

AFRICA'S SEVEN-NATION
WAR

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AFRICA'S SEVEN-NATION WAR

Executive Summary

What seems to be turning into a continental war first broke out on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo on 2 August 1998. So far, it has involved a dozen African countries, either directly as combatants in the fighting, or indirectly as mediators in various peace initiatives. This is the second time in two years that Congo has been the theatre of an armed rebellion against the government in place that has degenerated into a regional conflict.¹ In 1996-1997, a regional alliance composed of Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Burundi and Eritrea toppled Marshall Mobutu and replaced him with Laurent Désiré Kabila in May 1997.

With this second war, the hoped-for African renaissance that was born out of Mobutu's removal has lost all substance. The alliances formed two years ago are breaking apart and reforming around the question of whether or not Kabila should remain in power. The rebel forces, comprising Congolese soldiers, Congolese Tutsi Banyamulenge, Rwandan, Ugandan and some Burundian government troops, all accuse Kabila of turning into a dictator and increasing regional instability by his support for the guerrilla groups opposed to the governments of his former allies, including the Rwandan '*génocidaires*'. For his part, Kabila is resisting the rebel movement with support from Angolan, Zimbabwean and Namibian troops acting in the name of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Kabila accuses Rwanda and Uganda of aggression and "foreign adventurism" in regard to Congolese territory and natural resources.

The various mediation attempts undertaken by the Organisation of African Unity, the SADC, the international Francophonie community and Libya, as well as a number of individual personalities, have all run into the same obstacles. The main ones are the cease-fire, agreement over which parties should be acknowledged as belligerents, the withdrawal of foreign troops, direct rebel involvement in negotiations and the choice of a mediator. Each side has stalled on these issues or else manipulated them in order to block negotiations and play for time. In the first place, they each believe in the possibility of a military victory, although all have officially pronounced themselves willing to take part in talks. In the second place, a war of this amplitude requires the support of the population, which neither side has yet achieved. The parties are also trying to rally diplomatic support at the international level, as well as new allies for their opposing causes. Finally, time is required to exploit the country's resources in order to finance the war and allow individuals to accumulate personal wealth.

The greatest challenge in regard to the war and its resolution is that the internal conflict in Congo is inseparably interlinked with the internal problems facing the other countries involved. Indeed, it is questionable whether the war can provide solutions to the DRC's real problems. It has certainly done nothing to resolve the leadership question. Not only is Kabila still *in situ*, but he has been accorded greater legitimacy since he gained the support of the SADC, and has also succeeded in creating a national movement revolving around his personality. The conflict has certainly not brought democracy any closer. On the contrary, if the war does produce a victor, the field will be free for the imposition of another dictatorship, and the culture of violence will become even more deeply ingrained in Congo. Neither can war resolve the problem in regard to the coexistence of different ethnic groups. The

¹ See ICG Democratic Republic of Congo Report N° 3, "How Kabila Lost His Way: The performance of Laurent Désiré Kabila's government", 21 May 1999.

Banyamulenge, who sparked off the war with Rwanda and Uganda, are even less well accepted by other Congolese than they were before and tribal conflict is engulfing the region. Finally, war will not ultimately provide an answer to the question of who controls the territory of this vast country.

The war that began nine months ago is in reality made of up several other conflicts with the result that six separate disputes are being waged on Congolese territory. In addition to the Congolese rebels challenging Kabila's leadership, there is the war between Rwanda and the ex-FAR and Interahamwe; between Uganda and its own rebels, as well as Sudan; between the Angolan government and UNITA; between the Burundian government and the FDD rebels; and between Congo-Brazzaville and militias backing Lissouba, the deposed former president. But here again, there is a risk that the fighting will serve to reinforce the various rebel groups rather than to defeat them. Kabila is supporting the guerrilla groups and using them as infantry in his coalition force to counteract the Congolese rebels. This gives him ample possibilities for forming future alliances and reinforces a state of instability for which no end is in sight.

The war has not yet produced any winners or losers. After the failed Rwandan attempt at a coup d'état against Kabila in Kinshasa, prevented only by the intervention of Angola and Zimbabwe, the rebel movement now covers almost half of the eastern part of Congo and the north of the country. The whole territory is now divided into a number of occupation zones and each of the occupiers has a different agenda. If this situation continues, there could well be a *de facto* division of the DRC that might permanently affect the unity of the state.

There are two outstanding factors that could cause the war to be prolonged. First, as long as the problem of the guerrilla groups remains unresolved and neighbouring countries have not been able to secure their border areas, there is little chance of troop withdrawals, even if a cease-fire is concluded. Second, the economic benefits to be reaped from the violence today far outweigh those that might be harvested from a peace. With two successive conflicts within two years, systematic recourse to armed force and a war financed out of the revenues earned by the different parties from Congo's own natural resources, there is a strong possibility that the presently fragmented country may implode and slide into a state of generalised violence.

For all those involved, the stakes are very large. The leaders of the countries concerned risk losing credibility and international support, perhaps even their presidencies. The coexistence of different agendas means a variety of different solutions to the present problems. The rebels are today divided between those seeking to overthrow Kabila by exercising the military option, who are supported by the Rwandans, and those who would prefer a negotiated settlement and an end to hostilities. The latter group are willing to accept Kabila as president of a transitional government.

This is the solution promoted by Museveni and seems to be the most probable scenario. It would begin with the signature of a cease-fire agreement mediated by Khadafi, an old friend of Museveni, but would not include the withdrawal of foreign troops as long as the guerrilla problem on Congo's borders had not been resolved. The different countries whose troops are presently occupying part of Congo would also hope for a 'gentlemen's agreement' on the harmonisation of their political and economic interests with the transition government, particularly Angola. Indeed, whoever heads that government would be expected to commit Congo to disengage from any existing arrangement with UNITA. Other provisions would be a good integration of foreign troops among the Congolese, the satisfactory administration of occupied territory by Congo's allies, and the inclusion of Congolese in the various commercial networks that have been set up.



AFRICA'S SEVEN-NATION WAR

I. INTRODUCTION

A Goma-based Congolese army officer accompanied by two soldiers appeared at a local radio station on 2 August 1998 to announce that a rebellion had broken out against President Laurent Désiré Kabila. From its beginnings in North Kivu, the rebellion has now spread to cover more than forty percent of DRC territory, drawing in the armies of seven African countries and costing many millions of dollars. As yet, there appears to be no clear winner or loser emerging from a war in which victories have been claimed and counter-claimed on numerous occasions.

The lines of battle have been drawn and redrawn as the fighting that began in the east of the country spread quickly to the west, and then returned again to the east following a failed attempt by the rebels in early August 1998 to seize the capital, Kinshasa. Since then, the war has moved both to the north and southeast with towns and airports falling to the rebels as they advanced further into the interior of Congo towards the mineral-rich provinces of Kasai and Katanga.

This is the first time that a war in Africa has pitted one group of African countries against another. Four countries are officially providing President Kabila with military backing: Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and Chad, while another three are actively participating on the side of the rebels: Uganda and Rwanda, with the help of Burundi in the southeast.

The degree of cohesion that can be maintained within the two coalitions is likely to influence the outcome of the war. The Kabila coalition was initially strong and inflicted defeats on its enemy in early August 1998 as the rebels tried to advance from the port of Kitona and the Angolan border towards Kinshasa. However, this coalition seems to be cracking as it tries, so far unsuccessfully, to dislodge the rebels and their allies from their bases in the southeast and the north. Recent battles around Kabalo, Moba and Kalemie have been lost to the rebel coalition, with significant losses of men and equipment.

The rebel coalition led by Rwanda and Uganda has divided its operational areas into sectors. Rwanda is in charge of a sector that runs from Rutshuru on the border with Uganda to Pepa on the border with Zambia; Uganda is responsible for an area extending from Butembo to Isiro on the border with Sudan, and from Businga in the interior towards Gbadolite. In some cases the sectors are shared, but the absence of a joint general command has led to a lack of co-ordination on the battlefield. Ugandan troops have been advancing more quickly than Rwandan troops as the opposition is weaker in their sector, composed mainly of Chadian, Congolese and ex-Ugandan government troops. In the Rwandan-led sector, the Rwandan troops and units of the Congolese rebels have been facing a tough challenge from Zimbabwe forces and their allies, which is slowing down their planned advance towards Mbuji-Mayi.

How did the war start? In July 1998, rumours of a planned coup supported by the Rwandans prompted Kabila to send home the Rwandan troops that were training, and even commanding his army. It was during their departure that a military uprising was declared in the east of the country, backed by Kigali. A rebel offensive was launched towards Bas-Congo with the objective of seizing Kinshasa and installing a new government. The rebels flew with a hijacked

plane to Western Congo and captured Muanda and the Banana naval base in a move intended to force Kabila to wage war on two fronts simultaneously. The advance on Kinshasa failed only at the last minute. This was due to two factors. First, the arrival of Zimbabwean and Angolan troops to support Kabila, which came as a surprise to the rebel coalition. Second, officially-encouraged ethnic propaganda was inciting Kinshasans to hunt down and kill Tutsis. The tense situation could have further degenerated into large-scale ethnic killings if the Rwandan Tutsi troops had entered Kinshasa and tried to overthrow Kabila.

In the first two weeks of the war, the rebel coalition seized Goma, the North Kivu capital, as well as Bukavu and Uvira in South Kivu. This enabled them to establish a foothold in Eastern Congo, which borders Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi. On 23 August 1998, the rebels led by Bob Ngoy, the second-in-command of the armed wing of the rebel movement, announced the capture of Kisangani, the second-largest town in Congo. This enabled them to open up a new front line in the north of the country, which has led to the capture of a number of small towns in the north close to Equateur province: Isiro, Aketi, and Bumba. The rebels are now targeting Lisala before making a move on Gbadolite, Mobutu's hometown. The fall of Kisangani encouraged the Ugandan government to send more troops to Congo to control key installations such as Kisangani airport and other airfields. The official reason for Uganda's intervention was to prevent Sudanese government forces from taking over installations in Eastern Congo and using them to attack Uganda. A number of major battles were fought on the northern front in an attempt by Chadian government forces to stop the rebels, supported by Ugandan troops, from advancing into Equateur province. Many Chadian soldiers were either killed in the fighting or captured by the Ugandans. A new Congolese rebel group emerged during this northern campaign: the Mouvement national pour la libération du Congo (MNL),² led by Jean-Pierre Bemba, which supported the Ugandan advance.

After the rebels captured Kisangani, and the Kabila coalition regained the western front, both coalitions shifted their attention to Kindu, on the River Congo. The Kabila coalition intended Kindu to serve as the main operational base for launching a counter-offensive against rebel bases in the east. However, the reverse happened on 16 October 1998, when Kindu fell to the rebel alliance after a week of heavy fighting. Available information indicates that Zimbabwean and Angolan forces the main defence of Kindu to the Forces armées congolaises (FAC),³ the Chadians, ex-FAR⁴ soldiers and Ugandan soldiers who had formerly supported Idi Amin.

The fall of Kindu was a turning point in the four-month-old war. The rebels took 400 prisoners, and seized material and arms left behind by the Kabila alliance. According to rebel leader, Commandant Ondekane, this provided his forces with a major supply of weapons. Kabila and his allies announced a counter-offensive to stop the enemy advance. However, this never materialised despite a declaration by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe after a summit of Kabila's allies in Harare on 21 October 1998 that, "We will go to the east because that is where the sun comes from." The lack of a counter-attack left the rebels with a *de facto* victory in the east. Many ordinary Congolese and independent newspapers have questioned why this never took place. Some military analysts suggest that the external allies hesitated because they doubted the capacity of the FAC to provide adequate support. There has also been speculation that Kabila's coalition was weakened by the reported withdrawal of some Angolan battalions and Zimbabwe's recent more cautious approach as the result of increasing casualties and equipment losses. Justice Minister Mwenze Kongolo said that the delay was largely due to the "complex task of co-ordinating several armies."⁵

However, the war has been continuing in the southeast, towards the mineral-rich province of Katanga. Kalemie and Moba, port towns on Lake Tanganyika, are under rebel control. Kabalo, 150 km to the south of Kalemie and Moba, has been the scene of horrific fighting. Congolese government troops backed by Zimbabwean forces, ex-FAR and Interahamwe from

² Congolese National Liberation Movement.

³ Congolese Armed Forces, the new government army created by Kabila.

⁴ Former Rwandan Army under Juvénal Habyarimana.

⁵ Quoted by *The New Vision*, "Congo executes army deserters", 16 November 1998.

Rwanda, and FDD⁶ guerrillas from Burundi have been engaging Congolese rebels backed by Rwandan and Burundian army troops. Media reports indicate that although the rebel coalition has proved superior in the battles in this region, they seem unable to control the area they have conquered.

The next battles: Mbuji-Mayi, Kamina, Gbadolite, Mbandaka and Kinshasa?

The coalitions are now preparing to fight for Mbuji-Mayi in East Kasai province, 250 miles east of Kabalo. This is a leading diamond-producing town of high strategic importance for both sides, a gateway to both the west and south of Congo. According to Micaise Bel Oka, editor of an independent Goma newspaper: "The fight for Mbuji-Mayi is going to be a matter of life and death. Whoever wins, takes it all."⁷ Given the military build-up that has been taking place, this is likely to be along and bloody fight on both sides. Angolan and Zimbabwean forces backed by FAC forces have fortified the town with thousands of troops and heavy military equipment.

The Congolese rebels are approaching Mbuji-Mayi cautiously. Rebel commander Jean-Pierre Ondekane said: "At the moment we are not in a hurry to attack Mbuji-Mayi for strategic reasons. When the right time comes, we shall do it."⁸ However, in February 1999 after a lull in the fighting, the rebels decided to begin their advance and announced a big offensive towards Mbuji-Mayi with 60,000 men. Military experts in the region say that the rebel strategy is to secure their rear base in the south around Kabalo, Moba and Kalemie before attacking Mbuji-Mayi itself. Their second objective will be to move towards Kamina in the southeast, a large airbase where rebels say that Kabila is training former Hutu militias and ex-FAR to reinforce his war machine. The advance on Mbuji-Mayi will be on three fronts. One will be from Kabalo, east of Mbuji-Mayi, where rebel forces supported by the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) have been engaging Zimbabwean soldiers backed by Burundian FDD rebels, FAC troops and the ex-FAR. The second will be from Kindu, north-west of Mbuji-Mayi, through Lodja towards Mbuji-Mayi, and the third from Kisangani.

Once Mbuji-Mayi is taken, the front line is likely to move westwards towards Kinshasa to link up with rebel forces from the Equateur region, backed by Uganda, moving towards Mbandaka and Gbadolite. The rebel coalition seems determined to push on to Kinshasa despite its failure to take the capital last year. They are motivated by reports of weaknesses within the Kabila coalition. These result from the renewed fighting in Angola between the government and UNITA, which is leading to the gradual withdrawal of the Angolan troops that played a key role in preventing the rebels from taking Kinshasa last year. As Ugandan Minister Amama Mbabazi said at the end of March, "at the rate the rebels are moving, it is possible they could reach Kinshasa".⁹ Even more recently, the rebels confirmed that they were pushing on to Kinshasa.¹⁰

Kabila and his allies continue to insist that they will stand and fight. Speaking after a four-nation summit between Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia and the DRC in Kinshasa on 21 February 1999, Zimbabwean President Mugabe was reported on state-run television in Kinshasa as saying that the allies would spare no effort to help the DRC restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Lashing out at Uganda and Rwanda, Mugabe said: "There is no doubt on our part that they intend the war to continue ... to exploit the resources of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The time has come for the international community not only to exert pressure on them to withdraw ... but also to recognise that their aggression is against international law, and therefore must cease. As I said, we are determined to put an end to this war, and today we re-examined other ways of putting an end to this aggression by all means."¹¹

⁶ FDD: Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (Forces for the Defence of Democracy), the armed wing of a major opposition force: CNDD-FDD.

⁷ Interview conducted by an ICG researcher in Kigali on 19 December 1998.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ IRIN, 27 March 1999.

¹⁰ AFP, 12 April 1999.

¹¹ IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Network), 22 February, 1999.

Neither side has advanced significantly since November 1998. The Ugandans are occupying Kisangani and other small towns in Equateur province. The Rwandans, Burundians and Congolese rebels have reached as far south as Kabalo. The Angolans, Zimbabweans and guerrilla forces fighting on Kabila's side are still controlling Mbuji-Mayi, Lumumbashi and the western half of the country. The battles for Mbuji-Mayi, Kabinda, Mbandaka and Gbadolite will be decisive. If the rebels take those strategic and wealthy towns, Kabila and his allies will have lost the military game. But as long as they continue to hold them, a balance of force will be maintained and it would be premature to guess at the military outcome of the war.

Both sides have increased their military build-up since December 1998. The Rwandan troops and units of Congolese rebels have acquired sophisticated weapons, including missiles capable of bringing down jet fighters. Uganda has imported long-range artillery guns, which they are using to neutralise military units in the northeast. Angola and Zimbabwe had an edge over Uganda and Rwanda in weaponry at the beginning of the war, but now the position is changing and Kabila's allies acknowledge that the rebel coalition has acquired modern weaponry.

The renewed fighting in Angola is affecting the Kabila coalition. Media reports indicate that Angola is scaling down its military effort in the DRC in order to focus on its internal conflict with UNITA. The fighting has flared up again over the past two months, and the government has expressed concern that UNITA has acquired sophisticated weapons and retrained its fighters. Without Angola's military assistance, Kabila's allies will have a hard job stopping the rebel advance on Mbuji-Mayi and other major towns like Mbandaka and Gbadolite. If they fall, Zimbabwe is likely to be the only coalition country still fighting the advancing rebels.

II. WHY NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOT TAKEN OFF?

A. Failed Negotiations Attempts

More than a dozen summits and many ministerial consultations have dealt with the DRC since the outbreak of the war. Most were organised under the auspices of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) as part of the Lusaka Peace Process and have included meetings and summits in Victoria Falls (7-8 August 1998 and 8 September 1998), Pretoria (23 August 1998), Durban, Ouagadougou (Organisation of African Unity in December 1998), Sirte in Libya, Paris (Francophone summit from 26-29 November 1998), Lusaka, Windhoek (18 January 1999), and N'djamena. Despite all these meetings, and an agreement-in-principle on the necessity of negotiations, no consensus has yet emerged in regard to the participants, the agenda or the methodology of any such peace talks. The Lusaka summits, which had to be postponed twice, have conspicuously failed to offer any solution to the problems.

It would seem clear that a cease-fire, the withdrawal of foreign troops, identification of the belligerent parties and Kabila's future as president are all legitimate topics for negotiation. However, it is clear that both sides have been playing for time by blocking any such discussions.

B. The Cease-Fire Agreement

The possibility of a cease-fire has been raised consistently since the first Victoria Falls summit in August 1998. The second Victoria Falls meeting in September 1998 mandated regional ministers of defence and other officials working with the OAU and the United Nations to meet in Addis Ababa in order to establish two points. The first was how to effect an immediate cease-fire and the second, the mechanisms required for monitoring compliance with cease-fire provisions, especially those relating to the withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC. On 10 September 1998, the UN and the OAU presented a draft agreement for a cease-fire to the ministers of defence and other government officials from Congo, Namibia, Angola, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This called for an end to hostilities and the military situation

on the ground to be frozen. It also covered the protection of civilians, an embargo on ammunition and weapons' supplies, the release of prisoners of war, the opening of humanitarian corridors and the withdrawal of foreign troops from DRC territory after deployment of a peacekeeping operation. This agreement reaffirmed the territorial integrity of the DRC and the need for state administrative control to be re-established throughout the country.

However, this draft cease-fire created a basis for confusion rather than for negotiation. According to the document, "all belligerent forces as provided for in this cease-fire agreement" and as signatories to it as future guarantors, were identified as the governments of Angola, DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Thus Uganda and Rwanda, which had not yet publicly acknowledged the presence of their troops on DRC territory, were included in the list of signatories. Officially protesting the exclusion of any DRC rebel movement from the list, the Uganda and Rwanda delegations walked out of the meeting, which then ended without the draft cease-fire agreement being adopted. Zambia was also included in the list of signatories, although it was the only country that did not actually have any troops in the DRC at that time.

Despite its flaws, this agreement was adopted in principle at the Lusaka meeting on 26-27 October 1998 "pending further consultations with the parties concerned". In order to address Ugandan and Rwandan concerns about the exclusion of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie*¹² (RCD), a mechanism was established for involving them in talks to decide how the cease-fire would be implemented. This required direct contact between Kabila and the rebels, which had been mooted regularly since the second Victoria Falls summit on 8 September 1998.

A committee was set up to arrange this meeting. It included representatives of Zambia, the OAU, UN, SADC, Mozambique, South Africa and Tanzania. After consultations with the committee, the RCD delegation officially declared: "There are only two belligerents in the DRC conflict, namely the government of President Kabila and the RCD itself. Any other forces are in the DRC as allies of one or the other of the belligerents." The RCD delegation expressed "a need for the process of resolving the conflict to be owned by the Congolese people, because it is essentially one between Congolese."¹³ According to an ICG interview with RCD leaders,¹⁴ the RCD had three objections to the draft agreement.

- The RCD was not included on the list of signatories;
- The agreement's reference to Article 3 of the OAU charter, which guarantees all member states the right of sovereignty and territorial integrity, implied that this was an inter-state war. However, for the RCD, "this war is a civil war"¹⁵;
- The RCD felt strongly that the document should include a paragraph stating that the government of Kabila was practising genocide.

At the Windhoek summit on 18 January 1999, the belligerent states agreed to sign a cease-fire agreement within a few weeks and mandated Zambian President Frederick Chiluba to convene a summit at which it would be signed. He has since visited all the countries with troops in Congo for consultations on the planned summit, but no document has yet been signed.

C. Identifying the Belligerents

The Lusaka initiative has been stalled for some time over the question of exactly who qualifies as a belligerent as the various players cannot agree on a definition applicable to this context.

¹² Congolese Rally for Democracy.

¹³ Report of the committee tasked to meet the delegation of the RCD in Lusaka, 26-27 October 1998.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Interview with RCD leaders in Goma by an ICG researcher on 9 December 1998.

Both sides have deliberately maintained confusion about who belongs to the core and who should be considered a peripheral belligerent; neither side is willing to concede to the other.

The list of participants in the conflict has been expanding since the war began, although no new names have emerged since November 1998. On Kabila's side, the countries involved are the DRC, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad and Sudan, in addition to the Interahamwe, FDD, Mai-Mai, ADF and former soldiers of Idi Amin. The rebel movement is backed by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, in addition to the RCD and Jean-Pierre Bemba's Mouvement national pour la libération du Congo (MNL).¹⁶ A new entrant on the rebel side is the Union des Républicains Nationalistes pour la libération (URNL),¹⁷ composed mainly of Mobutu's former Special Presidential Division forces, which crossed over from Congo-Brazzaville in February.

The status of "non-state" actors remains unclear

One of the major ambiguities in the Lusaka process is that the status of "non-state" players such as the RCD, ex-FAR and Interahamwe, FDD, former Ugandan soldiers, ex-FAZ, and Mai-Mai has not yet been defined in the agreement. Who represents which group? Who signs the cease-fire on behalf of which group? Kabila's camp does not want to take responsibility for the non-governmental actors fighting on its behalf; Uganda and Rwanda want the RCD to be recognised as the sole representative of the rebel movement.

Even if the countries involved in the war eventually sign a cease-fire agreement, what guarantees are there that the non-state participants will respect it? Who would take responsibility for implementation of the agreement by those forces? As long as the status of the various rebel groups is not defined and they are not included among the guarantors of the agreement, it is unlikely that the Rwandans, Ugandans and Burundians will agree to sign.

Since the outbreak of the war, Kabila and his allies have consistently refused to acknowledge the RCD as a belligerent. According to them, Uganda and Rwanda are the belligerents and are accused of aggression against the DRC. The DRC has asked the UN Security Council to intervene in a bid to force the withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan troops from the strife-torn country. In a letter to the Security Council, the DRC representative to the UN, André Kapanga, denounced "the blatant aggression of Uganda and Rwanda against the DRC"¹⁸. Kabila knows that the RCD, as well as other Congolese opposition parties, will insist on their right to participate in talks between all the political forces in the country that are likely to play a role in a transitional government.

In the opposition camp, Uganda and Rwanda have denied that they are belligerents ever since the outbreak of the war. Initially they even denied the presence of their troops in the DRC. Later, Uganda admitted to a military presence there, but purely in order to defend its national security interests: "As far as the claims that Uganda had invaded Congo are concerned, State House dismisses such falsehood. Since about one year ago, we have been having two UDF battalions in DRC behind Mount Rwenzori, to combat ADF and other lawless elements. This was by mutual understanding with President Kabila. When Kabila's army was chased from the area recently, our forces there helped to avoid bloodshed in the area. Where our forces were not, massacres took place. Opposite West Nile, we are monitoring the activities of Sudanese infiltrators. This is the only extent of our involvement up to now."¹⁹ Two weeks later, President Museveni explained to Parliament, "the threats to Uganda's security emanating from the DRC in the form of bandit groups make Uganda's involvement inevitable ... The security problems of neighbours must be handled correctly and durably otherwise they invite intervention into internal affairs."²⁰

¹⁶ Congolese National Liberation Movement.

¹⁷ Union of Nationalist Republicans for the Liberation.

¹⁸ Agence France Presse (AFP), 20 August 1998.

¹⁹ Press release, President Museveni's office, 21 August 1998.

²⁰ Press release, State House, 16 September 1998.

Uganda and Rwanda say their troops are in Congo not only to look after their security interests but also to ensure a political solution in the DRC and to prevent further genocide. They try to justify their intervention by re-defining national sovereignty. Uganda's Minister of Regional Co-operation made the following statement at the Lusaka ministerial meeting on 26-27 October 1998: "There is an opinion, which we do not accept ... that a government, because it is ruling over a sovereign country like Congo or Uganda, has got a right, if it so chooses, to exterminate any group of people within that country."

This is the only occasion on which Uganda has acknowledged the presence of its troops in the DRC. Rwanda, although suspected of backing the rebels since August 1998, acknowledged its involvement only three months after the war had begun. However, admitting the existence of troops in the DRC does not automatically qualify the two countries as belligerents because they have consistently claimed that they are not engaged in combat against the DRC government and its allies. They claim that they are only fighting their own rebel groups based on Congolese territory, and therefore would not be bound by a cease-fire agreement.

The delayed confessions by the occupying forces are aimed at one key objective: recognition for the RCD rebels and their participation in the negotiations. If the negotiations include the RCD, then Uganda and Rwanda will have an ally in the peace process. In this case, Kabila would be unable to maintain his monopoly of power and would have to address the fundamental questions to which the Congolese expect answers as well as the issues that concern his former sponsors.

D. The Withdrawal of Foreign Troops

This issue has been a consistent feature at all the summits. Although a consensus was reached that all troops must withdraw, the possibility of this actually happening seems increasingly unrealistic. Museveni and Kagame declared on 26 March that their main enemies are Sudan and the Interahamwe and, "the conflict will only end when both are disarmed from the Congo".²¹ The Zimbabwean, Angolan, Namibian and Chadian troops invited in by Kabila say that they will only withdraw when the DRC government tells them to do so. Meanwhile, Uganda and Rwanda, which back the rebels, state that all foreign troops must leave Congo once an agreement has been reached on the guerrilla issue.

The external parties on the Kabila coalition side have very clearly intervened in the conflict. When it looked like the rebels might succeed in taking Kinshasa a week after the war broke out on 2 August 1998, three Southern African states, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola, provided support to save the regime. They justified this as an obligation to save the government of a legitimate SADC member state from the external aggression of Rwanda and Uganda. In an address to the September 1998 summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Durban (South Africa), President Mugabe of Zimbabwe said that if the three countries had not intervened, Congo would have been left with no government at all.

Kabila has made the withdrawal of the "uninvited" Ugandan and Rwandan troops a condition for talks to begin. He calculates that the Congolese rebels are militarily dependent on these countries' troops. If they were to leave the country, the military situation would then tilt in his favour and might even make negotiations irrelevant. On the rebel side, the withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan troops would mean the end of the rebellion. Now that the two countries are engaged in the war, it is tactically impossible for them to withdraw without at least securing the east of the country. In 1996, they mobilised a regional consensus to support Kabila and the AFDL²² and therefore assumed leadership in the region. By withdrawing their troops from the DRC at this stage, they risk losing their remaining influence in Congo and any hope of a reward for the 'investment' they have been making since 1996. Zimbabwe and

²¹ IRIN, 26 March 1999.

²² Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaïre), Kabila's original force.

Angola were also active in the AFDL, but never played a leadership role until Kabila himself invited them to do so.

The peacekeeping force

At the second Victoria Falls summit, cease-fire discussions resulted in the establishment of a mechanism to monitor compliance with its provisions, especially those relating to the withdrawal of foreign forces from the DRC. The agreement states that "the withdrawal of foreign forces from the national territory of the DRC shall be carried out after the effective deployment of a peacekeeping operation."²³ However, talks on the withdrawal of foreign troops and other peacekeeping questions have stalled on the issue of the 'legitimate security concerns of Rwanda and Uganda.'

Following consultations on 14 October 1998, President Museveni recognised that "the military presence of Uganda in the DRC is based on genuine and legitimate security interests and on its determination to prevent genocide in the area until a government of the DRC agreed on by all belligerent parties and opposition groups is in place, or the OAU puts in place an alternative arrangement." Rwandan Vice-President Kagame explained his concerns about "(i) continuing insecurity in Rwanda caused by ex-FAR and Interahamwe militia based in the DRC and supported by the Kabila government, (ii) state-inspired acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing of targeted groups of people in the DRC." Both Presidents reiterated that "it was precisely those issues of supporting terrorist groups and plans to commit genocide that had caused the two countries to be in conflict with the Mobutu regime in 1996/1997."²⁴

Since a cease-fire was drafted in Addis Ababa on 10 September 1998, an OAU inter-African force has been under discussion. However, Salim Ahmed Salim (secretary-general of the OAU) announced that the OAU lacked the capacity to manage such a force. President Museveni and President Ghaddafi met in Libya, where the two men focused on the idea of a neutral multinational force to replace the UDFP (Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social) in the Congo. The international community generally supported the idea of such a force and the UN sent one of Kofi Annan's military advisers to the October 1998 Lusaka meeting. At the Windhoek summit, the states involved in the war mandated Zambian President Chiluba to request the OAU and the UN to work out modalities for a peacekeeping force.

However, although all parties apparently accept the need for some form of peacekeeping force to oversee the implementation of any cease-fire or political agreement, many problems have arisen. First, Ghaddafi's association with the idea of a peacekeeping force meant that the initiative had little chance of acceptance. As the Ugandan journal, *The New Vision*, put it: "regional sources said an initiative by Libyan President Muammar Ghaddafi to pull together an African force to move into the former Zaire and secure its borders had little backing and in any case was a nightmare scenario for the west."²⁵ Second, there are many strings attached to the acceptance of a neutral multinational force. For example, Uganda will only consider withdrawal if "an international force that is neutral in terms of interstate relations and domestic politics is formed; and it has the capacity to stop the various rebel groups from using the Congolese rebels to destabilise Uganda; and this force has also the capacity to stop genocide."²⁶

In other words, by ringing a peacekeeping mandate with conditions, Uganda and Rwanda ensure that the deployment of such a force is all but impossible. Nonetheless, the idea continues to surface, as at the Paris Sommet de la Francophonie (November 1998) summit when Kofi Annan said, "we may need to create a buffer zone and bring in observers. I believe the UN can play a role. We cannot leave that solely to Africans."²⁷

²³ Draft cease-fire agreement, Addis Ababa, 10 September 1998.

²⁴ Press statement, State House, Kampala, 14 October 1998

²⁵ Buchizya Mseteka, Mandela's bid for peace in the Congo, *The New Vision*, 10 November 1998.

²⁶ Adonia Ayebare, *Sunday Vision*, 8 November 1998.

²⁷ Europe 1, quoted by *The New Vision*, 1 December 1998

The rebels and their backers know full well that there is very little likelihood of such a peacekeeping force. Even if they agreed to the principle, it is unlikely that such a force could be formed. Who would offer troops for a force intended to secure the borders of at least three countries over thousands of miles from Sudan to Zambia? And what mandate would such a force have? Would it fall under Chapter VI (a post-agreement peacekeeping operation)? And if so, how would it defend itself against the various guerrilla groups based in the DRC? Indeed, if it had to do so, the operation would then fall under Chapter VII (peace-enforcement). But given that the international community failed to separate *bona fide* refugees from among the FAR and militia troops in the Goma camps in 1994-1996, it is unlikely that they would now approve a Chapter VII intervention to deal with the many different rebel movements on DRC territory. Finally, even if a mandate were agreed, which countries' troops would be considered appropriate for a neutral mediation force?

E. Direct Involvement of the Rebels in Peace Talks

Although direct rebel involvement in peace talks has come up at every summit of heads of state, the "non-state" players do not participate in such meetings. At the second Victoria Falls summit, SADC heads of state, together with the presidents of Uganda and Rwanda, mandated neutral countries to act as mediators: Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa and Zambia. This block of neutral countries, chaired by President Chiluba of Zambia, is working closely with the OAU and has received the support of the international community, the US and France. In general, the international community has supported SADC as a framework for achieving a solution in Congo as no other institution appears to have the capacity or the will to work towards a settlement of the war.

There has been minor progress in the situation regarding rebel involvement in SADC-brokered negotiations. At the SADC meeting in Gaborone, Botswana, the rebels were consulted by the proxy committee set up by the Lusaka ministerial meeting. Despite the lack of any direct and official contact between the rebels and the SADC, individual meetings were held with Presidents Nelson Mandela, Benjamin Mkapa, Yoweri Museveni, Frederick Chiluba and Muammar Ghaddafi.

However, this approach has not worked well. After that first meeting with the proxy committee, the rebels rejected further consultation-by-proxy and said that they would only participate in future negotiations as direct contributors. On 10 December 1998, South Africa endorsed the rebels' position by saying that there was no point to negotiations in which they were not directly involved. This has thrown the Lusaka initiative into disarray and led to the postponement of a summit scheduled for 14 December 1998. Uganda and Rwanda had previously walked out of most of the early Lusaka meetings in protest at the refusal to allow rebel participation.

The latest talks among technical experts in Lusaka from 15-17 April represented a major step forward as the RCD was allowed to participate officially for the first time. But this technical meeting aimed at paving the way for a cease-fire and changing the rules of the negotiating process broke down without reaching any agreement when the rebels walked out. They protested that they were only given the agenda of the meeting on the day of the meeting itself and that their request to meet Kabila face-to-face had been rejected. Rwanda did not send a delegation to the Lusaka meeting claiming it was "a mere waste of time" unless the RCD was involved directly in peace talks and as long as there was no cease-fire agreement²⁸.

However, Kabila's approach to rebel involvement seems to have evolved. At first he said that he would never meet them directly and insisted that there was no internal rebellion. Later, he said he was willing to meet them if they came to Kinshasa. At the N'djamena summit, he agreed in principle to meet with them anywhere in mid-March, he said that he was ready to hold direct talks, perhaps under the auspices of the Community of Sant' Egidio, a Roman Catholic organisation based in Rome.²⁹ His foreign affairs minister, Abdoulaye Yerodia,

²⁸ Patrick Mazimpaka, minister in the president's office, 16 April, 1999.

²⁹ IRIN, 17 March 1999. The Community of Sant' Egidio has been involved in many mediation processes, including the current Burundi Peace Talks.

confirmed that the government has agreed to meet the rebels "to reach an agreement on elections, an electoral law and the Constitution. We shall go to the place which the OAU and other international organisations suggest to meet the others".³⁰

However, the rebels remain sceptical about Kabila's intentions. Wamba said on 8 March 1999: "Every other day, Kabila, as he moves around, announces that he will meet us, but this is a publicity exercise. Nobody has yet been able to work out what he is proposing".³¹

If the rebels are allowed to negotiate directly, the next issue is likely to be representation. The split in the RCD and the emergence of other rebel groups, such as the URNLC, led by Mobutu's former Special Presidential Division, and Bemba's MNLC, operating in Equateur province, create confusion about the status and various claims of the different groups. Would the RCD represent all these groups in any negotiations? If not, should they all be invited to take part in direct talks?

F. Reaching a Political Settlement and Kabila's Future as President

The rebels are using the negotiating card in order to put Kabila under scrutiny and to give them an opportunity to point out the flaws in his government, especially his refusal to broaden the political spectrum. The call for a power-sharing formula is likely to win the backing of other major political parties, such as the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social³² (UDPS) led by Etienne Tshisekedi. They speculate that Kabila's failure to enter into direct negotiations with them will lead to Kabila being seen as an obstacle to the return of peace in Congo.

When he was leading the rebellion against Mobutu in 1996, Kabila refused to attend a meeting, aboard a ship, organised by South Africa to meet President Mobutu. This was against the advice of his backers, Museveni and Mandela. Kabila is quite likely to continue to employ stalling tactics in order to pursue a military victory, even if his current allies want him to enter negotiations.

Kabila has now himself, become an obstacle to inclusive negotiations under the terms fixed by Uganda and Rwanda. But he seems no longer opposed to the idea of talks as long as he controls the process and it does not threaten his position as president. He recently lifted the ban on political parties, called for a national debate and even invited the rebels to join a debate on future elections. As long as he continues to enjoy international recognition as the president of Congo, and to receive the diplomatic support and recognition of SADC countries, he is likely to maintain both domestic support and that of his allies.

Uganda and Rwanda, which together led the regional initiative in 1996-97 to bring Kabila to power, are now leading the initiative to overthrow him. However, if they are unable make quick progress on the battlefield, and if Kabila shows a clear commitment to democratise the country, they might be forced to work with him.

G. Identifying the mediators

The final reason why negotiations cannot work is the choice of mediator. Zambian President Chiluba is leading the Lusaka process, but Zambia has no coercive power to ensure negotiations work. Although a SADC member state, Zambia has no determining role in the regional organisation where it is overshadowed by the 'giants': South Africa, Angola and Zimbabwe; and it only has a very small army. Furthermore, the Angolan government has now accused President Chiluba of supporting UNITA.

Confidence in President Chiluba as a mediator is evaporating. Kabila and his allies believe he is close to the rebels and their allies, Uganda and Rwanda. He has therefore turned to for Joachim Chissano, president of Mozambique, as an alternative mediator, and this is causing confusion about just who is playing the main role. In addition, instead of concentrating on the

³⁰ IRIN, 24 March 1999.

³¹ AFP, 8 March 1999.

³² Union for Democracy and Social Progress.

Congo negotiations, President Chiluba is trying to clear his name over the allegations that his government is assisting UNITA. As a result, the DRC government has been looking to Togolese President Eyadema and Kenyan President Arap Moi to act as mediators.³³

South Africa

Although not involved militarily in the Congo, South Africa is a major player in the Congolese conflict. Since the war began, President Mandela has been calling for a negotiated settlement that addresses the security concerns of Uganda and Rwanda, and the withdrawal of all foreign troops. He has also played a key role in convincing Rwandan Vice-President Paul Kagame to admit to his country's military involvement in Congo. Mandela's peace plan calls on the international community to underwrite security guarantees for Rwanda and to prevent attacks by exiled Hutus now enjoying the patronage of Kabila's government. South Africa supports Rwanda's position regarding the continuing threat from armed opponents blamed for the 1994 genocide, and has therefore been selling arms to Kigali. Rwanda would benefit substantially from supporting a negotiated settlement. It could then mobilise international support for a durable solution to its own security problem.

Mandela's efforts are said to have the blessing of the UN and the US. His recent demand that no further negotiations should take place without the direct involvement of the rebels has thrown the SADC-initiated negotiations off balance.

The Khadafi initiative

According to a Reuters report in *The Monitor* newspaper of 28 December 1998, President Khadafi met Kabila on 25 December 1998 and rebel leader Wamba Dia Wamba two days later. According to the Kinshasa-based newspaper, *La Reference Plus*, of 28 December 1998, the rebel leader told President Khadafi that the RCD claimed the post of vice-president and the ministries of defence and foreign affairs in a future government of national unity. It is not yet clear how President Kabila reacted to these demands. Khadafi met Ugandan President Museveni on 28 December and a subsequent press release from State House in Kampala indicated that "both Presidents discussed issues related to the developments in the Great Lakes region."

After the most recent Lusaka talks broke off without any agreement, Presidents Kabila and Museveni met again with Khadafi on 17 April 1999 in Sirte, Libya, and put their names to a cease-fire accord. This agreement provides for the deployment of peacekeeping forces in the Great Lakes region and the withdrawal of foreign troops. It also calls for a national dialogue in the DRC with all sides participating. The mini-summit reportedly called for continued mediation by Khadafi, who declared the agreement to be "the beginning of a tangible solution to the greatest current problem in Africa". Speaking after the signing ceremony, he said that the "revolutionary African will" that had brought about this accord could now be applied to other conflict areas, such as the Horn of Africa³⁴.

However on 20 April, Uganda's foreign affairs minister, Amama Mbabazi, played down the significance of the Libyan peace deal. "The peace agreement is simply a statement of our desires - what we would like to happen in Congo. But it's not enough just to talk about ceasing hostilities or withdrawing our forces. We need details on how we would go about implementing a cease-fire, while our withdrawal is contingent on our security concerns being addressed and an international peacekeeping force coming in."³⁵ Mbabazi said that the Libyan peace agreement, which is yet to be made public, included a resolution for a cease-fire, withdrawal of foreign forces and deployment of a neutral international peacekeeping force. He added that it

³³ IRIN, 1 April 1999, IRIN 22 April 1999.

³⁴ IRIN, 19 April 1999.

³⁵ AFP, 20 April 1999.

also expressed the need to guarantee the security of DRC's neighbours, to hunt down and punish those responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and the necessity of dialogue among the Congolese people. Finally, he pointed out that the Libyan peace agreement should link up with the SADC-sponsored peace talks in Lusaka, which have been trying to bring about a negotiated end to the conflict since war first broke out.

Libya has greatly stepped up its diplomatic involvement in sub-Saharan Africa after African governments agreed last summer to defy the UN air embargo imposed in response to the 1988 Lockerbie bombing. Libya, which has bankrolled the Chadian military intervention in Congo, is trying to use the conflict in Congo to announce a shift in the focus of its foreign policy from Arab to African issues. This move results mainly from the OAU's support for Khadafi in his fight against sanctions. Libya funded the last meeting of the Pan-African Movement in Zanzibar in April 1999. Before the Sirte agreement was signed, Khadafi hosted a regional summit attended by Presidents Omar al-Beshir of Sudan, Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali and Idriss Deby of Chad. President Issaias Afewerki of Eritrea and President Ange Patasse of the Central African Republic also attended the summit of the Common Market for East and Central Africa (COMESA) as observers. Libya's deputy minister for foreign affairs, Ali Triki, is quoted as saying: "What matters to us is the stability of Africa."

The mediation effort by the Community of Sant' Egidio

The Roman Catholic Community of Sant'Egidio, which has been involved in brokering African conflicts in the past, invited both sides of the DRC to meet in Rome on 30 April 1999. The talks have now been postponed to 8 May and are to be hosted in Nairobi. It is intended that they should take place within the framework of the national debate proposed by Kabila last month.

Rebel leaders stressed that President Kabila would have to meet some of their terms if they were to attend. Jean-Pierre Bemba of the MNL, says his presence depends on the release of all political prisoners by Kinshasa, and Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, head of RCD, insists on the participation of the "internal Congolese domestic opposition". He also insists that the main items on the agenda should be a cease-fire and preparations for peace. Wamba supported Bemba's call for the release of political prisoners as "a sign of good faith", calling on the Kinshasa government to provide such "signs" as proof that there would be "an atmosphere of trust".

When Kabila proposed this debate a few weeks ago, he said the main theme would be "the legitimacy of the government."

III. WHOSE WAR IS IT ANYWAY?

The major reason why the negotiations have not taken off is that the nature of the conflict has not been clearly identified. In fact, it is a civil war that has taken on external dimensions. The DRC's internal political problems are at the roots of the security concerns of neighbouring states; and these regional interests are themselves the reason why the conflict has developed such military magnitude.

Two strategies are at work behind the political and diplomatic rhetoric: one is directed towards a negotiated settlement, while the other focuses on the military option. The parties all need time to prepare for both outcomes. While each side pays lip service to the principle of negotiations, the continued fighting clearly contradicts their public positions. No party, internal or external, can afford to abandon the military option, so they are all "buying time" by finding excuses to delay negotiations. What do they expect to gain from this?

A. The Congolese Parties to the Conflict

1. Kabila: Buying Time

Kabila needs time to manoeuvre into a position from which he can dictate the terms of the negotiations. He has three objectives: to develop his own military capacity, to mobilise domestic opinion in his favour and to augment diplomatic support among the international community.

▪ Developing Military Capacity

When Kabila came to power, he decided to reform the army. This was to become an integrated force comprised of soldiers of Mobutu's Forces Armées Zairoises³⁶ (FAZ), and Kabila's own core force of Banyamulenge and *Katangan gendarmes*. However, neither of the latter elements was sufficiently well equipped or adequately trained to take command of the new FAC army. This explains the emergence of officers from the ranks of ex-FAZ troops, such as Jean-Pierre Ondekane, who is now leading the rebel movement. It also partly explains why Joseph Kabila, the president's son, was appointed FAC chief of staff. His initial military training was under the Tanzanians during the 1996 war, and he was receiving further training in China when the rebellion broke out in August 1998. Kabila has never won the loyalty of the ex-FAZ. They have not forgotten their humiliating defeat by the AFDL in 1996 and soon defected to the rebel side soon after this latest conflict began.

Most of the better-trained FAC troops belonged to the elite unit of the 10th Battalion stationed in Goma. It was this unit, numbering 25,000 men, which launched the rebellion on 2 August 1998 from FAC headquarters in Kivu. An official announcement that the FAC had started a war to liberate their country was broadcast over Radio Goma by one of their officers, Sylvain Mbuki. Kabila denounced them as traitors and puppets of Rwanda and Uganda. Their defection led directly to the loss of Kivu. They immediately started marching north towards Oriental and Equateur provinces, south to Northern Katanga and also towards the centre of the country; the FAC troops stationed in those provinces all defected to the rebel movement.

In response, Kabila has embarked on a massive recruitment exercise to plug the gap in the FAC's ranks. However, the deserters included the more experienced FAC soldiers and the new and obviously inexperienced recruits have not proved up to the job. Kabila has therefore had to co-opt more seasoned fighters from among the ex-FAR and Interahamwe militias, soldiers who formerly fought for Idi Amin, and the Burundian FDD in order to beef up his war machine.

Those different forces were co-opted from all around the DRC: from Congo-Brazzaville, Central African Republic, Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania. The only common point on their agendas is the desire to fight their respective governments. The final report of the UN Commission of Enquiry on the Flow of Arms to Former Rwandan Armed Forces confirms that Rwandan Hutu forces have become *de facto* allies of the DRC government.³⁷ Burundian FDD troops have also been reported to be fighting near Moba.³⁸ According to interviews conducted in Kigali,³⁹ Rwandan officials claim that the contacts with the Interahamwe started almost as soon as Kabila took over and that his government "has gathered today 10,000 members of a militia force being trained in Katanga."⁴⁰ However, this information is difficult to verify. The lack of cohesion and the heterogeneous composition of his own army puts Kabila in a vulnerable position and has led him to rely on these foreign forces. His future as president will largely be determined by foreign intervention, as was the case for Mobutu.

▪ Mobilising Popular Support

³⁶ Zairean Armed Forces.

³⁷ "Now Hutu Rebels Stock up Arms in Support of Kabila", *The East African*, 30 November-6 December, 1998.

³⁸ "300 rebelles hutu des FDD ont été capturés", AFP, 12 December 1998.

³⁹ Interviews conducted by an ICG researcher in November 1998.

⁴⁰ AFP, quoted by *The Monitor*, 28 August 1998.

With vast areas in the east beyond the authority of the government, Kabila has resorted to media propaganda in order to reach the population there. This was pitched at three different levels: nationalist, ethnic and military. By appealing to his population to resist the 'foreign aggressors' and playing on their nationalist feelings, he has gained considerable popularity. When the war broke out, he handed Rwanda a tailor-made argument to become involved by saying: "The war should be taken to where it came from ... We will defend ourselves... the Rwandans will not win the war... we're not going to lower ourselves to be the pawn of a little country like Rwanda and a little people."⁴¹ Mobutu had already portrayed the 1996 rebellion as a Rwandan rebellion. Kabila believes that Rwanda's support for the 1996 rebellion is now widely understood, making it far easier to raise international suspicion about its involvement since 1998. At the same time, he wants to erase all memory of the well-documented assistance provided by Rwanda in 1996-1997. Such foreign support, especially from Rwanda, does not earn him the people's approval.

Kabila has used the war to turn himself into a Congolese nationalist, accusing Uganda and Rwanda of aggression and 'imperialist intentions'. Boosting his popularity in this way is a political investment he expects to realise in future elections; he hopes that his wartime reputation will transform him into a 'liberator' in the people's eyes. He would like to appear as the successor to Patrice Lumumba, the national hero who was killed after Zaire won independence.

The second component of Kabila's populist strategy has been wilfully to incite ethnic hatred. A year ago he was perceived as pro-Tutsi, but in order to play on nationalist sentiment, he has had to turn against his former allies. Tutsi Rwandans and the Congolese Banyamulenge believe the anti-Tutsi propaganda is based on the perception of many Congolese that this war is a foreign invasion. Kabila publicly appealed to his people in an August 1998 radio broadcast to "take up arms, even traditional weapons - bows and arrows, spears and other things" to kill Tutsi, "otherwise they will make us their slaves."⁴² Senior government officials have openly instigated violence against the Tutsi in Kinshasa who have been hunted down and killed. In order to capitalise on his new popularity, Kabila recently announced that elections would be held in April 1999. In February 1999 he lifted the ban on political parties, although he also introduced many conditions for registration. The war has brought him some of the legitimacy that he had been lacking since May 1997 when he was seen as 'a puppet of the Tutsi'. Now he is buying time in order to campaign for victory in the elections.

Kabila has set up an efficient propaganda machine to mobilise the population in support of his war effort. One tactic he has used is to claim victories where they do not exist. For example, at one point the ministry of defence in Kinshasa announced that government troops were successfully fighting a battle for Kindu airport, which was not the case. However, since most Congolese tend to believe what is said over the radio, the announcement caused panic in rebel-controlled territory and jubilation in Kinshasa over the fall of Kindu! Kabila has been effective in his use of the media to mobilise the population. This is an advantage he holds over the rebels who lack the facilities to use the media in the same way.

In a recent cabinet reshuffle, Kabila brought in Saolona Bemba, father of Jean-Pierre Bemba, the rebel leader of one of the groups fighting to topple his government. This move was aimed at winning support from the pro-Mobutu forces that have previously supported the rebellion. Saolona Bemba has been made minister for the economy and industry and is said to be popular in Equateur, Mobutu's home province.

▪ Shopping for Diplomatic Support

Kabila also needs time to build up his diplomatic networks. He has travelled all over the African continent soliciting diplomatic and military support. He first concentrated on the SADC countries and met with some success. Three countries, including two major SADC member states, have provided him with troops: Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia. Since the beginning of

⁴¹ AFP, quoted by *The Monitor*, 7 August 1998.

⁴² Ann Simmons, "New genocide is feared in festering Congo", *Los Angeles Times*, 22 October 1998.

the war, Kabila has made four visits to both Libya and Sudan, and has also visited Chad, Nigeria, Egypt, Central African Republic, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, and Kenya. He has used the vocabulary of ethnic hatred throughout the region and given further life to the myth of an expansionist 'Hima Empire' and the need for "Bantu solidarity against the Nilotic people". Surprisingly, some African leaders don't seem to mind this ethnic line; President Mugabe, for example has referred to "this ethnic war".

Kabila is also reaching out to the Arab world. He has made a state visit to Saudi Arabia and held meetings in Sudan and Libya. In soliciting Sudan and Libya, he revives memories of colonial days and neo-Marxism that encourage support for his cause. On one of his trips to Libya, President Ghaddafi called for African unity against the 'American plot' in Africa: "When the United States sensed the African continent was moving towards unity, it created a conspiracy at the heart of the continent to block that unity."⁴³

He has lobbied the OAU, also with a measure of success as he gained recognition for government and the territorial sovereignty of the DRC. Trying to prove his point by reference to international laws, Kabila constantly refers to the OAU charter and the violation of the territorial integrity of the DRC in an effort to draw international support for his cause. He exploits international concern that the break-up of Congo as a nation-state could lead to a conflict engulfing the whole African continent. On a different scale, the break-up of the DRC could signal the end of the colonial borders recognised by the OAU. The US has been clear on the need to respect the territorial sovereignty of the DRC. As Susan Rice – Deputy Secretary of State for African Affairs - said on 21 October 1998 at Columbia University: "The more countries we have involved, the more complicated it becomes to unravel. This is becoming akin to Africa's First World War."⁴⁴

In November 1998, Kabila went to Italy where he met Pope John Paul II and President Scalfaro. He continued on to Belgium where he was received by the king and the prime minister and also attended the Francophonie summit in Paris. The summit was attended by 49 heads of state and was used by other African leaders to criticise the Rwandan and Ugandan presidents, Bizimungu and Museveni. Kabila chose to speak the language of democracy while in Europe, and announced that he was going to organise elections.

On 12 April, he succeeded in getting a Security Council resolution passed that included a reaffirmation of the "obligation of all States to respect the territorial integrity, political independence and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other States in the region (...), and further reaffirms the need for all States to refrain from any interference in each other's internal affairs, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations; (...) calls upon those States to bring to an end the presence of these uninvited forces and to take immediate steps to that end; (...) calls for the immediate signing of a cease-fire agreement allowing the orderly withdrawal of all foreign forces, the re-establishment of the authority of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo throughout its territory, and the disarmament of non-governmental armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and welcomes the intention of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to hold an all-inclusive national debate as a precursor to elections, and encourages further progress in this respect."

B. The Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD)

The RCD also need time to win credibility and to succeed in making the conflict look like a purely internal civil war, but their cohesion is undermined on several fronts.

An Ad Hoc Coalition

The RCD was formed on 1 August 1998, just one day before the war broke out, which indicates a lack of political preparation. Many anti-Kabila forces and personalities were called

⁴³ "Ghaddafi hails Mugabe, Kabila denounces the US", *The Monitor*, 23 November 1998.

⁴⁴ "Leave DRC, US urges Museveni, Kagame", cited in *The East African*, 26 October 1998.

to an emergency meeting in Goma that day, some who had worked with Kabila and some key people from the 1996 struggle. They include the following.

1. Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, an independent professor from Dar es Salaam university who never joined the AFDL and has criticised Kabila's regime since its inception;⁴⁵
2. Arthur Zahidi Ngoma, president of the opposition party, Forces du Futur,⁴⁶ and a well-known opponent of Mobutu who has never worked with Kabila;
3. A number of former AFDL members: Moise Nyarugabo, former private secretary to Kabila, who left Kinshasa two months before the rebellion broke out; Bizima Karaha, Kabila's former foreign affairs minister; Déogratias Bugera, former secretary-general of the AFDL and a Kabila minister; Kalala Shambuye, ex-AFDL official.
4. Army officers: Commander Jean-Pierre Ondekane, Sylvain Mbuki, Bob Ngoy, Nuru Songoro.

The movement is officially based on criticism of the AFDL that has grown since Kabila took over. Indeed, Kabila has distanced himself from the movement and its founders; for example, he has left AFDL officials without budget or facilities, refused to convene AFDL meetings on several occasions and refused to acknowledge their claims to a role in government. Some AFDL officials claim that when the movement was created there was an agreement to include other political parties once they reached Kinshasa. The FAC in the east also had complaints. They claim they received no support from the government to fight the Mai-Mai and that the government may even have given the Mai-Mai some support. The *kadogos* who had been fighting with Kabila against Mobutu were also dissatisfied because Kabila had suggested that they would be demobilised without formulating a policy for their reintegration into society.

The RCD's operating philosophy and apparent objectives appear to differ significantly from these on which the AFDL was posited. In the protocol agreement signed by the RCD's founders, the most striking element is the claim that Kabila's primary fault was to claim personal credit for the victory of the Congolese people over Mobutu. In short, the AFDL victory created a window of opportunity for Kabila that he has wasted no time in putting to use for his own ends. The preamble to the protocol agreement expresses the feeling that he has been let down.

"Considering the struggles carried out by our people to liberate themselves from Mobutu's dictatorship, considering Mr Kabila's confiscation of power and his poor leadership characterised by: the concentration of power in the hands of his own family; the absence of any rational organisation and the poor method of approach towards the organisation of the state machinery; the refusal to put in place democratic and republican institutions; the embezzlement, the misappropriation of public funds and corruption; the daily mismanagement; the diplomatic isolation; the massive violations of human rights; the refusal to abide by the laws and the regulations of the republic; considering policies aimed at excluding other political groups thereby pushing the country into despotism; the absence of a long-term vision of society and a political programme after a period of one and a half years in power; the refusal or the incapacity to eradicate all sorts of actions deplorable to our people, etc...."

As expressed in the statement announcing their programme, the RCD's objectives have two dimensions. First, an internal dimension, which intends an end to all forms of dictatorship and the construction of a united, democratic and prosperous state by "safeguarding national sovereignty, territorial integrity and equal rights of citizenship for all." Second, an external focus on regional security "by working for peace and stability in the sub-region; by commitment to a refusal to allow Congolese territory to be used for the purpose of destabilising

⁴⁵ Paper presented at the Makerere University in July 1997.

⁴⁶ Future Force.

neighbouring countries; by relying on economic development as a factor for regional integration and solidarity in the sub-region; by contributing toward the development of an African renaissance; by working for the development of an international co-operation that is equitable and mutually beneficial."

The founder members of the RCD are a heterogeneous coalition whose opposition to Kabila is the only common denominator. They come from diverse political backgrounds and only joined together in August 1998 to launch the rebellion against Kabila. The first three months of the conflict were spent attempting to co-ordinate the different interests of the various political factions within the rebel movement.

Wamba dia Wamba is the leader of one of these factions. He is the president of a movement that is supported by the majority of newcomers to the political arena, as well as by key regional leaders such as Julius Nyerere and Yoweri Museveni. His RCD appointment is the result of a compromise between conflicting interests within the party. Another faction is composed of AFDL remnants such as Moise Nyarugabo, the first vice-president of the RCD, Déogratias Bugera, former secretary-general of the AFDL and a minister in President Kabila's office, and Bizima Karaha, former minister of foreign affairs and now the RCD's external co-ordinator. The third faction is led by Lunda Bululu, who was prime minister under Mobutu's first transitional government and is now executive council co-ordinator. He draws support from politicians who served under Mobutu and also seems to enjoy some support from the population because of his background as a former prime minister.

Most RCD officials interviewed by an ICG field researcher conceded that the multiplicity of political interests, including those of their major political backers, Uganda and Rwanda, are leading to a lack of cohesion in the movement. But these political differences are officially played down. In an interview with Reuters in Goma, RCD Vice-President Moise Nyarugabo said: "This is normal and it can happen that any movement may contain some differences. But the differences we are facing we are facing as a team."

▪ **Seeking international recognition**

The RCD has managed to emerge from the diplomatic isolation it experienced at the beginning of the rebellion, for which Uganda and Rwanda are widely considered to have been responsible. In the five months since the conflict began, the rebel leadership has undertaken diplomatic missions in Africa, Europe and North America. Within the region, the RCD leadership has managed to gain support from South Africa, which has made direct rebel involvement in talks with President Kabila a prerequisite for the resumption of SADC-sponsored negotiations under the chairmanship of President Chiluba of Zambia. Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola, SADC member states that intervened militarily to save Kabila's regime, initially managed to diplomatically isolate the rebels and their main backers Rwanda and Uganda. However, South Africa has succeeded in encouraging most SADC members towards supporting the Mandela peace plan.

Senior RCD officials have met several heads of states, including the presidents of Zambia, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Libya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, and some have visited Europe and North America. According to Bizima Karaha, the RCD's former external relations' co-ordinator, most of these diplomatic contacts are still in their early stages. The RCD received a boost in its quest for diplomatic recognition with President Chiluba's announcement that the rebels would be directly involved, for the first time, in the Lusaka talks scheduled for 15-16 January 1999.

▪ **An unpopular rebellion**

The rebel movement's credibility is undermined by many recent reports criticising human rights violations committed by rebel soldiers. A Human Rights Watch report released in February 1999 documents rebel abuses including civilian massacres, arbitrary detention of political opponents and harassment of human rights defenders. It also says government forces are

responsible for the continuing persecution of ethnic Tutsis, restrictions on basic freedoms and violations of the conventions of war. Human Rights Watch senior researcher Suliman Baldo stated: "Both sides are committing terrible abuses in this war, killing innocent civilians and wreaking destruction on the countryside. But outside powers, some of which have gotten involved in the bloodshed, also have a responsibility to stop these gross violations of the laws of war."

The latest report on the human rights situation in Congo by UN Special Investigator Roberto Garreton accuses both the government and the rebel forces of gross human rights violations, although he says that the rebel forces have massacred civilians and enforced a reign of terror far exceeding any violations committed by the government. Garreton describes rebel-run prisons as genuine torture centres and calls many of them 'extermination' centres. He said that: "The rebel forces must understand that they do not have any popular support and that they are seen as aggressors who have placed the people under a climate of terror."

▪ **Tensions between Banyamulenge and Rwandans**

Clashes between Banyamulenge soldiers and the Rwandan army in Uvira in February and March 1999 are another sign of growing tension. Pushed into the forefront by the conflict, the Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsi) are more an instrument of this revolt than the initiators. Their participation in the AFDL war has seen their standing within Congo deteriorate for several reasons. The dispute over their nationality and the strained relations with other ethnic groups has contributed to a feeling of insecurity. Their leaders' political ambitions remain unfulfilled, while relations with their former Rwandan allies have deteriorated. The tension between the Banyamulenge and their Rwandan ethnic cousins is another irony of the Congo conflict. The Rwandans say that their intervention in Congo was partly to protect the Banyamulenge who were under threat from other ethnic groups, while the Banyamulenge say the Rwandans only use them as a pretext for their intervention in Congo. They claim that their association with Rwanda is isolating them from other Congolese and argue that their concerns about citizenship and security should take centre stage in the war.

Banyamulenge politicians in the RCD such as Bizima Karaha and Moise Nyarugabo, as well as some military commanders, have been trying without success to make peace with other disgruntled Banyamulenge leaders such as Mutambo. The Rwandan army, in alliance with other Congolese forces, is pushing the war deeper into Congo and the general view is that the Banyamulenge question has been put on hold for the moment. Meanwhile, some of the Banyamulenge fighters opposed to what they call the RCD and Rwandan approach are exploiting the divisions between Ugandan and Rwandan forces in Congo by requesting to join up with the Ugandans. Ugandan officers are said to have visited Uvira with the aim of opening up a frontline in the south together with the Banyamulenge.

▪ **The Mouvement national de libération congolais (MNL): a Ugandan response to the RCD's unpopularity**

Uganda, a major military backer of the RCD, has registered its disappointment with the party's political programme by backing a rival anti-Kabila group led by businessman Jean-Pierre Bemba, which emerged in Northern Congo in November 1998. This group operates out of Mobutu's home province of Equateur. Bemba is the son of Saolona Bemba, who became a millionaire under the Mobutu regime and has business interests in coffee companies, a media group, airlines and phone companies. Bemba senior has been in and out of prison since Kabila took power. Bemba junior, who claims to have the same objective as the RCD, to topple Kabila, has received training and military backing from Ugandan troops. Within three months he claimed the capture of a string of towns in Equateur and is also credited with "pulverising detachments of troops from Chad in the North."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ "Uneasy Alliance", *East African Alternatives*, Jan/Feb 1999, p 6.

Efforts to bring together Bemba and the mainstream RCD movement have been unsuccessful despite meetings in Kampala between Bemba and the RCD leadership. A senior Ugandan official told ICG that it agreed in principle that the two groups should work together: "Our President told both Bemba and the RCD leadership that he cannot support a faction and called for unity." For some time, Bemba operated independently of the RCD, but then stopped claiming victories for his little-known Mouvement de Libération Congolais. This has recently changed again with Bemba once more claiming that "he has nothing to do with the RCD".

Anna Borzello recently wrote in the influential BBC Focus on Africa magazine⁴⁸: "However, informed sources suggest that Bemba played a significant role for Ugandans because he expressed a strong belief in the importance of mobilising the population. The Ugandans felt that Kabila, whom they had originally supported, had not been able to popularise his government and widen his political base. This, Kampala believes, is their only way to guarantee the DRC's long term stability and in turn Uganda's own security interests. Already the RCD rebels have been criticised for not building that base of popular support. Bemba therefore seemed to be a living reminder to them not to make Kabila's mistakes".

▪ **Disagreement over RCD strategy creates tension between Uganda and Rwanda**

Uganda's support for Bemba is the result of the power struggle between the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) and the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and has created differences between Kampala and Kigali over their approach to the war. Some senior army officers have used the press to attack each other openly. *The New Times*, a pro-RPF weekly newspaper, attacked senior Ugandan military officers in its 12-18 October 1998 issue for using the war in Congo to enrich themselves and to spread anti-Rwandan propaganda: "General Saleh deployed gold diggers: when the war broke out in Congo, this clique saw it as a windfall - literally a goldmine. You don't need to look far for evidence of this shameful degeneration on the part of the UPDF. All you need to do is look at the line up of UPDF commanders who have been deployed to conduct the war in Congo. It is a group of men rotten to the core." As a result, Museveni ordered the arrest of some officers accused of corruption,⁴⁹ but did not remove Kazini.

Another Rwandan criticism of Ugandan strategy concerns Bemba's ties with the Mobutist generals who have links with Hutu opposition groups. Kigali officials are concerned that Bemba's connections with Mobutists could jeopardise their diplomatic efforts to convince Angola that Rwanda had no connection with UNITA. It is well known that the Mobutu regime supported UNITA against the Dos Santos government for years.

The Monitor, a Ugandan newspaper, reported in its 27 December 1998 issue that tensions between the RPA and the UPDF reached a climax with an exchange of fire, resulting in casualties on both sides. The Monitor quoted senior Ugandan army officers' criticisms of both the RCD and the Rwandan army. For example, an officer who has just returned from Congo, said: "The RCD is nothing on the ground. They were just handpicked by Kigali after their planned coup against Kabila failed. They are just beginning to organise themselves into a serious rebel group. But when you go to areas where Bemba operates, you see signs of a real insurrection by Congolese people themselves. The RCD, on the other hand, is nothing without Ugandan and Rwandan troops."

However, Major Ndahiro, Vice-President Kagame's adviser and military spokesman, denied that there was any fighting between the Ugandan and Rwandan armies, but acknowledged that there had been a rift between some UPDF officers and RCD officials over new recruits. In an interview with *The Monitor*, Major Ndahiro said that UPDF officers wanted most of the recruits to be deployed with Bemba's MLC, while the RCD wanted them under their control. Information available to ICG indicates that the Ugandan army has been in charge of training rebels recruited by the RCD. Press reports in November 1998 announced that the problem was being resolved by the formation of a joint military command for troops in Congo, but this

⁴⁸ *Focus on Africa*, January-March 1999.

⁴⁹ IRIN, 29 December 1998.

was immediately denied by the Rwandan government, which dismissed the report as "pure lies".⁵⁰

Without a joint command between Uganda and Rwanda, the rebellion in Congo will remain deeply divided. On the ground, both forces seem to be competing with rather than complementing the other, arguing over which is the best army and which is more disciplined, and making mutual accusations about responsibility for past mistakes. The leaders of both armies have expressed a willingness to work together, but this has not been translated into action on the ground, raising the question of how far this is an expression of a genuine desire to co-operate.

The Rwandans and the Ugandans have essentially different approaches to the war in Congo. The Ugandans believe that a political approach must accompany military action in order to ensure a durable solution. According to Museveni, Congo has never been "liberated" and the Congolese must be empowered to do this for themselves. The Rwandans give absolute priority to the military approach, which is intended to neutralise their enemy and secure Kivu.

If the two armies continue to pursue conflicting strategies in Congo, the creation of further factions is likely, which will be difficult to control in future. Even if there is a military victory on the rebel side, there is a risk of replaying the Somalia scenario: no central control over an increasing number of different factions.

▪ **Could General Ilunga be a unifying factor?**

Uganda and Rwanda have jointly agreed on the head of the new rebel army, who has also been appointed minister for defence by the RCD leadership in Goma. He is General Emile Ilunga, a former head of military intelligence under Mobutu and also head of the political wing of the Katangans in Angola. This appointment is seen as a face-saving measure by both armies, which finally realised that their continuing differences could wreck their chances for realising their objectives in Congo. General Ilunga is from Kasai province, an opposition stronghold, and is not tainted to the same extent as other generals who served under Mobutu. He is said to be respected by the Angolan government because he distanced himself from UNITA's leadership.

▪ **RCD leadership problems and the widening gap between the political and military wings**

The civilian RCD has neither a charismatic nor a clear-cut leadership. Indeed, they accuse each other of misusing funds, failing to rally popular support and claiming personal credit for successes in the anti-Kabila struggle. The movement has been starved of an effective decision-making mechanism as the current leadership is supposed to work on a collegiate basis, meaning that it implements the principle of consensus-building. The RCD has excluded all other political forces and refuses to open up its 28-member decision-making assembly to any of them. Very recently, in March 1999, as a result of opposition from the mainstream RCD, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba moved his headquarters from Goma to Kisangani.⁵¹ He declared, "there is no coup d'état but there is some malaise in Goma."⁵² This move could probably be interpreted as a sign that he will now work more closely with the Ugandans than the Rwandans. However, academic sources indicate that he has expressed a wish to return to teaching at the University of Dar es Salaam.

Delegations of senior RCD officials have visited Kampala many times to seek advice on reconciling their differences, and have also travelled to Rwanda for the same purpose. Both

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *The East African*, 5 April 1999.

⁵² Ibid.

factions periodically announce that they have solved their differences "for the good of the movement". But the RCD leadership is increasingly split over the same essential point that divides Uganda and Rwanda. Those close to the Ugandans want a negotiated settlement and are ready to accept Kabila as a transitional president. Those close to the Rwandans, a few Congolese Tutsi, including Moise Nyarugabo from the RCD and former Mobutists such as Lunda Bululu, still believe in a military solution and want to advance on Kinshasa.

In order to overcome internal divisions and win popular support, the RCD held a Congress in Goma in January 1999 and is now drafting a new federal constitution for Congo. The movement also agreed to open itself up to other opposition activists. As a result, the RCD will from now on have a 137-member assembly, and a 'government' and 'president' in charge of the rebel-controlled eastern half of Congo. Wamba will remain at the head of the movement, but only as the first among equals in the new, eight-member political committee that will act as a collective presidency. "New people will come in and new departments will be opened to improve social and economic life in the liberated territories we control and we need a legal basis for that."⁵³ Other major changes include Bizima Karaha's move from his post as head of external relations to take charge of intelligence and security, and the elevation of Ondekane to RCD vice-president. Arthur Zahidi Ngoma, one of the RCD's founders, left the movement altogether, claiming that it was not sufficiently representative of Kabila's opponents and that power was too concentrated in the hands of the executive committee. On 18 February 1999, he announced the creation of a new group, Forces du Futur, that claims to favour the pacifist option of negotiation with Kabila.

A group calling itself the RCD Nouveau (Renovators) emerged in November 1998 to challenge the mainstream leadership over weaknesses in the movement's capacity for mobilisation. Composed of younger members, this group has been demanding reforms in the movement that would open it up to include other political and pressure groups. At the Goma Congress in January 1999, the RCD leadership was divided over their right to be present and their claims to be included in the RCD. Some called on the new youth group to abandon the conditions they had laid down prior to joining the RCD; others, including Ngoma, Karaha, Bugera and Depelchin, supported their immediate acceptance into the movement. This Renovated RCD group, led by Hon. Prince Willy Mishiki, a member of the UDPS and grandson of the Mwami of Masisi-Walikale and Hunde-Nyanga, seems to have achieved some popularity at grass-roots level. The base of their programme is the consensual decisions reached at the Congolese National Conference in 1991 and includes a commitment to federalism and democratisation.

These conflicting interests within the RCD raise questions about the movement's future as a political organisation in a post-war Congo, and even now as the war continues. The protocol agreement establishing the RCD recognises the factor of continuity, but includes a clause on dissolution: "the RCD may be dissolved by a decision of a 3/4 majority of the assembly during a meeting called for this specific purpose. The request for dissolution must be presented by 2/3 of its members. After the dissolution, the financial resources and property are transferred to an organisation pursuing the same objectives."

More rifts are expected if the RCD produces no strong leader. This is a shaky background for a new political organisation, which needs time to develop into a genuine force. This explains why the RCD might not yet be ready to enter negotiations with the Kabila government, despite a declared willingness to do so. It hopes to buy time while it deals with the three challenges that must be met if the movement is to succeed into the future: developing a political base in the areas under its control, building a strong military force and gaining diplomatic recognition.

C. Congo's Politics Distorted by the Importation of Six Wars from Other Countries

1. When Financing a War Becomes Economic Violence

⁵³ Sesonga Hipungu Dja, from the opposition Party for the Future. Quoted by AFP, *East African Standard*, 22 January 1999.

The three Southern African allies claim that their intervention in Congo's war is intended to save the legitimate government of President Kabila. However, there are other agendas at work, which include the promotion of business interests and the quest for regional leadership.

The war in Congo is being commercialised and exploited by both sides as a moneymaking venture. Congo's vast natural resources are being used to finance both coalitions, to develop the economies of the external players in the war and to create personal enrichment for many. The inability of the two sides to finance the war without outside help is directly connected to other issues such as war strategy, a cease-fire agreement and the withdrawal of foreign troops. As was mentioned earlier, the next battles for Mbuji-Mayi and Kanaga are motivated by financial concerns. Both towns are famous for their high-quality diamonds, which fetch millions of dollars and will provide the rebels and their backers with the financial guarantees they need to sustain their war machine prior to the battle for Kinshasa.

Kabila needs time to finance military recruitment, his diplomatic campaign and political programmes. He has signed a decree transferring all the activities of Gécamines, a major state mining company, to two private companies: Ridgepoint Overseas Development Ltd and Central Mining Group Corporation. Kabila is a shareholder in the first and a relative of Mugabe owns shares in the second. A Greek company, closely linked to Nujoma, is also associated with the consortium.⁵⁴ Together, these companies have forged an alliance to exploit all the mineral assets of the central sector of Congo. Kinshasa sources say that Kabila has created a personal company called HB Holdings, which is engaged in different business activities.

The intervention by Zimbabwe and Namibia carries clear overtones of business interests. The Wall Street Journal Europe of 12 October 1998 reported that Zimbabwe's political and military elite has turned the war in Congo into a business bonanza. Philip Chiyangwa, a leading businessman and the head of a Zimbabwean government economic committee is quoted as saying: "We Zimbabweans were the first ones to go to Kabila's assistance, so naturally we are hoping to go to Congo, using the fact we are Zimbabweans as our trump card, and be big players." By the take over of Gécamines (by Zimbabwean operator Billy Rautenback) and oil reserves (by Angolan Songangol), the 'invited countries' are repaying themselves the money Kabila borrowed during the AFDL war, funding the current war and making a profit into the bargain.

The Wall Street Journal report goes on to say that: "What makes this new scramble for a chunk of Congo's vast natural wealth significant is that it is being undertaken by black Africans. For centuries, Europeans and Americans were players in Central Africa, sending troops, selling arms and fighting wars on behalf of various local leaders in exchange for ivory, rubber, diamonds and mineral rights. Now it's the turn of Africans themselves to make a play for Congo's riches, and Zimbabwe's political leadership is leading the charge."

Control over the exploitation of Kivu's considerable economic potential is also an objective for both Uganda and Rwanda. Since the AFDL war, Kigali and Kampala have seen control as a means of organising resources and business in the east of the DRC and thereby becoming less dependent on international donors. The mineral resources, mainly gold in North Kivu, could quickly generate income. The Kivu market could also provide outlets for Ugandan industries. Museveni explained in a paper published in July 1998: "One of the main causes of Africa's stagnation is narrow markets because there are small national populations... Therefore rationalisation in this area, by working to achieve wider markets, is an indispensable requisite for development."⁵⁵ To achieve that objective, Museveni believes that "an integrated political leadership at the top is an indispensable structure in order to permit the economic integration process to begin to coalesce."⁵⁶ The commercial and cross-border ethnic connections between North Kivu and the west of Uganda give Kampala a natural advantage.

⁵⁴ "Guerres de butins dans l'eldorado congolais, Kabila et les pays voisins accaparent les richesses minières", Steven Smith, *Libération*, 14 October 1998.

⁵⁵ Towards a Closer Co-operation in Africa, Yoweri Museveni, July 1998, p 11.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p 12.

However, the deep-rooted decay in Kivu's economy and infrastructure complicate the realisation of the province's potential.

The rebel coalition has entered into business ventures to finance the war resulting in an estimated five million US dollars from the sale of minerals and other products through Uganda and Rwanda. The rebels have established a system for effective use of natural resources in the territory under their control, setting up departments of finance and mining in charge of awarding contracts and sales. Rebel-controlled territory is rich in minerals such as gold, diamonds and tin, as well as timber, coffee, tea, beans and maize; all of which are sold through companies in either Uganda or Rwanda. Payment is mostly in cash, mainly US dollars. Most of the money is banked in Rwandan and Ugandan banks and is withdrawn periodically to buy arms and medicines and to cover the charter of aircraft to transport supplies to the battlefield. The rebels are also raising war taxes, for example, through visas costing US\$100 per person. Equipment such as cameras, satellite phones and foreign-registered vehicles are also taxed. Goods belonging to businesses not directly to the rebel administration also have to pay a tax.

Apart from rebels, private companies based in Kampala, Kisangani, Goma, and Kigali are cashing on the war in Congo. These companies deal in minerals, air cargo transport, weapons and essential commodities such as soap, salt, cigarettes, coffee and human and veterinary medicines. Companies identified by the ICG field researcher include a number of air transport businesses. Goma Air transports cargo for both civilian and military clients, mainly between Goma and other rebel-held towns such as Kisangani, Bunia, Beni, Buta, Lisala, Kalemie and Kindu. Ukraine Cargo Airways operates out of Entebbe (Uganda) and transports arms to Kisangani, where the headquarters of the Ugandan army in Congo are located. Planet Air is another company that has been contracted by the Ugandan army to transport military supplies to Kisangani. Take Air is a carrier that has worked in Congo since the AFDL war in 1996-97. One of its major shareholders is a senior Uganda military official; others are Italian businessmen. They work for other businessmen transporting merchandise from Nairobi and Kampala to the rebel-held territory. TMK Airline is a private airline transporting only civilian passengers from both Kigali and Entebbe to Goma and Kisangani; TMK has been operating in Congo since the 1970s.

Most of the companies doing business in rebel-held territory deal directly with the people running the war. Uganda has the greatest advantage when it comes to selling goods to Congo. All essential commodities used in the rebel-held territory are made in Uganda, which has increased both industrial production and tax revenues. President Museveni's theory regarding the creation of bigger markets is thus being put into practice in this unconventional manner.

Local Congolese businessmen are also cashing in on the war. They have been given duty-free status to import goods from the Far East through Uganda and Rwanda without paying taxes. The various actors have concluded an alliance based on commercial interests; most of the businessmen who have benefited support the rebellion and say they hope the war will continue. They worry that if Kabila regains control they will lose their trade monopolies. As long as the war continues, the scarcity of goods will persist and they will make substantial profits out of heavily inflated prices. The continued presence of Ugandan and Rwandan troops is in itself an additional source of income. Some supplies, including food, are purchased in hotels whose rooms are permanently rented by soldiers in towns such as Kisangani, Goma, Butembo and Beni. Encouraging local business is one way of isolating Kabila from the population.

Congo's wealth is the biggest obstacle to a negotiated settlement. Both sides are influenced by economic calculations, and one question is always present: what do we gain or lose if there is peace in Congo? As long as the profits of violence outweigh the gains of peace, there is little hope that foreign actors will allow the Congolese government to be sovereign in its own territory. Because the war is largely self-financed, donors and the rest of the international community have no leverage over the warring parties, either internal and external. In the case of Uganda and Rwanda, donor agencies have found no evidence of aid funds being spent on

the war and have continued to release funds for those countries. For example, the World Bank has just released 75 million dollars to Rwanda⁵⁷, and the UK has pledged 55 million pounds worth of aid⁵⁸.

If both sides in the war, but especially the external participants, were to become exhausted by the fighting or fail to make much progress on the ground, they might harmonise their economic interests in Congo by making informal arrangements to cease hostilities. For example, they might agree on a *de facto* partition of territory, avoid pitched battles between their forces, discretely exchange prisoners of war and establish trade agreements. Indications of such quiet diplomacy surfaced when Rwanda's Major-General Paul Kagame made an unpublicised visit to Zimbabwe in February 1999 for confidential talks with President Mugabe. Angola, another major ally of Kabila, has continued to exchange delegations with Uganda and Rwanda to promote confidence building.

Looking at the volume of business flowing in and out of the DRC, it might be wondered whether the proclaimed ideological content of the war has not already been diluted by money-making enterprises. The rebellion, even if it has legitimate political claims, is slowly evolving into an excuse for personal ventures by its leaders and sponsors. Trade in natural resources and weapons takes precedence over politics, resulting in rebel leaders becoming warlords instead of genuine revolutionaries with a clear strategy for claiming leadership of the country.

2. The DRC is the Theatre for Seven Different Wars

Currently, there are five foreign civil wars and one interstate war being waged on DRC territory in addition to its own internal conflict, which is therefore complicated by many different agendas. Uganda, Angola, Burundi, Sudan and Rwanda, all of which are fighting civil wars, have intervened as the result of threats, real or imaginary, posed by various rebel groups based in Congo. The civil war in Congo-Brazzaville has also spilled across the DRC's border.

▪ The fighting resumes in Angola: a DRC connection?

It is likely that the resumption of the civil war in Angola between the MPLA government forces and the UNITA rebels under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi is linked to the conflict in the DRC.

Most regional observers were surprised when Angolan government forces intervened to save the Kabila regime. At first, Angola was suspicious that some of Kabila ministers had business dealings with Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA leader. Senior Rwandan military officials told an ICG field researcher that the rebel coalition had been given a green light from senior Angolan top generals to go ahead and take Kinshasa, and were caught by surprise when the Angolan military on the ground intervened to prevent this. The Ugandans have a different version of the Angolan intervention: "The Angolans acted on wrong intelligence reports that the rebel coalition was working with UNITA."

UNITA took advantage of Angolan intervention in the DRC to launch its current offensive, which has resulted in the destruction of many towns and the deaths of thousands of civilians. They saw that government troops were thin on the ground in Angola with more than three brigades deployed in Congo. The Angolan government also has troops in Congo-Brazzaville to back up the regime of General Sassou Nguesso, now under threat from militias loyal to former (elected) President Lissouba. The Dos Santos government contributed the largest force to assist in bringing General Nguesso back to power in 1997 because Lissouba's government had been involved in business deals with the UNITA leadership. Angola is now fighting on three fronts simultaneously: internally against UNITA, in the DRC and in Congo-Brazzaville.

⁵⁷ IRIN, 7 April 1999.

⁵⁸ IRIN, 13 April 1999.

The Angolan government had successfully mobilised African opinion against UNITA before war broke out in Congo. Now there are unconfirmed reports that UNITA has been exploiting the divisions among different African states resulting from their intervention in the DRC. In a communiqué issued after a meeting on 30 December 1998, both Uganda and Rwanda denied working with UNITA, but Kinshasa continues to allege that some African countries and some Western powers are supporting the movement in order to weaken the Kabila coalition through the withdrawal of Angolan government forces.

The war in Congo may lead to the reactivation of the old Savimbi networks for strategic purposes. These networks include former white South African security operatives, the CIA and a number of Mobutu generals who are reported to have joined the coalition against Kabila. Although diverging ideologically from Savimbi, who is seen as the West's puppet, the ANC government has an interest in weakening the Kabila coalition; it has undermined the South African proposals to end the war and, therefore, Mandela's leadership in the region. Any US support for UNITA would be motivated by the threat of Sudan's involvement in the war in Congo. A final point is that when the AFDL started its march towards Kinshasa in 1996-1997, UNITA supported Mobutu.

▪ **Uganda: the ADF, the LRA and the Sudan factor**

Uganda is also fighting a civil war, which pits the Ugandan army against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the western part of the country neighbouring Congo, and against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Although the ADF was created before Kabila came to power, the Ugandan government accuses Kinshasa of giving it support. For the last three years, the rebels have carried out cross-border raids into Uganda, although these have decreased over the past four months. Led by Jamil Makulu, a Muslim cleric, the ADF is composed of former soldiers of Idi Amin, Ugandan army deserters and remnants of the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda, a rebel group defeated in the late 1980s and financed by Iran and Sudan. Led by Joseph Kony, the LRA was born in 1986 out of the opposition to Museveni, but only became active in 1994. On 29 March 1999, the Ugandan government announced that it was ready to hold talks with the rebels and even to offer them an amnesty.

Uganda's presence in Congo can also be explained by its involvement in Sudan's civil war between the Khartoum government and the SPLA. Uganda's military presence has not been limited to the border areas where the Ugandan rebels are active; it goes as far afield as Kisangani, thousands of kilometres from the border. The explanation given for pushing so far inside Congo is to take control of strategic facilities such as airfields to prevent their use by Sudan, Uganda's hostile northern neighbour. Uganda supports the Southern Sudan Liberation Army, which is fighting the Sudanese government, while Sudan supports the LRA against the Ugandan government. By moving into Congo's Equateur province, Ugandan forces are providing a rear base for the SPLA across the border. Prior to the renewed conflict, the Sudanese government army used to attack the SPLA positions from that area.

At the beginning of February 1999 a large conference in Kampala brought together representatives of the Sudanese diaspora and other external opponents of the Khartoum government. This meeting could be seen as an opportunity for Museveni to mobilise support for his fight against the Sudanese government. He has certainly received the backing of the US, which has invested extensively in Museveni's regime since 1986, seeing it as a bulwark against Sudan. Some Ugandan officials now say that once the DRC conflict is resolved, their next target will be Sudan.⁵⁹

▪ **The Unresolved Problem of the Ex-FAR**

When the war began on 2 August 1998, Kabila and his allies blamed the new conflict mainly on Rwanda, and to some extent Uganda, accusing them of aggression and of harbouring intentions to annex some parts of Congo. A senior Rwandan official told an ICG researcher on 19 December 1998 that the reason Kigali was becoming involved in Congo was "to make sure

⁵⁹ Interview with Ugandan officials by an ICG researcher.

that Kabila is not able to solely determine the course of events until there is a more accommodating regime in Congo."

Rwanda has several points on its agenda in the war against Kabila. The country is battling with the ex-FAR (former Rwandan government troops) and Interahamwe militias responsible for the 1994 genocide. Unlike any other player in Congo, Rwanda's war has been fought mainly on Congolese soil since the overthrow of the Habyarimana regime in 1994. The Rwandan conflict was exported onto its neighbour's territory when the entire former government removed itself to the camps in Eastern Zaire after the genocide and re-established itself there. Since then, the Rwandans have been claiming that Congo represents a security threat to the very existence of the Rwandan state. When the RPA supported the AFDL rebels under Kabila, the aim was to neutralise their own opponents who were backed by Mobutu. During the planning of the operation, the Rwandans recruited Banyamulenge youths to protect Tutsi communities in Kivu under threat of expulsion from Zaire. In the process, they developed a plan to overthrow Mobutu, which was successfully carried out with the support of other Congolese and regional allies.

Since the success of the AFDL war, the Rwandans have argued that they have legitimate security interests in Congo which justified their troops remaining in the DRC after Kabila was brought to power. This time around, they have again used the security argument to explain their intervention, accusing Kabila of training the ex-FAR and Interahamwe. However, it is not clear whether Kabila started working with the ex-FAR before the war was launched or whether he was responding to Rwanda backing the rebels. However, as the Rwandans had control of Kabila's security apparatus since May 1997, they should have been able to prevent him from working behind their backs and to address the problem of the ex-FAR without overthrowing him.

The expulsion of the Rwandan soldiers in July 1998 sparked a bitter conflict and precipitated Kigali's decision to prevent Kabila from dictating the terms of their relationship. They were not ready to give up the influential role they had been playing in Kinshasa. There is now a well-entrenched suspicion in Congo in particular and the region in general that Rwanda will interfere in Congo's politics whenever its interests are at stake. This is why Zimbabwe and Angola felt prompted to intervene on behalf of the weaker Kabila regime.

Rwanda will always be concerned who controls Kivu. For security reasons, they want to create a buffer zone, in much the same way as Israel did in South Lebanon. Being a small country, Rwanda is naturally threatened by a larger, hostile Congo. This could explain why the RPA has helped push the war further inland and away from their border as it prevents their armed opponents from maintaining easy contact with the population inside Rwanda.

Congo's resources are paying for the war on its territory. This both relieves the financial burden on the external partners and reduces their dependency on international aid. So long as the Interahamwe threat is not removed, Rwanda's war machine will continue to require large resources. For reasons of international credibility, the war cannot be financed by the state budget. With access to Congo's resources, the costs of waging war become less of a burden to Rwanda and the war itself becomes more sustainable.

Finally, the lack of a political solution to Rwanda's internal problems is creating instability in the entire region. The incursions of ex-FAR and Interahamwe militia from Kivu sustain a climate of great fear among the Tutsi population that makes any reconciliation effort impossible. Congo is likely to be an extended battlefield for the Rwandan civil war as long as those suspected of participation in the genocide remain on DRC territory.

▪ **Congo's War Sustains the Military Option in Burundi**

Burundi is a less conspicuous player in the Congolese war, although one much affected by it. Since 1993, when the first directly elected Hutu president was killed by the military, the country has faced a rebellion by the majority Hutu ethnic group, which has been excluded from the army and from positions of power for decades. Under Mobutu, Congo was the base for the

Burundi rebellion until 1996, when the AFDL backed by Rwanda and the Burundi army attacked FDD camps and forced the rebels to flee to Tanzania. A handful remained in Burundi, where they have been carrying out limited military campaigns. This time round, the Burundian rebels, especially the FDD, were re-armed to fight with the Kabila coalition. In order to counteract the FDD, the Burundi military government has deployed forces in the southeast of Congo. Apart from fighting the rebels, the Bujumbura is also protecting its vital economic route across Lake Tanganyika, which is used to bring in strategic goods. This was a major trade route during the embargo between 31 July 1996 and 23 January 1999. Indeed, the DRC generally acted as an important commercial channel for Burundian imports during this period.⁶⁰

With the FDD participating on one side and the Burundian army on the other, the DRC conflict represents a potential threat to the Burundian peace process underway both inside the country and in Arusha. Burundi was never involved in the initial plan to topple Kabila and continues to maintain diplomatic contacts with him in order to prevent any angry reaction against its army's presence in Congo. However, Bujumbura is also aware that Kabila has provided logistical and military support to the FDD forces now fighting alongside ex-FAR, Zimbabwean and Angolan soldiers.

▪ **The war in Congo-Brazzaville shifts to Congo-Kinshasa**

Kabila and Congo-Brazzaville's current president, Sassou Nguesso, have had a mutually suspicious relationship. Kabila supported Nguesso's rival, the previous president, Pascal Lissouba, during the fighting that eventually brought Nguesso to power. Although the two heads of state made an agreement in January 1999 that one would not support forces hostile to the other, militias loyal to Kolelas, the former prime minister, have received support from Kabila. Nguesso is said to have returned the compliment by supporting Mobutu's former presidential guards in their attack on the town of Bolobo across the river from Congo-Brazzaville, and thus displaced another civil war onto Congolese territory.

The transposition of the various civil wars of each of the countries now also directly involved in the Congo conflict indicates a virtual absence of a culture of dialogue through which to resolve political problems here. During the years of Mobutu's dictatorship, the country experienced no armed war until 1996-97, when Kabila and his allies introduced the idea of armed resistance into Congo. If this imported culture of violence takes root here, in the third-largest country in Africa situated in the heart of the continent, then there is little prospect of stability either in the DRC itself, or in the region.

IV. NO WINNERS, NO LOSERS: WHY NEGOTIATIONS ARE NECESSARY

So far, both sides in the war have pursued the military option to resolve this crisis. When the rebels' lightning attack failed to take Kinshasa in the first two weeks' of the conflict and Kabila's allies failed to take the fight to the rebel strongholds in the east, it became clear that this war is not going to be won easily.

The present stalemate shows that both the internal and external players are stretching their political and military capacities to continue fighting. None of them can afford a defeat because this would probably lead to the fall of some of the regimes involved, or at least weaken them dramatically. At this stage, only negotiations offer the possibility of saving face.

A. **A Difficult War to Sustain**

▪ **Kabila: A Weakening Coalition**

⁶⁰ ICG interview with Burundian government officials in Bujumbura and staff at the Kinshasa embassy, September 1998.

Kabila's political gains from the conflict represent a major reason why he should undertake negotiations with the rebels and other political groups. If he did so, he would be able to invoke the war to win support for himself in a future competitive electoral or political environment. Although there are signs that his position is weakening, he has also gained enough credibility by resisting the rebellion to risk entering negotiations with the rebels.

Lately, Kabila has been making a number of concessions. He lifted the ban on political parties, reshuffled his cabinet and extended it to include the UDPS and former Mobutu politicians, and opened a national debate. Kabila's offer to talk to rebels in Kinshasa was recently confirmed in April and is a major step towards a face-to-face meeting. A Western diplomat interviewed by ICG on 9 January 1999 said: "This makes it easy for President Chiluba to arrange a meeting between the rebels and Kabila when they meet in Lusaka and convince them to sign a cease-fire."

Moreover, Kabila is relying on forces with different interests than his own that might turn against him if they perceive that the situation is no longer moving in their favour. His reliance on foreign troops is also unsustainable now that Angola, one of his major backers, is facing a renewed outbreak of war with its UNITA rebels and is reported to be withdrawing some of its troops to support the fight at home. Last year Angola sent heavy equipment and over 5,000 troops to Congo to stop the rebel advance on Kinshasa. For its part, Zimbabwe is facing stiff internal opposition over the presence of its troops in Congo. The Angolans, the Zimbabweans, and the Namibians, as well as the guerrilla forces from Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, are all involved in the DRC conflict for an ulterior motive and will remain there only as long as they gain a domestic advantage from their presence there.

▪ **The Rebels: A Shaky Alliance**

The rebels under the RCD umbrella are also under pressure, despite their military strength. First, it appears clear that their position is quite inconsistent. They claim to want negotiations, but keep finding excuses either to boycott or to walk out of any meetings to which they are invited.

Politically, the rebels are facing an uphill task in trying to convince the population that their war against Kabila is legitimate. They have also been facing internal divisions over their approach to political mobilisation and their management of resources, which led to the emergence of the rival group led by Bemba. If the RCD accepted negotiations, this would help to reduce the internal pressures by focusing on the Congo's political future in general, rather than on its own divisive policies. Negotiations would also isolate Bemba's MNLC, which is supported by Uganda, but is not recognised by the SADC peace initiative.

On the military side, the rebels have nothing to lose by negotiating: they control the trained battalions of FAC soldiers who defected, the young *kadogos* and the Banyamulenge fighters who were instrumental in removing Mobutu. When it comes to building a future national army, the rebels will be in a better position than Kabila who remains with a much-reduced FAC force and ageing elements of the *Katangan gendarmes*.

▪ **A Tough Challenge in Museveni's Career**

Since taking power over a decade ago, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda has been riding high at the head of a 'new breed of African leaders'. However, his decision to send troops into Congo for the second time in two years has dented his reputation as a statesman and he now stands accused as an invader, and instigator of a conflict that has drawn in half a dozen African countries. In Uganda, public opinion is questioning the wisdom of sending troops to Congo, when the army has yet to succeed in containing three home-grown rebel groups. Ugandans are also suspicious that funds intended for infrastructure such as health, education and roads are being diverted to the war in Congo. Donor countries providing the aid that makes up 55% of Uganda's budget are concerned about the country's involvement in Congo and the increased military expenditure. At least one European country has confidentially

informed the Ugandan authorities that it will withhold money if Museveni does not reconsider his position in regard to the war.

Uganda's involvement in the DRC is also interfering with its domestic political timetable. Two polls are on the horizon: a referendum in 2000 to decide between Museveni's system of governance and a genuine pluralism, and general elections planned for 2001. Although the president said on 15 April that he would go ahead with next year's referendum, he may lose both polls as the result of his military adventurism. If he finds he is paying too high a price in terms of unfavourable public opinion at, there is a possibility that Museveni may withdraw from the DRC.

The Ugandan president certainly wants to give the appearance of being a "good guy" by playing the democratic game. He tells diplomats that he wants to remove his troops from the DRC and even signed a cease-fire agreement in Libya on 17 April, which includes troops withdrawals. In order to promote a conciliatory image, he announced that he was ready to negotiate with his own rebel group, the LRA. However, on other occasions, he reiterates his belief that the Congolese have never been liberated through armed resistance, and the Ugandan people should therefore be prepared to sacrifice themselves in order to help their neighbours attain 'true liberation'.

Despite the considerable risks he faces, it is unlikely that Museveni will pull out soon, even if a diplomatic solution is negotiated for Congo. Kabila has become an enemy, with whom it would be impossible to work in the long term. Moreover, Museveni has a strong motivation: if he contributes to the "liberation of Congo", he is likely to be regarded as the legitimate successor to Mwalimu Nyerere⁶¹. And if he gains the allegiance of the people of Congo, a huge and rich country, he will ensure Uganda a leading role in the region.

Nevertheless, a negotiated settlement to the Congolese problem is perhaps the only way out for Uganda. If Uganda pulls out his troops without a negotiated settlement, President Museveni will lose face, and at the security level, Uganda will be left exposed to a hostile regime in the DRC allied to an even more hostile regime in Sudan. If his troops remain, there is a risk of a humiliating military defeat, which would lead to internal political chaos in Uganda.

Museveni seems to be working in three directions. First, Uganda has openly called for a political solution in the DRC, indicating that the leadership is aware of the dangers of a military solution. Negotiations mean that the rebels might have to accept that Kabila would remain during a period of transition, but Museveni is playing for time and "waiting for Kabila to fall by himself". Indeed, there has been increasing unrest in Kinshasa as the economic consequences of the war start to become dramatic. Second, he kept in touch with Angola's leader, Dos Santos, in order to reach a 'gentleman's agreement', both on the question of UNITA and on Angola's future presence in Congo. Third, Museveni's *rapprochement* with Khadafi can be interpreted as a sign of willingness to invest in a diplomatic solution. Museveni sees many advantages in Khadafi's mediation. He is a long-time ally of Museveni and supplied guns during the five-year bush war that eventually brought the Ugandan leader to power in 1986. Khadafi is also an important link to the Afro-Arab world, including Chad and Sudan; Chad has committed troops to help Kabila in the DRC, and Sudan is also accused of intervention. Putting an end to the Sudanese civil war is certainly as big a preoccupation for Museveni as the war in Congo. By signing the peace accord in Sirte, Museveni also hoped to block the flow of arms to Kabila from Libya via Chad and therefore involve Libya in negotiation rather than confrontation. In turn, Khadafi could become an important player on the international scene and extend his role in sub-Saharan Africa following the decision taken last year by African governments to ignore the now-suspended UN air embargo on Libya in the wake of the 1988 Lockerbie bombing.

⁶¹ Julius K. Nyerere, former President of Tanzania hosted on its territory and gave assistance to many liberation movements in the 1990's.

Museveni seems to stand alone in employing this strategy. There are two possible reasons for this. Either the fact that he has unilaterally approached the Libyan leader to mediate signals a difference of opinion between Rwanda and Uganda. Or, the two countries have reached a consensus that Museveni will take charge of the diplomatic approach and look more conciliatory while Rwanda remains in charge of the military side and maintains a tough line on negotiations.

▪ **Rwanda's Enemies Keep on Increasing**

Rwanda has significant internal problems stemming from the 1994 genocide. Reconciliation efforts have not received proper attention due to security problems, which have their origin in Congo. Less than two years after the overthrow of Mobutu, Rwanda is engaged in another war in Congo, which is proving no more successful than the first in defeating Rwanda's enemies. Instead, the ex-FAR and Interahamwe have found new allies on each occasion. If the government loses the war, the very existence of the Rwandan state will be threatened.

The government's efforts to end the war militarily have been hampered by the hard-line positions adopted by the rebel leaders who can count on support from their compatriots in Congo. The Rwandan rebels operating deep in the forests in the fertile regions of Rwanda often call on the population for shelter and food, which leads to reprisals by the army resulting in the death and displacement of thousands. For example, there is a camp housing 450,000 displaced people in Mucaca, in Northwest Rwanda. The RPF government has been concentrating on ensuring justice for the genocide victims and has yet to address the political aspects of the on-going rebellion. There is a strong view among Rwanda's Hutu population that there can only be a political solution to the crisis in Rwanda if one is first found in Congo.

However, the Rwanda government sends out contradictory messages. On the one hand, it recently held local elections and confirmed that, if further exercises in democracy continue successfully, the transition could end "within two or three years". Despite protests from Tutsi extremists, some genocide suspects have been released from prison and some ex-FAR soldiers have been integrated into the national army. On the other hand, many Hutu ministers have fled abroad in the last six months, and other Hutu officials, including Prime Minister Rwigema, have been accused of participation in the genocide. More importantly, some Rwandan officials do not seem to have learned any lessons from the 1996 war in Congo. They appear intent on returning to Kinshasa and once more exercising control over Congo's political life.

There are many questions about Rwanda's capacity to reach her objectives through war, and both Kigali and Kampala face several obstacles to achieving their ambitions: the lack of a functioning economic administration or transport infrastructure in the DRC, the lack of support for the Rwandan government among local political leaders and the strong anti-Tutsi feeling among a large section of the Congolese population. Indeed, increased hostility towards the two governments could favour the development of precisely the sort of armed groups that Kabila has been looking to for support for several months. Until these obstacles can be surmounted, Rwanda and Uganda will have only limited economic influence in Kivu and will continue to face insecurity on their borders.

▪ **Internal Support for Mugabe is Diminishing**

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe would save face if a political solution to the Congo problem were found sooner rather than later. He says that his 13,000 troops are in Congo not to escalate the war, but to bring peace and stability to Central Africa. He predicts that his forces, bolstered by support from Angola and Namibia, will flush out Congolese rebels from the eastern part of the country. But his stand has cost him public support at home. Reports of Zimbabwean soldiers being taken prisoners by rebels and others being killed in Congo have provoked a public outcry. Some observers predict that the conflict will lead to Mugabe's fall from power.

According to a Reuters report carried by Uganda's New Vision newspaper on 17 December 1998, the Zimbabwean ministry of defence announced that: "Two senior military officers, Colonel Alfonso Kufa and squadron leader Herbert Vundla, died on the spot when their Alouette 3 gunship crashed, while sergeant Edison Sande survived but was believed to have been captured by the rebels." The same article quotes Zimbabwean officials as saying that mounting losses of men and equipment could force Mugabe to make an early exit from the war.

The arrest of 23 senior military officers on suspicion of plotting a military coup against Mugabe is a clear indication of the growing tension within the armed forces. The arrested officers claimed that they were motivated by the mismanagement of the economy and the army's deployment in the DRC, which they blame on Mugabe. According to The Economist magazine of 7 November 1998: "Harare is tense and jittery. Not only is public sentiment against the war, but scores of soldiers about to be posted to Congo are said to have deserted. More than half the members of Mr Mugabe's 54-strong cabinet have voiced their opposition to the war, according to the Mirror, a weekly newspaper with good government connections." Mugabe, who has in the past opposed negotiations involving the rebels, is said to have taken a softer stance recently and advised Kabila to meet the rebels. The only way left for Mugabe to save face is to become involved in a negotiated settlement.

▪ **Dos Santos' Leadership is at Stake**

As a rebel coalition victory would probably mean the end of his regime, Dos Santos also has an interest in a negotiated peace. Angola is threatened by a renewed UNITA offensive with three major cities turned into battlefields. Angola's main reason for intervening in Congo was not to save Kabila's regime, but to protect its own strategic interests, which was achieved by winning control over major air bases on the common border with Congo. Rwanda and Uganda are said to have guaranteed to the Angola government that they have no deal going with UNITA. Rwanda, Uganda and Angola have exchanged delegations of senior security officials in order to allay fears of UNITA support. Luanda would benefit from a negotiated settlement as the Angolan army troops remaining in Congo could be recalled to concentrate on the war with UNITA.

The MPLA leadership is now deeply divided over anti-UNITA strategy. Dos Santos reshuffled his cabinet and changed the military leadership with the sole purpose of defeating UNITA. This included sacking the defence minister, De Matteo, who was instrumental in the earlier war against UNITA. Dos Santos refers to his new administration as a 'war cabinet'.

If either Kabila or Sassou Nguesso were to be removed, Angola would be left without a reliable ally against UNITA. If the Congo crisis were resolved by negotiation, Angola would be able to make a dignified exit and be sure of a good relationship with a future transitional government in Congo and with the countries presently backing the Congolese rebels. By continuing to back Kabila militarily, the Angolan leadership exposes itself to the risk of military defeat both in the DRC and in its own war against UNITA.

▪ **Namibian Involvement**

Although Namibia's military contribution to Congo has been negligible (about 100 men), President Nujoma would also like to see a peaceful resolution to the war. He would then be able to concentrate on solving the domestic problems arising from the controversial extension of his regime to a third term in contradiction to the constitution, which allows for only two terms.

B. The Challenges

▪ **Post-Conflict Issues**

Negotiations have been conducted as the war has progressed, but these have not been successful because all the warring parties believe they can win the war militarily. There is no spirit of compromise on either side. In fact, even if one side was to win a military victory, the war would not really be over. A military victory would create the conditions for a repressive dictatorship in Kinshasa, thus giving many groups an excuse to restart the fighting. The conflict will only be over totally when the Congolese parties to the conflict agree to negotiate. It is their agendas that should be taking centre stage and those of the external parties should be addressed only within the broad framework of the negotiations.

As President Yoweri Museveni conceded in a press release dated 3 September 1998: "The presence of foreign troops in a country distorts the internal politics of that country in such way that the political questions are not addressed. If foreign troops are to intervene in any country, they should be under the very clear supervision of the United Nations or of recognised regional bodies."

Congo is facing four major problems, none of which will be solved by the war:

1. The leadership problem. Kabila has been universally criticised, although the war has given him an opportunity to revive his leadership. If he were to go, it is not sure who could replace him. No strong leader seems to have emerged from the RCD. Only one thing is clear: the mistakes made in 1996-1997 must not be repeated, but it is not apparent how a repetition can be avoided;
2. The problem regarding democratisation and the construction of a solid state. Congo has never had a legitimate government, although the Congolese have been talking about implementing a classic democratic system since the National Conference in 1991. The Museveni-Kagame formula conflicts with that democratic model; this aims to ensure legitimacy for a regime installed by a guerrilla movement with a strong leader, which will put regional security and stability at the head of its priorities. They have been trying to impose this vision of power and governance through the course of two wars, but the rebel movement has a very narrow political base. If the rebels do come to power, this 'war solution' will induce them to build up their military capacity with a view to future defence needs, which will serve only to worsen a constantly deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation;
3. The problem of managing this huge country. It is questionable whether the DRC still remains a united state. It no longer has an effective central government and the state cannot be relied on to ensure basic services or to protect its citizens. All ethnic groups are armed or have their own militia. Despite all this, the Congolese people retain a strong sense of national identity and do not wish to see their country fragmented. The best solution might be a federal system of government;
4. The problem of the Congolese Tutsi. Other ethnic groups in the DRC resent the Congolese Tutsi and it was partly to appease them that Kabila sent home the Rwandan troops in July 1998. The Banyamulenge have now been associated with the Rwandans during two wars and this has turned the population against them. In fact many Banyamulenge are opposed to the current war because it jeopardises their security and the possibility of peaceful coexistence with other ethnic groups. Faced with a sense of disappointment and isolation since Kabila took over, they have tried to improve their contacts with neighbouring ethnic communities. Distrust and mutual fear led to a *rapprochement* with the government of Burundi and the creation of a Banyamulenge political movement, the Federalist Republican Forces, directed against Kabila. For Burundi, the new relationship with the Banyamulenge had the double advantage of strengthening security on the main route through South Kivu used for circumventing the embargo, as well as helping to contain what they see as Rwandan and Ugandan ambitions to dominate the region.

Because Rwanda and Uganda have used the Congolese Tutsi to advance their own interests, the question of their nationality has become more vexed. With the growing anti-Tutsi feeling,

the peaceful return and reintegration of displaced Tutsis in Kivu is under threat, along with the physical security of the Banyamulenge. Refugee repatriation programs from Tanzania are also on hold while new displacements are likely. As their relationship with the Rwandans deteriorates, they certainly do not want to be resettled there as they would not feel safe. If the Banyamulenge return home after the war, they will be forced to remain armed in order to protect themselves.

▪ **The Fragmentation of Regional Blocks and Regional Organisations**

The war in Congo has exposed cracks within the SADC, especially in view of the differences between Presidents Mandela and Mugabe. When the war broke out, Mugabe, who heads SADC's Security and Defence Committee, tried to persuade member states to legitimise his intervention. Mandela, who called for a negotiated settlement, opposed this. These differences have created blocs within SADC that appear determined to undermine each other. Another split resulted from Botswana, another economically strong member of SADC, supporting South Africa to suppress an army mutiny in Lesotho. These divisions have served to strengthen COMESA, a rival economic regional grouping, whose member states have avoided the organisation becoming involved in any effort to resolve the conflict in Congo. Boney Katatumba, president of the Ugandan Chamber of Commerce, said in an interview with an ICG researcher on 9 January 1999: "COMESA is more focused than SADC, and is likely to attract more donor funding. That is why economically strong countries like Egypt are joining."

President Mandela, who is stepping down at the end of the year, would like to leave behind a united SADC to face future challenges. One way of achieving this is to press for a negotiated settlement to the Congolese conflict, which threatens the stability of the continent, in particular Central and Southern Africa. At the end of their meeting in Harare in December 1998, Mandela and Mugabe announced that they had narrowed their differences on Congo. If a final settlement could be negotiated, regional solidarity, which is now in disarray, could be salvaged.

▪ **The Rehabilitation of Rebel Groups**

Kabila is sowing the seeds of future chaos by training and arming the militias. Indeed, he treats his FDD and ex-FAR infantry like royalty. However, this is also creating future problems for the enemies who want to overthrow him.

Regional suspicions have been consolidated by the capacity of various rebel groups to procure the sponsorship of neighbouring countries through exploiting interstate conflicts. Kabila came to power with the help of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Angola, whose support was based on suspicions that Mobutu was hosting the ADF, ex-FAR, Interahamwe, FDD and UNITA. The same scenario recurred after Kabila fell out with his former allies. Uganda and Rwanda support the Congolese rebels in order to fight Kabila, and now might even support UNITA in order to weaken Angola, one of Kabila's major allies. In turn, Kabila has rehabilitated the groups that he fought against with the AFDL - the ex-FAR, FDD and ADF - in order to weaken his former allies. He is also allied with the government of Sudan, which supported Mobutu and is at war with Uganda.

The rehabilitation and rearming of rebel groups, and their many different agendas multiply the possibilities of new alliances among the various players. As long as no political solution is reached, they can act as mercenaries fighting alongside whoever promises them arms and money they can also use to promote their own causes. The international community should itself deal with the ex-FAR and Interahamwe instead of regarding them as a security issue of concern only to Rwanda and Uganda. Without a concerted international effort, this unresolved problem gives Rwanda and Uganda a legitimate reason to intervene militarily.

▪ **The Conflict in the DRC Leads to Endless Possibilities of Alliances and Further Fragmentation**

The Rwandan genocide opened a new chapter in Central Africa's history and sent shock waves throughout the region. The war in the DRC, which can be clearly seen as a

consequence of the genocide, is now fuelling all the conflicts in the region: Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Congo-Brazzaville, Central African Republic. It is also directly or indirectly destabilising almost all the countries of Eastern and Southern Africa: Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Interstate wars are the logical follow on to intrastate wars, and *vice versa*. The situation raises the whole issue of border realignments, or at least of ways of overcoming the present border problems.

▪ **African Solutions for African Problems?**

The ongoing war has exposed African governments to the challenge of solving their own problems. Most Western countries have disengaged from African affairs by promoting the theory of African solutions to African problems. This means that Africa must develop a capacity for conflict resolution. Notable African statesmen such as former Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, Kenya's Daniel Arap Moi, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and Frederick Chiluba of Zambia are all involved in conflict mediation. The war in Congo is a litmus test of their capacity to resolve Africa's own problems, especially bloody civil wars. As far as the DRC is concerned, they face the problem that each is identified with one of the sides, which is likely to be a complication in any African conflict.

▪ **The International Community Remains Silent**

It is striking to note the silence of the international community on this issue. Media coverage is non-existent in the US. Kabila's failure to address the problems of the Congolese people or the concerns of his neighbours and the international community might explain the absence of any strong international initiative to end the war. No international player is interested in a resolution that leads to the installation of a Kabila regime expecting international reconstruction aid. They will probably all remain on the sidelines until his departure becomes inevitable, while continuing to offer general support for SADC initiatives that let them off the hook.

Nevertheless, the war is a sign of the failure of US policy in the region. All the so-called 'new breed of African leaders', considered some of America's most reliable African allies, are at war with one another, including Ethiopia and Eritrea.

European Union reaction has not differed greatly from that of the US. The EU's special envoy to the Great Lakes, Aldo Ajello, and the British envoy, Tony Lloyd, have visited the region and promised to support the establishment of a peacekeeping force if there is a breakthrough in negotiations. However, no Western power has undertaken to contribute troops to such a force.

C. Possible Scenarios

1. The Continuation of Hostilities

a. If Kabila Wins

The following scenarios are the possible outcomes of a military victory by the Kabila coalition.

- Kabila would become stronger politically and maintain his hold on power;
- He would become more intolerant;

- The Banyamulenge and the Congolese Tutsi would have to leave the DRC, probably going to neighbouring countries;
- Ethnic tensions would intensify across the region; for example, Hamites versus Bantus;
- Kabila would become a threat to Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda, which might try to destabilise the DRC and its allies through support for guerrilla groups and political opponents. Given the history of the relationship between Kabila and his former sponsors, there is very little chance that trust could be rebuilt. Further instability would have to be expected;
- The ex-FAR would be officially rehabilitated and guerrilla movements from Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, as well as Sudanese government forces, would be invited to install or re-install themselves in bases in the DRC;
- Kabila would establish political, economic and military alliances with Sudan, Libya, Cuba and Chad;
- The Dos Santos leadership in Angola would be strengthened and UNITA would be weakened;
- SADC would remain divided and the rivalry between South Africa and Zimbabwe for regional leadership would intensify.

b. If the Rebels Win

- There is a great risk that the population would be hostile to a new RCD government in protest against Rwanda's influence. This could spark off political turmoil in Kinshasa, leading to further anarchy, the destruction of property, violence, etc. There would also be a strong likelihood of ethnic violence against the Tutsi;
- If the rebels march on Kinshasa, there is a risk that large numbers of refugees would pour into neighbouring countries, especially an instable Congo-Brazzaville;
- Kabila's allies would start a rebellion that would be supported by Zimbabwe and Angola;
- Rwanda and Uganda would keep their position as major regional players.

2. Stalemate and a *De Facto* Partition

a. The Fighting Continues

The war could continue inconclusively for a long period and evolve towards a scenario such as that of Angola or Sudan, with the country divided into rebel-held territory and government-controlled zones. However, that supposes that rebel resources, internal and external, are sufficient to sustain a highly militarised administration over a large area. It also means that all countries involved in the war would have to remain in Congo for a long time. For the time being, the rebels control only towns and airports and have no local allies for ensuring a sustainable administration.

b. A Meaningless Cease-Fire is Signed

The countries involved reach an explicit agreement to stop hostilities, harmonise their interests and occupy different zones. This would make the war less expensive to maintain, but there would be no foreign troop withdrawals.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A Negotiated Settlement

A negotiated political settlement is more likely if a number of conditions are met. For example, if a military victory proves impossible, or the occupation of the country unsustainable for political or other reasons. Or, again, should it become too difficult to continue financing the war, or public opinion at home against involvement in the war becomes too great for the leaders of the external countries involved.

A. Support for a Negotiated Solution through the Sant'egidio Initiative

- The first priority should be direct talks between Kabila and the rebels. The international community should put pressure on the rebels to go to this meeting in May and to encourage them to drop all their earlier preconditions. It must be pointed out to them that they cannot ask for direct negotiations and then reject all the opportunities offered to them as such inconsistency only serves to weaken their negotiating position;
- The Congolese agendas must be brought back to centre stage and support given to the national debate proposed by Kabila as a first step towards multiparty negotiations. Pressure should be brought to bear on Kabila to accept that all subjects are permissible in this debate. Kabila has proposed that it should begin with discussion restricted to the legitimacy of his government. Indeed, a legitimate government is a key priority not only for the Congolese, but also for their neighbours. There will be no security for Rwanda until the DRC has a legitimate government with whom it can discuss measures for controlling the activities of the ex-FAR and Interahamwe militias;
- Agreement must be reached on a period of transitional all-inclusive political debate and an end to all ethnically directed propaganda;
- The international community should adopt a carrot and stick approach that would begin by committing some funds for Congo's reconstruction, in particular in regard to political, civil and military institutions that will be accountable to the people. At the same time, it should make it quite clear that a military coup in Kinshasa would not be acceptable and back this up with clear and firm indications of the likely consequences.

1. Recognition that the Ex-FAR and Interahamwe are a Threat to International Security

- Remind all interested parties, including the US, that the Entebbe Communiqué signed in March 1998 clearly states that genocide is a security concern for the region. Consequently the ex-FAR and Interahamwe militias should be recognised as an international threat and isolated from the support of or alliance with any other groups in order to remove all excuses for future interventions. The unresolved problem that these groups present serves to perpetuate the state of war in Rwanda. The international community must accept a responsibility for the neutralisation of the '*genocidaires*' and the threat that they still present to the victims of the genocide. The Congolese people should not be forced to continue to suffer the consequences of two wars directly linked to the genocide;

- A way must be found for a transitional government to negotiate a deal with the guerrilla groups. A cease-fire should be regarded as the first step towards a comprehensive peace plan that should include all the parties in the conflict, but this should not be seen as a panacea. The guerrilla problem will remain until a solution is found to the domestic conflicts in the region. The forces of neighbouring countries should therefore be allowed to remain in the DRC as a peacekeeping force in the meantime.

Glossary:

President Laurent-Désiré Kabila	Democratic Republic of the CONG (former Zaire)
President Yoweri Museveni	Uganda
President Nelson Mandela	South Africa (until June 1999)
President Blaise Compaoré	Burkina Faso
President Muammar Khadafi	Libya
President Pasteur Bizimungu	Rwanda
President Benjamin Mkapa	Tanzania
President Jacques Chirac	France
Boutros Boutros Ghali,	former secretary-general of the United Nations
President Frederick Chiluba	Zambia
Joachim Chissano, President	Mozambique
Julius Nyerere	Former President of Tanzania
Major-General Paul Kagame,	minister of defence and vice-president of Rwanda
Etienne Tshisekedi,	head of the UDPS
André Kisase Ngandu,	former head of the Conseil National de Résistance pour la Démocratie (CNRD) led by assassinated probably by pro-Kabila forces.
Masasu Nindaga,	leader of the Mouvement Révolutionnaire pour la Libération du Zaire
Déogratias Bugera,	leader of the Alliance Démocratique des Peuples
President Mwinyi,	former Tanzanian head of state
Dr. Emile Ilunga,	head of the political wing of the Katangans in Angola
James Kabarebebe,	Rwandan Chief of Staff to Kabila
Bizima Karaha	
Jean-Pierre Ondekane,	the commander of the rebel forces and vice-president of the RCD
Arthur Zahidi Ngoma,	one of the founders of the RCD
Moise Nyarugabo,	the first vice-president of the RCD
Déogratias Bugera,	former general secretary of the AFDL, a minister in Kabila's office
Bizima Karaha,	former minister of Foreign Affairs, now External co-ordinator of the RCD

Lunda Bululu,	former Prime Minister under the first transitional government set up by Mobutu and now executive council co-ordinator
Ngoma's	Force du Future,
Olenga Nkoy's	FONUS
Gizenga's	PALU
Kinkiey and Kamanda	who created the Rassemblement du Peuple Congolais in August 1997