

The Crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) presents the following backgrounder on the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo as of November 30, 2020. Information and maps are from various sources and not the original work of USCRI. All information is subject to change.

Quick Overview

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one of the most enduring and complex humanitarian crises in the world. The country is simultaneously experiencing armed conflicts, food insecurity, forced displacement, and multiple recurring epidemics, including cholera, measles, and intermittent outbreaks of Ebola.¹

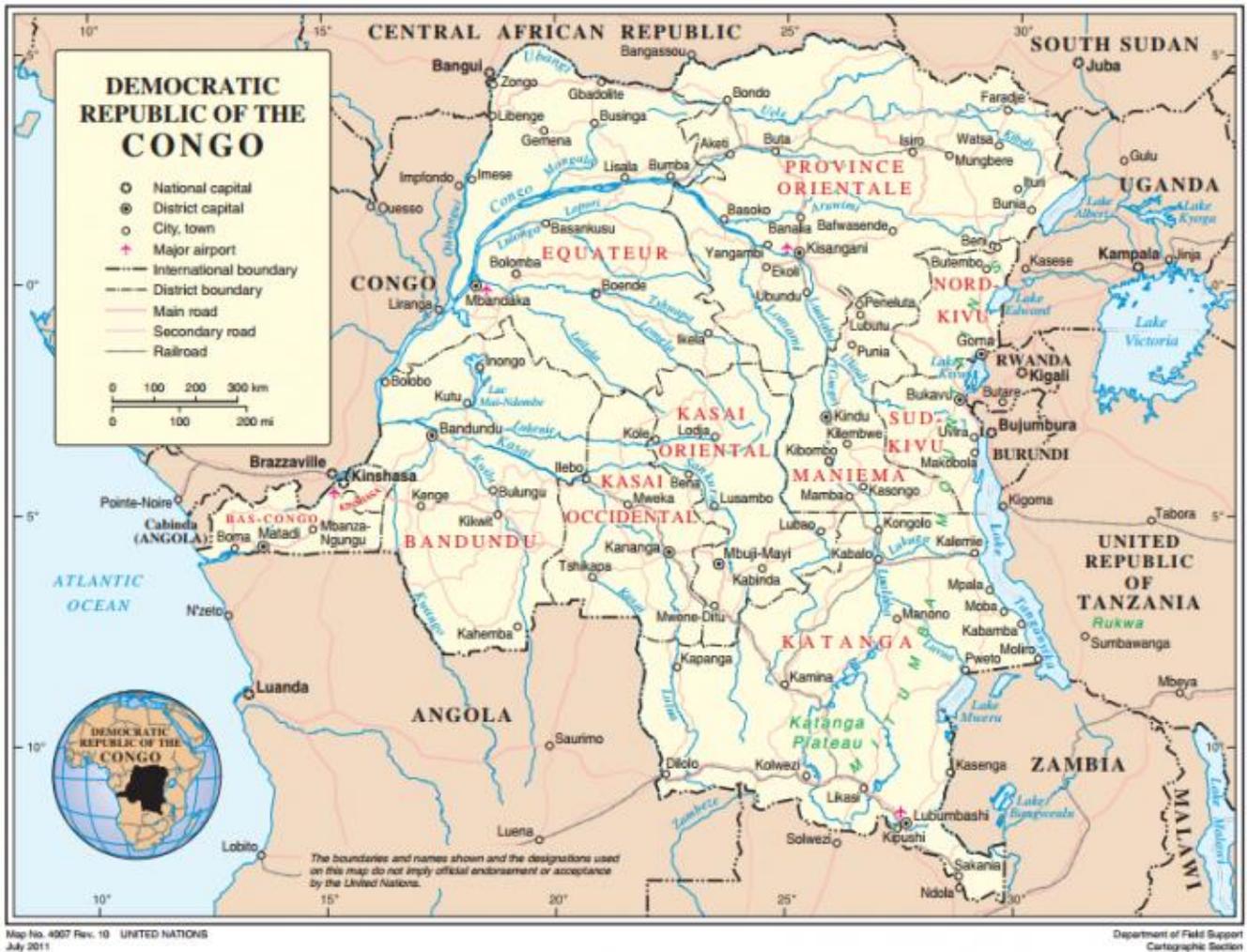
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WHO WE ARE

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) is a nongovernmental, not-for-profit international organization that responds to the needs and advocates for the rights of refugees and immigrants worldwide.

Basic Information



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Demographics³



Population: 86.7 million

Population ages 0-14: 46% (USA: 19%)

Population ages 15-64: 51% (USA: 65%)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita: \$545 (USA: \$65,280)

Origins of the Crisis

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Ephemeral Periods of Peace

While the most recent humanitarian crisis was sparked by escalated conflict starting in 1994, the roots of the modern conflict and accompanying humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereinafter "DRC") are rooted in the country's tumultuous history and its wealth of mineral deposits.

A Colony Owned by One Man

The first record of the DRC, or as it was known, the Kingdom of Kongo, was in 1482, when Portuguese explorers discovered the mouth of the Congo River. The territory was later established as a center for the Atlantic slave trade by British, Dutch, Portuguese, and French merchants, thus marking the country's entry into a history of turmoil due to its resources – whether they be human or natural.⁴ Yet, while experiencing destructive upheaval due to the slave trade and resulting uprisings, the next few hundred years were relatively peaceful in terms of armed conflict and violence.

In the late 19th Century, during a period known as the "Scramble for Africa," the powers of Europe vied for control of resource rich Africa, carving up the continent into separate colonies. The United Kingdom took large parts of mostly the east and south, along with small territories in the west, while France dominated most of north and west Africa. Meanwhile, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium took scattered parts of the continent, including the Kingdom of Kongo.⁵

Unlike the other countries of Europe, Belgium itself was not the owner of the colony. Instead, its king, Leopold II, claimed the Kingdom of Kongo, now the Congo Free State, as his own private property.⁶ In 1885, Leopold II lay claim to the territory, claiming to the other European powers that he was involved in humanitarian aid work, and not seeking to use the area for resources.⁷ However, the opposite was true, and the king's reign over the territory until 1908 was one of the most exploitative and violent in the continent's history. During this period, the country was forced to endure the systematic exploitation of its natural resources, especially ivory and rubber. At the same time, a regime of terror, which included mass killings, mutilations, and destruction of homes, was instituted to force the people to extract the resources to add wealth to the king's personal coffers.⁸ It is estimated that the regime led to the direct and indirect deaths of 50 percent of the population at the time.⁹

In 1905, after several months of investigation, a commission established by other European powers published a report detailing the abuses of Leopold II's rule. Strong public opposition in Belgium to the continuation of his rule forced Leopold II to renounce his rule over the Free State of the Congo, thus making the territory a colony of Belgium and renamed the Belgian Congo.¹⁰

The Roots of Conflict Minerals in the DRC

Belgium would retain Belgian Congo until the latter claimed independence in 1960. During the period, the Belgians set the stage for decades of future conflict and violence. While the widespread violence and killings were curbed and the development of hospitals, infrastructure, and schools was begun, the Belgian government set up a system of even more intense economic exploitation.¹¹

The Belgian Congo's wealth of natural resources had always been the main attraction for Belgium, and with Leopold II removed, corporations were given more control and influence over the economy in the colony. The United Mines of Upper Katanga (UMHK) was founded shortly after Leopold II's reign ended and for the next 50 years, this corporation exercised the greatest influence and control over the economy and the resources, exploiting the native Congolese to mine cobalt, copper, tin uranium and zinc in mines which were among the richest in the world. Cobalt extraction in Katanga alone represented 75 percent of global production.¹²

Moreover, King Leopold II had created the function of a European "district commander," who appointed Congolese chiefs that were responsible for the oppression of their own people that included expropriation, monopolization of natural resources, and forced labor.¹³ This assignment of exploitation was perpetrated into the remainder of the colonial period when the Belgian government divided the country into *secteurs* in 1933, each with an incapacitated leadership with no ability to resolve conflicts.¹⁴ The government then appropriated all "vacant" territory, which had been communally held by tribes or clans, and redistributed them to mostly European individuals or foreign companies for mineral extraction.¹⁵ Between 1910 and 1960, the Belgian Congo became one of the most industrial, but one of the least educated and developed colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁶

Pan-Africanism and Continental Independence

Pan Africanism refers to a philosophy (or philosophies) which sought to promote ideas of a united and independent Africa.¹⁷ While the movement towards continental independence began in the early 1900s, independence movements in individual colonies began in the late 1940s. Some African states gained political independence through peaceful transitions of power, when former colonial masters handed over power to Africans. Ghana (Gold Coast, et. al.) was the first in 1957, and South Africa was the last in 1994. Peaceful transition was not the norm, however, and many countries had to wage armed struggle to attain political freedom.¹⁸

Belgian Congo was no exception, and its path to independence was characterized by violent protests in response to increased bureaucratic constraints by the colonial administration. Congolese political parties started to rise, and in 1959, 34 protestors were killed in riots that broke out after members of the political party Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO) were not allowed to assemble by the Belgian administration.¹⁹ The Belgian response agitated already high discontent to new levels, as the rural populations began protesting colonial rule, feeling empowered to resist.

The same year, the Parti Solidaire Africain unified the major political parties and organized a movement against Belgian rule, providing a legitimate and fully Congolese institution to organize and channel a source of national pride and unity, as well as opposition to the Belgium administration. Eventually, Parti Solidaire Africain became more and more like a quasi-government, arranging services for Congolese.²⁰

In 1959, the Belgian government decided to hold an election that would give Congolese positions of inconsequential power. However, Parti Solidaire Africain urged the Congolese people to boycott the elections due to their undemocratic nature. The overwhelming success of the boycott proved to the Belgian administration that the Congo was ungovernable. Deciding against a bloody and possibly drawn out and politically costly affair to make the Congolese comply, like the war in Algeria, the

administration chose to surrender control. Moreover, international pressure was mounting against Belgium, as the United States was pressuring European nations to give up their colonies, aligned with the idea of self-determination within Pan-Africanism.²¹ In 1960, the Belgian Congo gained independence and became the Republic of the Congo (also known as Congo-Léopoldville to distinguish it from the Republic of Congo - Brazzaville).

Continuing a Legacy of Exploitation

Within months of independence, hopes for a smooth and successful transition to independent rule faded and instead a series of events contributed to the new country's instability. Patrice Lumumba became Prime Minister and Joseph Kasavubu President after independence. Within two weeks of independence, however, Congo's new government faced a national mutiny from the army and threats from a variety of secessionist movements.²² Cold War tensions increasingly played into Congo's leadership struggle, with the United States fearing that the charismatic Lumumba and his supporters would allow the break-up of the new country and support the Soviet domination of central Africa.²³ With the backing of both the United States and Belgium, Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba, who was later arrested and assassinated.²⁴

In the summer of 1960, two provinces of the country declared secession, including the mineral-rich region of Katanga. A five-year period of political turmoil and violent and widespread rebellions ensued, resulting in more than 100,000 deaths, and ending with a coup in 1965 when Mobutu Sese Seko ousted President Kasavubu with support from both the United States and Belgium.²⁵ Mobutu brutally quelled new rebellions and personally dominated Congo, renaming the country Zaire in 1971. Between 1965 and 1997, Mobutu systematically used the country's mineral wealth to co-opt potential rivals, and to enrich himself and his allies through a patronage system so wildly corrupt that many came to view it as a "kleptocracy"—a country with a government whose principal aim was to loot public goods. Mobutu is conservatively estimated to have stolen at least \$5 billion from his country, much of it moved to international banks and investments. Further, Mobutu allowed Hutu extremists and genocide participants to seek refuge in the DRC in the wake of the Rwandan Genocide of 1994.²⁶

With the end of the Cold War, his health failing, the suspension of international economic aid to Congo, and the global collapse of raw commodity prices at the end of the 1980s, Mobutu began to lose his grip on power, finally being ousted in 1997 and the country renamed to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). From 1998 to 2003, government forces supported by Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe fought rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda in what is known as the Second Congo War. While estimates vary greatly, the death toll may have reached over three million people. Despite a peace deal in 2002 and the formation of a transitional government in 2003, ongoing violence perpetrated by armed groups against civilians in the eastern region has continued, largely due to poor governance, weak institutions, and rampant corruption.²⁷

Current Situation

Rebel groups continue to fill the vacuum left by national armies seeking to gain control of the abundant mineral wealth available, sparking constant violence.²⁸ Moreover, some mineral-rich regions continue to seek to secede from the country. Since 2017, in Eastern DRC alone, rebel groups have violently attacked 9,313 civilians, kidnapped 5,287, and killed at least 3,867 and left millions more displaced within the

country and refugees in neighboring countries.²⁹

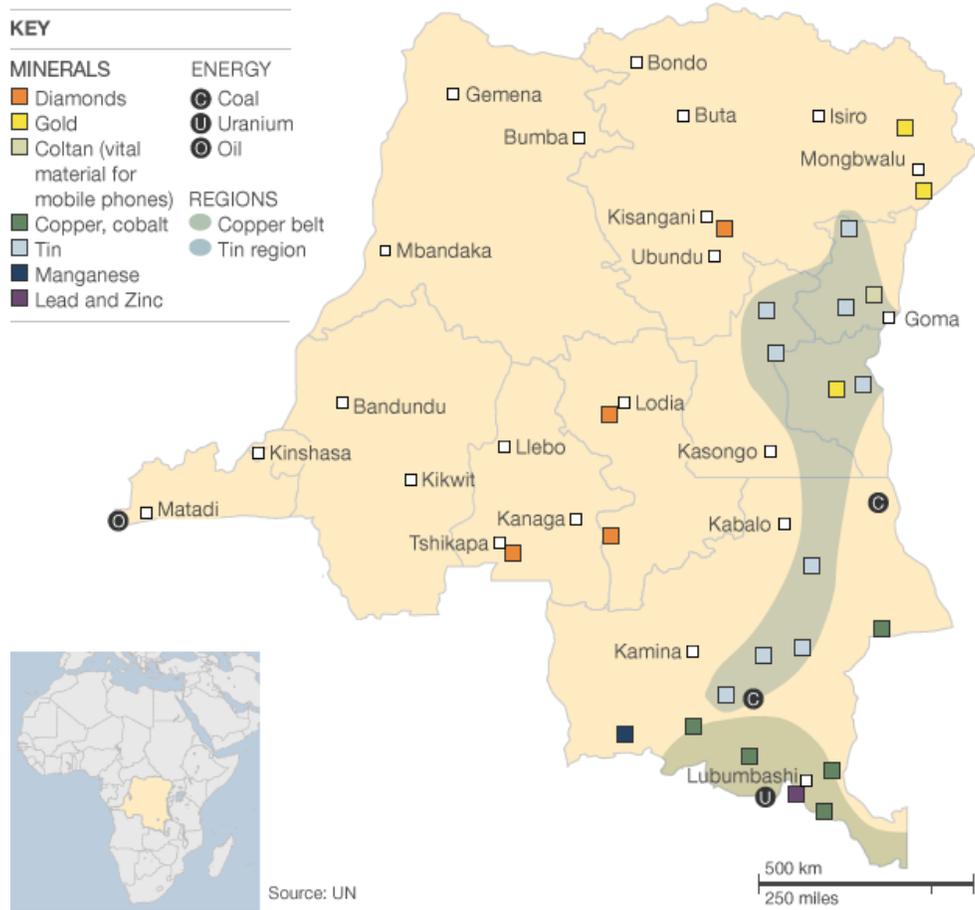
One of the most prominent rebel groups to emerge in the aftermath of the war was known as the March 23 Movement (M23), made up primarily of ethnic Tutsis who were allegedly supported by the Rwandan government. M23 rebelled against the Congolese government for supposedly reneging on a peace deal signed in 2009. The UN Security Council authorized an offensive brigade under the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) to support the DRC state army in its fight against M23. The Congolese army and UN peacekeepers defeated the group in 2013, but other armed groups have since emerged.³⁰

The country's massive resource wealth—estimated to include \$24 trillion of untapped mineral resources—continues to perpetrate conflict. The mineral trade, mostly consisting of copper, cobalt, gold, coltan, tin, and diamonds, provides financial means for groups to operate and buy arms. The United States passed legislation in 2010 to reduce the purchase of “conflict minerals” and prevent the funding of armed militias, but complex supply chains in the DRC mineral sale business have made it difficult for companies that purchase resources from secondhand buyers to obtain certification. As a result, multinational companies have stopped buying minerals from the DRC altogether, putting many miners out of work and even driving some to join armed groups to gain a source of livelihood.³¹

Five factors make the link between conflicts and natural resources possible in the case of the DRC³²:

1. **Unequal distribution of proceeds from natural resources, which is a cause of grievance for the resource-endowed regions.** These regions see the central state as a mechanism for exploiting their wealth without tangible benefits at the local level.
2. **Ethnicity, which plays a role as the mobilizing factor in conflicts, especially in secessionist movements.** The marked ethnic concentration across regions implies that regional distribution of natural resources is in fact distribution of resources across ethnic groups.
3. **The high value of minerals which makes regional claims for secession credible.** In the case of the DRC, the hike in the copper and cobalt prices in the 1970s was an enticing factor in fueling the secessionist drive. Similarly, rising commodity prices and the discovery of highly valued commodities such as coltan in the context of a global economic boom contributed to fueling resource nationalism in resource-rich regions, especially the Eastern provinces, the Katanga and the Kasai regions.
4. **The weakness of the state that becomes unable to quell the secessionist rebellions and is incapable of sustaining a strong security apparatus to combat the rebellion.** Moreover, a weak state that is unable to provide public services lacks loyalty from its people including its own security.
5. **The combination of a weak state and abundance of natural resources creates opportunities for external agents to take advantage of the power vacuum to exploit natural resources.** Thus, insecurity emerges and is sustained as various actors fight for the control of natural resources while taking sides in domestic conflicts.

Map: Regional distribution of mineral reserves in the DRC, 2015³³

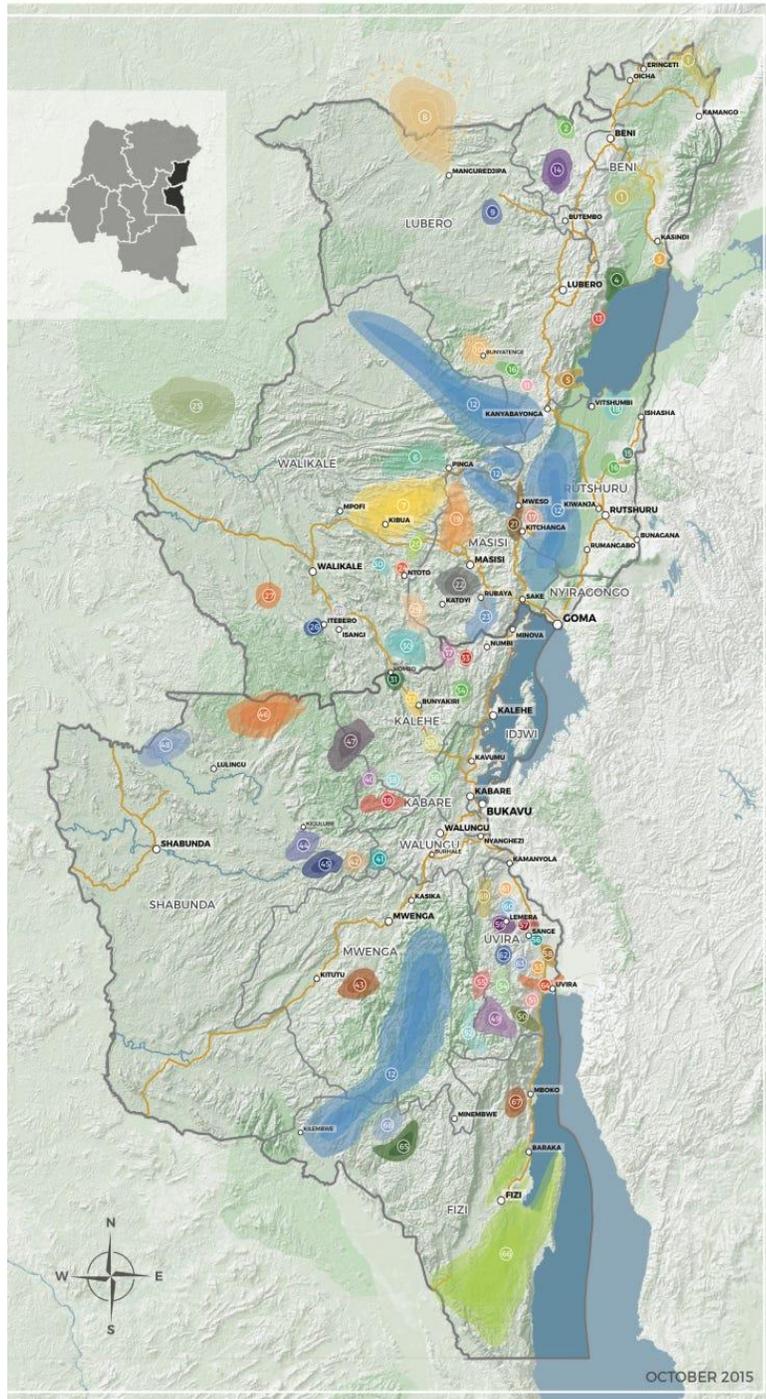


Map: Armed Groups in Eastern DRC, 2015³⁴

CONGO RESEARCH GROUP GROUPE D'ÉTUDE SUR LE CONGO

ARMED GROUPS IN NORTH AND SOUTH KIVU

NYU CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION



- ADF
- FOLC-Kandanga
- Kasindiens
- Mayi-Mayi Nguru
- MPLC
- NDC-Sheka
- NDC-Guidon
- Mayi Mayi Manu (ex-Morgan)
- FDK
- UPCP-Lafontaine
- UPCP-Damaceni
- FDLR-FOCA
- Mayi-Mayi PRM/PAREM
- Mayi-Mayi Vurundo
- Kambale group (ex-Soki)
- FDLR-RUD
- Nyatura-Domi (ex-Muchoma/Vutura)
- AFAPRM Mayi Mayi Charles (ex-Shetani)
- APCLS
- FDC-Guides
- Nyatura-FDDH
- Nyatura-Delta
- Nyatura-Kalume
- MAC
- Mayi Mayi Simba Kachimuka
- Raia Mutomboki Akilo
- Raia Mutomboki Mirage
- Raia Mutomboki Elenge
- Mayi-Mayi Kifuafua Limenzi
- Mayi-Mayi Kifuafua Delphin
- Raia Mutomboki Shukuru
- Raia Mutomboki Hamakombo
- Raia Mutomboki Musole
- Raia Mutomboki Butachibera
- Raia Mutomboki Mweeke
- Raia Mutomboki Imani Bitaa
- Mayi-Mayi Kirikicho
- Raia Mutomboki Blaise
- Raia Mutomboki Lukoba
- Raia Mutomboki Kashungushungu
- Raia Mutomboki Maheshe
- Raia Mutomboki Ndarumanga
- Mayi-Mayi Nyakiliba
- Raia Mutomboki Mabala
- Raia Mutomboki Makombo
- Raia Mutomboki Takulengwe
- Raia Mutomboki Donat/Ngandu
- Raia Mutomboki Kazimoto (ex-Kikuni)
- Nyamusharaba (ex-Tawimbi)
- Mayi-Mayi Toto
- Mayi-Mayi Fujo
- LDF Hauts Plateaux
- Mayi-Mayi Nyerere
- Mayi-Mayi Mushombe
- Mayi-Mayi Mahoro
- Mayi-Mayi Karakara/Amuse-Cueille
- Mayi-Mayi Simusizi
- Mayi-Mayi Cere-Kilolo
- LDF Intervention
- LDF Moliere
- LDF Mahinduzi
- LDF Santos
- LDF Kashumba
- FNL-Nzabampema
- Mayi-Mayi Mulumba
- Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba
- Mayi-Mayi Bwasakala/Reunion (FPC)
- Mayi-Mayi MDLC (Chochi/Yenga)
- Rushombo Group

An essay explaining key trends in armed mobilization and our methodology can be found at www.congoresearchgroup.org and www.christophvogel.net

Impacts

The direct and indirect impacts of the instability and conflict between the multiple armed groups, the weak Congolese government, and international peacekeepers are significant throughout the DRC, despite the concentration of the active crisis being primarily in the eastern, mineral-rich regions of the country. Weak governance, strong, yet non-centralized rebel control over geographic territory and civilians, multiple recurring epidemics, including cholera, measles, and intermittent outbreaks of Ebola, and widespread displacement are the primary issues facing the DRC. COVID-19 has further exacerbated the repercussions of these problems.

Weak governance

The DRC, like many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, has suffered from decades of weak governance, particularly in the eastern part of the country.

Opposition leader Félix Tshisekedi was declared the winner of the country's presidential elections held in late December 2018. The transfer of power from former President Joseph Kabila, who ruled for eighteen years and had delayed elections multiple times, marked the first peaceful transfer of power in the DRC's history. However, election results have since been questioned. Technical issues and irregularities, including a delay in voting for more than a million people, marred the election itself and polling data indicates that a different opposition leader, Martin Fayulu, may have actually won.³⁵

The government has poor control over most of the country, and generally mismanages the country's rich resources that could contribute to greater stability and wealth for its citizens. The country is teeming with natural resources – gold, diamonds, coltan, tin, uranium, and oil – just to name a few. The DRC is the continent's biggest copper producer and the world's largest source of cobalt– a metal that has tripled in value in the past 18 months, given the surge in demand for electric cars. The country is home to immense biodiversity and the world's second largest rainforest, which serves as a significant carbon sink for greenhouse gases. The DRC's rivers have the hydropower potential that could one day power half of sub-Saharan Africa. With 80 million hectares of arable land and diverse climate conditions, the DRC has the agricultural potential to feed much of Africa. And the country's volcanoes, gorillas, and stunning landscapes present enormous opportunities for the tourism industry.³⁶

Yet despite these riches, the DRC is one of the world's poorest countries in the world. Ten out of 100 children in the DRC die before they reach the age of five, and more than 40 percent have stunted growth due to malnutrition. Poor governance and largescale abuses by armed groups and members of the Congolese security forces – fueled by widespread impunity and struggles for control over the country's vast resources – have stunted the country's development and left countless victims. Today, more than 13 million Congolese affected by recent violence are in need of emergency assistance, including food, sanitation, shelter, and education.³⁷ The government's inability to harness the country's resources greatly inhibits the DRC's overall development.

Moreover, intragovernmental turmoil along with general mismanagement has allowed armed groups to rise, particularly in the eastern regions, to fill gaps in services for citizens, thereby weakening the Congolese government's influence. While the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the peacekeeping mission present in the country since 2010, mitigates some effects of weak governance, it only acts as a stopgap to prevent the overflow of violence into other parts of the country.³⁸

Armed groups

More than 100 armed groups are believed to operate in the eastern region of the DRC. Despite the presence of more than 16,000 United Nations peacekeepers, these groups continue to terrorize communities and control weakly governed areas.³⁹ More importantly, many of these armed groups have connections to well established terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab, which allow them to operate in an entrenched and well-resourced manner.

One of the predictors of where a new insurgency will emerge in the DRC is past movements: armed groups beget armed groups, as commanders take advantage of networks of former combatants and rekindle relations with smugglers, arms dealers and miners. Violence in the DRC continues to be influenced by regional dynamics and is fed by trans-border militarized networks and collaborations with terrorist groups.⁴⁰

Compounding the issue of widespread violence caused by armed groups in the eastern DRC is the fact that the countries of the Great Lakes region, particularly Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, have been known to actively support and facilitate armed groups in the DRC in order to launch proxy wars against each other. At the same time, Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi is considering inviting these countries into the DRC to fight groups they respectively oppose.⁴¹ Given their growing animosity, these three countries, if invited into the DRC, could escalate support to allied militias while targeting enemies.⁴² A new proxy struggle could further destabilize the DRC and even provoke a full-blown regional security crisis.⁴³

While there are many groups, some are more organized than others. Below is an overview of the four main active and illegal foreign armed groups identified by MONUSCO that exercise control over vast amounts of territory and civilians, greatly contributing to the pervasiveness of the humanitarian crisis in the DRC:

Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

The FDLR was founded by some of the key perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide who fled across the border into eastern DRC in the wake of those massacres.⁴⁴ It is the largest illegal foreign armed group operating in the DRC and has added Congolese members to its ranks.⁴⁵ Its public purpose is to use military pressure to open "inter-Rwandan dialogue" with the current Rwandan government, but its covert purpose appears to be to overthrow the Rwandan government.⁴⁶ The FDLR currently operates in the eastern and southeastern regions of the country with an estimated 2,000 combatants.⁴⁷ The group continues to be implicated in human rights violations and the illicit exploitation of natural resources over the last 15-20 years.⁴⁸

Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

The ADF is a Ugandan-led Islamist rebel group operating northwest of the Rwenzori Mountains around

DRC's Beni Territory. Founded in 1995, it has a goal to establish an Islamic state in Uganda.⁴⁹ It is among the oldest but least known groups in eastern DRC and has about 1,200 combatants. The group has attempted to increase its numbers through recruitment and kidnappings.⁵⁰ The ADF has links with Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab.⁵¹ The group has approximately 500 combatants, though its overall strength is unknown.⁵²

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

The LRA is a Ugandan rebel group currently based along the northeastern border areas of the DRC as well as in the eastern Central African Republic.⁵³ The LRA was created in 1997 by remnants of the Ugandan spiritual rebel movement and former members of the Ugandan army.⁵⁴ Between 1994 and 2004, the LRA was based in Southern Sudan but after the peace negotiations that led to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) taking over control of Southern Sudan the group moved its base to DRC, beginning a period of violent expansion campaigns.⁵⁵

The National Liberation Forces (FNL)

The FNL Burundian rebel group was originally formed in 1985 as the military wing of a wider Hutu-led rebel group.⁵⁶ While most of the FNL integrated into the national Burundian army after the elections in mid- 2010, the remnants restarted rebel activities in Burundi and across the border in the DRC.⁵⁷ The FNL currently appears to be in an alliance with the FDLR.⁵⁸

Between 2002 and 2013, MONUSCO facilitated the repatriation of more than 29,000 foreign ex-combatants from many armed groups to their countries of origin from North and South Kivu, Oriental Province, and North Katanga.⁵⁹

Recurring epidemics

In addition to political instability, the DRC suffers from multiple recurring epidemics, which, when added to the government's weak governance and provision of social services, create a lethal health crisis. The most concerning epidemics include Ebola, cholera, and measles.

At least two decades of conflict have collapsed healthcare infrastructure, and government expenditure on health per capita remains one of the lowest in the world.⁶⁰ Epidemics are a part of life for most Congolese and infected patients often present in extremis due to lack of vaccination programs, poor healthcare access, and fee-for-service barriers.⁶¹ Further compounding the issue is the overall lack of infrastructure, including reliable roads on which medical personnel may travel to sick patients, as well as deliberate attacks on medical facilities by armed groups.⁶²

Since 1976, the DRC has experienced 11 outbreaks of Ebola (1976, 1977, 1995, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020), claiming thousands of lives, making it the country with the largest number of outbreaks globally.⁶³ The healthcare system in the DRC is extremely limited and rudimentary, unequipped to manage, much less quell, the spread of Ebola, as evidenced by its reemergence every few years.

The latest Ebola outbreak adds further pressure to the country's overburdened healthcare system that is already grappling with other infectious diseases.⁶⁴ The world's largest measles epidemic has been

ongoing in the DRC since June 2019, exacerbated by delays and coordination issues with vaccination campaigns, all of which have contributed to a heavy death toll—6,779 deaths in 2019 and 783 deaths reported as of May 2020, mostly of children.⁶⁵

Displaced persons and refugees

Not only is the DRC a significant source of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), but also it is a host of more than 536,000 refugees, primarily from Burundi, Central African Republic, and South Sudan.⁶⁶

The number of Congolese fleeing the DRC is much higher. As of October 2020, 934,000 refugees and asylum seekers have sought protection in other countries, mostly in Uganda (44.8%), Tanzania (8.3%), Burundi (8.3%), Rwanda (8.2%), and South Africa (6.2%), among others.⁶⁷

Within the DRC itself, there are more than 5 million IDPs, primarily from the eastern regions of the country.⁶⁸ This high number of IDPs represents the largest internally displaced population on the entire continent of Africa.⁶⁹ Yet, this population is constantly in flux, moving in and out of the eastern regions based on the level of fighting of the armed groups, making them especially susceptible to both contracting and spreading the previously discussed diseases as well as COVID-19.⁷⁰

COVID-19

As of October 2020, there have been more than 11,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the DRC, with 303 deaths and more than 10,337 recovered.⁷¹ As discussed previously, the healthcare system is widely unable to effectively deal with the pandemic and relies on outside aid to do so. While it is unclear how many cases of the virus are undiagnosed, the principal issue arising from COVID-19 in the DRC is food security. Four in ten of DRC's estimated 100 million people are food insecure, according to the most recent nationwide data, with 15.6 million suffering "crisis" or "emergency" hunger.⁷² Beyond the issues of COVID-19 limiting aid workers' ability to deliver food, drought, flooding and pest infestations, as well as farmers' limited access to their fields have created insecurity and COVID-19 movement restrictions have further worsened the problem.⁷³

Moreover, the pandemic has dealt a tremendous blow to the DRC's economy. The World Bank warns the outbreak could trigger an economic recession in the country in 2020, stemming from a reduction in exports caused by the global economic downturn.⁷⁴ In addition, the mineral resources-centered economy—plagued by chronic mismanagement, opacity, and corruption—has weakened due to the steady fall in commodity prices.⁷⁵ Copper prices dropped by 25 percent at the onset of the pandemic, triggering a \$5 billion revenue loss.⁷⁶

Such a recession, when paired with all issues discussed above, could serve to put the DRC into a quickly deteriorating tailspin, much worse than the situation already present prior to the outbreak of COVID-19.

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- ³ World Bank Data, *Democratic Republic of the Congo*, The World Bank Group (2020), <https://data.worldbank.org/country/congo-dem-rep>.
- ⁴ Tracy Warren, *Background Report on Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo*, OAK RIDGE NATIONAL LABORATORY (2011), www.info.ornl.gov/sites/publications/files/Pub25323.pdf.
- ⁵ Stelios Michalopoulos and Elias Papaioannou, *The Long-Run Effects of the Scramble for Africa*, 101 AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW 1, 4.
- ⁶ ADAM HOSCHCHILD, *KING LEOPOLD'S GHOST* (1st ed. 1999).
- ⁷ PAUL GIFFORD, *FRANCE AND BRITAIN IN AFRICA. IMPERIAL RIVALRY AND COLONIAL RULE* (1st ed. 1971) at 230.
- ⁸ Hoschchild, *supra* note 6.
- ⁹ *Id.*
- ¹⁰ *Id.*
- ¹¹ *Id.*
- ¹² *Id.* at 31.
- ¹³ TSHILEMALEMA MUKENGE, *CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF THE CONGO* (1st ed. 2002).
- ¹⁴ *Id.* at 22.
- ¹⁵ Hoschchild, *supra* note 6 at 117.
- ¹⁶ *Id.*
- ¹⁷ Mark Malisa and Phillippa Nhengeze, *Pan-Africanism: A Quest for Liberation and the Pursuit of a United Africa*, 2 GENEALOGY 1, 2 (2018).
- ¹⁸ *Id.* at 5.
- ¹⁹ RENÉ LEMARCHAND, *POLITICAL AWAKENING IN THE BELGIAN CONGO* (1st ed. 1964).
- ²⁰ *Id.*
- ²¹ *Id.*
- ²² Enough Project, *The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Roots of the Crisis*, ENOUGH PROJECT (2017), www.enoughproject.org/files/pdf/crisis_roots_congo.pdf.
- ²³ *Id.*
- ²⁴ *Id.*
- ²⁵ *Id.*
- ²⁶ *Id.*
- ²⁷ Council on Foreign Relations, *Global Conflict Tracker: Democratic Republic of the Congo* (2020), www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo.
- ²⁸ Enough Project, *supra* note 20.
- ²⁹ Congo Research Group, *Kivu Security Tracker* (2020), www.kivusecurity.org/.
- ³⁰ Council on Foreign Relations, *supra* note 23.
- ³¹ *Id.*
- ³² Léonce Ndikumana, Emizet F. Kisangani, Isaac Kalonda-Kanyama, et. al., *Conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Causes, impact and implications for the Great Lakes region*, UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (2015) at 22.
- ³³ *Id.* at 23.
- ³⁴ Congo Research Group, *Armed Groups in North and South Kivu* (2015), www.congoresearchgroup.org/mapping-of-armed-groups-in-eastern-congo-october-2015/.
- ³⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, *supra* note 23.
- ³⁶ Ida Sawyer, *Overview of the Political Crisis in DR Congo and the Human Rights, Security, and Humanitarian Consequences*, Human Rights Watch (April 9, 2018), www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/09/overview-political-crisis-dr-congo-and-human-rights-security-and-humanitarian.
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