

CONGO (DRC) in Perspective

An Orientation Guide



Technology Integration Division
March 2010



DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

Table of Contents

<i>GEOGRAPHY</i> _____	5
Introduction _____	5
Geographic Regions and Topographic Features _____	6
Climate _____	6
Rivers and Lakes _____	8
The Congo River _____	8
Tributaries _____	9
Lakes _____	9
Cities _____	10
Kinshasa _____	11
Lubumbashi _____	12
Mbuji-Mayi _____	13
Kananga _____	13
Kisangani _____	14
Environmental Concerns _____	15
Natural Hazards _____	16
Self Study Questions: _____	17
<i>History</i> _____	18
Introduction _____	18
Kingdoms and Empires before the Europeans _____	18
Arrival of the Europeans _____	20
The Age of Exploration _____	20
Henry Morton Stanley: Adventurer _____	21
“Ce Magnifique Gâteau Africain”: Leopold’s Congo _____	22
The Congo Free State _____	23
Public Indignation: Savagery Perpetrated by Business Interests _____	24
Belgian Congo _____	25
Religious Movements _____	26
Prelude to Independence _____	27
“The Revolution Without Revolutionaries” _____	28
The Republic of the Congo (1960–1965) _____	29
Independence _____	29
The Congo Crisis: Secession Movements _____	29
The Mobutu Era (1965–1997) _____	30
Early Years _____	30
Corruption and Economic Collapse _____	31
The Congo Wars (1996–2003) _____	32
Recent Events: Another Kabila in Power _____	33
Self Study Questions: _____	34
<i>Economy</i> _____	35

Introduction	35
Agriculture	35
Manufacturing and Industry	36
Banking and Currency	37
Trade	38
Investment	39
Energy and Mineral Resources	41
Energy: Oil, Gas and Hydroelectricity	41
Minerals: Rich Deposits, Rife with Conflict	41
Standard of Living	42
Tourism	43
Transportation	43
Economic Outlook	44
International Organizations	45
Self Study Questions:	46
<i>Society</i>	47
Introduction	47
Ethnic Groups and Languages	47
Regional Languages	48
Religion	49
Gender Issues	50
Traditions: Celebrations and Holidays	51
Cuisine	52
Traditional Dress	53
Arts	53
Music: Soukous, Rumba and Pop	53
Traditional Crafts: Spiritual Power and Everyday Objects	55
Folktales and Folklore	56
Sports and Recreation	56
Self Study Questions:	57
<i>Security</i>	58
Introduction	58
Military	58
MONUC	59
U.S–Democratic Republic of the Congo Relations	60
Relations With Neighboring Countries	61
Central African Republic	61
Republic of the Congo	62

Angola	62
Zambia	63
Tanzania	64
Burundi	64
Rwanda	65
Uganda	66
Sudan	67
Terrorist Groups and Activity	68
LRA	69
FDLR	69
Issues Affecting Stability	70
Ethnic Conflict	70
Military Reform	71
Demographic Concerns	72
Looking Forward	73
Self Study Questions:	73
<i>Further Reading</i>	74
<i>Appendix A: Answers to Self Study Questions</i>	76

GEOGRAPHY

Introduction

“Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were king. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest.”

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) is one of two countries that are named after the Congo River. The Republic of the Congo, located on the D.R.C.’s western border, is the other.¹ These are the only two countries in the world named after the same river. To outsiders, the image of the Congo River has often been one of mystery and potential danger. It has been seen as an enigmatic river sweeping through immense swaths of equatorial rainforests, which is suddenly interrupted by impassable falls and churning rapids. To those living in the vast interior basins of the D.R.C., however, the Congo River is a lifeline. It links the nation’s hundreds of rivers and provides accessibility in a country that otherwise may seem impenetrable.



© Vberger / wikipedia.org
Congo river

The D.R.C. occupies an area comparable to the U.S. east of the Mississippi River. It is the third largest country in Africa (behind Sudan and Algeria). This expansive territory contains fewer paved roads than the state of Rhode Island, totaling less than 2,800 km (1,740 mi) of roads connecting the nation’s regions.^{2, 3} Such lack of infrastructure has led to the isolation of many communities. It has been one of many contributing factors in the D.R.C.’s struggle “to maintain political institutions, protect its population from conflict, control its territory and meet the basic needs of the population.”⁴

¹ Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo.” January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

² Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook. “Congo, Democratic Republic of.” 15 January 2010. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html>

³ Rhode Island Department of Transportation. *Putting Customers First: Annual Report 2007*. “RIDOT Quick Facts [p. 49].” 2008. <http://www.dot.state.ri.us/documents/news/annrepts/2007AnnualReport.pdf>

⁴ AfricanEconomicOutlook.org. “Congo (DRC): Political Context.” 20 January 2010. http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/central-africa/congo-drc/#/political_context

Geographic Regions and Topographic Features

The terrain of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) consists of mountains and plateaus ringing the Congo Basin, a westward-sloping lowland area through which the Congo River and its tributaries flow. Nearly 60% of the total area of the Congo Basin lies within the D.R.C.⁵ Within the basin is the world's second largest rain forest, an area that contains 70% of Africa's plant cover.⁶

Along the country's far eastern border, a series of high mountains form the edge of the the Albertine Rift Valley, the western arm of the East African Rift System.⁷ The actual border of the D.R.C. lies within the valley and includes parts of several large lakes that run along the valley floor. One section of the D.R.C.'s eastern mountains is the Ruwenzori Range, part of which straddles the D.R.C.–Uganda border between Lakes



© Peter / flickr.com
Rain forest in Ghana, DRC

Edward and Albert. The D.R.C.'s highest point is Pic Marguerite on Mount Stanley. Also known as Mount Ngaliéma, this peak lies within the Ruwenzoris and is 5,109 m (16,763 ft) above sea level. It is exceeded in height by only two other African peaks: Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya.⁸ Other ranges along the D.R.C.'s eastern border include the Blue Mountains, which flank Lake Albert, and the Virunga Mountains, a chain of volcanic peaks lying between Lakes Edward and Kivu. Two of the Virunga volcanoes, Nyiragongo and Nyamulagira, are still active, with the most recent eruption of Nyamulagira occurring in January 2010.⁹ South of the Virunga Mountains, the Mitumba Mountains stretch southward along the western edges of Lakes Kivu and Tanganyika and then veer southwestward toward the Zambian border.

The southern region of the D.R.C. consists of highlands that range from approximately 500 to 1,000 m in altitude. In the northern part of the country, another upland region of high plateaus lies north of the Uele River, which flows into the Ubangi, a tributary of the Congo River. The northern upland area marks the drainage divide between the Congo River and Nile River systems.¹⁰ The western-most portion of the D.R.C. consists of a narrow coastal stretch that is connected to the southwestern rim of the Congo Basin by a gorge carved through the Crystal Mountains by the Congo River.

Climate

⁵ MongaBay.com. Butler, Rhett A. "Congo Deforestation Statistics." 2010. <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/congo/stats.html>

⁶ MongaBay.com. Butler, Rhett A. "The Congo Rain Forest, An Overview of a Threatened Ecosystem." 6 June 2005. http://news.mongabay.com/2005/0606-rhett_butler.html

⁷ Encyclopedia of Earth. Saundry, Peter. "Lake Albert." 13 July 2009. http://www.eoearth.org/article/Lake_Albert,_Africa

⁸ Peakware.com. "Mount Stanley." 2010. <http://www.peakware.com/peaks.html?pk=1084>

⁹ BBC News. "DR Congo Volcano Eruption Threatens Rare Chimpanzees." 2 January 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8437742.stm>

¹⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Congo: Land: Relief." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40789>

The flow at the mouth of the Congo River fluctuates little during the course of the year, when compared to the high and low-flow seasons for many of the world's other major rivers. The Congo Basin straddles both sides of the equator, and the tributaries entering the river from the north and from the south flow through regions that have opposite rainfall patterns which enable the year-round flow into the Congo. Near the equator, rainfall is generally plentiful all year long, with two pronounced wet seasons. For example, the Congo River city of Kisangani, located just a little north of the equator, has peak rains in April and October, with the overall total annual rainfall a little more than 170 cm (67 in).¹¹ Temperatures in the equatorial region seldom drop below the mid-20s C (mid-70s F), and humidity is high all year.



© Laura / flickr.com
Rain in Goma

To the south and north of the equatorial zone, the climate becomes more seasonal. Rainfall drops significantly during the dry season, which can extend for four to seven months depending on the distance from the equator. In general, the dry season south of the equatorial zone occurs between April and October. North of the equatorial zone, these months would be the wet season. Daily temperatures increase and relative humidity drops during the dry months in these subequatorial zones. Annual rainfall is also less than in the equatorial zone. Kinshasa (at about 4.3°S of the equator) and Lubumbashi (11.6°S) average 135.8 cm (53.5 in) and 123.3 cm (48.5 in) of rainfall each year, respectively.^{12, 13}

Along the D.R.C.'s narrow coastal zone, climate is affected dramatically by local ocean currents. Here, rainfall totals are dramatically less than in the rest of the D.R.C.

For example, the small coastal port of Banana averages 76 cm (30 in) of rain each year.¹⁴ In the mountains of the far eastern part of the D.R.C., higher altitudes produce lower average temperatures, although annual rainfall totals do not change significantly.¹⁵



© Laura / flickr.com
Gray skies in Goma

¹¹ BBC Weather. "Average Conditions: Kisangani, Congo Democratic Republic." No date. http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/city_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT000780

¹² BBC Weather. "Average Conditions: Lubumbashi, Congo Democratic Republic." No date. http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/city_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT000790

¹³ BBC Weather. "Average Conditions: Kinshasa, Congo Democratic Republic." No date. http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/city_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT000770

¹⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Congo: Land: Climate." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40791>

¹⁵ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Congo: Land: Climate." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40791>

Rivers and Lakes

Any discussion of rivers in the D.R.C. begins with the Congo River itself, Africa's second longest river after the Nile. With the exception of a few places in the Albertine Rift Valley, all rivers and streams in the D.R.C. eventually become part of the Congo. Like the Amazon River of South America, the Congo River flows through wet equatorial regions carrying a tremendous volume of water to the Atlantic.

The Congo River

Two sources of the Congo River can be identified. One is the Chambeshi River, which rises in the highlands of Zambia south of Lake Tanganyika. By the measure of the longest distance from the Congo River's mouth, this is the tributary where the flow to the Congo begins. However, as measured by the greatest amount of water flow, the Lualaba River, which begins in the southern highlands of the D.R.C., is the Congo's initial tributary.



© LM TP / Flickr.com
Congo river

The Chambeshi River flows into the swamps of Lake Bangweulu, where it merges with the Lulapula River. This river eventually turns north and forms the D.R.C.–Zambia border for much of its length. After the Lulapula flows into the southern end of Lake Mweru, it emerges as the Luvua River at the northern end, where it turns northwest, carving a path through the Mitumba Mountains. South of the town of Kabalo, the Luvua converges with the Lualaba. From here, the Lualaba travels northward until it reaches the Boyoma Falls, just southwest of the city of Kisangani.

The Boyoma Falls represent the end of the upper Congo River system. From Kisangani to the Malebo Pool—a large lake-like part of the river located at Kinshasa, the capital the river widens and descends gradually. This middle stretch of the Congo River is the longest fully navigable section of the river and completes a long, counter-clockwise arc that results in the ultimate flow southwestward at Kinshasa. Immediately below Kinshasa, the Congo abruptly cascades through Livingstone Falls as it begins its final descent to the Atlantic Ocean. Numerous cataracts and rapids through rocky, steep terrain mark the next 350 km (217 mi) downriver. This stretch of the river obstructed upstream investigation of the Congo River by European explorers for several hundred years, contributing to its mystery. The last of the rapids occur just upstream of the port city of Matadi. From here, the final 134 km (83 mi) of the Congo River's journey to the Atlantic consists of a navigable estuary.¹⁶



© Julien Hameis
Kisangani fall, Democratic Republic of Congo

¹⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Congo River: Physical Features: Physiography." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-37045>

Tributaries

The Congo is fed by numerous tributaries. The most important of these are the Lomami, Ubangi, and Kasai Rivers. The Lomami River flows northward on a path that is west of and roughly parallel to the Lualaba (upper Congo River). It enters the left bank of the Congo River about 113 km (70 mi) downstream from Kisangani.¹⁷ The Ubangi River flows into the Congo from the north (right-bank side), downstream from the city of Mbandaka. Along with its tributary, the Bomu River, the Ubangi is a boundary river between the D.R.C. and two of its neighbors: the Central African Republic and the Republic of the Congo. The Kasai is the last of the major tributaries to enter the Congo River. It flows along a north to northwest route from its headwaters in the upland regions of southern D.R.C. and Angola. Its upstream portion forms the boundary between the D.R.C. and Angola. Two of the Kasai's tributaries—the Kwango and Tshikapa Rivers—also serve as parts of the D.R.C.–Angolan border.

Lakes

Much of the D.R.C.'s eastern boundary runs through the large lakes of the Albertine Rift Valley. From north to south, they are Lakes Edward, Albert, Kivu, and Tanganyika. Both Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika drain into the Lualaba River, while Lakes Edward and Albert are part of the Nile River drainage system.¹⁸ Another rift valley lake (Lake Mweru) also forms part of the D.R.C. eastern border to the southwest of the Albertine Rift Valley. Two of the largest non-Rift Valley lakes in the D.R.C. are Lake Mai-Ndombe and Lake Tumba, both of which lie within a swampy region in the western D.R.C. between the Congo River and the Kasai River.



© Julien Hameis
Shore of Lake Edward

¹⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Lomami River.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9048800>

¹⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Geography and Environment: Rivers and Lakes.” December 1993.

Cities

City	Province (Capital)¹⁹	Population 2004²⁰
Kinshasa	Kinshasa	7,273,947
Lubumbashi	Katanga (Haut-Katanga)	1,283,380
Mbuji-Mayi	Kasai-Oriental (Kasai-Oriental)	1,213,726
Kananga	Kasai-Occidental (Lulua)	720,362
Kisangani	Oriental (Tshopo)	682,599
Bukavu	Sud-Kivu (Sud-Kivu)	471,789
Kolwezi	Katanga (Lualaba)	456,446
Likasi	Katanga (Mongala)	367,219
Tshikapa	Kasai-Occidental (Kasai)	366,503
Kikwit	Bandundu (Kwilu)	294,210

¹⁹ The Congolese constitution passed in 2006 called for reconstituting the existing 10 provinces into 25 newly created provinces. The constitution set February 2009 as the latest date by which the new provinces should come into existence.

²⁰ No census has been taken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1984. The given population figures come from an estimate produced by the United Nations Organization Mission DR Congo (MONUC) – Department of Peacekeeping Operations GIS Unit. Reference: ReliefWeb.org. “Urban Population Map.” 22 September 2004.

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Af.nsf/luFullMap/870AEB3188D5D25485257046006B924F/\\$File/monuc_POP_cod090505.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/fullMaps_Af.nsf/luFullMap/870AEB3188D5D25485257046006B924F/$File/monuc_POP_cod090505.pdf?OpenElement)

Kinshasa

The D.R.C's capital and largest city, Kinshasa lies on the Congo River, directly across the Malebo Pool from Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo. Kinshasa was established as a trading post in 1881 by Welsh-born explorer/journalist Henry Morton Stanley, who named it Léopoldville after his employer at the time, King Leopold II of Belgium. Because the cataracts and rapids made the Congo River impassable for several hundred miles downriver from the Malebo Pool, Stanley commanded a large party of native Africans and Europeans to carve a road from the Congo estuary to the Malebo Pool (then called the Stanley Pool). This road allowed porters to disassemble steamships, carry them upriver to the pool, and reassemble them at Léopoldville.²¹ A few years later, construction began on a railroad line between the seaport of Matadi, located on the Congo estuary, and Léopoldville. Its completion in 1898 marked the true beginning of Léopoldville's rise. Later, the construction of an oil pipeline connecting Matadi with Léopoldville's river ports further solidified Léopoldville's important role in linking the interior parts of the Congo colony with the coastal region.²² By 1923, Léopoldville had become the administrative center of the Belgian Congo, although its population was still less than 25,000.^{23, 24}



Léopoldville's population expanded greatly from the 1940s onward.^{25, 26} The city itself remained racially segregated until independence in 1960, when the majority of Europeans left the country.²⁷ In 1966, the capital city's name was changed to Kinshasa, which had been the name of a nearby fishing village when the Léopoldville trading post was founded. The change was part of President Mobutu Sésé Seko's authenticity campaign designed to rid the D.R.C. of names reflecting the country's colonial past.²⁸ The city today remains the financial, industrial, and political center of the D.R.C., even as it continues to recover from nearly two decades of civil war and political turmoil.

²¹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 2: Exploring the Congo [p. 60–62]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press

²² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kinshasa: History." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9050>

²³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kinshasa: People." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9042>

²⁴ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kinshasa: History." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9050>

²⁵ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 5: The Belgian Congo [pp. 176–177, 186]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

²⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kinshasa: People." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9042>

²⁷ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 5: The Belgian Congo [pp. 176–177, 186]." 2002. New York: St. Martin's Press

²⁸ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Horison, Sean. "Kinshasa" [p. 89]. 2008. Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides.

Lubumbashi

Lubumbashi, the D.R.C.'s second largest city, is also one of its most remote from the nation's capital. It is located closer in distance to South Africa's capital city of Pretoria than to Kinshasa.²⁹ The city is named after a local river. Lubumbashi started as a company town, founded by the Belgian-British mineral company Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK) in 1910.³⁰ The mining settlement, which was known as Élisabethville until 1971, grew quickly as the UMHK brought workers in from southern Belgian Congo and adjacent territories to work in the copper and cobalt mines, and in other mining-related industries.³¹ A railway linking Élisabethville with the British colony of Rhodesia (modern-day Zambia and Zimbabwe) was responsible for bringing in many of these new workers.³² In 1920, the old town was razed and rebuilt following a grid pattern, with the center of the city reserved for Europeans only.³³



© Nick Hobgood
Lubumbashi Cathedral

During the 1960s, the years immediately following Congolese independence, Élisabethville—renamed Lubumbashi—was briefly the capital of the breakaway state of Katanga. Several decades later in August 2000, President Laurent-Désiré Kabila, only a few months before he was assassinated, declared the city the home of the D.R.C.'s transitional parliament's constitutive and legislative assembly.³⁴ This assembly, containing members hand-picked by Kabila, never gained internal or international legitimacy.³⁵ Throughout the tumultuous history of the D.R.C., Lubumbashi has continued to be a distribution and administrative center for the various mining activities in southern Katanga Province. Other local industries include brewing, printing, food processing, and the production of bricks, cigarettes, and soap.³⁶

²⁹ TimeandDate.com. "Cities Located Close to Lubumbashi." 27 January 2010.

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/distances.html?n=139>

³⁰ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Horison, Sean. "Lubumbashi" [p. 137]. 2008. Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides.

³¹ *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century African History*. Mianda, Gertrude. "Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo [p. 338]." 2003. London, UK: Routledge.

³² *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 5: "The Belgian Congo [p. 160]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

³³ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert B. "Chapter 5. "The Belgian Congo [pp. 158–159]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

³⁴ *Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century African History*. Mianda, Gertrude. "Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo [p. 338]." 2003. London, UK: Routledge.

³⁵ BBC News, International Version. "UN Condemns Kabila Over Parliament." 22 August 2000. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/891497.stm>

³⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Lubumbashi." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9049225>

Mbuji-Mayi

In 1914, diamond deposits were discovered in the vicinity of the modern city of Mbuji-Mayi. At the time, the local area was home to several villages of the Bakwanga clan. During the latter half of the 1940s, an industrial-scale diamond mine was developed on a small river just south of the Bakwanga villages. The new mine led to a major influx of workers and to the development of Bakwanga, a company mining town that quickly mushroomed into the largest city in the Kasai region. Nevertheless, Bakwanga still was only a modest-size city of fewer than 40,000 people throughout the 1950s.³⁷ The first wave of massive population growth occurred after independence in the early 1960s. Fighting in the Katanga and Kasai regions brought tens of thousands of ethnic Luban refugees to the city.³⁸ During this period, Bakwanga was briefly the capital of the autonomous Mining State of South Kasai (*État Minier du Sud-Kasaï*), which like neighboring Katanga broke away from the rest of the D.R.C. during the summer of 1960. The South Kasai secession lasted for only about a year, after which Bakwanga became the capital of the newly created Kasai Oriental Province

Mbuji-Mayi, as the city was renamed in the 1960s, features the nation's largest diamond mine, which is 80% state-owned.³⁹ However, production from this mine has dramatically declined owing to labor disputes and deteriorating infrastructure. The largest percentage of diamonds now mined in the region come from artisanal (i.e., small-scale) mines.^{40, 41}

Kananga

Kananga is located 163 km (101 mi) west of Mbuji-Mayi on the right (east) bank of the Lulua River, a major tributary of the Kasai River.⁴² The city is a commercial and administrative center for Kasai-Occidental Province and until 1972 was known as Luluabourg. The city is on the railroad that links Lubumbashi with the Kasai River port of Ilebo.⁴³ At one time, this route was the major



© yirmx / flickr.com
Elephants in Kananga

³⁷ *The Management of Secondary Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Traditional and Modern Institutional Arrangement*. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT). "VI. Case Study: Mbuji-Mayi [p. 129]." 1991. Nairobi, Kenya: UN HABITAT.

³⁸ *The Management of Secondary Cities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Traditional and Modern Institutional Arrangement*. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT). "VI. Case Study: Mbuji-Mayi [p. 125–129]." 1991. Nairobi, Kenya: UN HABITAT.

³⁹ U.S. Geological Survey. *2007 Minerals Yearbook*. "Congo (Kinshasa) [p. 8]." August 2009. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2007/myb3-2007-cg.pdf>

⁴⁰ U.S. Geological Survey. *2007 Minerals Yearbook*. "Congo (Kinshasa) [p. 8]." August 2009. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2007/myb3-2007-cg.pdf>

⁴¹ Partnership Africa Canada. *Diamonds and Human Security: Annual Report 2009*. "Democratic Republic of the Congo [p. 9]." http://www.pacweb.org/Documents/annual-reviews-diamonds/AR_diamonds_2009_eng.pdf

⁴² *Central Africa*, 2nd Ed. Newton, Alex. "Zaire [p. 504]." 1994. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications

⁴³ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kananga." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9044522>

overland transportation corridor bringing Katanga Province's mineral wealth to market via Kinshasa and ultimately to the sea port at Matadi. Today the mined ores are sent southward to ports in South Africa.⁴⁴

Kisangani

Kisangani, formerly known as Stanleyville, is a major river port on the Congo River. It is the capital and central city of the province of Orientale. Kisangani lies just downstream from Boyoma (formerly Stanley) Falls, at the northern end of the Congo's longest stretch of navigable water. During the early years of the Congo Free State colony, 1880s, river boats from Léopoldville (Kinshasa) would slowly steam more than 1700 km (1056 mi) upstream to reach the remote trading post at Falls Station. This distant outpost, located on a river island at the present site of Kisangani, would serve as an inspiration for the Inner Station run by Mr. Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's classic novella *Heart of Darkness*.⁴⁵



River transportation into Kisangani

Most of Kisangani lies between the right (north) bank of the Congo and the left (south) bank of the Tshopo River. The latter river, a tributary of the Congo, provides the city's electricity via a hydroelectric plant. Kisangani is surrounded by a large agricultural region carved out of the equatorial forests, producing palm oil, rice, cotton, coffee, rubber, cocoa, timber, and quinine.⁴⁶ Diamonds fields also exist near the city.

Kisangani has been a troubled city during the last two decades. In 1991 and 1992, the city was looted on two occasions by disgruntled army units.⁴⁷ Kisangani was the site of extensive fighting during 1999–2000, when rival militias and their Rwandan and Ugandan sponsors fought for control of the city's diamond trade.^{48, 49} By the time that the situation calmed in 2002–2003, Kisangani's infrastructure and local economy lay in ruins.^{50, 51} Another unfortunate effect of this conflict was the spread of anti-personnel mines around the city and in the surrounding countryside.⁵²

⁴⁴ BBC News. "DR Congo Crash Toll 'Passes 100'." 2 August 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6928227.stm>

⁴⁵ *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. "Meeting Mr. Kurtz [p. 144]." 2009. New York, NY: Mariner Books.

⁴⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Kisangani." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9045647>

⁴⁷ *Central Africa*, 2nd Ed. Newton, Alex. "Zaire [p. 511]." 1994. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

⁴⁸ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. "Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 543]." 2005. New York, NY: Public Affairs

⁴⁹ Societecivile.cd. "Participation Active à la Reconstruction de la Vilee De Kisangani/RDC." 4 July 2008. <http://www.societecivile.cd/node/3840>

⁵⁰ *Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic*. Horison, Sean. "Kisangani [p. 163–164]." 2008. Chalfont St. Peter, UK: Bradt Travel Guides.

Environmental Concerns

The Congo Basin is home to one of the world's great rainforests, a repository of plants and wildlife that is unrivaled on the African continent. By one estimate, this region contains over 600 types of trees and 10,000 animal species.⁵³ Deforestation is a continuing problem, with nearly 5% of the forest having been lost in the 15 years between 1990 and 2005.⁵⁴ Most of the forest loss occurs as a result of subsistence activities, such as slash-and-



© Nick Hobgood
Local hunters in the Congo

burn agriculture and using wood as firewood. The warfare of the 1990s and 2000s has also taken a toll on the forest lands. Hundreds of thousands of people from villages and cities have, at various times, been forced to flee through the forests on their way to refugee sites, causing damage to vegetation and disruption to wildlife.⁵⁵

Beyond deforestation, the greatest threat to the wildlife of the D.R.C.'s forests is the unsustainable level of bushmeat hunting as a source of food and income.⁵⁶ The meat of both protected and nonprotected species can commonly be found in the markets of the D.R.C.'s towns and cities. Attention to this issue is driven by concern about the hunting of endangered great apes, including chimpanzees and bonobos.⁵⁷ Logging roads carved into the interior parts of the forest have escalated the problem by providing increased access for hunters.^{58, 59}

Mining activities, on both a large-scale and an artisanal level, often have negative effects on the water quality of the D.R.C.'s rivers. The problem is particularly severe in eastern D.R.C. This region was occupied by Rwanda and Uganda, and by aligned Congolese militias during the Second Congo War (1998–2003), and continues to be an area of rebel activity. Among the resources of this region are cassiterite (source of tin), coltan (which contains the mineral tantalum, used in numerous electronics applications), and gold. Most

⁵¹ ABC Nightline. "Congo Series, Part 3—Kisangani ." 23 January 2002.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/story?id=128593&page=1>

⁵² GlobalSecurity.org. IRIN. "DRC-Congo: Congos Seek Support for Landmine Clearance."

<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2003/05/mil-030509-irin05.htm>

⁵³ MongaBay.com. Butler, Rhett A. "The Congo" 2010. <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/congo/>

⁵⁴ MongaBay.com. Butler, Rhett A. "Congo Deforestation Statistics." 2010.

<http://rainforests.mongabay.com/congo/stats.html>

⁵⁵ MongaBay.com. Butler, Rhett A. "Deforestation in the Congo Rainforest." 2010.

<http://rainforests.mongabay.com/congo/deforestation.html>

⁵⁶ MongaBay.com. Butler, Rhett A. "Imperiled Riches: The Expanding Africa Bush Meat Trade." 2008.

<http://www.mongabay.com/08bushmeat.htm>

⁵⁷ Hartford Web Publishing. Reuters. Mahtani, Dino. "Monkey Business in Kinshasa Markets." 11 August 2003. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/35/320.html>

⁵⁸ Hartford Web Publishing. Reuters. Mahtani, Dino. "Monkey Business in Kinshasa Markets." 11 August 2003. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/35/320.html>

⁵⁹ MongaBay.com. Butler, Rhett A. "Imperiled Riches: The Expanding Africa Bush Meat Trade." 2008. <http://www.mongabay.com/08bushmeat.htm>

of the mining is done near streams. The resulting erosion and dumped tailings (which can contain mercury and arsenic) have led to siltation and water contamination.⁶⁰

Natural Hazards

The eastern-most section of the D.R.C., part of the Albertine Rift Valley, is a volcanic zone. Two of the volcanoes—Nyiragongo and Nyamulagira—are presently active. In 2002 Nyiragongo erupted and the resulting lava flows reached the city of Goma. More than 40 people were killed, and approximately 4,500 homes and buildings in the city were destroyed.^{61, 62} To the northwest of Nyiragongo lies Nyamulagira, a volcano that has erupted twice since 2006—most recently, in January 2010. The 2010 eruption occurred in a region of Virunga National Park, threatening a population of endangered chimpanzees.⁶³



© Laura / flickr.com
Mount Nyiragongo

The Congo straddles the equator and the rainfall patterns to the north are generally opposite those to the south. As a result, runoff in the Congo River Basin is fairly steady all year long. Occasionally, however, the areas both south and north of the equator will experience heavy rains at the same time, leading to flooding on both the northern and southern tributaries of the Congo River. As a result, downstream sections of the Congo see high river levels. One such event occurred in 1999, the so-called “flood of the century”, on the Congo River.⁶⁴ In Kinshasa, 65,000 people were forced to evacuate their homes. Another 13,000 people downstream from Kinshasa also had to flee for higher shelter.⁶⁵ More recently, extremely heavy rains in Kinshasa in October 2007 killed 31 people and destroyed or damaged 1,500 homes. As with most floods in the D.R.C., this event took place during the late October to mid-January period when rainfalls are heaviest in the wettest parts of the country.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ EnviroSecurity.org. Institute for Environmental Security. “Mining, Forest Change, and Conflict in the Kivus, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.” May 2008.

http://www.envirosecurity.org/espa/PDF/Mining_forest_change_and_conflict_in_the_Kivus.pdf

⁶¹ Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, U.S. Geological Survey. “Nyiragongo—Could It Happen Here?” 31 January 2002. http://hvo.wr.usgs.gov/volcanowatch/2002/02_01_31.html

⁶² Earthquake Research Institute, University of Tokyo. Hiroyuki, Hamaguchi. “Cooperative Observations at Nyiragongo Volcano in D.R. of Congo.” No date. http://www.eri.u-tokyo.ac.jp/KAZANKYO/n_report/72.pdf

⁶³ BBC News. “DR Congo Eruption Threatens Rare Chimpanzees.” 2 January 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8437742.stm>

⁶⁴ Dartmouth University Flood Observatory. “1999 Global Register of Major Flood Events.” No date. <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~floods/Archives/1999sum.htm>

⁶⁵ Relief Web. United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “Democratic Republic of the Congo – River Floods: OCHA Situation Report No. 4.” 26 January 2000. <http://ocha-gwapps1.unog.ch/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/ACOS-64DAK7?OpenDocument&emid=FL-1999-0531-ZAR>

⁶⁶ Dartmouth University Flood Observatory. “Active Archive of Large Floods, 1985- Present [entries 286, 502, 507, 1411, 1625, 1659, 1931].” 2009. <http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7Efloods/Archives/2008.xml>

Self Study Questions:

The Congo Basin is a westward-sloping lowland area through which the Congo River and its tributaries flow. True or False?

The flow at the mouth of the Congo River fluctuates little during the course of the year. True or False?

Two sources of the Congo River can be identified. True or False?

Kinshasa was originally named Brazzaville. True or False?

Most of the deforestation in the D.R.C. is caused by refugees. True or False?

History

Introduction

In 2010 the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) marks its 50th year since becoming an independent nation. During that time, the country has suffered bloody periods of rioting and ethnic conflict, several early secession movements, a 32-year reign by one of Africa's most corrupt leaders, and (since 1996) two extremely brutal wars. The country first became a political entity when King Leopold II of Belgium claimed it as his private colony. The Congolese native population suffered immensely during this period, and the Congo Free State (as it was called) became a universal symbol of the inhumane treatment that "civilized" people could inflict on others in a far-off, unknown corner of the world.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
King Leopold II of Belgium

Today, the people and leaders of the D.R.C. must grapple with the legacy of the nation's past. Violence, ethnic strife, corruption, and greed have for so long been ingrained in the D.R.C.'s history that few observers expect things to change quickly. Nevertheless, some faint but hopeful signs exist that improvements lie ahead. A fledgling democracy has begun to take root, and economic reforms have been initiated. The nation's vast mineral wealth offers the financial means for the country to quickly rebuild its economy and to begin raising the general standard of living, as long as the benefits are equitably distributed. Security issues and human rights abuses continue to be a concern, but the nation's leaders are now working to address these weaknesses and excesses.

Thus, the country that is sometimes referred to as the "heart of Africa,"—often with modifiers such as "troubled," "bleeding," or "dark,"—may yet throw off the burden of its past. As Joseph Kabila, the D.R.C.'s elected president stated in a 2009 interview, one of the new government's most important accomplishments is the restoration of hope: "the hope that we've given to the Congolese people, hope that there is tomorrow, that there's something that we call tomorrow and that they're not going to die today and that there is a better tomorrow, that tomorrow will be better than today."⁶⁷

Kingdoms and Empires before the Europeans

Prior to the late fifteenth century, the people of the region that is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo had few if any encounters with non-African outsiders. Much of the central Congo Basin was rainforest. The obstacles presented by this terrain worked against the development of large political alliances or kingdoms. Local chieftains or dominant clans sometimes



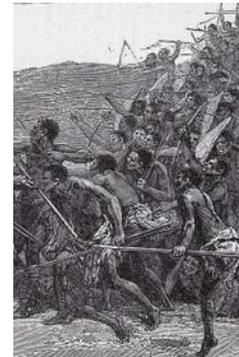
© Gerhard Mercator
Map of the Kingdom of Congo

⁶⁷ New York Times. Gettleman, Jeffrey. "An Interview With Joseph Kabila." 3 April 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/04/world/africa/04kabilatranscript.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1

were able to expand their authority through warfare, but a primary characteristic of the rainforest tribal societies was social fragmentation.⁶⁸

The first large-scale state to emerge in the Congo region was the Kongo kingdom. According to oral accounts, the origins of the Kongo kingdom lay in the late 14th century. Two leaders of small tribal states in the lower Congo River region agreed to a coalition that would eventually incorporate several other small states to the south (in modern-day Angola).⁶⁹ Centralized control over these smaller states increasingly was wielded by a ruler based in the kingdom's capital of Mbanza Kongo (called São Salvador after the Portuguese arrived).

Later, other kingdoms would also arise further inland in the savanna regions of the southern D.R.C. Foremost among these were the Luba and Lunda empires. In traditional accounts, these two states arose in the 15th or 16th century. The Songye people to the northeast invaded the area between the Lualaba and Lomami Rivers and founded the Luba kingdom.⁷⁰ A century or so later, a Luba satellite state to the southwest began to emerge as a separate independent state.⁷¹ The Lunda empire, as this second kingdom became known, was able to expand more easily than the Luba empire because of its perpetual succession system. New officials took the name and kinship relationships of the founding holder of the office. This peaceful transfer of power maintained social stability, even when local chiefs from outlying regions assumed leadership positions within the kingdom.⁷²



© JW Buel
African Congo Bowmen

⁶⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Early Historical Perspectives: State Systems Versus Segmentary Societies." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0017\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0017))

⁶⁹ *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles, and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660*. Thornton, John K.; and Linda M. Heywood. "Chapter 3: The Portuguese, Kongo and Ndongo and the Origins of Atlantic Creole Culture to 1607 [p. 57]." 2007. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

⁷⁰ *The History of Congo*. Gondola, Ch. Didier. "Chapter 2: The Congo Basin in Ancient and Precolonial Times [p. 36]." 2002. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

⁷¹ *The History of Congo*. Gondola, Ch. Didier. "Chapter 2: The Congo Basin in Ancient and Precolonial Times [p. 36]." 2002. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

⁷² Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Early Historical Perspectives: Rulers and Ruled." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0018\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0018))

Arrival of the Europeans

Portuguese explorers reportedly were the first Europeans to sail to the mouth of the Congo River estuary. In 1482, Diogo Cão came ashore on the south bank of the Congo River, where he erected a pillar to commemorate the event and claim Portuguese authority over the region.^{73, 74}



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Stone of Ielala, with the inscriptions of Diogo Cão

By 1491, the Portuguese had made contact with the Kongo king in Mbanza Kongo. Mostly futile attempts were made by Portuguese missionaries to Christianize the local citizenry (although a later Kongo king, Afonso, did convert). The Portuguese proved more successful in establishing extensive slave trade with the Kongo. The Kongo themselves were slaveholders and traffickers, but the increasing Portuguese demand for slaves to work in the sugar plantations of São Tomé and the mines and coffee plantations of Brazil ultimately began to destabilize the Kongo kingdom.^{75, 76} In 1526, Afonso wrote to Portuguese King João III, pleading “each day the traders are kidnapping our people—children of this country, sons of our nobles and vassals, even people of our own family. This corruption and depravity are so widespread that our land is depopulated.”⁷⁷

Afonso’s pleas proved fruitless. The slave trade continued to thrive, although the Portuguese eventually shifted most of their operations to the south (to the port of Luanda in modern-day Angola) during the late 17th century.^{78, 79} After 1800 the Congo River estuary port of Boma became an important port for the slave trade, although by this time many countries (such as England) were moving toward the abolition of slavery.⁸⁰

The Age of Exploration

Until the mid-19th century, no Europeans had explored the interior regions of the Congo Basin. The Congo River was the most natural approach to this region, but the imposing wall of the Crystal Mountains, where the river became impassable was a significant

⁷³ *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. Prologue: “The Traders Are Kidnapping Our People [p. 8].” 1998. Boston/New York: Mariner Books.

⁷⁴ Technische Universiteit Eindhoven. Discoverer’s Web. Howgego, Ray. “Diogo Cão.” No date. <http://www.win.tue.nl/~engels/discovery/cao.html>

⁷⁵ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Land Beyond Obscurity and Darkness [p. 14].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

⁷⁶ Macrohistory and World Report. Smitha, Frank E. “Portuguese and Other Europeans in Africa in the Early 1500s.” 2001. <http://www.fsmitha.com/h3/h17port2.htm>

⁷⁷ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Land Beyond Obscurity and Darkness [p. 10].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

⁷⁸ Macrohistory and World Report. Smitha, Frank E. “Portugal Abandons the Kongo and Expands.” <http://www.fsmitha.com/h3/h17port3.htm>

⁷⁹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Land Beyond Obscurity and Darkness [p. 16–17].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

⁸⁰ *General History of Africa (Abridged Edition)*. V. *Africa From the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. “The Kongo Kingdom and Its Neighbors [p. 285].” 1999. Paris: UNESCO.

barrier to inland exploration. There was little economic motivation on the part of the Europeans to explore beyond the coast, because the dominant export—slaves—was brought to the coastal regions by African slave traders or by African or mulatto middlemen known as *pombeiros*.⁸¹

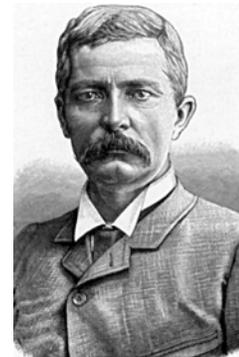
In 1806 two mulatto *pombeiros*, Pedro João Baptista and Amaro Jose, initiated what would become a round-trip traversal of central Africa, the first such known crossing, in order to survey the trade routes of the African slave traders.⁸² Their travels took them through the Lunda kingdom, whose traders now moved ivory and slaves.⁸³ Later exploration of the central African interior tended to be more focused on missionary work (e.g., David Livingstone) or geographical investigations (e.g., Verney Lovett Cameron). Both Livingstone and Cameron separately reached the Lualaba River (the name of the upper Congo River) in eastern Congo in 1871 and 1874, respectively. Along the way, they each had encountered the Arab-African trader Hamad bin Muhammad bin Juma bin Raja bin el Murgebi (better known by his nickname Tippu Tip), who was building an empire in the eastern Congo by providing slaves and ivory to traders at the Indian Ocean ports of East Africa.^{84,85} From the Lualaba, Livingstone would backtrack to the east and Lake Tanganyika, but Cameron pushed on westward, eventually reaching the Atlantic coast near the Angolan port city of Benguela.⁸⁶



© Frank G. and Frances Carpenter
Stone of Ielala, with the
inscriptions of Diogo Cão

Henry Morton Stanley: Adventurer

The most important of this generation of explorers, who influenced the future history of the Congo, was Welsh-born Henry Morton Stanley. Stanley's early life, spent both in Wales and the United States, was the stuff of a Dickens novel mixed with *Huckleberry Finn*. After spending much of his youth in a northern Wales workhouse, Stanley signed on as a deckhand for a merchant ship traveling to New Orleans. In the U.S., he spent several years as a Civil War soldier, fighting for both the Union and Confederate armies, before venturing to Turkey. A few years later, he was hired by the *New York Herald* to



© Helmlot, H.F.
Henry Morton Stanley, 1902

⁸¹ *Africa Since 1800*, 5th Ed. Roland Oliver; and Anthony Atmore. "Chapter 6: Western Central Africa, 1800–1880 [pp. 85–86]. 2005. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

⁸² *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. Prologue: "The Traders Are Kidnapping Our People [p. 8]." 1998. Boston/New York: Mariner Books.

⁸³ University of Iowa. Art and Life in Africa. "Lunda People." 13 November 1998.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Lunda.html>

⁸⁴ Bookrags.com. Encyclopedia of World Biography. "Tippu Tip." 2005–2006.

<http://www.bookrags.com/biography/tippu-tip/>

⁸⁵ *Africa Since 1800*, 5th Ed. Oliver, Roland; and Anthony Atmore. "Six. Western Central Africa, 1800–1880 [pp. 78–80]." 2005. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Cameron, Verney Lovett." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9018814>

cover a British military campaign against the Emperor of Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Stanley would come to world attention in 1871 when he took an assignment for his paper to locate David Livingstone, who had not been heard from for three years since embarking on his latest exploration. After 236 days of leading a large caravan westward across what is today Tanzania, Stanley found Livingstone in a village on the eastern bank of Lake Tanganyika. It was at this time he uttered his famous greeting, “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?”⁸⁷

The “Discovery” of the Congo River

Three years later, Stanley led another central African expedition, with the goal of identifying the source of the Nile. After investigating Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika, Stanley’s party continued traveling westward, eventually reaching the Lualaba River. Here, like Livingstone and Cameron before him, Stanley encountered the slave trader Tippu Tip, who agreed to supply Stanley with additional porters and to accompany him for part of the way down the Lualaba River. Two months later, Stanley’s party reached the series of rapids now called Boyoma Falls, just upstream of the modern-day city of Kisangani. After portaging their boats and canoes around the falls, the expedition sailed along 1,600 km (1,000 mi) of navigable river. As the river turned toward the northwest and eventually southwest, Stanley realized that this could not possibly be part of the Nile River. Almost 1,000 days after they began their journey, the nearly starving remnants of the Stanley expedition finally reached Boma, a trading post on the Congo River estuary.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Carte de visite of Henry
Morton Stanley, 1872

News of Stanley’s exploration of the Congo River traveled quickly to Europe, and upon his return Stanley was celebrated as a conquering hero at capitals across the continent. Among his many receptions with European royalty and politicians was an introduction to a little-known king of a small northern European country that had been an independent nation for less than 50 years. These two quickly struck up a friendship that eventually led to a business arrangement that would soon change the face of central Africa.



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Leopold II, King of the Belgians

“*Ce Magnifique Gâteau Africain*”: Leopold’s Congo

King Leopold II was the constitutional monarch of Belgium, but his power was more ceremonial than it was practical. Nonetheless, he harbored a deep desire to develop an empire along the lines of Belgium’s European neighbors, such as England and France.⁸⁸ Africa soon became a focus of his colonial interests, stating that the

⁸⁷ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “Exploring the Congo [pp. 31–42].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

⁸⁸ *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. “The Fox Crosses the Stream [pp. 37–40].” 1998. Boston/New York: Mariner Books.

times provided “*une bonne occasion nous procurer une partie de ce magnifique gâteau africain*” (“a fine chance for us to obtain a part of this magnificent African cake”). Unfortunately for Leopold, his imperial interests were not shared by the Belgian government. Stanley, however, was a strong supporter of colonialism. Upon his return to Europe, he strongly lobbied for British involvement in the development of the Congo interior and became frustrated when government ministers in London failed to share his enthusiasm for such a venture.

With both men frustrated by the inaction of their governments, it may not seem surprising that Stanley was soon put on a five-year retainer by Leopold to establish trading stations and acquire lands along the Congo River. After first overseeing the difficult construction of a road leading from the Congo River estuary to Malebo Pool, where the navigable portion of the Congo River began, Stanley traveled by steamboat up the Congo River. By 1884 he had negotiated treaties on behalf of the International Association of the Congo (controlled by Leopold) with more than 450 Congo Basin chieftains.⁸⁹ It is likely that few—if any—of the Congo chiefs fully understood the terms of these agreements, but they would subsequently serve as the legal basis for Leopold’s claim to the lands of the Congo Basin.

The Congo Free State

At the Berlin West African Conference in 1884, all of the world’s colonial powers met to sort out various commercial claims to pieces of the African continent. Belgium was not represented, and Leopold’s International Association of the Congo was not invited to attend because it was not a national entity. Nevertheless, working behind the scenes, Leopold’s agents were able to secure recognition for the International Association of the Congo regarding its claim to the Congo Basin. The recognition was granted on the condition that all other nations would have free trade access to the region and that the basin would be free of slavery.^{90, 91, 92}



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Berlin Conference on partition of Africa, 1885

These arrangements formally established the Congo Free State, which became the only privately owned colony in Africa. As trading stations along the Congo River expanded and construction of a railroad from the Congo River estuary to Léopoldville (Kinshasa) began, a



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Force Publique soldiers in the Belgian Congo, 1918

⁸⁹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Association Internationale du Congo.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9009950>

⁹⁰ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Congo Free State.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40812>

⁹¹ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Berlin West Africa Conference.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9078808>

⁹² *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. “From Florida to Berlin [pp. 84–86].” 1998. Boston/New York: Mariner Books.

colonial military force, known as the *Force Publique*, was formed. An army of African soldiers led by European officers, the Force Publique quickly engaged in a series of battles in the eastern Congo with Tippu Tip and his allies. Their successful campaign against the Afro-Arab slave trader provided both a promotional and economic boost to the colony. Europeans read only about how Leopold's noble army had rid the colony's eastern regions of the Arab slave traders, who had been much vilified in the travel writings of Stanley. Left unsaid, but probably more important in Leopold's calculations, was that one of the Free State's main sources of competition for the resources of the Congo interior was now on the sidelines.⁹³

Public Indignation: Savagery Perpetrated by Business Interests

The Congo Free State today is considered one of the most brutal colonial regimes ever to have existed. . As one German doctor wrote about his time in the Congo, “the history of modern civilized nations has scarcely ever had anything to equal such shameful deeds as the agents in the Belgian Congo have rendered themselves guilty of.”⁹⁴ The worst excesses came in regions in which rubber trees grew wild in the forests. As the automotive revolution greatly increased demand for rubber to produce inflatable tires, the sap of the rubber tree quickly supplanted ivory as the most profitable resource of the Congo interior. Forced labor became the standard way to recruit workers to tap the trees. Those individuals or villages that refused to participate often suffered deadly consequences. News of atrocities by the Force Publique and other agents of the Free State began to filter out of the interior. Many of the reports of cruelty inflicted upon the native population came from Protestant missionaries. Among them was William Sheppard, an African-American missionary of the Southern Presbyterian Church. He was later tried and found not guilty of libel charges brought by one of the rubber concession companies in the Congo.⁹⁵ Photos of severed hands—cut off Congolese who refused to comply with the rubber harvesting demands—were shown in papers and at lectures in Europe and the U.S. and became an enduring image of the Congo Free State for many.⁹⁶



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
William Henry Sheppard

In England, E. D. Morel (a former clerk for the Liverpool company that shipped cargo to and from Antwerp to Boma in the Congo) organized the Congo Reform Association. This group became the leading oppositional force to the Free State practices. Leopold, working through his agents, tried to counter the growing public concerns about the abuses

⁹³ *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*. Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. “Chapter 1: Imperialism, Belgian Colonialism, and African Resistance [p. 21].” 2002. London/New York: Zed Books

⁹⁴ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “Exploring the Congo [p. 31].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁹⁵ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “Saving the Congo [p. 142].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

⁹⁶ *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. “To Flood Deeds With Day [p. 215].” 1998. Boston/New York: Mariner Books.

in the Congo by employing a variety of strategies, ranging from bribing newspapers to arranging public enquiries to be carried out by individuals thought loyal to the CFS's interests.⁹⁷ None of these counterstrategies were effective in stemming the growing public disapproval in all corners of Europe and the U.S. of the Congo Free State's activities.

Belgian Congo

The negative publicity tied to the Congo Free State became an increasing embarrassment to the Belgian government. In 1908 the government reached an agreement with Leopold to transfer his authority over the Congo to the Belgian state. To do so, the government agreed to remit over 200 million francs of assumed debt and payments to the king.⁹⁸ The colony still contained some of the world's largest collection of mineral resources, but the Congo Free State policies had depopulated the region, limiting the number of workers who could be employed to extract these riches.⁹⁹ As was the case under Leopold's regime, the Belgian government continued to award land and mineral concessions to Belgian corporations in exchange for a governmental share in the profits. One of these companies was the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, which oversaw the development of the vast copper deposits in Katanga Province (southeastern Congo) that would eventually make the Belgian Congo the fourth largest producer of copper in the world, trailing only the United States, the British Empire, and all of South America.¹⁰⁰ Tin, uranium, cobalt, and zinc were also mined in the same region. Overnight Katanga became one of the world's signature mining regions. (The atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II contained uranium that was extracted from Katangan mines.¹⁰¹)



© Eelco / flickr.com
Malachite copper ore from Katanga, Congo

⁹⁷ *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. "Journalists Won't Give You Receipts [pp. 235–252]." 1998. Boston/New York: Mariner Books.

⁹⁸ *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Hochschild, Adam. "Journalists Won't Give You Receipts [p. 259]." 1998. Boston/New York: Mariner Books.

⁹⁹ One estimate shows the Congo's population dropping from 20 million people in 1880 to little more than 6 million in 1908. See *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "The Belgian Congo [p. 156]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹⁰⁰ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "The Belgian Congo [p. 158]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹⁰¹ BBC News. "DR Congo Uranium Mine Collapses." 12 July 2004. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3887373.stm>

Religious Movements

The brutal methods of the Congo Free State era eventually abated under Belgian administration, and general living conditions for many Congolese improved significantly. However, the Belgians' paternalistic policies towards the native Congolese spawned periodic rebellions and offered few opportunities for social advancement.¹⁰² Large cities began to emerge, particularly in mining areas. These mining communities, such as Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), were filled with migrant workers from rural areas. Many suffered as they found themselves divorced from their tribal connections and forced to live in the city next to others with different customs and beliefs.^{103, 104}



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Elisabethville (Lubumbashi) mine, 1917

Given the disruption of traditional Congolese societies, it is perhaps not too surprising that messianic and millenarian religious sects, blending Christian and traditional African beliefs and symbology, began to spring up across the Congo.¹⁰⁵ The popularity of these religions deeply distressed nervous colonial officials concerned about the possibility of its use for nationalistic (i.e., anticolonial) purposes.¹⁰⁶ Many mainstream Christian religious leaders in the Congo also felt threatened by such “heretical” offshoots.

The most popular of these new religious movements was Kimbanguism, founded by the faith healer Simon Kimbangu, from the Kongo (western Congo). Although Kimbangu's teachings preached nonviolence and were not much different from those of many evangelical sects, he was nonetheless tried on sedition charges and sentenced to death (commuted to life in prison) by a Belgian Congo court.^{107, 108} This heavy-handed measure backfired. Kimbangu's severe prison sentence acted to increase the movement's popularity. His sentence was seen as a martyr's fate, and it heightened messianic feelings toward him and made him a symbol of Congolese nationalism.

¹⁰² Encyclopædia Britannica Online. “Congo: History: Belgian Paternalism and the Politics of Decolonization.” 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40813>

¹⁰³ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Belgian Congo [p. 172].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹⁰⁴ *The History of Congo*. Gondola, Ch. Didier. “5. The Colonial State, 1908–1960 [pp. 91–92].” 2002. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

¹⁰⁵ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Belgian Congo [p. 173].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹⁰⁶ FriendsOfTheCongo.com. “Freedom Fighters.” 2009. <http://www.friendsofthecongo.org/freedomfighters/index.php>

¹⁰⁷ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Belgian Congo [p. 174].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹⁰⁸ Times of Zambia. Kayula, Peter. “Kimbanguists Salute FJT Over Congo Peace Efforts.” 2005. <http://www.times.co.zm/news/viewnews.cgi?category=8&id=1005934086>

Prelude to Independence

Most Congolese children were attending primary school by the 1950s (mostly in state-supported Catholic schools), but few students moved on to secondary schools and universities. Unlike other colonial powers around the world, the Belgian government had no interest in developing an educated class that would be capable of carrying on many of the colony's administrative duties.¹⁰⁹



© Ken Wiegand (USAID)
Primary school students in school

This policy was built upon the reasonable assumption that an educated elite would soon press for independence. The ramifications for the post-colonial Congo state would be disastrous.

The Belgian Congo was one of the most segregated colonial societies up until its demise, reflecting the general contempt that many white colonial administrators had for the native population. Among whites, it was common to refer to native Congolese as *macaques* (monkeys), noting that “they were up in trees just fifty years ago.”¹¹⁰ Even the more educated and Westernized Congolese, known as *évolués*, were frequently the targets of derision among the colonialists. Such attitudes were noted and commented on by Belgium's King Baudouin after a 1955 trip to the Congo.^{111, 112}

In 1955, Dr. A. A. J. van Bilsen, a lecturer at Colonial University in Antwerp, published a paper outlining a “thirty-year plan” for transitioning the Congo to independence. His outline noted that “in the Congo . . . the formation of an *élite* and of responsible directing *cadres* is a generation behind the British and French territories.”¹¹³ In Belgium, van Bilsen's paper was criticized for one of its underlying assumptions—that the Congo should eventually become independent.¹¹⁴ Ultimately, however, any thought concerning a smooth, three-decade transition to a fully independent Congo was as much a fantasy as the idea that the Congo could remain under Belgian control indefinitely. A full-fledged independence movement was already brewing in the Congo, and its culmination, which would be far from smooth or planned, was only four years away.

¹⁰⁹ *The History of Congo*. Gondola, Ch. Didier. “Chapter 5: The Colonial State, 1908–1960 [pp. 82–83].” 2002. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

¹¹⁰ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Belgian Congo [p. 179].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹¹¹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Belgian Congo [p. 178].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

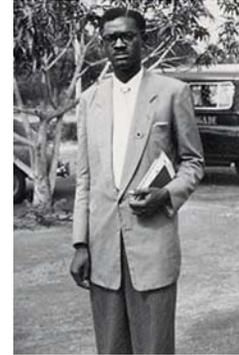
¹¹² Among the Congolese that Baudouin spoke to on this trip was a young postal clerk named Patrice Lumumba. Five years later, Lumumba would be elected as the Congo's first Prime Minister. See GaleNet.com. Biography Resource Center. “Patrice Hemery Lumumba.” 2002. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC?vrsn=149&OP=starts&locID=cfsc_remote&srchtp=name&ca=1&c=1&AI=U13734430&NA=Lumumba&ste=12&tbst=prp&tab=1&docNum=K1606002108&bConts=43

¹¹³ *Africa Since 1800*, 4th Ed. Roland Oliver, and Anthony Atmore. “Chapter 18: The Road to Independence: From the Sahara to the Zambezi [p. 230].” 1994. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

¹¹⁴ *Africa Since 1800*, 4th Ed. Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore. “Chapter 18: The Road to Independence: From the Sahara to the Zambezi [p. 230].” 1994. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

“The Revolution Without Revolutionaries”

In 1956, Patrice Lumumba was a secondary-school dropout who had just been sentenced to two years in prison for embezzling USD 2,250 while working as a postal clerk.¹¹⁵ He was released after serving only a year, because his *évolué* friends were able to collect enough money to repay what he had taken. While working as a sales manager for a brewery in Léopoldville, Lumumba turned his energies increasingly toward politics and the independence movement. In 1958 he founded the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) the only political party in the Congo at the time that had a national, rather than tribal, constituency.¹¹⁶ Later that year, Lumumba delivered a fiery speech demanding immediate independence for the Congo shortly after attending the All-Africa People’s Conference in Ghana. A large political rally in Léopoldville was organized the following week by Joseph Kasa-Vubu, a civil servant who led a Bakongo (“people of the Kongo ethnic group”) political party. When the rally was canceled by Belgian Congo officials, violent rioting broke out in Léopoldville that was only brought under control several days later. One historian later concluded that “it was at once the most decisive single event in the surge to independence and singularly prophetic of the revolution without revolutionaries which followed in 1960.”¹¹⁷



© Collection IISG / wikipedia.org
Patrice Lumumba

Events in the Congo moved at breakneck speed toward independence. Both Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu were imprisoned after the Léopoldville riots but later released. By that time, violence had erupted in the Belgian Congo, including an ethnic war between the Lulua and Luba tribes and rioting in Stanleyville (Kisangani).¹¹⁸ The Belgian police and the Force Publique territorial army were finding it increasingly difficult to control these flare-ups. Popular opinion in Belgium strongly opposed sending military reinforcements from the homeland. During a conference in Brussels in January–February 1960, attended by Lumumba, Kasa-Vubu, and others, the Belgian government figuratively threw up its hands and committed to fast-track independence for the Congo, to take effect on 30 June 1960.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Belgian Congo [p. 182].” 2002. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

¹¹⁶ *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila: A People’s History*. Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. “Chapter 2: The Struggle for Independence [pp. 83–84].” 2002. London/New York: Zed Books.

¹¹⁷ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “The Belgian Congo [p. 183].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

¹¹⁸ *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila: A People’s History*. Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. “Chapter 2: The Struggle for Independence [pp. 87–88].” 2002. London/New York: Zed Books.

¹¹⁹ WorldatWar.net. Johnson, Robert Craig. “Heart of Darkness: The Tragedy of the Congo, 1960–67.” 1997. <http://worldatwar.net/chandelle/v2/v2n3/congo.html>

The Republic of the Congo (1960–1965)

Independence

The new nation began life with a coalition government headed by Prime Minister Lumumba, who asked Kasavubu to serve as the Congo's first president. The independence ceremony in Léopoldville was attended by Belgium's King Baudouin, who in his remarks lauded Congo independence as "the crowning of the work conceived by the genius of Leopold II." Lumumba's speech, following the king's, was less favorable, hailing the end of "a regime of injustice, suppression, and exploitation. In an ad-libbed comment that created headlines around the world, Lumumba alluded to the contemptuous term for the Congolese used by many Belgians over the years, declaring that "we are no longer your 'monkeys.'"¹²⁰



© Irene/ flickr.com
Léopoldville with Congo river in background

To say that things went badly in the Congo in the period after independence would be an enormous understatement. Four days after the independence ceremony, the *Gendarmerie* (the national police) and soldiers of the Force Publique revolted, angry at the retention of some Belgian officers. To quell the unrest Lumumba removed all the white officers. He named as Army Chief of Staff his personal aide, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, a former sergeant major in the Force Publique, who later worked as a journalist before joining forces with Lumumba.¹²¹

The Congo Crisis: Secession Movements

Conditions rapidly deteriorated into chaos. The majority of Europeans from the larger cities fled the country to escape marauding soldiers and policemen.¹²² In the southern part of the country, the mineral-rich province of Katanga seceded from the Congo, as did the southern part of Kasai province. (The latter secession would prove to be short lived.) Lumumba called on the United Nations (UN) for military assistance to restore Katanga back to the Congo, and when the UN refused, he turned to the Soviet Union for help. Soviet assistance instantaneously made the Congo the a hot spot in the Cold War, and Washington officials began signaling their preferences for a Congolese government more aligned to the West. Lumumba was subsequently ousted by Mobutu in September 1960,



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Belgian paracommandos, 1964

¹²⁰ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [pp. 199–200]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹²¹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [pp. 199–200]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹²² *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [p. 186]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

only a few months after Lumumba's fiery independence speech. He eventually escaped UN protective custody, but was recaptured by Congolese forces a few months later. Lumumba was then transferred to Elisabethville (Lubumbashi), where he was later killed under circumstances that have no clear official explanation to this day.^{123, 124}

The Congo would be racked by fighting over the next four years. UN forces eventually brought the Katangan secessionist state to an end in January 1963, but in 1964 new rebellions broke out. The first of these was centered in the Kwilu region in the southwestern part of the Congo.¹²⁵ A few months later, an even more potent conflict was initiated in the eastern Congo by a group of Lumumba loyalists known as the Simbas. After briefly controlling nearly half of the Congo, the Simba forces were pushed back by mercenary-assisted government forces. Before their retreat, however, Simba forces were responsible for the death of at least 20,000 Congolese, many of whom died in public executions.¹²⁶ This conflict would ultimately play out as a hostage crisis when the Simbas threatened to kill several thousand Europeans and Americans held in Stanleyville and nearby villages.¹²⁷ In November 1964, Stanleyville was retaken in a joint Belgian-American paratroop operation, although over 300 European and American civilians were executed by the Simbas as they fled the city.¹²⁸

The Mobutu Era (1965–1997)

Early Years

Soon after overthrowing Lumumba in 1960, Mobutu took a behind-the-scenes role within the weak Congolese government. Mobutu retained his power base in the military, although the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC, as the Congolese army was now known) was an undisciplined and demoralized force during the early 1960s.¹²⁹ In 1965, during a power struggle between



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Mobutu and Nixon, 1973

¹²³ Biography Resource Center. "Patrice Emery Lumumba." 2002.

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC?vrsn=149&OP=starts&locID=cfsc_remote&srchtp=name&ca=1&c=1&AI=U13734430&NA=Lumumba&ste=12&tbt=prp&tab=1&docNum=K1606002108&bConts=43

¹²⁴ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [pp. 191–196]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹²⁵ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Lemarchand, René. "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: The First Republic, 1960–1965: Rural Insurgencies: The 'Second Independence.'" December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0037\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0037))

¹²⁶ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Hearth of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. "Chapter 6: Heart of Darkness [p. 114]." 2005. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

¹²⁷ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [pp. 204–205]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹²⁸ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [p. 205]. 2002." New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹²⁹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [p. 203]. 2002." New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

President Kasa-Vubu and the Prime Minister Moïse Tshombé (formerly the leader of the secessionist Katanga state), Mobutu staged another coup. This time, all executive powers were transferred to Mobutu, and he retained those powers for the next 32 years.¹³⁰

During the first years of Mobutu's rule, the last of the secessionist movements were crushed and the country finally achieved a semblance of political stability, albeit by means of eliminating all internal opposition. "Mobutuism" became the new state ideology, reinforced through the country's sole political party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR). As Mobutu would later rationalize and justify this doctrine, "in our African tradition there are never two chiefs. . . . That is why we Congolese, in the desire to conform to the traditions of our continent, have resolved to group all the energies of the citizens of our country under the banner of a single national party."¹³¹

In 1971, Mobutu announced a sweeping new policy to eliminate all references to the colonial past. The country's name changed to Republic of Zaire, and large and small cities alike took on African names. All Zairians with Christian names were required to use African names. Mobutu's new name became Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga (translated, "the all-powerful warrior who goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake"), usually shortened in the Western world to Mobutu Sese Seko.¹³²

Corruption and Economic Collapse

A rigged presidential election in 1970 (Mobutu received over 99% of the vote) cemented Mobutu's dictatorial status. Over the next decade he would survive two coup attempts while amassing one of the world's largest fortunes. Diverted government funds and foreign aid, kickbacks, bribes, and embezzled export earnings—all contributed to his personal gain.¹³³ By 1985, *Forbes* magazine estimated Mobutu's financial worth to be USD 5 billion.¹³⁴



© Spyros_Demetriou / flickr.com
Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo

¹³⁰ Biography Resource Center. "Mobutu Sese Seko." 8 January 2006.

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC?vrsn=149&OP=starts&locID=cfsc_remote&srchtp=name&ca=1&c=1&AI=U13022936&NA=Mobutu&ste=12&tbst=prp&tab=1&docNum=K1606003419&bConts=59

¹³¹ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. "Chapter 17: The Great Plunderer [pp. 295–296]." 2005. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

¹³² *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [p. 208]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹³³ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. "Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [p. 211]." 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

¹³⁴ Biography Resource Center. "Mobutu Sese Seko." 8 January 2006.

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC?vrsn=149&OP=starts&locID=cfsc_remote&srchtp=name&ca=1&c=1&AI=U13022936&NA=Mobutu&ste=12&tbst=prp&tab=1&docNum=K1606003419&bConts=59

Mobutu used this fortune to supply himself with all the trappings of regal splendor and to ensure the loyalties of those who might have been potential adversaries. Bribes and “gifts” from Mobutu to high-level army and government officials soon set off a chain reaction through all levels of the Zairian government. Corruption became endemic among the leadership as the general living standards for average citizens rapidly deteriorated. By the end of the 1980s, Zaire, despite its immense mineral wealth, was bankrupt.

Foreign aid and other forms of financial support to Zaire, most notably from the U.S., disappeared when the Cold War ended.¹³⁵ With pro-democracy movements unfolding among several African nations, Mobutu found himself pressured to institute political reform allowing a limited amount of political opposition.¹³⁶ By the early 1990s, however, the country’s soldiers and civil servants were increasingly restive because they were no longer being paid on a regular basis. In September 1991, a riot by soldiers in Kinshasa left 100 Congolese dead and many more injured. With the nation’s economy gutted (the Zairian GDP per capita in 1993 was 65% lower than it had been in 1958, two years before independence). Mobutu’s regime was clearly living on borrowed time. As one U.S. ambassador during the 1990s put it, “Mobutu had not only killed the goose that laid the golden eggs, he’d eaten the carcass and made fat from the feathers.”¹³⁷

The Congo Wars (1996–2003)

In 1994, lingering ethnic strife in neighboring Rwanda led to a genocidal attack on Tutsi tribespeople by Hutu militias known collectively as the *Interahamwe*. A few months later, *Interahamwe* members fled into Zaire, fearing reciprocal genocide when a Tutsi-dominated rebel force swept southward into Rwanda from Uganda. The Rwanda Hutu-Tutsi conflict soon stirred up a hornet’s nest of ethnic antagonism in eastern Zaire. The Tutsi communities in the region received no support from the Mobutu government in their battles with the Hutu refugees and other tribal groups, and began to look outside the country for support. In 1996, a Tutsi “liberation movement,” the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), invaded eastern Zaire and rapidly advanced westward. The AFDL was a Rwandan- and Ugandan-backed rebel organization fronted by Laurent- Désiré Kabila, a former small-time warlord who had briefly dabbled in leftist



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Civilians waiting to cross the
DEC-Rwanda border, 2001

¹³⁵ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [p. 218].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

¹³⁶ Biography Resource Center. “Mobutu Sese Seko.” 8 January 2006.

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC?vrsn=149&OP=starts&locID=cfsc_remote&srchtp=name&ca=1&c=1&AI=U13022936&NA=Mobutu&ste=12&tbst=prp&tab=1&docNum=K1606003419&bConts=59

¹³⁷ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. “Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 526].” 2005. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

rebellions during the 1960s (and was dismissed by Che Guevara as a leader lacking “revolutionary seriousness”).¹³⁸

Kabila and the AFDL forces entered Kinshasa in May 1997, meeting no real resistance, and thus ending what is now referred to as the First Congo War. Mobutu and his family narrowly escaped the country, but the former strongman died in exile from prostate cancer less than four months later.¹³⁹ Any optimism that conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (as Zaire was renamed) would turn around under Kabila’s leadership was quickly dashed. Kabila proved to be as despotic as his predecessor. When a schism developed between the new Congo leader and the Ugandan and Rwandan Tutsis that had brought him to power, a new round of fighting broke out in the eastern Congo. The Second Congo War, as this new conflict is now known, took place between 1998 and 2003. Eventually, the armies of several African countries, fighting either against (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi) or for (Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia) the forces loyal to Kabila were embroiled in this conflict. For this reason, the Second Congo War is also sometimes referred to as “Africa’s World War,” a devastating conflict that has both directly and indirectly led to the loss of millions of lives. During this time, Congolese oil, diamond, gold, and coltan resources were plundered by several of the participating countries, particularly Uganda and Rwanda.^{140, 141}

Recent Events: Another Kabila in Power

Kabila was assassinated in January 2001 by a palace guard. His successor, chosen by Kabila loyalists, was his son Joseph Kabila Kabange, a 30-year-old political neophyte with no power base, who was widely viewed as a puppet choice. He instantly became the world’s youngest leader and, as one publication of the time put it, “perhaps the most unexpected leader in modern Africa’s history.”^{142, 143}



© Helene C. Stikkel
President Joseph Kabila Kabange

Yet the younger Kabila proved to be his own man and quickly reversed course from many of his father’s policies. In July 2002, a

¹³⁸ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. “Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 526].” 2005. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

¹³⁹ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [p. 221].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

¹⁴⁰ *The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo*. Edgerton, Robert P. “Independence—the Dream and the Nightmare [pp. 239-240].” 2002. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press.

¹⁴¹ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. “Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [pp. 540–543].” 2005. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

¹⁴² African Business. “Kabilla [*sic*] II: Unravelling the Enigma.” March 2001.

http://www.africasia.com/archive/ab/01_03/cover1.htm

¹⁴³ Biography Resource Center. “Joseph Kabila.” 2007.

http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/BioRC?vrsn=149&OP=contains&locID=cfsc_remote&srchtp=name&ca=1&c=1&AI=U13030107&NA=Joseph+Kabila&ste=12&tbst=prp&tab=1&docNum=K1631008893&bCents=59

peace deal was signed after long negotiations, although several militias with sponsors in Uganda, Rwanda, and Kinshasa still continued their activities, as did local warlords.¹⁴⁴ Presidential elections were held in 2006 to replace the transitional government put in place after the peace treaty was signed—the first true elections in the Congo since 1965. Kabila won a hotly contested runoff contest the results of which were sharply divided on regional lines, with Kabila winning the eastern region by wide margins and his opponent, Jean-Pierre Bemba, taking the western and northern regions of the country.¹⁴⁵

During the last four years, the D.R.C. has experienced a relatively stable period. Nevertheless, continuing conflict in the eastern Congo carried out by several militias continues to be the nation's number one security issue. Two of the largest militias are the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR, a Hutu group containing many of the remaining *Interahamwe* members.) and the National Congress for the Defense of the Congolese People (CNDP, a Tutsi group).^{146, 147} It is estimated that as of late 2009, approximately 1.7 million people have been displaced in the D.R.C. provinces of Sud Kivu and Nord Kivu, where much of the rebel activity has been centered.¹⁴⁸ In March 2009, the D.R.C. government signed a peace treaty with the CNDP and several other armed groups in the Kivus, but the FDLR continues to carry out operations in the region.

Self Study Questions:

The Kongo kingdom was not the first large-scale state to emerge in the Congo region. True or False?

King Leopold II of Belgium authorized Henry Morton Stanley to establish trading stations and acquire lands along the Congo River. True or False?

After independence, the vast majority of Europeans fled the larger cities of the Congo. True or False?

Soon after overthrowing Lumumba, Mobutu took on all executive powers in the Congolese government. True or False?

The First Congo War ended when Kabila and the AFDL forces entered Kinshasa. True or False?

¹⁴⁴ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. "Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 544]." 2005. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.

¹⁴⁵ BBC News. "Kabila Named DR Congo Poll Winner." 15 November 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6151598.stm>

¹⁴⁶ Federation of American Scientists. Congressional Research Service. Dagne, Ted. "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Background and Current Developments." 15 October 2009. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40108.pdf>

¹⁴⁷ Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo." January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

¹⁴⁸ Federation of American Scientists. Congressional Research Service. Dagne, Ted. "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Background and Current Developments." 15 October 2009. <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40108.pdf>

Economy

Introduction

Years of corruption, misrule, and conflict have taken a heavy toll on the economy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.). A major part of the present-day economy is invisible in the nation's economic statistics because of the sizable role that the informal sector (i.e., small-scale business activities that the government cannot track) plays in daily commercial activities. Much of the formal sector activity in the D.R.C. comes from the mining and refining of the nation's abundant mineral deposits. However, these resources have proven to be as much a curse as they have a benefit. Former national leader Mobutu Sese Seko used the nation's mineral wealth by setting up a vast network of kickbacks and bribes to consolidate his power and to build his own fortune. More recently, rebel militias in the eastern part of the country have used the mineral deposits to subsidize their activities.¹⁴⁹ One of the biggest challenges that the D.R.C. faces today is to ensure that government revenues that are produced by the mineral wealth are used to develop the economy rather than to increase the personal wealth of governmental officials.



© Grassroots Reconciliation Group
Gold from Lang Lang, Kivu

Agriculture

Agriculture remains the most important sector in the economy of the D.R.C. Its overall contribution to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) has been declining in recent years.¹⁵⁰ In 2007, the last year in which reliable data are available, agriculture (a category that includes forestry, fishing, livestock, and hunting), accounted for 38.5—41% of the D.R.C.'s GDP.^{151, 152} However, most agricultural production is subsistence farming, with little reportable commercial activity. Such farming is therefore not included in GDP calculations. Over 70% of the D.R.C. population lives in rural areas, where agriculture is the dominant economic activity.



© cj/vp / flickr.com
Abandoned cotton farm

¹⁴⁹ United States Institute of Peace. Gilpin, Richard; and Richard Downie. "Conflict-Business Dynamics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo." November 2009. <http://www.usip.org/resources/conflict-business-dynamics-in-the-democratic-republic-congo>

¹⁵⁰ New Agriculturalist. "Country Profile: Democratic Republic of Congo." January 2009. <http://www.new-ag.info/09/01/countryp.php>

¹⁵¹ The World Bank. "Data and Statistics: Democratic Republic of Congo Data Profile." September 2009. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/CONGODEMOCRATICEXTN/0,,menuPK:349492~pagePK:141132~piPK:141109~theSitePK:349466,00.html>

¹⁵² International Monetary Fund. IMF Country Report No. 10–11. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statistical Appendix [p. 7]." January 2010. <http://imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr1011.pdf>

The most important food crops are plantains, cassava, maize (corn), groundnuts (peanuts), and rice. Cash crops generally grown on plantations, include coffee, cocoa, sugarcane, tea, cotton, and rubber.¹⁵³ The D.R.C. was once one of the world's largest producers of palm oil, but, because of economic decline and conflict, it now produces only minor amounts of this product. This situation could change dramatically, however, if the Chinese company, ZTE Agribusiness carries out its plans. In June 2009 the company announced it will develop a 1 million ha (3,861 sq mi) palm oil plantation in the D.R.C. to produce biodiesel fuel.¹⁵⁴

Raising cattle is limited in the D.R.C. because of cattle's susceptibility to sleeping sickness, induced by tsetse fly bites. Goats, chickens, pigs, sheep, ducks, and geese are tended on farms, but hunting and fishing are integral to the food supply.¹⁵⁵

Wood, logs and milled lumber, is the D.R.C.'s leading agricultural export. The nation's vast forests make this resource potentially an extremely valuable source of foreign income. The nation's lack of paved roads, poor rail and waterways and lack of equipment make it challenging to transport timber products to market, however. Environmental concerns about deforestation have led the government to place restrictions and regulations on timber industry licenses. Unfortunately, there is mounting evidence that the logging roads into the remote interiors of the rain forest have allowed increased illegal hunting and trade in bush meat.^{156, 157}

Manufacturing and Industry

Roughly 26–27% of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (D.R.C.) GDP is generated by the industrial sector (which includes mining, manufacturing, construction, electricity generation and water supply).^{158, 159} More than half of the D.R.C.'s industrial production comes from mining, owing to the nation's vast reserves of mineral resources. (The

¹⁵³ New Agriculturalist. "Country Profile: Democratic Republic of Congo." January 2009. <http://www.new-ag.info/09/01/country.php>

¹⁵⁴ New Scientist. "Palm Oil Plans Threaten African Biodiversity." 15 July 2009.

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20327174.000-palm-oil-plans-threaten-african-biodiversity.html>

¹⁵⁵ *Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures*. DiPiazza, Francesca Davis. "The Economy [pp. 60–61]." 2008. Minneapolis, MN: Twenty-First Century Books (Lerner Publishing).

¹⁵⁶ *Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures*. DiPiazza, Francesca Davis. "The Economy [p. 61]." 2008. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing.

http://books.google.com/books?id=dvJJJu89amAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false

¹⁵⁷ BBC News. Eshelby, Kate. "Concern Over Congo Logging." 16 August 2004.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3937829.stm>

¹⁵⁸ The World Bank. "Data and Statistics: Democratic Republic of Congo Data Profile." September 2009. <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/CONGODEMOCRATICEX/0,,menuPK:349492~pagePK:141132~piPK:141109~theSitePK:349466,00.html>

¹⁵⁹ International Monetary Fund. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statistical Appendix [p. 7]." January 2010. <http://imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr1011.pdf>

D.R.C.’s mining industry is discussed elsewhere in this chapter under “Mineral Resources.”) Construction contributes over 8% to the nation’s overall GDP.¹⁶⁰

Manufacturing is a minor player in the D.R.C.’s economy, contributing a little more than 4% of the national GDP.¹⁶¹

The D.R.C.’s manufacturing output has declined by roughly one– half since 1960.¹⁶² Most of the manufacturing that takes place in the D.R.C. occurs in Kinshasa and Lumumbashi, the nation’s two largest cities.¹⁶³ Processed foods, primarily from wheat and sugar, beverages, cigarettes, textiles, shoes, building materials (cement, crushed stones), tires, paints, explosives, and metal furniture are some of the items produced. Almost all of these products are used domestically.^{164, 165}



© Grassroots Reconciliation Group
Kaniola gold mine in South Kivu

Banking and Currency

The Congolese franc (CDF) has been the standard currency in the D.R.C. since 1998, when it replaced the *new zaire* banknote. The D.R.C.’s currency, like the country itself, has undergone several name changes since the colonial era. Rapid inflation has been a factor in these currency changes, most notably in 1993 when the *new zaire* replaced the old zaire at an exchange rate of 1 *new zaire* for 3 million old zaires.¹⁶⁶ Then the exchange

¹⁶⁰ International Monetary Fund. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statistical Appendix [p. 7].” January 2010. <http://imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr1011.pdf>

¹⁶¹ International Monetary Fund. “Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statistical Appendix [p. 7].” January 2010. <http://imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr1011.pdf>

¹⁶² *Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures*. DiPiazza, Francesca Davis. “The Economy [p. 63].” 2008. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing.

http://books.google.com/books?id=dvJJu89amAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false

¹⁶³ *Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures*. DiPiazza, Francesca Davis. “The Economy [p. 63].” 2008. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing.

¹⁶⁴ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. “Trade Performance HS: Export and Imports of Congo D.R. (2008, in USD thousands).” 2010.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI.aspx?RP=180&YR=2008

¹⁶⁵ *Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures*. DiPiazza, Francesca Davis. “The Economy [p. 64].” 2008. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publishing.

http://books.google.com/books?id=dvJJu89amAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_v2_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=&f=false

¹⁶⁶ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. Smith, Hampton; and Tim Merrill, Sandra W. Meditz. *Zaire: A Country Study*.

Chapter 3: The Economy: Structure and Dynamics of the Economy: Currency.” December 1993.

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0118\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0118))

rate for the Congolese franc was 0.71 CDF = \$1.00 (USD 1.00).¹⁶⁷ In February 2010, this rate had risen to 921 CDF = 1.00 USD.¹⁶⁸

The *Banque Central du Congo*, D.R.C.'s central bank, is headquartered in Kinshasa. It ensures the stability of the national currency, manages the nation's monetary reserves, regulates and monitors the country's financial institutions, promotes the development of money markets and capital.¹⁶⁹ Eighteen commercial banks are licensed to operate within the country, although several have not yet opened.¹⁷⁰ The level of banking activity within the country is very low for a nation of more than 68 million people. As of 2008, the entire D.R.C. banking system consisted of only 200,000 bank accounts.¹⁷¹



With income levels so low in the D.R.C., significant local economies are supported by institutions that specialize in small-scale loans, other financial services for individuals, and micro-enterprises. In the D.R.C., microfinance is provided by cooperative credit unions, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and one licensed bank (ProCredit).¹⁷² A second microfinance bank, Advans Banque, opened its doors in July 2009.¹⁷³ Nonetheless, the demand for credit far exceeds what can be provided by microfinance lenders.

Trade

The D.R.C.'s exports are mineral commodities, and thus the nation's overall trade balance is very sensitive to worldwide fluctuations in demand and price for these commodities. Legal exports of some minerals have been hampered by the ongoing conflict in ore-bearing regions. Although gold, tin, and coltan were once major exports of the D.R.C., their share of D.R.C.'s exports has plummeted in recent years because rebel militias operate



¹⁶⁷ *Africa South of the Sahara 2003*, Vol. 32. Gourou, Pierre. "The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Economy [p. 270]." 2003. London, UK: Europa Publications.

¹⁶⁸ Banque Central du Congo. "Cours de Change." OANDA.com. "Currency Converter." 23 February 2010. <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

¹⁶⁹ Financial Institutions Center, Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Ooka, Eiko; and Susan Keppelman. "Democratic Republic of Congo." 2009. [http://fic.wharton.upenn.edu/fic/africa/Dem Rep Congo Final.pdf](http://fic.wharton.upenn.edu/fic/africa/Dem%20Rep%20Congo%20Final.pdf)

¹⁷⁰ International Monetary Fund. "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Statistical Appendix [p. 25]." January 2010. <http://imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2010/cr1011.pdf>

¹⁷¹ ProCreditHolding.com. "ProCredit Bank: Congo." August 2009. http://www.procredit-holding.com/front_content.php?idcat=31

¹⁷² Microfinance Information Exchange. "Microfinance in Congo, Democratic Republic of the." 2008. [http://www.mixmarket.org/mfi/country/Congo, Democratic Republic of the](http://www.mixmarket.org/mfi/country/Congo,%20Democratic%20Republic%20of%20the)

¹⁷³ SymInvest.com. "Advans SA SICAR Launches Advans Banque Congo." 29 July 2010. <http://www.syminvest.com/market/news/microfinance/advans-sa-sicar-launches-advans-banque-congo/2009/7/29/1954>

in the eastern D.R.C, where these minerals are mined.^{174, 175, 176} The D.R.C.'s most valuable mineral exports are cobalt, copper, and diamonds. These three commodities produced more than 83% of the D.R.C.'s total export revenues in 2008.¹⁷⁷ More than 40% of the D.R.C.'s export revenues come from China, followed by Zambia, Belgium, Finland, and the United States.¹⁷⁸

The D.R.C.'s imports are mostly manufactured items, including machinery and equipment needed for the nation's construction and mining industries.¹⁷⁹ Crude oil is another significant export, although the country's lack of refining capacity for its own heavy crude oil makes it necessary to import processed petroleum products.¹⁸⁰ The D.R.C. is a net importer of many food products, including wheat and flour, rice, maize, palm oil, salt, sugar, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages. The only agricultural products for which the D.R.C. is a net exporter are wood, tobacco and coffee.¹⁸¹

Investment

The D.R.C. has consistently rated at or near the bottom in the World Bank's annual surveys of overall ease of doing business in the world's nations. In 2010, it rated 182nd out of 183 countries, with only the Central African Republic rated lower.¹⁸² (In 2008 and 2009, the D.R.C.



© Radio Okapi
Perenco base

¹⁷⁴ RaiseHopeforCongo.org. "Crisis in Congo." 2008.

http://www.raisehopeforcongo.org/files/pdf/crisis_in_congo.pdf

¹⁷⁵ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Congo D.R. – 26 Ores, Slag and Ash (2008, in USD Thousands)." 2010.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_HS4.aspx?IN=26&RP=180&YR=2008&IL=26
Ores, slag and ash&TY=T

¹⁷⁶ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Congo D.R. – 71 Pearls, Precious Stones, Metals, Coins, Etc. (2008, in USD Thousands)." 2010.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI_HS4.aspx?IN=71&RP=180&YR=2008&IL=71
Pearls, precious stones, metals, coins, etc&TY=T

¹⁷⁷ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports of Congo D.R. (2008, in USD thousands)." 2010.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_EP_CI.aspx?RP=180&YR=2008

¹⁷⁸ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Exports of Congo D.R. – 00 All Industries (2008, in USD thousands)." 2010.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI.aspx?RP=180&YR=2008

¹⁷⁹ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Congo D.R. (2008, in USD thousands)." 2010.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI.aspx?RP=180&YR=2008

¹⁸⁰ Jane's.com. "Natural Resources (Democratic Republic of Congo)." 2009.

<http://www.janes.com/extracts/extract/cafrsu/drocs040.html>

¹⁸¹ International Trade Centre/World Trade Organization. "Trade Performance HS: Export and Imports of Congo D.R. (2008, in USD thousands)." 2010.

http://www.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_TP_CI.aspx?RP=180&YR=2008

¹⁸² The World Bank Group. The Doing Business Project. "Economy Rankings." 2010.

<http://www.doingbusiness.org/economyrankings/>

was last.)¹⁸³ When the uncertain security situation is considered, it is not surprising that the D.R.C. has had difficulty attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) to stimulate economic development. Despite these obstacles, however, FDI inflows to the D.R.C. increased significantly in 2007 and 2008.¹⁸⁴ Most of this investment has been in the mining sector.¹⁸⁵

The largest foreign investment project in the D.R.C. involves China.¹⁸⁶ In 2008, three state-owned Chinese companies signed an agreement with the Congolese government to form a Chinese–Congolese joint venture called *Sino-Congelais des Mines* (Sicomines) to invest USD 9 billion in mining and infrastructure improvements. Under the agreement, all of the investments would be paid off by future profits on copper and cobalt concessions in Katanga Province. However, the deal also required the D.R.C. to guarantee the reimbursement of any infrastructure improvements that could not be paid off from mineral profits. The International Monetary Fund has expressed unwillingness to write off existing D.R.C. debts if the D.R.C. risks taking on new debt through the Sicomines agreement.^{187, 188} In May 2009, China and the D.R.C. agreed to delay USD 3 billion of the infrastructure improvements and reduce the D.R.C.’s liability in order to address these concerns.¹⁸⁹ The project has been marred by a scandal in which nearly half of the USD 50 million paid upon-signing has disappeared. A commission appointed by the National Assembly has implicated government officials and senior officials of the state-owned mining company, Gécamines.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ The World Bank Group. The Doing Business Project. “Doing Business 2009 [p. 6].”

http://www.doingbusiness.org/documents/DB09_Overview.pdf

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. “Country Fact Sheet: Congo, Democratic Republic of.” 2009. <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Page.asp?intItemID=3198&lang=1>

¹⁸⁵ eStandardsForum.org. “Country Brief: Democratic Republic of the Congo [p. 11].” 12 November 2009. [http://www.estandardsforum.org/system/briefs/246/original/brief-Democratic Republic of Congo.pdf?1260312059](http://www.estandardsforum.org/system/briefs/246/original/brief-Democratic%20Republic%20of%20Congo.pdf?1260312059)

¹⁸⁶ African Development Bank Group. African Economic Outlook. “Foreign Direct Investment.” 11 February 2010. <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/outlook/growth-of-aid-to-africa/foreign-direct-investment/>

¹⁸⁷ AllAfrica.com. Nieuwoudt, Stephanie. “Congo-Kinshasa: Pros and Cons to Huge Chinese Investment.” 28 October 2009. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200910280842.html>

¹⁸⁸ eStandardsForum.org. “Country Brief: Democratic Republic of the Congo [p. 11].” 12 November 2009. [http://www.estandardsforum.org/system/briefs/246/original/brief-Democratic Republic of Congo.pdf?1260312059](http://www.estandardsforum.org/system/briefs/246/original/brief-Democratic%20Republic%20of%20Congo.pdf?1260312059)

¹⁸⁹ Southern Africa Resources Watch. Bloomberg. Wild, Franz. “Congo’s Sicomines Confirms Extent of Copper Find.” 27 August 2009. <http://www.sarwatch.org/headline-news-for-the-drc/126-headline-news-for-the-drc/737-congos-sicomines-confirms-extent-of-copper-find-.html>

¹⁹⁰ AllAfrica.com. “Congo-Kinshasa: Kinshasa’s Missing Millions.” 15 February 2010. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201002151711.html>

Energy and Mineral Resources

Energy: Oil, Gas and Hydroelectricity

The D.R.C. produces a moderate amount of oil from wells both on land and offshore. . In 2008, nearly 20,000 barrels per day (bbl/day) were extracted, down nearly 40% from peak production in 1985.¹⁹¹ The offshore fields are very mature. It is estimated that less than 10% of the original reserves remain in these fields.¹⁹² Production activities at both the onshore and offshore fields are managed by Perenco, an Anglo-French oil and gas company that is the D.R.C.'s largest private investor and taxpayer.¹⁹³



© International Rivers
Old Inga Dam

The D.R.C.'s other fossil fuel resources are limited. The D.R.C. produces a modest amount of low-grade coal from a single mine in Katanga Province, and no natural gas fields are sufficiently large for production. More promising is the nation's hydroelectric capacity. Nearly all of the nation's electricity is produced via hydropower. The two largest hydroplants are the Inga 1 and 2 dams, located 225 km (140 mi) southwest of Kinshasa on the Congo River. Their combined capacity is 1,775 MW of electricity, although silting and inadequate maintenance have reduced their output to 700 MW. The electricity generated at the Inga dams is transported across the country via high-voltage lines to the mining region of Katanga Province.¹⁹⁴ Plans are in the works to build two new hydroelectric dams at Inga, Grand Inga and Inga 3. The first dam would supply an additional 4,300 MW of power. The second, which could come online by 2025, would produce 39,000 MW of power. This dam would be the world's largest producer of hydroelectric power, more than double the capacity of the current leader—the Three Gorges Dam in China.¹⁹⁵

Minerals: Rich Deposits, Rife with Conflict

The D.R.C. is one of the world's most mineral-rich countries. In Katanga Provincielies a belt of copper and cobalt deposits that generates a high percentage of the nation's total export revenues. Manganese and zinc



© About Mulungwishi mission station
Minerals in Katanga

¹⁹¹ U.S. Energy Information Administration. "Congo (Kinshasa) Energy Profile." 6 January 2010. http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/country_energy_data.cfm?fips=CG

¹⁹² Perenco.com. "Offshore." No date. <http://www.perenco-drc.com/operations/offshore.html>

¹⁹³ Perenco.com. "Perenco in the DRC." No date. <http://www.perenco-drc.com/about-us/perenco-in-the-drc.html>

¹⁹⁴ M&C.com. Deutsch Presse-Agentur. Koltermann, Ulrike. "Congo Dreams of World's Biggest Hydroelectric Dam." 8 December 2006.

http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/energywatch/features/article_1230965.php/Congo_dreams_of_world_s_biggest_hydroelectric_dam

¹⁹⁵ Reuters.com. "Africa's Grand Inga Could Be Online by 2025: Official." 23 April 2009.

<http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJ0E53M03C20090423>

deposits also occur in this region, although only zinc is currently mined. To the northwest of Katanga, Kasai-Oriental and Kasai-Occidental Provinces, are rich in deposits of industrial quality diamonds, most of which are presently extracted by artisanal (small-scale) miners. Tin, tungsten, and coltan (the source ore for the minerals niobium and tantalum) are all mined in the eastern D.R.C., with tungsten and coltan primarily found in the conflict-torn regions of Nord Kivu and Sud Kivu. The D.R.C. supplies approximately 80% of the world's coltan which is an essential element in cell phones, iPods and other electronic devices. The demand for coltan had encouraged smuggling and is a major source of funding for continued war activities.¹⁹⁶ Several gold artisanal mines are also under either the control of rebel militias or governmental military forces, located in the Ituri District of Orientale Province (northeastern D.R.C.) and in Sud Kivu Province.¹⁹⁷

Standard of Living

The people of the D.R.C. have one of the lowest standards of living in the world, despite their bounty of mineral riches. The nation's GDP per capita, at USD 298, is the lowest of all world countries measured in the most recent United Nations Human Development Index.¹⁹⁸

From 1990 to 2007, the GDP per capita *declined* at an average annual rate of 4.3%, the world's worst rate for any nation during that period according to UNICEF statistics.¹⁹⁹ The average rate of inflation in the D.R.C. during the same 1990–2007 period was 355%, also the world's worst performance.²⁰⁰ Considering that the D.R.C.'s GDP per capita had actually grown over 5% during each year from 2003 to 2007, the amount of devastation brought to the nation's economy by the Mobutu regime and the subsequent years of civil war becomes even more evident.



© Foxtrot74 / flickr.com
Residential area in Kinshasa

Health standards in the D.R.C., particularly in rural areas, are low. The average life expectancy in the D.R.C. (47.6 years) is one of the lowest in the world, although it is close to that of many of the D.R.C.'s immediate neighbors.²⁰¹ Only 46% of the total

¹⁹⁶ The Smith College Sophian. "Coltan: fueling the conflict in the Congo." 4 April 2009. <http://media.www.smithsophian.com/media/storage/paper587/news/2009/04/02/Features/Coltan.Fueling.The.Conflict.In.The.Congo-3702996-page2.shtml>

¹⁹⁷ U.S. Geological Survey. *2008 Minerals Yearbook*. Yager, Thomas R. "Congo (Kinshasa)." February 2010. <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/2008/myb3-2008-cg.pdf>

¹⁹⁸ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2009*. "Table H: Human Development Index 2007 and Its Components." 2009. http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_Tables_rev.xls

¹⁹⁹ UNICEF. State of the World's Children 2009. "Table 7. Economic Indicators." December 2008. http://www.unicef.org/sowc09/docs/SOWC09_Table_7.pdf

²⁰⁰ hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_Tables_rev.xls

²⁰⁰ UNICEF. State of the World's Children 2009. "Table 7. Economic Indicators." December 2008. http://www.unicef.org/sowc09/docs/SOWC09_Table_7.pdf

²⁰¹ United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 2009*. "Table H: Human Development Index 2007 and Its Components." 2009. http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_Tables_rev.xls

population has access to a healthy drinking-water, and this percentage drops to 29% in the rural countryside. Less than a third (31%) of the D.R.C.'s people has access to sanitary facilities.²⁰²

Tourism

The D.R.C. does have tourist attractions, but the civil wars and political instability have crippled its tourist appeal. Many of the areas that would have the widest tourist appeal are in the eastern border regions of the country, where persistent rebel militia presence has made travel dangerous. Five national parks and wildlife reserves are located in this area, all of which are on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites: Virunga National Park (diverse habitats), Kahuzi-Biega National Park, (home of lowland gorillas), Garamba National Park, (home of white the rhinoceros), Salonga National Park (rainforest tropical reserve), Okapi Wildlife Reserve (home of the nomadic pygmy Mbuti and Efe).²⁰³ In February 2010, the U.S. State Department warned about the risks of travel in the eastern areas and the threat of violent criminal activity in Kinshasa.²⁰⁴



© Foxtrot74 / flickr.com
Hotel Kaby De Luxe, Kinshasa

In 2007, only 47,000 tourist arrivals were recorded, an average of fewer than 130 visitors per day. Non day-trip tourists arriving via land routes are rare. This was less than half the number of visitors recorded in 2000, a year in which the D.R.C. was embroiled in its Second Civil War.²⁰⁵

Transportation

One of the largest challenges facing the D.R.C. is the need for large-scale improvement of its inadequate transportation network of railroads, rivers, and roads. All of these systems are in poor condition at present.

The D.R.C.'s railway system consists of several segments that often do not interlink. . The capital city of Kinshasa, for example, is served only by a narrow-gauge line that



© Lara / flickr.com
Train station in Kinshasa

²⁰² UNICEF. State of the World's Children 2009. "Table 3. Health." December 2008.

http://www.unicef.org/sowc09/docs/SOWC09_Table_3.pdf

²⁰³ UNESCO World Heritage. "Democratic Republic of the Congo." 2010.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/cd>

²⁰⁴ Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Travel Warning: Congo, Democratic Republic of the." 1 September 2009. http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_2198.html

²⁰⁵ UNData.org. "Country Profile: Democratic Republic of the Congo." 2010.

<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Democratic Republic of the Congo>

runs southwestward to the port city of Matadi. There are slightly more than 4,000 km (2,485 mi) of railways in the D.R.C., although some of these lines are in very poor condition and receive little to no train traffic.²⁰⁶

Most roads in the D.R.C. are not paved and are impassable during the rainy season. The United Nations in 2006 determined that only 2,250 km (1,400 mi) are paved, which is about 1% of the total. Only a few paved roads remain in good condition, notably the route from Kinshasa to Matadi in the west and from Lubumbashi to Likasi in Katanga Province.²⁰⁷

Many of the D.R.C.'s numerous rivers have long navigable stretches, but there is no continuous navigable stretch between Kinshasa and the mineral-rich areas of Katanga Province. The most important port cities are Kinshasa and Kisangani, on opposite ends of the Congo River's longest navigable stretch. Ilebo, located on the Kasai River is the site of a railhead (the end of a railway line that links to another mode of transport) leading to Lubumbashi in southern Katanga Province. The D.R.C. also has three ocean ports: Matadi, Boma, and Banana. Matadi is the largest of these ports, but it is unable to handle large freighters. Feasibility studies are underway to build a road-rail bridge linking Kinshasa with Brazzaville and to establish a rail route between Kinshasa and Pointe Noire, the Republic of the Congo's large Atlantic Ocean port.²⁰⁸

N'djili International Airport, located on the outskirts of Kinshasa, is the D.R.C.'s largest airport and the only one handling flights from outside Africa. Air travel is particularly important in the D.R.C., as many inland cities are virtually unreachable from the capital by any other means.

Economic Outlook

By almost every economic measure, rate of inflation, GDP growth, and private sector investment, the D.R.C. has made real strides since 2001. Since Joseph Kabila became president, and especially since the signing of the 2003 peace treaty, international economic assistance has returned to the country. Monetary and fiscal reforms such as the easing of tight restraints on petroleum prices and exchange rates, have kept the GDP growth rate above 5.6% a year from 2006 through 2008.²⁰⁹ The global financial crisis that began in late 2008 adversely affected demand and prices for the mineral resources that are the



© Eddy Isango / IRIN
VP Jean-Bemba and President Joseph Kabila

²⁰⁶ Central Intelligence Agency. The World Factbook. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the." 22 February 2010. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html>

²⁰⁷ United Nations Joint Logistics Centre. "DRC Snapshot: Roads in the DRC." 25 July 2006. <http://wfplogistics.unjlc.org/UNJLC/23003/DRC/land/roads>

²⁰⁸ OT Africa Line. "Kinshasa and Brazzaville to Be Linked by Bridge." 13 July 2009. <http://www.otal.com/congo/>

²⁰⁹ Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo." January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

dominant source of the D.R.C.'s export revenues, resulting in reduced GDP growth in 2009.^{210, 211}

As the second decade of the 2000s begins, can D.R.C.'s economic resurgence be sustained? Certainly, roadblocks remain that could stall future economic growth. Among these are the ongoing rebel and ethnic conflicts that affect security in parts of the country, a devastated infrastructure that increases the time and money needed to ship goods, and the slow progress that has been made in addressing the D.R.C.'s "culture of corruption."

One other obstacle that the D.R.C. economy faces is a legacy of the economic misrule of the past. Today, the D.R.C. bears the heavy weight of external debt from the Mobutu and Laurent Kabila eras. The current Kabila government is working with major multilateral financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to restructure the economy to qualify for debt relief. As of December 2009, the D.R.C.'s external debt was estimated to be USD 13.1 billion, or over 500% of annual governmental revenues, debt that the International Monetary Fund has judged unsustainable over the long term.²¹²

International Organizations

The D.R.C. is a member-state of several regional developmental and trade groups: the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In October 2008, COMESA and SADC members joined with the East African Community, to form Africa's largest free trade zone, stretching from Egypt and Libya in the north to South Africa in the south. One of the goals of creating such a "special economic zone" is to establish economic linkages between the member countries.²¹³ Many African countries, including the D.R.C., currently carry out most of their trade with nations on other continents. It is hoped that such a large free-trade zone will both stimulate trade between member states and allow developing African nations to better compete in the global economy. Negotiating the final terms of the free-trade



© Radio Okapi
Ship on the Congo river

²¹⁰ International Monetary Fund. "IMF Executive Board Concludes Article IV Consultation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo." 16 December 2009.

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2009/pn09136.htm>

²¹¹ Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo." January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

²¹² International Monetary Fund. "IMF Executive Board Concludes Article IV Consultation with the Democratic Republic of the Congo." 16 December 2009.

<http://www.imf.org/external/np/sec/pn/2009/pn09136.htm>

²¹³ BBC News. Greenwood, Louise. "Q & A: Free Trade Zones in Africa." 21 August 2009.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8208254.stm>

agreement (FTA), however, will most likely take several years, if other FTAs are any indication.²¹⁴

Self Study Questions:

The agricultural sector is the most important part of the Congo economy. True or False?

Roughly one quarter of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (D.R.C.'s) GDP is generated by the industrial sector. True or False?

The D.R.C.'s exports do not include many mineral commodities. True or False?

To the northwest of Katanga are rich deposits of industrial quality diamonds. True or False?

Many of the D.R.C.'s numerous rivers have long navigable stretches. True or False?

²¹⁴ BBC News. Greenwood, Louise. "Q & A: Free Trade Zones in Africa." 21 August 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8208254.stm>

Society

Introduction

Few countries in the world are as culturally and linguistically diverse as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.). One reason is because the nation's domestic transportation infrastructure is so weak, many live relatively isolated lives. Such diversity and isolation have added complexity to the development of a cohesive national culture that both transcends and embraces ethnic and regional affiliations.



© Silvio / flickr.com
Kids from Kinshasa

Like many African nations, the D.R.C.'s borders reflect previous colonial boundaries rather than preexisting cultural or ethnic groupings. For example, the Lamba of southern Katanga Province have much more in common with the Lamba of neighboring Zambia than they do with other ethnic groups, even those living in close proximity.²¹⁵ The D.R.C.'s repeated secession movements and ethnic scapegoating still reflect these divisions, which are amplified by the vastness of the nation and its impenetrable nature. Only in large urban areas, most notably Kinshasa, are tensions lessened such that people from different ethnic groups and clans successfully live next to one another.

Ethnic Groups and Languages

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to possibly 250 different ethnic groups. Most of these, including virtually all that live south of the equator, speak languages in the Bantu family.²¹⁶ Most ethnic Bantu are thought to have entered the Congo Basin between the 10th and 14th centuries.²¹⁷ One of the largest Bantu groups are the Mongo (also known as Ngundu), who live in the central Congo River Basin. These people trace their lineage to an ancient ancestor named Mongo.²¹⁸ Cultural identification through ancestor lineage is typical of many clans (i.e., smaller groups within larger, language-defined ethnic groups). Clan membership is a stronger cultural



© Valentina Buj
Family in the Katanga Province

²¹⁵ *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*. Siegel, Brian. "The 'Wild' and 'Lazy' Lamba: Ethnic Stereotypes on the Central African Copperbelt [p. 357]." 1989. London: James Currey Ltd./Berkeley, Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

²¹⁶ Ethnologue: Languages of the World, 16th Ed. "Languages of Democratic Republic of Congo." 2010. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=CD

²¹⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica Online. "Congo: People: Ethnic Groups." 2010. <http://search.eb.com/eb/article-40795>

²¹⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Ethnic Groups: Bantu Speakers of the Congo River Basin and Its Environs." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0060\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0060))

identity than larger ethnic identity in many areas of the D.R.C.²¹⁹ Two other large Bantu groups are the Luba, the dominant group within the Kasai provinces and northern Katanga Province; and the Kongo, descendants of the coastal peoples who were the first to interact with Portuguese explorers in the late 15th century.

In the northernmost region of the D.R.C., most of the ethnic groups speak non-Bantu languages. From the northwest through the east-central portion of this region, the languages belong to the Adamawa-Ubangi family. The largest groups of speakers are the Zande, Ngbaka, and Ngbandi. In the far northeast, ethnic groups speaking Nilo-Saharan languages dominate. Within this region lies the Ituri rainforest, where several Mbuti pygmy groups have long lived.

Regional Languages

Out of the many languages spoken by D.R.C. ethnic groups, four *lingua francas* have developed. These are widely spoken, often as a second language, in large areas of the country. Today, these languages are among the D.R.C.'s national languages—along with the colonial language of French, which is used extensively in government, the formal business sector, and education.²²⁰



© Julien Hameis
Miners in the Kasai Province

In west Congo, the Kikongo (Kongo language) is spoken throughout Bas-Congo Province and the southern half of Bandundu Province at its eastern border. Moving further eastward, Luba-Kasai (or Tshiluba) is the predominant language in both the Kasai Occidental and the Kasai Oriental Provinces. In east Congo—an area that includes all of Katanga, Maniema, Sud-Kivu, and Nord-Kivu Provinces, and the southern portions of Orientale Province—Kiswahili (Swahili) is most commonly spoken. Kiswahili has been spoken here since the era of the Arab-African ivory and slave traders, who introduced the language to the region when they arrived from their Indian Ocean coastal enclaves.

The fourth and most widely spoken national language is Lingala. Lingala grew out of an indigenous language that became the primary language of the military during the Colonial era.²²¹ Today, the language is commonly spoken in Kinshasa and Equateur Province, as well as in the northern parts of Bandundu and Orientale Provinces. Much of the widely popular Congo music, known to outsiders as *soukous*, is sung in Lingala, which solidifies the language's strong base.

²¹⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Ethnic Groups." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0058\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0058))

²²⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Languages: Officially Recognized Languages." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0056\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0056))

²²¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. "Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Languages: Officially Recognized Languages." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0056\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0056))

Language and politics can become ensnarled in the D.R.C. When Joseph Kabila came to power, he had very little support in the western half of the country. Since he had grown up in Sud-Kivu Province and later was educated in neighboring Tanzania, his “native” tongues were Kiswahili and English. Meanwhile, his speaking skills in French and Lingala, the primary languages of Kinshasa, were weak and nonexistent, respectively. His language deficits made him suspect to some of his opponents and became a political issue during the 2006 presidential campaign.²²²



© The Advocacy Project
Youth group in Kikwit

Religion

The people of the D.R.C. are primarily Christian. Recent estimates of the nation’s religious affiliations are as follows: 50% Roman Catholic, 20% mainline Protestant (i.e., non-evangelical, non-fundamentalist), 9% Kimbanguist (an indigenous Christian church), and 9% Muslim. Much smaller numbers of adherents belong to other religious groups, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah’s Witnesses, and Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Most of the remainder of the D.R.C. population practice indigenous religious beliefs.²²³



© onthebridge / flickr.com
Greek Orthodox church in Kinshasa

The spectrum of religious beliefs in the D.R.C. is not as rigid as a list of organized religions might suggest. Indigenous beliefs, stories, and traditions have permeated all the churches within the D.R.C., including the Roman Catholic Church. The Jamaa movement within the Catholic Church, for example, emerged during the 1950s and employs African fables, myths, and animal stories to illustrate Christian values. It establishes emotional connections with God, focusing on a search for the three central human values of life: wholeness, fecundity, and mutual love.^{224,225}

²²² Human Rights Watch. “We Will Crush You”: *The Restriction of Political Space in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. “Chapter 3: Prelude to Violence: A Climate of Suspicion [p. 13].” 2008.

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/11/25/we-will-crush-you-0>

²²³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. International Religious Freedom Report 2009. “Congo, Democratic Republic of the.” 26 October 2009.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2009/127226.htm>

²²⁴ *Encyclopedia of African and African-American Religions*. “Jamaa [p. 164].” 2001. New York, NY : Routledge.

²²⁵ *Culture and Customs of the Congo*. Mukenge, Tshilemalema. “Religion and Worldview [p. 45].” 2002. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press.

The Kimbanguist Church emerged from the English Baptist Mission Church, and was founded by Minister Simon Kimbangu in the early 1920s. Kimbangu gained fame for a series of faith healings before being arrested by Belgian colonial authorities. The church adheres to a strict Protestant doctrine that prohibits polygyny,²²⁶ sorcery, magic fetish beliefs, consumption of alcohol, and smoking.²²⁷



© FredR / flickr.com
Entrance to a little church in Kinshasa

Traditional beliefs and practices in the D.R.C. recognize a higher being, viewed as the creator. Few other attributes are associated with this higher power, however. Ancestors are not worshiped; but rather they are looked upon as spirits that continue to live in the world of the living. Other spirits reside in the forces of nature, such as river spirits that must be placated before their waters may be crossed.²²⁸ Witches and sorcerers are believed to possess special powers to wield or disarm the unseen forces that cause everyday afflictions and misfortunes. Diviners are frequently employed to identify the spirits or their earthly agents that are causing mayhem and to prescribe appropriate remedies for the situation.²²⁹

Gender Issues

The D.R.C. is a country with very strong patriarchal traditions. In the countryside, men are the elders of the community, the source of local authority. Women, however, play extremely vital roles both inside and outside the home. They are actively involved in growing and harvesting food. The markets where food is sold are often dominated by women.²³⁰ Chopping wood, hauling water, and basic household chores such as washing clothes, cooking, and childcare—all of these tasks are the responsibility of women.²³¹



© Woody Collins
Congolese women

²²⁶ *Polygyny* is the form of polygamy in which a man has more than one wife, in contrast to *polyandry* in which a woman has multiple husbands.

²²⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Religion: The Kimbanguist Church.” December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0091\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0091))

²²⁸ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Religion: Traditional African Religions.” December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0095\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0095))

²²⁹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Almquist, Alden. “Chapter 2: The Society and Its Environment: Religion: Traditional African Religions.” December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0095\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0095))

²³⁰ *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Lifestyle: The Role of Women [p. 79].” 1999. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²³¹ EveryCulture.com (cached). “Gender Roles and Statuses.” No date. <http://74.125.155.132/search?q=cache:rAS48PMIn3YJ:www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html+women+markets+Democratic+Congo&cd=10&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>

While the D.R.C. constitution calls for legal equality between men and women, in practice, women do not have many of the same legal rights as men. A married woman, for example, is not allowed to sign a legal contract without the consent of her husband. This restricts the ability of women to open bank accounts and to take out bank loans.²³² Married women, therefore have a very limited ability to buy and sell land. D.R.C. law also forbids a woman from working at night and from accepting employment without her husband's permission.²³³

Traditions: Celebrations and Holidays

The D.R.C. recognizes nine official holidays, falling into three categories: patriotic/historic (Martyr's Day, January 4; Heroes' Day, January 16/17; Liberation Day, May 17; Independence Day, June 30), secular (New Year's Day, January 1; Labor Day, May 1; Parents' Day, August 1), and Christian (Easter, March or April; Christmas, December 25).²³⁴



© Radio Okapi
Antoine Gizenga

Currently, the two national figures celebrated on Heroes' Day are former Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and former President Laurent Kabila; the holiday marks the dates of their assassinations. In June 2009, Antoine Gizenga—a former ally of Lumumba and later Prime Minister for two years under President Joseph Kabila—was named the D.R.C.'s third "national hero" and presumably will be celebrated on future Heroes' Days.²³⁵ Liberation Day marks the date that the Mobutu regime fell in 1997, while Martyr's Day invokes the memory of the 1959 riot in Kinshasa after a pro-independence rally was canceled by the government. It was the flash point for a fast-moving series of events that would lead to D.R.C. independence on 30 June 1960 (Independence Day).

Members of the Kimbanguist Church have celebrated Christmas on May 25 ever since prophetic revelations in 1999 led church elders to change the date.²³⁶ All other Congolese Christians, however, celebrate this holiday on December 25. Many of the American traditions—Christmas trees, gift giving, colorful displays of lights—are not generally

²³² OECD. Social Institutions and Gender Index. "Gender Equality and Social Institutions in Congo, Dem. Rep." 2009. <http://genderindex.org/country/congo-dem-rep>

²³³ Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State. 2008 Human Rights Report. "Democratic Republic of the Congo." 25 February 2009. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/118995.htm>

²³⁴ Q++Studio.com. "Public Holidays and Bank Holidays for Congo (DRC)." 2010. http://www.qppstudio.net/publicolidays2010/congo_dem_rep_zaire_.htm

²³⁵ Congo News Channel. Agence France-Presse. "DR Congo's Ex-PM, Antoine Gizenga, Made National Hero." 30 June 2009. <http://cnblog.congonewschannel.net/2009/06/dr-congos-ex-pm-antoine-gizenga-made.html>

²³⁶ BBC News. James, John. "Christmas Comes Late to DR Congo." 25 May 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6692201.stm>

practiced. The holiday is marked by attendance at local church services, followed by a large family meal for those who have the means to provide one.²³⁷

Family events, such as weddings and baptisms, are generally the most festive celebrations in the D.R.C. Speeches, singing, dancing, drinking, and celebratory meals all mark the occasion. Wedding celebrations can span an entire week of parties, family visits, and gift giving, placing a large financial strain on young grooms and their families.²³⁸

Cuisine

Meals in the D.R.C. vary widely depending on the availability of food items. The most common staple is cassava, a starchy tuber that is often boiled and pounded into a dense mash (*fufu*).^{239,240} It is often eaten with a sauce, enriched with vegetables, meat, and fish if available.²⁴¹ Maize and rice are also staples, although the latter is more expensive because most rice in the D.R.C. is imported.²⁴² Sweet potatoes and plantains may serve as side dishes. Tropical fruits such as pineapples, papayas, coconuts, oranges, and avocados are also available.^{243, 244}



Courtesy of Wikipedia
Women preparing fufu

Fish (especially perch), goat, and chicken are the most common meat sources, usually used just to flavor the meal. Animals from the forest (bushmeat), including insects, larvae, and rodents are often consumed.²⁴⁵ Beef is only eaten in the higher regions of the country where the disease-bearing tsetse fly do not exist.²⁴⁶ If there is a national dish, it is probably chicken *moambé*. This dish is a spicy stew, simmered in

²³⁷ The Guardian. Kasengela, Sophie. “Christmas Around the World: Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2007/dec/23/christmas2007?page=4>

²³⁸ *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Lifestyle: The Role of Women [p. 79].” 1999. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²³⁹ Whats4Eats.com. “Fufu.” 2010. <http://www.whats4eats.com/vegetables/fufu-recipe>

²⁴⁰ TheCongoCookbook.com. “Fufu, Et Cetera.” 2009.

http://www.congocookbook.com/recipe_indexes/fufu_et_cetera.html

²⁴¹ *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Food: Everyday Fare [p. 116].” 1999. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²⁴² *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Food: Everyday Fare [p. 116].” 1999. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²⁴³ EveryCulture.com (cached). “Food and Economy: Food in Daily Life.” No date.

<http://74.125.155.132/search?q=cache:rAS48PMIn3YJ:www.everyculture.com/Bo-Co/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo.html+women+markets+Democratic+Congo&cd=10&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>

²⁴⁴ *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Food: Everyday Fare [p. 116].” 1999. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Marshall Cavendish.

²⁴⁵ *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Food: Everyday Fare [p. 116].” 1999. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Marshall Cavendish.

²⁴⁶ IDEELS. North-South Conference: Building Partnerships for Sustainable Development. “Democratic Republic of the Congo.” 2009. <http://www.ideels.uni-bremen.de/congo>

palm butter and sometimes served with rice or fufu.²⁴⁷ It should be noted, however, that the average Congolese can not afford such a dish except on special occasions. Another popular dish is *saka saka*, which is boiled cassava leaves cooked with palm oil, onions, peppers, garlic, and other spices.²⁴⁸

Beer and palm wine are favorite beverages. The latter is made by tapping palm trees, adding yeast to the juice, and then allowing the mixture to ferment overnight.²⁴⁹ Herbal tea, flavored with local ingredients such as lemon grass, is a popular nonalcoholic drink.²⁵⁰

Traditional Dress

Traditional Congolese raffia and bark cloth clothing²⁵¹ have given way to Western clothes, even in rural areas. During the “authenticity” campaign of the Mobutu era, Western-style business clothes were banned and the Congolese adopted a variation of the Chinese tunic suit, called the *abacost*, or “down with the suit.” After Mobutu’s departure in 1997, such styles quickly disappeared. For Congolese men, trousers and printed shirts (short-sleeved or long-sleeved) are standard clothing. Congolese women usually wear wrap-around dresses or skirts with blouses, typically made from brightly printed fabrics. Kerchiefs, sometimes intricately folded, are frequently wrapped around their hair.^{252, 253}



© Jay Dedman
Congolese woman in a clothing store

Arts

Music: Soukous, Rumba and Pop

Congolese music is popular throughout Africa and, with the growth of World Music, throughout Europe and other



© onthebridge / flickr.com
Live music in Kinshasa

²⁴⁷ The Congo Cookbook: Meat Recipes. “Moambé Stew.” 2009.

http://www.congocookbook.com/meat_recipes/moambe_stew.html

²⁴⁸ The Congo Cookbook: Vegetable and Side Dish Recipes. “Saka saka.” 2009.

http://www.congocookbook.com/vegetable_and_side_dish_recipes/saka_saka.html

²⁴⁹ *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Food: Eating Out [p. 119].” 1999. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²⁵⁰ *Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo*. Heale, Jay. “Food: Drinks [p. 120].” 1999. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish.

²⁵¹ Powerhouse Museum. “A10691 Textile, Raphia and Bark, Skirt, Bakuba, Africa, 1940.” 2006–2008.

<http://www.dhub.org/object/170545,shelter>

²⁵² Global Oneness. “Culture of the Democratic Republic of the Congo—Dress and Fashion.” No date.

http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/Culture_of_the_Democratic_Republic_of_the_Congo_-_Dress_and_fashion/id/4958955

²⁵³ Encyclopedia.com. Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cultures. “Congolese.” 1999.

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3435900115.html>

continents as well.²⁵⁴ The nation's music is often called *soukous* outside the D.R.C. This term is applied so broadly that it characterizes any form of music created by D.R.C. musicians. Much of the music is sung in the Lingala language, and thus "lingala" is the name for this music in parts of East Africa.²⁵⁵

The term *soukous* first appeared in the late 1940s when African-rumba bands sprang up around Léopoldville (Kinshasa) and nearby Brazzaville in the modern-day Republic of the Congo. The music featured rhythms that were originally African and had been transformed by slaves in Cuba and other places in the Caribbean. Thus, the new rumba-style music that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s was a reinvention of music that had returned to its roots.²⁵⁶ The guitar player/singer Antoine Wendo Kolosoy (better known today as Papa Wendo) was the first star of the genre. His 1949 hit song "Marie Louise" brought charges of Satanism by the Roman Catholic Church and resulted in Kolosoy's excommunication and a brief imprisonment.²⁵⁷

Among the best-known early *soukous* bands were OK Jazz (later TPOK Jazz) and African Jazz. These bands were led, respectively, by bandleaders Joseph Kabasele Tshamala (also known as "*Le Grand Kalle*") and François "Franco," Luambo Luanzo Makiadi. During this time the musical arrangements became much more jazzlike, with horns and double basses accompanying the music's syncopated rhythms. From these bands came the next generation of *soukous* musical stars, including the singer/songwriter Tabu Ley Rochereau and guitarist Dr. Nico Kisanda. After a 1974 concert by American soul artist James Brown—staged in Kinshasa before the heavyweight boxing championship between Muhammed Ali and George Foreman—his energetic dance style became a part of Tabu Ley's Rochereau Orchestre Afrisa International's stage act. At this time, the band began to introduce funk-influenced elements to songs such as "Aon Aon."²⁵⁸



© FredR / flickr.com
Back-up singers

The music scene in the D.R.C. deteriorated during the late 1970s as corruption-spawned economic decline made the D.R.C. an increasingly harder place for musicians to make a living. One of the last major *soukous* bands was Zaiko Langa Langa, fronted by Papa

²⁵⁴ The Economist. "Congolese Music." 18 December 2003.

http://www.economist.com/printedition/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=2281725&source=login_payBarrier

²⁵⁵ Hartford Web Publishing. Daily Nation (Nairobi). "Celebrating Congo's Franco: The Ties That Bind Africa." 11 October 2003. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/35/321.html>

²⁵⁶ The Economist. "Congolese Music." 18 December 2003.

http://www.economist.com/printedition/displayStory.cfm?Story_ID=2281725&source=login_payBarrier

²⁵⁷ BBC News. "Father" of Congolese Rumba Dies." 30 July 2008.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/7533358.stm>

²⁵⁸ Pitchfork.com. Powell, Mike. "Album Review: Tabu Ley Rochereau/Mbila Bel: The Voice of Lightness/Bel Canto." 29 January 2008. <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/11650-the-voice-of-lightness-bel-canto/>

Wemba (born Jules Shungu Wembadio Pene Kikunda).²⁵⁹ Wemba would later form Viva La Musica in 1977 and increasingly experiment with Western pop musical elements.²⁶⁰

Traditional Crafts: Spiritual Power and Everyday Objects

The D.R.C.'s many ethnic groups have long created a wide variety of sculptures and carvings with distinct regional differences. Often these items are fetishes, i.e. objects believed to be vested with special powers. The *nkisi nkondi* statues of the Bakongo ("Kongo people"), carved from wood, are particularly striking. A cavity is carved in the figure's abdomen for storing spiritual ingredients, and then it is covered by a mirror. Both nails and blades are then driven into the statue as a means of destroying evil forces or as confirmation of covenants or agreements.²⁶¹



© Fran Simó
Nkisi nkondi statue

The Bakuba, who live along the upper parts of the Kasai River, have been acknowledged for their carvings and other traditional crafts, including masks, cups, game boards, and charms. Perhaps most famous of these are the *ndop* statues of their kings, which are considered spirit doubles that physically embody the soul of the king.²⁶² To the southeast of the Bakuba, the Baluba are noted both for their ceremonial masks and for their carvings of women—who have traditionally played an important role in Baluba society.^{263, 264}

To the north of the Congo River, the forest-based Mangbetu people carved royal figures that feature the wrapped and elongated heads that were in fashion.²⁶⁵ Often these figures would be carved on objects designed for both everyday and ceremonial use, such as palm wine jars, boxes made of tree bark, and harps and trumpets. These items would be used to demonstrate the wealth and refinement of clan leaders on special occasions.²⁶⁶ To the north of the Mangbetu,



© cosmorocheester collects / flickr.com
Baluba mask

²⁵⁹ Papa Wemba: A History of Mwana Molokai. "Growing Up: 1949–1977." No date.

http://www.aozj17.dsl.pipex.com/growing_up.html

²⁶⁰ Weblo.com. "Papa Wemba Biography." 2010. http://www.weblo.com/music/artist/Papa_Wemba/22658/

²⁶¹ Brooklyn Museum. "Collections: Arts of Africa: Power Figure (Nkisi Nkondi)." No date.

[http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/2957/Power_Figure_\(Nkisi_Nkondi\)](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/2957/Power_Figure_(Nkisi_Nkondi))

²⁶² Brooklyn Museum. "Collections: Arts of Africa: Ndop Portrait of King Mishe miShyaang maMbul." No date.

http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/4791/Ndop_Portrait_of_King_Mishe_miShyaang_maMbul

²⁶³ Art and Life in Africa. University of Iowa. "Luba People." 7 March 1999.

<http://www.uiowa.edu/~africart/toc/people/Luba.html>

²⁶⁴ *Central Africa*. Newton, Alex. "Zaire—Facts About the Country [pp. 461–463]. 1994. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

²⁶⁵ *Central Africa*. Newton, Alex. "Zaire—Facts About the Country [pp. 461–463]. 1994. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

²⁶⁶ African Art Museum. "Tribal African Art: Mangbetu (Guruguru, Mangutu, Mombouttous, Mongbutu, Ngbetu)." No date. <http://www.zyama.com/mangbetu/index.htm>

the Zande carved more primitive figures with simplified features and enlarged, pointed heads. The most well known of these are the *yanda*, small wood or clay statuettes of women that were used by the highest ranking members of the *mani* secret society as protections from misfortunes and evil spirits.²⁶⁷

Folktales and Folklore

The D.R.C., with over 200 ethnic groups (many of whom speak languages without a written system) is rich in oral tradition. In keeping with its vast rainforests and natural wonders, many folktales feature animal characters who personify traits, such as laziness, greed, and cleverness. Special folk tales—tribal origin legends—correspond to each clan and ethnic group in the D.R.C. Many of these tales have elements of truth to them, although it is generally impossible to verify the details. One such account describes the origin of the Kongo Kingdom, which is traced to Lukeni lua Nimi, the offspring of an arranged marriage between the son and daughter of two local tribal chiefs.



© Cliff / flickr.com
Flywhisk handle from
the 19th century

Sports and Recreation

Like the rest of Africa and much of the rest of the world, football (soccer) is the national sport of the D.R.C., both for participants and spectators. The national team has won two African cups (1968, 1974), and in 1974 became the first sub-Saharan nation to qualify for the World Cup competition. (This was the D.R.C.'s last appearance at the World Cup competition.) In 2009, the D.R.C. team won the inaugural African Championship of Nations (in which players who were playing on teams outside their native country were not permitted).²⁶⁸ Following the D.R.C. team's victory, President Joseph Kabila declared a national holiday.²⁶⁹

Despite football's prominence, the D.R.C.'s most famous athlete is the former National Basketball Association All Star Dkembe Mutombo. Mutombo was born in Kinshasa and did not even pick up a basketball until he was 18 years old. He came to the United States in 1987 on an academic scholarship, planning to become a doctor and return to his home country. As his professional basketball career was winding down in the mid-2000s, he supported



© United Nations Photo
Soccer game in Goma

²⁶⁷ African Art Museum. "Tribal African Art: Mangbetu (Guruguru, Mangutu, Momboutous, Mongbutu, Ngbetu)." No date. <http://www.zyama.com/mangbetu/index.htm>

²⁶⁸ BBC News. "New Tournament for Africa." 11 September 2007. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/football/africa/6990333.stm>

²⁶⁹ Q++Studio.com. "Public Holidays and Bank Holidays for Congo (DRC)." 2010. http://www.qppstudio.net/publicolidays2010/congo__dem__rep__zaire_.htm

fundraising for a USD 29 million 300-bed hospital in downtown Kinshasa that opened in 2006.²⁷⁰

The D.R.C. has competed in most of the Olympic Games since 1968, although none of their athletes has yet won a medal. Sprinter Gary Kikaya, however, is a source of national pride. In 2006, he ran the fastest time ever recorded for the 400m race by a non-American sprinter.²⁷¹ During the 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games, he made it to the semifinal competition, but was unable to qualify further.²⁷²

Favorite leisure activities include board games (chess and checkers) and card games. One type of game, *mankala*, is particularly popular in rural areas.²⁷³ It is played on a wooden board or scooped into dirt or sand, with two rows of shallow indentations filled with stones or seeds. In one version, the player left with the most stones/seeds at the end of the game is declared the winner.

Self Study Questions:

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to as many as 250 different ethnic groups. True or False?

On the eastern side of the D.R.C., French is the most commonly spoken language. True or False?

Indigenous beliefs, stories, and traditions have permeated all the churches within the D.R.C. True or False?

In the D.R.C., the most common staple food is cassava, a starchy tuber that is often boiled and then pounded into a dense mash (*fufu*). True or False?

Congolese music has not become popular outside of Africa. True or False?

²⁷⁰ New York Times. Araton, Harvey. "Mutombo's Dream House Sleeps 300." 15 August 2006.

http://select.nytimes.com/2006/08/15/sports/basketball/15araton.html?_r=1#

²⁷¹ All_TimeAthletics.com. Larsson, Peter. "All-Time Men's Best 400 m." 2 March 2010.

http://www.alltime-athletics.com/m_400ok.htm

²⁷² New York Times. Araton, Harvey. "Out of the Limelight, but Still Running Hard." 5 August 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/sports/olympics/05araton.html>

²⁷³ Encyclopedia.com. Junior Worldmark Encyclopedia of World Cultures. "Congolese." 1999.

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3435900115.html>

Security

Introduction

Each year, *Foreign Policy* magazine and the nonprofit Fund for Peace jointly assess the overall social, economic, and military/political conditions in each of the world's countries, ranking them on a "failed state" index. For many years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.) has found itself near the "top" of this list, placing it among the world's least secure nations. In 2009, for example, only four other nations (Somalia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Chad) ranked "higher" than the D.R.C on the failed-state list.²⁷⁴ Of the 12 factors assessed, the D.R.C. performs the worst in the "Security Apparatus" category because of the undisciplined behavior and abusive actions of the nation's military and police.²⁷⁵ This unreliable security force creates a vacuum that is frequently filled by military forces from nations neighboring the D.R.C. During the Second Congo War the D.R.C. became the battle ground for a conflict fought by many of the armies of central Africa and their proxy militias. Recently, military units from Rwanda and Uganda were invited to pursue rebel militias that the D.R.C s army is incapable of engaging on its own.



© UN Photo/A Burridge
Displaced Congolese

Military

The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Forces d'Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*, FARDC) is not a mature military. President Mobutu and his successors Laurent Kabila and Joseph Kabila differed from each other in many respects, however, they shared an identical distrust of the army. For this reason, each man created favored military units—with names such as the Special Presidential Division or the Presidential Guard—that largely consisted of members having regional or ethnic affiliations with the president.²⁷⁶ These elite units received the best training and the majority of resources available. Thus soldiers in the regular ranks often "shook down" the civilian population to compensate for their lack of pay and supplies.^{277, 278} With low



© Spyros_Demetriou / flickr.com
FARDC military police

²⁷⁴ Fund for Peace. "Failed States Index 2009." 2009.

http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=391&Itemid=549

²⁷⁵ Fund for Peace. "Democratic Republic of the Congo." 22 June 2009.

http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=386&Itemid=543

²⁷⁶ International Crisis Group. Africa Report #104. "Security Sector Reform in the Congo [pp. 2–3]." 13 February 2006.

http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/central_africa/104_security_sector_reform_in_the_congo.pdf

²⁷⁷ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Glickson, Roger G., and Joshua Sinai. "Chapter 5: National Security: Armed Forces Missions and Organizations: Army." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0190\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0190))

morale and marginal training, the Congolese armed forces generally did not perform well in defending against external invaders. In 1977 and 1978, for example, two invasions of Shaba (Katanga) Province by Angola-based Katangese rebel forces faced little or no resistance from Zairean (D.R.C.) forces. The rebel forces were put down only after supporting troops from other countries intervened. A similar lack of resistance occurred in 1996 when the forces led by Laurent Kabila invaded from Rwanda.

Today, the roughly 120,000-member FARDC is reconfiguring by integrating ex-rebel militias into regular army brigades.^{279,280} Discipline and morale within the ranks are still major concerns. Reports of human-rights abuses against civilians by FARDC forces in the rebel areas of the eastern D.R.C. are frequent.²⁸¹ Corruption operates down the chain of the command, so soldiers often do not get paid. As one UN official described it, “The money comes from Kinshasa, then goes to Kisangani, and by the time it gets down to company level there’s not much left.”²⁸²



MONUC

With such a weak military, much of the security burden in the eastern D.R.C. has fallen to the MONUC—the Mission of the United Nations Organization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo*). At the start of 2010, nearly 18,650 UN troops were deployed in the D.R.C., with another nearly 1,900 uniformed personnel also on the ground. MONUC is the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world.²⁸³ A small deployment of UN security observers arrived in November 1999 following a ceasefire agreement signed in Lusaka, Zambia. For the first several years, the MONUC observers and military personnel deferred to the peacekeeping forces of the Joint Military



²⁷⁸ *The Tragic State of the Congo: From Decolonization to Dictatorship*. Haskin, Jeanne M. “Chapter 4: Terror and Dissent [p. 58].” 2005. New York, NY: Algora Publishing

²⁷⁹ The New York Review of Books. Vol. 56, No. 13. Hochschild, Adam. “Rape of the Congo.” 13 August 2009. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22956>

²⁸⁰ Institute of Security Studies. *African Security Review*, No. 17.2. Boshoff, Henri. “Security Sector Reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Status of Military Reform.” June 2008. <http://media.web.britannica.com/ebsco/pdf/33/33720097.pdf>

²⁸¹ The New York Review of Books. Vol. 56, No. 13. Hochschild, Adam. “Rape of the Congo.” 13 August 2009. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22956>

²⁸² The New York Review of Books. Vol. 56, No. 13. Hochschild, Adam. “Rape of the Congo.” 13 August 2009. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/22956>

²⁸³ United Nations. “MONUC Facts and Figures.” 2010. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monuc/facts.shtml>

Commission (JMC) established by those who signed the Lusaka agreement.²⁸⁴ In 2000 The UN forces are mandated to use force if necessary to protect Congolese civilians, but they initially took a passive role. Most notably in the events — that led to the massacre in Kisangani, May 2002.^{285, 286}

After the civilian massacres in Bunia in 2003 and Bukavu in 2004, the UN Security Council in October 2004 strengthened MONUC's mandate to allow more active engagement with rebel forces. MONUC forces were instructed to assist in the “disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of Congolese combatants and their dependents.”²⁸⁷ To meet this expanded mandate, MONUC forces were increased by nearly 6,000 military personnel.²⁸⁸ After MONUC took a more active role in anti-militia operations, it has carried out joint operations with government FARDC forces. Though, joint operations become awkward when FARDC units carry out human rights abuses. As a result, UN officials in 2009 restricted the conditions under which MONUC forces could support FARDC forces in military operations.²⁸⁹

U.S–Democratic Republic of the Congo Relations

Cold War politics colored the United States' relations with the D.R.C. from the 1960s through the 1980s. Except for a brief chilly period in 1973 when Mobutu nationalized foreign-owned enterprises, the Mobutu government received steady military aid and development support from the US. Both countries found common ground supporting rebels resisting a Cuban-supported socialist government in Angola. In 1990, as Cold War patronage ended, the U.S. Congress cut off most support to the D.R.C. (with the exception of some humanitarian aid), because of the Mobutu regime's poor human rights record and its rampant corruption.^{290, 291} Relations continued to decline. In 1993, the U.S.



DCD Image
Mobutu and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger

²⁸⁴ Institute for Security Studies. *African Security Review*, No. 16.3. Marks, Joshua. “The Pitfalls of Action and Inaction: Civilian Protection in MONUC's Peacekeeping Operations.” 2007.

<http://media.web.britannica.com/ebsco/pdf/27/27399184.pdf>

²⁸⁵ Refugees International. Bernath, Clifford; and Anne Edgerton. “MONUC: Flawed Mandate Limits Success [p. 9].” May 2003. repository.forcedmigration.org/pdf/?pid=fmo:3161

²⁸⁶ Institute for Security Studies. *African Security Review*, No. 16.3. Marks, Joshua. “The Pitfalls of Action and Inaction: Civilian Protection in MONUC's Peacekeeping Operations.” 2007.

<http://media.web.britannica.com/ebsco/pdf/27/27399184.pdf>

²⁸⁷ United Nations Security Council. “Resolution 1565 (2004).” 1 October 2004.

[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1565 %282004%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1565%202004%29)

²⁸⁸ United Nations Security Council. “Resolution 1565 (2004).” 1 October 2004.

[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1565 %282004%29](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1565%202004%29)

²⁸⁹ The New York Times. Gettleman, James. “UN Told Not to Join Congo Army in Operation.” 9

December 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/10/world/africa/10congo.html?_r=1&ref=africa

²⁹⁰ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Turner, Thomas. “Chapter 4: Government and Politics: Foreign Policy: Relations With the West: Relations With the United States.”

December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0172\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0172))

administration refused to fill an open ambassadorial post in Kinshasa and disallowed Mobutu and his associates from entering the United States.²⁹²

Since 2001, when Joseph Kabila became president (after his father was assassinated) the United States has rebuilt stronger relations with the D.R.C. Washington's foremost goal has been to help bring economic and political stability to the D.R.C. This challenging task is even more difficult due to ongoing humanitarian needs and human rights abuses occurring throughout eastern D.R.C. In 2008, the U.S. Government supplied more than USD 700 million to the D.R.C. through both bilateral and multilateral programs, much of it for humanitarian purposes. The U.S. is also the largest donor nation to the MONUC peacekeeping program, which has an annual budget of over USD 1 billion.²⁹³

Relations With Neighboring Countries

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic (C.A.R.) and the D.R.C. share a border defined by the Ubangi and Bomu Rivers. The *Mouvement pour la Liberation du Congo* (MLC) is a Ugandan-backed Congolese organization headed by 2006 D.R.C. presidential candidate Jean-Pierre Bemba. During the Second Congo War (2001–2003), these Congolese rebels fought in support of C.A.R. President Ange-Félix Patassé against C.A.R. rebel forces led by François Bozizé. The MLC's stronghold was the northwestern region of the D.R.C., including the area directly across the Congo River from the C.A.R. capital of Bangui. During this period, relations between the two countries soured as the MLC made use of C.A.R. territory as a base of operations.²⁹⁴



© John Friel
Ubangui river

When Bozizé overthrew Patassé in 2003, the two countries quickly normalized relations, partly because their leaders now had a common enemy. Bemba soon became D.R.C. President Joseph Kabila's main political rival. C.A.R. President Bozizé pressed charges of war crimes against Bemba, based on alleged atrocities occurring during the fighting in

²⁹¹ Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College. Metz, Steven. "Reform, Conflict, and Security in Zaire [p. 11]." <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=203>

²⁹² Institute for Policy Studies. Foreign Policy in Focus. Collins, Carole J. L. "Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo." 1 July 1997. http://www.fpif.org/reports/zairedemocratic_republic_of_the_congo

²⁹³ Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo." January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

²⁹⁴ GlobalSecurity.org. IRIN. "DRC–Central African Republic: Bangui, Kinshasa Revive Defence Accords." 16 June 2003. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2003/06/mil-030616-irin02.htm>

2001–2003.²⁹⁵ In 2010, Bemba was put on trial by the International Criminal Court in Brussels based on these charges.²⁹⁶

Republic of the Congo

The “other” Congo was not a combatant state during the Second Congo War and generally maintains good relations with its larger neighbor across the Congo and Ubangi Rivers. Brazzaville, the Republic of the Congo’s capital city, lies directly across the Congo River from Kinshasa, and the two cities are linked by regular ferry service.



© Henri Hovi
Skyline of Brazzaville

In late 2009, a humanitarian crisis developed when conflict over fishing and farming rights near the Ubangi River erupted into violence. The fighting quickly escalated, with former members of Jean-Pierre Bemba’s MLC militia reportedly among the combatants.²⁹⁷ Within several weeks, over 100,000 D.R.C. citizens fled to the Republic of the Congo’s side of the river. Over 80% of the refugees were women and children.²⁹⁸

Angola

Beginning in the 1970s and continuing for nearly three decades, Angola was involved in a civil war that strongly affected its relations with the D.R.C. One of the Angolan belligerents—the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi—was supported by President Mobutu. It used the D.R.C. as a rear supply base in its fight against Angola’s socialist government.²⁹⁹ The Angolan government, in return, backed Angolan-based Katangan secessionists during military campaigns in 1977 and 1978 as well as the anti-Mobutu insurgency led by Laurent Kabila during the First Congo War (1997).^{300,301,302} The Angolan



© Eege Foto
Jonas Savimbi

²⁹⁵ The New York Times. “Congo Ex-Official Is Held in Belgium on War Crimes Charges.” 25 May 2008. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE1DD133EF936A15756C0A96E9C8B63>

²⁹⁶ International Criminal Court. “Trial of Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo to Commence Tuesday, 27 April, 2010.” 11 May 2009. [http://www.icc-cpi.int/menus/icc/situations and cases/situations/situation+icc+0105/related+cases/icc+0105+0108/press+releases/pr472](http://www.icc-cpi.int/menus/icc/situations+and+cases/situations/situation+icc+0105/related+cases/icc+0105+0108/press+releases/pr472)

²⁹⁷ Bloomberg.com. Kavanagh, Michael. “Thousands Flee Northern Congo Insurgency Inspired by Mystic.” 22 December 2009. <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601116&sid=am8VfFbPveNM>

²⁹⁸ VOAnews.com. Schlein, Lisa. “More Than 100,000 Congo Refugees Need Aid.” 9 March 2010. <http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/africa/central/-More-Than-100000-Congo-Refugees-Need-Aid--87121662.html>

²⁹⁹ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. “Chapter 18: White Dominoes [p. 316].” 2005. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

³⁰⁰ The Washington Post. Duke, Lynne. “Passive Protest Stops Zaire’s Capital Cold.” 15 April 1997. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/africa/april/15/zprotest.htm>

government also militarily supported Kabila during the Second Civil War. Angola backed him because of the fear that an anti-Kabila government in Kinshasa would threaten the development of Angola's oil deposits along its northwestern coast and the coastal enclave of Cabinda. Luanda was concerned that UNITA would return to using the D.R.C. as a rear base in its continuing battle against the government if instability persisted.³⁰³ Angola's intervention was crucial in saving the Kabila government during the early stages of the Second Congo War, because Angolan forces halted a rebel advance from the west toward Kinshasa.³⁰⁴

Angola's long civil war ended in 2002, a few months after Savimbi was killed by government soldiers in an ambush.³⁰⁵ The Second Congo War formally ended a year later, although fighting still continues in the eastern parts of the D.R.C. Angola has committed to an official policy of non-intervention in the continuing Congolese conflict. Despite this policy, D.R.C. President Joseph Kabila asked for Angolan military assistance in late 2008 when rebel leader Laurent Nkunda's forces pushed toward the eastern city of Goma.³⁰⁶ Several unconfirmed reports surfaced that Angolan soldiers had been sent to the Goma region to reinforce the FARDC forces, although MONUC officials reported having seen no evidence of Angolan forces in the area.³⁰⁷

Zambia

Zambia is the only neighboring country that engages in significant trade with the D.R.C. Zambia's proximity to the copper-producing regions of southern Katanga and its relatively strong transportation links with the Katangan region facilitate this trade. Traditionally, copper ore concentrate from Katangan mines has been sent to Zambian smelters for refinement. However, since March 2007 the Katangan governor, Moise Kotumbi, has



© Merlin
Copper plant in Zambia

³⁰¹ Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. *Zaire: A Country Study*. Turner, Thomas. "Chapter 4: Government and Politics: Foreign Policy: Regional Relations: Relations With Angola Since the War." December 1993. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+zr0176\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+zr0176))

³⁰² *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. "Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 535]." 2005. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

³⁰³ United Nations Development Programme Oslo Governance Centre. Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. "The International Dimensions of the Congo Crisis [p. 6]." No date. <http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs05/The International Dimensions of the Congo Crisis.pdf>

³⁰⁴ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. "Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 539–540]." 2005. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

³⁰⁵ BBC News. Simpson, Chris. "Obituary: Jonas Savimbi, UNITA's Local Boy." 25 February 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/264094.stm>

³⁰⁶ AlertNet.org. Reuters. Almeida, Henrique. "Kabila to Discuss Congo Crisis With Angola President." 20 November 2008. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/LK168351.htm>

³⁰⁷ ReliefWeb.org. Deutsche Presse Agentur. "DR Congo: Foreign Troops Backing Congolese Army Against Rebel-Report." 13 November 2008. <http://ocha-gwapps1.unog.ch/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/CJAL-7LCMQ2?OpenDocument>

periodically restricted shipments of copper ore to Zambia to shift more of the copper processing business to Katanga.^{308, 309} Kotumbi is a former resident of Zambia, where he was once under investigation by a governmental task force on corruption charges related to his business operations there. The investigation ended in December 2007. The Zambian Minister of Information explained that this was a decision based on the Zambian government's desire not to harm relations with the D.R.C. by pursuing one of its leading governmental figures.³¹⁰

Tanzania

Lake Tanganyika, ranging from 48 to 72 km (30 to 45 mi) in width, forms the entirety of the D.R.C.-Tanzania border.³¹¹ The only direct connection between the two nations is sporadic cargo ferry service that links the D.R.C. lake port of Kalemie with the Tanzanian port of Kigoma.³¹²



© d_proffer / flickr.com
Lake Tanganyika

Tanzania was not a participant nation in the Second Congo War and has been supportive of efforts to end fighting in the D.R.C. Its western regions have seen a steady stream of refugees from the D.R.C. since the mid-1990s. As of January 2010, some 60,000 Congolese refugees were still living in Tanzania.³¹³

Burundi

Burundi and the D.R.C. share a border that aligns with the northern-most section of Lake Tanganyika and the lower stretch of the Ruzizi River, which carries overflow from Lake Kivu southward to Lake Tanganyika. Like Rwanda, its neighbor to the north, Burundi is populated by the two ethnic groups, Hutus and Tutsis, who have perpetrated several deadly episodes of violence upon each other since 1959. These massacres have caused the flight of hundreds of thousands of Burundi refugees, both Hutu and Tutsi, into neighboring Tanzania, Rwanda, and the D.R.C.



© Susan Novak
Burundi and DRC border crossing

³⁰⁸ Mining Weekly. Reuters. "First Quantum Says Resumes Congo Ore Exports." 5 April 2007. http://africannewsanalysis.blogspot.com/2007_04_01_archive.html

³⁰⁹ Lusaka Times. "Zambia: DRC Lifts Copper Concentrates Ban." 6 February 2009. <http://www.lusakatimes.com/?p=8232>

³¹⁰ Lusaka Times. "Zambia: Zambia Defends Decision to Discontinue Katumbi's Corruption Cases." 11 December 2007. <http://www.lusakatimes.com/?p=1678>

³¹¹ Florida State University College of Law. Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State. "International Boundary Study, No. 51 [p. 3]." 1 June 1965.

<http://www.law.fsu.edu/library/collection/LimitsinSeas/IBS051.pdf> [retrieved 18 March 2010]

³¹² *Tanzania*, 6th Edition. "Transport: Getting There and Away [p. 353]." 2008. Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications.

³¹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "United Republic of Tanzania." 2010. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e45c736>

The Hutu-Tutsi conflict has played out in the D.R.C. and sparked both of the Congo Wars. During the First Congo War, Burundi backed the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo Kinshasa* (AFDL), which was an overwhelmingly Tutsi militia.³¹⁴ The Burundi government again supported the Tutsi-aligned forces in the Second Congo War, citing its fears about attacks launched by Hutu extremists operating from bases in the Kivu provinces of the eastern D.R.C. The role played by the Burundi army in the Second Congo War was much more limited than that of its “allies”, Rwanda and Uganda. Nonetheless, reports suggested that Congo’s mineral resources were a partial factor in Burundi’s participation in the D.R.C. fighting.^{315, 316}

After Burundi’s armed forces left the D.R.C., they continued to battle Hutu rebel militias in a civil war that came to an end in 2009. Some of the former rebel fighters in Burundi have reportedly joined the Hutu militia *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), which still battles the Congolese Army and MONUC forces in the Kivu provinces of the eastern D.R.C. Meager disarmament incentives for Burundian rebel fighters have boosted their recruitment by the Congolese rebels.³¹⁷

Rwanda

No country has been more actively involved in the affairs of the D.R.C. over the last two decades than Rwanda. Its active role in both Congo Wars has strained relations between the two nations, although relations have thawed since 2009. In August, Presidents Kabila of the D.R.C. and Kagame of Rwanda held talks for the first time since Kabila came to power in 2001. Formal ties between the two nations were restored, ending an 11-year diplomatic break initiated at the beginning of the Second Congo War.^{318, 319}



© Tracy Longacre
Rwanda and DRC border

The August restoration of relations followed the January 2009 arrest of Laurent Nkunda by the Rwandan military. Nkunda was the leader of the *Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP), a Tutsi-dominated rebel militia that had operated in Nord Kivu province.

³¹⁴ The Washington Post. Duke, Lynne. “Passive Protest Stops Zaire’s Capital Cold.” 15 April 1997. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/inatl/africa/april/15/zprotest.htm>

³¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme Oslo Governance Centre. Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. “The International Dimensions of the Congo Crisis [p. 6].” No date. <http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/docs05/The International Dimensions of the Congo Crisis.pdf>

³¹⁶ United Nations. “Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo [para. 105].” 12 April 2001. <http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/drcongo.htm>

³¹⁷ The New York Times. Kron, Josh; and Jeffrey Gettleman. “Congo’s Militias Lure Rebels From Burundi.” 20 August 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/21/world/africa/21congo.html>

³¹⁸ BBC News. Usher, Sebastian. “‘New Era’ for DR Congo and Rwanda.” 6 August 2009. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8188715.stm>

³¹⁹ Independent Online. Agence France-Presse. “Kagame and Kabila Restore Ties.” 7 August 2009. http://www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=136&art_id=nw20090806230238968C709941

Nkunda's arrest underscores the complexity of the interwoven relationships between the rebel militias operating in the D.R.C., the governments of the D.R.C., and Rwanda. Nkunda's CNDP. According to a UN investigation, the CNDP was likely assisted by the Rwandan military, who viewed the CNDP as a proxy force that could oppose Hutu-dominated militias—most notably, the FDLR—that were attacking Tutsi communities in the eastern D.R.C from the Kivu provinces.³²⁰ The UN report linked the CNDP and the Rwandan military and alleged cooperation between some Congolese military authorities and the Hutu militias.^{321, 322}

By early 2009 both the D.R.C. and Rwandan governments concluded that stemming the tide against the Hutu and Tutsi militias operating in the eastern D.R.C. required mutual military and political cooperation. Nkunda's forces had become an embarrassment to the Rwandan government, because a CNDP offensive toward the city of Goma created hundreds of thousands of refugees and generated numerous reports of rape, torture, and extrajudicial executions.³²³ For five weeks in January and February 2009, Rwandan and D.R.C. forces carried out a joint mission to force FDLR rebel forces from their strongholds in Nord Kivu. The operation, by most accounts, weakened the FDLR but could not eradicate it as a threat.³²⁴

Uganda

The other major state actor actively involved in the eastern D.R.C. conflicts is Uganda. During the First and Second Congo Wars, the Ugandan government supported the Tutsi-aligned militias that pressed against the governments of Presidents Mobutu and Laurent Kabila, respectively. The Ugandan military actively operated in northern Congo during the second conflict, supporting Jean-Pierre Bemba's *Mouvement pour la Liberation du Congo* (MLC) in Équateur Province and various militias in Orientale Province. The last Ugandan troops left the D.R.C. in April 2003 amid charges that some military leaders and private businesspersons had plundered the coltan, diamond, and other resources of the northeastern region. A UN investigatory panel also noted that the Ugandans' role in arming local militias to support their commercial activities created conditions conducive to violent ethnic conflict, most notably between the Hema and Lendu clans of the Ituri



© Laura / flickr.com
Uganda and DRC border

³²⁰ Afrik.com. Ofori-Atta, Prince. "Nkunda's Arrest: Diplomatic Cooperation to Derail Rebels' Premises." 23 January 2009. <http://en.afrik.com/article15202.html>

³²¹ The New York Times. Polgreen, Lydia "Militias in Congo Tied to Government and Rwanda." 12 December 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/13/world/africa/13congo.html?_r=1

³²² GlobalSecurity.org. "Congo Civil War Maps." <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/congo-maps.htm>

³²³ Time. Perry, Alex. "Behind Rwanda's Arrest of Nkunda." 23 January 2009. <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1873613,00.html>

³²⁴ Agence France-Presse. "Dozens of Civilians Killed in DR Congo Attacks: UN." 13 May 2009. <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iEw4rts174XhpU0NaFtFR-LB2zSw>

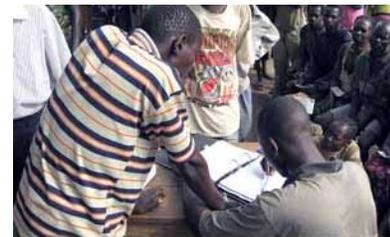
region of Orientale Province.³²⁵ In 2005, the International Court of Justice in The Hague found Uganda guilty of looting and human rights abuses in the D.R.C. during the Second Congo War. The Court ordered Uganda to make reparations.

While the reparations have yet to be negotiated, relations between the two nations have improved since the late 2000s. Similar to the situation with Rwanda, the D.R.C. government in December 2008 invited the Ugandan military (as well as that of the southern Sudan) back into Orientale Province to help fight the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel militia involved in a long-standing conflict in northern Uganda that spilled over into the eastern D.R.C in September 2005.^{326, 327, 328} Even in a region where atrocities occur regularly, the LRA's activities in northeastern D.R.C. have been particularly brutal. On Christmas day 2009, for example, LRA rebels killed over 850 villagers and forcibly recruited 160 children into their militias.³²⁹

In August 2009, Uganda and the D.R.C. restored full diplomatic relations after a 12-year lapse.³³⁰ One immediate benefit of this restoration has been an easing of border-crossing restrictions, which has helped increase trade and business activity between the two countries.³³¹

Sudan

The D.R.C. borders Southern Sudan, a region that was embroiled in violent civil war for over 20 years. A 2005 peace treaty granted semiautonomous status to Southern Sudan for six years, which will led to a referendum on independence in 2011. For over four years, relations between the D.R.C and the Government of Southern Sudan have focused on the presence of rebel bases of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in the northeastern part



© BBC World Service
Camp refugees

³²⁵ GlobalSecurity.org. "Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo [para. 97–131]." 8 October 2002. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/congo.htm>

³²⁶ Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State. "Background Note: Democratic Republic of the Congo." January 2010. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2823.htm>

³²⁷ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2008*. "Chapter 2: Africa Overview." 30 April 2009. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2008/122412.htm>

³²⁸ The New York Times. Lacey, Marc. "Congo Troops Move to Evict Ugandan Rebels." 5 October 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/05/international/africa/05brief-congo.html>

³²⁹ ReliefWeb.org. "The Christmas Massacres: LRA Attacks on Civilians in Northern Congo." 16 February 2009. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/ASAZ-7PBF5D?OpenDocument>

³³⁰ GlobalSecurity.org. Voice of America. Boswell, Alan. "Restoration of DRC–Uganda Ties Shows New Regional Cooperation." 31 August 2009. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2009/08/mil-090831-voa12.htm>

³³¹ GlobalSecurity.org. Voice of America. Boswell, Alan. "Restoration of DRC–Uganda Ties Shows New Regional Cooperation." 31 August 2009. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2009/08/mil-090831-voa12.htm>

of the D.R.C.'s Orientale Province.

The Sudanese government in Khartoum previously supported the LRA. This northern Ugandan rebel group assisted the Sudanese military forces in their fight against the main southern Sudan rebel group, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The relationship between the Government of Sudan and the LRA declined during the late 1990s. By 2002 the Government of Sudan was allowing the Ugandan army permission to attack LRA bases in border regions of Southern Sudan.^{332, 333, 334} After the signing of the Southern Sudan peace treaty in 2005, the LRA relocated its forces to the forests of Garamba National Park in the D.R.C.³³⁵

From 2006 to 2008, several rounds of peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government were held in the Southern Sudan capital city of Juba. Meanwhile, a large contingent of LRA forces remained in low profile in Garamba. By September 2008, the peace process had reached a dead end, ushering in a period of brutal raids against the nearby population. The D.R.C., Southern Sudan, and Uganda launched a joint military operation against LRA bases in Garamba in December 2008, continuing until March 2009. In retaliation, the LRA carried out massacres in several local villages, forcing thousands of local Congolese to seek refuge.³³⁶ Today, although the main force of the LRA is believed to be in the Central African Republic, autonomous LRA units continue to operate in northern D.R.C. and Southern Sudan.³³⁷



© Stein Ove Komeliusen
Soldiers of the Sudan People's Liberation Army

Terrorist Groups and Activity

Two organizations—the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR)—have been responsible for most of the terrorist attacks against D.R.C. civilian populations in recent years.³³⁸

³³² The New York Times. "Africa: Uganda Helicopter Gunships Kill 54 Rebels." 19 May 2004. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/19/world/world-briefing-africa-uganda-helicopter-gunships-kill-54-rebels.html>

³³³ The New York Times. Reuters. "Uganda Asks Sudan to Arrest Rebel Leader." 8 October 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/08/international/africa/08uganda.html> [retrieved 22 March 2010]

³³⁴ Small Arms Survey, Graduate Institute of International and Developmental Studies. Schomerus, Mareike. The Lord's Resistance Army in Sudan: A History and Overview [pp. 25–26]. <http://smallarmssurveysudan.org/pdfs/HSBA-SWP-8-LRA.pdf> [retrieved 22 March 2010]

³³⁵ AllAfrica.com. "Uganda: US Pushing for New Law Against LRA." 1 March 2010. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201003011361.html>

³³⁶ New Statesman. Rice, Xan. "We Are Killing in the Light of God." 29 October 2009. <http://www.newstatesman.com/international-politics/2009/11/kony-uganda-congo-lra-sudan>

³³⁷ IRIN. "Sudan: Southerners Still Besieged by Suspected LRA Fighters." 24 November 2009. <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=87173>

³³⁸ National Counterterrorism Center. "Worldwide Incidents Tracking System." 2010. <http://www.nctc.gov/>

LRA

The LRA was founded in 1987 as an ethnic Acholi-dominated movement calling for the overthrow of the Ugandan government.³³⁹ The LRA leaders suggest that they plan to install a new Ugandan government based on the Ten Commandments.³⁴⁰ The group is notorious for kidnapping children and forcing them into military service (one estimate puts the percentage of “recruits” at 80% children). Rape, torture, and a random approach to violence characterize the LRA attacks.³⁴¹ In October 2005, the International Criminal Court in The Hague indicted LRA leader Joseph Kony and four of his leading lieutenants (two now deceased) on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.³⁴² Recent reports have placed Kony in either the Central African Republic or the Darfur region of Sudan.^{343, 344}



© John & Melanie Kotsopoulos
Soldiers protecting people
from the LRA

FDLR

The FDLR is a successor group to the *Armée pour la Libération du Rwanda* (ALIR). This organization consists of former Rwandan Army personnel and members of the civilian *Interahamwe* militia and is held responsible for the genocide carried out against Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994. The ALIR fought in support of and received assistance from Laurent Kabila’s besieged government during the Second Congo War.³⁴⁵ (Ironically, many ALIR members had fought against Kabila’s Tutsi-dominated insurgency group *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo*, or AFDL, during the First Congo War just two years earlier.) ALIR members battled Rwandan- and Ugandan-aligned forces during the war, both as integrated units within the Congolese army and as a separate



Courtesy of Wikipedia.org
Congolese soldier new
the Rwandan border

³³⁹ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006*. “Chapter 6:—Terrorist Organizations.” 30 April 2007. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm>

³⁴⁰ Times Online. Farfar, Sam. “I Will Use the Ten Commandments to Liberate Uganda.” 28 June 2006. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article680339.ece>

³⁴¹ Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland. “Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA).” 1 March 2008. http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data/tops/terrorist_organization_profile.asp?id=3513

³⁴² Institute for War and Peace Reporting. Anderson, Janet. “World Court Faces Biggest Challenge.” 6 June 2006. http://www.iwpr.net/?p=acr&s=f&o=321675&apc_state=henh

³⁴³ Relief Web. Sudan Tribune. “Uganda’s Kony May Have Moved to Darfur, Museveni Says.” 13 March 2010. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MUMA-83H9AK?OpenDocument>

³⁴⁴ New York Times. Gettleman, Jeffrey. “Fleeing Rebels Kill Hundreds of Congolese.” 27 March 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/28/world/africa/28congo.html?pagewanted=1>

³⁴⁵ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. “Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 538].” 2005. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

guerrilla force operating in the eastern D.R.C.³⁴⁶ The latter group also carried out terrorist acts. Perhaps the most infamous of these was the 1999 murder of eight foreign tourists and a park warden in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, located in Uganda near the border with Nord Kivu Province.³⁴⁷

The creation of the FDLR in 2000 merged the two ALIR branches. The group's stated goal of overthrowing the current Rwandan government has gradually been superseded by lucrative business interests. Gold, tin, and coltan resources are mined in the Kivu provinces and have sustained FDLR's military operations. In March 2009, the Congolese Army (FARDC) began a military operation known as Kimia II. With MONUC's support, the operation's goal was to root out FDLR forces operating in the Kivus. Numerous reports soon emerged alleging that thousands of killings and rapes of the local civilian populations had been committed by both FDLR rebels and FARDC units.^{348, 349} More than 900,000 people in the Kivus were forced to flee their homes and villages as the violence escalated.^{350, 351}

In November 2009 the president of the FDLR, Ignace Murwanashyaka, and a top deputy were arrested in Germany on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.³⁵² A month later, the Kamia II campaign ended, only to be followed in February 2010 by another joint FARDC/MONUC operation in the Kivus against FDLR (Operation Amani Leo).

Issues Affecting Stability

Ethnic Conflict

Much of the fighting in the D.R.C. is tied to disputes between ethnic groups, often based on land use issues. For example, in the 1990s the eastern D.R.C. became embroiled in the Hutu-Tutsi conflict as refugees from



© Julien Hameis
Displaced kids in North Kivu

³⁴⁶ International Crisis Group. Africa Briefing, No. 25. "The Congo: Solving the FDLR Problem Once and For All [p. 2]." 12 May 2005.
http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/central_africa/b025_the_congo_solving_the_fdlr_problem_once_and_for_all.pdf

³⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Justice. "Justice Department Announces Indictment, Arrests of Three Rebel Group Members for Brutal Murders of Two American Tourists in Uganda." 3 March 2003.
http://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/2003/March/03_crm_131.htm

³⁴⁸ The Guardian. Tran, Mark. "UN Denies Complicity in Congo War Crimes." 11 November 2009.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/11/congo-un-rebels-rwanda-kimia>

³⁴⁹ Enough Project. "DR Congo: Civilian Cost of Military Operation Is Unacceptable." 13 October 2009.
<http://www.enoughproject.org/news/press-release-dr-congo-civilian-cost-military-operation-unacceptable>

³⁵⁰ The Guardian. Tran, Mark. "UN Denies Complicity in Congo War Crimes." 11 November 2009.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/11/congo-un-rebels-rwanda-kimia>

³⁵¹ Enough Project. "DR Congo: Civilian Cost of Military Operation Is Unacceptable." 13 October 2009.
<http://www.enoughproject.org/news/press-release-dr-congo-civilian-cost-military-operation-unacceptable>

³⁵² Christian Science Monitor. Delany, Max. "Germany Arrests Congo Rebel Leaders." 17 November 2009.
<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2009/1117/p01s01-woaf.html>

Rwanda and Burundi took up residence in camps in Nord Kivu and Sud Kivu. This influx exacerbated tensions between the native population of the Kivus—*autochtones*, or “natives,” as they described themselves—and the ethnic Rwandan population (Banyarwanda) that had been living in the Kivus for several generations. In some districts, the Banyarwanda controlled almost 60% of the land.³⁵³ Encouraged by local government leaders, *autochtone* resentments led to the creation of anti-Banyarwanda militias among *autochtone* groups such as the Babembe in Sud Kivu and the Hunde, Nande, and Nyanga in Nord Kivu.^{354, 355} Prior to the influx of Rwandan Hutu refugees into Nord Kivu, several of these *autochtone* militias had attacked Banyarwanda communities in the region.³⁵⁶

During the Second Congo War, disputes between Lendu agriculturalists and Hema pastoralists in the Ituri region of Orientale Province erupted in violence. Historically, the two groups had cooperated with each other, but the Belgian colonial policy toward the region created a favored status for the Hema that was challenged by the Lendu in 1999 after a perceived land grab by a small group of Hema.³⁵⁷ The Ugandan army and Ugandan-backed forces in control of Ituri during the Second Congo War were often at odds with one another and did not hesitate to arm and support either the Hema or the Lendu militias as proxy armies supporting their aims. Other ethnic groups in the Itiri region found themselves having to choose sides.³⁵⁸

Military Reform

Since the Congo Free State’s Force Publique brutally suppressed revolts by local populations, the Congo’s military has been viewed with suspicion and fear by the population. Today, the situation is not improved, as underpaid, undertrained forces continue to carry out human-rights abuses against local populations.³⁵⁹ The



© UN Photo/Marie Frechon
MONUC peacekeepers in the DRC

³⁵³ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. “Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [p. 529].” 2005. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

³⁵⁴ *The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair*. Meredith, Martin. “Chapter 28: Where Vultures Fly [pp. 528–529].” 2005. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

³⁵⁵ *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo*. Vlassenroot, Koen. “Land and Conflict: The Case of Masisi [p. 91].” Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press.

³⁵⁶ Refworld. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “The Geopolitical Situation in the Great Lakes Area in Light of the Kivu Crisis.” 1 February 1997.

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,WRITENET,,COD,,3ae6a6be0,0.html>

³⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch. *Covered in Blood: Ethnically Targeted Violence in Northern DRC*. “IV. Local Context—Armed Political Groups [p. 18].” July 2003. <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2003/07/07/covered-blood-0>

³⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch. *Covered in Blood: Ethnically Targeted Violence in Northern DRC*. “IV. Local Context—Armed Political Groups [p. 18].” July 2003. <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2003/07/07/covered-blood-0>

³⁵⁹ International Crisis Group. “Security Sector Reform in the Congo [p. 2].” 13 February 2006. http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/central_africa/104_security_sector_reform_in_the_congo.pdf

efficacy of FARDC as a fighting force has been severely questioned as well. In recent years, the D.R.C. government has had to resort to the use of outside forces, such as MONUC and the Rwandan and Ugandan armies, to bring the rampant violence in the eastern D.R.C. under control. There is strong concern both inside and outside the country that FARDC must be systematically improved to avoid disaster when MONUC eventually leaves the D.R.C. Reform measures must not only address institutional and military training issues, but also cover related matters such as improvements in equipment, training, elimination of corrupt payroll practices, and improvements in military justice.^{360,361}

Demographic Concerns

Besides its many other problems, the D.R.C. faces population and demographic pressures that will intensify the challenges the government faces to achieve security and to boost the economy. The current population growth rate is 3.21%, one of the highest in the world. As the nation's population rapidly increases, issues of land ownership and usage, that provoke many ethnic conflicts, will likely intensify. Even worse is the fact that nearly 47% of the D.R.C.'s population is under 15 years old, with the average age of 16.4 years.³⁶² (Only Mali, Niger, and Uganda have a lower average age among the world's nations.)³⁶³ As these children reach adulthood, they will face an economy that has few employment opportunities. While many countries of sub-Saharan Africa face similar challenges, the extensive and long-running conflicts in the heavily populated eastern D.R.C. over the last 15 years has only increased the problems. An entire generation has grown up experiencing displacement and the other ravages of war while having little to no access to education.³⁶⁴



© Julien Hamels
Children of the DRC

³⁶⁰ International Crisis Group. "Security Sector Reform in the Congo [pp. i-ii]." 13 February 2006. http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/central_africa/104_security_sector_reform_in_the_congo.pdf

³⁶¹ Alert Net. Reuters. Hubert, Thomas. "Analysis—Congo Military Reform Needs More Money, Coordination." 23 December 2009. <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/LDE5BM0J4.htm>

³⁶² Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Congo, Democratic Republic of the." 4 March 2010. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html>

³⁶³ Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*. "Field Listing: Median Age." 2010. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2177.html>

³⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch. "Letters From Parents in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to the UN Security Council." 22 April 2009. <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/04/22/letter-parents-eastern-democratic-republic-congo-un-security-council>

Looking Forward

While much of the D.R.C. is currently conflict free, the overall security situation within the nation can best be described as “fragile.” Economic conditions remain dire for much of the nation’s population, creating circumstances ripe for exploitation by groups wishing to use violent means to achieve their aims. Corruption, although no longer unofficially sanctioned by the



© Aubrey Graham / IRIN
Camp in North Kivu

government as in the Mobutu era, remains an obstinate problem. Several areas in the eastern part of the nation—in particular, Nord Kivu, Sud Kivu, and Orientale Provinces—are still being terrorized by rebel militias and renegade governmental forces. The inhumane actions by these rebel militias, such as the use of rape as a weapon of war, has tainted the D.R.C.’s image in the world press.^{365, 366} In addition, the continuing conflict in the eastern D.R.C. has created a massive population of refugees, displaced within the D.R.C. or living in refugee camps in neighboring countries. Progress will need to be made on all these fronts if the D.R.C. is to achieve a lasting sense of stability and security.

Self Study Questions:

With morale low and training marginal, the Congolese armed forces generally have not performed well when forced to defend against external invaders. True or False?

Much of the security burden in the eastern D.R.C. has fallen upon the soldiers of MONUC. True or False?

Rwanda’s active role in both Congo Wars has strained relations between the two nations. True or False?

The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) has peacefully worked to defend civilian populations. True or False?

Much of the fighting in the D.R.C. is at least partly tied to disputes between ethnic groups. True or False?

³⁶⁵ The Washington Post. McCrummen, Stephanie. “Congo’s Rape Epidemic Worsens During U.S.–Backed Military Operation.” 10 August 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/08/10/AR2009081000492.html>

³⁶⁶ HBO. “The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo.” 2010. <http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/the-greatest-silence-rape-in-the-congo/index.html>

Further Reading

A Bend in the River. Naipul, V. S. 1989 (originally published 1979). New York: Random House (fiction)

Blood River: The Terrifying Journey Through the World's Most Dangerous Country. Butcher, Tim. 2008. New York: Grove Press

The Catastrophist: A Novel. Bennett, Roman. 1997. New York: Simon & Schuster (fiction)

Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo. Vlassenroot, Koen; and Timothy Raeymaekers, Eds. 2004. Ghent, Belgium: Academia Press

Congo: Democratic Republic – Republic. Horison, Sean. 2008. Chalfont St. Peter, Engl: Bradt Travel Guides

The Congo From Leopold to Matila: A People's History. Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. 2002. London/New York: Zed Books

Culture and Customs of the Congo. Mukenge, Tshilemalema. 2002. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press

Cultures of the World: Democratic Republic of the Congo. Heale, Jay. 1999. Tarrytown, N.Y: Marshall Cavendish

Democratic Republic of Congo in Pictures. DiPiazza, Francesca Davis. 2008. Minneapolis, Minn: Twenty-First Century Books (Lerner Publishing)

The Fate of Africa: From the Hopes of Freedom to the Heart of Despair. Meredith, Martin. "Chapter 6. Heart of Darkness [pp. 93-115] and Chapter 28. Where Vultures Fly [pp. 524-544]." 2005. New York: Public Affairs

Full Circle. Yamusangie, Frederick. 2003. Lincoln, Nebr: iUniverse (fiction)

Heart of Darkness. Conrad, Joseph. 1995 (originally published 1902). London: Penguin Books (fiction)

The History of Congo. Gondola, Ch. Didier. 2002. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press

In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in Mobutu's Congo. Wrong, Michela. 2001. New York: HarperCollins

King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa. Hochschild, Adam. 1998. New York: Mariner Books

The Poisonwood Bible. Kingsolver, Barbara. 1998. New York: HarperCollins (fiction)

The Troubled Heart of Africa: A History of the Congo. Edgerton, Robert B. 2002. New York: St. Martin's Press

Zaire: A Country Study. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress. 1994. Washington, D.C: U.S. Government Printing Office

Appendix A: Answers to Self Study Questions

The Congo Basin is a westward-sloping lowland area through which the Congo River and its tributaries flow.

True: The Congo River and its tributaries all flow through the westward-sloping lowland area that forms the Congo Basin. Within the basin is the world's second largest rain forest, an area that comprises 70% of Africa's plant cover. Nearly 60% of the total area of the Congo Basin lies within the D.R.C.

The flow at the mouth of the Congo River fluctuates little during the course of the year.

True: When compared to the high-flow and low-flow seasons of the world's other major rivers, the flow at the mouth of the Congo River fluctuates little during the course of the year. The Congo Basin straddles both sides of the equator, and the tributaries entering the river from the north and from the south flow through regions that have opposite rainfall patterns.

Two sources of the Congo River can be identified.

True: Two sources of the Congo River can be identified. One is the Chambeshi River, which rises in the highlands of Zambia south of Lake Tanganyika. By the measure of the longest distance from the Congo River's mouth, this is the tributary where the flow to the Congo begins. However, as measured by greatest amount of water flow, the Lualaba River, which begins in the southern highlands of the D.R.C., is the Congo's initial tributary.

Kinshasa was originally named Brazzaville.

False: The D.R.C.'s capital and largest city, Kinshasa lies on the Congo River, directly across the Malebo Pool from Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo. Kinshasa was established as a trading post in 1881 by Welsh-born explorer/journalist Henry Morton Stanley, who named it Léopoldville after his employer at the time, King Leopold II of Belgium.

Most of the deforestation in the D.R.C. is caused by refugees.

False: Most of the forest loss occurs as a result of subsistence activities, such as slash-and-burn agriculture and using wood as fuel. The warfare of the 1990s and 2000s has also taken a toll on the forest lands. Hundreds of thousands of people from villages and cities have, at various times, been forced to flee through the forests on their way to refugee sites, causing damage to vegetation and disrupting wildlife.

The Kongo kingdom was not the first large-scale state to emerge in the Congo region.

False: The first large-scale state to emerge in the Congo region was the Kongo kingdom. According to oral accounts, the origins of the Kongo kingdom lay in the late 14th century. Two leaders of small tribal states in the lower Congo River region agreed to a coalition

that would eventually incorporate several other small states to the south (in modern-day Angola).

King Leopold II of Belgium authorized Henry Morton Stanley to establish trading stations and acquire lands along the Congo River.

True: Stanley was put on a five-year retainer by Leopold to establish trading stations and acquire lands along the Congo River. After overseeing the difficult construction of a road leading from the Congo River estuary to Malebo Pool, Stanley traveled by steamboat up the Congo River. By 1884 he had negotiated treaties on behalf of the International Association of the Congo (controlled by Leopold) with more than 450 Congo Basin chieftains.

After independence, the vast majority of Europeans fled the larger cities of the Congo.

True: After independence, the vast majority of Europeans from the larger cities fled the Congo to escape marauding soldiers and policemen. In the southern part of the country, the mineral-rich province of Katanga seceded from the Congo, as did the southern part of Kasai province (The latter secession would prove to be short lived).

Soon after overthrowing Lumumba, Mobutu took on all executive powers in the Congolese government.

False Soon after overthrowing Lumumba in 1960, Mobutu took a behind-the-scenes role within the weak Congolese government. Mobutu retained his power base in the military until 1965, when he staged another coup. This time, all executive powers were transferred to Mobutu, and he retained those powers for the next 32 years.

The First Congo War ended when Kabila and the AFDL forces entered Kinshasa.

True: A Tutsi “liberation movement,” the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), invaded eastern Zaire and rapidly advanced westward. The AFDL was a Rwandan- and Ugandan-backed rebel organization fronted by Zairian Laurent- Désiré Kabila, a former small-time warlord who had briefly dabbled in leftist rebellions during the 1960s. Kabila and the AFDL forces entered Kinshasa in May 1997, meeting no real resistance, and thus ending what is now referred to as the First Congo War.

The agricultural sector is the most important part of the Congo economy.

True: Agriculture remains the most important sector in the economy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.). Its overall contribution to the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP) has been declining in recent years. In 2007, the last year in which reliable data are available, agriculture (a category that also includes forestry, fishing, livestock, and hunting), accounted for 38.5– 41% of the D.R.C.’s GDP.

Roughly one quarter of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (D.R.C.'s) GDP is generated by the industrial sector.

True: From 26–27% of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (D.R.C.'s) GDP is generated by the industrial sector (which includes mining, manufacturing, construction, and hydroelectric power generation). More than half of the D.R.C.'s industrial production comes from mining, owing to the nation's vast reserves of mineral resources.

The D.R.C.'s exports do not include many mineral commodities.

False: The D.R.C.'s exports are mineral commodities, and thus the nation's overall trade balance is very sensitive to worldwide fluctuations in demand (and prices) for these commodities. Legal exports of some minerals have been hampered by the ongoing conflict in ore-bearing regions.

To the northwest of Katanga are rich deposits of industrial quality diamonds.

True: To the northwest of Katanga, the Kasai-Oriental and Kasai-Occidental Provinces are rich in deposits of industrial quality diamonds, most of which are presently extracted by artisanal (small-scale) miners. Several gold artisanal mines are under the control of rebel militias or governmental military forces.

Many of the D.R.C.'s numerous rivers have long navigable stretches.

True: Although there is no continuous navigable stretch between Kinshasa and the mineral-rich areas of Katanga Province, many of the D.R.C.'s numerous rivers have long navigable stretches. The most important port cities are Kinshasa and Kisangani, on opposite ends of the Congo River's longest navigable stretch. Ilebo, located on the Kasai River is the site of a railhead (the end of a railway line that links to another mode of transport) leading to Lubumbashi in southern Katanga Province.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to as many as 250 different ethnic groups.

True: The Democratic Republic of the Congo is home to as many as 250 different ethnic groups. Most of these, including virtually all that live south of the equator, speak languages of the Bantu family. Among the largest of the Bantu ethnic groups are the Mongo (also known as Ngundu), who live in the central Congo River Basin. These people trace their lineage to an ancient ancestor named Mongo.

On the eastern side of the D.R.C., French is the most commonly spoken language.

False: On the eastern side of the D.R.C.—in an area that includes all of Katanga, Maniema, Sud-Kivu, and Nord-Kivu Provinces, and the southern portions of Orientale Province—Kiswahili is the most commonly spoken language. Kiswahili has been spoken here since the era of the Arab-African ivory and slave traders, who introduced the language to the region when they arrived from their Indian Ocean coastal enclaves. French is used extensively in government, the formal business sector, and education.

Indigenous beliefs, stories, and traditions have permeated all the churches within the D.R.C.

True: Indigenous beliefs, stories, and traditions have permeated all the churches within the D.R.C., even including the Roman Catholic Church. The Jamaa movement within the Catholic Church, for example, emerged during the 1950s and employs African fables, myths, and animal stories to help illustrate Christian values and establish emotional connections with God, focusing on a search for the three central human values of life wholeness, fecundity, and mutual love.

In the D.R.C., the most common staple food is cassava, a starchy tuber that is often boiled and then pounded into a dense mash (*fufu*).

True: The most common staple food in the D.R.C. is cassava, a starchy tuber that is often boiled and then pounded into a dense mash (*fufu*). It is often eaten with a sauce, enriched with vegetables, meat, and fish if available. Maize and rice are also used as staple foods, although the latter is generally more expensive because most rice in the D.R.C. is imported.

Congolese music has not become popular outside of Africa.

False: Congolese music is widely popular throughout Africa and, with the growing popularity of World Music, in Europe and other continents as well. The nation's characteristic music is often called *soukous* outside the D.R.C. Such a term is today applied so broadly as to characterize any form of music being created by D.R.C. musicians.

With morale low and training marginal, the Congolese armed forces generally have not performed well when forced to defend against external invaders.

True: The Congolese armed forces generally have not performed well when forced to defend against external invaders. In 1977 and 1978, for example, two invasions of Shaba (Katanga) Province by Angola-based Katangese rebel forces faced little or no resistance from Zairean (D.R.C.) forces and were only put down after supporting troops from other countries intervened. A similar lack of resistance occurred once more in 1996 when the forces led by Laurent Kabila invaded from Rwanda.

Much of the security burden in the eastern D.R.C. has fallen upon the soldiers of MONUC.

True: Much of the security burden in the eastern D.R.C. has fallen upon the soldiers of the Mission of the United Nations Organization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo*), usually referred to by the acronym MONUC. At the start of 2010, MONUC was the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world.

Rwanda's active role in both Congo Wars has strained relations between the two nations.

True: Rwanda's active role in both Congo Wars has strained relations between the two nations, although relations have significantly thawed since early 2009. In August of that year, Presidents Kabila of the D.R.C. and Kagame of Rwanda held bilateral talks for the first time since Kabila came to power in 2001. After the meeting, formal ties between the two nations were restored.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has peacefully worked to defend civilian populations.

False: The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is one of two organizations that have been responsible for most of the terrorist attacks against D.R.C. civilian populations in recent years. The group is notorious for kidnapping children and forcing them into military service. (One estimate puts the percentage of "recruits" at 80% children.) Rape, torture, and a seemingly random approach to violence characterize the LRA attacks.

Much of the fighting in the D.R.C. is at least partly tied to disputes between ethnic groups.

True: Much of the fighting in the D.R.C. is at least partly tied to disputes between ethnic groups, which in turn are often based on issues tied to land use. For example, the eastern D.R.C. became embroiled in the Hutu-Tutsi conflict as refugees from Rwanda and Burundi took up residence in camps in Nord Kivu and Sud Kivu. This influx exacerbated a preexisting tension between the native population of the Kivus and the ethnic Rwandan population.