate Risk	
	\pm Military expenditure in 2016 amounted to 1% of GDP in the DRC, unchanged from the rate of expenditure in 2015 and up from 0.8% of GDP in 2011. $^{ m lxii}$
Militarization	- The DRC accounts for 21% of regional military expenditure in the Great Lakes Region (comprised of
	Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda). In real terms this amounted to (US\$) 469M for
Direction: Stable	2016. ^{lxiii}
─	± The total number of active armed forces is 134 000 in 2017, unchanged from 2016. Ixiv The number of
	armed forces represents 0.2% of the population. Ixv This number has declined from 159 000 active
	armed forces in 2012. Ixvi
Environmental	+ The Congo Basin is the second largest rainforest in the world. By the standards of most rainforests,
Stress	deforestation has been moderate. Ixviii Between 2011-2015, the percentage of forested areas in the
	country only dropped 0.5% over four years. lxix However, as most Congolese are heavily dependent on

Direction: Stable	the forest for subsistence, population growth will continue to put pressure on the Congo Basin. IXX
	± Hectares per person of arable land has dropped from 0.10 to 0.9 between 2011 and 2015, therefore, there has been very little change overtime. While 70% of Congolese are employed in agriculture, only 10 million of 80 million hectares of arable land is currently under cultivation. XXXIII
	- The DRC holds over half of Africa's freshwater reserves, however ½ of Congolese do not have access to clean drinking water. The key issue the inadequate water delivery to urban centers and the degradation of nearby water sources.
Risk Assessment	Both environmental stress and militarization present the potential for future conflict, however, their trend line remain stable thus are only a moderate risk at this time. The DRC is naturally endowed with freshwater, forests, and arable land. However, as conflict continues to worsen living conditions, this increases pressure on the environment due to the dependence of the Congolese on bushmeat for both consumption and to sell. Deforestation exacerbates this issue, further endangering both the massive carbon sinks of the Congo Basin, as well as the habitat and population of animal populations. Despite the increase in state repression by the Kabila regime, this has not been accompanied by increased militarization. The number of active armed troops only represents 0.2% of the population, or 1 in 500. Additionally, the percentage of GDP devoted towards military expenditures is stable, and has only increased marginally in the past five years.

	Low Risk
	+ At an estimated population of almost 79 million, the DRC is the 19th most populous country of the world. While total population is increasing, the population growth rate has begun to slowly decline. Additionally, the population density of the DRC remains relatively low.
Demographic	± Urbanization: According to the World Bank, urban population remains relatively low, and the urban population growth rate has begun to slowly decrease. xxvii
Stress	- The demographic shift in the DRC known as the youth bulge is likely to cause strain on the DRC. The median age of the country is 18.6 years old, and approximately 41.7% of the population us under
Direction:	14. Currently, the dependency ratio is extremely high at 97.5. While the fertility rate has dropped, it still remains at an average of 6.2 children per woman. Ixxiix
	Currently, the high dependency ratio put extreme pressure on productive adults in the DRC. While the large group of youth people entering the workforce could lessen this burden, there is a chance of them becoming a demographic bomb. It the economy cannot provide employment and satisfy this group, it could increase social and political instability in the country.
	Although the growth rate is declining, the growing population continues to put strain on the economy
Risk	and existing infrastructure of the DRC, specifically on water resources. As the massive youth population
Assessment:	reaches maturity, this is likely to cause further instability in the country and strain on the government and the economy.

	Internal Stakeholders	
President Joseph	Although President Kabila came to power legitimately in 2006 and again in 2012, he has sought to	
Kabila and the RDC	consolidate power by defying the constitution and refusing to hold elections. lxxxii	
	The former rebel groups and FAC were integrated into mixed brigades in the FARDC (Forces	
	Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo, Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of	
Security Forces	Congo) to create the new army of the DRC state, after Kabila assumed power in 2001. Executity	
	forces are used by President Kabila to defend against attacks on his rule by rebel groups, and	
	violently suppress citizen protests.	
National People's	Several armed militias in opposition stronghold areas united in June 2017 to form the most	
Coalition for the	prominent insurgent alliance, the CNPSC with the overarching objective to oust President Kabila.	
Sovereignty of	This group has been particularly active in the Eastern provinces of the DRC, seeking to control	
Congo (CNPSC)	strategic areas with natural resources. lxxxiv	
	It is estimated that 70 armed groups are active in the DRC, concentrated in the Eastern provinces.	
Armed Insurgents	These groups have had longstanding grievances against the central government, and have been	
	galvanized by President Kabila's decision not to hold elections. Their violence is concentrated	

	locally but primarily focused on government institutions. lxxxv
Opposition Parties: Le Rassemblement	There are more than 400 active political parties in the DRC, primarily concentrated in the capital Kinshasa. Historically the opposition has been quite fractured, and struggled to mount a convincing opposition to President Kabila and his party. However, several key parties have united under the alliance <i>Le Rassemblement</i> , which seeks to hold Kabila to account and convince the Congolese
	people they are the best alternative to creating a peaceful and prosperous country. IXXXVI

External Stakeholders	
Bordering States: Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi.	Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi historically, and contemporarily continue to have varying levels of involvement in the conflict, both directly and indirectly. For example, Uganda and Burundi are used as corridors for the smuggling of illegally mined resources and arms. Rwanda and Burundi are allegedly fighting proxy wars in the DRC. IXXXVIII These states have an economic incentive to maintain weak state enforcement in the DRC's eastern regions.
African Union (AU)	The AU is the leading multi-lateral organization on the continent. It has been very active in mediation, preventative diplomacy, and public statements regarding the conflict in the DRC. The AU also has a field reporting mission present in the DRC, and supports MONUSCO's peace and stabilization efforts in the region. IXXXIX
United Nation(UN) and MONUSCO	MONUSCO is the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC. Having been active since 2010, it is the longest standing and most expensive peacekeeping mission in history. Its mandate is to use all necessary means to carry out stabilization, to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts., ^{xc} However, MONUSCO's credibility and legitimacy has been damaged by instances of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by its forces. ^{xci}
The United States of America (USA) and the European Union (EU)	The USA and the EU have publically condemned President Kabila's failure to hold elections and violent repression, particularly at the UN. They have implemented targeted sanctions including travel bans, assets freezes, and a ban on making economic resources available to, or engaging in transactions with the military chief of staff of President Joseph Kabila, eight senior officials and a militia leader. They have also threatened to withhold aid if the situation further deteriorates or Kabila does not hold elections in 2018. **Cii

Scenarios:		
Best Case	Credible, free and fair elections are held in 2018 with international observers present. There are no violent protests before or after the election and there is a peaceful transition of power. The breakthrough of the political impasse will allow external donors to increase their efforts in the DRC, improving access to humanitarian aid, development and access to water. The stable political situation eases the uncertainty, which eases investors' doubts and allows for greater inflows of FDI. Commodity prices continue to rise and the economy stabilizes. The flow of refugees both in and out of the country stabilizes and there is a decrease in recruits of refugees by rebels.	
Worst Case	Kabila keeps a strong hold on power and refuses to hold elections. He increases repression against protestors and violent clashes become more widespread. By holding onto power, the states institutions become weakened and their capacity to implement projects and provide services is reduced. The DRC becomes isolated from the international community and donors abandon projects in the country. The tense political climate causes inflation to increase, investment to decrease, making economic recovery unattainable. There is increased militarization by both state and non-state actors, which worsens the humanitarian crisis and increases the number of refugees.	
Most Likely Case	Kabila continues to delay elections for as long as possible, until international pressure leads to a hasty, rigged election. Due to uncertainty, there is continued violence both preceding and following the event. State repression and low civil liberties remain an issue, which gives further cause for violent opposition. International actors and donors continue are reluctant to increase efforts to assist with underdevelopment. As such, there is no movement on improving access to clean water, putting more pressure on existing reservoirs and the water crisis continues to worsen. In sum, domestic and international uncertainty furthers	

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