

Finally, it is useful to emphasize the problem of reconciling western and African perceptions on natural resource management. Conservation, even on a very subjective basis, is essential to many westerners. Economic development is more important to most African policy makers. A balance between these two objectives, unfortunately, is not readily found. However if this balance and the balance between territorial integrity, involvement of the authorities and partnership with the population are not attained, natural resources will be exhausted. In turn, this rich heritage will not benefit the local population, nor will it provide the fruits of development or better environmental management.

The war in the Democratic Republic of Congo has resulted in the institution of a structure for controlling protected areas. It is called the Network of Protected Areas of Central Africa. It guards against military actions within parks and other protected areas. As many Congolese as foreigners are involved. World heritage areas and areas of local interest are being saved from the numerous consequences of the war that are listed above.

This network will continue to reflect on ways of creating other protected areas, in order to reach the objective of 15% of the national territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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WHY ARMED CONFLICT PERSISTS IN THE KIVU REGION OF THE CONGO (DRC)

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During the last three decades, the history of sub-Saharan Africa has been filled with armed conflicts. Among the most notable are the wars that tore apart Angola, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, and most recently Ivory Coast. By around 1999, twenty African countries were being subjected to open fighting, either sporadic or continuous. Few of these conflicts actually set one country against another as happened in the case of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Most of these wars were internal even though, for a number, they eventually drew in neighbouring states. That is the case of the Rwandan civil war that caused two million refugees to flee across borders and for the conflicts in DR Congo to which seven other countries contributed troops and arms.

Political reasons, such as ideology, power disputes, leadership vacuum; or socio-economic reasons, e.g. religion, ethnicity, access to natural resources, include all the most fundamental reasons driving the sub-Saharan unrest. Since 1996, DRC has been at war. If the first battles, making up the so-called "war of liberation", were part of an expedition to chase out the autocratic regime of Mobutu Sese Seko, this is no explanation for the subsequent bloody battles that started in August 1998. The opposition is far too bitter and recalcitrant.

The Agreements of Sun City and of Pretoria signed in 2002 and 2003 by all the major belligerents officially brought an end to the war. A transition government was put in place for a period of two years operating on the basis of a mutually approved document, the Global and Inclusive Agreement.

Despite political processes that seem to be steering the country towards reconciliation and unification, one geographic area remains a stubborn source point for armed conflict and persistent political resistance. Both political and socio-economic roots continue to feed the hostilities in the far-eastern provinces of North and South Kivu that border Rwanda.

The political tinder that seems to have been the most caustic concerns national identity which was denied an important part of the population of Rwandan origin living in the Kivu provinces. Historically, in 1972, a law was adopted that gave Congolese nationality, collectively, to all refugees or transplanted Rwandans. Ten years later, in 1982, this law was rescinded and replaced by another that only recognized citizenship that was acquired on an individual basis by naturalization. Thereby, hundreds of thousands of peasants saw their Congolese nationality withdrawn along with all the associated civil rights included access to land, administrative functions and political posts. In the long term, the question of nationality was a major lever jacking up the tensions of the region (P. Mathieu & A. Mafikiri).

The law concerning nationality has been at the center of debates in the transition Parliament. A proposed draft revision was submitted by the Presidential Cabinet and after extensive debates has just been

adopted by Parliament (September 2004). It recognizes Congolese nationality for all Rwandan refugees and other ethnic groups who were living in Congo as of June 30, 1960. The Congolese nationality is, however, exclusive meaning that no one can be both Congolese and Rwandan.

Socio-economic fuel for the on-going armed conflict is always somehow connected to the flammable issues of natural resources. The north eastern Congo, including more than half a million square km flanking the border of approximately 1000 km with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, is rich in fertile land excellent for both farming and pasturing, is rich in little exploited forest land, and is rich in economically important minerals including gold, diamonds, cassiterite (tinstone), Colombo-tantalite (coltan), wolframite and others. By contrast, the neighbour, Rwanda, is overpopulated, mainly denuded of forest, has decimated most of its animal resources, has large areas of infertile soils, and limited mineral resources. In consequence two important Rwandan protected areas became totally or partially declassified (Akagera and Gishwati) after the Popular Army of Rwanda (PAR) took power in Kigali in 1994.

Important to the resource wars in eastern DRC are continuing effects from the mid-70s when a severe economic crisis crippled the country. The crisis continued through the 80s with a unidirectional fall in export products, rampant inflation, progressive decay of all infrastructures, and the dramatic impoverishment of the population. Liberalization of mineral export was a measure taken by a "cornered" government in 1983 to relieve unemployment and boost the national economy. Unfortunately the decision opened wide the opportunities for

generalized black-market dealings across the borders to Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania and contributed to the bankruptcy of national mining companies. Burundi and Rwanda, for instance, became important exporters of diamonds and gold although their own mineral stocks are very minor. Coffee, papain, quinine, and timber found growing black-market routes to neighbouring countries. The mafiose trading networks became firmly engrained and reached well beyond Congo's immediate borders.

With the war, natural resources were exploited more intensively. It was no longer undercover, as the rebellion gained legitimacy through the Lusaka Accords (1999). This legitimized trade directly to the east without taxes to Kinshasa. During the first years of the war, Uganda and Rwanda traded through the DRC rebel movements that they effectively controlled.

Rwanda in certain respects extended its national territory into the Kivus with their forests and mineral resources. The war allowed for open transfer of Rwandan populations into the DRC provincial territories of Masisi and Rutshuru. Continuing instability permitted Rwanda easy access to the DRC forests with their mineral wealth – as these were claimed to be particularly dangerous and source of threat to Rwanda's legitimate frontiers.

The continued lack of clarity regarding the politico-military situation in the Kivus continues to destabilize two of DRCs richest national parks that have the misfortune of lying along the Rwandan border. The forests of Virunga National Park and Kahuzi Biega National Park are home not only to gorillas and elephants but also to gun-

wielding rebels and whole villages of miners exporting their ore to Rwanda. The forests, through their riches in timber, minerals, and ivory easily provide the financial means to continue the war and the wealth to specific individuals to motivate its prolongation. The real inability to build peace, however, comes from a large Rwando-Congolese population. As long as they fear that "peace" might push them from "little" to "nothing" it will be hard to assure a real peace.

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