Contemporary History of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a Perspective on the Great Lakes Region[1]

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Abstract:

The Great Lakes region in Africa is an ethnic-geopolitical "hornet's nest" burdened with serious problems at the meeting of several worlds. The three francophone countries that emerged in the former Belgian (or in the case of Rwanda and Burundi, German for a few decades before) colonial territories are usually classified by some divisions as part of the Central African region, which also includes Chad, the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Other groupings – such as this analysis – refer to them as francophone states of the African Great Lakes subregion, alongside Anglo-Saxon Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. We are convinced that the common or similar historical past also justifies this latter division. In the Great Lakes region, we can speak of 3 historical and one artificial state formation: the conglomerate of provinces that make up the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Congo-Kinshasa, the former Zaire, and the Belgian Congo), Rwanda, and Burundi all have historical precedents, in a given core area. While Uganda was artificially created by the British colonialists in 1896 by separating it from Tanzania and adding several other territories.

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I.1. Geopolitical Framework: The DRC, the Great Powers and the UN

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the 11th largest country in the world and the largest in Africa, with an area of 2,345,410 km^2, about the size of 4 Frances, and a population of over 105 million. Its capital, Kinshasa (founded by Henry Morton Stanley as Léopoldville between 1881 and 1961), is the third largest city in Africa with a population of 17 million and is also the largest francophone agglomeration in the world.[3] The DRC is the most populous francophone state, ahead of France. Its official language is French, which is spoken by three-quarters of the country's population (typically as a second or third language), but only about half, 42.5 million people, can read and write. The four most important so-called national languages are Swahili (22.26 million, mainly in the east), Lingala (14.43, in the northwest), Tshiluba (6.4, Kasaï province), and Kituba[4] (4.55, in the southwest). In total, more than 250 languages are spoken in the country.

The country's borders were drawn in the Treaty of Berlin in 1885, following natural boundaries except for the southern Angolan border. Its territory is covered by the Congo River (formerly known as Zaïre, which is also the name of a neighboring Angolan province) and its watershed, half of which is covered by equatorial rainforest. The plateaus of Shaba province are fertile savannas, and the eastern Kivu province is fertile volcanic soil, but in recent decades they have been losing their fertility. The people live mainly in villages, concentrated in the eastern half of the country.

The Bantu people arrived in the DRC in several waves between 2000 and 500 BC. The people first settled in the south and along the rivers, avoiding the dense forests. They practiced extensive agriculture, which required more and more deforestation every year. By around 1000 AD, the entire country was populated, the main crop was yam, and pottery was developed.

Four major kingdoms emerged in the (southern) DRC throughout history: the Kingdom of Kongo, 1390-1914; the Kingdom of Kuba, 1625-1904; the Lunda or Mwata Yamvo Kingdom, 1665-1887; and the Luba Kingdom, 1585-1889. Also worth mentioning is the short-lived Yeke Kingdom (1856-1891), also known as *Garanganze* or *M`Siri*. These smaller and larger, mostly prosperous merchant states with different organizational and state structures (federative, confederal) were established in the savannah-like southern areas of the DRC and mostly extended beyond the southern borders of today's DRC (Murray 2003, 166-167).

The Kingdom of Kongo developed along the left bank of the Congo River, roughly from the present-day capital Kinshasa to the Gulf of Guinea, in the area of Cabinda in Congo, including the southern corner of Gabon and the northwestern tip of Angola to Luanda in the south. Its capital was São Salvador (present-day Mbanza Kongo in

[3] Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo, is located on the other side of the Congo river, making them the two closest capitals in the world. (Magnan 2017)
[4] Or kikongo (a name mainly used in Brazzaville-Congo). (Les Quatres… 2020)

Angola). The kingdom essentially functioned as a unit of federalized entities, under a central administration. It engaged in advanced trade in ivory, copper, gold, raffia clothing, and pottery. It was a vassal of the Angolan kingdom of Ndongo (or Angola). In 1518, Angola sought Portuguese help to gain independence from Kongo but was driven out by the Portuguese in 1520. The Portuguese tried again in 1556, but Paulo Dias de Novais failed again in 1564 (Batsîkama 2010, Fauvelle – Surun 2019, 40-41).

The Kingdom of Kuba was founded in the southern part of the DRC, in the West Kasaï province, with its center in Mushenge. This kingdom was organized on a confederal basis under the dominance of the Kuba people. This royal clan included nearly 20 different Bantu ethnic groups, including the states of the Luba, Leele, Pende, Dengese and Wong. Shyaam a-Mbul founded the Kingdom of Kuba, and according to legend, he introduced the cultivation of many crops - cassava root, beans, tobacco, etc. - to the area. Since this area had no access to the sea it was not affected by the institution of the slave trade (unlike neighboring Congo). The kingdom declined in the 19th century after the Luba invasion, the Belgians first set foot here in 1884 and then annexed it in 1904. Although the area fell to tribal chiefdoms, it put up a stubborn resistance, so the Belgians tried to break the population with increasingly cruel methods (Obenga 1974).

The Lunda or Mwata Yamvo kingdom extended to the southwestern part of the Katanga region of the DRC, as well as to northeastern Angola and northwestern Zambia. The word Lunda itself means alliance, friendship, and was headed by an emperor or empress, the Numi, and then from 1660 by Mwant Yav, who was appointed by the council of nobles. Mwata Yamvo or Mwant Yav (1660-1675) is considered the first Lunda ruler at the head of the confederation of Lunda tribes, whose territory originally extended to southern Katanga. His name became a royal title, and the kingdom operated on the basis of customary law (*royaume coutimier*). It fell to the Belgian conquest in 1887 (Margarido 1969).

The Luba kingdom extended to the other, northern half of Katanga, as well as to the provinces of East and West Kasaï and Maniema in the north as far as Kasongo, to Kolwezi in the south, and to Lake Tanganyika in the east, and had several capitals. Unlike the other kingdoms, it was a centralized, despotic Bantu state, with the ruling class constantly fighting each other for power, despite blood succession. At the same time, the ruler could even be replaced by his own half-brother. Each ruler chose a new capital for himself. The fate of the Luba kingdom was sealed by long-distance trade. Around 1870-80, East African traders began to obtain ivory and slaves from the Central African savannahs. The demand for slaves also accelerated Belgian colonial efforts, and the empire was divided in 1889 due to internal strife and easily fell into the hands of the Belgians (Anthoine 1996).

In summary, it can be said that throughout history, in the savannah-like southern areas of the DRC, smaller and larger, mostly prosperous merchant states with different organizational structures and state structures (federal, confederal) were established, most of which extended territorially beyond the southern borders of today's DRC.

I.2. The Portuguese Conquest

The first European (Portuguese) explorer, Diogo Cão, appeared in the region in 1482, and in 1489 he signed agreements with the Kingdom of Kongo on an equal footing. Two years later, the king of the Bakongo was baptized, taking the name Joao I. However, the king's religious zeal did not last long, and he soon became an apostate due to the prohibition of polygamy. In 1505, missionaries and slave traders began to colonize the area. During the reign of Joao's son, Alfonso I (1506-1560), an era of prosperity began, the slave trade developed, and the royal power used Christianity to fight witchcraft. When the Portuguese founded the colony of Luanda in Angola in 1575, cassava root appeared in the diet. In the 1700s, the Kongo kingdom slowly began to disappear, while the ivory and the slave trade (Slave Coast; parts of modern-day Togo, Benin, and Nigeria) along the rivers continued to grow. From the region, 4-6,000 slaves were transported to the Americas annually, by 1780 this number had increased to 15,000. In many cases, poor parents sold their children themselves. Kinshasa also emerged as a trading city.

Before the Belgian colonization, it is worth mentioning the short-lived *Yeke Kingdom* (1856-1891), also known as *Garanganze* or *M`Siri*. King Msiri established the most powerful Central African kingdom in the Katanga region, covering an area of about 500.000 km^2. This kingdom controlled the only east-west trade route in the middle of the continent, as the Kalahari Desert and the Lozi Kingdom in the south and the tropical rainforest in the north blocked access. Msiri traded in Katanga copper, slaves and ivory, mainly in exchange for gunpowder and firearms. He had alliances and marriages with the major trading states of the region (e.g. the Sultanate of Zanzibar). A race for the territory began at the end of the 19th century: The Belgian King Charles II King Leopold, hoping for gold, offered a treaty, offering to join the Congo Free State. Cecil Rhodes' expedition sought to acquire the territory for the British South Africa Company. The "Katanga Race" was won by the expedition of Canadian William Stairs (1891–92), who arrived in the territory in the service of Leopold II. He killed Msiri and administered the territory himself until it was annexed to the Belgian Congo (Legros 1996).

Meanwhile, the French colonized the Brazzaville-Congo region on the other side of the Congo River. The Englishman H. M. Stanley, who had quarreled with the British and also entered the Belgian service, mapped the eastern part of the Congo River, concluded treaties with about 450 tribes, and in 1877 crossed the equatorial rainforest. He represented Leopold II for five years. During this time, he made 2.5 million km2 of territory (and its workforce) - namely Zaïre, Rwanda and Burundi - the sole property of the king. Belgian colonization officially increased the property of the king and not the country, Belgium. He began building a 200-kilometer path along the waterfalls to Stanley Pool (now Malebo Pool) - from this point (near Kinshasa) the Congo River can be navigable all the way down to the ocean. Many of the natives who were forced to work lost their lives. Stanley's brutal methods earned him the nickname *Bula Matari* "the Rock Splitter" in England. In 1884, he renamed Kinshasa Léopoldville, which became the capital of Léopold-Congo (Congo Free State). In 1879, Léopold created the AIC

(Association internationale du Congo,) the *International Association of the Congo*[5], which served as a front for his efforts. Then, at the Congress of Berlin on 15 November 1884, Léopold II officially acquired the Congo territory, supposedly to promote its development. In 1897, the entire territory officially became the Society's territory.

On August 20, 1908, the Belgians annexed the Congo, and the Belgian Congo was created, which officially existed until 1960. The inhumane forced labor conditions maintained by the colonizers were revealed, which (death, disease, emigration) claimed 5 million victims since 1885. Between 1908-10, the situation improved somewhat with social and administrative reforms (Gerencsér 1998, 428-429). The balance of colonialism between 1908-50 meant 26 million gold francs in revenue and 235 million gold francs in expenditure for Belgium, in 1950 this amounted to 7 billion gold francs, 10% of the budget. The other side of the coin is that the accusation that Belgium simply plundered the DRC is not valid. Significant infrastructure investments were made (roads, bridges, railways, ports) and church missions played a significant role in the field of education (Lugan 2020, 1075-1076). In any case, in 1955, Congo declared bankruptcy. Between 1920 and 1950, religiously based independence movements were established, mainly among the peasants, but these were still liquidated. Joseph Kasavubu (or Kasa-Vubu) became the leader of the *Bakongo Party*, which had been established two years earlier, in 1955. In 1958, Patrice Lumumba's *Congolese National Movement* (MNC) was established, and then the *African Solidarity Party* (PSA) under the leadership of Antoine Gizenga.

I.3. Independence and Chaos (1960-65)

On 30 June 1960, the Belgian Congo became independent as Zaïre. Kasavubu became president and Lumumba prime minister. Almost immediately, on 5 July, the Public Force (*Force publique*, FP), the Congolese professional army, mutinied, and a civil war began that lasted until 1965. The soldiers mutinied because they saw their situation as precarious, having to salute from one day to the next, the president and vice-president, whom they had previously imprisoned (Ndaywel 1997).

On 11 July 1960, Katanga, led by Moïse Tshombé declared independence. (Tshombé was supported by the French, who hoped that their ally would provide them with access to rich mineral resources.) The country sought help from the United Nations and the United States. On July 14, 1960, the UN deployed 19,828 troops to the region as part of the ONUC[6] mission to ensure the withdrawal of Belgian troops, restore order and, in any case, maintain the unity of the country.

The process of secession continued: in August 1960, the Luba Albert Kalondji broke with Lumumba and declared the independence of the South Kasaï province. Then, on August 25, he entered into a confederation with Katanga. The new confederation

[5] Or International Congo Society

[6] United Nations Organisation in the Congo (*Organisation des Nations unies au Congo*, 1960-63) after United Nations Operation in the Congo (*Opération des Nations unies au Congo*) until 30 June 1964.

owned the lion's share of country's mineral resources, putting the central government in an impossible position.

Power in the country was thus held by 3 centers at that time:

- The central government was represented by Kasavubu in Léopoldville (Kinshasa), supported by the UN and Western countries.
- Gizenga's Lumumbist government in Stanleyville (Kisangani) in the eastern region was supported by the Soviet Union: it was not internationally recognized.
- Tshombé's Katanga government in Élisabethville[7] (Lubumbashi) was supported by France, which was also not internationally recognized.

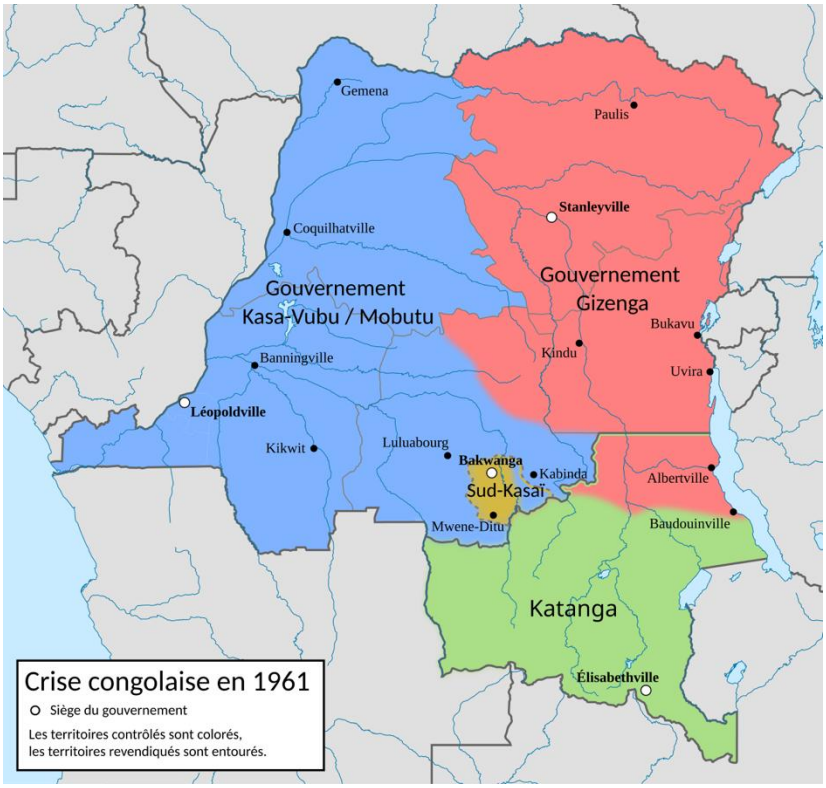


Figure 1: The Map of Congo in 1961 (Congo Crisis). Source: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:Map_Congo_crisis_1961.svg (in blue, the Léopoldville government, in red, the rebel government based in Stanleyville, in yellow, autonomous Kasaï, in green, independent Katanga)

The negotiations took place within the framework of the UN, with Secretaries-General Dag Hammarskjöld and U Thant negotiating with Tshombé. According to the official version on 18 September 1961, Dag Hammarskjöld's plane exploded[8] over Northern

[7] Or Elisabethstadt, Élisabeth Gabrielle Valérie Marie de Wittelsbach, the third Queen of the Belgians from 1909 to 1934.

[8] Research, which has been intensifying since the late 1990s, suggests that it was an assassination. There are several versions, either a Belgian mercenary Jan van Risseghem or a German mercenary Heinrich Schafer shot down the plane with a machine gun from an armed DO-28. We consider all of this to be conceivable, political leaders are still advised not to travel by plane in Africa, the number of assassinations

Rhodesia (today's Zambia). Prime *Minister* Lumumba launched a military attack on the breakaway regions. The army killed Luba civilians, and Lumumba became known as the "*Killer of the Lubas of Kasa*". Kasavubu then resigned as PM and handed him over to the Katangans. Luba soldiers killed him in revenge on 17 January 1961.

Upon news of Lumumba's execution, Lumumbist uprisings immediately broke out in the west, east, North Katanga, Maniema and Kivu. The People's Republic of the Congo (PRC) was proclaimed in Stanleyville (Kisangani Province). In Katanga, however, the UN successfully fought against the Katanga gendarmerie, which was overseen by a handful of French mercenaries, and by February 1963 Tshombé had been forced into exile in Spain (Lugan 2020. 1437-1440).

The country descended into anarchy, the opposition, the CNL (National Liberation Council, actively supported by China), was forced to exile to neighboring Congo-Brazzaville, and the army was unable to handle the situation. In the end, the paradoxical situation arose that both the CNL and the army concluded that the separatist Tshombé had to be recalled in order to restore the country's unity. So, on July 6, 1964, President Kasavubu entrusted him with forming a government. In November, all hell broke loose in the DRC, and the militias, drugged and drunk on palm wine, began pogroms against the local and European population. Belgium (in alliance with the United States) was forced to intervene.

To free the European prisoners, paratroopers were dropped in Stanleyville on 23-24 November 1964 as part of Operation *Dragon Rouge* (Red Dragon), after receiving official authorization from Prime Minister Tshombe. Until the last moment, the participants believed that they were going to a NATO military exercise in the Mediterranean. Among other things, using 12 C-130 military transport aircraft received from the US for this purpose and arriving from Evreux (France) 320 commandos freed the Europeans held captive by the Simba rebels in the Hôtel Victoria in Stanleyville. On the night of 25–26 November, during *Operation Dragon Noir* (Black Dragon), 250 more hostages were successfully rescued 400 km away in Paulis (now Isiro), for a total of 2,375 people, significantly increasing the reputation of the Belgian Para-Commando Regiment (Opération Dragon… 2014). In June 1965, Tshombé's party, CONACO (Congolese National Convention), won the elections, but Kasavubu resigned on 15 October and was forced to go into exile in Spain again.

I.4. The Mobutu Regime (1965-1997): the Second Republic (1965-1990)

In November 1965, General Mobutu Sese Seko (born Joseph-Désiré Mobutu) (with American support) gained control of the entire country, combining the powers of president and prime minister in one person. He made Lumumba a national hero, cynically presenting himself as the martyr's successor and the sole executor of his program (Benkes 2004, 12). Washington, Brussels and Paris saw in him a loyal local

and mysterious accidents is significant – and this can only be partly attributed to the very poor condition of the African aircraft fleet.

strongman who could restore order in the country. At that time, Zaïre's level of development was comparable to that of South Korea, while by 1996 it was already one of the poorest countries in the world. Meanwhile, Mobutu had become one of the ten richest people in the world, thanks to the fact that the income from gold and diamond mining increased the president's personal wealth. The diamond fields of Kasai were in the hands of the vassals of Mobutu's son Kongolu, mostly Lebanese, and Kinshasa, where the diamonds were bought for cash, became a place to launder money from the drug trade (Verschave 1998, 227-229).

In July 1967, Paris wanted to play its only card and commissioned the mercenary Bob Denard to take advantage of the uprisings to somehow overthrow Mobutu and install Tshombe in his place (Bat 2015), who was sentenced to death by a Congolese court in March of that year. As far as it can be reconstructed from the scraps of information and contradictory literature, it was not in the United States' interest to overthrow Mobutu and perhaps a race began between the American and French services. Tshombe's plane from Ibiza to Spain was hijacked by a certain Francis Bodenan (a CIA agent) and forced to land in Algeria by Houari Boumédiène. But the Algerian President did not hand him over to Kinshasa, he was imprisoned and died in 1969 - officially of heart failure (Maurin 2021, 644).[9]

In 1969, when Georges Pompidou came to power, there was a rapprochement with the French again. In 1971, Mobutu changed the name of the country to Zaïre, in the spirit of the 3 Z policy (the new currency was also named after the river). In 1972, an "originality campaign" was launched, and Christian names had to be changed back to African ones. (It was then that he also took the name Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa Za Banga[10]). Mobutu placed foreign companies and farms in the hands of the young national bourgeoisie and imposed a 50 percent state share in all new mining enterprises. Many investments were unfinished, state spending increased, and the budget deficit ballooned. In addition to the lack of expertise, nepotism, corruption, and the one-sided development that forced the copper sector, the plantations deteriorated catastrophically, and the production of the processing industry companies declined (Balázs 2001, 164).

In 1977, the Katanga Tigers, with the support of Angolan troops, flooded the Shaba region (formerly Katanga). The background to this situation is that many of them had fled to Angola as former soldiers of Tshombé, where they became members of the Portuguese army, and then began to return after Angola gained independence in 1975. Meanwhile, the DRC (Katanga) became the back base of the Angolan independence movement, supporting Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, founded in 1966. All this also disturbed the circles of the Soviet Union and Cuba, which were allies of Angola. In 1977, Mobutu received, in addition to the help of the French air force (*Opération Verveine*, verbena),

[9] According to Maurin, Bodenan was a double (French and CIA) agent. We, however, believe that it was not in France's interest to hijack Tshombé's plane or to "take it out of circulation" in Algeria. In light of Denard's mandate, this does not seem logical.

[10] meaning: (Mobutu) the warrior who goes from victory to victory and no one can stop him

1,000 Moroccan military assistance to settle the situation and repelled the first attack (Türke 2021, 214). The Shaba-Katanga province itself produced 15,000 tons of cobalt and 450,000 tons of copper at that time, accounting for 75% of the DRC's GNP. A year later, on May 14, 1978, rebels from Angola, supported by East German experts and Cuban soldiers from the Texeira de Sousa base, took 2,000 Europeans hostage in Kolwezi, including 6 French military experts. They then began the systematic murder of the prisoners. On May 19-20, around 600 French (and Belgian) paratroopers - as part of *Operation Leopard* - not only freed the hostages and retook the city but also ensured France's military influence in the country for the long term.

In 1982, after long years in prison, Etienne Tshisekedi secretly founded his party, the UDPS (Union for Democracy and Social Progress). Tshisekedi had previously criticized Mobutu's regime several times and had sent a memorandum to the president calling for the elimination of bad governance. Between 1986 and 1995, clashes between the ALC (Armée de Liberation Congolese) and the army became regular in the Ruwenzori Mountains. On 17 January 1988, the UDPS dared to hold its first public demonstration in Kinshasa, but it was dispersed by security forces, resulting in six deaths. Tshisekedi was arrested again and sentenced to psychiatric treatment.

Alarmed by the changes that had taken place since the end of the Cold War, Mobutu called a national consultation for all of Zaire on 24 January 1990. On 24 April he announced the end of the Second Republic and a democratic transition, allowing a multi-party system and the establishment of a one-year transitional government, followed by free elections. But a student revolt on the Lubumbashi Campus in May, due to the poor economic situation, was brutally suppressed (500 dead), leaving Mobutu internationally isolated. In September 1991, soldiers also revolted over unpaid wages and began looting. Belgium and France also evacuated their citizens due to the unrest. Following the pattern used earlier, they again tried to "clean up the mess" by putting the opposition in a position and shifting responsibility for the consequences: On 15 August 1992, at the height of the economic collapse, Etienne Tshisekedi was appointed Prime Minister, but Mobutu resigned in March of the following year. Ethnic riots broke out in the provinces of Kivu and Shaba and on the Rwandan border, and the following year, 1 million Hutu refugees migrated to Zaïre in connection with the events in Rwanda.

International interest in the DRC temporarily declined with the end of the Cold War. However, the antecedents of the French "rehabilitation" of Mobutu date back to 1990, when a 1,500-strong presidential special detachment, together with France and Habyarimana's army, carried out a military operation in Rwanda to eliminate the RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) (Türke 2022). The amount of financial assistance provided to refugees in eastern Zaïre reached 2.5 billion dollars, equivalent to Rwanda's GNP. However, according to HRW, President Mobutu's half-brother, who was responsible for land distribution, and *Hutu Power*, which controlled food distribution, embezzled a significant portion of the money (Rwanda/Zaïre… 1995). The militias were partly financed by the sale of humanitarian aid.

Although French President Mitterrand agreed on 16 October 1993 to receive General Mobutu at a Francophone summit in Mauritius, the Zairean president's actual rehabilitation did not begin until April 1994, in the midst of the Rwandan massacre. According to some, the president became an important figure in the fight against Pan-African aspirations and against the "evil Anglo-Saxon axis" represented by Yoweri Museveni, the Ugandan leader allied with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) (Verschave 1998, 243-244 and 231-232).

The reason for Mobutu's rehabilitation was thus clear: his task was to provide a rearguard in Zaïre during the war against Rwanda (1994, *Turquoise*). What were the results of the situation created by French policy? (Türke 2016, 58-59)

Mobutu allowed the French to deploy significant logistics in Zaïre. He was an ally of *Hutu Power* which supplied 20,000 tons of coffee to Zaïre. The coffee supplies in the shops were the property of the Mobutu family. François Mitterrand painted a positive picture of the development of Franco-African relations at the Franco-African summit in Biarritz in November 1994. The creation of an African standby force was approved. Although Mobutu played a significant role in the massacres and openly supported the Angolan civil war, this did not prevent the French from allowing the president to participate in the standby force. Thanks to diplomatic support from the Élysée, the interim government led by *Hutu Power*, with the help of Mobutu, managed to thwart the convening of a reconciliation conference in Tanzania. Bruno Delaye explained this as follows: *"We cannot allow the English-speaking countries to decide the future of a French-speaking country."* Thanks to this quick reaction, thousands of innocent people could have been prevented… Some say that Mitterrand thought so: *"In these countries, genocide is not very important."* (Gouteux 2001, 102)

According to a journalist, the French strategy could be described as follows: the primary objective was to make the situation in Rwanda so untenable that it would be possible to return to the previous government and share power. Zaïre, as a hinterland, would allow the FAR (Rwandan government forces) to regroup and train with President Mobutu's guards, and ultimately to invade Rwanda. Or it will be possible to achieve that the FPR (Rwandan Patriotic Front, Tutsi) launches an attack on the FAR bases in Zaïre, which will create the necessary pretext for international intervention, an intervention in Rwanda (Verschave 1998, 245).

According to HRW, France, with the assistance of President Mobutu, supplied *Hutu Power* with artillery, machine guns and assault rifles. A significant portion of these weapons were delivered by air freight companies registered or based in Zaïre. Mobutu allowed Hutu Power to train in Zaïre, and after the defeat of the FAR, France trained *Hutu Power* in the Central African Republic (Rwanda/Zaïre… 1995). The weapons reached the Rwandan armed forces through the Goma airport in the French-controlled zone. The French also left at least one weapons depot in Kamembe, Rwanda. According to UN representatives, the arming of former members of the Rwandan armed forces was organized from Kenya. In addition, in June 1996, Russian planes carrying the weapons crashed in Kinshasa. Thus, part of the equipment of *Operation Turquoise*

(AML-60 and AML-90 armored vehicles, vehicles equipped with 120 mm mortars, anti-aircraft weapons, rocket launchers, howitzers, military trucks) was given to Habyarimana's former army, while the other part was sold to Zairean officers (Verschave 1998, 246-247).

French diplomacy feared the vacuum created by the fall of the Habyarimana clan in Rwanda and aimed to squeeze Uganda and its allies.[11] Mobutu increasingly turned to the Zairean general with the request that he take power and *"take the Great Lakes region under his protective and peace-making wing."* All this had the consequence that Mobutu authorized the massacre of the descendants of the Kasaï in Katanga province and the extermination of the Rwandan (Kinyarwanda)-speaking population around Lake Kivu. *"By deploying its logistics to provide military and humanitarian aid in the Goma area, that is, in Zaïre, and then allowing the creation of Rwandan refugee camps there, Paris made it clear that Mobutu was indispensable."* Following the logic of "the enemies of my enemies are my friends", two opposing axes emerged:

The "Francophone axis" was formed by the alliance of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Rwandan *Hutu Power* and Sudan (which had been pro-French since 1994), with French support.

The "Anglo-Saxon" axis was formed by the cooperation of Uganda led by Yoweri Museveni, Rwanda led by the Tutsi Paul Kagame, and the South Sudanese movement of John Garang, supported by the United States, which armed the Sudanese opposition through Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Libya supported the Francophone axis financially but also maintained good relations with Rwanda.[12] The Rwandan FPR's rear area was Uganda. As for Uganda, the French-backed axis provided assistance to three guerrilla groups operating in the DRC (Zaire)-Sudan-Uganda border zone: (Verschave 1998, 237-239, Negotiating Peace… 2004, 3*)*

The LRA (*Lord's Resistance Army*) is a Bible-based Christian movement that has been active since 1987. The movement, which operates under the supervision of the priestess Alice Lakwena and the command of Joseph Kony, was armed by Sudan. In 1993, it had only 200-300 soldiers, but by 1997 its number had reached 5,000. The soldiers were well-equipped: they had new camouflage military clothing, their own weapons, rocket launchers and mortars.

The WNBF (*West Nile Bank Front*) was formed around 1995 under the leadership of Juma Oris. The Front's ranks included fighters from Muslim minorities, the Ugandan Aringa minority, the Kakwa (a tribe of the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin Dada), and the Nubians (descendants of slaves of the 19th century Egyptian-Sudanese army).

The ADF (Allied Democratic Forces) only emerged later in the border region between Zaïre and Uganda. Its somewhat "surrealist" force included Hutu elements of the former Rwandan army, as well as the Tabek (members of a Muslim sect that brings together

[11]This was the main reason for the rapprochement between the French and Sudanese secret services, patronized by Charles Pasqua. (Verschave 1998, 80.)

[12] The system of alliances just outlined is merely a simplified scheme, as the composition of the various alliances changed from time to time, often in contradictory ways. (Verschave 1998, 232 and 236)

several ethnic groups), the Bokonyo (an ethnic group living in the Rwenzori Mountains and fighting the Rwandan government for administrative autonomy since 1952). Over the past forty years, they have fought against almost "everyone" (the British, Idi Amin, Obote, Museveni president of Uganda, etc.).

Jacques Chirac became the new French president in May 1995, and French diplomacy in the region remained largely unchanged. Chirac received Mobutu at the Élysée Palace on 24 April 1996, and Jacques Godfrain, the Minister of Cooperation, a relative of Jacques Foccart,[13] announced the official resumption of cooperation between France and Zaïre. The most influential figure in this policy was Paul Barril, a former high-ranking police officer under Mitterrand, whose security consultancy firm advised President Mobutu. Another influential figure in French Africa policy was Christian Tavernier, the head of President Mobutu's mercenary army, who, with the help of Paul Barrill and his 284 soldiers stationed in Watsa, was responsible for securing the CAR-DRC-Sudan supply line supplying the Ugandan guerrillas. Guerrillas operating in South Sudan and the northern DRC maintained contact with each other in the Kaya region, located on the Uganda-Sudan-Congo tri-border. This is where weapons, including those financed by the French, passed through.[14]

I.5. The Kabilas' Takeover and "Africa's World War" (1997-2005)

In September 1996, war broke out in the Kivu province of the DRC. This war caused an earthquake in Rwanda, swept away the regime of General Mobutu and brought about a radical transformation in the life of Zaïre. During the First Congo War (1996-1997), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL, 1996, a coalition led by Kabila) overthrew Mobutu's regime in 1997, and Laurent Désiré Kabila took office – thanks to the powerful support of Uganda and Rwanda. Kabila, who came to power on 17 May 1997, changed the name of the country to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The overthrow of Mobutu was a very unpleasant surprise for France. Kabila quickly found himself at odds with France's regional interests, as early as 1997-1998. The main reason for this was his allies at the time, Uganda (Yorevi Museweni), Rwanda (Paul Kagame), Angola and, above all, the United States, and then Sudan, which provided 2,000 soldiers for his country. In addition, Libya also showed itself ready to provide financial support to Kabila's regime. Its political system was based on anti-Tutsi and anti-French sentiment. France united the following interest groups against Kabila's allies and the AFDL: (Verschave 1998, 232-233, 237-239, 251). Congo-Brazzaville (for attacks on Kinshasa); Zairean officers and soldiers; Rwandan soldiers and militias who committed the Rwandan "genocide" and their Burundian allies; the remnants of Idi Amin Dada's army in Uganda; the LRA; like the previous two groups, Muslim fundamentalists (the

[13] General de Gaulle's "Monsieur Africa" was the man who oversaw France's African policy until his death. He was considered President Chirac's right-hand man on African issues.
[14] However, these were not French weapons, but weapons purchased from the Eastern European bloc.

"cleansers" of the Nuba Mountains and other Sudanese regions) supported by the Khartoum regime (Sudan) and Serbian militias carrying out ethnic cleansing.

The crisis – aptly named: "Africa's World War" – culminated on August 2, 1998, when former AFDL fighters from the eastern part of the country incited a rebellion against the new president, which led to the outbreak of the Second Congo War (1998-2003). This war can be considered "predatory in nature", as the country's vast natural resources attracted the interest of neighboring countries. A total of 7 (foreign) countries participated in the conflict: Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Chad, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda. Within a few months, the crisis spread to the northeastern front. Two movements attempted to overthrow Kabila's regime, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) in the east of the country (with significant Tutsi participation) and supported by the Rwandan government, and the Movement/Army for the Liberation of Congo (MLC/ALC, 1998-), led by Jean Pierre Bemba, which controlled the north of the country and was supported by the Ugandan government. The civil wars were not therefore isolated. Zimbabwe, Chad and Namibia also sent soldiers to the DRC to reinforce the loyalist army. Meanwhile, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi supported the rebel forces. Nearly 4 million people lost their lives as a result of the violence. As the internationalization of the crisis also violated international law, the UN Security Council expressed its deep concern about the peace and stability of the Great Lakes region and called for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops (History of MONUC 2003).

Despite the mutual distrust between Kabila's DRC and President Chirac's France, both sides soon had to radically redefine their goals before they finally became allies. Kabila was first forced to review his political methods and then, in response to the plundering of Congo by Rwandan troops by his now inconvenient allies, he dismissed his Rwandan and Ugandan advisors on 1 July 1998. France also did everything it could to win back its former ally (who had defected to the United States) and Kabila's attempt to break out of his growing isolation led to an alliance with France. As in the days of Mobutu, some of the weapons were transported through Chadian airports under French supervision. (Verschave 2002, 129) Kabila thus lost his Ugandan and Rwandan allies (who, incidentally, plundered and refused to leave the DRC), but in return he enjoyed the support of the French-led coalition (Angola, *Hutu Power*, Sudan, Chad). For example, Libya, Angola and France financed the military intervention in Zimbabwe that served their interests. So, they "cocked a snook" at the United States: Angola switched sides, while Zimbabwe and Namibia allowed Kabila to keep Kinshasa under his control (Verschave 2002, 126).

In the Ituri region, the conflict between different ethnic groups (farmers and herders) was not new, as the region is a meeting ground for the Bantu (Lugabara and Madi), the "plain Nilotic" (Karamojong) and the "rivers and lakes" such as the Luo (Acholi and Langi) ethnic groups (Lugan 2020, 1461). Under the pretext of helping Kabila take power, Ugandan forces (UPDF – Uganda People's Defence Forces) occupied the region in 1996 and then in 1998, in alliance with Rwanda, persecuting the Hutu population of the

region and then attacking Mobutu's army. The liberation of the area was provided for in the Luanda Agreement of September 2002 (AWEU 2005, 25). According to some estimates, 3.5 million people lost their lives as a result of the war that began in 1998 and lasted five years (Faria 2004, 47-49). Accepting the UN call, on 10 July 1999, the DRC, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as the MLC, signed a ceasefire agreement in Lusaka (Zambia), while Burundi, Chad and the RCD abstained. The agreement included the normalization of the situation on the DRC's borders and placed the following main tasks at the forefront: controlling the illegal arms trade; controlling the infiltration of armed groups; initiating a national dialogue; establishing public security; and disarming the various militias and armed groups.

The agreement also established a military commission, composed of two representatives from each side, under the direction of a neutral mediator delegated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (MONUC 2004). In order to secure the system, the agreement provided for the deployment of UN troops in cooperation with the OAU. The violence in the DRC threatened to repeat the 1994 "genocide" in neighboring Rwanda. The UN called on the DRC to join the signatories, and, accepting the agreement's proposal, Security Council Resolution 1258 authorized the deployment of 90 military and civilian personnel to the mixed military commission. On 1 November 1999, the Secretary-General decided to establish MONUC (UN Mission in the DRC) and to deploy 500 military observers.

MONUC was not mandated to use military force to bring order to the region (Duffit-Séré 2003, 6-7). As events unfolded, the UN extended the mission's mandate eight times until the summer of 2004, increasing the number of participants almost continuously – from 90 (August 1999) to 10,800 (July 2000-July 2004).[15] In terms of total MONUC personnel, it was seven times larger than the EU ARTEMIS mission. Both missions included civilian and military elements. MONUC was mandated to carry out civilian tasks, namely human rights monitoring, humanitarian aid management, information gathering, child protection, political situation management and medical assistance.

In March 2000, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Senegalese General Mountaga Diallo as MONUC commander. In January 2001, violence flared up again with the assassination of President Laurent Désiré Kabila, who was killed by an officer in his own army recruited from Rwandan-controlled Kivu, for reasons unknown, especially since he was immediately beheaded by the presidential guard (Lugan 2020, 1465). Kabila was succeeded by his son, 29-year-old Joseph Kabila, with Angolan and Zimbabwean help. He dismissed members of his father's government and replaced them with his own troops. His two pillars of power are the country's two main ethnic groups, the Lunda from Kasai province, and the Luba (his father's ethnic group) from Katanga province. He began very difficult negotiations on the withdrawal of foreign troops.

[15] Security Council Resolution, http://daccess-ods.un.org/: (UNSC Resolution 1258 of 6 August 1999 – 90 personnel). Then UNSC Resolution 1493 of 28 July 2003: until 30 July 2004 (maximum strength of 10,800 personnel). For further interim UNSC resolutions, see Türke 2016, 66-67.

UN Security Council Resolution 1376 on 9 November 2002 launched MONUC's third phase, which was to carry out DDRRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Resettlement) tasks for foreign armed forces. On 25 February 2002, the Congolese negotiations began between the warring parties in the South African city of Sun City. These were temporarily interrupted by the reoccupation of the town of Moliro by the RCD-Goma army. All parties agreed on the principles. As a result of the Congo-Rwanda peace agreement signed in Pretoria on 30 July 2002, a kind of *détente* began on 5 October 2002 with the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the DRC. On September 6, under the Luanda Agreements, Uganda promised to withdraw its troops from Ituri. The Americans not only intervened as a neutral outsider in the events but also provided secret financial assistance to the various factions. Of course, Washington's aim was to gain influence in the region. For a long time, only 65 UN observers (mainly from Uruguay), were stationed in this area, without specific authorization, but later the military protection of these observers became increasingly important (AWEU 2005, 25). On December 30, 2002, the Gbadolite ceasefire agreement was signed under the auspices of MONUC between the MLC, RCD-N and RCD-K/ML. This ended the Second Congo War.

Despite this, the situation became tense again in the first months of 2003. MONUC observers reported serious human rights violations in the Mambasa region, and shortly afterwards they learned of troop movements on the eastern and northeastern borders of the DRC. Following the withdrawal of the Ugandan army from Ituri, militias immediately took over the towns, and atrocities against the civilian population resumed (Grignon 2003, 2). On 10 February 2003, the foreign ministers of Uganda and the DRC signed the Dar es Salaam Agreement in Tanzania, which specified the timetable for the establishment of the Ituri Pacification Commission and the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from Bunia. At the end of the month, MONUC suspended air flights to Bunia due to a serious incident: General Mountaga Diallo's helicopter was shot down over Bunia, causing serious damage.

The situation around Bunia was particularly tense. The population of Ituri region is 5 million and is divided into 12 different ethnic groups.[16] 500,000-600,000 people were displaced and settled in different parts of the region. The two main warring parties were the UPC and the FIPI:

1.) The activities of the Congolese Patriotic Union (UPC) under the command of Thomas Lubanga[17] were mainly carried out by militias from the Hema (150,000 people, who are pastoralists by profession) and Gegere ethnic groups. Until December 2002, UPC received support from Uganda, but Lubanga sought allies in Rwanda and developed cooperation with the RCD-Goma.[18] For this reason, in March 2003, Uganda

[16] A detailed history of the various groups fighting in the DRC and the cooperation between the groups see Prome, 2003, 16-18.

[17] Lubanga was transferred from Kinshasa to The Hague on March 17, 2006, to stand trial at the International Court of Justice.

[18] RDC-Goma was also supported by Rwanda after the RCD-ML and MLC excluded it from the Mambasa ceasefire talks in December 2002. (Ituri… 2003)

exiled the UPC to Bunia. However, the UPC managed to gain strength there as well. Since June 2002, it had about 2,000-3,000 soldiers.

2.) The Party for the Unity and Integrity of the Congo (PUSIC), led by Khawa Mandro, emerged from among the Hema dissatisfied with the UPC. The party, which had existed since November 2002, had a force of 1,000. Khawa's goal was to unite the local population into a coalition, the Party for the Integration and Peace of Ituri (FIPI), formed in December 2002 and supported by Uganda.[19] Khawa's goal was to unite the local population into a coalition, the Party for the Integration and Peace of Ituri (FIPI), formed in December 2002 and supported by Uganda. All this in order to keep the local population under control of the region's mineral resources and to avoid conflicts between the Nanda and officials from Kinshasa.

The Nationalist Front (FNI), a Rwandan-backed organization of the Lendu ethnic group (750,000 people, farmers), was led by Floribert Njabu Ngabu. The members of the organization were trained by the RCD-ML, which also provided military support to the FNI. The FNI had 1,000 soldiers. The Front for Reconciliation, Peace and Integration (FRPI), which operated as the army of the Ngiti political party, was led by Dr. Adirodo and had 400 members. Overall, the number of militants was relatively low, but many of them were children. The conflict between ethnic groups cannot be reduced to the confrontation between the Hema and Lendu groups (see: PUSIC and FIPI). Uganda's main objectives were to maintain chaos and to apply the principle of *divide et impera*, in order to justify its presence and thus ensure the extraction of the natural resources in the region (timber, uranium and the largest gold mine in Africa).

MONUC began deploying military forces in the Ituri region (411, then 600), and on 23 April 700 Uruguayan peacekeepers began their peacekeeping operations. A report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU) stressed that *"these forces do not have the necessary means or authority to deal with the situation"* and that the Rwandan-backed UPC was being held back (AWEU 2004, 15). Child soldiers aged between 12 and 16, drugged and armed with small arms, patrolled the town and kept the population in fear. The mission seemed to be losing control of events: between 7 and 16 May, fierce fighting broke out between the armed Hema and Lendu ethnic groups.

MONUC distributed 10,000 tons of food and provided protection to 15,000 people in the humanitarian aid operation, during which time two of its military observers were brutally murdered near Bunia, and heavy fighting broke out around the MONUC and UPC headquarters. This was the moment when UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed for help from the international community. The attacks on American troops stationed in Iraq ultimately led the Bush administration to refrain from intervening. This was a good thing for the nascent European (Common) Security and Defence Policy (then: ESDP, now: CSDP), which was launching its first missions and operations at that time. On 10 May 2003, France made its participation conditional on three conditions:

[19] The coalition members are: PUSIC, FNI and FPDC (National Force for Congolese Democracy - Alur and Lugbara political party).

the operation being mandated by the UN, the involvement of other states, and the agreement of all parties concerned to deploy the operation. In France, an EU operation was perceived more positively due to the country's dubious role in the region (e.g. support for local mafias) and the French *Operation Turquoise* in Rwanda. At the time of *Operation Turquoise*, the FPR had taken power in Kigali in July 1994, and President Paul Kagame was also heavily involved in the wars in Ituri. The countries involved in the fighting in the region (namely the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda) officially supported the French intervention. *"According to some sources, the department for African affairs at the Élysée explicitly recommended that the intervention be transformed into an EU operation."* (Grignon 2003, 2-3). In addition, Kofi Annan took a dual approach by requesting assistance from both France and the European Union. The Ituri issue was discussed at European level by defence ministers in the General Affairs Council on 19 May (Tardy 2005, 5 and 12).

Meanwhile, a transitional government was formed in the DRC on 30 June 2003, with four vice-presidents elected alongside Kabila, representing the four main forces present in the country: Abdoulaye Yerodia Ndombasi from the presidential camp, Azarias Ruberwa from the RCD, Jean-Pierre Bemba from the MLC and Arthur Zaidi Ngoma as a representative of civil society. The transitional government remained in power until 18 February 2006, when the Third Republic was proclaimed (Lugan 2020, 1457). Operation EUFOR ARTEMIS was launched on 12 June 2003, embedded in the UN peacekeeping mission. Its aim was to assist the local UN mission, MONUC, which had proven incapable of handling such crises.

NATO (and especially the United States) opposed an independent EU operation and did not want to provide support for its implementation (Faria 2004, 45-46 and 57-58) due to its priorities in the Balkans and Afghanistan. And we should not forget the rivalry between the French and the Americans in the DRC over President Kabila. Despite its territorial and temporal limitations, ARTEMIS performed its task relatively successfully during its approximately 2.5-month duration, despite the significant risks assumed (small number of personnel, hostile environment, limited evacuation options). As for the events that followed the operation (which are of course not its direct consequence) stability in the DRC proved to be fragile. On 6 October 2003, the EU condemned the massacres that took place around the village of Katchele in Ituri (Commission Pressroom 2003).

Operation ARTEMIS was followed by three EU operations/missions:

- EUPOL Kinshasa (30 April 2005 – 1 July 2007),
- EUPOL RDC (1 July 2007 – 30 September 2014)
- EUSEC RDC (8 June 2005 – 30 July 2016);
- and EUFOR RDC (23 June 2006 – 30 November 2006).

Two years after Operation ARTEMIS, the European Union was once again operating in the DRC. It launched two missions to support the political process, covering economic, political and security issues. This time, the missions concerned the relatively calmer region in the west of the country (Türke 2016, 93-108).

I.6. The Third Republic (2006-2019) and the End of the Kabila Era

Following the promulgation of the constitution of 18 December 2005, the Third Republic was proclaimed in the DRC on 18 February 2006. The first round of parliamentary and presidential elections (the first free elections in 40 years) was originally scheduled for April 2006, but was postponed three months later, to 30 July 2006. President Kabila was challenged by Jean-Pierre Bemba. On 29 October 2006, Kabila won the second round of the presidential election with 58.05%. Antoine Gizenga[20] was appointed Prime Minister. The European Union provided 150 million euros in support of the elections and sent a 250-strong observation mission led by General Philippe Morillon.

Bemba, known as "Chairman," was not only a close associate of Mobutu, but also had family ties to the former president. (His sister was married to one of the former president's sons). In 1997, after Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) took power, Bemba fled the country. In 1998, he founded the MLC/ALC, which he represented in the interim government as vice-president from 30 June 2003. The Mobutuist wing of the party exerted a strong influence on the president. In 2002, he was accused of buying weapons and authorizing his militias to carry out attacks in the CAR, with the support of Colonel Gaddafi, in support of the regime led by Ange-Félix Patassé. During these incidents, his poorly paid militias committed several crimes (robbery, rape and looting). In the first round of the presidential election held in October 2006, he came in second place with more than 20% of the votes cast. But in the second round he only achieved 42% of the votes cast.[21] The country was essentially divided in two, with Katanga voting for Kabila and the western parts for Bemba. Both candidates had their own armies. Even the presence of international forces did not deter the armies from fighting each other: On 21 August 2006, the presidential guard threw a bomb at Bemba's residence, but he managed to escape an assassination attempt.[22]

2007 began with heavy clashes in Upper-Congo between security forces and members of the separatist *Bundu dia Kongo*. In the 19 January 2007 elections for the 108-member Senate, the Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP, Kabila's political platform) won 56 senatorial seats. Bemba's Union for the Nation (UN) platform had to make do with 20 seats in the Senate. Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga's United Lumumba Party (PALU) managed to win only two senatorial seats. The elections confirmed the leading role of the People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD, the

[20] This is the same Antoine Gizenga who was the Lumumbista Prime Minister of the Free Republic of the Congo 45 (!) years ago in 1961.

[21] He was successful in his home province (Equateur Province), as well as in the poorer urban areas of Kinshasa and Bas-Congo. Some reports say he spent $20 million on his campaign (Duku 2006).

[22] The parties – Kabila and Bemba – launched two investigations, and "surprisingly" the conclusions of the investigations were completely different. According to one, the attack was carried out by Bemba's militias, who also kidnapped two police officers, with the aim of causing a clash in front of Western observers. According to the other theory, Kabila's soldiers carried out a deliberate attack or, more accurately, an assassination attempt.

majority party in the AMP) and the Congolese Liberal Movement (MLC) on the Congolese political chessboard. The poor performance of PALU seriously questioned Gizenga's position. Attacks by Laurent Nkunda's CNDP (National Congress for the Defence of the People) in the Kivu region and by the Maï-Maï in the east of the country have become increasingly frequent.

Bemba was elected senator, but his bodyguards did not comply with the ultimatum of 15 March 2007, according to which they should have joined the national army. It should also be emphasized that in the DRC (as in Guinea-Bissau, Türke 2011) programs related to DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) and SSR (security sector reform) play a role in strengthening the position of the winner. Because by disarming rival groups that cooperate with his opponent, he strengthens his army, as well as the presidential guard, police (etc.). [23]

Without their own army, a political candidate essentially has no chance in the "democratic" elections of Africa. So, it can be decided to what extent these steps promote the construction of competing plural democracies and to what extent they entrench the position of autocratic-minded individuals who have been elected to the presidency for many years, and in the meantime to what extent they succeed in ensuring stability in the given regions. This is how we can judge the extent to which these international programs initiated in the interests of democratization, ignoring the traditional positions of the clans, promote the construction of competing plural democracies. Or to what extent do they contribute to securing the position of autocratic-minded individuals who entrenchment of the presidential seat for many years? And at this price, to what extent do they succeed in ensuring stability in the given regions?

Bemba then issued a ceasefire call and sought refuge in the South African embassy. He then left the country on 11 April 2007 and travelled to Portugal but was arrested in Brussels on 24 May 2008 and summoned to the ICC on charges of crimes against humanity committed between 2002 and 2003 when his militia came to the aid of President of CAR, Ange-Félix Patassé.[24]

On 27 November 2007, the Supreme Court declared Joseph Kabila the winner of the second round. In 2009, the Goma Peace Agreement, signed by the government, the CNDP and the Nigerian mediator and former President Olusegun Obasanjo, “officially” ended the Kivu War (2004–2009). Under the peace agreement, the CNDP was to

[23] The absurdity of the situation is that Bemba had 600-1000 armed men, although officially (!) he could have maintained a guard of 100 (Courtoux 2006).

[24] On 24 May 2008, Bemba was arrested – based on an arrest warrant issued the day before by the International Court of Justice in The Hague – on charges of sexual crimes, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during his troops' incursion into the KAC between October 2002 and March 2003. His trial began on 22 November 2010 in The Hague. Thus, with the presence of EUFOR, it intervened in the political rivalry of two war criminals – similar to Milosevic (CPI 2008).

become a political party, former rebels held by the DRC authorities were to be released, and Kinshasa was to enact a law granting amnesty to former rebels. Some of the rebels were integrated into the Congolese regular army.[25]

On 28 November 2011, Kabila was re-elected, but his main opponent, Etienne Tshisekedi, former Prime Minister of Zaire (1991, 1992-93 and 1997), challenged the election results and also declared himself president. In 2012, the Kivu conflict resumed, and this time the warring parties declared war directly on the government. Kabila effectively lost control a large part of the country (Kivu, Katanga, Goma provinces, etc.). Thanks to the massive presence of the Ugandan LRA and Rwandan troops, the M23 (based on the CNDP) became the most important factor in the region. After that, the UN (learning from previous mistakes) sent a 20,688-strong mission, MONUSCO, with a strong mandate and a rapid reaction intervention brigade with military helicopters, to the region under the charismatic leadership of Martin Kobler. With this help, the FARDC (Congolese army) was able to win a decisive victory over the M23 in November 2013.

On June 30, 2015, the administrative reform redrawn the borders of the Congolese provinces: increasing their number from the previous 11 to 26 in order to make it more difficult for large regions (such as Katanga) to secede. The reform had been on the agenda for a long time and was carried out with the agreement of the political class. For example, the province of Grand Kivu was divided into three parts in 1988 (North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema) and the 2006 constitution already mentions the 25 new provinces + Kinshasa (as legal personality).

The advantage of the reform is the enforcement of the principle of subsidiarity, which gives more autonomy to the new regions. The disadvantage is the increased bureaucracy with 26 governors and more than 260 provincial ministers (which increases the possibilities for corruption) and the emergence of new tax levels (Türke 2016, 103-104). According to the constitution, 40% of the central budget resources must be kept at their place of payment, the provinces. In March 2022, 7 years after the reform, 15 of the 26 new provinces still had not managed to establish their own financial directorate. They essentially do not have their own resource management and the amounts allocated to them flow into the financial directorate of a neighboring province (Muamba 2022).

From October 2014, the Muslim rebels of the ADF (United Democratic Forces) began to destabilize the North Kivu region again, organizing pogroms. In May 2015, rebellions against the central government resumed in the Beni region (North Kivu), and the ADF had already killed more than 300 people. On December 20, 2015, the Civil Front 2016 was created, a coalition of civil society and opposition figures (Vital Kamerhe UMC, Moïse Katumbi, Félix Tshisekedi UDPS, Martin Fayulu Ecidé). Their main goal was to prevent Kabila from winning a third term. The Lucha youth movement, founded in 2012, also took an increasingly active part in the resistance. On February 16, 2016, the opposition declared a "dead city day" in protest throughout the country, to which the police responded with arbitrary arrests. The united opposition, which launched in June

[25] This is the main reason why national armies in Africa are extremely heterogeneous and unreliable. See the example of Mali.

under the name *Rassemblement* (Rally), invited former governor Moïse Katumbi to challenge Kabila. In July, a new militia, Kamuina Nsapu, began killing civilians in Kasai province, and in North Kivu, Maï-Maï and FDLR Rwandan rebels resumed pogroms. In September, in Kinshasa, protesters demanding Kabila's departure clashed with police, resulting in 53 deaths, while on October 18, the government, under the auspices of the African Union and mediated by Togolese Edem Kodjopour, attempted to postpone the elections until April 2018. The 31 December 2016 agreement had envisaged holding the elections by the end of 2017 at the latest.

In 2017, 1.3 million people were displaced in the DRC, and in March two UN experts were brutally murdered while investigating human rights abuses in the Kasai region. In April, President Kabila appointed Bruno Tshibala, a dissident from the opposition, as prime minister. On 15 June, Kofi Annan and nine former African presidents issued a statement calling the situation in the DRC untenable. In October, HRW identified 120 armed groups in the two Kivu regions, with the number of displaced people reaching 4 million. At the end of the year, elections were postponed until December 2018, and demonstrations against Kabila and the massacres followed one another in the country. The year 2018 was known for the resurgence of Ebola and the bloodshed around Lake Albert, while on July 13, 2018. And it essentially "started all over again" in Ituri, forcing the UN to publicly condemn the mass ethnic cleansing in the region... (Lugan 2020, 1458-1459).

I.7. Congo after the Kabilas: Félix Tshisekedi's presidency (2019-)

The presidential elections held in December 2018 were won by the opposition candidate Félix Tshisekedi, son of former Prime Minister and resistance leader Étienne Tshisekedi, with 38.6%. His opponents Martin Fayulu received 34.8% and Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, Kabila's "heir apparent", received 23.8%. Fayulu strongly contested the results and claimed his own victory of 61%, which was confirmed by 40,000 election observers from Cenco and by investigative teams from *RFI*, the *Financial Times* and *TV5 Monde*. Tshisekedi was accused of secretly colluding with Kabila, which can be confirmed by the fact that Kabila immediately received the titles of hereditary senator and honorary president at the beginning of the new term and did not have to hand over his presidential residence called GLM.

In the legislative elections, the FCC won, winning 337 seats out of 500. In mid-January 2019, despite the African Union's request to suspend the announcement of the election results, the Constitutional Court finalized the results on the 20th, which, despite the obvious fraud, is considered the first peaceful transfer of power since independence (RDC: reactions... 2019). Sylvestre Ilunga, the former president of the national railway company, became the prime minister of the 65-member (!) government. The president began his mandate in a very controversial manner, for example, immediately resisting the replacement of officials accused of corruption and crimes against humanity. It is no coincidence that on April 8, 2020, Vital Kamerhe, Tshisekedi's chief of staff and main

political ally, was imprisoned on charges of misappropriation of public funds and sentenced to 20 years of hard labor.

In the summer of 2020, disagreements between Kabila and Tshisekedi increased, mainly over the appointment of the army, the electoral commission and the constitutional court. Then, on 6 December 2020, the president announced the split in the governing coalition between his own political platform, CACH ("Direction for Change"), and former President Kabila's party, FCC (Common Front for Congo). The FCC dominated both parliament and provincial assemblies (Ba-Mweze 2020).

In early 2021, Roger Lumbala, who was captured in Paris at the end of 2020, was indicted on charges of crimes against humanity committed in the northeastern part of the DRC between 2000 and 2003. In February the Italian ambassador was killed in an attack in Goma. On April 30, 2021, the president declared a state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu provinces due to the renewed wave of violence. In the fall he asked for the international community's help in the fight against terrorism against the ADF. The ADF(-Nalu) was formed in 1995 as an opposition to the Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces President Yoveri Museveni. The force consists of 300-600 fighters and has since moved its headquarters to the DRC. In 2017, they announced their affiliation with the Islamic State.

Conclusion

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is an artificially created state-like entity in the former Belgian colony, weakened by historical-ethnic secessionist aspirations since independence. The provinces, artificially connected by the colonial Belgians exclusively along their own interests, are artificially held together by the central government, which is often in need of regional or international assistance. In many cases, these provinces are tied together by closer historical-ethnic ties to the (southern) areas beyond the borders. The southern (Katanga/Shaba, Kasaï) and eastern (Ituri) parts are under little or no state control, and these regions have been (or were) the scene of continuous gateways and waves of violence, with hardly any peaceful periods to be found in their post-independence history. Mobutu's corrupt regime survived for 32 years thanks to American and then French support and influence, and even during the Kabila era, the country barely made any progress on the path to democracy.

The region's integration efforts (Türke 2018) are repeatedly thwarted by civil wars. Behind them, one can discover the imperial ambitions of certain states or ethnic groups (DRC, Rwanda/"Tutsi"), which have been repeatedly stalled and frozen for several years by protracted or internationalized civil war situations. On the other hand, the range of organizational memberships shows a great deal of overlap and confusion, which works against efficiency and reflects the "floating nature" of the region. That is, some states are also members of integration institutions in other (sub)regions (e.g., East or Southern Africa). Paradoxically, this works against closer cooperation across Africa, although in the last decade it has become increasingly clear which forms of integration are capable of acting as relevant actors on the international scene.

Due to the huge size of the DRC and the ongoing destabilized-war situation in the eastern part of the country and the secessionist aspirations there, it proved unable to offer a real political-economic alternative to the neighboring "dwarves" Rwanda and Burundi, which are both demographically and economically weak and once closely part of the Francophone sphere of interest. Moreover, it constantly threatened these with strong political pressure and economic "absorption" – even when the invasion, mainly from Uganda, threatened to tear off their own eastern territories. The region is increasingly drifting towards the Anglo-Saxon forms of integration[26] of South and East Africa – which seem to be more successful than the Francophone ones.

However, the fact that this region is increasingly drifting towards the Anglo-Saxon forms of integration of South and East Africa (necessarily Anglo-Saxon due to the colonial past of these states) is only a sideline of the Francophone-Anglo-Saxon rivalry. Due to historical and ethnic roots, geographical conditions and economic and trade cooperation systems, this process can be considered rational in an economic and financial sense. Francophone (integration) efforts are losing out to Anglo-Saxon-based efforts also in this region: Rwanda has come under complete Anglo-Saxon political and cultural influence, and this trend is also present in Burundi.

Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

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[26] In the Anglo-Saxon integration bloc(s), these proportions are also more balanced, and education is much more developed. Only one African Francophone university makes it into the African top 50 (2019), the rest are Anglo-Saxon (Niyongere 2019).

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