THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE GREAT LAKES CRISIS

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Résumé

A rebours de certaines idées reçues, les réflexions qui suivent s'inscrivent dans une lecture géopolitique de la crise des Grands Lacs. Celle-ci tient compte non seulement de la géographie politique de la région, à savoir de la dimension territoriale des conflits identitaires, mais des idéologies relatives aux territoires (ceux-ci englobant terroirs et sous-régions). Les bouleversements qui ont traversé l'Afrique ex-belge recouvrent une large gamme de conflits – à propos des terres, de la nationalité, de l'accès aux ressources du sous-sol – dont l'intensité et les retombées varient dans le temps et dans l'espace. Nonobstant leur spécificité et leurs mutations, ils ont en commun de véhiculer des images réductrices de l''autre', d'entraîner de multiples ingérences, politiques ou militaires, s'articulant sur des solidarités transfrontalières, et, partant, de multiplier les rivalités entre groupes. A cet accroissement de la violence, qu'accompagne une rapide détérioration de l'environnement et la criminalisation de l'économie par puissances interposées (Rwanda, Ouganda, Zimbabwe), les groupes d'intérêt occidentaux ne sont pas étrangers. A l'échelon régional, cependant, une responsabilité particulière revient au Rwanda, dont les clientèles ethno-régionales, pour fragiles et fluides qu'elles soient, n'ont cessé d'alimenter la crise qui sévit dans l'est du Congo. Les retombées mortifères de l'interdépendance régionale ne sont plus a démontrer. Comment les maîtriser, dans un contexte de délabrement de l'économie, de délitement de l'Etat et de désorganisation de l'armée, tel est le défi majeur que pose la crise des Grands Lacs.

1.   INTRODUCTION

It may be useful at the outset to clear up some of the conceptual ambiguities surrounding this title, beginning with the spatial dimension of 'the Great Lakes' region. In common usage the phrase refers to Central Africa's Great Rift valley, stretching on a north-south axis along the Congo-Nile crest, from Lake Tanganyika in the south to Lake Edward and the legendary Mountains of the Moon in the north. It consists of huge volcanic bulges and depressions born of the displacement of the earth's tectonic plates some fifteen million years ago. But where exactly does it begin and where does it end? Should it include western Tanzania and south-western Sudan? Should the Maniema and north Katanga be factored in as well? The answers are anything but straightforward. There is general agreement, however, that a minimal definition should include Rwanda, Burundi, eastern Congo and south-western Uganda as the core area of what was once called the «interlacustrine» zone of the continent, covering an estimated 300,000 sq. miles. This is the sense in which we shall use the phrase, assuming that Ituri and Katanga are also legitimate candidates for inclusion.

The interlacustrine metaphor is perhaps not the most illuminating in the context of this discussion if only because it suggests too much in the way of uniformity and too little about the diversity of peoples, cultures and sub-

regions subsumed under this label.[1] There is a fundamental truth in the observation that «the extent to which people are attached to their native turf (*terroir d'origine*) is still highly developed among the people of the Great Lakes».[2] To this day group loyalties continue to cluster around pre-colonial *terroirs*. While many readily identify with places like Nduga, Kiga, Bwisha, Bwito, Masisi, Rutshuru, Beni-Butembo, to name only a few, nowhere among Africans is the 'Great Lakes' perceived as a meaningful identity marker. The phrase, as Chrétien reminds us, is evocative of «the German tradition of a *Volksgeist*, as if a kind of common soul had emerged from the proximity of these lakes».[3] Though encompassing many of the shared cultural traits identified by the author – a high population density, the agro-pastoral tandem, the heritage of kingship, a tendency for outsiders to look at these societies through the lens of race, and so forth – in the end, he adds, what links these peoples and cultures together, is «a kind of connivance born of multiple confrontations and countless encounters».[4] Since these words were written (1986), most of these encounters have been extremely bloody and their after-effects devastating.

At the root of these confrontations lies an array of forces and circumstances of enormous complexity. Most are the product of human decisions made during the colonial and post-colonial eras, but these must be seen in the perspective of the drastic changes that have taken place in the regional environment. Politics and geography intersect in different ways at different points in time, but the key variables remain the same. The potential for conflict is inscribed in the discontinuities in population densities, the availability of land, the cultural fault lines discernible in different language patterns, modes of social organization and ecological circumstances. None of the above were fixed since time immemorial. As had been noted time and again, and most recently by Michael Mann, modernity has gone hand in hand with eruptions of ethnic violence.[5] Societies that were once held together by hierarchies of birth, rank and privilege have been subjected to profound

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[1] For specific illustrations, see CROS, M.-F., and MISSER, F., *Géopolitique du Congo (RDC),* Bruxelles, Editions Complexe, 2006.

[2] SIBABIBDULA, K., "Les Nande au contact avec d'autres civilisations : lecture de quelques vécus indicateurs", in *Les identités meurtrières : Faire face aux défis posés par nos murs psychologiques et idéologiques*, Goma, June 26, 2004, Pole Institute, p.84, available at poleinst@cimpuserve.com.

[3] CHRETIEN, J.-P., "L'Afrique des Grands Lacs existe-t-elle ?", *Revue Tiers Monde*, Tome 27, No. 106, 1986, p.266.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] MANN, M., *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

disruptions of their social fabric, ushering in «masterless men»,[6] marginalized youth and warlords in search of gold, diamonds and coltan. Today's demographic explosion in Rwanda, resulting in a population density of 300 per sq. kilometres, is without parallel elsewhere, causing a drastic shrinking of cultivable land; areas where land hunger was almost unknown at the inception of colonial rule (as in Rutshuru and Masisi) are now saturated; deforestation has denuded large tracts of land, accelerating soil erosion and reducing crop cultivation;[7] almost everywhere wildlife is fast disappearing, most notably hippos, elephants and mountain gorillas, with profoundly negative effects on the region's ecosystem[8]. Once described as a tourist paradise,[9] today's Great Lakes region shows all the symptoms of a Hobbesian universe.

Convenient though it is to speak of the crisis in the Great Lakes in the singular, it makes more sense to think in terms of a multiplicity of crises, which, though historically distinct, and occurring in specific national contexts, have set off violent chain reactions in neighbouring states. The Hutu revolution (1959-1962) in Rwanda was one such crisis. Another was the 1994 genocide. Both have sent shock waves through the region, the first creating the conditions of a 'partial genocide' of Hutu in Burundi in 1972, the second unleashing ethnic cleansing, population displacements and civil war through many parts of the Congo, resulting in human losses far greater than in either Burundi in 1972 or Rwanda in 1994. To these we shall return in a moment, but before going any further a note of caution is in order about some of the misconceptions surrounding the region's recent agonies.

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[6] The expression is borrowed from HILL, C., *The World Turned Upside Down*, New York, Penguin Books, 1972, p.39.

[7] According to a 1991 report of the Canadian Agency for International Development, the rate of deforestation in the Kivu region is 65,000 hectares per year. "Schéma régional d'aménagement du Kivu", ACDI, September 1991, p.154.

[8] How war-induced environmental degradation affects peace prospects is best captured in a recent press report about the side-effects of the vanishing hippo population of Lake Edward. Extensive poaching by various and sundry militias has resulted in the elimination of an estimated 93 per cent of hippos, in turn reducing the dung-generated phyloplankton feeding the lake's freshwater tilapia. Which is why the efforts of local NGOs to retool former militias into fishermen have been less than successful. As one local fisherman lamented, "fifteen years ago we routinely hauled in 500 good size tilapia in one night… even catching thirty fish now is a blessing". PHILLIPS, M., "More Dung, Please: Vanishing Hippos Break a Food Chain", *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19-20, 2005, pp.1 and 4.

[9] See Moorehead's engaging depiction of Lake Kivu, "a lovely pool of green water, set among some of the most splendid forests and mountains of all Africa", penned in 1959, and compare it with the hellish picture drawn by journalists during the cholera epidemic that broke out in the wake of the Hutu refugee exodus in 1994. MOOREHEAD, A., *No Room in the Ark*, London, Penguin Books, 1962.

2.   CHALLENGING RECEIVED IDEAS

The belief that nowhere in the continent has violence taken a heavier toll than in Rwanda, with nearly a million deaths, overwhelmingly Tutsi, is one of the most persistent and persistently misleading ideas about the region. It may come as a surprise, therefore, that four times as many people have died in eastern Congo between 1998 and 2006. Although the exact number will never be known, a recent survey by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) shows that nearly 4 million people were killed from war-related causes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since 1998, «the largest documented death toll in a conflict since World War II».[10] Citing the IRC survey, the British medical journal *The Lancet* recently drew the right conclusion: «It is a sad indictment of us all that seven years into this crisis ignorance about its scale and impact is almost universal, and that international engagement remains completely out of proportion to humanitarian need».[11]

Ignorance in this case is largely a reflection of public indifference in the face of a situation which, however unfortunate, is generally seen by outside observers as African-made, rooted in the incorrigible greed of rival warlords, and therefore the responsibility of Africans. But this is only partially true. This is how a British journalist sees the other side of the coin in his coverage of «the most savage war in the world»: «it is also the story of a trail of blood that leads directly to you: to your remote control, to your mobile phone, to your laptop and to your diamond necklace… it is a battle for the metals that make our technological society vibrate and ring and bling».[12] Western economic interests are indeed deeply involved in the conflict through their participation, direct or indirect, in the illicit trade in arms and mineral resources. Both span a wide network of companies, brokers, moneychangers and facilitators. European companies – Belgian (*Cogecom*), Swiss (*Finmining, Raremet*), German (*Masingiro*), Dutch (*Chemie Pharmacie*)—the figure prominently in the war economy of the region, a fact conclusively demonstrated by several outstanding investigative reports.[13] Among various forms of US involvement, passing reference must be made to the joint venture

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[10] IRC, "Congo: Nearly 4 Million Dead in 6 Year Conflict", www.internationalrescue-committee.org.

[11] *The Lancet*, January 7, 2006.

[12] HARI, J., "A journey into the most savage war in the World", *The Independent*, May 6, 2006, p.1.

[13] See especially, CUVELIER, J. AND RAEYMAEKERS, T., *Supporting the War Economy in the DRC*: *European Companies and the Coltan Trade*, Antwerp, International Peace Information Service (IPIS), January 2002; Human Rights Watch (HRW), *The Curse of Gold, Democratic Republic of the Congo*, New York, 2005; DIETRICH, C., *Hard Currency: The Criminalized Diamond Economy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its Neighbours*, Partnership Africa Canada, Occasional Paper # 4, 2002.

between the American corporation *Trinitech* and the Dutch firm *Chemie Pharmacie*, in which the US Embassy in Kigali may have played a 'facilitating' role. As reported by one well informed observer, «the economic section of the US embassy in Kigali has been extremely active at the beginning of the war in helping establish joint ventures to exploit coltan», a fact carefully expunged from all official reports, leaving only Africans to be incriminated.[14] Though seldom brought into the public domain, the share of responsibility of Western corporate interests in supporting a war economy that has resulted in the deaths of millions cannot be ignored.

Frequent reference to confrontations among warring factions as a «resource war» points to yet another misconception, for which Paul Collier deserves full credit.[15] This is not to imply that 'greed' is not a factor in *sustaining* the bloodshed; the point rather is that it never played the central role that Collier would like us to believe in setting in motion the infernal machine leading to inter-ethnic and inter-state violence. As recent academic research has shown, instead of invoking the logic of self-serving enrichment, the denial of economic opportunities, more often than not as a result of political exclusion, emerges as the critical factor in the aetiology of conflict.[16] The basic distinction here is between exclusion as the initial motive and greed as a propelling force at a later stage of inter-group violence. The passage from exclusion to greed is not automatic; it implies major changes in the regional field of politics which also point to basic shifts in identity patterns.

3.   DECONSTRUCTING SOCIAL IDENTITIES

Tempting as it is to view ethnic diversity as the central determinant of violent behaviour in the region, the evidence shows otherwise. To the extent that it does provide a meaningful point of reference, ethnicity is not a throwback to primeval enmities. Whether socially constructed, manipulated, invented or mobilized, it is a recent phenomenon, even when its roots are sometimes traceable to pre-colonial times (as in the case of the Banyamulenge). Its contours, moreover, are constantly shifting, as are the

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[14] GRIGNON, F., "Economic Agendas in the Peace Process", in *The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Economic Dimensions of War and Peace*, NEST, M., GRIGNON, F., KISANGANI, E.F. , International Peace Academy Occasional Papers Series, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2006, p.87.

[15] COLLIER, P. et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap : Civil War and Development Policy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003.

[16] See ARNSON, J. and ZARTMAN, W. (eds.), *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection* of *Need, Creed and Greed*, Washington, Woodrow Wilson Center Press and The John Hopkins University Press, 2005; BALLENTINE, K. and SHERMAN, J. (eds.), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2003.

human targets against which it is directed. Communities seen as allies one day, are viewed as enemies the next. New coalitions are built for short-term advantage, only to dissolve into warring factions when new options suddenly emerge. In this highly fluid political field conflict is not reducible to any single identity marker. It is better conceptualized as involving different social boundaries, activated at different points in time, in response to changing political stakes.

3.1. Hutu vs. Tutsi: The Reductionist Trap

No serious analyst of the recent history of the Great Lakes would deny the central significance of the Rwanda genocide on the polarization of Hutu-Tutsi identities throughout the region. Nonetheless, to reduce every conflict at every stage of its evolution to a straight Hutu-Tutsi confrontation is unconvincing. Such a dualism overlooks the presence of alternative forms of identification, and wrongly assumes the salience of the Hutu-Tutsi dichotomy to be permanent feature of the political landscape.

The danger of Hutu-Tutsi reductionism is all the more evident when one considers the ethnographic composition of the region. Rwanda and Burundi, after all, are not the only countries whose ethnic maps reveal the existence of Hutu and Tutsi. Kinyarwanda or Kirundi-speaking people are also found in eastern Congo, southern Uganda, western Tanzania. According to the best estimates, the region claims roughly 12 million people speaking Kinyarwanda, and nearly 20 million if Kirundi, a language closely related to Kinyarwanda, is included. Although many migrated from Rwanda and Burundi to neighbouring states during and after the colonial period, the presence of Hutu and Tutsi in eastern Congo reaches back to pre-colonial times. What needs to be underscored is that migrations from Rwanda or Burundi did not occur at once but were staggered through the centuries. Length of residence, ecology and history have shaped identities in ways that defy such simple categorizations as Hutu and Tutsi. It is with reason, therefore, that some analysts, in coming to grips with the politics of North Kivu, insist on drawing distinctions between the Hutu from Bwisha, those from Rutshuru, and those from Masisi and Kalehe.[17]

Such nuances went largely unnoticed by Belgian civil servants. In its effort to make more 'legible' the region's complex ethnic configurations the colonial state contributed significantly to formalize and legitimize the Hutu-Tutsi polarity. Thus the 1959 census figures for what was then the Kivu region (now divided into North and South Kivu and Maniema) designate,

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[17] BUCYALIMWE, M.S., "Le TPD à Goma (Nord Kivu): Mythes et Réalités", in MARYSSE, S., REYNTJENS, F. (eds.), *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2003-2004*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2004, p.140.

oddly enough, as *Bantous Hamites* and *Hamites*, respectively, the 184,089 Hutu and 53,233 Tutsi registered, thus making the Banyarwanda the third largest group after the Banande (390,704) and the Bashi (382, 572).[18] Time and again historians have drawn attention to the perverse effects of the colonizer's recourse to Hamitic and Bantu labels, as if to impose its own normative construction on Hutu and Tutsi.[19] Equally striking is the phenomenon described by James Scott in *Seeing Like a State*, i.e. «the state's attempt to make a society legible, to arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions…» These state simplifications, he adds, «did not successfully represent the actual activity of the society they depicted, nor were they intended to… they were maps that, when allied with state power, would enable much of the reality they depicted to be remade».[20]

Nonetheless, such attempts at remaking social realities did not obliterate all distinctions within Hutu and Tutsi. Nor did they erase the persistent tension between them, on the one hand, and the so-called «native» Congolese on the other. Many Kinyarwanda speakers, Hutu and Tutsi, trace their families' origins to pre-colonial times, and have every right to claim the status of Congolese citizens. This is certainly true of the Banyamulenge («the people from Mulenge") established in the high plateau area of South Kivu since the 19th century if not earlier,[21] of the Hutu of Bwisha, many of whom lived in this area long before the onset of colonial rule, while others came as agricultural labourers from Rwanda in the 1930s to supply the European plantocracy of North Kivu with cheap labour. In short, as social categories, the terms 'Hutu' and 'Tutsi' cannot do justice to the registers of historical experience that lie at the heart of these many sub-loyalties.

3.2. The case of the Banyamulenge

A rather unique case of ethnogenesis, the Banyamulenge are a perfect example of how geography, history and politics combine to create a new set

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[18] LEMARCHAND, R., "The Fire in the Great Lakes", *Current History*, Vol. 98, No. 628, May 1999, p.196.

[19] For an excellent treatment, see BALIBUTSA, M., *Une archéologie de la violence en Afrique des Grands Lacs*, Libreville, Editions du CICIBA, 1999, pp.246-444. See also CHRETIEN, J.P., *The Great Lakes of Africa: Two Thousand Years of History* (translated by STRAUSS, S.), New York, Zone Books, 2003.

[20] SCOTT, J.S., *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1998, p.2, 3.

[21] See WILLAME, J.-C., *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identitaire au Kivu*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997.

of identities within the larger Banyarwanda cultural frame.[22] Heavily concentrated on the high-lying plateau of the Itombwe region of South Kivu, estimates of their numerical importance vary wildly. The figure of 400,000 cited by the late Joseph Mutambo is grossly inflated.[23] A more reliable figure would be between 50,000 and 70,000. Their name derives from the locality (Mulenge) whence they are said to originate. The term, however, has been the source of much controversy because it became increasingly used in the late 1990s as an omnibus label to designate all Tutsi living in North and South Kivu. It came into usage in 1976, as a result of the efforts of the late Gisaro Muhoza, a member of parliament from South Kivu, to regroup the Banyamulenge populations of Mwenga, Fizi and Uvira territories into a single administrative entity. Although his initiative failed, the name stuck, and by 1996 it was often used by ethnic Tutsi and Congolese to designate all Tutsi residents of North and South Kivu.

Though much of their history is shrouded in mystery, most historians would agree that they are descendants of Tutsi pastoralists who migrated from Rwanda some time in the nineteenth century, long before the advent of colonial rule (a fact vehemently contested, however, by many Congolese intellectuals). They are culturally and socially distinct from the long-established ethnic Tutsi of North Kivu, and the Tutsi refugees of the 1959-62 Rwanda revolution. Many in fact speak Kinyarwanda differently. Their political awakening can be traced back to the eastern Congo rebellion of 1964-65. Many initially joined the insurgency, only to switch sides when they saw their cattle being slaughtered to feed to insurgents. Their contribution to the counter-insurgency did not go unnoticed in Kinshasa. Many were rewarded with lucrative positions in the provincial capital, and more and more of their children flocked to missionary schools. From a primarily rural, isolated, backward community, the Banyamulenge would soon become increasingly aware of themselves as a political force.

How many joined the RPF in the 1990s is impossible to tell. What is beyond doubt is that they formed the bulk of Kabila's *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL) in 1996, and after the fall of Bukavu they filled most of the administrative positions vacated by the Congolese, some of whom were ardent Mobutists. Equally clear is that they suffered very heavy losses during the anti-Mobutist crusade as well as during the 1998 crisis, when many were massacred by Kabila's supporters in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi. It was said that in the late 1990s Bukavu claimed a larger number of Banyamulenge widows than any other town in the region.

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[22] For much of the information in this section I am indebted to Etienne Rusamira, Sanson Muziri and Mansse Muller Ruhimbika for sharing with me their views on the many issues relating to the history and politics of the Banyamulenge.

[23] MUTAMBO, J., *Les Banyamulenge*, Limete/Kinshasa, Imprimerie Saint Paul, 1997, p.26.

The creation in mid-1998 of the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD), under Rwandan sponsorship, was meant to provide them with a vehicle for the defence of their interests – and of anyone else's who cared to join – but as it evolved into an instrument for the defence of Rwandan interests in eastern Congo, many felt aggrieved and alienated. The feeling that they have been 'instrumentalised' by Kagame is widely shared among them. As we shall see, this sense of grievance against Rwanda is in large part responsible for the internal strains and divisions suffered by the community. All this, however, does not detract from the fact that, as a group, the Banyamulenge are profoundly aware of their cultural distinctiveness. Few people have been dealt a harsher blow by history: many argue, with justice, that they have been twice victimized, first by Kagame who used them as cannon fodder for the defence of Rwanda's strategic interests, and then by Congolese extremists, as happened in Bukavu in June 2004, when in the wake of an abortive Banyamulenge-led coup hundreds perished.

3.3. 'Otherness'

What defines the 'other' as an ally or an enemy? Several objective criteria come to mind: language (e.g. 'Rwandophones' or Kinyarwanda speakers), country of origin ('Banyarwanda'), place of settlement ('Banyamulenge', the people of Mulenge), ethnicity (Hutu and Tutsi), to which must be added *morphologie*, or body maps, a reference that increasingly crops up in newspaper articles in Goma and Bukavu. None of the above, however, tells us why one set of criteria should be more relevant than another at any given time: why, for example Hutu and Tutsi were generally lumped together as the embodiment of a "Banyarwanda" menace from 1963 until 1994, when the label quickly dissolved into Hutu-Tutsi enmities; or why the term Banyamulenge, as distinct from Tutsi, carried such threatening overtones among other communities from 1996 onwards.

'Otherness' has less to do with objective identity markers than with the perceived threats posed by one community to another. Whether real or imaginary, such threats do not materialize out of thin air. They are intimately related to changes in the national and regional political environments. Political murder (Ndadaye 1993), genocide (Rwanda 1994), refugee flows (predominantly Tutsi in 1959-63, Hutu in 1994), ethnic cleansing (of Hutu refugees in eastern Congo in 1996-7), the approach of elections (2005-6) – these, as we shall see, are the events and circumstances that have crystallized group identities.

Several phases can be identified in the redefinition of group identities:

- From the so-called «Kanyarwanda war» in 1963 until 1994 the tendency among «native» Congolese was to view all Banyarwanda living in eastern Congo as the incarnation of a multi-faceted menace.

- After the Rwanda bloodbath the Hutu-Tutsi conflict metastasized through much of North and South Kivu, causing untold casualties among long time Tutsi residents, and setting the stage for the 1996 Rwandan-led and Rwandan-inspired invasion of the Congo by the AFDL.[24] From then on the Hutu-Tutsi frame of reference became the dominant identity marker and a powerful tool of propaganda for extremists at both ends of the ethnic spectrum.[25]

- Yet by 1998, with the second Congo war, as an ever greater number of actors comes into view, the political equations become more complicated, and the straight Hutu-Tutsi cleavage somewhat less relevant. A more complex cognitive map emerges causing Hutu and Tutsi to fragment into factions, and enter new patterns of alliances at home and abroad.

- Not the least intriguing of the mutations undergone by the regional identity prism is the emergence in recent times of language as the principal yardstick for lumping together Hutu and Tutsi under the «Rwandophone» label, a strategy clearly inspired by the provincial authorities of North Kivu to expand their grassroots constituency on the eve of the elections.

To grasp the significance of these episodes, something must be said of the long-term social and economic forces that have reshaped regional identities.

4.   MULTI-LAYERED CONFLICTS

The theme of exclusion runs like a red skein through the history of the Great Lakes. It lies at the heart of the 1959-62 Hutu revolution in Rwanda; thirty years later it served as the propelling force behind the 1990 invasion of

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[24] As if to give credence to the worst stereotypes about the Tutsi's ingrained deceitfulness and dissimulation, Kagame consistently denied having anything to do with the 1996 invasion; only months later, in an interview with John Pomfret, did he finally admit Rwanda's role in planning and directing the rebellion leading to Mobutu's overthrow. POMFRET, J., "Rwandans Led Revolt in Congo", *Washington Post*, July 9, 1997, p.1.

[25] Referring to the violent confrontations that took place in Bukavu and Gatumba (Burundi) in 2004, a recent International Crisis Group (ICG) report notes that "the crises illustrate that the notion of besieged Tutsi and Hutu communities is still used to justify military action against the transitional government by both Congolese dissidents and the Rwanda government". ICG, "The Congo's Transition is Failing: Crisis in the Kivu", *Africa Report* No. 91, March 30, 2005, p.11.

Rwanda by the *Rwanda Patriotic Front* (RPF).[26] Barely concealed by the ban on ethnic labels, ethnic discrimination has since emerged as the hallmark of the Kagame regime, to an extent unprecedented in the history of Rwanda. Burundi is another case in point: political exclusion is the obvious explanation behind the Hutu insurrection of 1972, in turn leading to the first genocide recorded in the annals of the Great Lakes.[27] Nor is eastern Congo an exception. Where it does stand as a special case is that the groups targeted for political exclusion are not always the same as those affected by economic and social discrimination. In the seventies and eighties the former were generally of Rwandan origins,[28] whether Hutu or Tutsi; the latter included those «native» Congolese communities who insistently denounced the «Banyarwanda» as the main source of economic oppression. Out of this situation has emerged a rich potential for inter-group violence.

4.1.   The threat of Banyarwanda domination: "Kanyarwanda", 1963-1966

The little-known «Kanyarwanda war» was the first public display of anti-Tutsi sentiment in post-independence Zaire. It lasted from 1963 to 1966 and resulted in large-scale massacres of Hutu and Tutsi. Its focus was the newly created "provincette" of North Kivu, one of the three entities that once formed Kivu province. The decision to carve smaller entities out of the pre-existing province was in large part inspired by the growing fears of Congolese 'tribes', notably the Hunde, that the Banyarwanda were about to tighten their grip on provincial institutions and thus threaten the autonomy of their ethnic neighbours. The geographical focus of the anti-Banyarwanda revolt was Masisi, and it involved, in essence, an alliance of Hunde and Nande elements against Hutu and Tutsi, with the Bashi generally supportive of the Banyarwanda. One of the first moves of the Hunde insurgents, according to one observer, was to reduce to ashes the local administrative archives so as to prevent the identification of the Banyarwanda otherwise than as refugees or foreigners.[29] That the insurrection should have had its point of ignition in Masisi – where large tracts of land had long been appropriated by

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[26] The extent to which Uganda's politics of indigeneity translated into exclusionary policies and practices directed against Banyarwanda, and thus played a key role in clinching the RPF's decision to invade Rwanda, is excellently discussed by MAMDANI, M., *When Victims Become Killers*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp.159-184.

[27] See LEMARCHAND, R., "Le génocide de 1972 au Burundi : Les silences de l'Histoire", *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 167, XLII-3, 2002, pp.551-567.

[28] There were, however, notable exceptions, like Barthélémy Bisengimana, who served as Mobutu's chief of staff from 1965 to 1977.

[29] NDIMUBANZI, N., "La question identitaire au Bwisha (Rutshuru, Nord-Kivu) : Le point de vue de l'histoire", in *Les identités meurtrières*, *op. cit.*, p.64.

Banyarwanda elements – is no less significant than the burning of provincial archives: in whipping up anti-Banyarwanda feelings the Kanyarwanda uprising was meant to call into question their claims to the land as well as their citizenship as much as their dominant position at the provincial level.

4.2.   The land problem

Thirty years after the Kanyarwanda war Masisi would flare up again in an orgy of anti-Banyarwanda violence. In March 1993, like a bolt out of the blue, armed groups of Nande, Hunde and Nyanga youth suddenly turned against all Banyarwanda in sight. The intervention of Mobutu's army, code-named Operation Mbata, though intended to restore order, in fact generated further violence. From May to September 1996 Zairian troops lived up to their reputation as a rabble, plundering much of the rural areas south of Bwisha, along the Rwandan border.[30] By the time violence died down an estimated 14,000 people had been killed, most of them Banyarwanda. Although the precipitating factors remain unclear,[31] there can be little doubt that the underlying causes of the insurrection lay in the growing scarcity of land, which drove the local peasant communities to the edge of starvation. For this situation the insurgents did not hesitate to hold the Banyarwanda responsible.

One need not go too far back into the past to realize that the colonial state also bears much of the blame. The story has been told many times of how, in the 1930s, Belgian authorities embarked on a vast resettlement scheme designed to encourage the influx of Banyarwanda (essentially Hutu) from Rwanda to North Kivu, the aim being to provide Belgian planters with a cheap labour force and create an outlet for the growing population pressure in Rwanda.[32] What is not always realized is that this sudden influx of immigrants played havoc with the traditional organization of the host communities, most notably the Hunde. Not content to expel many Hunde clans from their traditional homelands, the Belgian authorities proceed to create a Banyarwanda chiefdom in the heart of Hunde domains, the so-called

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[30] BUCYALIMWE, M.S., "Kivu and Ituri in the Congo War: The Roots and Nature of a Linkage", in *The Political Economy of the Great Lakes Region in Africa*, MARYSSE, S. and REYNTJENS, F. (eds.), 2005, New York, Palgrave, pp.190-222.

[31] According to one interpretation, it all started in the village of Ntoto in the Walikale territory, a hundred kilometers west of Goma, with the massacre of a crowd of Banyarwanda by armed Nyanga youth on March 20. About fifty were reported killed. See MURAIRI MITIMA, J.B., *Les Bahunde aux pieds des volcan Virunga (R.D Congo),* 2005, Paris, L'Harmattan, p.174.

[32] See REYNTJENS, F. and MARYSSE, S. (eds.), *Conflits au Kivu: Antécédents et Enjeux*, Antwerp, Centre for the Study of the Great Lakes Region of Africa, December 1996 (mimeo); MATHIEU, P., LAURENT, P-J., WILLAME, J-C. (eds.), *Démocratie, enjeux fanciers et pratiques locales en Afrique*, 1996, Paris, L'Harmattan; MATHIEU, P. and WILLAME, J-C., *Conflits et guerres au Kivu et dans la région des Grands Lacs*, 1999, Paris, L'Harmattan.

Gishari enclave (Bwisha), headed by a Tutsi chief.[33] The Gishari take-over was only the thin edge of the wedge. By 1959 in Rutshuru the Hutu and Tutsi were ten times as numerous as the indigenous Hunde population (10,193); in Masisi almost two thirds of the population were immigrants from Rwanda.[34]

Map 1: Patterns of violence in North Kivu (1993-1997)[35]

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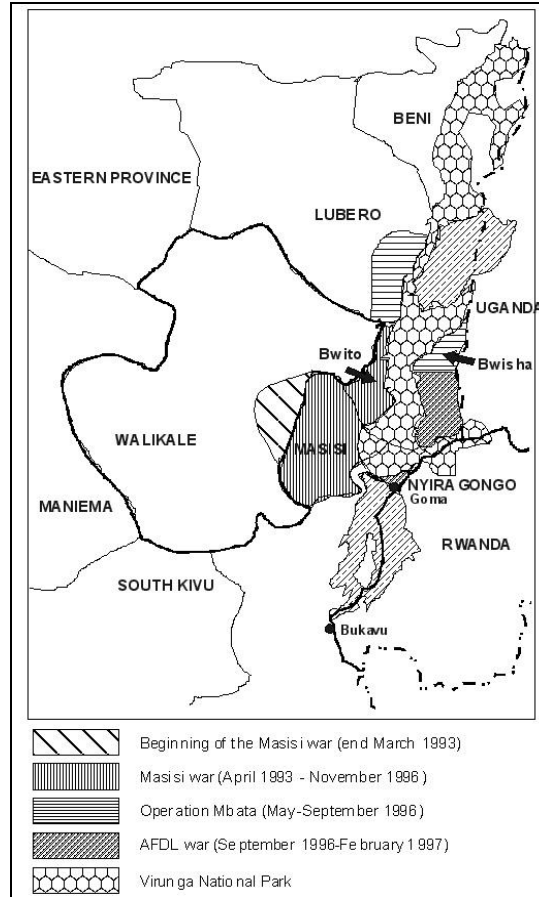
[33] In an otherwise excellent analysis, the author of a recent ICG report refers, bizarrely enough, to «the separate units called 'Gishare'», under which «the immigrant communities were administered, with Tutsi chiefs ruling over Hutu subjects», ICG, *The Congo Transition is Failing*, *op. cit*., p.8. Just as fanciful is the notion of «ethnic purges in the 1950's in neighboring Rwanda», and the contention that «in 1972 Mobutu bestowed citizenship in blanket fashion on all Rwandan immigrants», *Ibid*. This is as close as one gets to science fiction in any of the recent ICG reports on the Great Lakes. For an excellent historical account of the avatars of the Gishari chiefdom, see MURAIRI MITIMA, J-B., *op. cit.*, p.163 ff.
[34] *Population du Kivu. Résumé* (typescript). From the author's files.
[35] See BUCYALIMWE, M.S., *op. cit.,* pp.203.

Unlike the early migrant labourers who settled in Bwisha and Masisi under the wing of the *Mission d'Immigration des Banyarwanda* (MIB), the «fifty-niners», so called because they fled Rwanda during the revolution of 1959-62, were overwhelmingly Tutsi; they were incomparably better off in terms of material wealth and education than their Hutu predecessors; and they could count on the unfailing support of a leading émigré figure, Barthélemy Bisengimana, who by 1970 wielded considerable power as Mobutu's chief of staff. What Bisengimana could not achieve, bribery usually did. Bribing the local authorities to acquire land became standard practice.

The result has been to set in motion a massive process of land alienation. The extent of the holdings acquired by wealthy Tutsi speaks for itself: Kasungu received 10,000 hectares, Ngizayo 2,000, Bisengimana himself received one of the biggest ranches in the region, over 5,000 hectares.[36] The expropriation of native lands was further facilitated by the Bakajika law of 1966, which converted all public land into the domain of the state, followed by the Zairianisation measures of 1973. Instrumental as it was in operating massive land transfers into Tutsi hands, the effects of 'étatisation-cum-zairianisation' were by no means limited to North Kivu. At the root of the Hema-Lendu conflict in Ituri lies a very similar phenomenon. As Thierry Vircoulon has shown, the accumulation of land in Hema hands, with the Lendu often reduced to the status of day labourers, occurred largely at the expense of the Lendu communities, who, like many Hunde and Nyanga in North Kivu, eventually found themselves facing a subsistence crisis.[37]

While intensifying anti-Banyarwanda sentiment, land expropriation has had a profoundly disruptive impact on indigenous societies. This is a point of crucial significance to an understanding of the next phase in the regional dynamics of violence. As Koen Vlassenroot has convincingly argued, the cumulative effects of the repeated violations of customary land rights, the break-up of patron-client ties, the erosion of chiefly authority have created a critical mass of marginalized youth, many of whom later joined the warlords.[38] And just as the warlords can be seen as surrogated patrons for their deracinated followings, fighting for gold and diamonds and coltan is

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[36] Interview with MATETSA, N., Goma, Aug. 21, 1993.

[37] VIRCOULON, T., "L'Ituri ou la guerre au pluriel", *Afrique contemporaine*, Vol. 215, n°3, 2005, p.131.

[38] See VLASSENROOT, K., "Identity and insecurity. The building of ethnic agendas in South Kivu", in DOOM, R. and GORUS, J. eds., *Politics of Identity and Economics of Conflict in the Great Lakes Region*, Brussels, VUB Press, 2000, pp.268-288, and "Land and conflict: The case of Masisi", in VLASSENROOT, K., and RAEYMAEKERS, T., *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo*, Ghent, Academia Press, 2004, pp.81-101.

perhaps best understood, in David Keen's words, as "a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection".[39]

Another consequence of the land issue has been to give added urgency to the citizenship problem. The land problem and the nationality problem are but two sides of the same coin. Access to land presupposes access to citizenship; withdrawal of citizenship rights from the Banyarwanda meant the end of their security in land rights. But it would also mean, for many, the end of their physical security as residents of eastern Congo.

4.3.   The nationality question

A turning point in relations between immigrant and indigenous communities came in 1981, with the adoption of a new nationality law. By a stroke of the pen the Legislative Council repealed the 1972 law which gave citizenship rights to «persons originating from Rwanda-Urundi who were residents of the Kivu before January 1, 1950», and instead adopted the notoriously restrictive *ordonnance-loi* of March 28, 1981 which stipulated that citizenship could only be conferred on persons «who could show that one of their ancestors was member of a tribe or part of a tribe established in the Congo prior to October 18, 1908», when the Congo formally became a Belgian colony.[40] The dismissal of Bisengimana in 1977, for reasons that remain unclear, thus paved the way for the virtual denial of citizenship rights to all Banyarwanda, irrespective of their date of arrival.

Although the 1981 law was never implemented, it nevertheless provided official justification for further discriminatory moves. Candidates suspected of «foreign» origins were systematically prevented from running during the 1982 and 1987 elections on grounds of «dubious nationality». Despite great hopes among the Banyarwanda that the National Conference (1991) would resolve the nationality issue to their satisfaction, this was not to be the case. The party delegations representing their interests were refused admission to the conference. Civil society delegates did not fare much better. Given their well-established claims to citizenship, the Banyamulenge of South Kivu were especially resentful of such exclusionary measures. After the candidacies of two leading Banyamulenge were declared invalid in 1987, their constituents destroyed the ballot boxes. Many were arrested. When in October

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[39] KEEN, D., "The economic functions of violence in civil wars", *Adelphi Papers*, No. 320, cited in VLASSENROOT, "Identity and insecurity", *op. cit.*, p.284.

[40] *Conflits au Kivu : Antécédents et Enjeux*, *op. cit.*, p.23, 25. Unsurprisingly, the deputy responsible for sponsoring the bill was a Nande from North Kivu, Denis Paluku, who also happened to be a member of the Political Bureau of the ruling *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR). Paluku served as governor of North and South Kivu before ending up as governor of Katanga (then known as Shaba).

1993 the news reached South Kivu that the newly elected Hutu president of Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, had been killed by Tutsi officers, several Banyamulenge were stoned to death in the streets of Uvira.[41]

The worst was yet to come. While the victory of the RPF in Kigali was greeted with mixed feelings in eastern Congo, the report of the so-called Vangu commission – a parliamentary commission charged with investigating the identity of the refugee populations – declared the Banyamulenge «foreign migrants» («*immigrés étrangers*»). On the basis of this palpable absurdity the transitional parliament adopted a resolution on April 28, 1995, demanding the repatriation to their countries of origin of «all Rwanda and Burundi refugees and immigrants, without condition and without delay», including the Banyamulenge henceforth categorized as foreigners.[42] From then on the Banyamulenge came to be seen increasingly as Rwandan Tutsi in disguise. As the weekly paper *Munanira*, published in Uvira, commented, «this sly Zairwa (sic) is but a Rwandan whose morphology and ideology is identical to that of Paul Kagame… The Banyamulenge are, quite simply, Tutsi, and Rwandans at that».[43]

As happened elsewhere in the history of the Great Lakes, the stage was set for a self-fulfilling prophecy – grounded in self-protection — that inevitably led the Banyamulenge to become Kigali's staunchest allies during the AFDL rebellion leading to the undoing of the Mobutist dictatorship.

5.   INTERLOCKING CRISES

As the history of the region makes clear, its social upheavals are closely interconnected. An obvious example is the murderous, cross-border tit-for-tat behind the ethnic crises in Rwanda and Burundi: the Hutu revolution in Rwanda generated a powerful backlash in Burundi, steadily raising the ethnic temperature, until some 200,000 Hutu were killed by Tutsi in 1972, in what can legitimately be called a partial genocide. In Rwanda the blowback effect of the Burundi carnage took the form of violent anti-Tutsi pogroms, which paved the way for the rise to power of Juvenal Habyarimana in 1973. We also noted how in Uvira the news of Ndadaye's death triggered a brutal retaliation against Banyamulenge civilians. It is in Rwanda, however, that Ndadaye's assassination had its most dramatic impact as it ushered an immediate and drastic radicalization of anti-Tutsi sentiment, via Hutu Power, that played directly into the hands of the génocidaires.

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[41] RUHIMBIKA, M., *Les Banyamulenge (Congo-Zaire) entre deux guerres*, 2001, Paris, L'Harmattan, p.30.
[42] For the full text of the resolution, see RUHIMBIKA, *op. cit*., pp.203-211.
[43] *Ibid*. p.31.

None of the above, however, carried consequences as devastating and wide-ranging as the 1994 genocide. The fallout has been little short of seismic. The litany of cataclysms is all too familiar: over a million Hutu refugees pouring across the border into Zaïre, creating chaos and penury in many parts of North and South Kivu; repeated cross-border raids into Rwanda by remnants of the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR) and *interahamwe*, accompanied in parts of North Kivu by wholesale massacres of ethnic Tutsi, causing many to seek refuge in Rwanda; growing evidence of humanitarian aid diverted into extremist hands, and of Mobutu's military assistance to the Hutu refugee leaders. All of which raised deep anxieties among Rwanda's new leaders.

The critical turning points came in 1996 and 1998.[44] The destruction of the refugee camps in October 1996, followed by the killing of tens of thousands of civilian refugees by units of the *Rwandan Patriotic Army* (now known as the *Rwandan Defence Forces* [RDF]), was only the first stage of a grand politico-military strategy aimed at the overthrow of the Mobutist dictatorship and its replacement by a Tutsi-led protectorate. The 1996 war, nominally fought by Laurent Kabila's AFDL, with critical support from Rwanda, Uganda and Angola, successfully achieved each of these objectives. As Kinshasa fell to the AFDL «rebels», Kabila emerged as the ideal candidate to play the role of a compliant head of state – which he did until August 1998, when he turned against the king-makers, thus triggering the second Congo war.

Rather than retelling the story of the 1998 crisis, let us at this point shift our focus, and consider the case of RCD Commander Laurent Nkunda: his trajectory is illustrative of a range of experiences that help uncover the links between certain crucial episodes in the history of the region.

5.1.   Agency: A spoiler named Nkunda

Commander Laurent Nkunda's main claim to fame is to be among the most persistent «spoilers»[45] of the precarious peace that loomed on the Kivu

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[44] For a detailed discussion, see the outstanding contributions of LANOTTE, O., *Congo: Guerres sans frontières*, Bruxelles, GRIP, Editions Complexe, 2003, and REYNTJENS, F., *La guerre des Grands Lacs: Alliances mouvantes et conflist extra-territoriaux en Afrique Centrale*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1999.

[45] The concept of 'spoiler' is borrowed from STEADMAN, S. J., "Introduction", in STEADMAN, S. J., ROTHCHILD, D. and COUSENS, E. (eds.), *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, A project of the International Peace Academy, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2002. The author writes: «My research tried to add to the differentiation among cases of civil war termination by putting forth a typology of spoilers, based on their position in the peace process, number of spoilers, their intent and whether the locus of spoiling behaviour lies with the leader or followers of the party.», *Ibid*., p.12. Our argument here is that the crises

horizon after the 2002 Global and Inclusive Agreement. He has fought in two theatres, in Rwanda and in the Congo, and is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Congolese – and, indirectly, of the many Banyamulenge murdered in Gatumba (Burundi) in August 2004.

A reliable source describes him as «the son of a Tutsi cattle herder in Masisi», who spent time «teaching in a local school before joining the RPF in the early 1990s».[46] Although there is every reason to believe that he must have fought in Rwanda during the civil war, exactly where and in what capacity remains unknown. He eventually surfaced in eastern Congo as a member of the AFDL, and after 1998 joined the RCD, «where he was an intelligence officer and held various key positions in the military leadership».

His reputation for brutality is well established. So is his role in organizing the bloody repression of the Kisangani mutiny in May 2002. When a group of soldiers and police officers of the DRC mutinied against their RCD officers, Nkunda was serving as commander of the seventh brigade in Goma, after completing a military training program at Gabiro, in Rwanda. Along with several Kinyarwanda-speaking officers, including the notorious Gabriel Amisi, and 120 troops, Nkunda was sent to Kisangani to restore peace and order. He did so with exemplary cruelty, carrying scores of summary executions. According to Human Rights Watch, «RCD officers had been responsible for the deaths of more than 160 persons».[47]

After the installation of the transitional government in 2003 he was appointed regional military commander of Kasai Oriental. He declined the offer, however, «saying that it would not be safe for him to travel to Kinshasa and Mbuji-Mayi». He resigned from his position in the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC), presumably to make himself available for other missions. One such mission occurred in May 2004 in Bukavu, when a Banyamulenge colonel, Jules Mutebutsi, also trained in Rwanda and subsequently integrated into the FARDC, mutinied against his commanding officer (General Mbuza Mabe, commander of the tenth military region) and seized control of the provincial capital of South Kivu. It was Nkunda, however, who provided the much-needed military assistance to overcome the resistance of the FARDC. Although the mutiny proved short-lived, more enduring were its after-effects. After the army retook control of the city scores of Banyamulenge were killed by mobs of enraged Congolese,

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that have swept across the region are as much the product of individual spoilers as they are the result of structural factors of the kind dicussed below.

[46] ICG, "Congo's Elections: Making or Breaking the Peace", *Africa Report*, No. 108, 27 April 2006, p.14, note 97. Except where otherwise indicated, all other quotes in this section are from this same source.

[47] Human Rights Watch, *War Crimes in Kisangani: The Response of Rwandan-Backed Rebels to the May 2002 Mutiny*, Vol. 14, No. 6, August 2002, p.2.

while thousands found refuge in the Gatumba refugee camp in Burundi. It was in Gatumba, in August of the same year, that over a hundred perished at the hands of Hutu extremists affiliated with the Burundi-based *Forces Nationales de Libération* (FNL) and Mai-Mai elements from the DRC.

Determined to live up to his reputation as a spoiler, Nkunda's next port of call was Kanyabayonga, near the border with Rwanda, where in December 2004 he took on several units of the FARDC, presumably with logistical assistance from the Rwandan army, bringing relations between Rwanda and the DRC near the breaking point. More recently, in January 2006, Commander Nkunda made another show of military prowess when he attacked the town of Rutshuru, causing the displacement of tens of thousands of panic-stricken villagers.

One hesitates to make too much of the Nkunda vignette, but it is emblematic of how at certain critical junctures the choices made by individual actors have triggered one crisis after another. Once this is said, the regional context in which decisions were made is no less worthy of attention.

5.2.   Cross-Border Ties: The kin-country syndrome

What Huntington refers to as the «kin country syndrome»[48] — where communities sharing similar cultural ties are mobilized across national boundaries, in support of, or against, a government – draws attention to an obvious dimension of the Great Lakes crises. Although the phenomenon is not unique to the region, in no other part of the continent has it played a more decisive role in projecting ethnic hatreds from one national arena to another.

Kin-country rallying was indeed a critical vector in the diffusion of ethnic enmities from Rwanda into Burundi in the early 1960s, and back from Burundi into Rwanda in 1973. So, also, among ethnic Tutsi in eastern Congo during the early stages of the civil war in Rwanda, when hundreds were recruited into the ranks of the RPF. And when they found themselves in the crosshairs of Congolese and refugee extremists in 1996, Rwanda did not hesitate to reciprocate the favour. While the RPF acted as the senior partner, many were the Banyamulenge who served as auxiliaries in the destruction of the refugee camps, and in subsequent 'cleansing' operations. Much the same coalescence of ethnic affinities presided over the emergence of the solidly Hutu *Forces Démocratique pour la Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) in eastern Congo, notwithstanding the bitter rivalries currently tearing its leadership.[49]

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[48] HUNTINGTON, S., *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996, p.272.

[49] See RAFTI, M., "Crumbling in Exile: The Changing Nature of the Rwandan Opposition", in *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs, Annuaire 2004-2005*, in MARYSSE, S., and REYNTJENS, F. (eds.), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005, pp.95-118.

Again, consider the case of the Nande of North Kivu (known as Bakonjo in Uganda): for years Nande involvement in the wide-ranging trade-networks linking their core area of Butembo-Beni to East Africa and beyond helped strengthen Nande-Bakonjo ties, but the connection became politically significant in the 1990s when, in his effort to weaken the Museveni regime, Mobutu did everything he could to bolster the Bakonjo-led *National Army for the Liberation of Uganda* (NALU), a move which elicited a fair degree of sympathy among the Nande.[50] Parts of North Kivu became a privileged sanctuary for NALU militants. According to one observer, armed with weapons sent from Kinshasa and Khartoum, on November 13 they launched a major offensive against Uganda, which temporarily brought under its control much of the Kasese district and the town of Mbarara.[51]

Such «fault line conflicts», Huntington notes, «tend to be vicious and bloody, since fundamental issues of identity are at stake. In addition, they tend to be lengthy; they may be interrupted by truces or agreements but these tend to break down and the conflict is resumed».[52]

5.3.   Refugee flows

In the absence of massive outpourings of Hutu refugees to neighbouring states – with vivid memories of the violence they experienced, or inflicted – it is a question of whether kinship ties could have been mobilized so quickly and so effectively, and whether the security concerns of neighbouring states would have assumed the same urgency. Much of the history of the region is indeed reducible to the transformation of refugee-generating conflict into conflict-generating refugees, or as Myron Weiner puts it, «conflicts create refugees, but refugees also create conflicts».[53] From the days of the Hutu revolution in Rwanda to the invasion of the «refugee warriors» from Uganda in 1994, from the huge exodus of Hutu from Burundi in 1972 to the 'cleansing' of Hutu refugee camps in 1996-7, the pattern which emerges again and again is one in which refugee populations serve as the vehicles through which ethnic identities are mobilized and manipulated, host communities preyed upon and external resources extracted. The net result, as

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[50] PRUNIER, G., "Rebel movements and proxy warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo", *African Affairs*, vol. 103, no. 412, 2004, p.368.

[51] MWAKA BWENGE, A., "Les milices Mai-Mai à l'est de la République du Congo: Dynamique d'une gouvernementalité en situation de crise", *Revue Africaine de Sociologie*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 2003, p.23.

[52] HUNTINGTON, *op. cit.*, 252.

[53] WEINER, M. *The Global Migration Crisis: Challenge to States and to Human Rights*, New York, Harper's Collins, 1995, p.137. See also his first-rate analysis of the causes of refugee flows, "Bad Neighbors, Bad Neighborhoods: An Inquiry into the Causes of Refugee Flows", *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Summer 1996, pp.5-42.

one observer noted, has been to «create domestic instability, generate interstate tension and threaten international security».[54]

The view that «refugees are potentially a tool in interstate conflicts»[55] is nowhere more cruelly demonstrated than by the fate that befell the Hutu refugees – numbering over a million. Manipulated by their own leaders as well as by Mobutu and ultimately by Laurent Kabila, they paid a heavy price in the retribution visited upon them by the RPF. Beatrice Umutesi's searing account of her gruelling trek across two thousand miles bears testimony to the refugee's agonies in the course of the relentless manhunt conducted by the Rwandan army assisted by AFDL units.[56] There is no need to speak of a «humanitarian hysteria»[57] to describe the concern of the international community in order to recognize the self-destructive consequences of the disastrous policies pursued by Hutu extremists and their Zairian allies. There can be no denying that Hutu leaders did organize armed raids into Rwanda. Nor is there any doubt about the diverting of humanitarian aid, presumably to use it as bargaining chip with civilian refugees, or about Mobutu's role in arming refugee factions. Just how serious were the risks thus posed to the host country became clear after the Rwandan military began a series of attacks against the camps on October 18, 1996.

Arming refugees is one thing; disarming them is a far more difficult undertaking. Thus if Laurent Kabila found it expedient in 1998 to arm Hutu refugees in his campaign against the Rwanda-backed RCD, disarming them once they have outlived their strategic usefulness is only one of the many headaches facing his son on the eve of multiparty elections.

As the foregoing suggests, strategies based on a calculus of short-term advantages may entail heavy costs a few years down the road. Similarly, alliances that seem perfectly logical one day may turn out to be utterly counterproductive the next. Kagame's experience with his less than obedient AFDL ally is just one example of the inherent fickleness of political clients.

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[54] LOESCHER, G., "Refugee Movements and International Security", *Adelphi Paper No. 268*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, 1992, London.
[55] WEINER, 1995, *op. cit.*, p.137.
[56] UMUTESI, B., *Surviving the Slaughter: The Ordeal of a Rwandan Refugee in Zaire*, 2004, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press; see also, LEMARCHAND, R., "Bearing Witness to Mass Murder", *African Studies Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3, December 2005, pp.93-101.
[57] The expression is Howard Adelman's in his highly biased interpretation of the refugee problem. See ADELMAN, H., "The Use and Abuse of Refugees in Zaire", in STEADMAN, S. J., and TANNER, F. (eds.), *Refugee Manipulation: War, Politics and The Abuse of Human Suffering*, 2003, Washington, The Brookings Institution Press, p.120. For a persuasive, well documented counter-argument, see REYNTJENS, *La guerre des Grands Lacs*, *op. cit.*, pp.100-142, and GODDING, J.P., *Réfugiés rwandais au Zaïre : Sommes-nous encore des hommes*? Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997.

6.   A FLUID LANDSCAPE

The 1996-1997 anti-Mobutist crusade did little more than replace one dictatorship with another. The 1998 war, on the other hand, marks a sharp break in the region's history. It ushered in one of the bloodiest wars recorded in recent times, the effects of which are still tragically visible in many parts of the country. Much of this violence, however, has gone unreported. It unfolds not along a well-delineated battle line but in oil-slick patterns in separate provincial and sub-provincial arenas. Each episode has its own logic, each its own set of actors. And each is in some measure traceable to the reversal of alliances that followed in the wake of Kabila's decision to challenge the overrule of his Tutsi 'protectors'.

6.1.   Switching sides

How the Kigali-sponsored attack against the refugee camps morphed into a full-scale, externally supported invasion aimed at the overthrow of Mobutu is beyond the scope of this discussion.[58] Suffice it to note that the AFDL could not have reached Kinshasa with such speed and relative ease without the critical support it received from Rwanda, Uganda and Angola. Their shared dislike of Mobutu, based on a realistic assessment of their respective interests, proved a fragile glue in the face of the new challenges raised by Kabila's revolt. Thus, if Angola remained Kinshasa's most trusted ally, and would soon be joined by Zimbabwe — whose mercenary motives are well established — Rwanda and Uganda needed little prodding to turn against their renegade client. And while Burundi displayed, in Lanotte's felicitous phrasing, a «tolerant complicity» in the fight against Kabila,[59] eventually Namibia, the Sudan and Chad all joined Luanda in giving their half-hearted support to Kinshasa.

Basically, the old axiom according to which «the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and the friend of my enemy is my enemy» provides the essential logic behind the making and unmaking of alliances during the 1996 and 1998 wars.[60] This applies to interstate as well as domestic alliances. In each case the pattern is one in which friends and enemies reverse roles in response to their changing perceptions of the other's motives. What Rwanda and Uganda saw as a betrayal, Angola perceived as a legitimate move. Uganda's support of the

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[58] See REYNTJENS, *La guerre des Grands Lacs*, *op. cit*., and "The privatistion and criminalisation of public space in the geopolitics of the Great Lakes region", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 2005, pp.587-607.

[59] LANOTTE, *op. cit*., p.173. For much of the information in this section I am indebted to his outstanding contribution. See esp. pp.159-196.

[60] See REYNTJENS, "The privatization and criminalisation of public space", *op. cit*., p.591.

Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) made it a matter of *realpolitik* for Khartoum to join hands with Kinshasa. In sending 2,000 troops to battle against Jean-Pierre Bemba's *Mouvement de Libération du Congo* (MLC) Chad felt obligated to heed Khartoum's prodding (until the cost in human losses proved too onerous), in recognition of Sudan's past support to Idriss Déby.

Of the many alliances of convenience formed during the first and second Congo wars, none seemed more durable than the one between Rwanda and Uganda. Both viewed Mobutu with equal distaste, and both saw treasonable behaviour in Kabila's volte-face. Yet by late 1999 the alliance had all but disintegrated. The bitter infighting that erupted in Kisangani in 1999, 2000 and 2001 over access to the rich mineral deposits of Bafwasende and other localities did more than spell the end of a friendly relationship. It brought the former allies to the brink of war.

Much the same switching of partnerships can be seen at the domestic level. As long as he owed fealty to his Rwandan patrons Kabila thought nothing of covering up the murder of Hutu refugees; nor did he shrink from blocking the work of the UN forensic investigation team in 1997, even demanding the sacking of its president, Roberto Garreton, «after he produced a preliminary sixteen-page report that identified forty sites where Kabila's AFDL was suspected of having committed atrocities.»[61] A year later, however, those refugee leaders who managed to survive the carnage had become Kabila's best friends in his fight against Rwandan «rebels».

The mixed fortunes of the RCD are another case in point. Despite or because of its murky origins – having been conceived, created, nurtured and supported by Kigali to defend its interests in eastern Congo – the RCD today is a weak version of its former self. In addition to its core constituency, made up of Banyamulenge,[62] it was able at first to recruit a number of influential politicians of different ethnic and provincial origins. Many have since left the movement. The old-guard Mobutists, Lunda Bululu, Lambert Mende and Alexis Thambwe have joined other parties; Arthur Zaidi Ngoma, has founded his own political formation (*Camp de la Patrie*), and so has Mbusa Nyamwisi (*Forces du Renouveau*); Wamba dia Wamba – whose early defection led to the first of many RCD clones, the so-called RCD-Kisangani, as distinct from the RCD-Goma – has resumed his academic career after a calamitous series of setbacks. What is left of the party is something of an empty shell, with its

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[61] FRENCH., H., *A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa*, New York, Knopf, 2004.

[62] Notably Bizima Karaha, Deogratias Bugera, Moise Nyarugabo, Benjamin Serukiza, all of whom held important positions in the bogus government set up by the RCD immediately after its creation in 1998. See LANOTTE, *op. cit.*, p.76.

formal head, Azarias Ruberwa, in Kinshasa, desperately trying to stem the tide of dissidence.

Of the many defections suffered by the RCD, perhaps the least expected was initiated by a leading Banyamulenge personality, Manassé Ruhimbika. His short-lived *Forces Républicaines Fédéralistes* (FRF) made plain the lack of internal cohesion among the Banyamulenge and the growing resentment harboured by many, including Ruhimbika, over Rwanda's dominance of the RCD. The FRF breakaway was only the harbinger of a far more serious split, which by 2002 had turned into a full-scale rebellion against the RCD. Led by a former RCD commander, Patrick Masunzu, the insurrection quickly spread through the Itombwe plateau, the traditional homeland of the Banyamulenge, and for a while reportedly coalesced with the FDLR and Mai-Mai elements. Masunzu's forces fought pitched battles against RCD troops, resulting in heavy losses on both sides, and some 40,000 displaced.[63] Reflecting on the lessons of the insurrection, one observer commented, «Banyamulenge opinion is now profoundly divided. Some still back the RCD; many feel it has abandoned their interests».[64] This is as true today as it was in 2003.

Thus, if fragmentation is indeed the most salient characteristic of Congolese politics, this is in part due to the persistence of highly divisive issues, having to do with disagreements over the extent and legitimacy of the Rwandan connection, the sharing of resources among allies, the choice of tactical alliances, and so forth. But this is only one aspect of a more complicated reality.

6.2. Patterns of fragmentation

The political vacuum created by the sudden collapse of the Mobutist state must be seen as a key factor in the rapid fragmentation of the political arena. On the debris of the state mushroomed overnight a host of civil society organizations and militias, of which the Mai-Mai militias are the most notorious for their propensity to fragment and proliferate. Pinning them down long enough to analyze their contours is not easy. Nonetheless, the political dynamic behind the surge of armed factions seems reasonably clear.[65]

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[63] ICG, "The Kivus: The Forgotten Crucible of the Congo Conflict", *Africa Report* No. 56, January 24, 2003, p.13.

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] Thanks to the pioneering research of Koen Vlassenroot and Frank Van Acker; see, in particular, VLASSENROOT, K. and VAN ACKER, F., "Les 'Mai-Mai' et les functions de la violence milicienne dans l'est du Congo", *Politique Africaine*, No. 84, December 2001, pp.103-116. See also MWAKA BWENGE's excellent contribution, "Les milices Mai-Mai à l'est de la République du Congo: Dynamique d'une gouvernemantalité en situation de crise", *op. cit.*, pp.20-34.

Unlike what can be observed in the case of the RCD, where fragmentation starts at the top, the efflorescence of Mai-Mai factions is a locally rooted phenomenon. It stems in part from the Mobutist legacy of playing one ethnic community off against another – sometimes referred to as the «géopolitique» argument – and in part from the persistence over time — through youth groups, civil society organizations, Church groups[66] — of recruitment strategies based on ethno-regional ties. Describing the state of play in South Kivu in 2000, Ruhimbika notes that «there are five major Mai-Mai axes which reflect local ethnic configurations»: the Fizi axis (Dunia), the Uvira axis (Bidalira), the Kizuka high plateau area (Mulemera), the Ruzizi axis (controlled by Burundi's *Forces de Défense de la Démocratie* [FDD]), the Lubumba axis (also controlled by Bidalira).[67]

Although the ethno-regional dimension is a common characteristic of most Mai-Mai factions, their members, as Ruhimbika's description suggests, come from different horizons: some, like «the old general Louis Bidalira» are veterans of the 1964 Simba rebellion in eastern Congo, others are Hutu refugees from Burundi, as in the Ruzizi valley, others are recycled *interahamwe* or their offspring. Viewed from a broader perspective, however, the Mai-Mai can best be seen as the political manifestation of the social exclusion affecting a growing number of marginalized youth. As Vlassenroot and Van Acker perceptively note, «the formation of the Mai-Mai must be understood as a social process which creates its own rationality, dictated by their rejection of the institutional order, and shaped by an environment which offers ample opportunities for creating and exploiting illicit trade networks and invites a warlord type of activities».[68]

In their early phase of development the Mai-Mai were not so much motivated by greed as by the need to protect their communities against the threats posed by newcomers, first the Hutu refugees in 1994, and then the Tutsi after the AFDL insurrection. Beginning in early 1997, after the assassination of a leading Mai-Mai personality, the main thrust of their activities was directed against the Rwandan occupying forces and their local allies. By the late 1990s, however, access to mineral wealth loomed increasingly large on their agenda. In a pattern that repeated itself again and again, the quest for gold and diamonds has gone hand in hand with the

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[66] Examples include the JUFERI in the Katanga, a youth brigade identified with the anti-Kasaian *Union des Fédéralistes et Républicains Indépendants* (UFERI), in North Kivu, the MAGRIVI (*Mutuelle des agriculteurs des Virunga)* and the ACOGENOKI (*Association coopérative des groupements d'éleveurs du Nord Kivu*), identified respectively with the Hutu and Tutsi communities, in South Kivu the Groupe Milima (after the Swahili term for "mountain") founded by Ruhimbika to represent the interests of the Banyamulenge.

[67] RUHIMBIKA, *op. cit.*, p.106-107.

[68] VLASSENROOT and VAN ACKER, *op. cit.*, p.109.

procurement of weapons. The picture drawn by Vlassenroot and Van Acker in 2001 is still relevant today: «Since the militia leaders control the bulk of economic activities in the mineral-rich areas, the Mai-Mai, along with the *interahamwe* and FDD, have created their own war economy and are riding a wave of prosperity, which in turn brought about a decline in security in the mining districts».[69] The shift from 'protection' to 'greed' has been accompanied by a proliferation of armed factions, including Mai-Mai, in what looks increasingly like a free-for-all competition for loot.

An extreme but not atypical case is that of Ituri: since 2003 no fewer than eight armed factions have been involved in the scramble for gold and diamonds. Closer scrutiny suggests that greed was not the only motive behind this situation of intense competitiveness. In the words of an NGO report, «the conflict which was over land at the beginning, has taken on multiple dimensions. Ethnicity is not a sufficient point of reference to understand what is going on in Ituri. Perpetrators of violence are at once and the same time ethnically based politico-military groups (UPC, PUSIC, FNI and FRPI), heterogeneous armed groups (FAPC and FPDC) and states (Uganda, Rwanda and DRC). The facts also demonstrate that the motives for confrontation are not always dictated by ethnic hatred, but by other considerations having to do with efforts at political positioning, the quest for material gain, he struggle for local, national or sub-regional leadership…»[70]

The story of how the original RCD broke into warring factions reveals much the same plurality of motives, albeit with ethnic and sub-ethnic cleavages looming increasingly large as a source of division. Personal and political grudges were certainly instrumental in causing Wamba-dia-Wamba's decision to form his own party in Kisangani (RCD-K), but the choice of Kisangani was not made at random. The prospects of easy access to the area's rich mineral deposits were just as crucial for the dissident leader as they were, a few months later, in triggering the violent confrontation between Rwanda and Uganda, at which point he had few other options than to move to Bunia, the capital of Ituri. This is where the seeds of his undoing were sown. Quite aside from the greed factor, in the context of a growing ethnic polarization between Hema and Lendu, his decision to side with the Lendu immediately sealed a Nande-Hema alliance against him, bringing together Mbusa Nyamwisi (Nande) and Tibasima (Hema) as the key players, identified with the *RCD-Mouvement de Libération* (RCD-ML). With Uganda firmly behind the Hema, Wamba eventually bowed to Museveni's pressure to leave Bunia, thus paving the way for the next round, between Nande and Hema. Eventually

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[69] *Ibid.*, p.113.

[70] JUSTICE-PLUS, Organisation de Vulgarisation et de Défense des Droits de l'Homme, *Ituri: La Violence au delà du clivage ethnique*, December 2003, p.2. For a similar interpretation, see Vircoulon, *op. cit*.

the Hema-Gegere group decided to break away from the RCD-ML in hopes to getting the exclusive benefit of the Kilo-Moto gold mines, and under the leadership of Thomas Lubanga formed the *Union des Populations Congolaises* (UPC). In time, however, intra-Hema rivalries would prompt the culturally distinct southern Hema to set up their own group, the *Parti pour l'Unité et la Sauvegarde de l'Intégrité du Congo* (PUSIC), led by chief Kahwa, while the northern Gegere-Hema remained under Lubanga's wing. Meanwhile, unable to hold his ground against the Hema's UPC, Nyamwisi retired to his solidly Nande fiefdom of Beni-Butambo, while Ituri sank inexorably into an ever more bloody factional strife. Ethnicity, greed, political ambitions were all involved, though not always in equal proportion, in the unravelling of the original RCD.

And so were external actors, most notably Uganda and Rwanda. A detailed discussion of their involvement in Ituri politics would take us too far afield. Suffice it to note that both share a large part of responsibility in the factional strife that engulfed large section of the province. First by supporting the Hema against the Lendu, then switching sides, while Rwanda threw its weight around the Hema, Uganda has played a major role in intensifying the conflict. And the same applies to Rwanda, even though Kigali made every effort to create the illusion that assistance to UPC was the initiative of the RCD-Goma. In truth the UPC entered into an alliance with the RCD-Goma in January 2003, which provided for political and military assistance, but as early as June 2002 Rwanda was already delivering large quantities of arms and ammunition to the UPC. In trying to grasp the dynamic of violence in eastern Congo, one is reminded of Tilly's pithy formula, "someone who produces both the danger and, at a price, the shield against it, is a racketeer".[71] Nurtured by foreign patrons, and relayed by local warlords, the racketeering shows no sign of coming to an end any time soon.

7.   THE RWANDAN MENACE

In terms of size and potential wealth there is no greater contrast than between minute, overpopulated, resource-poor Rwanda and its 'scandalously' well endowed, giant neighbour to the west; the anomaly lies in the overwhelming military superiority of Rwanda's RDF, one of the most experienced, disciplined and efficient armed forces in the region.

The threats posed by Rwanda to its Congolese neighbour were cruelly revealed during the 1996 and 1998 wars, and by the repeated forays of the RDF into the DRC from 1998 to 2002, as far south into the interior as north

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[71] TILLY, C., "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime", in EVANS, P., RUESCHEMEYER, D., and SKOCPOL, T., *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.170.

Katanga and Kasai, and Beni-Butembo in the north. Following the 2002 Pretoria Accords, the bulk of Rwanda's army formally withdrew from the DRC; nonetheless, writes Reyntjens, «(it) later maintained a covert presence both directly and indirectly through its proxy, the RCD-Goma».[72] Just how serious is the challenge of its proxy was made clear during the May 2004 offensive on Bukavu, the border attacks on Kanyabayonga in December 2004, and in Rutshuru in January 2006.

Ironically, Rwanda was the first to feel threatened by the presence of armed Hutu refugees in eastern Congo; its security concerns made it mandatory to 'neutralize' the camps from which originated the raids against its national territory. Expansion quickly followed pre-emption, and with the power vacuum created by the fall of the Mobutist state the need to fill it with trustworthy allies backed by effective military force became all the more urgent. This is where a radical shift occurred in Rwanda's policy goals. Security meant, in essence, continuing access to mineral resources, not only to reward local allies but to strengthen its military establishment. No longer is Rwanda's security imperilled by Hutu rebels, but, if anything, by rebels within its own military establishment. This is not to underestimate the potential nuisance of the radical, Hutu-led FDLR, consisting mainly of remnants of the *interahamwe* and ex-FAR. While these constitute a clear and present danger to the civilian populations of North and South Kivu and parts of Maniema, Rwanda's allegation that they pose a mortal threat to its security is vastly exaggerated; nonetheless, the FDLR offer a convenient pretext for Kigali's military incursions into North Kivu. The FDLR are no match for an estimated 70,000 men in arms, and a sophisticated military arsenal, consisting of APCs, tanks and helicopters. Even though it is not immediately threatened by rebel forces, Rwanda's maintenance of its armed forces is heavily dependent on free access to its neighbour's wealth.

Exactly how much of the mineral pie goes to Rwanda and how much to its local allies is impossible to tell, because of the secrecy surrounding these transactions and the number of intermediaries and joint ventures involved. A rough indication of the profits going to the RCD was disclosed by Adolphe Onusumba, a key RCD figure, who is reported to have declared in 2000, «We raise more or less $ 200,000 per month from diamonds… Coltan gives us more: a million dollars a month».[73] This is probably a fraction of the

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[72] REYNTJENS, "The privatization and criminalisation of public space…", *op. cit.*, p.592.
[73] NEST, M., "The Political Economy of the Congo War", in NEST, M., GRIGNON, F. and KISANGANI, E. (eds.), *The Democratic Republic of Congo: Economic Dimensions of War and Peace*, International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2006, p.47.

overall profits going into Rwandan pockets.[74] Whether or how far discords over the sharing of the Congo's wealth have contributed to the RCD's declining fortunes is moot. What is beyond doubt is that the RCD is no longer Kagame's most dependable ally in eastern DRC. In the words of one observer, «the Rwandan government has progressively relegated the national RCD leadership to a secondary tool of influence in Kinshasa and focused instead on creating and strengthening autonomous power bases in areas of the DRC it considers to be within its sphere of influence».[75]

Rwanda's primary tool of influence in eastern DRC is the multifaceted NGO *Tous pour la Paix et le Développement*, in short TPD, headed until 2000 by the now all-powerful North Kivu Governor Eugene Serufuli Ngayabaseka. It was founded in 1998, ostensibly «to assist Congolese refugees in Rwanda to return to the DRC»,[76] meaning essentially those Tutsi elements indigenous to North Kivu who fled the violence in 1995 and 1996. Of far greater significance, however, are TPD's 'latent' functions. Its aims are to expand and strengthen Kigali's grass-roots 'constituencies' politically, militarily and economically. This is how Dennis Tull describes its activities: «(to help) the RCD establish a strong power base on both an elite level as well as on the ground by forging close links between Kigali, the RCD and a Banyarwanda group consisting of rich landowners and repatriates in North Kivu… to address Rwanda's security concerns by reinforcing military recruitment among the Banyarwanda repatriates… thirdly, by supposedly promoting humanitarian concerns, the repatriation network might have tapped resources provided by international agencies, thus contributing to the financing of this alliance».[77] The emphasis placed on the recruitment of Hutu participants in the TPD is the most arresting – and potentially risky – aspect of Kigali's new strategy.

That Serufuli happens to be a Hutu, and a Hutu from Rutshuru at that, is of course indicative of the new course being charted by Kigali. No longer is the aim to assemble a group of potential supporters from various ethnic and regional horizons around a core of Banyamulenge faithful, as used to be the

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[74] To quote from a 2005 ICG report, «Between January and August 2004, 1,70 tons of cassiterite were flown out of Walikale. At the current world price, this amounts to between $12 and $17 million. Most of the profits are made by the dealers in Goma and Bukavu… Much of the ore was processed across the border in Gisenyi, at a smelter operated by the South African Metal Processing Association (MPA). MPA is associated with an individual who has in the past been a substantial backer of the RPF». ICG, *The Congo's Transition is Failing…*, *op. cit.*, p.14.

[75] GRIGNON, F., "Economic Agendas in the Peace Process", in NEST at al., *The Democratic Republic of Congo*, *op. cit.*

[76] BUCYALIMWE, M.S., "Le TPD à Goma (Nord Kivu): mythes et réalités", *op. cit.*, p.160.

[77] TULL, D., "A reconfiguration of Political Order? The State of the State in North Kivu (DR Congo)", *African Affairs*, No. 2003, quoted in BUCYALIMWE, M.S., "Le TPD a Goma", *op. cit.*, p.159.

case during the early years of the RCD, but to reach out to Hutu elements indigenous to North Kivu. In a fascinating exploration of the historical antecedents of the TPD Bucyalimwe Mararo shows its curious pedigree, traceable to the pro-Hutu *Mutuelle Agricole des Virunga* (MAGRIVI), and the more 'ecumenical' *Mutuelle* UMOJA. TPD, in short, has deep roots in the social landscape of the region. In one significant respect, its settlement policies are ominously reminiscent of the colonial era, when Hutu migrants gradually pushed the Hunde out of their traditional domains in Masisi, thus creating lasting enmities between them. As Hutu chiefs are once again replacing Hunde authorities, and appropriating their landholdings, the stage is set for a renewal of tension.[78] Whether their shared awareness of being up against a common ethnic enemy can help forge closer ties between Hutu and Tutsi remains to be seen.

In brief, the short-term the menace posed by Rwanda's new course lies in the challenge it poses to the transition to multiparty democracy. It stems from the support network put in place on behalf of its client faction, and the possibility that, should the RCD lose the electoral battle, the patron state would not hesitate to use bullets against ballots. In the longer term the threat is economic because the continuing siphoning off of minerals inevitably translates into huge opportunity costs for the Congolese people. The political and economic sides of the coin are intimately related, however. Only by nurturing and manipulating a vast array of vested interests among the host communities of eastern Congo can Rwanda hope to meet the twin challenges of its foreign policy, i.e. make eastern Congo safe for its dictatorship, and extract the resources needed to protect it.

Looking back at the violence that has swept across the Great Lakes, future historians will ponder on the analogy with the Thirty Years War. In both instances we are dealing not with one war but an aggregation of wars; in each instance the logic of the unforeseen lies at the root of the endless and violent episodes generated by the initial event; and, ultimately, leaving behind nothing but waste and destruction in its wake. This is how C.V. Wedgewood, in her classic account, summed up the chaos and bloodshed unleashed through Europe from 1618 to 1648: «Morally subversive, economically destructive, socially degrading, confused in its causes, devious in its results, it is the outstanding example in European history of meaningless conflict».[79]

What better epitaph for a conflict that has taken four million lives – and nearly six, when the losses in Rwanda and Burundi, are added to the toll –, displaced hundreds of thousands, raised ethnic hatreds to unprecedented levels, and made a wasteland of many parts of the environment?

Gainesville, May 2006

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[78] Interview with BASHALI NSIYI, R., Antwerp, July 2003.
[79] WEDGWOOD, C.V., *The Thirty Years War*, New York, The New York Review of Books, 2005, p.viii.