

## CRISIS IN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND ROLE OF UNITED NATIONS IN ESTABLISHING PEACE

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### Abstract

*The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), located in the centre of Africa has been suffering from political unrest and armed conflict since independence. The country has faced two major wars where most of the neighbouring states got involved along with the rebel groups of DRC. Since independence of DRC from Belgium in 1960, enduring peace is yet to be established in the country due to ethnic disputes, fighting for power to run the government, unfinished disarmament process, corruption in extracting rich mineral resources, border land disputes with neighbouring states and weak law enforcing institutions. Being one of the richest countries of Africa in mineral resources, the people of the country could not enjoy peaceful and quality of life as of now. The government failed to stop human rights violation orchestrated by the rebels. Due to two major wars inside DRC, good number of innocent people got killed and millions got displaced internally and many of them become refugees to Sub-Saharan African States. United Nations (UN) has deployed good number of forces inside DRC to bring peace in the country and protect the civilians but it seems that establishing peace in DRC has become an illusion. General populations of DRC are leading a very painful life. There were many initiatives taken by the International Organisation including African Union and neighbouring states but due to non-compliance to the agreement by all signing parties including rebel groups, the peace in DRC could not be established. UN has deployed its forces three times since independence but could not establish peace in DRC. Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Air Force and Bangladesh Police also deployed their contingents for United Nations Peace Keeping Operations (UNPKO) but the people of DRC are yet to see light at the end of the tunnel. Deployment of UN Forces in large and difficult terrain of DRC is not adequate considering the area of operation and number of rebel groups operating in DRC. Rebels operating in and around border areas are getting help from some of the neighbouring states. Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reconciliation (DDR) programme could not be done properly as the rebels are continuously trading arms against mineral resources. Masterminding to stay in power even after completing the tenure is making the democratic process weaker day by*

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*day. It seems that hard time of the people of DRC is not going to end soon and enduring peace has become illusion.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

*“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”*

Martin Luther King Jr.

Africa on the world map appears like a pistol with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the centre as its trigger but unfortunately this pistol is pointing inwards. The DRC is one of the world’s largest on-going tragedies. It borders the Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan in the north; Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania (separated by Lake Tanganyika) in the east; Zambia and Angola to the south; the Republic of the Congo, the Angolan enclave of Cabinda and the Atlantic Ocean in the west. The DRC, located in the heart of Africa has been suffering from political unrest and armed conflict since 1996 which destabilised the country in particular and the region in general. Armed conflict among many negative forces has caused unfathomable suffering to common people which led approximately 4.25 million people internally displaced, 600,000 people refugees to sub-Saharan African countries and over 526,000 refugees taking shelter from other African countries into DRC as of 9 January 2018.<sup>1</sup> Nine African countries and around 20 armed groups were involved in two wars which are the world’s deadliest conflicts since World War II, killing 5.4 million people.<sup>2</sup> The country could not progress further due to hindrance in the development work affected by armed conflict in different parts of the country.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, “DR Congo emergency,” available at: <<http://www.unhcr.org/dr-congo-emergency.html>> (accessed on 3 October, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> J. Bavier, “Congo war-driven crisis kills 45,000 a month: study,” *Reuters*, 22 January 2008, available at: < <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congo-democratic-death/congo-war-driven-crisis-kills-45000-a-month-study-idUSL2280201220080122>> (accessed on 4 October 2017).



Map 1 (a) and (b): Location of DRC and Neighbouring States

Although citizens of the DRC are among the poorest in the world, having the second lowest nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, the DRC is the richest country in the world in terms of natural resources; its untapped deposits of raw minerals are estimated to be worth of US \$24 trillion<sup>3</sup>. It is the potential political centre of gravity for Central Africa because of its size, 50% of Africa's forests, home to one of the world's mightiest river systems that could provide hydro-electric power to the entire continent. She is the latent African economic powerhouse due to the Central African copper belt which runs through the DRC, contains one third of the world's reserves of cobalt and 1/10 of its copper reserves. The DRC contains 80% of world reserves of columbite-

<sup>3</sup> Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20091125042436/http://www.societecivile.cd/node/4243> (accessed on 5 October 2017).