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Webs of War in the Congo: The Politics of Hybrid Wars, Conflict Networks, and Multilateral Responses 1996-2003

Tatiana Carayannis

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WEBS OF WAR IN THE CONGO
THE POLITICS OF HYBRID WARS, CONFLICT NETWORKS,
AND MULTILATERAL RESPONSES
1996-2003

by

TATIANA CARAYANNIS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City of New York

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
ABSTRACT

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ADVISOR: Irving L. Markovitz

ABSTRACT: Since 1996, the Democratic Republic of Congo has been the battleground for wars within wars, where networks of conflict interact to produce patterns of local resource extraction and patterns of local and regional violence, resulting in one of the most devastating, yet surprisingly understudied, humanitarian disasters of our day. This dissertation explains the complex political sociologies of the three Congo wars and tests key assumptions in the new war literature through empirical observation of the wars and a case study of the Mouvement de Liberation du Congo (MLC), one of the principal rebel movements in these wars.

This project challenges the assertion that contemporary conflicts are exclusively intra-state (or civil war) phenomena. There is no neat dividing line between the external and internal dimensions of the three Congo wars, as actors are linked together in transnational networks of war, thus making the local never truly local. This dissertation also argues that the discursive emphasis on the economic functions of violence and the economic agendas of actors—particularly non-state actors—to the exclusion of political grievance articulation against the state or rival groups, offers only partial and at times even misguided explanations. Political
contestation in the Congo is being restructured into violent, networked insurgencies and proxy movements, and public authority is contested and reshaped by a multitude of actors, state and non-state.

The complexities of these wars have deeply challenged the United Nations and others in their efforts to end the continued violence. Interventions to end the violence have failed—not because local dynamics have been ignored in favor of national ones, but rather because the linkages between different scales of violence (local, national, regional, international) have been poorly understood. There is a need for new ways to conceive of and characterize what appear to be hybrid wars structured around complex, transnational networks linking a diversity of actors. This study thus represents an effort to develop a network-centered approach to explain contemporary war, in which the network is the primary unit of analysis.
To my parents, Jocelyne and Constantine, who introduced me to the Congo and who insisted on the value of higher education. Little did they know the two would converge.

And to my wife and life partner, Maureen, who’s known me for nearly as long as I’ve been working on the Congo. And that’s a long time.
Acknowledgements

I discuss my intellectual journey that led to writing this dissertation in the Introduction so I will not repeat it here, except to say that I have the best and most patient, dissertation committee and troika of mentors one could ask for—Herbert Weiss, Tom Weiss, and Lenny Markovitz. Given the lifespan of this project, I owe many debts to many people. I will not be able to acknowledge them all here, nor ever repay their friendship, support, and encouragement over the years. The road to PhD has been so long that I have written at least parts of this dissertation in the company of three consecutive pet dogs (Rosie, Zoe, and Piper); and five cats (Fetch, Lehman, Phoebe, Mango, and Sophie).

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Finally, I hope that my nephews and nieces Dean and Nick, Cassie and Jamie, will look at this experience not in horror, but with the knowledge that perseverance yields results. Even if one takes the scenic route.
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Thus it would seem that knowledge and genius, of which we make such great parade, consists but in detecting the errors and absurdities of those who have gone before, and devising new errors and absurdities, to be detected by those who are to come after us.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, scholars and analysts have pointed to a shift in the nature of organized violence, from recognizable armed threats in conflict situations to more fragmented political actors and more diffuse and complex, threat environments. While some argue that war in the twenty-first century is on the decline, others point out that it merely has taken on new forms.¹ Increasingly, conflict environments feature not only state armies but non-state armed groups, criminal gangs, drug-traffickers, and terrorists, where civilians may be both victim and perpetrator. These actors employ new communications and weapons technologies and frequently operate across national borders and regions, even when local allegiances are a critical dynamic of violence. In today’s globalized world, it is more difficult to distinguish between “organized” violence and violence with no overt political or economic agendas.

This greater complexity in the production of violence has hampered efforts to respond to conflict around the world. As we look at the many seemingly intractable conflicts around the world today—Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, Yemen, Central African Republic, Libya, for example, it is reasonable to ask why we have not been able to end the violence despite massive international investments in peace efforts. If the renewed emphasis in many capitals on conflict prevention, or the recent critical reviews of United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) peace operations in 2015-2016 are any indication,² there is a growing recognition that our international conflict response toolbox is inadequate in the face of new empirical realities, and that expensive, international interventions to stop the violence are not working.
This dissertation explains the dynamics of the three wars in the DRC over the last two decades and efforts to end them. In trying to understand why it has been so difficult to end the violence that has ravaged Congo for twenty years, it analyzes how the Congo wars are constituted, organized, and inter-connected; and it examines multilateral action to end them and rebuild state institutions. In particular, it “unpacks” the processes of violent conflict by identifying the relationships, interests, identities, and strategies of key actors in these wars, especially non-state ones. And it argues that interventions aimed to end the violence have failed not because local dynamics have been ignored in favor of national ones as some have argued; but rather because the linkages between different scales of violence (local, national, regional) have been—and continue to be—poorly understood.

While some would see these conflicts as prototypical, so-called internal new wars, conflicts in and around the DRC defy traditional International Relations (IR) distinctions between intra-state and inter-state armed conflicts. These wars have been an amalgam of civil strife, inter-state conflict, and opportunistic warlordism with ethnic, financial, political, and security dimensions. And although the battlefield has largely been the DRC, their spatial reach transcends territorial boundaries. They are at the same time local, national, and regional in nature; they link state and non-state actors—international organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), drug, diamond, and arms barons, rebels and warlords—in inter-related networks with reciprocal effects.

The Three Congo Wars

Since the 1996 invasion of Zaire by a coalition of neighboring states, the Congo has been the battleground for wars within wars, where networks of conflict interact to produce patterns of local resource extraction and patterns of local and regional violence. The result is one of the
most devastating, yet still relatively understudied, humanitarian disasters of our day, which has profoundly changed the history of Africa. This, despite the fact that the Congo continues to host the largest, and at an annual cost of $1.23 billion the most expensive, United Nations peace operation in the world.\footnote{5}

The three Congo wars were triggered by the Rwanda genocide of 1994 and the subsequent destabilization of eastern Congo, and have involved at least nine African countries as direct combatants, and many more as military, financial, and political supporters of those fighting, as well as a number of internal and external armed groups, international companies and businessmen (rarely women), arms dealers, and organized crime. These complex, and often shifting, military, political, and economic networks de facto partitioned the country into several broad spheres of influence, in some cases even after the political transition of 2003.\footnote{6} Realignments among the numerous state and non-state armed actors in these wars have often resulted in unpredictable and surprising bedfellows.

While most scholars acknowledge two Congo wars, the conflict in the Congo can be more usefully viewed as three interlocking wars.\footnote{7} The first began in September 1996 as an invasion by a coalition of neighboring states of what was then Zaire, and resulted in replacing President Joseph Mobutu with Laurent-Désiré Kabila in May 1997. The second broke out in August 1998 when a similar configuration of neighboring states, some of whom had been Kabila’s patrons in the first war, broke with him and attempted a similar ouster, but without their earlier success. It ended with the signing of the Lusaka cease-fire agreement in July 1999 by the Kabila government and the MLC and RCD rebel groups fighting it, the result of a stalemate in the war and considerable external pressure. The withdrawal of most foreign troops shortly thereafter created a power vacuum, and a third war began behind UN-monitored cease-fire lines
in northeastern Congo. This war was fought between ever smaller groups—foreign and domestic—that have since become significant actors in the illicit activities in that region. These wars are impossible to make sense of without accounting for the role of regional and transnational forces in them.

When I first began this project in mid-2000, the dearth of scholarship on the Congo wars was surprising given the high rates of displacement and loss of life. Over the last decade, a small cottage industry of accounts of the Congo wars has emerged to fill the vacuum. As Howard French notes, these books share a common narrative. “The Kagame regime, and its allies in Central Africa, are portrayed not as heroes but rather as opportunists who use moral arguments to advance economic interests. And their supporters in the United States and Western Europe emerge as alternately complicit, gullible, or simply confused. For their part in bringing intractable conflict to a region that had known very little armed violence for nearly thirty years, all the parties—so these books argue—deserve blame, including the United States.” This, for the most part, is an accurate narrative.

However, these publications treat actors as atomistic and rational, and fail to address the complex, networked structures that link the diversity of actors within them. Where these connections have been attempted—for example, Gérard Prunier’s *Africa’s World War*—the result is a rich account of fascinating detail and anecdotes devoid of any theoretical framework or analysis, and at times even devoid of actual evidence. While Prunier comes perhaps the closest to trying to weave together the various complex relationships in the networks of these wars, and although a very entertaining 529 pages, the reliability of his sources is hit or miss. As with many edited volumes, John Clark’s *The African Stakes of the Congo War* is of uneven quality, though it does try to trace some of the connections between local and international
dynamics by arguing that global transformations have made African states more vulnerable to conflict; Nzongola’s *A People’s History* is a most valuable addition to Congo’s political history but as it covers a much longer arc of Congo’s history, beginning with the pre-independence from Belgian colonial occupation, it does not get into the detail of the recent Congo wars. One can say the same about Adam Hochschild’s *King Leopold’s Ghost* and Van Reybrouck’s award-winning opus, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*. Rentjeys’ *The Great African War*, though shorter and better sourced, follows a similar narrative to Prunier’s. Turner’s *The Congo Wars* and Lemarchand’s *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*, while useful additions to the bookshelf, focus mostly on the dynamics between eastern Congo and its Rwandan and Burundian neighbors—understandable in that both scholars have focused most of their work on the east. One of the most recent books on the Congo wars, Autessere’s *The Trouble with the Congo*, focuses exclusively on the argument about the “local-ness” of these wars. She argues that international peacebuilders in Congo repeatedly ignored local dynamics and that this explains the failure of international efforts to end the violence. While the book is well researched, it ignores the linkages between the local, the national, the regional, and the international dimensions of these wars and thus gives not only a partial, but a simplistic narrative of the wars and the failure to end them.

In short, most of the accounts of these wars treat them either as one monolithic war—*Africa’s World War* and *The Great African War*; or as part of a Great Lakes dynamic, which privileges events and actors in eastern Congo and their neighbors to the east—*The Congo Wars* and *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*; or as a series of purely local conflicts ignored by the international community—*The Trouble With the Congo*. The one common denominator across them is that the violence in the DRC over the last decade and a half is characterized as a
civil war, while I argue that there is no neat dividing line between the external and internal dimensions of this conflict. The Congo wars are instead structured around complex, transnational networks that link a diversity of actors inside and outside the region. These conflict networks cross territorial boundaries, monetary and trade zones; link diasporic, transnational, nongovernmental, and ethnic communities; and have a global reach even as they produce local violence. The local, national, regional, and international dimensions of these wars are interrelated.

This dissertation thus not only presents existing evidence on the wars in new and different ways, highlighting the linkages among actors in shifting networks; it also brings in new evidence, through a “case within the case”—a study of the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC), one of the principal rebel groups in the Second Congo War, which became, for a time, the second most powerful political force in the country. In this way, it follows in the footsteps of Herbert F. Weiss, whose dissertation and subsequent prize-winning book on independence politics in the Congo, looked at the development of political parties during the independence struggle, and then focused on a case within the case, a study of the militant Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA) party. He used this case study to illustrate his findings that the peasant followers of the PSA, the rural masses, were more radically anti-colonial, in the sense of aggressively protesting for more substantive change than their urban educated, elite leadership.26

What distinguishes the three wars is the networks of actors in each one. When the Lusaka cease-fire agreement was signed in July 1999, three rival Congolese rebel groups and their networks—the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) and the split factions of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD-Goma, RCD-K/ML, RCD-N) controlled two-thirds of the DRC’s territory. Laurent Kabila’s government in Kinshasa, which had itself
taken power by force two years earlier, controlled the remaining third. In both the first and second wars, neighboring states established a network of local proxy movements in an attempt to put a local stamp on their activities. However, the bulk of Kabila’s fighting forces in the first war were foreign (mostly Rwandan)—this was the AFDL; while in the second war this was less so. The MLC’s forces were largely Congolese trained by Ugandan officers, while the RCD forces were integrated within a network of Rwandan troops and commanders. The paradox here is that despite the fact that most of the troops fighting in the first war were foreign, Congolese initially referred to it as a Congolese rebellion; and most Congolese see the second war as an invasion even though there were more Congolese fighting in this one than there were foreign troops.

While much of the violence experienced today in the DRC may be over extractive resources and control of lucrative territory, and while illegal extraction of resources and criminal networks have been standing features of all three wars, it would be misleading to assume that these conflict drivers mutually exclude political narratives and ideologies that also drive the wars. Unlike the facile distinctions made in contemporary conflict literatures, these two drivers of conflict—illicit resource extraction and criminal networks—not only coincide but often reinforce each other in perpetuating cycles of violence.

These wars illuminate non-state armed group behavior, and show that political contestation in the DRC is being restructured around violent, networked insurgencies and proxy movements. The case of the Congo wars dispels the argument that rebellion in Africa is entirely about economic greed and devoid of a political narrative of grievance.” Instead, public authority in Congo is being constantly contested and negotiated by multiple actors across various scales. These actors can be the state, armed groups, customary authorities, civil society, religious institutions, or the private sector, with the lines between these boundaries often blurred. This
dissertation tests the proposition that the network may be the most appropriate conceptual tool to analyze the sub-national and trans-national dimensions of, and public authority in, the Congo wars. Broadly defined, and as is discussed further in Chapter One, networks are social structures that tie together actors or agents in systems of loose interdependence. War networks are political projects that aim to reconstitute political authority.

A Note on Method

The wars in the DRC are arguably the best, as well as the most challenging laboratory to date in which to test assumptions in current scholarship about violent conflict and conflict resolution approaches, and against which to formulate new analytical frames to help us understand violent conflict in Africa today and efforts to resolve it. The methods of research employed in this project are mainly historical and qualitative, drawing on archival and documentary evidence, extensive multi-sited ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and methods of social network analysis.

This dissertation’s theoretical and empirical arguments about contemporary violent conflict are supported by two small-N comparative and longitudinal studies of the Congo wars and the actors within them. The first is a comparative analysis of the three wars, based on a collection of historical data—through a library search and desk review of existing literature and documentation—ethnographic research and interviews to produce a thick description of the wars and their varied networks. The second is an in-depth case study of the MLC rebel movement in the Second Congo War. This study is based on extensive ethnographic field research in the DRC during and after the wars and is used to test the arguments and hypotheses about contemporary armed conflict that were generated inductively in the first study.
Like most research projects, this one would not have been undertaken at all had it not been for a confluence of particular circumstances. These quickly moved my curiosity away from two projects I was considering for the dissertation—the first was the intellectual legacy of John F. Kennedy’s Africa policy, a history of ideas prompted and facilitated by my long friendship with J. Wayne Fredericks, architect of Kennedy’s Africa policy, and the generous access he gave me to his vast collection of papers, which now reside with the Schomburg Center for the Study of Black Culture at the New York Public Library. The second choice was a study of the impact of UN peacekeeping operations on local (host) economies partly through UN procurement practices, that I had cleverly (or so I thought) already entitled *In the Business of Peacekeeping*. This had been prompted by curiosity about the massive UN peace operation in the Congo in the 1960s (ONUC) of which my parents had been a part and which was part of family lore.

What moved my attention elsewhere was the sudden invasion of then Zaire in September 1996, shortly after I had returned to graduate school to begin doctoral studies, and the prospect that a phenomenon that I had literally grown up with—Mobutu’s thirty-two year old dictatorship—might actually be coming to an end. The lack of knowledge of what was happening on the ground among Africans and budding Africanists in New York (at that time mobile phones and e-mail were still new technologies) prompted a group of us in the political science department to host a series of “Congo-Zaire public roundtables” at the Graduate Center to which we invited United Nations Secretariat staff members, returning NGO representatives, researchers, and anyone else we could identify who could share with us the latest information on what was happening on the ground. The primary organizers were fellow student Kostas Loukeris, another Greek student with an interest in the study of Africa, and me. We were greatly supported and encouraged in these efforts by Professors Ofuatey-Kodjoe (then department chair)
and Lenny Markovitz, each affectionately knicknamed by their Greek/Africanist advisees as “Kodzopoulos” and “Markopoulos,” respectively.

One of those invited experts was Professor Herbert F. Weiss, recently emeritus from the political science faculty at CUNY’s Brooklyn College, then a fellow at Columbia’s Institute of African Studies. I cannot say that I remember the content of his talk, but I do remember that Danny Glover came to that roundtable. Changing events on the ground and the friendship that ensued with Herbert, including working with him as rapporteur for the UN Secretary-General’s Resource Group for the Great Lakes that Herbert had been asked to convene at the behest of UN under-secretary-general for Political Affairs, Kieran Prendergast, eventually opened up fresh possibilities to work on Central Africa generally and on Congo specifically.

At about this time, I was moving ahead on the two projects noted above. With the collaboration of Cornelia Bessie and Columbia University’s Oral History Research Office we recorded a long oral history interview with Wayne, and I began helping him sort through his vast collection of papers scattered throughout his Bronxville residence. This process, more than any formal methods training convinced me of the value of archives and the relevance of history in political science. I had also gone to see Professor Benjamin Rivlin, then director of the Ralph Bunche Institute at the Graduate Center and former colleague of Bunche’s, for advice about my UN peacekeeping project. He recommended that I go see a newly arrived faculty member from Brown University, Thomas G. Weiss, who had worked extensively on UN peacekeeping. I eventually found Tom, huddled in a small, dark office on 42nd street surrounded by unpacked boxes and sporting an impeccably tied bowtie. Tom, on hearing that I knew something about oral history, offered me a job with the newly launched UN Intellectual History Project, a research project which planned a series of such interviews. With no good reason to turn down the
job offer, I set up shop the next day across the hall from his office in what was the department’s filing and utility closet—the only space available. This job not only helped pay the rent for the duration of my doctoral work, but evolved into a full-time, substantive role with the UNIHP and a friendship with Tom, which helped deepen my research skills, publication record, and professional networks. Needless to say, I made little headway with my procurement project, as I learned later from contacts Tom gave me, that UN staff would rather eat horseflies than discuss procurement activity.

Several factors drove the selection of the MLC case study. Ultimately, the overriding factor was particular attributes of the rebel group which raised some interesting research questions. It looked different, it sounded different, and word was that it was attempting different experiments in governance than any of the other rebel groups operating in the Congo. This predated the notion and subsequent literature that would emerge some years later on rebel governance. The second factor was sheer serendipity, so frequently the friend of the social science researcher. Professor Herbert F. Weiss had been one of the first non-Congolese visitors to MLC headquarters in Gemena in Spring 2000 for research supported by the US Institute of Peace. He reported back his findings, which confirmed some of the rhetoric emanating from the group that it was experimenting with local and territorial governance models in addition to fighting a rebellion for control of the state. In the spirit of collaborative research, Weiss was willing to facilitate introductions to the MLC leadership, themselves receptive to visitors as they felt they had something worthwhile to show, so that research into this (initially) lesser-known rebel group could continue. The third factor which helped select the case study of the MLC was the context at the time the project was being launched, between 1998 and 1999. Negotiations for a cease-fire and the second war had just ended. However, the emerging third war behind the
cease-fire lines and the growing insecurity in eastern Congo—combined with limited access to rebel leaders in the east given Rwandan government control over the region, made conducting field research in that part of the country extremely difficult. It also meant, however, that airspace over Congo’s northwest Equateur province, much of it still under MLC rebel control, was inaccessible from Kinshasa.

The arrangement was that I would fly to Bangui, the small capital of the Central African Republic, be met by someone from the MLC at the Sheraton Hotel and taken by a pirogue across the Ubangui River to Zongo and then a motorcycle overland to Gemena. That proved unnecessary, as my first trip coincided with the short lived Matadi power-sharing agreement signed by the Kabila government and the MLC in August 2002, in the margins of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. Bemba’s delegation had been allowed temporary access to land in Kinshasa for those talks so I was able to fly back to Equateur with them in the MLC plane—a Swiss leased aircraft piloted by a South African pilot and (for take-offs and landings), Jean-Pierre Bemba. After a brief refueling and re-supply stop in Brazzaville where we picked up bottled water, fresh croissants, and a French arms dealer, we arrived at MLC headquarters.

Typically, the first question asked about a case study in evaluating its heuristic value for the broader discipline, asks about the applicability of the case study’s findings to broader concepts: “This is a case study of what?” The case study of the MLC is about the MLC, and the case study of the three Congo wars is about the three Congo wars. In other words, I would caution against making any broad generalizations from one case study. Of course, this is not to suggest that there is little value in examining these cases beyond learning more about the idiosyncrasies of this particular conflict; given the regional and global impact of the Congo wars, this reason alone would be sufficient justification to examine them. But it is also a case study of
a rebel movement in a globalized era, where people, capital, ideas, and communications flow across borders. And while there are limits to how far the case study method may take us in making broader generalizations, case studies can be useful for generating valid causal inferences if one can get multiple observations by disaggregating the data. The DRC wars are as good as any, as they provide us with ample evidence and multiple observations about contemporary dynamics of violence and efforts to end them.

This project, and especially the study of the MLC, is based on extensive resident knowledge and subsequent field research. This included travel to the DRC for field research first in 2000 and for most of the subsequent 16 years several times a year. Research was also conducted in Belgium, New York, Sweden, Washington D.C., Kampala, the African Union in Addis Ababa, and other locations. The “field” in field research is not the functional equivalent of laboratory research, which has sharply defined territory and where variables can be controlled; rather it should be understood, “whatever its substance” as:

[C]ontinuous with other fields and bound up with them in various ways: Institutions necessarily reach out towards other institutions and are penetrated or overlapped by them; social movements are often barely distinguishable from the whole cloth they would attempt to re-weave. From the perspective of social process, institutions and social movements have no spatial boundaries and no absolute beginnings or ends. Their parameters and properties are conceptual discoveries, and then, only for theoretical and practical purposes, are they assigned boundaries.”

Thus, “going into the field” for this project included doing ethnographic research in defined territorial spaces; as well as research in and on a wide diversity of temporal and other geographic space through interviews and historical data. The conceptual exploration of networks
and *hybridity* and how public authority is produced and contested, thus emerged directly out of observations made in this field—out of attempts to understand and follow complex relationships and transactions during the three wars—relationships that were themselves, perhaps not surprisingly, not bound to the temporal or territorial boundaries of the wars. As often happens—field research helps to develop or sharpen a research problem. The puzzle of the constitutive aspects of these wars, or how their actors and structures were mutually constituted, emerged out of field observations. The puzzle in turn drove the application of methods—and later, theories—of social networks, discussed further in the next chapter; and drove more research in the DRC.

This argues for going into the field without any preconceived theoretical framework except for a constructivist ontology, which allowed me to see what otherwise I would not have been able to see. I would, therefore, agree with Klotz and Lynch that theory and evidence inform each other: “Interpretation requires at least some key concepts to guide the selection of relevant information. In turn, those concepts result from researchers trying to understand, and act within, their socially constructed world.”

**Chapter Summaries**

This dissertation is divided into six chapters including this introductory chapter. The first chapter introduces the theoretical framework that informs the project. This is informed by two decades of scholarship on violent conflict since the end of the Cold War. Chapters Two and Three are a thick description of the three Congo wars, their networks and corollary conflicts, and efforts to end the violence. These chapters follow a chronological order. The analysis is organized around the duration of each of the three wars, with key periods before or after each war: April 1994-May 1997 (the first war which began in September 1996 that led to the ouster of President Mobutu, and significant events that led up to the first war); May 1997-August 1999.
(the second war, which began in August 1998 as an attempt to remove President Laurent Kabila, and the intervening 15 months between the first two wars); and 1999-2006 (the third war in eastern Congo that came into full force in 1999, after a cease-fire line ended the second war, until the start of the transitional government in 2003).

The study compares the three wars according to inter- and intra-state variables. It identifies the principal state and non-state actors in each war; the civil war phenomena (e.g., domestic insurgencies, ethno-national violence) that can be observed; the inter-state war phenomena (e.g., invasion of a sovereign state, protests against aggression of another state) that can be observed; and the balance—or mix—between the two types of phenomena in each war. To determine how political contestation—and these wars—are structured, the study examines the data using qualitative network analysis. It explores the interdependent linkages and power relationships between and among actors within each war, and between the wars, and how these networks govern and produce public authority; and finds that these relationships are less hierarchical and more decentralized and horizontal.

To the extent that networks are traceable, it investigates the network structures, purpose, activities, and membership. Some, for example, are “line” networks as in a smuggling chain. Others are hubs where each actor is connected via one central actor. Network members are connected through links to each other, and there are identifiable sectoral patterns of relationships, i.e., economic, political, ideological, military, ethnic. For example, a non-exhaustive typology of networks of the first two wars includes NGO and advocacy networks, insurgency networks, diamond smuggling networks, small arms trade networks, diasporic networks, individuals, and states. There are networks within networks and some are local, most trans-national, and even international. Density varies, as does membership size. It can be small or large, it tends to be
less cohesive and more diffuse, cooperative and competitive, and mostly short-lived. The underlying logic that drives most of the networks of the Congo wars is that of the enemy of my enemy is my friend, though there may be other logics at play at the same time.

Chapter Four is an in-depth examination of the MLC, one of the three principal rebel movements in these wars. This “case within a case” allows a deeper exploration of the dissertation’s main propositions. Central to the discussion of the wars are multilateral efforts—by the UN, the European Union (EU), the AU, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—at conflict management. The effort to determine the existence of political agendas, not just economic ones, in insurgencies focuses on an investigation of the MLC movement. The study analyzes the movement’s articulated political and economic program, and its ideology, organization, and leadership. It does this through a combination of content analysis of primary source documents and semi-structured interviews conducted in the field with senior leadership, such as Jean-Pierre Bemba (MLC president, subsequently vice-president in the transitional government, currently convicted for war crimes at the International Criminal Court (ICC)), Olivier Kamitatu (MLC general-secretary, subsequently president of the parliament, currently a member of the opposition), Antoine Ghonda (MLC representative to Washington DC and minister of foreign affairs in the transitional government), and General Dieudonné Hamuli (MLC chief of army staff and head of the DRC navy during the transition). As most of the major militarized movements in these wars started off by stating “ideological” goals, the distinction between them emerges from an analysis of their behavior.

The study thus also investigates the movement’s military history and record of territorial governance through field research in former Equateur Province, in Kisangani (Orientale Province), and Butembo (North Kivu Province), where the MLC got its start, and territory in
eastern Congo that the MLC controlled in 2001 during a short-lived common front with the RCD-ML; and in Kinshasa. It does so through semi-structured interviews with residents, civil society representatives, locally-based business representatives, and provincial administrators; and through content analysis of local press coverage, with the aim to gauge popular support for the movement and evaluate its actual performance on the ground.

The final and concluding Chapter Five is an effort to analyze the institutional weaknesses underpinning multilateral responses to such conflicts, and to recommend alternative policy “lenses” or approaches. The limits of binary, state-centered approaches to conflict resolution in complex, trans-national conflicts were recognized in three UN blockbuster reports that reviewed the UN peace and security architecture in 2015. Yet these policy reports mark merely a beginning of a new research and policy agenda.
Chapter 1

Rethinking the Politics of Violent Conflict

This chapter reviews the dominant theoretical literature that seeks to explain contemporary conflict in Africa since the end of the Cold War. It largely follows the chronological arc of this literature, as scholars have sought to explain not only the dynamics of conflict, its actors, and their motivations, but also why attempts to resolve it have often fallen short. It shows that while this literature has evolved to increasingly capture more of the multi-dimensional character of contemporary violent conflict, it still largely falls short of fully explaining what makes some conflicts, like the DRC wars of the last two decades, so intractable.

Why have nearly two decades of international interventions in DRC not resulted in sustainable peace? This dissertation argues that we need to rethink how we understand contemporary politics of violent conflict in Africa. Resolving the conflict in DRC has been difficult because the Congo wars are complex, hybrid wars that combine dimensions of inter-state and intra-state conflict; they are regional \textit{by nature}, not because they have spilled over the borders; and their reach and effects, as well as their causal factors may extend beyond the local, the national, and at times, the region itself.

This project thus tests the following hypotheses: First, that \textit{political contestation in Africa is being reorganized and restructured around violent, transnational networks of state and non-state actors}. Second, that \textit{insurgencies in Africa often use powerful narratives of political grievance and fight to assert new claims on state authority, and some even assume governance functions of the state in territories they control; they do not simply pursue economic interests}. 
The end of the Cold War and the explosion of civil wars in the Balkans and in Africa stimulated scholars and analysts to try to explain violent, intra-state conflicts. Proponents of the “new war” thesis that emerged in the 1990s argue that we have entered a new era in which there is both a qualitative and quantitative change in violent conflict around the globe, from fewer inter-state to more intra-state (or civil) wars. There are differences among scholars, largely regarding descriptive emphases, but the main propositions of the literature inspired by the new wars thesis to explain contemporary violence can usefully be grouped under two categories: the conceptualization of these wars—both in terms of terminology and measurement; and their causes or the motivations of the actors fighting in them.

The artificial distinction between what constitutes civil war and inter-state conflict has been made more acute with the empirical realities of these conflicts. We thus struggle to invent new ill-fitting concepts like “hybrid war,” “regional conflicts,” “internationalized conflicts,” “spillover conflict,” or even the “glocal.”

**Conceptualizing Violent Conflict: New Wars?**

Post-Cold War conflicts are conceived by new war analysts as violent struggles among a growing number and type of non-state actors, such as warlords, armed groups, insurgents, and various private commercial interests for control over valuable resources in so-called failed states; where the systematic targeting of civilians has itself become an instrument of war; and where the distinction between combatants and civilians is blurred. Not only is violence aimed at challenging the state increasingly in private hands, the means of violence is often in young hands. New lightweight, automatic weapons technology and the growing global trade in small arms make it possible for adolescents to carry deadly weapons, turning youth into attractive, expendable “child soldier” recruits in both regular and irregular armed forces. The ready
accessibility of relatively inexpensive electronic and mobile communications technology has also fueled the growth of violence in private hands,\textsuperscript{41} as it gives belligerents instant media access and the ability to launch devastating disinformation campaigns, and facilitates long-distance transactions with arms dealers and commercial networks.

Most significantly—from the point of view of this case study—new wars are conceived as civil wars, although proponents of the thesis acknowledge the presence of transnational forces. As Kaldor notes, “most of these wars are localized, they involve a myriad of transnational connections so that the distinction between internal and external, between aggression (attacks from abroad) and repression (attacks from inside the country), or even between local and global, are difficult to sustain.”\textsuperscript{42} However, any regional effects are considered by new war analysts as “spillover” phenomena from the internal conflict.

How does the experience of the Congo wars compare to the propositions put forth by new war scholarship? With one glaring exception, i.e., the proposition that these are civil wars, the violent conflict in the Congo shares many of the characteristics of so-called new wars. For example, private militias controlled by local warlords, ethnic and autochthonous elites, rebel leaders, and opportunistic public officials freely roam the country. Many have been accused of committing systematic violations of human rights against civilian populations, from cannibalism to ethnic cleansing to rape. Criminal syndicates and private corporate interests are ever-present, providing weapons and logistics support, while exploiting the Congo’s vast mineral resources, with and without the acquiescence of the central government of the day. Youth under the age of 18 constitute anywhere between 10 to 60 per cent of armed forces, depending on the armed group; and the DRC continues to have one of the highest rates of internally displaced persons in Africa, an estimated 2.2 million as of early 2017.\textsuperscript{43}
However, the case of the three wars in the Congo challenges the new war assertion that contemporary conflicts are civil war phenomena that “spill over” into the region. The Congo wars appear to be, instead, complex, hybrid wars combining civil war, inter-state war, and cross-border insurgencies. The conflict has seen multiple invasions of the territory of a sovereign state by various coalitions of African states claiming security threats, while multiple internal rebellions with competing agendas and foreign sponsors, and with varying degrees of local mobilization and support control large portions of the country. These wars also include more localized conflicts that involve indigenous militias, non-Congolese insurgency groups operating out of the Congo, and competing ethnic groups fighting over control of local resources and population. There seems to be no neat dividing line between the external and internal dimensions of this conflict: financial, political, and ideological factors—which are addressed below—cut across conflict boundaries and link them together in networks of war.

I first used the term “hybrid wars” in a 2003 published article in an effort to underscore the complexities of the Congo wars. By hybridity, I was referring to the mix of internal and external, inter-state dynamics, the range of actors involved (state and non-state), and the transnational flows of people, arms, and capital that often characterizes them. Since then, the term has gained widespread currency, especially within the US military, but only because of its use by Frank Hoffman to capture the blurring of regular and irregular forces, the public and private, and formal and informal in contemporary organized violence. Hoffman was particularly aiming to highlight the implications of such hybridity for the US military and US warfighting.

The DRC case sheds light on the conceptual trap into which many analysts fall. Like many IR theorists, new war and other scholars continue to employ the “normal lenses of
international relations and comparative politics, where ‘internal’ and ‘external’ forces are separated for analytical purposes.”46 As Russett notes, “Neither can still be passed off as a bounded sub-discipline.”47 The dominant theories in international relations—neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism—privilege the state and inadequately account for the behavior of non-state actors, which constitute the bulk of the combatants in these conflicts. For theoretical parsimony, IR theories assume that state interests are exogenously given, but stop short of determining what motivates those interests.48 Intra-state conflict and political transitions, and the role of non-state actors in them, are treated as second-order issues outside the universe of system-level theory. Social constructivists offer a broader ontology that allows for agency, and structures that are both social and material,49 however, their approaches have yet to be empirically applied to security issues.50 Applied IR research on contemporary conflict is more likely to transcend these boundaries in examining empirical cases, but it has tended to be overly atheoretical.51 Moreover, these wars expose the febrile nature of juridical statehood in Africa in the broader context of the international system.52 There seems to be a disconnect between our current conceptual frameworks and the empirical realities of these wars.

Some contemporary conflicts seem to be organized around networks, which cross territorial boundaries, monetary and trade zones; link diasporic, transnational, nongovernmental, and ethnic communities; include international and regional organizations; and often have a global reach. Some of these networks, (e.g., the illicit small arms trade networks) are violent and clandestine, but others, (e.g., the transnational network of human rights activists) may be benign and more transparent. The working assumption in this dissertation is that constructivist approaches, combined with social network analysis can offer methodological guidance to understanding how war networks operate and change. They historicize the object under
investigation rather than take it as a given. This allows us to explore how *structures*—of war, of the international system—may be shaped by the identities and interests of actors within them, as well as by the distribution of material capabilities. Ideational factors are essential in understanding ethno-national strife, or how identities are mutually constituted and help escalate violent conflict, or how operational and discursive legacies of earlier peace interventions in a region shape how new ones are conceived and received, or how the Rwandan Tutsi, under particular circumstances, could turn against some of their ethnic brethren in the Congo, the Banyamulenge, whom they had long defended, when these chose to identify as Congolese during the Second Congo War rather than ethnic Tutsi.

The possibility that violent conflicts cross the artificial theoretical divide between international relations and comparative politics has encouraged some attempts not only to open the black box and explore what motivates the interests of both state and non-state actors in these conflicts, but also how national, sub-national, and supra-national actors interact and are linked. Some important contributions seek to conceptualize these wars as belonging to structures of conflict that are transnational *by nature*—not because conflict has spilled over or spread across territorial boundaries. However, the analytic concept Rubin and Armstrong offer as an alternative, *regional conflict formations* or *regional conflict complexes*, is itself limiting as it treats wars as territorially-bound to a region, which they define ambiguously as “a set of territories over which conflict networks are closely linked.” This conceptualization fails to reflect the dynamic nature of time and space in these networks, and the key fact that their actors are embedded in social ties that transcend territorial space—points which Rubin and Armstrong seem to acknowledge but fail to capture with the conceptual straightjacket of “the region.”
More recently, the term “internationalized civil war” has been used to describe the protracted violent conflicts that have involved entire regions, like Congo and Syria. Notwithstanding the fact that this, too, has a built-in assumption of spillover, the term really refers to the involvement of two or more states in a domestic conflict, as it was used in 1983 to refer to Syria’s intervention in the civil war in Lebanon. The idea of external state involvement in domestic conflict is certainly not new but it is fundamentally different from the type of internationalization of violence that we see today, where the international dimensions are as often non-state as state, and even extra-regional. In contrast to this embedded assumption of the state-non-state binary, Duffield stresses that “war networks” imply political projects that now go beyond conventional forms of territorial, bureaucratic, or juridical authority. Callaghy and his colleagues offer a preliminary framework that better captures these dynamic processes with what they call “transboundary formations of considerable diversity” which “link global, regional, national, and local forces through structures, networks, and discourses that have wideranging impact.”

Motivations for Violent Conflict: From Greed v. Grievance to Rebel Governance - Bringing Politics Back In

Having established that the violence we are seeing in Africa and elsewhere since the 1990s is being fought by a wide range of actors, including private actors, analysts turned to a related concern, the motivations of actors in these wars.

The causal logic of much of the new war thesis is that economic globalization has weakened state power and authority, creating a power vacuum that is then filled by private and sometimes criminal interests, often with ethnic or religious agendas. Duffield notes that while they have encouraged privatization, entrepreneurship, the liberalization of markets, and the free flow of goods and capital, these liberalizing forces also drive the “the liberal war” in which
violence is in the private hands of armed militias, mercenaries, and private military companies; and a whole new class of local and international entrepreneurs benefit from international development assistance, and unregulated global networks of illegal resource extraction and arms trafficking. One illustration of the link between neoliberalism and conflict is a growing private security industry with a direct role in military affairs, and with an interest in expanding its markets. As Singer notes, “the privatized military industry represents alternative patterns of power and authority linked to the global market” where “military resources are now available on the open market, often at better prices.” IR scholars must now allow for market-driven “state-firm” and “inter-firm networks” and how these may encourage or deter violent conflict.

Diminished state capacity reduces local contests for resources to rent-seeking, as revenue-generating enterprises and the formal economy have collapsed. Proponents like Kaldor and Klare argue that the result is no longer the “old” wars over ideas, but wars over resources: These are “resource wars,” or “conflicts that revolve, to a significant degree, over the pursuit or possession of critical materials.” Rebel and insurgent forces in these wars are traders in “blood diamonds” or just simply looters motivated largely by financial greed rather than political grievance. Paul Collier gave statistical substance to this economic argument in a quantitative analysis of civil conflicts over a 34-year period, in which he concludes that economic agendas, not political ones, are what explain behavior in these wars. Simply put, “competition for control of the state is a competition for control over the power to exploit.”

The pressures of globalization may help explain some of the processes and interactions that have constructed the networks of the Congo wars. The liberal hegemony in the global economy has helped create and expand private commercial and financial networks; and has pressured some states with already diminished capacities to further decentralize. The increase in
speed, scale, and flows of people and capital, and market liberalization have helped give rise to stateless forces with the resources to threaten or compete with the state in some parts of the globe. As Mackinlay\textsuperscript{73} argues, globalization has changed the character of insurgency, and this has exposed analytical and operational weaknesses in current multilateral approaches to mitigate violent conflicts.

In Congo, there is ample evidence that international corporations, offshore financial centers, and global markets are complicit in perpetuating war economies, frequently being key nodes in networks that supply goods and services and provide market outlets to warring government authorities, rebels, and warlords.\textsuperscript{74} Without them and without old Cold War patrons, belligerents would otherwise have neither the foreign capital to finance a war, nor the profit incentive to sustain one. It would thus appear that the structures of conflict may not be de-linked from the “pacified” market structures in the so-called zones of peace.\textsuperscript{75} Indeed, “many of the conflicts raging in the ‘South’ are intertwined with, and in many respects products of, economic and political priorities and interests in ‘the North’.”\textsuperscript{76}

However, the new war assertion that the pressures of globalization lead to wars that are fueled \textit{entirely} by economic motivations, where a military victory is not the goal as long as belligerents continue to profit from violence, is questionable. For new war proponents, “the true cause of much civil war is not the loud discourse of grievance but the silent force of greed.”\textsuperscript{77} The “greed over grievance” hypothesis has helped move debate away from the irrationality or the senselessness of war and highlighted important, and previously missing elements in these conflicts by drawing attention to economic interests and the political economies of modern warfare.\textsuperscript{78} Yet, it then swung to another extreme by over-emphasizing economic explanations of violence and the political economy of war. Notwithstanding efforts to reconsider this argument,\textsuperscript{79}
much of the discourse about contemporary conflicts is focused on the economic functions of violence and the economic agendas of actors, particularly non-state actors, to the exclusion of political grievances against the state or rival groups. As Weber argues, however, greed is endemic in all societies, regardless of economic system.80 It is thus not a distinctive characteristic of the Congo wars.

The discursive emphasis on greed over grievance and coercive civil-military relations in rebel-held areas thus assumes that those who employ violence to challenge the state are motivated by personal enrichment rather than any political agenda. This emphasis offers partial explanations, as it looks at only one, albeit important, activity during war—resource exploitation. It fails to distinguish between legal and illicit resource exploitation, and between resource exploitation as the initial cause of war and resource exploitation as the sustaining factor of war.

While this may be an accurate depiction of some cases—e.g., the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone—the experience of rebel groups in the Congo suggests that these mono-explanations are not applicable to all cases of armed groups. The recognition that armed groups could have political motivations as well as economic interests has inspired, over the last decade, a growing body of literature on rebel governance. Focused mostly on the governance capacities and conduct of rebel groups and militias, these scholars also examine the relationship between rebel governance and resource extraction.81 The difficulty in conducting a comparative analysis across these or defining a typology is the wide variation, both in form and function, of rebel governance. Clapham has identified several types for whom grievances are essential and not peripheral: Liberation insurgencies, to achieve independence from colonial rule; separatist insurgencies, to advocate for the particular interests or identities of a group either through secession or some form of autonomous status; reform insurgencies, to change existing leadership
and radically reform the national government and its policies to create a new political order; and *warlord insurgencies*, to change existing leadership and create a personal territorial fiefdom separate for state institutions and control.  

Despite the political agendas of at least some insurgents, the exploitation of natural resources and civilians has become the principal means for financing wars in a capital-scarce environment no longer defined by major power sponsorship. The economies of war-torn states are severely compromised even before the outbreak of war, and with few exceptions, most manufacturers of instruments of violence are based outside immediate zones of conflict. It is likely, therefore, that conflict actors must establish links with actors and networks outside their own region for a variety of goods and services, and to engage in commercial activity that will generate the foreign capital necessary to pay for them. This leaves open the question of how time—or the pace of conflict—affects motivation. Greed becomes a necessity in a context of insecurity and rapid mobilization, where deep loyalty based on ideology has had no time to take root. Market forces can drive the swift pace of some wars.

Regardless of their extractive practices, we know that some armed groups provide key public goods within territories that they control, (e.g., security, local administrative elections, control over corrupt local clandestine networks), and enjoy positive relations with local civilian communities, but, as we see with the MLC, engage in predation when outside them. The point is that dismissing these actors as mere bandits misses at least part of an explanation for these wars, and ignores that these have been “perhaps the dominant instrument for bringing about political change” in the Third World. Having brought politics back in to the analysis of violent conflict, we can continue to explore how economic factors shape the progression of violence, together
with identity politics, territory and land, and other dynamics that together make up these multi-
layered, multi-level, ever complex violent conflicts.84

**Public Authority and the Problem with the Local: Bringing the State Back In**

Over the last decade, social scientists working on conflict and conflict-affected areas, and the increased emphasis on understanding governance and how political authority is shaped in war zones,85 have led to the recognition of the need to take a deeper dive into understanding so-called local contexts and local drivers of conflict. Many have argued that research and policy interventions have too long ignored local dynamics.86 Ignoring or misunderstanding the ‘local,’ it is argued, is what largely accounts for the failure of international peacebuilding efforts.87 This shift to the local—while a welcome corrective to a body of literature in conflict studies that has a poor evidence base and is overly focused on international dynamics and state systems without understanding the realities that face conflict-affected populations in the communities in which they live88—has brought with it its own challenges.

The privileging of the local grew out of critiques of liberal peacebuilding theory and practice that see international interventions as imbued with universal principles that do not apply to all societies or are imposed on them through an imbalance of power relations.89 On the one hand, this reflects the recognition that political authority is exercised and contested by a variety of actors below the state, who are rarely considered or consulted when development or peace interventions are planned. As such, “the ‘local’ has a symbolic function – it reminds us that as interveners we take decisions for and about people whom we do not know and do not speak for. It reminds us that international peacebuilding…is not representative and its claims to universalism can therefore never be substantiated.”90 In that sense, the local is radical. On the other hand, there are risks with romanticizing the local, as emphasizing local or cultural
primacy—which implies that the local is somehow more progressive, can be the excuse for exclusion and ethnonationalism. Local actors can be as corrupt or intolerant as national actors. The local can be as contested and violent as any other context.

Moreover, as actors in the Congo wars illustrate, many local actors who compete for power locally think globally. They have links outside their own communities all while being engaged in territorial competition and being embedded in local society. As Appadurai has shown, with the cross border flows and cultural influences of globalization, the local might not be very local at all. While we need a more granular understanding of local contexts, many of these conflicts also have significant transnational dimensions, even with the most local manifestation of violence. For example, the longstanding conflict over the customary chieftaincy in Mobutu’s ancestral town of Gbadolité in northwestern DRC, described in Chapter Five, where successive presidents have interfered in the most local of authority structures, illustrates how local politics in Congo are never truly local. They are networked and often linked to national dynamics and elites in odd and interesting ways. This means that local governance arrangements in these conflict contexts are not only constantly contested, they are also rarely purely local. Struggles over public authority may take place in concrete local arenas, but they are almost never exclusively local, linked instead to trans-local, provincial, national, and even global politics and capital flows. Identifying territorial forms of the local can thus be a challenge, plus used in this way, the term then loses its useful “radical-ness” as a critique of a one-size-fits all approach to liberal peacebuilding.

The local turn to peacebuilding has not only raised conceptual challenges, but methodological ones as well. In terms of methods, as access to the field in violent contexts is increasingly restricted by risk and liability concerns, it has forced fieldwork in these places to
rely on a number of techniques that may inhibit or distort findings or that may raise ethical questions (remote data gathering, local research partners, embedded fieldwork etc.). Methodological challenges also include the risk of method misappropriation or the privileging of one method over another regardless of the research question. For example, increasingly, IR scholars, in recognizing the need for context-based evidence, make use of ethnographic methods but lack the training offered by fieldwork-heavy disciplines like social anthropology, so fieldwork practice is often based on infrequent, brief visits rather than a long-term engagement with the “field.” Moreover, as the demand for context-based evidence grows, how do we researchers, manage the risk of working in insecure, violent places, without securitizing research? What responsibility do researchers have to cooperate with international justice mechanisms like the ICC if they have collected data on local atrocities and human rights violations?

Increasingly, and following on the literature on rebel governance, scholars are paying more attention to the role of non-state actors in producing local political orders and carrying out governance functions that are traditionally located with states. In DRC, we find that the state not only is present despite its weakness, its relationship with local communities helps shape local actors’ political struggles. Reference to statehood, we have found, seems to be crucial in claims to public authority. Armed groups in DRC, for example, often employ a discourse of stateness and will resort to taxation and the provision of justice and security for legitimacy. This is because the state—or the ideal of the state—still resonates strongly in the popular imaginary of public order. So, paradoxically, failed states are not so failed. They are instead a hive of competing authorities that provide public goods while they appeal to stateness, or to symbols of the state, for legitimacy. This emerging field of research about the production of public authority
in conflict areas provides a useful lens with which to understand daily processes of governance in violent settings. As Hoffman and Kirk argue, the nature of public authority in transitioning and conflict-affected regions is better understood by observing how public authority actually works—how power is legitimated and practiced—rather than beginning with a theory of what the state ought to be. This growing body of scholarship on public authority is itself a corrective to the failed state literature and to binary notions of hybridity—where authority is seen as a hybrid combination of state and non-state actors rather than what we observe, which is a constant competition between and among a variety of actors in which the private/public distinction no longer holds.

Much of this work understands public authority as defined by Lund—an “instance of power which seeks at least a minimum of voluntary compliance and thus is legitimated in some way.” In this view, “public authority” is neither necessarily ascribed to the state nor expected to take a certain form. Rather, as a number of scholars have demonstrated, it is a position of power, which gives actors a legitimacy that allows them to govern people, territory, and resources. By the same token, it is not something which magically emanates from the state. Rather, it is produced in the interface between different authorities’ practices of governance and peoples’ responses to these. Thus, statehood is “effectively propelled by institutions which challenge the state but depend on the idea of it to do so.” Public authority is “an open-ended and context-dependent process in which a multitude of actors alternately compete and collude with each other,” and which “emerges through concrete political struggles.”

The Case for a Network-Based Approach

Although complex wars would seem to require a variety of analytical and operational approaches, international efforts to resolve them continue to use conventional inter- and intra-
state lenses. A key and under-utilized analytical tool for understanding protracted armed conflict, social network analysis allows for the recognition of these wars’ transboundary and networked nature. These violent conflicts do not appear to be merely civil wars or inter-state conflicts. The networks that sustain them may exist not only to pillage but also to assert new claims on authority through direct involvement in the constitution of political structures and relations on the ground.

The complexities of the three Congo wars and the continued violence twenty years on, compels us to rethink how we understand the politics of violent conflict and the production of public authority. We need better ways to conceive of and characterize what appear to be hybrid wars structured around complex, transnational networks linking a diversity of actors, especially non-state actors, competing for political authority. As noted above, neither globalization, warlord bloodlust, economic interest, nor a black-box “failed state” approach can adequately explain the causes or dynamics of these wars. Proximate conditions alone, such as the Rwandan genocide and the decline of state institutions and fall of Mobutu, also would seem to be insufficient explanations.

In examining the dynamics of the Congo wars, this project thus explores critically the relationship between global processes (material and normative) and war, particularly between them and what the “new war” literature treats as the intervening causal variable, the “failed” state—a concept that suffers throughout the discipline from what Collier aptly calls conceptual stretching.99 The Congo wars show that while global economic changes may have led to false assumptions about why wars are fought, they may explain how they are fought. The diversity of actors—especially non-state actors—their straddling of territorial boundaries, and the density of their interactions raises the need for appropriate conceptual approaches to guide our observations.
and explanations of these dynamics. The Congo wars also demonstrate that “rebel organizations in Africa, often dismissed as mere criminal gangs, develop a complex apparatus in areas they control—which is less visible but not very different from the order implemented by ‘justice oriented’ rebels.”

The study compares the three Congo wars according to inter- and intra-state variables. Who are the principal (state and non-state) actors in each war? What civil war phenomena (e.g., domestic insurgencies, ethnonational violence) can be observed? What inter-state war phenomena (e.g., invasion of a sovereign state, protests against aggression of another state) can be observed? What is the balance—or mix—between the two types of phenomena in each war? To determine how political contestation—and these wars—are structured, the study will examine the data using qualitative network analysis. What are the interdependent linkages and power relationships between and among actors within each war, and between the wars? Are these relationships hierarchical or decentralized and horizontal?

Social network analysis is used broadly in anthropology, sociology, and information sciences, and focuses on the relationships and interactions among actors within networks. In political science, it has been applied to the study of public policy networks, but less so in IR where it is limited to the examination of epistemic communities, social activists, terrorist groups, and global governance. Its application to contemporary war promises to be particularly useful. Social network analysis views actors as acting not in isolation but within complex linkages with other actors: “actors and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent, autonomous units.” Structural interdependency means that a change in one actor or activity within a network—or within a competing network of which it is also a part—may generate changes in other parts of the structure, although density and proximity may be
mitigating factors of this interdependency. Indeed, in this framework, the ties may be any relationship existing between units…kinship, material transactions, flow of resources or support, behavioral interactions, group co-memberships, or the affective evaluation of one person by another. Clearly, some types of ties will be relevant or measurable for some sorts of social units but not for others.” And not all activity between units in a network is friendly and supportive—activity and linkages can also be competitive and hostile.

Three categories of activities govern relational ties and shape shared meanings among actors in networks of war. The first is political—including alliances, negotiations to end the war or to gain advantage, and efforts to gain local or international legitimacy. The second is economic—involving war-financing efforts through both legal and illicit commerce, and exploitation of natural resources and forced labor. The third is military and quasi-military—including efforts to ensure the security of an alliance and to make territorial advances, acquire necessary resources, or conquer civilian populations. These interactions may be direct and indirect, formal and informal. Actors may not have the same interests, but the networked infrastructure serves at least some interests of each.

Through the use of a network-centered approach, therefore, “our attention shifts from the attributes and motivations of individual personalities to the properties of the localities and networks in which…[war] activity is reproduced.” Organizing research around networks rather than individual attributes of, or bilateral relations between, actors may thus be a more analytically useful approach to explaining the Congo wars and how political authority is constituted given both the wide range of actors involved, and their complex linkages. In short, Jean-Pierre Bemba would not have been able to mount his rebellion without these networks. Neither would the RCD had been able to mount its war effort. But it is not merely non-state
actors who need networks and state patrons. As we saw with the role that the MLC rebel soldiers played in CAR in 2002-2003—when Central African President Felix Patassé called on them for help, a rebel movement can be the senior partner to a state.

War networks are actually political projects. They are used to assert new claims on resources and political authority. They are both the locus of the activity of contentious politics and the means with which to bring about political change. And while there may be different types of networks, even economic (trade networks) can have a political purpose. “Networks are alternative governance structures in particular settings where other forms of governance are weak.”\textsuperscript{111} Networks are also a strategic response to changes (both challenges and opportunities) in the environment. One of the fundamental assumptions about networks is that there is a dispersal of authority among multiple actors. And that while power relations between a dyad of actors may be symmetrical or asymmetrical, as, for example, in the MLC-Patassé relationship, there is no bureaucratic hierarchy where orders are given “from above.” This assumes a decentralized concept of social organization or governance. Thus according to Utas, some of the key nodes in these networks may be “Big Men” who are connected through political, economic, military, ethnic ties, and the points at which they cross each other are common projects or collaborative ventures. They may have common interests but not the same goals. A key characteristic of these networks—as is the case with the networks of the Congo wars—is that they are “unstable, changing, and constantly adaptable.”\textsuperscript{112} In this sense they are “nervous” systems.\textsuperscript{113}

A social network approach, therefore, provides an ontological frame to determine what attributes, what actors, and what phenomena to include in an analysis. It is an approach, a wide-angle lens, if you will, for capturing relationships rather than individual actors. One risk with this
approach, however, is in understanding the sum of a network’s parts. As General McChrystal learned in Afghanistan, it is one thing to trace the complex relationships among actors in a violent conflict, and another to understand what it all means, let alone how to intervene in it. In referring to the now infamous US military PowerPoint slide published in the front page of the New York Times at the height of the US war in Afghanistan, General McChrystal reportedly said, “When we’ve understood this slide we’ll have won the war.”

**Figure 1: US Military PowerPoint Slide of Complexity of War in Afghanistan**
(source: NY Times)

While network analysis is helpful to map out the complexity of the wars, it does not provide any guidance about how the relationships between actors shift, or how networks change. What explains how conflict networks change? How can we account for sudden re-alliances in these wars? Some Congo observers have suggested that conflict networks in DRC and their shifts are explained in Congo by one simple principle: the enemy of my enemy is my friend. This is largely accurate. But how do friendly or unfriendly relationships change?
One way to account for network shifts is the political marketplace. This is the idea developed by Alex de Waal that “holding onto power and securing a measure of stability…requires ‘having the political budget needed for the political market’”. Put another way, the ability of leaders to avoid destabilising levels of violence and to remain in power, is a function of their ability to buy off rivals and incorporate them into rent-seeking elite coalitions.”

De Waal, drawing on politics in the Horn of Africa, argues that the nature of patronage in the Horn has changed over the last fifty years from a few “spatially bounded networks” to many more “overlapping and border-straddling networks.” According to de Waal, the political marketplace is a system of governance “run on the basis of personal transactions in which political services and allegiances are exchanged for material reward in a competitive manner.”

He acknowledges that this is not very different from patronage politics. However, what distinguishes the political marketplace from the old patronage networks is the speed and hard currency with which patrimonialism takes place today. “Older systems involved slow-paced bargaining and used non-convertible currencies and symbolic rewards involving social prestige. The political market is monetized with hard currency—dollarized—and negotiations are fast-paced.”

Finally, de Waal argues that these marketplaces are deregulated and often regional, transcending national boundaries, with armed groups and other actors (state and non-state) from the region involved in the bidding.

In the Congo wars, we can observe such political marketplaces at local, national, and regional levels. While there are also other underlying logics in the struggle for power and authority in the Congo wars, the logic of the political marketplace is often the principal glue that connects various scales of violence. It is thus a useful framework with which to explain everyday governance in DRC and shifts in alliances. But change has also been observed as coming from
elsewhere. Interdependency means that a change in a key actor or activity within a network (or a competing one) may well generate a change in other parts of the structure. For example, as is explained in Chapter Four, when Kabila brought the North Kivu warlord Mbusa into the Kinshasa network during the second war, it triggered a military reaction by the MLC with disastrous consequences for civilians in northern DRC. There was no condemnation of Kinshasa by the UN despite the fact that this was a clear violation of the Lusaka cease-fire agreement. Change can also come from the characteristics of a particular network. The density of a network, the strength of its collective identity, or how loosely connected its membership is may determine a network’s adaptability. For example, loose coupling means that adjustments can be made without changing the whole structure. Changes outside a network may also generate changes within the network, for example, by altering the distribution of power, resources, interest, and capabilities. But how networks in these wars emerge, govern, and change is something that can only be answered empirically.
Chapter 2

The First Congo War and the End of the Mobutu Era

1996-1997

The wars in the Congo are impossible to make sense of without accounting for the role of regional and transnational forces, which manifested themselves differently in each of these three wars. As these wars were fought to establish spheres of influence rather than change borders, networks were key, as they served as alternative forms of governance, that are not confined to national borders. In networks, even while actors pursue their own interests, informal relationships matter—they condition the range of action possible by any given actor. In post-Cold War Africa, these relationships are not exclusively among states but rather link up various non-state actors across scales of authority structures—local, national, and international, with their own operating logics. Reno argues that networks will emerge when a state is weak or when formal governance systems are weakened or changed. The evidence in the case of the Congo, however, shows that since the state had long ceased to perform the functions expected of the modern Weberian state, it is changes in the structure of the international system—in which these war networks are embedded—and thus the changing identities of state and non-state actors, that may better account for the Congo wars’ regional, transnational, and networked character.

The Cold War networks of power in Africa—the bipolarity of Western alliances and Eastern alliances—had been relatively stable for years. Since 1965, the West had provided President Mobutu with a steady stream of income, mostly from the United States, which helped support his regime. Until then, social relations in Mobutu’s patronage system were already
organized around transboundary networks, some illicit, some not. Diminishing state capacity under Mobutu ensured the emergence of a shadow economy linked to transnational economic networks which, particularly those in eastern Zaire, established trade and monetary zones that operated independently of Kinshasa.\textsuperscript{121} The end of the Cold War and the importance of maintaining Cold War clients drastically reduced Mobutu’s domestic patronage budget. It also reduced the political budget available to him to buy the loyalty of foreign armed groups that had long challenged neighboring leaders out of bases in the Congo. Mobutu’s reduced purchasing power, combined with domestic pressures to democratize and the emergence of new African leaders in the early 1990s with regional ambitions, opened up space for realignments and the violent contestation of power in the Congo and in Central Africa, particularly in what came to be known as the “Great Lakes region.” The global changes unleashed by the end of the Cold War brought in actors with ties to different or substantially altered, networks. Although local actors after the Cold War continued to develop external linkages to states, international organizations, companies, global markets, and various other networks as a means to assert claims on resources and authority, new “political complexes” emerged to exploit the power and flexibility of non-formal economies by mobilizing the resources linked by the networks of the shadow economy.\textsuperscript{122}

The First Congo War (1996-1997) fundamentally reshaped an entire region. It was organized around three large, new networks, each of which included some combination of state actors, non-state armed groups, individual elites, local civil society groups, international organizations, criminal syndicates and the private sector: 1) Mobutu and his domestic and international supporters and clients; 2) the anti-Mobutu network, also known as the anti-Mobutu Coalition of the Willing, the core of which revolved around the relationships among four east African leaders; and 3) Mobutu’s former patrons and international (UN) and regional
organizations (AU) that remained silent during his rapid decline from power, and in so doing quietly signaled their support to those seeking to remove him. This chapter tells the story of the first war through the prism of these networks, beginning with the withdrawal of Mobutu’s Cold War patronage networks, and the emergence of a powerful east African network of new leaders. It chronicles the fall of Mobutu and his network of supporters, and the rise of the network that replaced him with Laurent-Désiré Kabila.

**Democratic transition in the Congo**

The process of democratization in the Congo began during the independence struggle with Congo’s first free election in May 1960 and independence from Belgian colonial rule on 30 June 1960. This process was cut short with Mobutu’s successful military coup in 1965, which ushered in 32 years of dictatorship. The democratization process would not resume until January 1990, when facing growing internal pressures for reform during a sustained economic crisis and during a significant drop in international support, he took steps to liberalize. There had already been defections from Mobutu’s party, the MPR, earlier. But what ultimately became the largest opposition party, the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS) had its beginnings in 1980 when a few members of the ostensibly Mobutu controlled parliament called for multiparty democracy. They were met immediately by repression. Nonetheless, they persisted, and in 1982 formed the UDPS. The UDPS has maintained a consistent policy of demanding democratic reforms and rejecting all forms of armed opposition. Indeed, there were moments in the declining days of the Mobutu dictatorship when elements of the military as well as foreign actors appealed to the UDPS leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, to lead a *coup d’état* backed by force. These proposals were always rejected.
Under pressure from the UDPS and others in the opposition, Mobutu invited individuals to submit written lists of grievances—an opportunity which thousands enthusiastically adopted—and in April 1990 he announced the end of single-party rule. This led to the convening, on August 7, 1991, of the National Sovereign Conference (CNS or in French, *Conférence Nationale Souveraine*), a body of 2,842 delegates taken from political parties and civic and religious organizations across the country that produced a widely accepted plan for a peaceful transition to democracy. The CNS terminated its work on December 6, 1992. This national constitutional conference opted for a power-sharing plan (with Mobutu), and elected Etienne Tshisekedi, the leader of the political opposition, as interim Prime Minister. In full public view with live television coverage, it reviewed Mobutu’s performance and the country’s history of corruption, political assassinations, and theft from public coffers. Although constantly undermined and manipulated by the Mobutu regime, the conference had a lasting legacy and legitimacy, because it provided a framework within which the nonviolent opposition to the Mobutu regime could formulate its demands for change. Later, the Kabila regime was challenged to uphold the decisions of the CNS, which it refused to do.

All this, however, failed to dislodge Mobutu, as political contestation had taken a violent turn. Tshisekedi lasted no more than three months as prime minister, and Mobutu forcibly evicted all newly appointed ministers from their offices and brazenly reasserted his dominance. While the CNS was ultimately unsuccessful in establishing a new order, it laid the foundation for a democratic Congo, a transition from dictatorship toward elections, and a federalist constitutional order. Mobutu fell from power in May 1997, after a network of neighboring states, militia groups, and private interests came together in October 1996 to militarily invade the country and forcibly remove his government.
The Rwanda Genocide and the Destabilization of Eastern Congo

The first event to transform an impoverished Congolese society into fertile ground for regional conflict and war was the genocide of the Rwandan Tutsi in 1994. For several years, the Rwandan Hutu-dominated government, led by President Habyarimana, and the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi-led rebel group, had been embroiled in a civil war. The genocide, which began in early April 1994 and lasted for approximately three months, saw Hutu leaders mobilize almost the entire Hutu population in the organized mass murder of up to one million Rwandan Tutsi and “moderate” Hutu. The failure of international interventions in Rwanda has been dealt with elsewhere. For the Congo, what is important is the effect of a variety of policy decisions by the United Nations in Rwanda, which led to a Security Council cover for the French Opération Turquoise, and the eventual destabilization of Congo/Zaire.

The killing of ten Belgian peacekeepers by former Rwandan Army Major Bernard Ntuyahaga and his soldiers in early April 1994, and the deteriorating security situation in Rwanda prompted the UN, at the urging of the Belgian government, to withdraw most of the first UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR I) forces two weeks into the genocide. As word of the massacres got out, France offered to lead a humanitarian mission to the region until the United Nations could mobilize support for a new operation with a mandate appropriate to the new situation on the ground. On 22 June 1994, UN Security Council resolution 929 authorized a temporary French mission “for humanitarian purposes in Rwanda until UNAMIR is brought up to the necessary strength.” Its mandate was to use “all necessary means” to ensure the humanitarian objectives spelled out in the Security Council’s earlier resolution 925 on UNAMIR though the resolution stressed “the strictly humanitarian character of this operation which shall be conducted in an impartial and neutral fashion.”
The first of the 2,500 heavily armed French troops of *Opération Turquoise* began arriving in Goma\(^{129}\) the following day. Although the Security Council authorized a multinational force under French command and control, it was de facto an exclusively French military intervention.\(^{130}\) This was problematic, as the Rwandan Hutu-dominated government had received political and financial support as well as military training from the French since 1990. It had long been part of a Franco-African military network. Thus, the arrival of French troops in the last weeks of the genocide, while the Habyarimana government was under heavy attack by the RPF, was seen by the Rwandan government as an intervention in its favor—so much so, that French soldiers were quoted saying they were “fed up of with being cheered along by murderers!”\(^{131}\) It was not surprising, therefore, that in the absence of any communication with the Rwandan rebels during the planning of the mission, and given the close ties between France and the Hutu dominated regime in Rwanda, the RPF saw the French intervention as an attempt to shore up the weakening *génocidaire* government. These fears were not unfounded. News accounts widely reported that the Mitterrand government had, in fact, continued to ship arms to the Habyarimana government even after the massacres had started. And, according to one observer close to the mission, there were some in the French government and military who conceived of this mission as an effort to provide assistance to the failing Hutu government.\(^{132}\)

*Opération Turquoise* established a so-called Safe Humanitarian Zone in southern Rwanda to which many Hutu leaders, Rwandan military, and civilians retreated. It is estimated that the French intervention did save some Tutsi,\(^{133}\) although it also jeopardized the lives of retreating UNAMIR I troops. Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, commander of the UNAMIR I forces, recalls that the arrival of French troops led the RPF to retaliate against the United Nations by
attacking the remaining UNAMIR troops left largely helpless with little heavy artillery and no communication with *Opération Turquoise* commanders.\(^{134}\)

The operation had two principal effects that were contrary to its mandate of protection and impartiality: first, it failed to stop the bulk of the massacres of civilians that were still occurring; and second, the operation did not disarm the Hutu militias, known as the Interahamwe, nor the defeated *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) units.\(^{135}\) Instead, it allowed them and their political leaders, along with masses of Rwandan Hutu civilians, to escape across the border into the Congo. These factors resulted in the profound destabilization of eastern Congo.

In mid-July 1994, when the RPF defeated the Hutu government in Rwanda and stopped the killings, approximately one million Hutu, amongst them many of the génocidaires, had moved into the Kivus, in eastern Congo. By August 1994, several UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) camps were established in the Congo near the Rwandan border. This influx of Rwandan refugees and the absence of UN control over the camps upset the delicate ethnic balance in the Kivus.\(^{136}\) The volume of these former Hutu army units and civilian refugees appears to have been such, and the limits on resources so great, that the UN allowed—or at least did not protect against—the reestablishment, in the camps, of the political and military structures and leadership that were responsible for the genocide in Rwanda.\(^{137}\) The camps soon replicated the highly organized, hierarchical, and disciplined Rwandan Hutu political and military systems under the génocidaires (as the genocide perpetrators were called), so that camp residents were led by the same communal authorities they had lived under when in Rwanda. These camps were subsequently used as staging grounds from which these Interahamwe/ex-FAR regrouped and launched offensives against the new Tutsi-dominated government in Rwanda.
A well-publicized cholera epidemic in the UNHCR camps in Goma in July 1994 was estimated to have killed between 20,000 and 50,000 camp residents.\textsuperscript{138} News reports of the epidemic caused a rapid shift in international public sympathy from the largely Tutsi victims of the genocide to the Hutus in the camps, many of whom had had a substantial part in committing the killings in Rwanda. The latter were increasingly seen as victims of disease rather than perpetrators of mass murder. By early 1996, however, the Congolese Hutu had become a dominant force in some parts of the Kivus, those from Rwanda having benefited from the cover of the UNHCR refugee camps and growing international sympathy. They proceeded to isolate and attack Congolese Tutsi—attacks which found moral and, eventually, military support from the Congolese (then Zairian) army, as well as from some Kivu politicians. The new Rwandan leaders saw the refugee camps as a serious security threat and complained that international humanitarian assistance aimed at alleviating the suffering of refugees was helping instead to rebuild the Hutu army.\textsuperscript{139} As early as 6 December 1994, in an interview with \textit{Radio France Internationale}, Rwandan then Vice-President Paul Kagame warned that unless the international community regained political and military control of the camps, Hutu leaders in exile in these camps would continue to prepare for war. Kagame repeatedly asked the United Nations to disarm the Hutu militias, and to identify the former Rwandan Hutu authorities in the camps and separate them from civilian refugees.\textsuperscript{140}

United Nations control over the refugee camps deteriorated to such an extent that it prompted humanitarian non-governmental organizations operating within them to issue strong protests. Some, like \textit{Médecins Sans Frontières}, eventually withdrew from the camps. UNHCR had neither the mandate nor the capacity to disarm tens of thousands of camp residents, nor the ability to block the flow of arms into the camps. UNHCR hired members of Mobutu’s
Presidential Guard—allies of the ex-FAR—to patrol the camps, marking the beginning of the military cooperation between the Rwandan Hutu and the Zairian security forces. Not only did the United Nations not respond to the Rwandan demands that it separate military and civilian camp residents, it also did not disarm the Interahamwe/ex-FAR operating out of the refugee camps. From the point of view of the new Rwandan government, this was the second major failing of the UN, the first being UNAMIR's withdrawal in the face of anti-Tutsi genocide in 1994. Thus, it should not have been a surprise that, in the absence of international action to disarm the militias in the camps, Rwanda eventually acted on its own.

**Africa’s “New Leaders” and the Rise of the East African Network**

It is difficult to understand the alliances and choices in the first Congo war without understanding broader regional relationships. The period immediately following the end of the Cold War was marked by significant shifts in international and continental alignments. The new leaders that emerged out of violent armed struggle in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda by 1996 “formed an axis that looked as though it would reshape half the African continent.” And indeed, it did, although in ways that were difficult to predict at the time. This was not a formal alliance among a group of states but a more informal network built around the personal relationships between these men and their extended patronage systems across their families and the business and military elite inside and outside the region. The rise of these “new leaders” (as they became known) or “Big Men” as Mats Utas would call them, also coincided with the second Bill Clinton administration in the US, which was still haunted by the twin traumas of the failed U.S. military intervention in Somalia in 1993 and American inaction during the Rwandan genocide in 1994. Early into Clinton’s second term, Susan Rice, assistant secretary of state for Africa from 1997 to 2001, and John Prendergast, Africa advisor to both Rice and President
Clinton, championed a new US diplomatic engagement with Africa. Washington’s new Africa policy was centered on strengthening ties with a handful of east African rebel leaders-turned-presidents—Meles Zenawi (Ethiopia), Isaias Afwerki (Eritrea), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), and Paul Kagame (Rwanda). All four shared the intellectual heritage of revolutionary struggle and grand plans to rebuild their countries. And all four were seen by Washington as a new type of African leader one could do business with and who would “serve as a vanguard for the social and political transformation of the continent.”

It also helped that all four were deeply opposed to the al Tourabi regime in Khartoum, which not only was sympathetic to the emerging militant Islamist tendencies across the region (hosting Osama bin Laden and his Al ‘Qaeda network, and supporting Islamist factions in Eritrea like the Eritrean Liberation Front and Eritrea Jihad). Sudan had also come out in support of Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War.

Uganda, Eritrea, and Ethiopia all began providing military advisors to the SPLA in South Sudan in an effort to undermine Khartoum. In dynamics that would be echoed further south in Mobutu’s Zaire, Sudan’s decision to export its jihadist revolution meant that any group with grievances against, or seeking support to challenge the authority of these new east African leaders could count on Sudan to back them. As with Central Africa and Mobutu’s Zaire, local grievances in East Africa were instrumentalized by the neighbors to advance their own, larger, political agendas, illustrating again that local competition for power and authority in this region is rarely purely local.

The first opportunity for Khartoum to do so was the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), the only such movement supported by Sudan that had no connection to militant Islam. The LRA dynamic emerged in 1987 as a syncretic cult movement embodying the grievances of the Acholi people in Northern Uganda, who had been left out of the Ugandan reconstruction project by
By 1992 they had adopted the name LRA, and enjoyed considerable military support from Khartoum and quiet acquiescence from Kinshasa to operate on Zairian soil. The lesser known Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) emerged in 1996 out of Uganda’s marginalized Asian Muslim youth following Idi Amin’s expulsion of Asian Ugandans and the seizure of their property. Some of these youth spent time in detention and came out more radicalized, others fled to eastern Congo/Zaire where they established military camps with Sudanese and Zairian support.

Other Ugandan insurrection groups included the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), the Uganda National Rescue Front, and the West Nile Bank Front, some with rear military bases in South Sudan, others in eastern Congo/Zaire. For Zaire’s Mobutu, these were useful insurance against the growing threat from Kigali and the East African network in 1995-1996. According to one account, Khartoum approached Mobutu “sometime during mid-1994 and got his approval to run supply convoys from Wau in Bahr-el-Ghazal down to northern Uganda through the Central African Republic and the Uele Province of Zaire. Not only did the LRA now get some of its supplies through Zaire, but Sudanese Army Security contacted Kakwa [an ethnic group found on the border of Uganda, Congo, and Sudan] and Aringa former Idi Amin soldiers who had been living in the area since 1979 and reorganized them into a fighting front.”

Thus, according to de Waal, not only was Uganda “Sudan’s first and most constant adversary,” it “also became the pivot of the regional strategy to confront Sudan and Zaire-Congo.” Since the operating principle in the region is the enemy of my enemy is my friend, when the East African network, led by Rwanda, decided to attack the refugee camps in eastern
Congo/Zaire to start the first Congo war, it was no surprise that Sudan threw its support behind Mobutu.

**The Start of the First War**

Meanwhile, in the mid-1990s, Kivu leaders were stirring up anti-Tutsi feelings both in north and South Kivu, aimed at Congolese Tutsi whose nationality rights were challenged as part of this campaign. In 1993, local government leaders led an ethnic cleansing campaign against the Congolese Tutsi in North Kivu, especially in the Masisi area. Then, in mid-1996, growing pressure developed against the Tutsi in South Kivu (these are the ethnic Tutsi of South Kivu, and one of the oldest Tutsi communities in the Congo)\(^{149}\) when local politicians and administrators, in cooperation with elements of the Mobutu regime, planned an ethnic cleansing campaign aimed against them.\(^{150}\)

A report issued by the Commission on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons of the Zairian parliament in September 1996 reflected the growing suspicion in Kinshasa of an alleged Tutsi plot. The so-called Vangu Report claimed to settle, once and for all, the thorny citizenship question of all Kinyarwanda-speaking\(^{151}\) peoples in the Congo (though this was really aimed at ethnic Tutsi). It concluded that there was evidence that Rwanda and Burundi had forged an alliance to create a *Tutsiland*—a new geographical entity that would cover not only Rwanda and Burundi, but part of Uganda and eastern Zaire, as well—and thus recommended the unconditional expulsion of all Kinyarwanda-speaking peoples from the Congo.\(^{152}\)

Well prior to this synchronized attack, a number of Congolese Tutsi had joined the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan opposition in its struggle against the Hutu-dominated regime in Rwanda, and had been armed and trained by the RPF.\(^{153}\) As a consequence, the Congolese Tutsi became the target of the Mobutu regime that had supported the now defeated Habyarimana government
In Rwanda. In the fall of 1996, there was, therefore, a coincidence of interests between the new Tutsi-led Rwandan government and the Congolese Tutsi.

In September 1996, given one week to come down from the high plateau and leave the Congo or face military action and presumably mass expulsion by the Zairian authorities, the Banyamulenge undertook a preemptive strike against the Zairian army (Forces Armées Zairoises or FAZ) and the now two year-old Hutu refugee camps in the Kivus. Although it is as yet unclear exactly when the Congolese Tutsi and the Rwandan government coordinated strategy to neutralize the Interahamwe/ex-FAR in the camps, as soon as the Congolese Tutsi attacks against the camps began, Rwandan government forces crossed the border and joined the offensive. The anticipated Zairian-Interahamwe/ex-FAR attacks against the Congolese Tutsi gave the Rwandans the long sought-after opportunity to pursue their security objectives: to eliminate the Interahamwe/ex-FAR threat operating out of the camps, and strike a blow against the Hutu-sympathizing Mobutu regime. This joint assault on the camps in September 1996 broke the hold the former Hutu military and political leadership had over the camps, enabling the vast majority of Hutu refugees in the camps to flee over the border back into Rwanda. It also marked the beginning of the First Congo War.

In October 1996, a meeting in Kampala brought together the chiefs of staff and senior security officers from the four countries in the East African network, and Paul Kagame himself, to craft the “grand” strategy against Zaire and Sudan. Getting rid of Mobutu and dismantling the camps in eastern Zaire would be the priority, led by Kagame. Presidents Yoweri Museveni and Isais Afewerki joined the Rwandan effort for similar security reasons. Anti-Museveni and anti-EPLF insurrection movements for years had operated out of bases in the Congo. Both in the Rwandan and Ugandan case there was reason to believe that the Mobutu government, or at least
some of Mobutu's generals, supported these movements, either financially, by supplying them with weapons, or by allowing them to operate out of Congo/Zaire. Mobutu’s generals were notorious for being a key node in the regional arms trade. Although not part of the east African network, Angola joined the network to organize against the Mobutu government. Angola’s principal adversary since independence, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), not only had bases in the Congo, but had received substantial support from Mobutu over the years, since the United States channeled military and financial aid to UNITA via Zaire throughout the Cold War. The east African network of leaders—Rwanda, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, along with Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere and Angola’s dos Santos, coalesced around a common goal—to cripple the insurgency movements challenging their governments from bases in Zaire.

In order that their actions not be seen as a straightforward act of aggression against a sovereign state, these invading states sought to establish an indigenous, anti-Mobutu revolution. In this, they faced a major obstacle. There were, indeed, a large number of opponents to the Mobutu regime in the Congo, but they were led by a network of prominent political leaders like Etienne Tshisekedi, head of the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS) party, who had a long-standing commitment to opposing Mobutu non-violently and non-militarily. This “non-violent opposition” as it was called, showed no inclination for joining a militarized attack on Kinshasa, so other Congolese had to be found to give the campaign revolutionary legitimacy. To achieve this goal, the Rwandan and Ugandan governments helped create an alliance of obscure and profoundly weak exiled Congolese who had for some time been willing to opt for a violent struggle against Mobutu. Four little known Congolese revolutionary parties with virtually no following were joined together in what became known as the Alliance
des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo (AFDL). The four parties were the Conseil National de la Resistance (CNR), led by Andre Kissase Ngandu, a Tetela who had fought in the rebellions of the 1960s; the Alliance Democratique des Peuples (ADP), headed by Deogratias Bugera, a Congolese Tutsi from Masisi who worked as an architect in Goma (and who would later fight against Laurent Kabila in the Second Congo War); the Mouvement Révolutionnaire pour la Libération du Zaire (MRLZ), headed by Anselme Masasu Ninganda, a Bukavu political activist of mixed Rwandan Tutsi/Congolese Mushi parentage; and the Parti de la Révolution Populaire (PRP), led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila. These four leaders signed the Lemera Agreement on October 18, 1996 in South Kivu to form the AFDL. A few months into the war, Angola encouraged the so-called Katanga Tigers, a group of exiles composed mainly of aging Katangan soldiers and their sons, to join the fight against Mobutu. These forces had participated in the attempted Katanga secession of 1960 under the leadership of Moise Tshombe, and had fled to Angola after their defeat by UN forces in 1962.

Among the leaders of the AFDL, only Kissase Ngandu had a real fighting force, composed of about 400 fighters. He was known to Museveni, who had given Kissase some resources to fend off the LRA. The other three groups were paper tigers. The only one who was at all known beyond the confines of Central Africa, was Laurent-Désiré Kabila. He had been a zone commander in the Congo rebellions of the mid-1960s where Che Guevara and a few hundred Cubans joined the Congo rebellion in 1964, and for over twenty years, the leader of a small revolutionary redoubt in South Kivu. A Lumumbist with Maoist tendencies, Kabila emerged as the principal spokesperson of the AFDL and became the protégé of the coalition's foreign sponsors, though if Che Guevara’s diaries from his time in the Congo are to be believed, this honor was not due to Kabila’s military prowess. Che Guevara describes Kabila’s People’s
*Liberation Army* at the time as a “picture of organizational chaos,” and a “parasitic army that did not work, did not train, did not fight, and demanded provisions and labor from the local population.”\(^{157}\) He recounted endlessly waiting for Kabila to show up so that they could help train his troops: “Kabila announced his imminent arrival, and we had to wait for him day after day—in vain.”\(^{158}\)

Kabila was mostly a small-time swindler and con man. In 1975, he kidnapped four scientists working with Jane Goodall in Tanzania and successfully ransomed them for $500,000; later, he set up a business operation with the Zairian army despite allegedly being their opponent. Kabila’s PRP would raise insecurity in the Fizi-Baraka area, the Zairian commanders would request more resources from Kinshasa, and Kabila would engage in gold and ivory trade with the military.\(^{159}\) Eventually he moved to Dar-es-Salaam. According to Gérard Prunier, Kabila was chosen as the spokesperson of the AFDL because Kagame and Museveni could not agree on the others.\(^{160}\) Bugera and Masasu Nindanga were Tutsi and backed by Kagame; Museveni’s choice was Kissasu Ngandu, whom he knew; and so Julius Nyerere, the president of Tanzania, suggested Kabila as the neutral choice. It is not clear whether Kagame and Museveni knew that Kabila was well known to the Tanzanian intelligence services who thought they could easily manipulate him.

So while we have seen an enormous amount of resource predation in the years following the first Congo war, greed alone was not the fuel for this war, as there were plenty of grievances against Mobutu to go around. However, financing for the war effort was necessary, and the ability for combatants to raise start-up funds by selling what Ross calls “booty futures”—the right to the future exploitation of natural resources once the armed group has successfully captured them in battle, was a new phenomenon in this war.\(^{161}\) Executives from American
Mineral Fields (AMF), a small US-based mining firm (now called Adastra Minerals) met Kabila in the jungle in mid-war and bought booty futures “in exchange for an undisclosed sum of cash (and apparently, the use of AMF’s chartered Lear jet). AMF received a diamond-purchasing monopoly, and after the war, exploration rights to huge reserves of Congolese cobalt, zinc, and copper. When the deal was announced, the price of AMF stock on the Toronto Stock Exchange rose from $3 to $7; when Kabila entered Kinshasa and took over the country several weeks later, it rose to $10.27.”162 Kabila sold booty futures to several other companies. Ross argues that the sale of booty futures is “an unusually dangerous form of finance, because it tends to favor the weaker party in a conflict—either a nascent insurgency, or a government on the verge of losing a civil war.”163 Mobutu had either not known about, or was too ill to activate this financing mechanism in the waning years of his presidency.

Despite the attempt to give a Congolese revolutionary character to this conflict, and the fact that many Congolese wanted to rid themselves of Mobutu's predatory regime, there is little doubt, as Figure 2 below shows, that the overwhelming military force employed on both sides in this war was foreign. The advancing forces of Laurent Kabila were mostly foreign and mostly Rwandan, and they pursued Hutu refugees across the vast country from eastern Congo/Zaire into western Equateur province and even into neighboring Central African Republic and Congo Brazzaville and killed them. The RPF led the operation, with a company of Eritrean commandos in support, and with a small but significant Ugandan (UPDF) fighting force helping to take major towns in the east and prevented Sudan from sending troops into Zaire or reinforcing the ADF. Rwandan RPA officer James Kabarebe, who had fought alongside Kagame as his aide de camp during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, was the AFDL's senior commander. Kabarebe later
became Kabila’s chief of staff when they took Kinshasa. Angolan troops played a significant role as the AFDL advanced on Kinshasa, pushing back UNITA forces that were defending Mobutu.

When Kabila assumed the presidency he was beholden to no Congolese forces other than the young “kadogos” who had been recruited into the war effort during the previous months.

**Mobutu’s Shrinking Network and the Reshaping of Public Authority**

The Mobutu regime tried to convince the world that what was happening was a foreign invasion of the Congo, but to little avail, given his growing international isolation. Neither the United Nations nor the African Union condemned the invading forces, an indication of a general feeling worldwide that Mobutu had to go. The notion that what was happening was largely a revolution against the Mobutu regime gained wide currency in the western press, which from the start of the war referred to it as a civil war or rebellion. Many Congolese shared this view, even though it was widely known that there were foreign troops fighting in the anti-Mobutu alliance. A young, unemployed Congolese lining up to join the allied rebel forces offered a journalist a sentiment echoed throughout the country: “When it started, we thought Rwanda was the one attacking Zaire. Later, we found out it was a Zairian struggle. I personally believe in the revolution because it’s a revolution that is sustained by everyone.”

The Congolese diaspora networks in North America and in Europe also played an important role in convincing the international community to shift its support from Mobutu to the new “rebellion.” One example is the All North American Conference on Zaire (ANACOZA), an organization consisting mostly of Congolese intellectuals and political exiles in the United States, initially established as a virtual chat group in the early days of the internet and email, to discuss the devastating effects of Mobutu’s rule. This organization began advocating for international support for Kabila as early as December 1996, and helped to influence how the
war was portrayed in the international media through letter campaigns and other lobbying efforts. One of ANACOZA’s leaders, a French literature professor at the University of Illinois, André Kapanga, would later become Kabila’s first UN ambassador.

While the United States was not the architect of the first war, it was in the loop, and in November 1996 even announced the transfer of $20m of surplus military supplies to Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Desperate to shore up his image and for Western support, Mobutu hired several Washington DC-based lobbyists, including Paul Manafort and his firm, Black, Manafort, Stone and Kelly; Edward Von Kloberg (PR consultant also to Saddam Hussein and Nicolae Ceausescu, and who committed suicide in 2005); and former US under-secretary for African affairs under George Bush, Herman Cohen and his firm, Woods and Cohen. Cohen, through his close relationships with France, was instrumental in bringing French support to Mobutu. Mobutu even appealed for support to the US televangelist Pat Robertson, the sole shareholder and chairman of African Development Company, Ltd, a diamond mining operation in Zaire, thanks to an earlier concession from Mobutu.

Mobutu failed to obtain any serious political or military support from abroad, except from the French. US intelligence reports indicated that France had conducted a covert operation to aid Mobutu in the hopes of retaining their influence over the third largest country in Africa, fearing what it perceived to be a growing American and east African Anglophone hegemonic network in Africa. The French government supplied Mobutu with three combat aircraft from Yugoslavia, along with crews and about 280 mercenaries, mostly Serbians but some from the French Foreign Legion, at the cost of $5 million and in clear violation of an agreement between France, Belgium, and the United States not to sell arms to the Zairian government.
government officials and Geolink, a Paris-based telecommunications company, ran the French covert operation.

The mercenaries were under the command of a Belgian colonel, Christian Tavernier, but were not the best fighting force. Jason Stearns quotes a French analyst who describes them thus: “They spent their days getting drunk and aimlessly harassing civilians. They did not have proper maps, they spoke neither French nor Swahili, and soon most of them were sick with dysentery and malaria.” Moreover, according to Stearns, Tavernier chose a remote town with no strategic importance as his operating base, but it was where he had obtained a mining concession. “On the battlefield, everything fell apart. The Serbs never provided the air support
the French demanded, complaining of missing parts and a lack of fuel. On several occasions, they even bombed Mobutu’s retreating troops, killing dozens.”

The forces that did the bulk of the fighting for the Mobutu regime were the Interahamwe/ex-FAR and UNITA rebel forces. Where the AFDL met resistance it was due to those forces fighting alongside the FAZ. By the end of 1996, Mobutu's army was being routed and was in full retreat, looting, raping and killing Congolese civilians along the way. This conduct, on top of years of scarcity and neglect under Mobutu's dictatorship, helps explain why the Congolese people soon welcomed the anti-Mobutu network and allowed its young men to be recruited into its ranks. By mid-February 1997, Kabila was showing off more than 10,000 new recruits sporting AK-47s and new uniforms in parades in cities along the eastern border, as more young recruits queued up for hours to enlist. Eritrean officers at the front lines were starting to book ahead rooms at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kinshasa in anticipation of the imminent fall of Mobutu.

International Preoccupation with Humanitarian Issues

In late 1996 and early 1997, anti-Mobutu network forces marched largely unchallenged across the country towards Kinshasa. During this military campaign, the international community was more focused on humanitarian concerns and what it perceived to be a new refugee crisis unfolding in the Congo, than on the presence of foreign troops on Congolese soil whose aim was to overthrow the Zairian government. The anti-Mobutu forces operating in the Congo appeared to have made little distinction between civilians and militias, or between women, children, and men; and the Interahamwe/ex-FAR themselves were accused of having used these civilians as human shields. So while international sentiment saw the retreating Hutu as refugees under fire by advancing rebel forces, and thus in need of international protection, the Rwandan troops saw
them as the hard-core perpetrators of the genocide who had not given up on retaking power in Rwanda, or even on finishing the genocide.

Concerned about the growing insecurity in the region, on October 18, 1996, the UN and the AU issued a joint call for an international conference on security in the region. On November 5, 1996, the AU brought together leaders from Uganda, Zambia, Rwanda, Eritrea, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Cameroon in Nairobi for a regional summit to address the war in Congo/Zaire. They called for an immediate cease-fire and reaffirmed their commitment to the AU principle of respecting the territorial integrity of member states—in this case, Zaire. 178 Although Rwanda joined in these declarations, its new president, Pasteur Bizimungu, had some days earlier made reference to a “Berlin II,” suggesting that Congolese borders were not, in fact, sacrosanct. 179

Meanwhile, western newspaper and television reports continued to focus on the plight of the “refugees,” and on the state of hundreds of lost or orphaned children among them. Calls for an international humanitarian intervention to assist and repatriate these Hutu refugees intensified and came not only from the UN and international humanitarian organizations, but also from the AU. On November 9, 1996, in what appears to have been a compromise between those in favor of a UN intervention and those opposed to it, Security Council resolution 1078 called on UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali (and his head of peacekeeping, Kofi Annan) to "draw up a concept of operations and framework for a humanitarian task force, with military assistance if necessary." 180 The resolution stopped short of authorizing a humanitarian intervention, but asked the UN Secretary-General to formulate a plan for one. It also asked the AU and the states in the region “to examine ways in which to contribute to and to complement efforts undertaken by the United Nations to defuse tension in the region, in particular in eastern Zaire.”
On November 11, 1996, the Central Organ of the AU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution, held its Fourth Extraordinary Session at the level of ministers in Addis Ababa. Statements from that meeting, as well as an AU communiqué transmitted to the Security Council on November 13, 1996, emphasized the urgent need for the provision of humanitarian assistance to the refugees in Congo/Zaire and for their voluntary repatriation to Rwanda.

**The Idea of a Multinational Force**

In early November 1996, with pressure mounting for international action, the Clinton administration began probing the Canadian government for possible interest in leading a mission to the Congo, suggesting that the United States would be willing to support a Canadian-led, but not a "blue-helmet" intervention. Once Canada and the United States reached a minimum agreement over American participation in the mission, on November 15, 1996, Security Council resolution 1080 authorized a Canadian-led “temporary multinational force to facilitate the immediate return of humanitarian organizations and the effective delivery by civilian relief organizations of humanitarian aid to alleviate the immediate suffering of displaced persons, refugees and civilians at risk in eastern Zaire, and to facilitate the voluntary, orderly repatriation of refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees as well as the voluntary return of displaced persons.” As part of the resolution the Security Council noted that these efforts were also requested by regional leaders at the Nairobi Summit on November 5, 1996, and that the Security Council intended “to respond positively on an urgent basis to those requests.” The multinational force was not authorized, however, to disarm the *Interahamwe/*ex-FAR in the
Neither Canada nor the United States wanted to assume responsibility for disarming combatants that were not likely to give up their weapons voluntarily.  

More importantly, the United States was buying time for the anti-Mobutu network to complete its task. In reviewing Prunier’s book on the Congo wars, former journalist Howard French who covered this period for the *New York Times* writes:  

In allowing the Rwandan invasion of Zaire, the United States had two very different goals. The most immediate was the clearing of over one million Hutu refugees from UN camps near the Rwandan border, which had become bases for vengeful elements of the defeated Hutu army and Interahamwe militia, the agents of the Rwandan genocide. In Prunier’s telling: ‘When Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice came back from her first trip to the Great Lakes region [of East Africa], a member of her staff said, ‘Museveni [of Uganda] and Kagame agree that the basic problem in the Great Lakes is the danger of a resurgence of genocide and they know how to deal with that. The only thing we [i.e., the US] have to do is look the other way.’ The gist of Prunier’s anecdote is correct, except that participants have confirmed to me that it was Rice herself who spoke these words.  

At the Security Council discussions on the resolution, the representative of the Zairian government, Lukabu Khabouji N’Zaji, expressed dismay at what he saw to be the Security Council’s unresponsiveness to a foreign act of aggression perpetrated against his state by the invading forces of Rwanda and Uganda. He complained about a Security Council double standard in the application of international law, and noted that since it had responded forcefully to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, he could not understand “the Council’s reluctance to defend Zaire against a similar aggression.” Nevertheless, Canada announced that already
twenty countries had committed over 10,000 troops for the mission; and US ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright reminded the Council of the “shock and horror” of the genocide in Rwanda two years earlier, adding that the international community was now prepared to assist “those most in need.” Rice’s close personal relationship with Kagame, Museveni, and Meles helped shape US policy in the region for many years.

In spite of the many pronouncements in favor of the mission and mounting pressure from the region, the authorized Canadian-led multinational force was never deployed. By the time the resolution was adopted, the situation on the ground had changed dramatically. As soon as the attacks on the camps started in September 1996, hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees began marching back across the border into Rwanda. It did not take much for the United States, already reluctant to intervene, to seize upon these events as reason enough for not deploying the multinational force. These two resolutions, 1078 and 1080, adopted within days of each other less than eight weeks into the first war, were the only Security Council actions in 1996 that dealt with the conflict in the Congo. The emphasis of both resolutions was the humanitarian needs of the Hutu refugee population; neither one dealt with the presence of foreign troops in the Congo.

The United Nations and the African Union

On February 18, 1997, five months into the anti-Mobutu military campaign and three months before Mobutu relinquished power, the Security Council adopted a five-point peace plan for eastern Zaire. The plan called for the immediate cessation of hostilities; the withdrawal of all external forces, including mercenaries; the respect for the national sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Zaire, and other states of the Great Lakes region; the protection of all refugees and the facilitation of humanitarian assistance; and the peaceful settlement of the conflict through dialogue, elections, and, the convening of an international conference. Although this
resolution recognized, for the first time, the presence of foreign forces in the Congo and called for their withdrawal, the Security Council stopped short of identifying any one force as the aggressor. An internationally recognized government, albeit an unpopular one, was claiming invasion, yet the UN and the AU were united in not responding substantively to a clear violation of international law and the UN Charter. The general sentiment seemed to be that a handful of states in the region were doing everyone a favor by assuming the responsibility of ridding Africa of one of its more embarrassing and enduring dictators who had, over several years hosted insurgency movements aiming to overthrow the governments of its neighbors.

International action during this period took the form of weak declaratory UN resolutions on the war, and intense international and regional diplomatic efforts to negotiate Mobutu’s exit. In January 1997, signaling his close cooperation with the AU on this issue, the UN Secretary-General appointed Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun of Algeria to serve as a joint UN-AU special representative for the Great Lakes region. Although there was no real institutional involvement by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) yet, individual southern African leaders had taken the lead in efforts to mediate a negotiated settlement. South African President Nelson Mandela, seen by many as the least self-interested and one of the most senior leaders, emerged as the principal mediator in this first war. The first meeting between Mobutu’s government and the rebels, which took place in Cape Town on February 20, 1997, was brokered largely by the United States and South Africa. These talks collapsed, however, and subsequent talks failed to reach agreement, even on an agenda for discussion.

In mid-March 1997, Mobutu was hospitalized in Monte Carlo with advanced prostate cancer. By that time, the anti-Mobutu network had captured Kisangani, a key city 770 miles east of Kinshasa. By early April, they had taken the southern town and military base of Kamina—a
strategic supply center for the FAZ—as well as other towns in the east and south. Meanwhile, reports out of Zaire claimed that rebel forces were systematically rounding up and executing retreating Hutu, and international press reports began referring to the anti-Mobutu alliance as a “clean-up” operation aimed at eliminating the remaining perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. In 2010, a mapping study conducted by the UN of mass atrocities committed on Congolese soil from 1993-2003 found that Rwandan army troops may have committed “acts of genocide” against Rwandan Hutu refugees and Congolese civilians fleeing the last days of the Rwanda genocide. Although the report leaves the final word on whether Rwanda committed genocide to a court of law, it found that the “systematic, planned, and widespread” massacre of Hutu refugees by AFDL/RPA forces and the “hunting-down of refugees that took place from east to west throughout the whole of the DRC,” may be classified as acts of genocide. The report spends ten pages backing up this classification.

A preliminary report presented to the UN Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in Geneva on April 8, 1997 by the UN’s special rapporteur for human rights in Zaire, Roberto Garretón, listed more than three dozen mass grave sites in the Congo that he said were the graves of mass killings of Hutu refugees by the anti-Mobutu alliance, and called on the UN to set up a commission to investigate these killings and other possible human rights violations perpetrated by the rebels during the war. A strong statement by the president of the Security Council in the third week of April 1997 underscored the UN’s growing frustration with the rebels’ treatment of retreating Hutu, and the refusal of the anti-Mobutu alliance to cooperate with UN relief efforts; and called on the alliance to ensure unrestricted and safe access by all humanitarian relief agencies and to guarantee their safety, as well as to cooperate with the newly established human rights investigative team. As the tension between the anti-Mobutu alliance and the United
Nations over humanitarian assistance to the retreating Rwandan Hutu in the Congo continued to escalate, Kabila demanded an apology from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for accusing the alliance of the “slow extermination” of refugees, and gave the United Nations an ultimatum of sixty days for removing the retreating Hutu out of the Congo, warning that "if it is not completed, we will do it ourselves.”¹⁹⁶

Meanwhile, the United States stepped up its diplomatic efforts to speed up Mobutu’s departure and avoid a battle for Kinshasa, which could well have produced a massive bloodbath. The United States also put pressure on Kabila to resolve the problem of the Hutu refugees by stressing the importance—in terms of international aid to his future government—to claim victory with as little damage to his international reputation as possible. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Bill Richardson, was dispatched to the now renamed Democratic Republic of Congo on a high-profile mission to break the impasse and was able to get Kabila to lift the sixty-day deadline, but left Sahnoun and Mandela—representing the United Nations and the region—to continue their efforts to broker a transition. In spite of promises to cooperate with UN investigators, Kabila continued to block United Nations personnel from suspected massacre sites. Kabila’s obstinacy must be understood in terms of his relationship with Kagame, the more powerful of the big men in Kabila’s network. Given the role of the RPA forces in fighting the war and killing fleeing civilians, Kagame—whose animus towards the UN dates from the world organization’s failure to stop the genocide—had little appetite to allow the UN to investigate crimes his troops may have committed. The war had reshaped local authority structures in DRC and the dominant authority in Congo, at least for a while, was now the Rwandan government and the Rwandan military.
Mandela’s mediation efforts, meant to ensure a smooth transition through a negotiated exit for Mobutu, did not include the so-called “non-violent opposition,” local NGOs, or church groups, all of which had considerable public support in the struggle to end the Mobutu dictatorship. While Kabila’s and Mobutu’s representatives were at the negotiating table in South Africa, Etienne Tshisekedi, the leader of the unarmed opposition in Kinshasa, was defying Mobutu’s state of emergency and leading a civilian disobedience campaign against him in the capital. In March 1997, Tshisekedi tried to end the war—and Mobutu’s rule—by inviting the anti-Mobutu alliance to stop fighting and join his cabinet. Kabila refused the offer, charging Tshisekedi with being Mobutu’s ally and part of the old guard that needed changing. Laurent Kabila was more tied to the east African network than to domestic elites in Congo.

By excluding Congolese opposition parties from negotiations for a transitional government, mediation efforts in the first war effectively marginalized the political leaders who had gained much popularity over the years. Participation in these negotiations was limited to the forces with guns. By treating the AFDL as the only opposition to Mobutu’s rule, these international and regional actions bestowed a considerable degree of legitimacy on Kabila and the network that brought him to power. This was critical in reshaping national and local governance as public authority must have some modicum of legitimacy even if it is largely based on coercion. This also no doubt encouraged Kabila, once in power, to ignore later calls by the United Nations and donor countries for multiparty politics. But it also shows that, the manner in which peace settlements are negotiated has serious consequences on their durability. On May 17, 1997, after a failed last-minute effort by Mandela and Sahnoun to produce agreement for another round of talks, and facing certain military defeat, Mobutu left Zaire for the last time, and the anti-
Mobutu alliance marched into Kinshasa without opposition. This ended the first war and consolidated the influence of the East African network over the so-called Great Lakes of Africa.

In spite of the damage to Kabila’s image abroad caused by the Hutu crisis, and his lack of cooperation with UN investigators, the Security Council gave his new government the imprimatur of legitimacy. On May 29, it issued a statement expressing its support for the Congolese people “as they begin a new period in their history” adding that it “welcomes the end of the fighting and expresses its satisfaction that stability has begun to return to the country.”197 The United Nations followed the lead of a region that chose to ignore the principle of non-intervention when a regional coalition willing to overthrow the Mobutu dictatorship emerged.

Diplomatic efforts in this eight-month period and Kabila's early dictatorial tendencies suggest that the paramount objective of the AU and the United Nations in the Congo was not a transition from dictatorship to democratic rule in the Congo, but rather regional stability through a quick, peaceful resolution to the war. There was a consensus among major powers in the Security Council and in the region over the dominance of the anti-Mobutu network that had emerged in the region.
Kabila’s honeymoon was short lived. By mid-1998, Eritrea and Ethiopia were at war. Rwanda and Uganda were rapidly moving apart, creating separate, though sometimes overlapping networks. As Mats Utas notes, “Wars and conflict have at times made marginal Big Men even bigger in the post-war period.” This was certainly the case with Laurent Kabila. It should be no surprise, therefore, that out of this turbulence emerged yet another Congo war.

During June and July 1998 a number of events indicated that relations between Kabila and Kagame had not only seriously deteriorated but had reached a breaking point. Some of Kabila’s collaborators reportedly concluded that a Tutsi officer was about to assassinate Kabila during the Independence Day festivities on June 30, 1998. James Kabarebe was suspected and replaced within days, and Kabila, in his new nationalist posture, openly encouraged anti-Tutsi sentiment in Kinshasa. In a sign of the momentous split of the anti-Mobutu network that was taking place, Kabila traveled abroad during these days, visiting Namibia and Cuba, presumably to seek new backing. By the end of July, Kabila had terminated the Rwandan Mission of Cooperation, and asked the Rwandan military to leave the country. It is not an exaggeration to say that the next twenty days profoundly changed the history of Africa and plunged it into the first “African World War,” as Madeleine Albright called it, which has produced one of the
world’s greatest humanitarian disasters.\textsuperscript{201} The Second Congo War even without its aftermath—in effect, a third war—is the largest war that Africa has seen since independence. That said, “African World War” is somewhat of a misnomer since, unlike the First and Second World Wars, which involved European, Asian, American, and colonial troops, the forces fighting in this war have been exclusively African, with the exception of some undetermined number of American and European mercenaries. Of course, arms and financing have been provided by non-African actors in these networks.

This chapter explores the struggle for local power and regional influence that emerged after Mobutu was removed from power. It looks at the shifting alliances that divided the network that put Laurent-Désiré Kabila in power and which led to a second war in 1998, and eventually to a third war in 1999. The Third Congo War lasted until a political settlement was reached and a transition began, in 2003. The accounts of the two wars in this chapter show how war networks, as was noted in Chapter Two, are unstable and “nervous.” They are largely collaborative ventures with actors who often, under the right conditions, are also competitors.

**The Inter-War Period: Laurent-Désiré’s Honeymoon**

Although Kabila had a relatively short post-war honeymoon, he did make some initial domestic changes that were welcomed by the Congolese people. Foremost among these was the real improvement in personal and property security that resulted from the elimination of arbitrary and capricious roadblocks and arrests by unpaid soldiers and police officers, a daily phenomenon during the latter years of Mobutu’s rule. This change was less appreciated by the elites, however, as many not only experienced a direct loss of access and influence, but also experienced property seizures with the changing of the guard.\textsuperscript{202} In a symbolic gesture aimed to eliminate all traces of the Mobutu regime, Kabila renamed the country the “Democratic Republic
of Congo,” changed the flag, national anthem, and national currency, and renamed streets, towns, and the national football team, mostly reverting to the names used at independence.

Kabila rejected all power-sharing arrangements with the numerous political parties that had been established during the last few years of the Mobutu regime, prohibited all party activity, and refused to work with civil society. For example, the name he chose to rename the country was not the name previously chosen unanimously by the Sovereign National Conference—“Federal Republic of Congo”—a name that reflected the Conference’s intention for decentralized power and which was to be put to a national referendum. Congolese politicians and civil society leaders became increasingly critical of his authoritarian rule, and encouraged the massacre investigation by helping to keep the issue of human rights violations in the news. In a show of strength, about 250 civil society representatives met in Kinshasa between June 16-20, 1997 to reaffirm their commitment to democracy and to the respect for human rights. This conference, financed largely by Belgium and Japan and supported by several international human rights groups, sought to demonstrate to the new rulers the strength of the domestic NGO network, their international support, and their capacity to organize. But Kabila's response was to crack down both on opposition parties and NGO activities. The behavior of Rwandan soldiers in Kinshasa added to the alienation of the population from the AFDL. Many began to see the Rwandan troops in the capital as an army of occupation rather than an army of liberation. Moreover, there was a growing resentment over Kabila’s efforts to stack his inner circle with members of his own ethnic group, the Katanga Luba and ethnic Tutsi.

Although Kabila’s relationship with the United Nations and Western donors in this period was overshadowed by the UN massacre investigation, the Congolese people’s growing disillusionment with the new regime did not help his standing internationally. Public opinion
polls two months after Kabila assumed the presidency revealed that an overwhelming majority of Congolese, at least in the capital, believed that the massacres had taken place, and well over half of the respondents put the blame on Kabila and his allies. Special Investigator Garretón was denied access to the eastern Congo by the Rwandan government when he first arrived in Kigali on May 4, 1997, and for the next fifteen months Kabila repeatedly denied them access to suspected massacre sites in Goma and elsewhere. There is some question whether Kabila had the power to permit the massacre investigation. On April 26, 1997, Aldo Ajello, the European Union's special representative, met Kabila in Kisangani to discuss the modalities for the repatriation of a group of Rwandan refugees from three camps located on the road from Kisangani to Ubundo. One of these camps had been attacked and dismantled, reportedly resulting in the deaths of a large number of refugees. Denying any wrongdoing on the part of his and Rwandan forces, Kabila authorized Ajello to visit all the camps up to Ubundo to verify that nobody had been killed. Members of UNHCR, the Red Cross, other UN organizations, and local and international media, as well as the governor of Orientale Province and the mayor of Kisangani who were asked by Kabila to accompany the delegation in order to facilitate the visit, accompanied Ajello. Ajello’s account of what he saw is unambiguous:

We reached the main camp (approximately 30 km from Kisangani) and we could see a few terrorized people who had been pushed back by the soldiers to the camp that same day. The largest part of the camp was empty and devastated. The signs of the aggression were evident everywhere. The holes of the bullets were visible in the tents. The poor belongings of the refugees were spread over the camp. Six dead bodies were lying in the bush a few meters from the camp. We were able to approach some of the refugees and the stories they told us were always the same. They had been attacked during the night by a
few civilians supported by a large number of soldiers who started shooting blindly at the tents. Some of them had been able to run away but many had been killed.

What we had seen was sufficient to sustain the allegations that a huge massacre had taken place there, but we decided to proceed in the direction of Ubundo. Unfortunately, we were stopped a few hundred meters from the camp, at a Rwandan checkpoint. Supported by the governor and the mayor, we informed the officer in charge that we had Kabila's authorization to go up to Ubundo, but we were refused permission to proceed. After a short discussion with the officer, the governor, visibly shaken, quickly suggested that we return immediately to Kisangani. It was evident that the area was under direct Rwandan control and that Kabila's authority was neither recognized nor respected. I came away with the clear impression that the camps on the road to Ubundo were a clear example of a more generalized situation.\textsuperscript{204}

Kabila’s reasons for blocking the massacre investigation were two-fold. First, he needed to maintain his claim to a “revolutionary” victory in order to shore up his rapidly deteriorating domestic power base. Allowing the investigation would have revealed that the network that brought him to power was largely composed of foreign troops, thus confirming the growing popular perception that Rwanda, not Kabila, was in charge in the Congo. Real national authority was, in fact, outside the country. Second, the investigation was strenuously opposed by the Rwandans who feared being exposed as the authors of retaliatory massacres of Hutu refugees, knowing it would mean certain international condemnation, which is what happened years later, when the United Nations published a mapping study on mass atrocities committed in the Congo. Although it was widely accepted that it was the Rwandan forces that were responsible for the
massacres, crossing the Rwandans would have been dangerous for Kabila since they held key positions in Kinshasa during this period and were also the local public authority in much of the east at that time. A report issued by Garretón on July 11, 1997 on the Hutu massacres during Kabila’s eight-month push, concluded that most of the killings had been perpetrated by forces in the anti-Mobutu network, the majority of which were foreign troops.  

Since the Security Council knew who was ultimately responsible for the massacres, the choice to blame Kabila was not made out of ignorance. Powerful actors—former US government officials and other key member states (Belgium, the United Kingdom) as well as private investors had quietly approved of the campaign to get rid of Mobutu and were sympathetic to the new Tutsi regime in Rwanda. The pressure the UN put on Kabila to allow the massacre investigations to go forward, therefore, was largely pointless, and only hurt the world body’s image in the Congo. Congolese citizens questioned why the UN emphasized Rwandan Hutu deaths but paid little attention to Congolese displaced communities or the country’s need for post-conflict aid. It was not uncommon to hear Congolese wonder whether the international community cared more about the dead than it did about the living.

In these short fifteen months, Kabila managed not only to antagonize the UN and Western donors, but also his domestic opposition and his network of collaborators in the first war. By early 1998 it became increasingly clear that the leaders who had been most responsible for putting Kabila into power were dissatisfied with his performance. His presidency had not produced the results they wanted. Kabila had not succeeded in ending the problem of border insecurity by neutralizing the insurgency groups threatening Uganda, Rwanda, and Angola from the Congo—the principal (though not only) factor that motivated their intervention in the first place. Though again, Kabila was not entirely to blame for these continued insurgency attacks, as
Rwandan and Ugandan troops controlled—to the extent there was any control over, the Congolese areas along their borders. In fact, Kabila had allowed Uganda to place a couple of battalions inside the Congo to ensure the security of Uganda on its Western border with the DRC; and Rwanda had full control over the Congolese army, as well as free rein in eastern Congo. Nevertheless, there were rumors that suggested that as early as January 1998, eight months into his rule, the intelligence chiefs of Angola, Rwanda, and Uganda were holding discussions about finding an alternative leader for the Congo.206 The antagonism deepened when Rwandan President Kagame publicly claimed credit for the overthrow of Mobutu in a Washington Post interview in July 1997,207 as it undermined Kabila’s authority and efforts at revolutionary legitimacy at home.

We can also assume that the price of Kabila’s loyalty had gone up. Kabila now had access to mining concessions in his province of origin, Katanga, and a steady stream of revenue and hefty political budget. Increasingly, Kabila was moving Katangans into positions of political and military power, “The Tutsi-Lubakat power struggle took an important turn when Kabila began marginalizing the AFDL as a political force. He progressively substituted his own personal power for the legitimacy he had acquired from that organization in which power was supposedly collectively shared.”208 He set up an “office of ill-gotten goods” (Office des biens mals acquis, OBMA) and seized the property and assets of the Mobutu elite, which he gave out to friends and supporters as his own substantial patronage fund. But he was constrained in his actions, because he was surrounded by Rwandan security personnel, including his own chief of staff, James Kabarebe, a Rwandan Tutsi officer who had fought alongside Kagame in 1994 in the RPF. This struggle for power led to the Second Congo War.
**The Second Congo War: “Africa’s World War”**

On August 2, 1998, after Kabila expelled the Rwandan military from Kinshasa, two of the best and largest units in the new Congolese army, first the 10th Brigade stationed in Goma, followed by the 12th Brigade stationed in Bukavu, declared that they were deserting the Kabila regime. Rwandan army troops crossed the border to support them. These units had been stationed in Kivu to help fight the Mai Mai and the *Interahamwe/ex-FAR*, which had organized guerilla operations in eastern Congo. These brigades, soon joined by others, had previously worked in close cooperation with the Rwandan military. In Kinshasa, Congolese Tutsi soldiers who had refused to be disarmed clashed with Kabila's *Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC)*, and most were killed. Two days later, in a spectacular cross-continental airlift, a hijacked plane full of Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers, led by James Kabarebe, landed at Kitona army base in Bas Congo where some 10,000-15,000 former Mobutu soldiers were being “re-educated.” These ex-FAZ soldiers joined the Rwandan and Ugandan forces, and within days the “rebellion” captured a number of towns and most importantly, the Inga hydroelectric dam, which enabled them to cut off electricity to Kinshasa and Katanga. This had a devastating effect on the people of Kinshasa who found themselves without running water or electricity. Within two weeks, and with the Kabila regime facing almost certain military defeat, a group of Congolese politicians ranging from former anti-Mobutu alliance leaders to former Mobutists, united in Goma to hastily form the political wing of the emerging anti-Kabila network, the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD)*. Kagame and Museveni followed the same formula as with the first war—recruit Congolese into the network to serve as its public face. In Kinshasa and in other Congolese cities under Kabila’s control, people were called to arms by the government. Anti-
Kabila network sympathizers who were caught were massacred on the spot, and a real pogrom against all Tutsi (and anyone mistaken for one) took hold.

The leadership of the RCD was composed mostly of a hodge-podge network of radical Marxist intellectuals, former Mobutists, former UN officials, and Rwandan sympathizers. Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, a prominent Congolese professor of history from Makerere University, was eventually selected to lead the RCD. He was championed by Museveni who wanted a well-known personality at the helm to add legitimacy to the group. Others included Jacques Depelchin, a western trained, Marxist historian from Congo who had also taught at Makerere; Alexis Thambwe and Prof. Lunda Bululu, who had been close to Mobutu; Prof. Z’Ahidi Ngoma, a former staff member of UNICEF; Mbasa Nyamwisi, a former politician from North Kivu; and several Congolese Tutsi close to Kagame. Museveni wanted to mold the RCD in the image of his own National Resistance Movement (NRM), meaning build a grassroots following, and thought Kagame’s approach—which was to insert Rwandans directly into the movement and its leadership, was too heavy-handed. There was little coherence to the group chosen to lead the RCD besides a convergence of interest among a group of individuals frustrated that they had been excluded from power by Mobutu and then by Kabila, and disappointed that the end of the Mobutu regime did not bring democracy to Congo.

It was even more ad hoc than the AFDL, though like the AFDL, they seized the opportunity of an emerging network that could help advance their individual interests. The group, which received financial backing from Kagame and Museveni, recruited Congolese Tutsi fighters to be trained and fight alongside Rwandan army commanders and troops. One of the former Mobutists who tried to join the new “rebellion” against Kabila was Jean-Pierre Bemba, the son of one of Congo’s wealthy elite businessmen who had seen much of his family assets
seized by Kabila. When he found little welcome amidst the radical left intellectuals within the RCD, he started another armed group, the *Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC)*. Museveni saw the opportunity to hedge his bets against the growing rift between him and Kagame over how to run the RCD, by agreeing to support the MLC. As Figure 3 shows, the MLC would move west along a northern axis, while the RCD was vying for Kinshasa from the southern Kitona military base in Bas Congo where it was busy amassing troops.

**Figure 3:**

MLC and RCD Offensives in the 2nd Congo War (August–October 1998)
The Second Congo War drew in more African states and other actors than even the first, and network relationships shifted dramatically. By the time the Second Congo War began in August 1998, the growing tensions between Asmara and Addis Ababa over a border dispute around the territory of Badme had plunged them both into a deadly war. Not only did Eritrea split with the East African network, Ethiopia was too distracted to participate in what was happening in Central Africa. So state support for the new “rebellion,” which by the autumn of 1998 had split into at least three competing networks, was limited to Rwanda, Uganda, and to a lesser extent, Burundi, with the Congolese army defectors mentioned earlier, and the politicians who created the RCD.209

In striking contrast to its actions in the first war, on August 23, 1998, Angola broke with its former friends and intervened on behalf of Kabila. It attacked the Rwanda-Uganda-RCD positions in Bas Congo from its bases in Cabinda and defeated them. Although this attempt to overthrow Kabila failed as a result of Angola’s intervention, the “rebellion” was able to achieve military control over eastern Congo and fundamentally reshape local governance in the Kivus. This second war would no doubt have ended in two weeks if it had not been for the Angolan about-face, even if Kabila’s ally, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, had opted to support him militarily sooner than he eventually did; in all likelihood, Kinshasa would have fallen before such aid could reach it.

Angola’s decision to change networks had a profound impact on the war and on politics in the region, and there has been much speculation about why Angola switched sides.211 There are two likely reasons. First, since this intervention to help a neighbor meant diverting substantial resources away from the government’s long-standing struggle with UNITA at home, it meant that Angola believed that the anti-Kabila alliance had struck a deal with UNITA. This is
supported by three factors: the presence of UNITA leaders seen in Kigali and Kampala around this time; the recruitment of former Mobutu generals and politicians—long-standing supporters of UNITA—into the anti-Kabila alliance; and the relative ease with which the mostly Rwandan troops were able to land and operate in Bas Congo, which had been a UNITA stronghold inside DRC, to launch attacks against the Angolan government.

Second, the UNITA factor also entered when the Ugandans and Rwandans solicited UNITA’s aid to extract the remainder of the Kitona operation from an Angolan airbase controlled by UNITA. As Ajello notes, Angola’s dos Santos “could not accept the launching of a military operation of this scope without his being consulted…could not tolerate the presence of foreign troops in a region of vital interest for Angola…without his authorization…[and finally,] he was not ready to accept the launching of a military operation to get rid of a president…if there is no credible alternative coming from the Congolese people.” Indeed, as Ajello notes, “for the Angolans, a power vacuum in the DRC was much more serious than a president who did not entirely satisfy them.”

Unlike during the first war, support for the Kinshasa government was wide. Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Chad sent substantial military contingents. Sudan sent a brigade and gave advanced military training and air support to the Kabila offensives in northern Congo. Khartoum also persuaded Qaddafi to finance the Chadian brigade, which pleased France as it allowed the Quai d’Orsay (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to get back in the game in Congo in an effort to regain some of the influence it had lost to the east Africans and the US with the fall of Mobutu. After severe economic decline at home, Zimbabwe’s political and military elite had amassed enormous economic interests in DRC that needed to be protected. Billy Rautenbach, a Zimbabwean car dealer, sometimes arms dealer, and a big man who connected Kabila and

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Mugabe, was given the chairmanship of Congo’s giant state-owned mining company, Gecamines, and Kabila struck a deal with the Ridgepointe Mining Group of Zimbabwe to jointly exploit cobalt and other minerals in DRC. The deal was ostensibly as much to enrich President Mugabe and his network of Zimbabwean government officials and their offshore accounts, as it was to help offset the costs of Zimbabwe’s assistance in the war. Namibia, though it had stayed out of the first Congo war, joined the Kabila network for both personal and economic reasons. President Sam Nujoma and Kabila had become friends in their youth while they were both in exile in Tanzania. Once Kabila had assumed power in May 1997, they established a joint diamond-mining venture together, which also needed to be protected.\footnote{215}

Kabila recruited non-state actors into his network as well. He successfully re-armed and mobilized the *Interahamwe*/*ex-FAR*, known later as the *Alliance pour la Libération du Rwanda* (ALiR), and today the *Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda* (FDLR).\footnote{216} In addition, Kabila created an alliance with the Mai Mai in the Kivus, a number of decentralized yet effective local groups of Congolese guerilla fighters in North and South Kivu who are united around their opposition to any foreign presence in the Congo. The world organization was largely prevented from taking a more active role in resolving the conflict due to the reluctance of the major powers, especially the United States, to intervene in such a large-scale and complex regional conflict before a peace agreement was reached. Also, the United States and the United Kingdom were still sympathetic to Kagame and Museveni. The triad of Susan Rice, John Prendergast, and Jendayi Frazer of US government officials had nursed close friendships with Kagame and Museveni, both of whom had turned around their post-conflict societies and had also become strategic allies of the United States, despite their authoritarian rule. This inaction created a space for a number of local initiatives.
Between the outbreak of the war in August 1998 and the signing of the Lusaka peace agreement in August 1999, there were twenty-three failed SADC or AU sponsored meetings at the ministerial or presidential level aimed at brokering an end to the war, as well as numerous other unsuccessful efforts by individual leaders in the region. One of the first regional responses was a decision by Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia to invoke Kinshasa's recent SADC membership as a reason to launch a military intervention under SADC auspices to defend the Kabila government from foreign aggression. Zimbabwe’s President Mugabe held the chairmanship of SADC’s Political, Defense, and Security Organ during this time, and used his position to secure a SADC umbrella for Zimbabwe’s, Angola’s, and Namibia’s military intervention to end the war in Kabila’s favor. The three countries also justified their actions as an application of the principle of individual and collective self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter, a justification later affirmed by the Security Council in Resolution 1234.

This intervention, which neither sought nor received the council’s authorization, is what South African analyst Cedric de Coning calls SADC’s “neo-interventionism”—operations undertaken by sub-regional groups that intervene not as peacemakers, but as allies of one of the belligerents in the conflict with the aim of influencing the outcome of the war. It deeply divided the sub-regional organization, as there were members, most notably South Africa, which strongly opposed it. South African leaders felt that Mugabe had hijacked SADC to give a Zimbabwean intervention greater legitimacy. The organ’s decision to intervene militarily was challenged by Mandela, then chair of the SADC Summit. Mandela argued that such decisions should rest with the Summit, as that is the institutional body that represents all community members at the level of head of state. In what appears to have been a power struggle between
Mugabe and Mandela for regional dominance, Mandela lost. South Africa’s preference for non-intervention and SADC neutrality was not heeded.

A draft cease-fire agreement prepared by UN and AU representatives for a summit of regional defense ministers held at Victoria Falls on August 18, 1998 demonstrated the problem that would plague the region in mediating a negotiated settlement: how to define the nature of the conflict, given that it was neither a civil war nor an inter-state conflict. Each party to the war interpreted the conflict differently, and consequently, could not agree on who the belligerents were. This draft agreement identified the governments of Angola, DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe as the belligerents. However, Rwanda and Uganda had not yet publicly declared their military presence in the Congo, and protested the exclusion of any of the Congolese rebel groups from the proposed list of signatories, by walking out of the meeting.219 In his continuing efforts to present the war exclusively as a case of foreign aggression by Rwanda and Uganda, Kabila initially denied the existence of an internal rebellion and refused to recognize the RCD as a belligerent. Of course, the RCD defined this war as a revolution against a dictatorial regime, and argued that the only two belligerents were the RCD and the Kabila regime, each with their foreign supporters.

By early 1999, the war had acquired an even greater complexity, as Figure 4 shows. There were now four anti-Kabila rebel groups operating in the Congo, collectively controlling over half the country until the political transition in 2003 (see Figure 5). The RCD had split into three movements as a result of internal disagreements: the RCD-ML (*Mouvement de Libération*), backed by Uganda and led by Wamba dia Wamba, the RCD-Goma, backed by
Rwanda and led by Emile Ilunga and later Azarias Ruberwa, and the small RCD-N (Nationale), also backed by Uganda and led by Roger Lumbala. The RCD-N was loosely allied with Bemba’s MLC, which also was backed by Museveni.
At its 18\textsuperscript{th} Summit meeting in Mauritius on September 13-14, 1998, SADC appointed Zambian president Frederick Chiluba to lead the peace effort, and during the last few months of 1998, a number of regional and extra-regional actors joined his efforts. The European Union sent Aldo Ajello as its special envoy, and the United States dispatched Ambassador Thomas Pickering, then undersecretary of state for political affairs, and former US Representative Howard Wolpe as special envoy. Indeed, Wolpe and Ajello both were deeply involved in the negotiations. According to Ajello, they were in regular contact, shared information, and even engaged in task-sharing.\textsuperscript{220}
A meeting with Kabila and Museveni hosted by Libya’s Muammar Qaddafi on April 18, 1999 resulted in the signing of an initial peace agreement. The Sirte Accord called for the deployment of a peacekeeping force, the withdrawal of foreign troops from Congolese soil, and a national dialogue, but resulted only in the withdrawal of Chadian troops from the Congo, as these had been badly beaten by Bemba and the MLC. Neither the RCD nor its sponsor, Rwanda, was a party to the agreement. Although SADC, the AU, and other regional powerbrokers continued their efforts to mediate a negotiated settlement during these months, what ultimately brought the warring parties to the negotiating table was a stalemate in the war.

**The Lusaka Agreement**

After delays, and considerable pressure from the Security Council, the United States, the European Union, and regional powers, the Lusaka Agreement for a Cease-Fire in the DRC was signed by all but two belligerents on July 10, 1999 in Lusaka. The remaining two, the MLC and the RCD, signed in August. South Africa under Mandela and then Mbeki, as well as Tanzania, was instrumental in pressuring Uganda and Rwanda to acknowledge their military involvement in the Congo and to accept the terms of the agreement. To a lesser extent, non-African actors also applied pressure. The United States and other international donors tied aid to all state actors involved to the achievement of a negotiated settlement; and international financial institutions made lending to those with troops in the Congo conditional on making their costs of war public.

Although the Lusaka process was encouraged by the United Nations and the region, and was supported by UN resolutions, it is a document negotiated by the region, which recognized the existence of powerful, transnational networks in this war. The agreement, in trying to address that, is based on two basic principles: the sovereignty of the Congolese state, and the
territorial integrity of the Congo's present borders. It called for the immediate cessation of hostilities within twenty-four hours of its signing—and by “hostile action” meant not only military attacks and reinforcements, but all hostile propaganda as well—an important emphasis in a region where “hate speech” and genocidal ideologies have crossed borders to incite violence with devastating consequences. In addressing the complexity of the relationships among actors in the conflict, the agreement also specifically called for disarming foreign militia groups in the Congo, the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the country, and the exchange of hostages and prisoners of war, as well as for the establishment of a Joint Military Commission (JMC) composed of representatives of the belligerents, each armed with veto power. Finally, it asked for the JMC to be headed by a neutral chair appointed by the African Union, and the JMC to be charged with ensuring, along with UN and AU observers, compliance with the cease-fire until the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force.

The agreement sought an all-inclusive process, the “Inter-Congolese Dialogue,” to produce a new political order for the Congo, with a “neutral facilitator” to organize this process. The former president of Botswana, Sir Ketumile Masire, was appointed as that facilitator in December 1999. The brilliance of the Lusaka Agreement was that all parties to the dispute, whether armed or not, state or non-state, were to participate in this dialogue as equals. The inclusion of the non-violent political opposition and of civil society groups was a positive element, and was in sharp contrast to the previous exclusion of these groups from international negotiations. However, Congolese armed groups in eastern Congo were neither represented at the peace negotiations in Lusaka, nor were they mentioned as participants in the internal dialogue. These were the Mai Mai—diverse armed Congolese groups in the Kivus fighting against the RCD and the presence of Rwandan and Ugandan troops on Congolese soil. The Mai
Mai were given material and moral support by Kinshasa and indeed, at one point even declared to be a part of the new Congolese army. This breach of the cease-fire agreement by Kinshasa was never condemned by the JMC or the United Nations. Moreover, the omission of the Mai Mai from the agreement was particularly serious, since they continued to fight and in no respect were affected by the cease-fire agreement, despite their close relationship with Kinshasa.

Finally, the agreement set the terms for UN engagement by calling for "an appropriate" Chapter VII peacekeeping force to "ensure the implementation of the agreement" (Article III.II.a). The signatories of the agreement asked that this mission have both a peacekeeping and a peace enforcement mandate. The peacekeeping responsibilities were to "monitor the cessation of hostilities…investigate violations…supervise disengagement of forces…provide and maintain humanitarian assistance…keep the Parties to the Cease-Fire Agreement informed…collect weapons from civilians…schedule and supervise the withdrawal of all foreign forces…[and] verify all information…” (Annex A, Chapter 8). They also asked that on "account of the peculiar situation of the DRC," the mission be given enforcement authority for "tracking down and disarming Armed Groups…screening mass killers…handing over 'génocidaires' to the International Crimes Tribunal for Rwanda…[and] repatriation" (Article III.II.a and Annex A, Chapter 8.2.2). Moreover, the agreement explicitly asked the UN to use coercive force, if necessary, to achieve these objectives—it tasked the UN with "[w]orking out such measures (persuasive or coercive) as are appropriate for the attainment of the objectives of disarming, assembling, repatriation and reintegration into society of members of Armed Groups" (Annex A, Chapter 8.2.2.e).
The regional powerbrokers who mediated the agreement recognized the limitations of a region divided across various powerful networks in undertaking its implementation. During pre-Lusaka discussions about an AU-led, inter-African peacekeeping force for the Congo, AU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim acknowledged that his organization lacked the capacity to successfully undertake such an operation. The AU’s weaknesses in conflict management are well documented and are due primarily to two factors: fiscal constraints and institutional weaknesses. Member states, some of the poorest in the world, are frequently in arrears with their dues, and the organization lacks coercive power. Its members’ strict adherence to the principle of non-intervention has often resulted in paralysis out of fear of setting unwanted precedents of intervention. Although the organization’s transformation from OAU to AU in 2002 included changes to its conflict-related mechanisms, those changes had yet to translate into significant changes in institutional capabilities or practice. In addition to these obstacles, members of the AU were themselves implicated in these various networks, and supported widely divergent policies in the Congo wars; some supported Kinshasa, some the rebels, and some opted for neutrality. Therefore, it was virtually impossible to obtain agreement on a common policy, leaving aside the absence of capacity and means.

For SADC there were similar concerns about resources and capacity. South Africa, the region’s dominant economy, made it clear that it had no intention of carrying the financial burden of a regional peacekeeping force. “I think there is a growing consensus that any DRC mission should not be just a SADC affair. We want other western countries to join in. We know if it is just SADC then South Africa will be left to underwrite the whole deployment. We do not want the DRC buck to stop here.”
The dual UN mandate, requested by the Lusaka Agreement, would have presented difficulties for any UN mission (as it eventually did ten years later, when MONUC became the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and was given a more robust peace enforcement mandate). Peacekeepers do not make good peace-enforcers, as the former implies a perception of impartiality and usually requires local consent, while the latter demands coercive action against one or more of the belligerents. However, the failure of the UN to authorize a more substantial force until years later, either for peacekeeping or peace enforcement was not due to a flaw in the Lusaka Agreement, but rather to the lack of political will of the major powers in the UN Security Council to act decisively with a large intervention in the Congo.

The United Nations Responds

Unlike the first war, there were encouraging signs for substantive UN involvement in Central Africa coming out of the Security Council in late 1998 and early 1999. UN Security Council statements soon after the war broke out commended the region’s diplomatic efforts for a peaceful settlement, and called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces in the Congo. The Security Council President’s Statement of December 11, 1998 said that the Security Council was “prepared to consider, in the light of efforts towards peaceful resolution of the conflict, the active involvement of the United Nations, in coordination with the AU, including through concrete, sustainable and effective measures, to assist in the implementation of an effective cease-fire agreement and in an agreed process for a political settlement of the conflict.” There were other signs that could have been interpreted by the region as a greater willingness of the UN to help enforce peace agreements negotiated by the region. Security Council resolution 1208, on the plight of refugees in African conflicts, adopted a month earlier on November 19, 1998, called
on African states to develop procedures to separate refugees from “other persons who do not qualify for international protection afforded refugees or otherwise do not require international protection” and urged African states to “seek international assistance, as appropriate,” to do this. Security Council resolution 1234, adopted on April 9, 1999, supported SADC’s regional mediation efforts by name, and for the first time since the second war began, made a clear distinction between invited and non-invited forces in the Congo, ie, between forces within Kabila’s network and those part of rival networks. This was in contrast to the Lusaka Agreement that made no such distinction.

Once the agreement was signed in Lusaka, Security Council resolution 1258, on August 6, 1999, welcomed the agreement and authorized an observer mission to the Congo. However, the Security Council did not grant this mission the enforcement mandate requested by the signatories to the Lusaka Agreement, nor did they authorize the force size they expected. The UN initially deployed 90 military liaison officers to the headquarters of the belligerents for three months to assist the JMC in the peace process, and to determine when there might be sufficient security guarantees to deploy a larger UN force. In defending this preliminary action against critics who argued it was insufficient, a UN spokesperson noted that although small in number, “these [military liaison officers] MLOs will contribute to confidence-building among the parties and represent the vanguard of further UN involvement.”231 The Congolese mission at the UN pushed hard for this resolution, and even embarked on a successful campaign to lobby African members of the Security Council and other non-permanent members through the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) caucus. The Congo viewed a UN intervention as being very much in its interest, both because Kinshasa recognized that it would not easily defeat the Rwandan-dominated network, but also because as long as Rwanda claimed that it had security concerns, it
would generate international sympathy. It was, therefore, hoped that a UN intervention would help eliminate the principal justification for Rwanda’s presence in the Congo and serve as a bulwark against rival networks.232

Once this small technical assessment team was deployed, the Security Council adopted resolution 1279 on November 30, 1999 authorizing the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, (MONUC or Mission de l’Organization des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo). MONUC would be constituted by the earlier deployment of military liaison personnel and increased by an additional 500 military observers.233 Its mandate included that of the earlier technical assessment team, the “observation of the cease-fire and the disengagement of forces,” (paragraph 5d) and “to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance” (paragraph 5e). The deployment of the force was to occur in three phases, conditional on the security situation on the ground. Phase I, the deployment of military liaison officers to the headquarters of all the signatories to the agreement to help coordination, had already been launched under resolution 1258. The deployment of military observers inside the Congo, authorized by resolution 1279, to monitor compliance with the peace agreement constituted Phase II. The shortcoming of this plan was that the actors that constituted these networks were not all state actors—in fact, they were not all even in Africa.

In January 2000, the warring parties met in New York under the auspices of the Security Council during “Africa month”—an initiative of US Ambassador Richard Holbrooke who held the Security Council presidency during that month.234 This was a public relations victory for Kabila. The Security Council accorded him all of the trimmings reserved for a head of state, while the rebel leaders or their representatives sat in the gallery. This had the effect of
reinforcing Kabila’s dominance over a network that now included half the countries in the sub-region, and compromised the impartiality of the United Nations.

On February 24, 2000, the Security Council adopted resolution 1291 extending MONUC’s mandate for another six months and expanded the force to 5,537 military personnel, including 500 observers and appropriate civilian staff. The resolution gave the mission the authority, under Chapter VII, “to take the necessary action…to protect United Nations personnel…ensure the security of and freedom of movement of its personnel, and protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence.” Kabila, demonstrating his long-standing suspicion of Westerners that dated back to the 1960s and the betrayal of Lumumba, supported the resolution only on the condition that the UN force would be composed solely of troops from the South, preferably from Africa, and reserved the right to reject or approve any of the contributions. The size of the force authorized was criticized again as far too small to effectively monitor a peace agreement with multiple belligerents in a country with little infrastructure. Canadian ambassador Robert Fowler said, “We do not believe that the number of 5,537 is magic. We would have liked to see a more capable observation mission. We do not believe that the mission, as currently planned, has the capacity to ensure or even verify compliance with relevant provisions of international human rights and humanitarian law.”

Fowler also noted that the deployment for the Congo was half that of Sierra Leone’s, even though the size of the Congo is ten times that of Sierra Leone. It is not clear how the number of 5,537 personnel was arrived at, but some reports suggest that it was the result of American opposition to a larger, more expensive force and of the US delegation’s insistence that a precise number be identified so as to secure Congressional approval for the funding before deciding to support the resolution.
Fowler initially threatened to vote against the resolution but agreed to it on the condition that the authorized force would constitute only a second phase, with a larger force deployed in a subsequent phase.\footnote{238} Frequent cease-fire violations and Kinshasa's continued refusal to allow the UN unfettered access made deployment of Phase II difficult and the monitoring of the disengagement of forces nearly impossible. Because of these difficulties, the AU deployed 30 neutral verification teams inside the Congo in November 1999 for a year to help monitor the cease-fire pending the deployment of MONUC observers. President Kabila assured a Security Council mission to the Congo led by Ambassador Holbrooke between May 4-8, 2000—the first of a series—that Kinshasa would fully cooperate with MONUC, while criticizing the United Nations for “failing to condemn the presence of uninvited troops” in the Congo.\footnote{239} Disagreements over where to co-locate the JMC and MONUC, and the MLC’s refusal to withdraw its forces as mandated by Phase II further delayed deployment.

Meanwhile, MLC leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, fearing a power vacuum in Equateur Province, insisted that he would not withdraw unless the United Nations deployed a force large enough to guarantee the security of over 100,000 people in villages MLC forces had "liberated.” “I think this UN and the international community only cares about my army withdrawing, but do not care if the black Congolese are massacred by the \textit{Interahamwe} and government forces.”\footnote{240} The reason he mentioned the \textit{Interahamwe}—usually associated with the conflict in the Kivus—is that Kabila had deployed Hutu battalions in the FAC to the Equateur front where they were considered by the MLC as being Kinshasa’s best soldiers. These Rwandan Hutu soldiers were mobilized by the Kabila regime largely from UNHCR camps, both in the east and in Congo-Brazzaville shortly after the Second Congo War started.
Laurent-Désiré Kabila’s assassination on January 16, 2001 removed some of the obstacles to further MONUC deployment, as his 29 year-old son and successor, Joseph Kabila, put in power by Katangan leaders in the dead of night, soon consented to the full deployment of UN forces. On February 22, 2001, Security Council resolution 1341 demanded that “Ugandan and Rwandan forces and all other foreign forces withdraw” from the Congo, and asked that a timetable for that withdrawal be prepared within the next three months.

On April 26, 2001, six workers with the International Committee of the Red Cross were killed by armed groups near Bunia, leading then Security Council president, UK Ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock, to note that the incident “made us not just worry about the safety of humanitarian and other UN international workers, but also for the peace process in the Congo.” Moreover, Uganda's anger at the accusations made against Ugandan officials in the April 2001 UN Report on Resource Exploitation in the DRC led Museveni to declare Uganda's unilateral withdrawal from the Congo and from the Lusaka Agreement. But as Kamel Morjane, the UN’s special representative for the Congo noted, Uganda's withdrawal would not threaten the peace process: “If the government decides to withdraw its forces from the Congo, it’s always favorable. This is in line with the Lusaka Agreement.” Museveni did not follow through on his threat. His brother General Salim Saleh and his fellow UPDF officers were making too much money from mafia-type networks they had set up in eastern DRC, which directly contributed to the growing violence in the east.

In this climate, the Security Council, led by French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte, visited the Central African region in mid-May 2001 to assess efforts to implement the peace plan. On the day the delegation was due to arrive in Kinshasa, Kabila repealed Decree 194, imposed by his father to restrict political party activity. This high-level delegation determined
that “the cease-fire is holding and the parties to the conflict, with one exception, have disengaged their forces in accordance with the agreement they have signed.” The Security Council delegation took the opportunity of MONUC’s imminent receipt of two fast patrol boats to announce that MONUC was reopening the vast Congolese river network. What the delegation of international diplomats failed to mention was that there was a third war emerging in eastern Congo. This violent, popular rebellion against the Rwandan occupation pitted the Mai Mai in alliance with the FDLR, the Burundian Hutu insurgents, and the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD). In what was a clear violation of the cease-fire agreement that the United Nations failed to denounce, these were all supported by Kinshasa against the RCD-Goma, the Rwandans, and to a lesser extent, against the now defunct Front de libération congolais. This was the short-lived alliance between the MLC and the RCD-ML in North Kivu initiated by Uganda, which at that time backed both rebel groups.

On the basis of the Security Council mission’s report, the Security Council decided that disengagement was nearly complete, and on June 15, 2001, adopted resolution 1355 authorizing preparations for the deployment of Phase III including plans for the voluntary disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration, and resettlement (DDRRR) of all armed groups in the Congo. The role of the UN in this process, as spelled out in a joint communiqué signed by all the parties at the conclusion of the Security Council’s visit to the region in May 2001, was to be that of an “impartial arbiter.” The UN was responsible for coordinating all aspects of the DDRRR process while international humanitarian agencies were responsible for the screening of génocidaires and war criminals and turning them over to the international tribunal investigating the Rwanda genocide. The role of the UN and the AU, therefore, was one of coordination and monitoring. The rest was conditional on the voluntary compliance of the armed groups. In other
words, the foreign armed militia fighters in the Congo were asked to voluntarily give up their arms and demobilize, and to voluntarily return to their countries of origin. Enforced compliance was not in the mandate established by the UN or the AU.

MONUC’s Chapter VII mandate was much more what we know of as a “Chapter 6 1/2” mandate: its enforcement capability is limited to the protection of its own personnel, that of humanitarian relief workers, and some Congolese civilians. It was not authorized to disarm armed militias by force. The problem with voluntary compliance, however, is that many of these armed groups went underground to avoid giving up their weapons, a fact predicted by the UN as early as June 2001.247

MONUC troops gradually were deployed in previously blocked areas, and as of September 30, 2002, 4,309 out of the authorized 5,537 uniformed personnel had been deployed.248 Despite its relatively small numbers, MONUC established a noticeable presence in some key cities in the country. Its riverboat units patrolled some of the country’s waterways, thus encouraging the movement of people and goods, and it provided over $700,000 worth of relief support, mostly in the form of air transport for relief workers, after the devastation caused by the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in Goma on January 17, 2002.

The Inter-Congolese Dialogue

The Lusaka Agreement that ended the second war envisioned a six week-long national dialogue with armed and unarmed Congolese groups about the future institutions and interim government of the Congo as a parallel process to the disarming of armed groups and the departure of foreign armies. Until his assassination, Laurent Kabila repeatedly refused to cooperate not only with the United Nations, but also with the dialogue’s neutral facilitator, former Botswana President Ketumile Masire. Kabila never accepted the agreement’s provision that all parties, including the
government, would enjoy the same status in the inter-Congolese dialogue. He quarreled with Masire over the start date of the negotiations and eventually shut down Masire’s office in Kinshasa. Kabila also tried to exploit Anglophone-Francophone rivalries in Africa by accusing Masire, an Anglophone, of being biased in favor of Uganda and Rwanda, and demanded that another facilitator—a Francophone—be appointed.

In addition to Kabila’s stall tactics, Masire faced another problem, that of raising sufficient operating resources. By May 2000, several weeks after he had been appointed, he still had not received the $6 million pledged from international donors for his office. When asked soon after his appointment how helpful the UN had been to his efforts thus far, his response was that although the United Nations had not done “as well as it should have,” it had “not disowned the process,” emphasizing, however, that there was no “umbilical cord” connecting his office to the UN. Although there were no public accusations of wasteful spending by Masire's office, some donors expressed concern privately that the funding made available for the neutral facilitator's work was not used effectively.

Joseph Kabila, once in power in January 2001, initially took steps to revive the Lusaka process, and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan voiced optimism: “I think there are hopeful signs coming out of the Congo,” he said. “We went through a gloomy patch, but since January with the change in leadership, President Joseph Kabila is determined to work with his compatriots to end the conflict and is working much more effectively with former President Masire.”

On May 4, 2001, two weeks before the Security Council’s visit to the region, the Lusaka Agreement signatories met again in Lusaka and signed a Declaration on the Fundamental Principles. The Inter-Congolese Dialogue finally got started with a preparatory meeting in
Gaborone between August 20-24, 2001, which was attended by representatives of all signatories to the Lusaka Agreement and the Congolese non-violent political opposition and civil society, as well as observers from the UN, AU, SADC, EU, and the JMC. After some disagreements over who would participate in the talks and on the venue, they agreed that the national dialogue would be held in Addis Ababa for a period of six weeks beginning on October 15, 2001.

The talks opened as planned at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) conference hall in Addis Ababa. The AU handled much of the logistic planning for the meeting by establishing a task force with representatives and staff from the AU Secretariat, Masire’s office, the United Nations, the Ethiopian government, and the ECA, and also contributed $200,000. According to Masire’s office, financial constraints limited the participation to only 80 representatives rather than the original 330 agreed upon in Gaborone. After just three days of peace talks, the Kinshasa government walked out of the meetings arguing that there was no point in going ahead with the talks if all the parties were not represented. Kinshasa was insisting that the Mai Mai be included in the talks, a proposal strongly opposed by the Congolese rebel groups who argued that only parties included in the Lusaka Agreement should be invited to participate in the dialogue. Olivier Kamitatu, secretary-general of the MLC, spoke for all the rebels when he said, “The government wants to consolidate its power and position at the talks by bringing on board as many allies as it can, but this is not part of the Lusaka Agreement so we cannot allow it.” That was indeed true. Kabila was trying to pad his side. But it was also the case that these allies were part of Kabila’s network and had a stake in the negotiations. It would be one thing if Kabila called the shots, if the network were hierarchical. But negotiating without them in a decentralized network would not get the process far. The remaining participants
decided to postpone the peace talks until early 2002, after South Africa offered to host them in South Africa’s gambling capital, Sun City, and to pick up fifty percent of the cost.

After that, there were a number of regional efforts and international diplomatic efforts to calm the region’s several conflicts and revive the peace process but they continued to be troubled by problems relating to the inclusiveness of the process. On October 29, 2001, ten days after the Inter-Congolese Dialogue collapsed in Addis, the Ugandan and Rwandan defense ministers met in southwestern Uganda and laid the groundwork for a face-to-face meeting between their leaders that was held in London in November, and hosted by the UK. On December 6, 2001, Nigeria hosted a preparatory meeting for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, under United Nations auspices. This Abuja meeting resulted in a compromise on the Mai Mai question, with agreement to give the Congolese militia six of the 300 plus seats at the national dialogue. Another round of UN-sponsored informal talks aimed at confidence building among the interlocutors in preparation for Sun City, was held in Geneva from February 4-7, 2002. This time, the RCD walked out of the talks, calling the meeting “a total failure.” At issue, again, was the Mai Mai question. The RCD accused Kinshasa of violating the Lusaka cease-fire agreement by continuing to support the fighting of the Mai Mai militias. “We cannot talk about transition and elections when fighting is still going on, if there is no respect for the cease-fire,” declared RCD-Goma’s secretary-general, Azarias Ruberwa.254

The national dialogue opened in Sun City on February 25, 2002 initially without the participation of one of the principal actors, the MLC, which complained that the government had stacked the deck in its favor by sending bogus civilian opposition parties (also true). Eventually, all of the actors participated in the talks that lasted for a total of 52 days. In spite of numerous efforts by South Africa, the dialogue failed to achieve even a general agreement between the key
actors. In their detailed study of the Inter-Congolese dialogue, Paule Bouvier and Francesca Bomboko recount that during the day, the belligerents would sit with their fellow rebels to negotiate with the mediators; but as soon as the international mediators clocked off for the day, belligerents would re-organize themselves into ethnic or regional networks and negotiate in their hotel rooms all night, out of sight of the international mediators.²⁵⁵

This, for example, is how an agreement for a transitional power-sharing arrangement in which Joseph Kabila would remain president and MLC leader Jean-Pierre Bemba would be named prime minister was signed by the government and the MLC, but was rejected by the Rwanda-backed RCD-Goma, and by the non-violent political opposition. Rwanda, the most powerful actor in the anti-Kabila network by now, was unhappy to be left out of the deal in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue—out of a deal that was in effect, a neighbor’s domestic political settlement. On leaving Sun City, the dialogue’s facilitator, Ketumile Masire, acknowledged that “we are leaving Sun City without fully realizing all our goals.”²⁵⁶ The Sun City agreement failed because the inclusiveness and recognition of these networks that had been achieved by the Lusaka Agreement were ignored, as was the emerging third war in eastern Congo and its devastating consequences. Once it became clear that national unification under its domination was not forthcoming, the pact with the MLC ceased to have any interest for Kinshasa. The government walked away from it, choosing, instead, to enter into bilateral agreements with Rwanda and Uganda, and to marginalize the rebel movements opposing it.

The Third Congo War and the Inferno of the East, 1999-2003

After the signing of the Lusaka Agreement, there was relatively little violence or combat along the cease-fire lines between Kinshasa-controlled and rebel-controlled regions. Violence and the accompanying humanitarian disaster were largely limited to the struggle between the Mai Mai
(loose groupings of self-defense groups that emerged in the Kivus to fight the presence of anyone perceived as foreign), the FDLR, and Burundian FDD forces, all fighting against Rwanda and the RCD behind the cease-fire lines (See Figure 6). A bilateral agreement signed between Kinshasa and Kigali in Pretoria on July 30, 2002 resulted in the complete withdrawal of Rwandan forces in return for Kinshasa’s promise to dismantle the Hutu militias and hand them over to Rwanda. A similar cease-fire agreement with Kampala in Luanda on September 6, 2002 resulted in the withdrawal of Ugandan forces. While the withdrawal of foreign troops paved the way for the formation of a government of national unity and for the first national elections in 2006, it also created a power vacuum in the east and a significant increase in violent, anarchic conflict between ever smaller groups that no major actor effectively controlled.

This power vacuum was particularly acute in Ituri, where the Ugandan and Rwandan occupation had created rival proxy groups along ethnic lines. The withdrawal of Ugandan troops in the spring of 2003 precipitated a deadly spate of factional fighting between ethnic-based militias controlled by the Hema and Lendu ethnic groups, causing thousands of civilians to flee the violence in the town of Bunia and seek refuge around the MONUC compound, which housed 700 Uruguayan peacekeepers. These proved unable to stop the violence. With tensions and public outcry at MONUC’s inability to respond effectively mounting, calls for a multinational force would be more successful in 2003 than they were in 1996. In May 2003, the Security Council, in resolution 1484, authorized the deployment of an EU-led International Emergency Multinational Force (IEMF) named Operation Artemis, to Ituri. Authorized under a Chapter VII mandate, Artemis was to be an interim force for three months to stabilize the region and give MONUC time to be reinforced. Artemis successfully managed to stabilize Ituri in a short period of time.
A devastating clash between Ugandan and Rwandan troops in Kisangani that began on June 5, 2000 resulted in thousands of civilian casualties and neither inspired confidence at the UN that there would soon be any peace to keep, nor favored calls for a more robust UN force in the Congo. A strongly worded resolution adopted by the Security Council on June 16, 2000 expressed “outrage” at the fighting, called for the immediate demilitarization of Kisangani and the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country, and, for the first time, directly accused Uganda and Rwanda of violating “the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic
Republic of the Congo” and asked Uganda and Rwanda to “pay reparations for the loss of life and the property damage they have inflicted on the civilian population in Kisangani.”

Discussions with Congo observers and UN officials lead to the conclusion that this resolution was driven primarily by French animus towards Rwanda. Washington’s position was that this resolution would severely undermine the Lusaka process in two ways. First, because it gave primacy to the withdrawal of foreign forces over the promotion of internal dialogue and the disarmament of armed groups, and, therefore, would only serve to harden the resistance of the Kinshasa hard-liners to disarming the FDLR. Second, because it privileged the foreign forces supporting Kinshasa, therefore undoing the balance reflected in the Lusaka
Agreement’s failure to distinguish between Kinshasa’s foreign allies and the foreign allies of the rebel groups.

The Networks

Rwanda’s initial political objectives were to bring the genocide perpetrators to justice and to control eastern Congo to protect against insurgents. Its economic objectives were (and still are) to create a zone of influence through its network of extraction so that it can continue to operate unencumbered. It did this largely by stationing Rwandan troops within RCD rebel battalions in eastern Congo who engaged in direct combat, but also by extending Rwandan control over the economic life in that region. Rwanda brought Congolese territories it controlled into the Rwandan telephone and currency networks. And as troops withdrew, it replaced the management of Congolese companies in the east with Rwandan officers in civilian clothes, and returned Congolese Tutsi refugees to eastern Congo to shore up their power base. Thus, the highly centralized Rwandan war network coordinated out of the Congo desk of the Rwandan army during the second war continued to operate largely uninterrupted through the RCD and close commercial ties with international criminal networks involved in the illicit trafficking of arms, diamonds, coltan, and counterfeit currency.

In 2002, the Banyamulenge community on the High Plateau of South Kivu mobilized against the RCD/Rwandan forces, as increasing numbers of Banyamulenge came to the conclusion that being allied to Rwanda was counterproductive for them, especially regarding their goal of being accepted as Congolese citizens. They also felt that the RCD and the Rwandans were not doing enough to protect them from attacks by Congolese neighbors who viewed all Tutsi as Rwandan nationals. A Banyamulenge officer who defected from the RCD found massive support in the High Plateau in 2001. In opposing the RCD, he was able not only
to negotiate an end to the antagonism that existed between the Banyamulenge community and the surrounding Mai Mai, but also forge an alliance between the Haut Plateau Banyamulenge and the ethnic Bembe and other Mai Mai groups. This was, however, viewed as a dangerous provocation by the Rwandans and the RCD, and they launched a massive military campaign against the Haut Plateau in mid-2002.

North Kivu and Ituri in northeastern Congo witnessed a different, but equally unresolved and deadly series of more localized conflicts over land and resources that have been exacerbated by state actors involved in the broader conflict in the region. Uganda’s initial strategy for political control over northern Congolese territories, in contrast to Rwanda, was based on monopolizing the use of mechanized military force and on the training of Congolese rebel forces, such as the MLC in northern Equateur province and the RCD breakaway group, the RCD/ML, in the northeast. They placed relatively few troops on the ground and did very little direct fighting, except against Rwandan troops in Kisangani over the local diamond trade. However, a series of further sub-divisions in the Ugandan-backed RCD/ML resulted in the emergence of small, ethnically-based Mai Mai groups, often allied with or against Ugandan military officers who were profiting handsomely from their presence in the Congo. The struggle over public authority in the area has been fueled and encouraged by “free-lancing” Ugandan officers engaged in business with local leaders.

The Ugandan war network was more decentralized than the Rwandan, and thus was more easily transformed into a profit-generating network for individual Ugandan officers rather than for broader state interests. According to an earlier UN panel of experts investigating these networks, Ugandan officers set up cartels with local rebel and ethnic leaders for the illegal export of primary materials, the use of counterfeit currency, tax fraud, and the manipulation of the
banking sector through partnership with European and Russian front companies. In anticipation of troop withdrawal, Ugandan officers trained local paramilitary forces to oversee and continue to facilitate these commercial activities.\textsuperscript{260} The decentralization of the Ugandan network and the growing independence of the MLC also permitted a smaller weapons transfer and commercial trade network to emerge, organized around the MLC-Central African Republic-Libya axis.

In late 2002, the Kinshasa government brought the latest leader of the RCD/ML in the Ugandan sphere of influence, Mbusa Nyamwisi, into its war network with the aim to place Kinshasa-linked militia forces to the east as well as to the west (where they had always been) of the MLC rebel-held area. An earlier rapprochement with Uganda had made this possible. Not only was this not declared by MONUC to be a violation of the cease-fire agreement which states that all signatories must hold their positions at the time of its signing, it resulted in an MLC campaign against Mbusa with disastrous consequences for the civilian population in that area.

One would not be able to understand the MLC’s decision to attack Mbusa in Mambasa, in western Ituri, without knowing that Mbusa had been bought off by Kabila and switched sides. In a political market, the availability of a hefty political budget to buy off rivals is helpful. Kinshasa’s strategy was to use the Mai Mai and FDLR forces to fight Rwanda and the RCD in the east, as it had no effective army of its own. It had also profited from the illegal exploitation of the country’s resources through elaborate joint ventures with foreign officers and leaders using offshore companies, both as a means of rewarding neighboring states and militia groups that had intervened on its behalf, as well as to line the pockets of government elites, particularly high ranking military officers. Virtually none of this revenue made it into the public treasury.
**Similarities and Differences between the Wars**

There are four striking similarities and differences between the first two post-Cold War wars in the Congo. First, in both wars, Rwanda and Uganda, seeking to stop insurgency movements against their governments from using the Congo as a base of operations, helped launch a network of Congolese rebel groups who sought to overthrow the Kinshasa regime. Second, in both cases, the Kinshasa authorities appealed to the UN Security Council and to the AU to condemn the “aggression” but obtained limited results. In the first war, neither the United Nations nor the African Union sent troops to help end the conflict. In the second war, the Security Council did so reluctantly. Third, in both wars, foreign forces did most of the fighting, importing massive violence into a country that, since the mid-1960s, had experienced little such violence. Fourth, both wars were complicated, involving numerous transboundary actors with overlapping transnational financial and security interests.261

The differences between the wars are more telling than the similarities. In the first war, the Kinshasa government was singularly unsuccessful in gaining any real foreign support and its army was rapidly defeated, whereas in the second war, the new Kinshasa government was very successful in obtaining foreign military and diplomatic support. In the first war, the foreign armies that actually did the fighting and defeated Mobutu were Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola, whereas that alliance split in the second war with Angola actively supporting Kinshasa. In the first war, the notion that the war was a “revolution” or a “war of liberation,” coupled with a generalized antagonism toward Mobutu, resulted in mobilizing considerable Congolese and foreign support for the so-called rebel forces. In the second war, much of the Congolese population was convinced that this was an invasion by the Rwandans, Ugandans, and for some,
simply the Tutsi; so, with the exception of the MLC in Equateur Province, there was very little popular support for the new rebels.

The paradox here is that although there were more Congolese troops fighting (on both sides) in the second war than in the first, the second one generally was viewed as an invasion and the first one as a genuine revolution. In the first war, there was a coincidence of interest between the region, the United Nations, and the major powers not to act once the war had started. But in the second war, when the region demanded UN action to enforce the peace agreement, the Security Council authorized a UN peace operation.

The Third Congo War was fundamentally different from the first and second. It was far less structured and involved many more, though smaller, military actors. In the first and Second Congo Wars, elements of the international community involved themselves in seeking to contain conflict and achieve, at the minimum, cease-fire agreements. This pressure contributed to the Lusaka Agreement. The Third Congo War did not benefit substantially from such initiatives and the result was endless violence behind the cease-fire line set by the Lusaka Agreement, while the rest of the country, though divided, survived without the plague of daily, bloody confrontations.
Chapter 4

Public Authority and Rebel Governance in DRC: 

The Mouvement de Libération du Congo

This chapter traces the history of one of the principal rebel movements in the Second Congo War, the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC); and analyzes its leadership, organizational structure, network of supporters, and program, as well as its relations with civilian populations under its control, within the context of the Second Congo War. This war produced enormous social and political change throughout the DRC, not just in eastern Congo. This biography of a rebel group, based on extensive field research in rebel-held territory from 2001-2003 and interviews with MLC leadership, looks at the impact on governance and rebel/civilian relations, civilian responses to rebel rule, and rebel attempts to establish political order over the territories it controlled during the war. In so doing, it explores the role of armed groups in the shaping and un-shaping of public authority.

While there is a growing body of literature on rebel governance, much of it focusses on the resource extraction practices of armed groups. Weinstein, for example, explores the relationship between what he calls “resource endowments” and rebel violence. Like Collier, he tries to identify the characteristics of rebel groups that explain their strategies of violence. So while scholars have tried to explain the onset and duration of civil war and rebellion, we still have little data on the governance capacity and performance of non-state armed groups. Few studies about contemporary violent protest in the Congo have looked at rebel groups’ provision of basic public goods like security and justice.
What the experience of the MLC in Congo shows is that public authority cannot automatically be ascribed to the state, as both state and non-state actors are among the most powerful actors engaged in political struggles about authority over people, territory and resources. Unlike the rebel movements in eastern Congo, the MLC enjoyed significant popular legitimacy within the territory it controlled—one of the poorest in the country. The MLC drew upon and evoked existing practices and symbols of the state in order to legitimate its claims on public authority. And it also drew upon discourses of belonging to harness popular and elite support, particularly discourses of ‘autochthony’ of claims to be the ‘first’ or ‘original’ inhabitants. These discourses also importantly fueled conflict dynamics, as they fed into exclusionary claims to rights, in particular in relation to territory and authority. Under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Bemba, a “son” of Equateur, the MLC entered the northwestern province as a popular force to defend the local population against the abuses committed by the Kabila government and allied foreign forces. In so doing, the population employed narratives of autochthony and saw it as a force for liberation.

The MLC rebellion emerged as a key actor in the Second Congo War (1998) in reaction to the first post-Mobutu government’s—Laurent Kabila’s—dictatorial tendencies, anachronistic social program, and systematic persecution of the Congolese economic and political class, and of the population in northern Congo—Mobutu’s ethnic and regional base. It is noteworthy of study because in its effort to fashion itself a rural protest movement and establish local governance structures, hold local elections, and levy taxes, it stands in sharp contrast to other Congolese armed groups in eastern Congo. While the MLC engaged in extractive activities to finance the war effort, it also established a civil administration and a system of local governance in northern
Equateur province, in addition to an army, which in the first three years of the rebellion, was disciplined and effective in military terms.

The MLC challenges established notions of armed, violent resistance in contemporary Africa implicit in current conflict literatures, which suggest that economic greed rather than political grievance is what drives this violence. It also is a good example of the role that non-state actors play in producing local political orders and carrying out governance functions that usually rest with states. Even though it struggled against the Congolese state over public authority in the northwest of the DRC, it employed its registers of authority when it governed its territories. The MLC sought to mimic the state by employing its forms of taxation, and by providing justice and security to the communities under its territory. The MLC thus employed narratives of “stateness” to render their governance of key domains legitimate, which suggests that the idea of the state still resonates with social imaginaries of public order.

Approaching the MLC more biographically follows on the work of Boas and Dunn who reject greed-based theories of rebellion and the overly quantitative approach to the study of insurgency. Like them, I argue that violent protest movements in an era of globalization, which the MLC represents, emerge in reaction to state dysfunction and predation. That said, I reject their argument that these movements also have no political project to reform the state. As explained in Chapter One, the MLC comes closer to Christopher Clapham’s earlier classification of a reform insurgency. It drew for legitimacy on what it perceived as the illegitimate rule of the Kinshasa authorities, who themselves assumed power without a popular mandate, and on a platform of state reform that it sought to implement within the territory it controls. Although the MLC engaged in extractive activities to finance the war effort, it also successfully established
both a civil administration and a system of local governance in Equateur province, as well as an army.

The RCD rebel group in eastern Congo, on the other hand, was established alongside a heavy Rwandan military presence, and was immediately perceived by the local population as an army of occupation. And while at no time since the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, and the subsequently defeated Congo rebellions, had the Congolese state been weaker, unlike the Belgian-backed Katangan secessionist movement of the immediate post-independence period, the MLC had articulated no programs aiming at secession, integration with surrounding states, or independence. Instead, they subscribed to a strongly nationalistic policy and to a single Congolese identity, with the aim to assume positions of leadership within the Kinshasa central government to radically reform the Congolese state.

**Bemba’s Motivation**

The MLC was formally established on September 30, 1998 in Kisangani. It is unclear exactly when its leader, Jean-Pierre Bemba decided to take up arms against Kabila, but as early as February or March 1998, he tried, with Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni’s encouragement, to join the newly formed Rwanda and Uganda–backed RCD rebellion in eastern DRC. Bemba’s flirtation with the RCD was brief, and his participation was refused. By his own account, he grew skeptical about the RCD’s potential to succeed because the group did not include the local population in the governance of territories it controlled. Rather, it chose to rely militarily almost entirely on Rwandan forces rather than developing Congolese military capacity. No doubt it was a mutual rejection and was the first of three critical interactions with eastern DRC that help explain Bemba’s unpopularity in the east. This echoed Museveni’s criticism of how Kagame chose to prosecute this war. Bemba and Museveni both recognized that
legitimacy requires some measure of compliance; coercion may be used, but is not enough to establish one’s authority. This is evidenced by Bemba’s voluntary recruitment practices of combatants and Bemba’s and Museveni’s insistence that Congolese be trained to do the bulk of the fighting rather than have foreign forces do it for them, as was largely the case in the RCD-Rwandan-dominated network.

Bemba claims to have been motivated by Kinshasa’s disregard for human rights, attacks on private property, and racist anti-Tutsi and anti-Equateur propaganda, as well as the monopoly of power in the hands of one ethnic group—what on numerous occasions, he called a “new mafia network” from Katanga province. He denounced that as a return to le tribalisme, or the ethnicity-based identity politics that many Congolese credit Mobutu for ending. However, his central disagreement with Laurent-Désiré Kabila was Kabila’s exclusion of the political and economic elite from the west, in particular the province of Equateur—Bemba’s own province of origin and Mobutu’s power base—and the confiscation of Bemba family and business property after Mobutu was deposed.

What the hyperinflation and army lootings of the 1990s did not destroy of the Bemba family business assets in Kinshasa, the AFDL did. Under Kabila, the old political class and the business community and their families found themselves increasingly harassed and arbitrarily detained. Bemba’s father, Jeannot Bemba Saolona, was arrested on several occasions and released reportedly only after paying considerable “fines.” Much of the Congolese elite went into exile. Bemba’s father opted to stay in the country and collaborate with the new authorities, eventually serving as Kabila’s minister of the economy and industry, but Bemba chose to leave Kinshasa just before Kabila’s arrival. Over the next year, he split his time between residences in Belgium and Portugal.
Museveni’s motivation was different. Given the growing split at the center of what remained of the anti-Mobutu network as Uganda and Rwanda increasingly competed for network influence and the ability to extract resources out of eastern Congo, Museveni decided to hedge his bets by investing in a new rebellion and in a competing network. This network included the MLC, Museveni himself, his half-brother General Salim Saleh, General James Kazini who was then head of the Ugandan People’s Defense Force, Thai and Chinese timber companies, local banks, and existing regional transport companies, among others. Not all actors within this network had the same goals, and not all actors had only one objective. Some had overt political objectives in state capture, others were interested in rents, for some, like the MLC, the two objectives overlapped.

**MLC Leadership**

Jean-Pierre Bemba was born just outside of Gemena in Equateur province in 1962, the oldest child of Jeannot Bemba Saolona. His mother died when he was thirteen years old. He is married to Liliane Texeira, with whom he has six children. One of his three sisters is married to Nzanga Mobutu, the deposed president’s son, who would run against him for president in 2006, and later joined Kabila’s government. Bemba’s father was one of the most powerful figures in the Mobutu regime and a prominent businessman who acquired enormous wealth under Mobutu’s nationalization measures in the mid-1970s. He made his fortune largely in agriculture and transport, but wielded influence over most sectors of Congolese economic life. At one time he was thought to be the Congo’s wealthiest individual, often called “the bosses’ boss” (*le patron des patrons*). His Scibe Group (Société Commerciale et Industrielle Bemba), a holding company, included enterprises ranging from the agro-industrial treatment of palm oil and coffee, to commercial aviation and transportation.
Bemba spent his first five years in Equateur and the next twenty in Belgium, seeing the Congo only during school holidays. From 1982 to 1986, he studied business and finance and development economics at l’Institut Catholique des Hautes Etudes Commerciales (ICHEC) in Brussels. From there, he entered the family business and eventually became the chief executive of the Scibe Group. Under him, the group developed a commercial air transport network and for some years Scibe Aviation and the Belgian Sabena airlines were the only companies flying between Kinshasa and Brussels. In the late 1980s, he branched out into telecommunications and television, starting COMCELL, a cellular phone company based in Kinshasa with offices in New York and Monaco that competed with TELECELL. His group also started CANAL KIN, a private TV network, and other business ventures, including a private postal company and a freight transport company with operations throughout Africa.

Until the establishment of the MLC, Bemba had been a businessman with no affiliation to any political group or party. It would seem, then, that he would lack the necessary political and military skills to direct a political or rebel movement. If he had any success, much of it would be due to his choice of Olivier Kamitatu as his second-in-command, and the network that he would assemble with the help of President Museveni.

The MLC political leadership was composed primarily of young, affluent Congolese businessmen and some women—the sons and daughters of Mobutu’s robber barons, who maintained a critical distance from that regime, even as they benefited from it. They were part of a Congolese diasporic network educated mostly in Western Europe, some in the same schools, like Bemba, Olivier Kamitatu, and (earlier) Francois Muamba, three of the MLC cadres. Most resided in Europe for extended periods and held dual citizenship, a practice that Kabila made illegal after the break with Rwanda. Under Bemba’s orders, each of the founding members of
the MLC, who had until then led pampered lives far from any prospect of military service, had to undergo four weeks of rigorous basic military training with the Uganda People’s Defense Force (UPDF). Some of them recounted bitterly having to travel for hundreds of kilometers on the back of motorcycles over dirt roads in the bush, catching malaria for the first time, and being made to sing for hours in Swahili by Ugandan commanders while in regiment formation. Bemba argued that without such training, leaders could not command troops in battle or gain their respect. Bemba approached raising an army as if he were raising a state army rather than a group of rebel fighters. Some of the later leadership, like Jose Endundo, formerly MLC Secretary for the Economy and later Minister of Public Works and Planning in Kabila’s government, and Alexis Thambwe, formerly advisor to Bemba and later Minister of Planning, came to the MLC from the RCD and though senior leaders there, had to go through boot camp as well. Some others previously held key positions in the Mobutu government. For example, Raymond Ramazani, the MLC’s former diplomatic adviser and representative in Paris, had been Mobutu’s ambassador to Paris and one of his most loyal advisors.

The secretary general or “prime minister” of the movement until 2006, Olivier Kamitatu was born in Brussels in 1964, the son of Cleophas Kamitatu, a leading 1960s politician from Bandundu who was sympathetic to Patrice Lumumba but who eventually held political office under Mobutu. Olivier’s mother, Mafuta Mingi Mbuta, was one of the first women in the Congolese parliament and a successful businesswoman in her own right. Like Bemba, Kamitatu studied at ICHEC and while there became the smart, likeable, younger protégé of his ambitious and increasingly powerful classmate. Kamitatu joined the Scibe Group as managing director of one of its news magazines. In 1990, he founded BERCI, a public-opinion and marketing firm in Kinshasa, which was funded by the US National Endowment for Democracy, USAID, DFID and
others, but left it in 1999 to join the *macquis* when Bemba formed the MLC. Kamitatu’s deft political skills allowed Bemba to focus on military affairs while he became the movement’s chief—and skillful—negotiator.

Although Bemba is from the Ngwaka tribe of northern Equateur, the movement avoided being ethnically or regionally based. As Figure 8 illustrates, in 2000, only 35 percent of the leadership was drawn from Equateur, 10 percent from Bandundu, 10 percent from South Kivu, 25 percent from Province Orientale, 15 percent from Kasai, and 5 percent from Maniema.\(^{270}\) Moreover, Bemba even included a Congolese Tutsi battalion commanded by a Congolese Tutsi commander, in his army—a huge risk given the growing national antipathy towards Rwandaphones in the Congo.

Not unlike Kabila’s army, the FAC, and to a lesser extent, the RCD, much of the MLC military leadership was drawn from the ex-FAZ (*Forces Armées Zairoises*) and Mobutu’s former DSP (*Division Spéciale Présidentielle*, or Mobutu’s presidential guard). But this does not mean that they were sympathetic to Mobutu or to dictatorship. General Dieudonné Amuli, the MLC’s former chief of staff and later head of the DRC Navy, for example, was part of Mobutu’s special guard, and the one who held the Kinshasa airport against the advancing AFDL forces just before they took Kinshasa. Amuli voiced great bitterness at having been abandoned at the front lines by Mobutu in the face of defeat without so much as an order to stand down, and could not stress enough that Mobutu severely neglected the national army.\(^{271}\) He insisted that his association with Mobutu had not corrupted him, but rather taught him how *not* to command an army.

Both Bemba and the MLC membership had difficulty distancing themselves from Mobutu’s legacy despite the presence of former Mobutu government officials in the ranks of the Kabila government and the RCD. While MLC leaders acknowledged their links to Mobutu, they
would emphatically reject the politics of nepotism and corruption that Mobutism represents. The 2006 elections further exposed the complexities of linking Mobutu and his legacy to any one political actor, given the alliance of Mobutu’s son, Nzanga Mobutu, with Kabila and the split in the Mobutu family over which candidate to support in the election of 2006.

Figure 8:

Regional/Ethnic Composition of MLC Leadership, 2000

Called a “bully” by his opponents and a “visionary” by his supporters, Bemba was a bit of both. As a leader, he was impatient, impulsive, stubborn, and rarely seen to smile or laugh in public or private. These qualities, combined with his imposing physical stature and youthful face, made him frightening to some and an endless target for political cartoonists, who depicted him as an overgrown, demanding baby still in diapers. His self-professed sense that it was his divine destiny to fix the DRC’s problems often sounded self-serving and arrogant. He truly believed that he was chosen and spoke frequently, publicly and privately, of sacrifice for country. He
could be ruthless with those who disagreed with him, and opponents and supporters alike complained that he was tight with money.

Even Bemba’s critics, however, acknowledged that he was an extremely charismatic and effective public speaker who, despite his privileged upbringing, managed more than any Congolese political figure during the wars to speak to the needs and aspirations of the average Congolese. In private, he would speak with an intensity and conviction about the need for a new political order in the DRC that could be infectious. Reflecting his business training, he could describe skillfully both his grand vision for the country and the minute details of how to realize it. A conversation with Bemba about a particular policy idea, such as revitalizing riverine travel and trade, would involve a detailed account of how the policy would be executed, from a cost-benefit analysis to a description of the specific type of boat architecture needed, effectively articulated without notes. He was also an aviation enthusiast—he learned to fly small planes and helicopters—a hobby that grew out of necessity as he feared relying exclusively on pilots-for-hire lest they deliver him to the highest bidder in the political market of the war. It since became a genuine passion and escape from his daily pressures and public responsibilities. The self-discipline to learn how to fly under less than optimal circumstances is one of the best illustrations of Bemba’s internal drive and self-motivation.

Bemba’s efforts to run his family businesses (not entirely successfully), organize a rebellion (successfully), administer rebel-held territories in both the west and the east (with mixed results), and hold office as vice president of the transitional government (during which he did not shy from wielding the power of the purse) suggest that Bemba was really everything that both his supporters and his detractors said he was.
Raising an Army

In spring 1998, Bemba sought to motivate a group of Congolese exiles to join an armed struggle with support from Kampala. He elaborated a political program with a network of friends and former classmates and discussed financing and training with Museveni. By Bemba’s own account, he met Museveni while exporting fish to Belgium through Uganda in the early 1990s, though it is widely believed that Mobutu used Bemba aviation companies to transport goods for Jonas Savimbi, then leader of União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), through Uganda throughout the 1980s. Another account claims that Bemba met Museveni through Museveni’s half-brother, General Salim Saleh, then chief of staff of the UPDF, while seeking to establish a link between ex-FAZ troops cantoned at the Kitona military base in southern DRC and UNITA forces in Angola.272 All these are likely, as none are mutually exclusive, though the MLC emphatically denied any involvement with the Angolan insurgency movement. But the firm belief, at least in Luanda, that Bemba, Uganda, and Rwanda had links to UNITA largely accounts for why Angola switched sides in the Second Congo War to back Laurent-Désiré Kabila and his network, as well as its strong antipathy toward Bemba to this day.

One month after the Second Congo War began, Bemba, then thirty-six years old, together with 154 Congolese recruits, began military training under Ugandan officers at Camp Kapalata, twenty kilometers outside of Kisangani.

As more ex-FAZ/DSP officers joined Bemba’s effort—many of whom, under Mobutu, had been well trained in military programs in the United States and Israel—they took over the training of new recruits. After initial Ugandan provision of weapons, uniforms, and artillery, the MLC captured much of its heavy materiel, munitions, and transport and communications equipment in battles with the FAC and their supporters; it also seized FAC and ex-DSP weapons
caches, especially in Gbadolité. Unlike the RCD-Goma, which had embedded Rwandan forces (troops and commanders) within its ranks, UPDF trainers and the small number of troops remained separate from MLC battalions. All non-officer recruits, regardless of age or gender, were trained in firing weapons, setting ambushes, spying, and survival and escape methods. Troops were unpaid, but were provided with weapons, ammunition, uniforms, food, and very minimal medical care, at least in the early years of the war.

In August 1998, when Uganda occupied the towns of Bunia and Isiro in the DRC’s border region with the CAR and Sudan, Khartoum intervened on behalf of Kabila, no doubt to undermine Museveni. Despite MLC claims that there were approximately one hundred Sudanese troops in Gemena by late 1998, Khartoum’s involvement consisted largely of sending two to three hundred anti-Museveni Ugandan rebels from the West Nile Bank Front to reinforce Kabila’s FAC; providing logistics assistance and training for the FAC in DRC and Sudan; and running aerial bombing raids against the UPDF and MLC troops, which the MLC publicly denounced as deliberate attacks on Congolese civilians, though it is unclear whether the Sudanese pilots were deliberately targeting civilian villages or just being true to their reputation of having lousy aim. To reinforce the FAC in northern Equateur, Kabila also received Chadian troops. The Chadian soldiers’ brutal treatment of civilians in Equateur is one of the principal reasons that Bemba was perceived as a liberator of that province.

The MLC/UPDF forces fought several battles against Chadian, Sudanese, and FAC troops during this period, and captured a number of FAC soldiers, whom they integrated into the MLC. The MLC also received an infusion of ex-FAZ officers after the Kitona airlift and after the RCD split, in addition to the Ugandan trainers and troops. A succession of these forces occupied the Gbadolité airport over the years, beginning with the first war. During the Mobutu
years, the small, northernmost Congolese airport in Gbadolité boasted Africa’s longest runway (4km) so that it could land the Concorde filled with the international guests Mobutu would entertain in his three hilltop palaces. Today, the airport sits empty, covered in Arabic, French, Sango, English, Ngwaka, Lingala, and other graffiti, a testament to the successive waves of armies that occupied the territory. The photos in Figures 9, 10, and 11 show the layers of competing authorities over resources, people, and territory in northern Equateur over the twenty years since the fall of Mobutu.

**Figure 9: Combatant Graffiti Memorial Wall, Gbadolité Airport (T. Carayannis)**
Figure 10: “Uganda Is the Best Fighters,” Gbadolité Airport (T. Carayannis)

Figure 11: “Kabila has Total Confidence in Chadian forces,” Mobutu Palace, Gbadolité (T. Carayannis)
During a nine-month campaign that moved west from Kisangani along two fronts in northern Equateur, Bemba’s Armée de Libération du Congo (ALC), with UPDF battalions and Ugandan air transport, ejected the FAC and Chadian troops and installed the movement’s headquarters in Gbadolité by July 1999. The MLC estimates that by May 1999 it had 8,600 troops, and that by the end of that year it had twenty thousand.

**An Army of Liberation and Local Governance—“Doing” the State**

Of all Congolese armed groups, the MLC had the most articulated political and economic program, which tried to address systematically what it perceived to be the shortcomings of the Kinshasa government and its policies. For the most part, the program remained consistent as the group evolved from rebel organization to political party. While the movement’s founding documents initially sought a qualified continuation of the democratization process started by the Sovereign National Conference (SNC) of 1992, which elected the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS) leader Etienne Tshisekedi as prime minister, they also noted that SNC resolutions needed to account for events of the last fifteen years. Later, and unlike the UDPS, the MLC accepted the legitimacy of the transitional government of 2003–2006 to oversee elections held six weeks after the government’s mandate had expired, and did not call for a return to the political transition process begun by the National Conference.

Not surprisingly, given the business background of much of the MLC’s political leadership, the movement was based on principles of economic liberalism. Its stated objective was to end dictatorship and establish a democratic rule of law under which business, private enterprise, and investment—both foreign and domestic—could flourish. In its appeal to state symbols, the movement had a flag, which featured the movement’s emblem. The group’s emblem, the common worker ant, reflects its emphasis on jobs and the economy, and symbolizes
organization, courage, solidarity, social cohesion, and work. It is ironic, of course, that the movement was led by the Congolese equivalent of the “one percent” and not by labor.

**Figure 12: MLC Flag**

![MLC Flag](image)

Given the party platform’s emphasis on free enterprise, it would seem that Bemba and the MLC would be natural allies of Western industrialized powers, but geopolitical concerns took precedence. First, Washington was suspicious of Bemba’s cozy relationship with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, a key actor in the MLC network. And France was not pleased with Bemba’s interventions into CAR and what they perceived as their sphere of influence in Central Africa. Second, foreign governments quickly judged Bemba as someone not easily manipulated or controlled. Bemba spent a good part of the war isolated in northern Equateur, and was thus unknown personally by many of Kinshasa’s foreign diplomats before he arrived in the capital to assume his transitional vice presidency. Once there, his forceful style and popular appeal reinforced some embassies’ perception that he would be difficult to manage. Finally, the
defection of several high-ranking members of the MLC leadership, notably second-in-command Olivier Kamitatu, who were liked, seen as moderates, and the key interlocutors of many foreign offices, further exposed Bemba’s Achilles heel.

Two additional factors in Bemba’s inability to curry favor with most Western powers have little to do with Bemba himself. First, on assuming power in 2001, Joseph Kabila employed a more cooperative and pro-Western leadership style than had his Maoist father, which brought him into networks that had been closed to his father. The younger Kabila played the international game well, quickly gaining multilateral and bilateral donor support. Second, the tendency of states and multilateral organizations to privilege incumbents in post-conflict elections worked in Kabila’s favor; in the landmark 2006 DRC elections, several influential Western governments made no secret of their preference for him over Bemba, based largely on the age-old principle of supporting the devil you know over the devil you do not. This principle had been followed by many powerful states inside and outside the region since the end of the second war.

On the political front, the MLC program was less specific. The founding documents of the rebel organization (and later, political party) make general claims to support human rights and good governance, and the separation of powers. The MLC initially called for a federal system of government, though it tempered its position when it became evident that the vast majority of the war-torn Congolese population increasingly saw federalism as code for partition. Likewise, the MLC initially supported the idea of dual citizenship, but abandoned it as anti-Rwandan sentiment grew and the rumor that masses of Rwandans were masquerading as Congolese citizens became part of the popular narrative. The rebel group also vacillated between supporting a generous immigration policy “in consultation with the region” and supporting “the strict adherence to Congolese law and national interest” as it tried to take a middle position
between the respective policies of the RCD-G and Kinshasa on the thorny question of citizenship. However, Bemba, as party leader, later called publicly for granting Congolese citizenship to all eligible Congolese Tutsi. This rejection of identity politics was consistent with MLC practice during the war, which had a Congolese Tutsi commander leading one of the ALC brigades, and unique during this war.

While the MLC advocated for decentralized national rule, the formal organizational structure of the movement was very top-down and heavily centralized around Bemba. Although the core leadership was heavily consulted in the decision-making process, Bemba would make all appointments. The paradox between the movement’s call for a decentralized state and its own centralized structure is reminiscent of the early years of Museveni, Bemba’s patron, and his one-party rule in Uganda. Until the establishment of the government of national unity in July 2003, the movement was led by a number of small committees under the direction of the president. In yet another reference to statehood, the four principle organs of the movement established by its statutes were the Politico-Military Council (the defense department), the Office of the President, the General Secretariat (the executive branch), and the army (Armée de libération du Congo, or ALC). The General Secretariat included the president, eleven national secretaries, one general secretary, and four representatives abroad; and was mandated with executing the general policy of the MLC, as defined by its president and the Politico-Military Council. The Council was the central governing body of the movement, and was composed of the MLC president and members appointed by him, drawn from the political (General Secretariat) and military (ALC) branches of the movement. The president also had an advisory committee and a cabinet.
What set the MLC apart from other rebel groups in the DRC were its efforts to create civilian administrations for the territories under its control. During the war, as soon as a town or village fell to the MLC, the movement would set up a local administrative structure consisting of an executive branch of the MLC, a territorial council comprised of women’s groups, unions, and business, civic and church leaders; and a territorial assembly. Each local administration had its own budget and authority to levy taxes, while the MLC provided security and acted as provincial governor. This decentralized administration permitted a greater inclusiveness of local actors into the administration of northern Equateur and was consistent with the MLC’s position in favor of decentralized government across the DRC. However, given the realities of war, these provincial and local administrations were probably oriented more toward recruitment and mobilization for the war than actual governance.

Once established in northern Equateur, the MLC subsidized its operations by taxing local business elites and drawing funds from provincial Bemba family enterprises that had not been seized by Kabila, such as coffee plantations and timber exports. The latter was done with help from the Victoria Group, a network of Ugandan political and military elite, a Lebanese cartel known for money laundering, printing counterfeit currency, and diamond smuggling, and Antwerp-based diamond dealers. When Ugandan support waned, the MLC diversified, conducting small-arms transfers, commodity exports, and transportation services through Libya and the CAR. Individual MLC leaders supported themselves and their families largely through personal wealth or businesses inside and outside of the country.

In a digital age, the tools with which to organize a violent protest movement are simple, affordable, and within reach of one’s arm chair. Bemba’s military command center was light and mobile and located in his home in Gemena and then Gbadolité. It consisted of a couple of
laptops, a television with satellite connection, printer and fax, and several satellite phones. These were all set up in his living room and cost about what a teenage online gamer’s home gaming computer setup would cost. The young, urban elite leaders of the MLC also understood that creating “a mutuality of interest creates a market for transnational support.” Bemba’s and Kamitatu’s business and media backgrounds meant they understood the importance of media and communications in a highly networked world, as political markets exist not just locally and regionally, but globally. A significant amount of time and resources was devoted to marketing the MLC to create this mutuality of interest both domestically but also with international supporters in an effort to broaden their network of support. The MLC was the first Congolese (and probably African) rebel group to have an active website and send out a weekly email newsletter of MLC governance and military activities and achievements throughout the war.

Despite the fact that Gbadolité was former President Mobutu’s hometown and that he spent an estimated $15 million monthly in the area to staff his palaces, hydroelectric plant, airport, and agricultural plantations, the region remains one of the poorest in the country. It is not a significant producer of diamonds; and a vibrant agricultural economy (coffee, timber, palm oil, rice) was reduced to subsistence farming in the waning days of Mobutu’s rule. Its transportation and communication infrastructure is virtually non-existent, and the region was (and still is) largely isolated from the rest of the country. Like most rural areas in the DRC, the education and health systems have collapsed. And unlike eastern Congo, international humanitarian and development NGOs have largely stayed out of northern Equateur, seeing it as a region privileged first by Mobutu and then by Bemba, though it has been neither.

For the war effort, however, northern Equateur and Gbadolité in particular, were strategically significant. First, the proximity to Bangui gave the MLC an essential rear base and
convenient exit and entry point for troops, small arms, and income-generating exports. Second, with one of the longest runways in Africa, the Gbadolité airport could land and take off large and long-range supply aircraft as needed. Third, the local perception of Bemba as a son of the land who liberated northern Equateur from Chadian occupation greatly advantaged the movement in the early years of the war. Even Bemba’s critics acknowledge that the MLC vastly improved security in the region, which is why, at least early in the war, the movement enjoyed considerable popular support in the territories it controlled, in contrast to eastern rebel groups. Polling data conducted in Gemena in 2002 show that nearly 70 percent of respondents felt protected against crime. The same number would have supported Bemba and the MLC if national elections were held then, even though nearly 70 percent were dissatisfied with social services under the rebel administration.278 In the early years of the war, before the MLC launched military operations into neighboring CAR and eastern DRC, many observers considered the ALC to be the best trained and most disciplined of the Congolese armed groups.

The MLC experience also underscores that struggles over public authority may take place in concrete local arenas, but they are almost never exclusively local, linked instead to trans-local, provincial, national, and even global politics and capital flows. In fragile and conflict affected areas, public authority is constantly being shaped, negotiated, and reshaped. The first Congo war and the removal of Mobutu as president disrupted the equilibrium of patronage networks that kept public authority relatively stable in Equateur. As a result of the wars, Gbadolité experienced a decades-long dispute over customary authority in the groupement of Lite, one of the administrative units of the town of Gbadolité.

As power changed hands in Kinshasa from Mobutu to Kabila, different segments of the family with rights to the chieftaincy were backed by different national leaders and political
factions. Even siblings made competing claims at the chieftaincy, each appealing to competing powerful national patrons. Initially supported by President Mobutu (with whom she reportedly had a child), and then subsequently imprisoned by President Laurent Kabila when he took power in 1997, the chief and older sister of the family was backed by Jean-Pierre Bemba once the MLC established itself in Equateur during the Second Congo War. Bemba’s subsequent exile in 2007 and the decline of the MLC as a dominant political force nationally, re-ignited this customary conflict. The chief’s younger brother competed for the post with support from President Joseph Kabila. This on-going customary conflict with active involvement at the highest levels in Kinshasa is one example of the linkages between national competition for power and local claims of authority. Since then we have seen a multiplicity of competing authorities who have instrumentalized and divided customary authority in this competition.

The Front de Libération du Congo Experiment

On January 16, 2001, the MLC merged with Wamba dia Wamba’s RCD-K/ML in an effort forced by the Ugandan government to create a common front and deal with the leadership split within the RCD-K/ML. Wamba dia Wamba was offered the vice-presidency, and his two challengers, Mbusa Nyamwisi and John Tibasima were appointed respectively Coordinator of the Movement, and Minister of Mines and Energy. Nyamwisi and Tibasima had just been expelled from the RDC-K/ML by Wamba. Roger Lumbala, who only months before had founded the RDC-Nationale with Ugandan backing, was given the post of Minister of Mobilization. Wamba dia Wamba refused to sign the agreement, denouncing the Ugandan-imposed merger as contrary to the Lusaka Agreement.

The MLC, with authority now over the whole of the north of the country, quickly undertook a series of initiatives, which succeeded in briefly containing the anarchic conditions
prevailing in eastern Congo. On February 17, 2001, the MLC successfully brokered an agreement between leaders of the Lendu and Hema communities, thereby introducing a temporary lull in a very bloody inter-ethnic conflict. The agreement, signed at the culmination of a meeting of 156 traditional Hema and Lendu chiefs in Bunia, tasked the newly installed FLC authorities with the closure of ethnic militia training camps, the disarmament of civilians, the deployment of security forces, the setting up of peace tribunals throughout the region, the rehabilitation of prisons, and the creation of a special provincial follow-up committee. When the FLC failed to deliver, largely due to continued Ugandan manipulation of their Congolese allies, and the fierce competition that ensued between the MLC and the RCD-K/ML for the control of Ituri’s lucrative resources, the ethnic war resumed, deadlier than before.

Bemba, seeking to broaden the FLC’s support base in a region where the MLC was viewed as an outsider, on March 21, 2001, signed the so-called Butembo Agreement with six Mai-Mai groups in the presence of representatives of the hereditary chiefs, churches, civil society, and the Ugandan army. The agreement was actively pursued by the Catholic Church and civil society groups in this volatile part of North Kivu, following months of violence between Mai-Mai groups and the occupying Ugandan army in which both forces indiscriminately attacked and looted civilians. With this agreement, a cease-fire between the FLC and the local Mai Mai militia was achieved, and the latter agreed to join the FLC, undergo military training, and become a special battalion in the FLC army responsible for frontier security. The retrained Mai Mai fighters were given their own brigades with special responsibility for border control. The move was calculated to calm the ethnically diverse Mai Mai militias whose overriding and unifying cause is the expulsion of foreign occupiers from the
Kivus and the DRC. Therefore, the idea of being guardians of the frontier appealed to their common underlying ideology.

When the FLC was formed, the MLC brought trusted commanders from the MLC into command positions in the common front to deal with the leadership vacuum in the northeast, where individual rebel leaders dominated different localities. This was very much resented by local populations, who saw it simply as a move on Bemba’s part to control the area and steal its wealth. Unlike in Equateur, where the MLC was seen as an army of liberation, in the northeast it was seen as an army of occupation. This perception was exacerbated by the behavior of the approximately 3,000 MLC troops brought in from Equateur. While the MLC army in northern Equateur had attained a reputation for being relatively disciplined in its interactions with civilians, MLC troops deployed in the east to assume policing functions began looting and harassing civilians. Many local groups and individuals complained to human rights groups that former ex-FAZ commanders who terrorized them under Mobutu had returned to the region as FLC commanders, having lost none of their past habits.

Bemba argued that since the RCD-K/ML area had wealth but no front against Kinshasa forces, it should be taxed in order to pay for the war effort for which the MLC-controlled area bore the entire weight. The MLC thus insisted on the immediate implementation of an accord brokered by the Ugandan backers of the two rebel fronts at the beginning of the war that instituted a 70 to 30 percent split of total revenues in the MLC’s favor. The RCD-K/ML had ignored that accord until the formation of the FLC. Ultimately, infighting between the two groups over the control of cash-generating customs posts on the Ugandan border and over the right to extract rents in the region, and the fueling of this fierce competition by individual
Ugandan commanders for their own benefit, led to the disintegration of the FLC common front a mere ten months later, in December 2001.

**Networked Interventions: Ituri and CAR**

A deadly military intervention in 2002 by the MLC in Ituri can only be understood in the context of shifting networks governed by a marketplace logic. Following the MLC’s failure to assert its authority in the east, Kabila was able to buy Mbusa Nyamwisi’s allegiance away from the Uganda dominated network and the Victoria Group. This opened an eastern front to the MLC’s war against Kinshasa, and provoked actions by the rebellion that resulted in Bemba’s third and perhaps most significant failure in eastern Congo.

In October 2002, in reaction to Mbusa switching sides, the MLC and RCD-Nationale suddenly launched *Opération Effacer le Tableau* (Operation Clean Slate) against Nyamwisi’s forces in Ituri. The joint operation was controversial within the MLC leadership, with some—Kamitatu especially—arguing against it. Both Kinshasa and local human rights groups accused MLC and RCD-N fighters of raping and killing civilians, engaging in cannibalism, and committing other atrocities against perceived collaborators with Mbusa and Kinshasa, especially the local pygmy communities. Some reports indicated that the *effaceurs* may have deliberately targeted Nande civilians, members of Nyamwisi’s ethnic group, as revenge for Nyamwisi’s rejection of Bemba’s leadership in the FLC in 2001. It had a devastating impact on civilian populations in the town of Mambasa and was a public relations disaster for the movement and for Bemba politically, giving Kinshasa enormous latitude to denounce Bemba widely as a war criminal in the national and international press.

The MLC denied that their troops engaged in cannibalism, and to combat the overwhelming negative press reports, they invited Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty
International to investigate. The MLC also arrested and convicted twenty-seven of its soldiers in trials that HRW later called “a mockery of justice.” HRW’s investigation found no widespread evidence of cannibalism and some pygmy groups later publicly retracted their accusations. But both HRW and the United Nations Mission in DRC (MONUC) investigations found evidence of other crimes committed against civilians, prompting Kinshasa to call for an investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC). This further reinforced the MLC’s and Bemba’s image in the east as heirs to Mobutu’s brutal regime.

Two MLC military interventions into CAR in 2002 further tarnished the MLC’s image and exposed Bemba to an ICC investigation and trial for which he has since been convicted. Both interventions were efforts to prop up democratically elected Central African President Ange-Felix Patassé against Chadian-backed rebels and internal rebellions. And in both, the CAR was the junior partner in the network, an unusual position with regard to a rebel movement. In December 2002, nearly one thousand MLC fighters joined Libyan troops in Bangui to shore up the Patassé government. Libya’s objective was to maintain a friendly government in CAR to allow Tripoli a rear base of operations against Chad’s President Déby and his French supporters. The MLC sustained heavy losses in the fighting and were widely accused of looting and raping civilians.

**The Transition**

Congo’s transitional government of National Unity adopted a so-called 1 + 4 formula, after the South African 1 + 2 model. Joseph Kabila remained president and four new vice presidents were appointed, two from each of the principal rebel groups, the MLC and the RCD-Goma, and one each from the former Kabila government and the political opposition to it. Over fifty ministers and deputy ministers were also appointed. Government ministers and representatives in the
Assembly and Senate were drawn from the Kabila government, rebel groups, unarmed political opposition, civil society, and Congolese citizen-militia groups, such as the Mai Mai.

Before leaving Gbadolité for Kinshasa on July 15, 2003, Bemba appointed two individuals to assume the duties of the MLC Executive Committee: Colonel Mbiato, a junior officer, was appointed interim Chief of Army Staff. A political operative, Pascal Lipemba, was appointed as interim MLC Executive Secretary. A young commander, Alain Munanga, was appointed Chief of Internal Security. All three were based in Gbadolité, and constituted the core of the remaining rebel leadership. They were answerable directly to Bemba and had as their principal mandate to take care of the troops until the transition government could take them in charge. Many expressed concern that Bemba’s departure from Gbadolité would trigger a security crisis due to what some thought was an underlying dissatisfaction among the troops at not having yet being paid or integrated into a national army.

In the weeks following Bemba’s departure, there was considerable confusion over who was to be the new presiding authority, the MLC or the mayor of Gbadolité, Mr. Kapalata. According to the Global Accords for the transition, once the new government in Kinshasa was sworn in, the duties of administering the provinces was to revert to the provincial hierarchy of governors and administrations, all of which were supposed to come under Kinshasa government authority. During the war, the province of Equateur, however, had been split between the MLC, which controlled the northern part of the province, and Kinshasa, which controlled the southern portion, including Mbandaka, the provincial capital. On the first weekend following Bemba’s departure the mayor of Gbadolité held a series of ceremonies to present himself to the people of Gbadolité, preparing to assume his new authority. He acknowledged, however, that he needed to wait for instructions from the provincial governor in Mbandaka, whose name he did not know
and whom he had no way of contacting. According to Mr. Lipemba, the MLC continued to be the presiding authority in all of northern Equateur until such time that the provincial governor could assume his authority.

Meanwhile the MLC army needed to be dealt with. This was not easy because combatants had been recruited from various places and had various motivations for joining the war effort, mostly out of poverty.

**Recruitment and Legitimacy**

Recruitment for the MLC was not difficult, due to pervasive poverty, lack of employment and educational opportunities, and often family encouragement. Unlike some armed groups in eastern DRC, for which minors constituted up to 60 percent of fighting forces, the MLC army, the *Armée de libération du Congo (ALC)* was composed mostly of adult recruits. Throughout the Congo wars, both adults and minors were either forcibly recruited into regular and irregular armed forces, or joined out of economic need or the need for revenge. Many underage fighters were orphaned by on-going conflict, and for many, joining the war offered one of few means of survival. Most, once in combat, found it difficult to disengage—not only were they threatened by the forces they joined, frequently, their communities feared their return. For others, the lack of alternatives, including their families’ poverty, left them no choice but to stay. Those who succeeded in demobilizing often lacked access to jobs or educational and vocational training programs, lost families in the wars, and became largely destitute. As a result, many were drawn into local and regional criminal networks, supplying the labor for the political economies that help sustain the violence between increasingly fragmented armed groups in eastern Congo since the end of the second and third wars.
The MLC’s official recruitment policy was the voluntary recruitment, not forced conscription, of fighters. This included the recruitment of men and women over the age of 18. According to the MLC leadership, any minors identified within its ranks were there in violation of direct orders, and those responsible for allowing them to serve were supposed to be punished. Documents were reportedly issued to field commanders outlining this recruitment policy, but when asked to share a copy of such directives, MLC officials interviewed at the time claimed that the documents were not available as the MLC archives had been boxed up in Gbadolité and all those with access to the archives had already relocated to Kinshasa. That was true, though also a convenient excuse to avoid the issue altogether, given growing international pressure to prosecute the recruitment of minors into rebel forces as a war crime.

MLC commanders acknowledged the presence of minors in their ranks but asserted that these were fewer in number than were estimated by local NGOs and international agencies. Commanders would admit whoever could reasonably pass for at least 18 years of age. A high-ranking officer interviewed estimated that there might only be 300 minors in the MLC, most between the ages of 15 and 17 years, but acknowledged that some 15-year olds may have entered the MLC as young as 11 years old. He based the estimate of 300 on a calculation of an estimated average of 50 or 60 minors in each 3,000-troop brigade of the 20,000-strong army. Local NGOs and international agencies at the time, however, estimated the number to be much higher, closer to 3,000, or 10-15 percent of total force strength, which is probably closer to reality. Some reports on training activities in MLC camps pointed to the presence of significant numbers of children among the trainees, and estimated that most of them were between the ages of 14 and 17. But even in those numbers, the MLC was among the least offender among all the rebel groups of the second war. Teenage recruits serve important functions in irregular
armies, especially in Africa where 50 percent of the population is under 18 years of age. When asked if young people make good soldiers, one commander said that they make better soldiers than adults because they are better at obeying orders! Minors were also present as “camp followers”—those who worked as cooks, messengers, porters, spies, and housekeepers for various militias. Minors in non-combat roles are particularly difficult to identify as they do not wear uniforms and thus blend into civilian life. Some may be the children of army commanders, others are married to them, and yet others are youngsters in nearby towns and villages looking for paid or unpaid work.

There is no evidence of a coercive strategy of recruitment into the MLC, which partly explains why the movement was perceived locally as a legitimate authority. And while Bemba’s family wealth and a vibrant mercenary market in the region would have permitted him to buy an army, the vast majority of fighters in the MLC—with the exception of those in opposing armed forces who were captured on the battlefield—joined, often with their families’ encouragement, in response to the pervasive poverty and the lack of employment and educational opportunities in the region. Fighters were recruited whenever the MLC launched a general recruitment drive, which was conducted by word of mouth throughout neighboring villages. The numbers of total recruits would vary depending on the density of the population in the area recruited from, and the local response to recruitment efforts. Sometimes the drives were initiated by the central military command of the movement (more the case during active combat), but frequently by field commanders sur place as they saw a need to supplement their units.

The recruitment of troops followed the westward progression of the war and combat operations, as the MLC actively recruited from towns and villages as these fell under MLC control. Therefore, the oldest recruits, who would have been well over 18 by the start of the
political transition in 2003, would have originated from eastern Congo where the movement got its start, and the most recent recruits were most likely from the northern Equateur region. The movement officially ceased all new recruitment drives as of December 2002, with the exception of units that needed replenishing due to combat or attrition losses. The MLC claimed that the number of new recruits over the years always exceeded the number of losses, except in the last couple of years before the transition, when the numbers “stagnated.” However, a number of local and international NGOs, as well as MONUC at the time, reported that the MLC launched a recruitment drive in Basankusu in February or March 2003—just months before Bemba assumed the vice presidency in a unity government in Kinshasa, that included the forced recruitment of minors. One Congolese NGO representative claimed that children in Basankusu were afraid to go to school during the recruitment drive, but he acknowledged that he had not observed this first-hand. When asked about this, MLC officers said that they were not aware of this drive but added that it may have been a replenishment drive, and reiterated that the MLC never recruited in schools.

It is likely that a recruitment drive may have taken place in order to complement the losses (estimated at several hundred) of returning MLC forces from the Central African Republic in mid-February 2003, and in anticipation of the signing of a military accord for the impending political transition in DRC. If it occurred in March, it also would have coincided with Bemba’s March 11, 2003 ceremony in Gbadolité in which he officially recognized the military ranks of the MLC army, and declared that a national agreement for a transitional constitution was imminent, telling the troops that they could soon be called upon to constitute a part of a new national army. The combination of the anticipation that Kinshasa was within reach and the formalization of the military ranks within the MLC forces may well have prompted some field
commanders to more aggressively recruit to increase their numbers, as well as prompting a rush of those hoping for a better life in a new national army to join in “peacetime”—hence the conflicting stories among NGOs that there was forced recruitment in Basankusu during this drive, but not elsewhere.

One can identify four categories of combatants associated with the MLC armed forces: those recruited in Kisangani and its environs in Orientale province where the rebellion got its start in 1998; AFDL child combatants captured on the battlefield between 1998-1999; fighters from northern Equateur who joined the rebellion between 1999-2003; fighters from the east who were retained in the ALC after the FLC break-up in late 2001; so-called camp followers and young girls in non-combat roles married to soldiers and officers; and those disabled in combat.

Orientale (August 1998-May 1999): The first recruits that would later constitute the MLC army originated from Kisangani and its environs, and it is likely that there were minors among them. According to Bemba’s own account, his rebellion was supported by Kisangani intellectuals and youth—mostly university students motivated by anti-Rwandan sentiments and a “desire to change direction in life.” Reports of Kisangani rights groups at the time pointed to the prevalent recruitment of minors by all factions, and the involvement of the UPDF in training them.

These first recruits were trained in Camp Kapalata, about 20 kilometers outside Kisangani, in August and September 1998. They were deployed alongside UPDF troops in October 1998, and additional recruitment followed their advancement in the war. Between late 1997 and early 1998 in the period between the first two wars, Camp Kapalata had been a training center for thousands of AFDL child recruits. These were mostly Kabila’s kadogos flown in from Goma and elsewhere in the Kivus to be retrained and reintegrated into the new Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC). In early 1998, reports revealed that hundreds of the camp’s occupants had
died from starvation and more were dying from a cholera epidemic. International pressure from humanitarian groups forced Kabila to release these children to UNICEF and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in February 1998. According to UNICEF reports, children who were awaiting family reunification when the war broke out in August 1998 were re-recruited into the new rebel forces emerging in the area. It is likely, therefore, that if the MLC was training new recruits in Camp Kapalata in the last quarter of 1998, some of those recruits would have been minors.

The MLC/UPDF troops followed a two-pronged approach towards Equateur. They advanced northwest from Kisangani towards Bumba, passing through Isangi and Singa on the south side of the Congo River. They also advanced north to Buta and then across to Dulia and down to Aketi, where they assumed control over the railroad between Dulia and Bumba to prepare to transport troops into Equateur province. Given this trajectory, we can assume that between October and mid-November 1998, the MLC recruited troops from Singa and other towns and villages along the river between Isangi and Bumba; from villages along the Kisangani-Buta road; from villages between Buta and Dulia; and along the railroad between Dulia and Aketi in Orientale province and on to Bumba. Isangi became the first major training center in the field. A training camp was also established in Buta.

*Northern Equateur (November 1998-2003):* As was the case in Orientale province, many of the troops were recruited from communities along access roads, rivers, and railroads. The MLC entered Equateur province by capturing Bumba on November 17, 1998, and set up a training camp there. On December 10, they captured Lisala, where they established another training camp, as well as the first political headquarters of the movement. By December 24, the MLC had moved north through Akula and captured Gemena. And by May 1999, Businga, Abuzi, Libenge, and the axis road between Businga and Gbadolité was under MLC control. The
MLC suffered heavy losses in the battle for Lisala. Consequently, between January and May 1999, they launched a massive recruitment drive and focused on training new recruits in the camps at Buta, Bumba, and Lisala. The MLC estimates that by May 1999 it had 8,600 troops, 80 percent of them new recruits. Gbadolité fell to the MLC in July 1999. Bemba and his army would have easily taken the provincial city of Mbandaka, which would have put him at Kinshasa’s doorstep. But the MLC, under considerable international pressure, including from Washington, chose not to proceed to Mbandaka, deciding that cooperating with key member states in the Security Council would be good both for image and strategy. This would prove to be a strategic error on Bemba’s part as none of those same powerful states who convinced him not to advance on Kinshasa acted to stop his arrest by the ICC years later. The Lusaka Cease-Fire agreement was signed days later.

*AFDL kadogos (1996-1999):* Many of the *kadogos* in the FAC recruited by Kabila and the AFDL between 1996-1997 originated from eastern Congo, as noted above. Although it is unclear how much of the Congolese army in 1998 was constituted by kadogos, some of them were captured in the field in Equateur and Orientale provinces as the MLC defeated Kabila’s army and advanced into Equateur in November 1998. The MLC’s practice was to send captured kadogos back to Camp Tudu in Gbadolité for two weeks of military and ideology “retraining” and then redeploy them as MLC troops, either at MLC headquarters in Gbadolité, or elsewhere in the field, but according to the MLC, never on the front lines.

*FLC (January-December 2001):* When the common front between the MLC and the RCD-K/ML, formed in February 2001, and dissolved less than a year later in December 2001, it is possible that some of the fighters in the RCD/K-ML and in local militias in Orientale and the
Kivus were integrated into MLC troop units, although probably not in great amounts as most where recruited by ethnic and Mai Mai militias in the east.

**The Struggle for Public Authority**

The MLC’s legitimacy as the public authority during the war and until the political transition was derived through coercion but also through the provision of a key public good—security, which it was able to provide through a broad network of military, political, and economic connections. The rebellion’s claim to authority was the provision of local security by providing protection from the occupying Chadian military and from the predatory practices of the state. And it established a functioning system of military justice. The MLC also became part of associational life and developed institutions of governance, including creating a parallel provincial capital, as the actual one was under government control and even before the war had not been at all present in people’s lives. It also maintained public officials like mayors, bourgemestres, territorial administrators, and judges. And because the provincial capital was outside its area of territorial control, it established a hybrid legislature to replace the provincial legislature.

The rebellion’s expression of public authority deliberately tried to reproduce state practices and norms. Not only was state capture the objective, the idea of the state was the principal object of reference and the claim to legitimate public authority. When acting outside of Congo, as when the MLC twice intervened in CAR to prop up then President Patassé, the MLC behaved like a sovereign state. The government of CAR was the junior partner in this relationship. As five years of research on public authority structures in Congo by the Justice and Security Research Programme have demonstrated, coercion is an important element of local power, but it is not enough. The element of compliance is key. Compliance can be elicited
through coercion, or as in this case, through a combination of coercion, the provision of effective security, or even narratives of autochthony. Even though the MLC leadership was drawn from across a variety of Congolese regions and ethnic groups, Bemba was known as a *mwana mboke*, or a son of the land in the territory he governed, and rejected as an outsider in territories he tried, and failed to govern.

Popular support for the movement in Equateur eroded substantially as negotiations for a unified transition government dragged on and local taxes tripled to finance the movement. As we have seen elsewhere in Congo, the MLC’s imposition of taxes was met with strong opposition despite the movement’s social embeddedness and perceived legitimacy. In fact, the MLC’s support eroded as its capacity to levy taxes grew. This echoes Vlassenroot’s findings in Kalehe that an increase in an armed group’s capacity to impose taxes does not necessarily contribute to a strengthening of public authority. While this does challenge prevalent notions of the reinforcing connections—or public mutuality or mutual accountability—of taxation in democratic culture, the reason may be more tied to the limits of conferring “stateness” to an armed group. Moreover, despite its efforts to create parallel and at times alternative governance structures, there was no mechanism for grievance articulation for the population. The makeshift legislature had no capacity to adjudicate disputes or manage complaints against the MLC authorities (for example, taxation); and the military justice system was not accessible to civilians, though it did convict a number of MLC soldiers of crimes against civilians. The absence of a mechanism for the peaceful articulation of grievances was one of the key reasons that support for the MLC began to erode after the initial provision of security.

In February 2003, the Paris-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) filed a petition with the ICC accusing both Bemba and Patassé of war crimes. Patassé was
overthrown in March 2003, and in 2005, François Bozizé, who ousted Patassé with French support, formally petitioned the ICC to investigate all crimes under its jurisdiction committed on CAR territory after July 1, 2002, the date of entry into force of the Rome Statute. Bemba was arrested in Brussels in 2009 and in 2016 was convicted by the ICC on five counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.287

Bemba’s arrest prompted popular outrage throughout the DRC and accusations that the ICC is an instrument of victor’s justice. Indeed, the case was politically expedient for France, which had supported Bozizé’s 2003 coup. It was advantageous for the United States and other European nations that had rallied behind Kabila’s post-transition presidency in the DRC, supporting the devil they knew over one that they didn’t. Given the mounting evidence of sexual violence in conflict zones, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the ICC’s first prosecutor, was under pressure early on by international advocacy groups to prosecute such a case. The Bemba trial provided an opportunity to highlight the use of rape as a weapon of war. Bemba, therefore, was an easy target for prosecution: with few friends outside of the region, he was low-hanging fruit for an ICC that needed to show that it could prosecute war criminals successfully.
Chapter 5

Conclusion: Rethinking Responses

The limits of binary, state-centered approaches to responding to complex, trans-national, and networked conflicts like the Congo wars were recognized in three UN blockbuster reports that reviewed the UN peace and security architecture in 2015. If we can draw one overarching policy implication from the three Congo wars, it is the growing disconnect between the existing international conflict response toolkit and the complexity of violence on the ground—a disconnect that is neither limited to the Great Lakes or to Africa, as trends in the changing nature of organized violence globally attest. The struggle for power over people, territory, and resources in large parts of the globe, however, is increasingly networked and violent. And the outcomes of these struggles are increasingly unpredictable. There is thus an overwhelming yet under-addressed need to manage conflict complexity, including trans-national dynamics and the proliferation of non-state actors in conflict.

Part of the challenge is analytical. As was noted in earlier chapters, many contemporary conflicts defy the usual civil war versus inter-state armed conflicts, and the actors in them combine levels of analysis. While the battlefield may be local, violence transcends territorial boundaries. These conflicts may be at the same time inter-personal, local, national, regional, and international in nature, and link both state and non-state actors, in networks organized sometimes as structure while other times as actors. MacKinlay refers to this as the “analytical gap” between current peacekeeping doctrine—whether of UN or regional organizations—and its approach to insurgency, and the changing nature of insurgency.
The second part of the challenge is operational—in our responses to end the violence. As the Congo wars demonstrate, it is rare to find a dividing line between the external and internal dimensions of contemporary violence; yet our responses remain state-centric and flat-footed. Instruments like the UN Group of Experts on the DRC that are more nimble and flexible than peace operations should be the future of the international toolkit. Among their remit is to “gather, examine and analyze information regarding the regional and international support networks to armed groups and criminal networks in the DRC.” Armed groups, financial flows, criminal syndicates, and ideas all cross borders, our responses to threats must be able to follow. However, the sudden disappearance and tragic murder of two members of the group—Michael Sharp of the US (and the Group’s coordinator) and Zaida Catalan of Sweden—in Kasai Central province in the DRC in March 2017 raises the question whether the UN has the tolerance for the kind of risk involved in effectively tracking violence-producing networks that contain criminal and/or violent extremist elements within them.

How we conceive of this violence and how we respond to it cannot be considered outside of the hegemonic discourses and practices of privatization, entrepreneurship, market liberalization, and the flow of goods and capital. As Duffield notes, the same forces that drive the so-called liberal peace are also driving “the liberal war”—wars in which violence is increasingly in the private hands of armed militias, mercenaries, and private military companies, and in which a whole new class of local and international entrepreneurs has emerged to profit both from international humanitarian assistance, as well as from increasingly unregulated global networks of illegal resource extraction and arms trafficking.

As some scholars have noted, these global changes have led to the “emergence of a new global order divided into two worlds: on the one hand, into a zone of peace in which war has
been ruled out as a means of conflict among democracies, on the other hand, into a zone of conflict in which political power is frequently contested by force”—yet, September 11 has “drastically unveiled the superficial character of this distinction...In the U.S.-led war on terrorism, the two zones have been (re-)united.”295 This liberal hegemony—both in the global economy and in global efforts for peace and security—may help explain the processes and interactions that have constructed the networks of the Congo wars by helping to create and expand commercial networks, and by pressuring states with already diminished capacities to further de-bureaucratize and decentralize.

Moreover, international companies, offshore financial centers, and global markets are deeply complicit in perpetuating war economies, as they frequently are key nodes in these networks. They supply goods and services and provide market outlets to warring government authorities, rebels, and warlords who, without these companies, would have neither the foreign capital needed to finance a war, nor the profit incentive to sustain one. The increase in speed, scale, and flows of people and capital, and market liberalization have all contributed to giving rise to stateless forces with the resources to threaten or compete with the state in some parts of the globe, all the while making reference to the state in claims for local authority. Thus, war economies show that the structures of conflict zones cannot be de-linked from the pacified marked structures in the so-called “zones of peace.”296

While it is becoming clear that these complex wars require different analytical and operational approaches, it is also clear that international efforts to resolve them continue to view them through hegemonic lenses. These analytical lenses embody a significant bias in “an unwillingness to consider that many of the conflicts raging in the ‘South’ are intertwined with, and in many respects products of, economic and political priorities and interests in ‘the North’.
As local ‘cultural’ antagonisms seem to dominate the analysis, the global ‘economic’ inequalities remain unquestioned.”

The inability to address the complexity of these wars has led international diplomats and civil servants to focus on what they think they can handle—the micro-dynamics of these wars, and in so doing they introduce other problems. In a special issue of the Third World Quarterly on the “emergence of interest in the ‘local’ in the policies and practices of international organizations,” Mac Ginty criticizes “the way in which international interveners remake particular localities through practices of power,” and calls for “a re-emergent critical localism as a corrective to this process.” Thania Paffenholz, in the same special issue, “points to the oversimplified binarism inherent in positing a local–international divide, in which the roles of both local and international actors are pre-assigned by the critic.”

**Networks of Transition, Networks in Transition**

Continued violence in eastern DRC persists for a number of reasons. The slow pace of army reform and reintegration processes; the lack of attention to local unresolved land-access disputes; the unresolved issue of citizenship; inter- and intra- community disputes over political, military and economic influence; competition over the control of mineral exploitation and trading networks; the nature of the state and the lack of progress in political reform and decentralization; and regional power politics.

Recent research on the ongoing violence in eastern Congo has shown that local/global and public/private networks continue to coalesce in security networks, which protect the extraction of resources, and that security governance is dominated by security networks engaged in the struggle for power and resource extraction. These networks cross the usual boundaries between the public and the private domain and can stretch from the highest political
levels to the lowest ranking security officials. Armed groups are embedded in social networks that encompass local authorities, provincial and national politicians, businesspeople, and civil society representatives. While these various civilian actors are coerced by armed groups, they also try to harness them to further their own purposes. Therefore, with the increasing fragmentation of the networks of the first two wars, security provision has become synonymous with the protection of particular political economic interests. This form of security governance is parasitic both on economic activities and the symbol of the state, which is employed by all of those competing for power to legitimate resource extraction, the imposition of rents, and the furtherance of grievance agendas.

One of the reasons that armed groups and security services alike in the Congo engage in unofficial forms of resource extraction is that they lack resources and function according to patronage logics, which is to say that they are based on unequal but reciprocal power relations. Patronage logics provide a modicum of protection to loyal members of the network, but not to those outside of it. Patronage and resource scarcity correlates with their parasitic behavior. As resources are scarce and unpredictable, they use their authority to extract resources from non-members either through the imposition of irregular taxes and fines; extortion schemes; collaboration with criminals; or through bribes. One of the most dangerous effects of the parasitical behavior of the Congolese army is that the vast majority of Congolese who are not part of powerful networks of patronage and protection have little faith in the army’s ability to protect them. As a result, there is very little trust between ordinary people and the security services, which are seen as corrupt and even as complicit with criminals. This vast body of disenfranchised and impoverished people has developed countless self-help initiatives to provide for and protect themselves and their communities. These include vigilante groups carrying out
‘justice populaire’ in cities like Bunia and Uvira, and armed groups in the hinterlands, like the Raiya Mutomboki in South Kivu and the FRPI in South Irumu in Ituri, which claim to defend their communities from a rapacious government and neighboring communities.302

At the same time, a portrayal of the army or armed groups as only predatory is simplistic. Despite being recognized as being sources of insecurity, like the MLC during the second war, these groups are also recognized as providing security. For example, research conducted in Mwanda, Mbandaka, Gemena and Gbadolité, shows that while communities do refer serious crimes to the police, they do so selectively, even if they also note that the police will exact payment in return. Thus, the violence perpetrated by state security services and armed groups is also in part a product of the demands of civilian communities, who appeal to armed elements to settle personal scores or win local conflicts.

Networks as Structures and Agents

The structure of a particular conflict presents difficulties for strategies to demobilize fighters and particularly to reintegrate them once a cease-fire has been reached. Not only must fighters be de-linked from military command and control structures that may, as in the DRC, transcend territorial boundaries, but the forces themselves must be de-linked from the political economies of violence—a key structural obstacle to transitions from war to peace—and from other social networks in which they may be embedded. Economic reintegration into non-rent-seeking economies is critical for the prevention of re-recruitment into new rebel armies, as well as to prevent fighters from being drawn into criminal networks to supply the labor for the political economies that help sustain violent protest movements and greedy warlords alike.

In the DRC, as we have seen in the Balkans and other conflict areas, “post-conflict” is somewhat of a misnomer, as the same networks continue to operate, and localized violence often
persists, even after the signing of a power sharing agreement. In 2004, at the start of Congo’s post-war transition, some Mai Mai fighters put down their weapons and left their forest dwellings in anticipation of being integrated into a new national army from which they could continue to defend their communities. But in the absence of a national plan for reintegration, they quickly since re-armed. In the few cases of successful child demobilization, even demobilized children who underwent family reunification found themselves re-recruited into local militia forces for lack of security on the ground and effective reintegration programs. The reintegration of ex-combatants into society must be accompanied by a massive development and reconstruction plan that provides for legitimate income-generating activities. The political economies of war must be replaced with economic and social institutions supportive of the peace process, and a “peace dividend” created for warring parties and local communities in order to mitigate rent-seeking behavior and the insecurity this causes. This is especially critical for the effective and durable reintegration of demobilized combatants, most of whom are unskilled, semiliterate, and have many dependents, yet have little experience in a labor market, and given the state of the economy, little opportunity to gain one. However, while economic integration is critical to short-term security and key to long-term reconstruction, one must also be careful not to over-emphasize economic explanations of violence.

Applying the conceptual lens of networks to international politics “forces a reevaluation of the concept of power,” as power in networks “depends on structural position in a field of connections to other agents as well as actor capabilities and attributes.” Compared to other organizational forms, the networks in the Congo wars are “closer to markets than hierarchies,” which, as Kahler also points out, makes it easier to exit the network. The ease of defection brings with it enormous mistrust among actors within networks and between rival ones. As
Donald Rothchild notes, “effective short-term implementation [of a peace settlement] is often required to lay the foundation for a long-term development of state norms and institution-building. Patterns of cooperative behavior cannot be fully accomplished until military security-building (the verification of the cease-fire, the cantonment of troops, demobilization, disarmament, and initial efforts to reintegrate the armed forces) has been largely achieved, and leaders and the public concentrate on coping with the arduous challenges of institution-building and economic development.”

The transitional, power-sharing government reflected the complexity of the wars. It adopted a “1+4 formula,” modeled loosely after the South African “1+2” model, not surprising given the key role that South Africa played in mediating the settlement. President Joseph Kabila retained his position, and four new vice presidents were appointed, each drawn from the two principal rebel groups (the MLC and the RCD-Goma) representing not just themselves but also the two dominant and competing networks (Uganda and Rwanda), and one each from two other networks of power—the former Kabila government and the non-violent political opposition, which included political parties and civil society, and their domestic and external supporters. In addition, over fifty ministers and deputy ministers were appointed. Government ministers and representatives in the Assembly and Senate were drawn from these networks—the Kabila government, the rebel groups, the unarmed political opposition, civil society, and Congolese citizen-militia groups such as the Mai Mai. In short, seats in the transitional government were allocated following a principle of proportionality and through elite pacts. This principle was also applied in the composition of the new security forces—both the police and the new national army, which at one point stood at about 300,000, with the same failed results, as the violence persists. This power sharing solution brokered by the UN and regional actors thus forced former
enemies and in many cases, current enemies, to occupy the same political space and work towards developing new and durable institutions. It made Vice-President Ruberwa, for instance, a Congolese Tutsi and leader of the Rwandan-backed RCD-Goma, a “partner” of Vice-President Yerodia, who as Kabila’s foreign minister in 1998 was one of the main leaders of the widespread anti-Tutsi pogrom held in Kinshasa.

In the same way that the Lusaka Cease-Fire Agreement in 1999 took into account the presence and linkages among violent protest movements, domestic and external ones, and state actors, peace settlement efforts cannot limit themselves to national actors alone. They must address the networks that actors are in and their power positions within them. Immediately after the end of the first Congo war, Laurent Kabila was Congo’s new president. But he was also a subordinate actor in a network dominated by the Rwandan government and its military. Effective peacemaking thus requires breaking the command and control structures—both domestic and external—that operate over rebel soldiers, thus making it more difficult for them to be re-recruited into violence-producing networks. This is no easy task.

As Paul Collier aptly notes, the demobilization process presents security challenges at two levels\(^{312}\): the first is “microinsecurity”—where individuals fear they will be victims of crimes perpetrated by former soldiers, not surprising since many irregular forces regularly prey on civilians (what John Stedman calls the “security gap” during the implementation of peace agreements);\(^{313}\) and the second is “macroinsecurity”—or the public’s fear of renewed insurrection. More important for the prospects of sustainable peace, however, is the challenge of the security dilemma faced by actors in a negotiated settlement—and the leaders themselves. Years of wars leaves belligerents with little trust for each other. And in the absence of credible security guarantees, most will opt to delay demobilizing their forces or hide and misrepresent the
nature and numbers of weapons caches, both as a deterrent to cheating, in preparation for cheating, and as insurance against renewed fighting.

This security dilemma was first seen in efforts to assure the security of the new transitional government in Kinshasa. Ensuring the security for individual rebel leaders assuming positions in Kinshasa was of great concern for rebel leaders, given that Kabila had been assassinated in a city that he controlled. Some rebel leaders demanded up to 15 bodyguards for each minister relocating to Kinshasa, and others demanded a total of 1,000 for each group. Yet others wanted a neutral security force in Kinshasa and Kabila’s army in the capital cantoned until a new civilian police force could be put into place—a process that would have taken months if not years. A compromise was finally reached, and as a result, Kinshasa was filled with armed soldiers from rival groups, raising the insecurity felt by Kinois residents, as urban crime rose and was frequently blamed on marauding soldiers.

The complexity of the disarmament and demobilization process is enormous. While a national plan for DDR and the new army was drafted in early 2004, by 2017 a third such DDR plan was drafted and the demobilization process has hardly begun. Many of the tens of thousands of combatants who joined armed groups did so to escape poverty or to protect their communities, others for revenge. Yet others joined with the promise of future employment in a professional national army, so they may not willingly demobilize unless they are offered better alternatives to soldiering or crime.

Second, while not all armed actors will be integrated into a new national army, all soldiers awaiting disposition must be cantoned, fed, clothed, and housed. Disagreements among the transitional government leadership over who should assume the costs of cantoned soldiers until their demobilization or integration into the new army—the transitional or rebel
authorities—delayed payments to the rank and file and resulted in unrest and in the east, in areas with high concentrations of armed groups, a resumption of violence. Moreover, integrating the different types of Congolese armies and militia into one single national army with a single military doctrine is a daunting task logistically and in practical terms, as there are several types of irregular armies operating in the DRC.

The three most substantial and more formally trained armies at the end of the second war were those belonging to Kabila, the RCD-Goma, and the MLC. There were also numerous Congolese civilian militia groups, the most important being the Mai Mai. These shared the goal of expelling the Rwandan and Ugandan occupation forces and defeating their Congolese proxies and have been coopted by various networks over the course of the wars. The fact that the Mai Mai have never had a common command structure further complicates their integration into a formal demobilization plan. There are also ethnic-based militia groups such as the UPC in Bunia, which is made up of Hema warriors fighting the Lendu. Finally, there are Congolese militia groups which are, in effect, personal armies of local leaders and warlords. Some of these are forces that initially belonged to recognized partners in the peace process but quickly degenerated into little more than warlord-led militia after the negotiated settlement. The armies of the RCD-ML and the RCD-N would fall into this category.

Third, there are both domestic and external spoilers. Some eastern governors, along with some top commanders of the RCD-Goma who were not given positions in the transitional government, threatened to resist the peace settlement, and some did, forming their own militias that they then put into service in the Rwandan-dominated network of the Second Congo War. Moreover, the embeddedness of armed groups in society means that conflict is created by the local competition for power among armed actors; rather than local conflict creating armed
groups. Ituri, for example, a territorial district roughly the size of Sierra Leone, that the Ugandan army had designated a province in the second war and even appointed a local governor, was for a long time the only area in the DRC where two Congolese ethnic groups were locked in a devastating violent struggle, the result of a power vacuum when Ugandan troops withdrew per a peace agreement, and were replaced by freelancing Ugandan and Rwandan military officers who used these local groups to fight a proxy war between the two networks that were competing over resources in the area.

In these scenarios, merely negotiating local cease-fire zones will not address the broader issue of the connectedness with other network actors. It may be a start to begin de-linking local actors from these networks, but without replacing the governance structures that these networks represent, the efforts will fail, as we have seen repeatedly in the violent struggle for power in the third Congo war. A key issue that makes the DDR process especially complex in this case is that it is both an internal and external process. MONUC’s original mandate, following the Lusaka Cease-Fire agreement in 1999, was the disarmament and demobilization of all foreign armed groups present in the Congo, and their subsequent repatriation. At the time of the signing of the Lusaka Agreement there were foreign insurgency groups operating in the Congo from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, and Sudan, and have been the principal justification used for the invasion and occupation of the DRC by its neighbors. Although regional political dynamics have helped make some progress on the repatriation of some foreign armed groups, the networks persist through other actors.

Conclusion

To sum up, there are several overarching points that the three Congo wars and the case study of the MLC compel us to think about. The first is that these wars are complex, with multiple
networked actors, and this has deeply challenged the United Nations and other actors in their efforts to respond to end persistent violence. These wars defy traditional IR distinctions between *intra-state* and *inter-state* armed conflicts. There is no neat dividing line between the external and internal dimensions of these wars, which are, instead, structured around complex, transnational networks that link a diversity of actors inside and outside the region. These conflict networks cross territorial boundaries, monetary and trade zones; link diasporic, transnational, nongovernmental, and ethnic communities; and have a global reach even as they produce local violence. International organizations do not. The pressures of globalization explain not *why* contemporary wars are fought, but *how* they are fought—how political authority is constituted given the wide range of actors involved and their complex linkages. These realities need to also inform how these wars are responded to. Yet, the international conflict resolution toolkit lacks the tools and the institutional infrastructure to address the complexities of highly networked wars like these.

Second, armed groups have grievances. They are not just looking to extract rents. The greed v. grievance debate was useful in its day as it brought in missing economic factors in our analysis of violent conflict, but it is too simple a narrative. As we see from the last two decades in DRC, political contestation in Congo is being restructured around violent, networked insurgencies and proxy movements. Public authority is being constantly contested, shaped, and reshaped by multiple actors across various scales—the state, rebel groups, customary authorities, civil society, the private sector, making the distinction between public and private increasingly blurred. Rebel groups can also perform the functions of state and compete to serve as public authorities; while there may be coercion, there is also compliance. The MLC was a case in point. It sought to govern through its network of influence, not merely conquer territory.
Third, if the Congo wars teach us anything, it is that the local in Congo is never truly local. Over the last decade, researchers working on conflict have pointed to the need to take a deeper dive into understanding so-called local contexts and local drivers of conflict. But as the networks in the Congo wars illustrate, many local actors who compete for power locally think globally. They have links outside their own communities all while being engaged in territorial competition and being embedded in local society. We romanticize the local at our peril, as local actors can be as corrupt or intolerant as any other. More importantly, interventions to end the violence have failed not because local dynamics have been ignored in favor of national ones but rather because the linkages between different scales of violence (local, national, regional, and international) remain poorly understood. A network approach helps us capture and analyze relationships between and across these levels as it understands actors as acting not in isolation but within complex linkages with other actors. It focuses us on relationships and transactions—it provides an ontological frame, a wide angle lens to capture the complexity of these conflicts.

Finally, war networks are political projects used to assert new claims on resources and political authority. They go beyond conventional forms of territorial, bureaucratic, or juridical authority, to become alternative governance structures when other forms of governance are weak or contested. As we saw early in the second war with Uganda and Rwanda, actors may share the same short-term objectives but not share the same long-term interests, and the networked infrastructure serves at least some interests of each. The decentralized rather than hierarchical structure of networks like those in the Congo wars makes them nervous, unstable, and dynamic structures of violence and governance. The United Nations and to a lesser extent, regional organizations have had a consistent presence throughout the duration of the three Congo wars and a mandate to end the violence, with mixed results. In order to put people first in their
responses, as the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel Report on Peace Operations demands, these actors will need to adjust to these empirical realities and adapt to the increasingly decentralized, complex competition for power and public authority. They are already well behind the curve ball.

1 See for example, the debates around John Mueller’s The Remnants of War (2004), Steven Pinker’s The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined (2011), and Mary Kaldor’s New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era (3rd ed., 2012).
5 The total cost of financing the UN peace operation in the DRC since the operation was first authorized in 1999 (first called MONUC, then MONUSCO to reflect its stabilization functions as of July 2010), is about $10 billion.
6 Carayannis 2003; Carayannis and Weiss 2003
7 Herbert Weiss gets the credit for suggesting this conceptualization.
8 A highly controversial and contested statistic is the mortality study figures published by the IRC. According to the IRC, violent conflicts in DRC and the accompanying famine and disease have claimed an estimated 5.4 million lives, approximately 10 percent of the population—the highest mortality rate of any conflict since World War II (IRC 2008, http://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/mortality-democratic-republic-congo-ongoing-crisis). This has been used by activists to claim that a genocide has occurred in DRC under the watch of the international community. For a critique of the study’s methodology and claims that these numbers are far less, see Human Security Report 2009/2010: The Causes of Peace and The Shrinking Costs of War, Human Security Report Project (HSRP). http://hsrgroup.org/human-security-reports/20092010/overview.aspx
12 Clark, The African Stakes of the Congo War.
17 Turner, *The Congo Wars*.
19 Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo*.
21 Prunier, *Africa’s World War*.
23 Turner, *The Congo Wars*.
24 Lemarchand, *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*.
25 Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo*.
31 For additional details about interviews and other sources, see Appendix I on Methodology.
34 I have been following the MLC for nearly 20 years, since its inception in 1999.
36 Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*.
37 An early and broadly accepted definition of “warlord” is Reno’s. These are rulers who “reject the pursuit of a broader project of creating a state that serves a collective good or even of creating institutions that are capable of developing independent perspectives and acting on behalf of interests distinct from the rulers’ personal exercise of power.” (Reno 1998:1).
40 UN General Assembly, Impact of armed conflict on children: Note by the Secretary-General (General Assembly document A/51/306), 26 August 1996; Rachel Brett and Irma Specht, Young Soldiers: Why They Choose to Fight (Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Organization, 2004).
41 Kaldor, New and Old Wars, 8.
42 Kaldor, New and Old Wars, 2.
43 http://www.unocha.org/drc
44 Tatiana Carayannis, “The Complex Wars of the Congo.”
53 Pugh and Cooper, War Economies in a Regional Context.
54 Rubin and Armstrong, “Regions and Networks in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building.”
59 Defined by Kaldor as the “intensification of global interconnectedness—political, economic, military, and cultural.” Kaldor, New and Old Wars, 3.
60 Duffield, Global Governance and the New Wars, 46.


Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 233-234.


Also commonly referred to as “conflict diamonds,” terms that grew out of efforts by human rights NGOs in the 1990s to draw attention to the easily traded commodity that has financed devastating wars in Angola and Sierra Leone, and which continue to do so in the DRC. This advocacy campaign led to the adoption by the UN in 2002 of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, an effort to regulate the global trade in rough diamonds.


Boone, *Property and Political Order in Africa*.


Caroline Hughes, Joakim Öjendal and Isabell Schierenbeck, “The struggle versus the song—the local turn in peacebuilding: an introduction,” in *Third World Quarterly* (Taylor and Francis, 2015).
93 Vlassenroot, “Identity and Insecurity.”
98 Carayannis and Vlassenroot, “Justice and Security in the DRC.”
106 Duffield, Global Governance and the New Wars; Singer, Corporate Warriors.
108 Wasserman and Faust, Social Network Analysis, 8.
110 Wasserman and Faust, Social Network Analysis, 4.
111 Mats Utas, African Conflicts and Informal Power, 14.
112 Ibid., 13.
117 Ibid.
119 Ibid.
125 UNAMIR forces were mandated to help implement a cease-fire agreement and transitional arrangements. On April 21, 1994, the UN Security Council voted to reduce its UNAMIR forces by 90 per cent, to 270 troops. France voted in favor of the withdrawal.
126 Six weeks earlier, on May 6, Security Council Resolution 918 authorized UNAMIR II, a redeployment of 5,500 UN troops with a Chapter VII humanitarian mandate, and imposed an arms embargo on Rwanda. However, delays in contributions meant that UNAMIR II was not deployed until August, three months later, just as Operation Turquoise was withdrawing its forces.
127 Resolution 925 was adopted on 8 June 1994 to extend UNAMIR’s mandate for another six months, until 9 December 1994. Its mandate required UNAMIR to protect internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and civilians by establishing “secure humanitarian areas,” and “provide security and support for the distribution of relief supplies and humanitarian relief operations.”
128 UN Security Council resolution 929 was adopted on 22 June 1994.
129 Goma is in eastern Congo, across the Congo-Rwanda border.
130 Within days, in what was a quid pro quo for each power, the Security Council authorized similar operations for the US in Haiti and for Russia in Georgia.
132 See Prunier’s account of Operation Turquoise in Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, pp. 281-311. Prunier was a member of the French Crisis Unit that supported the operation.
133 Bruce Jones, Peacemaking in Rwanda, p. 123.
135 Once out of power, the former Rwandan army combatants were known as “the ex-FAR.”
136 “Inter-ethnic relations in the Kivus had long been more problematic than in other parts of the Congo, largely due to the coexistence of pastoralists and sedentary farmers in that area; a higher population density than is found in other parts of the country; and to a cultural divide between the original sons of the land and Kinyarwanda-speaking immigrants—both Hutu and Tutsi—who have been migrating westward in several waves from Rwanda and Burundi, some going back many generations.” Herbert Weiss, “War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” Current African Issues No. 22, (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000).
137 UNHCR estimates by mid-November 1994 put refugee figures at: Goma, 850,000; Bukavu, 332,000; Uvira, 62,000; with another 800,000 in Burundi, Tanzania, and Uganda, for a total of 2.1 million.

139 Prunier notes that the former Rwandan leaders “monopolized the distribution of humanitarian aid and inflated the numbers of people actually registered to get more than what was needed.” Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, p. 314. Indeed, it was widely alleged that part of this aid was used to purchase arms, and that Zairian army officers were involved in this commerce.

140 Prunier, The Rwanda Crisis, pp. 315-316. According to Prunier, the incursions into Rwanda by this army in exile were confirmed by Major Plante, a spokesperson for UNAMIR, as early as September 1994. The French were evidently so confident that the former Rwandan authorities regrouping in the refugee camps would soon regain power in Rwanda, that they anticipated not having to invite the Tutsi government to the next Franco-African summit.


142 See The Lawyers’ Committee on Human Rights, Refugees, Rebels and the Quest for Justice (2002).


147 Prunier, Africa’s World War, 81-82.


149 The Congolese Tutsi are often mistakenly referred to as “Banyamulenge,” which is a particular Congolese Tutsi group in the Haut Plateau of Masisi. Although there is no consensus on exact dates, the age of the Congolese Tutsi community is estimated at 200 years. Also, there is some controversy over their exact numbers, which have been claimed to range from 25,000 to 400,000. See Info-Zaire, “Feuillet d’information produit par la Table de Concertation sur les Droits Humains au Zaïre,” No. 119, (30 September 1996).


151 Kinyarwanda is one of Rwanda’s three official languages, in addition to French and English. It is spoken widely in Rwanda by Tutsi and Hutu populations alike, and in parts of eastern DRC.

152 “Table de Concertation sur les Droits Humains au Zaïre,” Communiqué, 6 September 1996.

153 This is probably true although the numbers involved are very difficult to establish.

154 From this point forward, this coalition of Congolese, Rwandan, Ugandan, and later, Angolan forces will be referred to as “the anti-Mobutu alliance.”


156 Prunier, Africa’s World War, 113.


158 Ibid., 37.

159 Prunier, Africa’s World War, 115.

160 Ibid., 116.


162 Ibid.

163 Ibid.

164 Kabila’s armed youth, often children, who lorded over the population, sometimes killing people arbitrarily.
At the time, the Organization of African Unity (AU), but for the ease of reading, will refer to it as the African Union (AU) throughout rather than change names.

In fact, the principal pro-democracy non-governmental organization (NGOs) in the Congo, the Comité national des organisations non-gouvernementales au développement issued a statement shortly after the war started, confirming the presence of Rwandan and Ugandan troops fighting alongside the Banyamulenge in the Congo.

“Feuillet d’information produit par la Table de Concertation sur les Droits Humains au Zaire,” Info-Zaire newsletter, no. 121, 26 November 1996.


For detail, see Reno, Warlord Politics and African States, 163-164.


Ibid.

Prunier, Africa’s World War, 129.


As told to Alex de Waal by Yemane Ghebreab, head of political affairs of the PFDJ, Eritrea. Author email correspondence with Alex de Waal on 3/28/17.


Info-Zaire newsletter, no. 121, 26 November 1996.

Under the resolution, the objectives of the task force include “short-term humanitarian assistance and shelter to refugees and displaced persons in eastern Zaire, assisting the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees with the protection and voluntary repatriation of refugees and displaced persons, and establishing humanitarian corridors for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.”


Although Rwanda eventually went along with the proposed intervention, it objected to any efforts to repatriate Hutu refugees that were not authorized to disarm them first. Humanitarian NGOs were also insisting upon disarmament as a necessary condition for humanitarian relief efforts.


Ibid.

Those Rwandan Hutu who remained in the Congo were probably largely made up of Interahamwe/ex-FAR, their families, and some ordinary civilians who had either been forced, or volunteered to withdraw westward to escape the advancing forces of the anti-Mobutu alliance.

The mission was abandoned in spite of arguments by UNHCR and humanitarian relief organizations questioning the numbers of refugees actually returning to Rwanda, Info-Zaire newsletter, 26 November 1996.

Ibid.


Both sides sent high-level envoys to these indirect talks, which were attended also by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George E. Moose, President Clinton’s then special assistant on Africa, Susan Rice, and South African Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad. Mobutu was represented by his nephew and security adviser, Ngbanda Nzambo ko Ayumba, and Kabila by Bizima Karaha, who would later become DRC’s minister of foreign affairs, with close ties to Rwanda.

170


This is somewhat of a misnomer since, unlike the First and Second World Wars, which involved European, Asian, American, and colonial troops, the forces fighting in this war have been exclusively African, with the exception of some undetermined number of American and European mercenaries. Of course, arms and financing have been provided by non-African actors.

A mortality study on the DRC released by the International Rescue Committee on 8 May 2001 estimated that 2.5 million people died since the outbreak of the war in August 1998. Of that estimate, the study noted that only 350,000 deaths were directly caused by combat. The rest were caused by the starvation and disease that so often accompanies war and displacement. One out of eight households surveyed by the IRC had lost at least one family member to violence, and in eastern Congo, where an insurrection by the Congolese Mai Mai violently challenged RCD/Rwanda rule, 75 per cent of infants born during the war had died, or would die, before reaching two years.


Ethiopia and Eritrea were among Kabila’s foreign patrons during the first war. Henceforth referred to as the anti-Kabila network or the “rebellion.”


Ajello, *Cavalier de la paix*, 103.


Ngolet, *Crisis in the Congo*, 37.

Following the first war, the Interhamwe/ex-FAR recruited Rwandan Hutu from abroad, and in some cases, even Congolese, into what became ALiR, and now FDLR. Many of the new recruits have no ties to the genocide as they simply were too young or not in Rwanda during the genocide. Therefore, the membership of the FDLR is assumed not to be limited to the génocidaires or Rwandan Hutu.
The DRC became a member of SADC on 28 February 1998.


Ajello, *Cavalier de la paix*, 126.


A leadership quarrel within the RCD held up its signature since neither faction's leaders could agree on who should sign for the movement. Eventually, that disagreement was overcome by having all 50 founding members of the RCD become signatories.


Although subsequently, Kinshasa transformed this claim by indicating that the Mai Mai were *Forces d’Auto-défense Populaires* (FAP), or self-defense forces.


The AU has no provisions for sanctions against deviant states. It is also prohibited from expelling a member state from the organization.


Interview with André Kapanga, Congolese ambassador to the UN under Laurent Kabila, and the author, 4 April 2002.

South Africa’s Institute for Security Studies has correctly noted that MONUC is “[a]rguably the most complicated and ambitious post-Cold War experiment in the creation of peace from chaos with fairly modest resources.” Jakkie Cilliers and Mark Malan, *Peacekeeping in the DRC: MONUC and the Road to Peace* Monograph no. 66, (Halfway House: Institute for Security Studies, October 2001), Executive Summary, p. 3. Given the size of the country and the number of different combatants, domestic and foreign, one could well amend “fairly modest” to “inadequate”—both in terms of its mandate and size.

During this “Africa Month,” the Security Council, also discussed the problem of the AIDS pandemic in Africa, an unprecedented step which moved the Council closer to a broader conceptualization of security. In an equally unusual development, Holbrooke invited Vice-president Al Gore to address the Council on the issue of AIDS.


Steven Edwards, “Inadequate Congo Mission Doomed.” The U.S. is bearing two-thirds of the estimated initial cost of $41 million.

Interview with André Kapanga and the author, 4 April 2002.

Interview with André Kapanga and the author, 14 March 2002.


The FDD is the military wing of the Burundian Hutu party Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD).


This process would be facilitated by a radio and print media information campaign undertaken by “the UN, the OAU and the signatories…” (para. 16) on the incentive packages for those with arms to give them up.


On December 4, 2002, Security Council resolution 1445 expanded the number of troops authorized to 8,700.


On December 4, 2002, Security Council resolution 1445 expanded the number of troops authorized to 8,700.


Ethiopian newspapers widely reported the funding constraints faced by the neutral facilitator’s office, adding also that the Sheraton Hotel in Addis Ababa, where participants were being housed, had required Masire to pay a $1 million cash security deposit. “It must have been, however, painful for the facilitators, who were decrying low budget of only a little more than four million dollars, to block a quarter of it and live on the slender finance for the rest of the journey…” reported the Ethiopian daily, *Fortune*, 21 October 2001, 20.

“The troubled Inter-Congolese Dialogue May Cease for One Month,” *Addis Tribune*, 19 October 2001, 20. The Kinshasa government gave assurances that “it is not pulling out, it is still in the process, but is asking the conditions to be completed…” “Inter-Congolese Dialogue to Resume Today,” *The Ethiopian Herald*, 21 October 2001.


Neither has any other significant Congolese leader or group.

Much of this account is drawn from interviews with MLC leaders and commanders, and civilians in Gbadolité, Gemena, and Kinshasa between 2002-2017. See Appendix I for a list of those interviewed in 2002 and 2003 in Congo.

Interview with Jean-Pierre Bemba, Gemena, June 2002.


Compilation by Herbert Weiss and Tatiana Carayannis based on the key political leaders of the MLC in 2000.

Interview with General Dieudonné Amuli during a field visit to Gbadolîte in 2002.

See, e.g., the MLC founding statutes signed at Lisala on June 30, 1999; “Le Mouvement pour la libération du Congo,” (date unknown) a pamphlet outlining its platform; and the current MLC website at [www.mlccongo.org](http://www.mlccongo.org).


As Equateur is not rich in precious minerals, the MLC share of the diamond and other precious mineral trades was largely limited to the years it maintained close relations with Uganda; this relationship had soured by the end of 2001.


Interview with an unnamed commander during a field visit to Gbadolité in 2002.

Interviews with UNICEF staff in Kinshasa during 2002.

Interview with Congolese NGO representative in Gemena (name withheld for security reasons).

Carayannis interviews with local officials in Gemena and Gbadolité in 2002 and 2015.


Interview with unnamed commander during a field visit to Gbadolité in 2002.

Interviews with UNICEF staff in Kinshasa during 2002.

Interview with Congolese NGO representative in Gemena (name withheld for security reasons).


Carayannis interviews with local officials in Gemena and Gbadolité in 2002 and 2015.


298 Caroline Hughes et al., “The struggle versus the song – the local turn in peacebuilding: an introduction,” in Third World Quarterly 36, no. 5 (Taylor and Francis, 2015), 822.
304 See, for example, the case of children demobilized by the MLC-RCD/ML common front and UNICEF in 2000 in Tatiana Carayannis, “DRC: Child Recruitment Policy and Practice Within the Armed Forces of the Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC),” a Report Submitted to UNICEF DRC, October 2003.
308 Ibid, 13.
310 The Mai Mai are Congolese militia fighters opposed to any and all foreign presence in the Congo.
311 Timothy Sisk defines these pacts as “mutual security agreements in which parties foreshare the use of violence to achieve their aims in exchange for protection under agreed-upon rules of the political game.” Timothy D. Sisk, Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1996), 81.
Appendix I:

Selected Interviews for MLC Chapter

June-July 2003*

Kinshasa
André Kapanga, Political and Diplomatic Adviser to President Kabila
Marcellin Cishambo, Adviser to President Kabila
Trish Hiddleston, UNICEF Child Protection
Stephane Pichette, UNICEF Child Protection
Johanna Klinge, Child Protection Adviser, MONUC
Roisin de Burca, MDRP World Bank
Natasha Meden, MDRP World Bank
Nishkala Suntharalingam, Political Affairs Officer, MONUC
Gerard Gerold, Senior Political Adviser, MONUC
John Walker, Senior Military Information Officer, MONUC
David Smith, Former Chief, Radio Okapi
Yasmina Bouziane, Chief, Audiovisual Section, MONUC
Larry Streshley, Technical Advisor, SANRU III Project
Raja Jandhyala, UNDP
Dr. Richard Culp Robinson, National Representative, Pact Congo
Harry Goodall, Former Habitat for Humanity Director, Congo, and long time resident of Equateur
Greg Hall, Director, MAF
Dan Carlson, MAF pilot and long time resident of Equateur
Col. Thomas Luhaka, Executive Secretary, MLC Party
Francesca Bomboko, Director, Bureau d’Etudes, de Recherches, et du Consulting International (BERCI)
Jean François Ploquin, Secrétaire Général, Centre d’Information et de Solidarité avec l’Afrique (COSI)
James C. Swan, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy
Edward Bestic, Second Secretary, U.S. Embassy
Akoua Emma Atchrimi Agounke, Program Director, International Human Rights Law Group
Jo Wells, Head of Technical Assistance, International Human Rights Law Group
Marie Madeleine Mwika Lukusa, Member of Parliament, (Government)
Jean Francois Ekofo, Coordinator, Action d’Aide Sanitaire et de Développement aux Plus Démunis (AASD)
Pere Malu Malu
Monsignor Melchisedech Sikuli, Bishop of Butembo
Tenley Mogk, USAID
David Schaad, World Food Programme
Ruth Schaad, Nurse, community clinic, Limete
Balma Yahaya, War Child
Francine Dal, Croix Rouge Belge
Professor Jean-Pierre Lobho, Vice Dean, UNIKIN

Gbadolite, Gemena
Jean Pierre Bemba, Président MLC, and Vice Président de la Republique
Olivier Kamitatu, Secretary General, MLC, and President of the National Assembly
Antoine Ghonda, MLC representative to the U.S., then MLC Minister of Foreign Affairs
Jose Endundu, MLC Finance Minister
Dieudonné Hamuli, MLC chief of army staff and later head of the DRC navy
Col. Mbiato, Chef d’état Major, MLC
Pascal Lipemba, Secrétaire Executif, MLC
Cdt. Alain Munanga, Chef de Securité, MLC
Col. Wabu, MLC
Lt. Col. Egide Kongoli, Responsable, Camp Tudu, MLC
Mr. Kapalata, Maire de la Ville de Gbadolite
Maire Adjoint de la Ville de Gbadolite
Membre de l’Assemblée, MLC et Ville de Gbadolite
Pierre Sao Gbido-Goga, Bourgemestre, Commune de Gbadolite
Gani Are, Representative of SRSG and Head of Office, MONUC Gbadolite
Austin C. Amalu, Senior Humanitarian Affairs Officer, MONUC Gbadolite
Yande Kane, Human Rights Officer, MONUC Gbadolite
Jean Rene Mbango, Human Rights Officer, MONUC Gbadolite
Muriel Rodriguez, Political Affairs Adviser, MONUC Gbadolite
MILOBS, MONUC Gbadolite
Malick Faye, Chief, Radio Okapi Gbadolite
Abbe Oswald Bagaza Bala, Secrétaire Executif, CARITAS Gbadolite et Action pour la Solidarité et le Développement (ASODEV)
Marcel Tote Nganga, Secrétaire Administratif et Financier, Action pour la protection et l’encadrement de l’enfant (APEE) et Président du Comité local du district du Nord-Ubangui pour la protection des droits des enfants
Valerie, MSF France Gbadolite
Arnold-Robert Weleta, Président, ONG GAD
Taima Zalo Tailon, Président, ONG ADAGI & ECLAIRS et Société Civile Nord-Ubangui
Monique Banza, Président, ONG UFTD
Etienne Bema, Président, ONG Main dans la Main (MDM) et Président, Plateforme ONG Tagere Gbiako, Responsable de l’enseignement, Comité local du district du Nord-Ubangui pour la protection des droits des enfants
Rachel Mana, Secrétaire, Action d’Aide Sanitaire et de Développement aux Plus Démunis (AASD)
Jose Mbomba, Coordinateur Adjoint, Action Humanitaire du Congo (AHC)
Desire Kogbala, Secrétaire Général, Action Humanitaire du Congo (AHC)
Sebastien Sise, Président, Société Civile Nord-Ubangui et Ville de Gbadolite
Marie Mokparu-Konba, Secrétaire, Comité local du district du Nord-Ubangui pour la protection des droits des enfants
Tholase Libo, Coordonnateur, ONG DSDK de l’Eglise Kimbanguiste, Districte du Nord-Ubangui
Ginette Alongaboni, Trésorier, Comité local du district du Nord-Ubangui pour la protection des droits des enfants, et chargée des assistances sociales du MLC
Lambert Weka Mosuku, Responsable de la CEUM/Gbadolite
Isaac Libin Gilokangi, Superviseur, Action d’Aide Sanitaire et de Développement aux Plus Démunis (AASD)
Jephte Ndengemale, Chef du département défense des droits de l’enfant, Action pour la protection et l’encadrement de l’enfant (APEE)
Alphonse-Marie Dangali Kwale, Secrétaire, Action pour la protection et l’encadrement de l’enfant (APEE)
Abakar Ngbotezo, Directeur General, Action pour la sauvegarde de la dignité humaine (ASDH) et membre, Comité local du district du Nord-Ubangui pour la protection des droits des enfants
Jean-Pierre Kogbede, Président, Croix Rouge du Congo, Gbadolite
Jean Abia, Secrétaire du Comité, Croix Rouge du Congo, Gbadolite

*Many of these have been interviewed multiple times on subsequent field trips between 2002-2017, as have others not listed here.*
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