



HSC: Historical Security Council

Student Officer: Elif Gün

Issue: The Second Congo War (1998-2003)

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I. Introduction

The Second Congo War, which lasted from 1998 to 2003, was one of the deadliest wars in Africa, hence why it is called “Africa’s World War.” It was not merely an internal war but rather an occurrence of the involvement of multiple nations. It stems from the overthrowing of the President Mobutu, which led to increasing tensions between different ethnic groups and armies from neighbour nations such as Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and so on. The war has been fueled by regional interests in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in which various ethnic groups desired to take control and consolidate their power. During the war, guerrilla warfare was dominant, and an estimated 3.8 million people were killed. Even after its end, the war entailed nonstop violence and political instability.

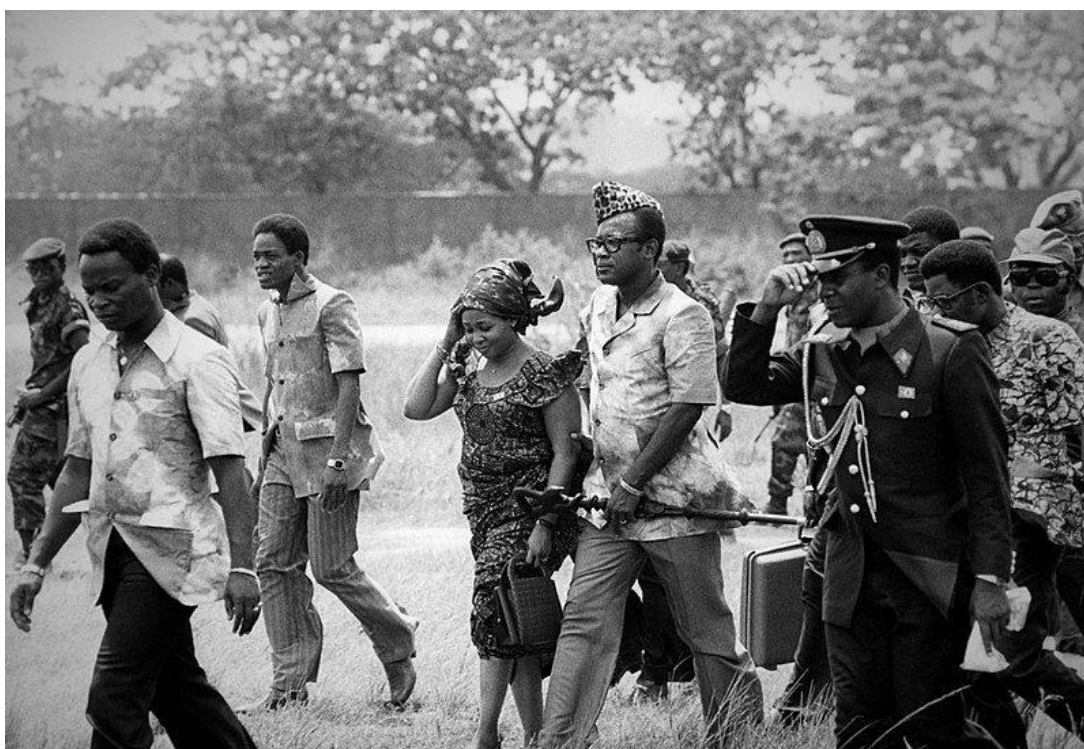


Image 1: first wife of Zairian president Mobutu Sese Seko, Marie-Antoinette Mobutu, in Kinshasa



II. Key Vocabulary

Extremism: the holding of extreme political or religious views; fanaticism. (Oxford Languages)

Militias: A military force that operates only some of the time and whose members are not soldiers in a permanent army. (Cambridge)

Assasination: The murder of a public figure. (Britannica)

Genocide: Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such. (United Nations)

Transitional government: The political institutions that emerge in a society when the status quo is unsustainable. (Peace Research Institute Oslo)

Political instability: A condition characterized by uncertain or volatile political circumstances, such as conflicts, governance issues, or changes in government. (IGI Global)

Alliance: A group of countries, political parties, or people who have agreed to work together because of shared interests or aims. (Cambridge)

Coup d'état: the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. (Britannica)

III. Involved Countries and Organizations

Democratic Republic of Congo

Democratic Republic of Congo is the region where the long-lasting conflict has taken place. There have been numerous groups that have taken part in this conflict but the government of DRC, has led the fight under the leadership of Kabila. Kabila tried to take the support of the national side of the country and consolidate power. He showcased the war as a fight for reclaiming sovereignty. The government fought against many militia groups, mainly RCD and MLC.

Rwanda

Rwanda played a central role in the Second Congo War, being one of the main offensive forces against Congo. The ethnic conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi people, as well as the subsequent genocide in 1994 had caused Rwanda to support Kibali, the opposition in the First Congo War. However, after Kibali came into power, relationships between the two nations soured as Kibali's treatment of the Tutsis was not satisfactory. Moreover, Rwanda claimed to have a great deal to do with Kibali's current position as



president, which undermined his regime. Thus, tensions between the nations rose and ultimately, they ended up on opposite sides of the war when Rwanda backed a rebel group against Kibali. Despite showing humanitarian concerns and the protection of Congolese Tutsi people as a reason, Rwanda's primary motivation to go to war was to eliminate the security threat posed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FAR) and the possible Hutu attacks.

Uganda

Uganda was another key foreign actor in the Second Congo War. Like Rwanda, Uganda had originally backed Kibali in the first war, albeit assuming a less prominent position than its ally. Uganda also justified its involvement in the war with a security rationale. Cross border attacks launched by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Kibali's closeness with Sudan antagonized Uganda. However, remaining true to the Rwandan-Ugandan alliance was also crucial to protect the interests of President Musevini's regime, as the two governments could potentially suffer in tandem. Uganda's possible benefit from Congo's mineral trade also points to an economic factor that may have influenced its position.

Rally for Congolese Democracy - Partnership with Rwanda

RCD consisted of Congolese Tutsis who were deported from the DRC government under Kabila. They sought to create a multi-part democracy in Congo and end dictatorship. Through this, they wanted to eliminate the Hutu militias. RCD was one of the main groups that fought against Kabila's government and they acted as a government-in-waiting. The Rwandan government supported these groups whom they aimed to stabilize the Hutu issue.

Movement of the Liberation of Congo - Partnership with Uganda

MLC worked closely with the Ugandan government who had a common goal to eliminate extremist Hutus. Under the leadership of Jean-Pierre Bemba, they fought a guerilla warfare against Kabila's government. They also sought to establish democracy and political pluralism. They also had underlying aims of strengthening their grip on Congo which would give them leverage over Sudan.

Angola

Angola took the side of Kabila's government. Angola was concerned about Mobuta-aligned rebel forces, and thought that the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), had ties to rebel leaders. Angola aligned itself with Kabila in the possibility of a civil war breaking out. Angola had a strategic alliance with DRC as Kabila allowed him to intervene UNITA inside Congo. They provided military support through sending troops and weaponry.



Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe took the side of Kabila's government during the war. Although they claimed to intervene for the sake of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), they had various other reasons to do so. Firstly, Congo had an important debt to Zimbabwe at the end of the First Congo War, and was concerned about repayment in the possibility of Kabila being overthrown. Another economic aspect lay in Zimbabwe's intent to penetrate the Congolese market and gain lucrative mining concessions in Congo amidst the war. President Mugabe also saw the war as a chance to reassert Zimbabwean dominance over the region. They also provided weaponry and air support which was very important for Kabila.

The United States

Although the US claimed to have taken on a neutral side, further examination shows a subtle anti-Kabila bias (Cook). The Clinton Administration accepted the Rwandan-Ugandan frame and treated this conflict as an internal civil war and not one of foreign invasion. The US was concerned about natural resource exploitation, and claimed that the Kabilan administration was selling strategic minerals for personal gain.

United Nations

The United Nations established a UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) in 1999. They sought to lead a ceasefire and disarm the groups. They continued to take place after 2003, assisting with the transitional government.



Image 2: UN Peacekeepers

Southern African Development Community (SADC)

The Southern African Development Community played a significant role in the Second Congo War, acting as both a military and diplomatic actor. When the conflict erupted in 1998, the SADC, which is supposed to be neutral, was divided in its approach: Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia intervened with military support for the Congolese government. These countries justified their intervention under the mutual defense agreements and the SADC security protocol, arguing that the territorial sovereignty of DRC had to be protected from Rwandan aggression. However, because this intervention had implications of economic benefits and a lack of agreement within the SADC itself, it drew criticism. Later, the SADC acted more as a mediator, contributing to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.

IV. Focused Overview of the Issue

1. Before 1998

The origins of the Second Congo War go all the way back to the 1800s, the era in which Africa's borders were drawn. The Berlin Conference, from November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885, was a series of negotiations held between colonial powers to solve the question of the Congo River Basin, as well as to tackle the common framework for European occupation in Africa (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). The arrangements not only disregarded cultural and ethnic realities but also led to the Belgian monarch King Leopold II's claim on Congo territory. First, Congo became the world's only private colony, renamed the Congo Free State, before being turned into a regular colony dubbed Belgian Congo in 1908.

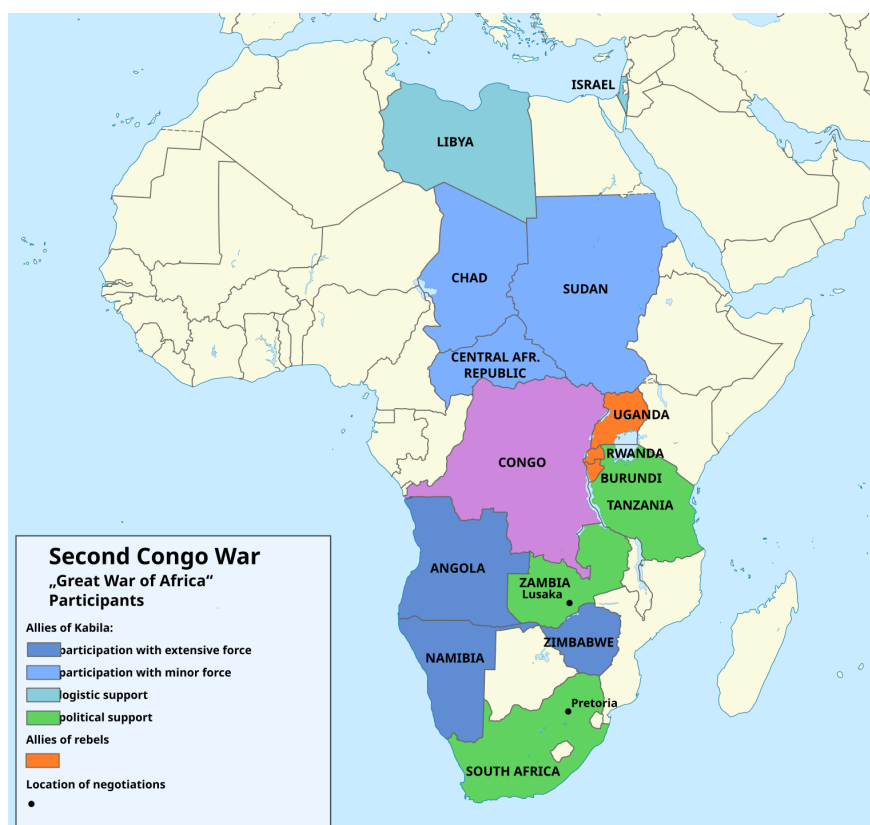


Image 3: Map of Africa and the Division of Forces



In the late 1950s, the first Congolese national political party, the Congo National Movement, emerged and began rallying for the independence of the state, and eventually became the Democratic Republic of Congo in June 1960 (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). Subsequently, the coalition government of President Joseph Kasavubu and Premier Lumumba was formed, and appointed a man named Mobutu Sese Seko as the secretary of state for national defense. In 1960, Mobutu turned over the government to Kasavubu, only to overturn him in a coup in 1965, assuming presidency. As president, Mobutu changed the name of the republic in October 1971 to the Republic of Zaire. His rule was characterized as oppressive; he followed a strict program of Africanization, and nationalized Congolese businesses to fund the government, eventually leading the country to bankruptcy and being forced out of power in 1997 (“Military Coup Places Mobutu in Control of Congo | Research Starters | EBSCO Research”).

The main issues of the Second Congo war stem from the fallout of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. In the course of events, Hutu extremists claimed around 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu lives. Fearing retaliation, nearly two million Hutus, including militias responsible for the genocide, migrated to the outskirts of Congo. The present dictator of DRC, Mobutu, was unable to stop all the extremist Hutus which created a security problem in DRC, Uganda and Rwanda. The events were followed by the election of the new government, Rwandan Patriotic Fronts’ which was a Tutsi-led government. Under the leadership of President Paul Kagame and many other African groups, they supported Laurent-Désiré Kabila, a Congolese rebel leader, to overthrow Mobutu. This campaign started the First Congo War. The war ended with the overthrowing of Mobutu by Kagame and Congo’s opposition party leader Kabila, bringing the latter into power in 1997.

2. Outbreak of the Second Congo War

After Kabila came to power, his relationships with the Rwandan and Uganda governments deteriorated. The main objective in these two governments’ interference was to solve the security problem plaguing the East and find a solution to the status of the Congolese Tutsi. However, instead of being solved, the new regime made these problems even worse. Kabila’s regime faced a major dilemma: the presence of foreign troops gave rise to the accusations of Kabila being a mere “puppet” (Reyntjens). Thus, Kabila tried to extricate himself from the view of Rwandan overrule. He started to show autocratic patterns and tried to consolidate power. He allowed armed Hutu groups to be placed on the border, and began to remove native Tutsis from the country. On July 28, 1998, the Rwandan mission of cooperation was ended by the DRC and the Rwandan military was asked to leave immediately. This action made tensions rise to an all time high, and the following days dictated the future of the continent.

On August 2, 1998, troops in Kabila’s army, many of whom were Rwandan, mutinied. Rwanda backed a new rebel group, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) led by Emile Ilunga, formerly the



civilian leader of the Katanga Tigers, a militia formed around former soldiers loyal to Katanga rebel Moïse Tshombe in the early 1960s, who had subsequently been joined by other Congolese dissatisfied with the government of Joseph Mobutu ("Second Congo War 1998-2003 | Research Starters | EBSCO Research"). A parallel group, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), formed to fight alongside the RCD, also seeking to overthrow Kabila. The DRC and rights groups claim MLC was backed by Uganda, which had also fallen out with the Kabila regime. Jean-Pierre Bemba, the present Congolese minister of defence, led the armed group that has now morphed into an opposition political party (Lawal).

In a statement read on the Goma-based radio, the 10th battalion of the FAC stated it was in revolt against Kabila: 'We, the army of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have taken the decision to remove President Laurent-Desiré Kabila from power' (Reyntjens). Led primarily by Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, the rebellion spread rapidly in the East.

However, unlike in the first war, which seemed to garner near unanimous support from both internal and external actors, this time, the continent was divided. The logic of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" was adopted, causing shifting alliances among state and non-state rebel groups. Congo was backed by Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Chad. By the end of September, Chad, Libya and the Sudan had entered the fray directly or indirectly, and a number of francophone West African countries expressed political support for Kabila, condemning the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) at a summit held in Libreville, Gabon on 24 September. This was thus rapidly becoming, in the words of US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice, the 'First African World War' (Reyntjens).

3. The Second Congo War

Two days after the war began, the Rwandans and Ugandans launched an aggressive attack that almost ended the war: they acquired the Kitona airbase, a convenient center of operations. By the middle of August, Rwanda and Uganda were steadily marching towards the capital. However, they didn't anticipate the complex nature of geopolitical relationships in Africa that could unite other nations against them.

The intervention of other armies pushed the Rwandan forces back. First Angola, on August 23, and later on the 26th Zimbabwe, sent military men to support the Kabila regime. These interventions saved the Kabila government, and pushed the rebel front lines away from the capital. However, the pushback was not enough to deescalate the opposition. In February 1999, a new Uganda-backed rebel group, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo emerged, strengthening the Rwandan-Ugandan forces.

In July, 1999, the countries with troops in DRC-Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Chad-and the DRC government participated in a peace conference in Lusaka, Zambia, resulting in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement had four main provisions: a cease-fire,



deployment of United Nations peacekeeping force (MONUC, the French acronym for Mission of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo), withdrawal of foreign troops, and an "inter-Congolese dialogue" meant to form a transitional government before elections ("Second Congo War 1998-2003 | Research Starters | EBSCO Research"). However, none of these provisions were immediately implemented and fighting continued. To monitor its implementation, the United Nations launched a peacekeeping force in 2000. The initial UN involvement in the area consisted of a force of military observers to report on the implementation of the ceasefire. Later, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), was established in November 1999.

At the peak of events, Kabila was assassinated in 2001 by his bodyguard. After him, his son Joseph Kabila came to power and worked on ending the long-lasting conflict. He began implementing many of the provisions in the Lusaka Agreement. In February 2001 Joseph Kabila met Rwanda's president in Washington, and shortly afterwards Uganda and Rwanda both agreed to withdraw their troops from eastern DRC. Despite this, Rwandan troops remained in Congo until 2002.

4. Consequences of the Conflict

The Second Congo War was one of the deadliest wars after World War 2 which has a record of death tolls of approximately 4 million, largely caused by disease, starvation, and war-related collapse of healthcare.

Alongside the death toll, millions of people were displaced, forced from their homes into forests or over-crowded camps under constant threat of disease. There were deep grievances regarding children, with some reports even saying that minors served as soldiers under Kabila's command (*DRC: Reluctant Recruits - Abduction and Recruitment of Children*).



Image 4: DR Congo Conflict, Amnesty International

Furthermore, sexual violence was widespread and systematic, bringing to light other humanitarian crises such as human trafficking and rape as a weapon of war. Healthcare services crumbled: by 2001, nearly 90% of households in Basankusu had been displaced, and health access plunged. Up to 75% percent of the population lacked formal care, leaving communities exposed to cholera, malaria, diarrheal disease, and malnutrition. At the end, although Joseph Kabila entailed a transitional government, the political instability remained and the tensions relatively remained unresolved.



V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
5th February 1885	King Leopold II establishes the Congo Free State, forming a private colony
15 November 1908	King Leopold II relinquishes his ownership over Congo and the colony of Belgian Congo is formed
30 June 1960	The Congo National Movement wins independence and the country becomes the Democratic Republic of Congo
September 1960	Mobutu overthrows Lumumba in a coup d'état
25 November 1965	Mobutu mounts a second coup d'état, this time taking personal control over the country
October 1971	In line with his Africanization policy, Mobutu changes the country's name to the Republic of Zaire
April-July 1994	The Rwandan Genocide occurs, forcing millions to flee over the Congolese border and cause destabilization in the region
Early 1996	With no progress on repatriation of the one million Hutu refugees to Rwanda, and with the former génocidaires among them continuing to launch cross-border attacks against Rwanda, local politicians in eastern Congo launch an ethnic cleansing campaign against Congolese Tutsis
Oct 1996	After 20 years in exile, the anti-Mobutu rebel Laurent-Désiré Kabila suddenly emerges in eastern Congo. He is now the leader of a new Congolese Tutsi rebel group, the AFDLC
24 October 1996	The First Congo war officially starts
17th of May 1997	Mobutu is overthrown, ending the First Congo War
27th of July 1998	Kabila orders all foreign forces to leave the country, his request goes widely ignored
2nd of August 1998	RCD rebellion begins
10th of July 1999	Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement is signed



16th of January 2001	Laurent Kabila is assassinated
30th of July 2002	Pretoria Accord was signed
6th of September 2002	Luanda Agreement was signed
30th of June 2003	Transitional government was established
July 2003	Official end of the Second Congo War

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement

It was signed on 10th of July 1999 in order to put an immediate ceasefire forth. The agreement consisted of four parts: an immediate ceasefire, the deployment of a UN mission, the withdrawal of all foreign troops in Congo, and the establishment of, "Inter-Congolese dialogue," aimed at creating a transitional government leading to democratic elections. Although it aimed to disarm militia groups it was considered as inefficient as implementation was weak and the conflict didn't finalize as all the parties that agreed to it on the surface did not implement its provisions.

UN Security Council Resolutions

During the course of events, five resolutions were passed regarding this issue. In these resolutions, MONUC was established and troops were allocated as the tensions arose. In the Resolution 1341, which was signed in February 2001, the UN called all forces to depart from Congo. Throughout these resolutions, the UN became one of the main partners in setting peace. However, serious humanitarian crises were not handled properly.

Luanda Agreement

In September 2002, DRC and Uganda signed the Luanda Agreement in which they came to a compromise that Uganda would withdraw its troops. It was the official documentation of better relationships between Uganda and DCR as both sides normalized diplomatic relationships. Although this established peace between the officials, the rebels continued their fight.

Sun City Agreement

Signed in April 2003, the agreement officialized the transitional government in Congo. Separated groups were gathered in institutions. Although few militias continued fighting, it officially ended the war.



VII. Failed Solution Attempts

Peace initiatives in the Second Congo War were not effective because agreements and international efforts could not reach to the source of the incident. Although the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (1999) was promising on paper, it quickly collapsed due to the distrust of the parties to each other and the lack of implementation of the ceasefire. The UN's MONUSCO mission could not be effective in DRC territory because it initially entered the field with a very limited authority, funding, and number of soldiers. Furthermore, Kabila blocked most of the offered UN intervention. Moreover, the conflict was not just between the government and the rebels; It had a complex structure in which the interests of nine states and dozens of militia groups conflicted. Since Congo's rich mineral resources provide constant income to the parties, the continuation of the war has become more profitable than peace for many actors. Under these conditions, even if agreements were signed, the parties continued their violations in line with their own interests and peace efforts failed.

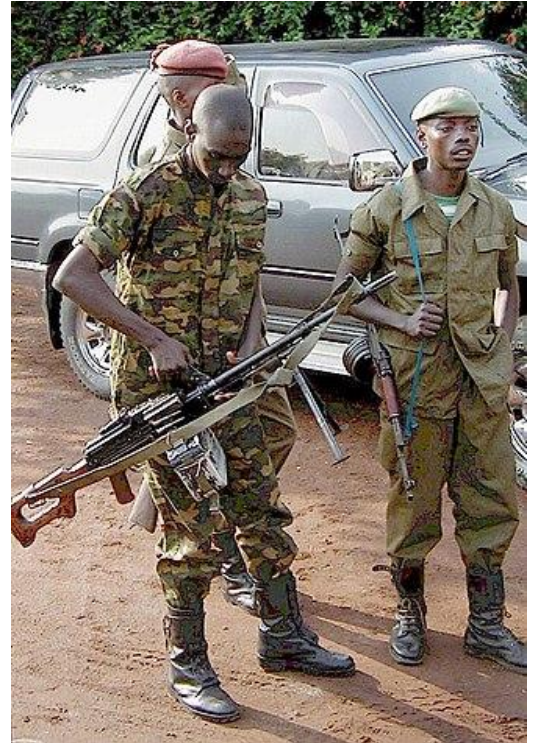


Image 5: Dua Congo Milito

VIII. Possible Solutions

In order to tackle the Second Congo War, solutions should not only be limited to ceasefires but should also address the root causes of the war. The war itself was fueled by an underlying ethnic conflict, yet worsened by other things such as Congo's natural resources, security questions, and political narratives.

First of all, integrating rebel groups, civil society and the opposition into governance through an inclusive political dialogue is essential for the sustainability of peace. Delegates should work on finding a solution that will ease hostilities so that they can begin working on more deeply-burrowed issues. While the failed ceasefire agreements seem disheartening, it is necessary to put a stop to the violence, so they may be used as a starting point to figure out what went wrong.

Working off of the point to end hostilities, at the regional level, joint mechanisms should be established on border security and militia disarmament, taking into account the security concerns of neighboring countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and Angola. A regional and international cooperation regarding security and trade could be formed to encourage a peaceful and fair transition forward. In addition, UN peacekeepers have a stronger mandate to protect civilians, disarm militias and monitor



agreements. Internally, a complete security sector reform may be necessary to ensure that the Congolese army is purged of factionalism and corruption.

One of the most important ways to ensure lasting peace is to address the cultural grievances that caused this war: the ethnic conflict. The legal rights of different ethnic groups in Congo must be safeguarded, and an environment of both internal and external social acceptance should be fostered. National unity campaigns and cultural protection initiatives should be implemented once the war is over.

The institutional capacity of the Congolese state should be strengthened and the authority gap in the east should be eliminated, thus narrowing the field of action of foreign militias and local armed groups. The governing body should reach a position of relative security and independence, so delegates are encouraged to come up with solutions regarding institutional reforms.

At the same time, it is critical to ensure the control of the country's rich mineral resources through transparent mechanisms, ending the war economy and encouraging armed groups to peace. Internal governmental protection regarding the state's environmental resources should be established.

Finally, delegates must tackle the humanitarian issues caused by the war. Being one of the most violent events of the 20th century, the fallout from the war could be massive. Delegates should keep in mind the ruined healthcare systems and rampant disease, as well as the need for general humanitarian aid like food and water. The displacement problem needs to be addressed, alongside various victims of sexual assault, human trafficking, and child soldiers.

IX. Useful Links

[Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo | Global Conflict Tracker](#)

[Briefing: The Second Congo War: More than a Remake](#)

[Understanding the Genocide in the Congo War | Panzi Foundation](#)

[Congo: The First and Second Wars, 1996-2003 - The Enough Project](#)

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