

East Democratic Republic of Congo conflict. A situation that confuses many people, NGOs and Governments. Implication of mineral and conflict fuelled by outsiders, individual, groups, business and Governments. ,UN expert reports

Before presenting this paper of the current situation of DR Congo , I thought it would be important to give you an overview of the country: " DR Congo is extremely wealthy - and extremely big. According to UN experts (2012) .DRC abounds with diamonds, gold, copper, cobalt and zinc. In addition of that, the country also supplies coltan, which is used in mobile phones and other electronic gadgets, and cassiterite, used in food packaging."

The mineral is one of main causes of the conflict in Congo! As you will learn from this article, the natural riches have attracted rapacious adventurers, unscrupulous corporations, and vicious warlords and corrupt governments and divided the population between competing ethnic groups.

Back in history in he early 20th Century, Belgian forces arrived and enslaved millions, while King Leopold ruled the country as his personal fiefdom. During a painful independence struggle in the 1960s, the vast country almost disintegrated as regions fought each other. But Joseph Mobutu seized power in 1965 and set about crushing internal rebellions and unifying the nation - eventually changing its name to Zaire.

However, Mobutu was soon seduced by wealth and once he controlled most of the country and gained a level of stability and prosperity, he began using the country's riches for one thing - to ensure he remained in power. As his rule went on, his plunder continued and the country gradually slipped out of his control.

The 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda hastened his downfall and helped plunge DR Congo into the deadliest conflict in African history. Why did Rwanda's genocide affect DR Congo so badly?

Eastern DR Congo has porous borders. After Rwanda's genocidal Hutu regime was overthrown, more than two million Hutus are thought to have fled into DR Congo fearing reprisals against them by the new, Tutsi-dominated government.

Unrest in the east has forced hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. Rwanda's Tutsi government started to back rival militias, fighting both the Hutu militias and Congolese government troops. The Tutsi militias, allied to other local groups backed by Uganda, eventually marched on Kinshasa and overthrew Mobutu's government. They

installed Laurent Kabila as president and he renamed the country - from Zaire to DR Congo in 1996.

But Kabila failed to expel the Hutu militia and tiny Rwanda, which had put him in power, soon sent a new force to oust him. Kabila then called in help from Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola and for the next five years all six countries, and others, fought a proxy war on Congolese land.

All sides were accused of using the cover of the war to loot the country's riches. More than five million people died in the war and its aftermath - mostly from starvation or disease. Although the war was declared over in 2003, the east of the country continues to be unstable

Has DR Congo achieved any kind of peace? Most of the country has now found peace and the central government has slowly reasserted control. The country even started to live up to its name by having the first democratic elections in more than four decades, which saw the late Laurent Kabila's son, Joseph, elected as president.

Many groups have been accused of using child soldiers. But a proxy war between Rwanda and the Kinshasa government continued in the east until the end of 2008. Particularly Tutsi warlord Gen Laurent Nkunda - who most analysts believe was backed by Rwanda - waged a campaign to destroy Hutu rebels from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). As part of the deal, Gen Nkunda was taken out of the country and put under house arrest in Rwanda - where he remains.

But the bitter conflict has continued unabated and Congolese government troops, backed by thousands of UN peacekeepers, have failed to defeat new rebel M23 mainly composed by Tutsi ethnics in East Congo. The M23 rebels are commanded, from behind the scenes, by Bosco Ntaganda - a man indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged war crimes. His colleagues - "a bunch of thugs" according to one experienced Western observer - also include a number of other figures allegedly linked to atrocities.

What is the UN doing?

The UN's peacekeeping mission has been in DR Congo for 10 years. At one point it was the biggest peacekeeping operation in the world, with almost 20,000 personnel on the ground. It is mandated to protect civilians and also help in the reconstruction of the country.

President Joseph Kabila wants UN peacekeepers out of the country

But as the battles in the east have rumbled on, the allegiances and intentions of the major players have become increasingly murky. Warlords have been absorbed into the army but are widely accused of carrying out atrocities and running their own personal militias. Army commanders have been accused of supplying the FDLR - the very rebels they are supposed to be fighting (information to be verified)

Human rights groups say the army and the FDLR are working together to exploit mines(also information to be verified). And Human Rights Watch has suggested the UN is risking becoming complicit in atrocities against civilians.

In November 2009, a report by UN-commissioned experts said UN involvement had done nothing to quell the violence - with rebels continuing to kill and plunder natural resources with impunity and claims the rebels are supported by an international crime network stretching through Africa to Western Europe and North America.

In August 2010, the UN force came in for more criticism for not doing anything to stop the rape of more than 150 women and children within miles of their base near Luvungi, saying they only heard about the attacks 10 days afterwards.

However, recently July 2012, United Nations Peacekeepers has started doing the extraordinary job in East of Congo! Initially, it is obvious that UNHCR does not want to take the responsibility of situation created by rebels and other Human rights abusers . That is one of reasons why UN peacekeepers has shelled the rebels positions in order to bring the stability . Arguably, what United Nations Peacekeepers are saying " enough is enough" . UN has used a well calculated response to the situation ion just to avoid refugees in mass and influx situations!

**Solution & Discussion:** The Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and neighbouring states called on Thursday for the creation of an international military force to eliminate armed rebels in the DRC's turbulent east. Is this going to work? Who should take the responsibility of East Congo conflicts, who would pay these soldiers and how long they would do the war-mission?

**NB:** The force changed its name from the UN Organisation Mission in DR Congo - known by its French acronym Monuc - to the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission - Monusco.