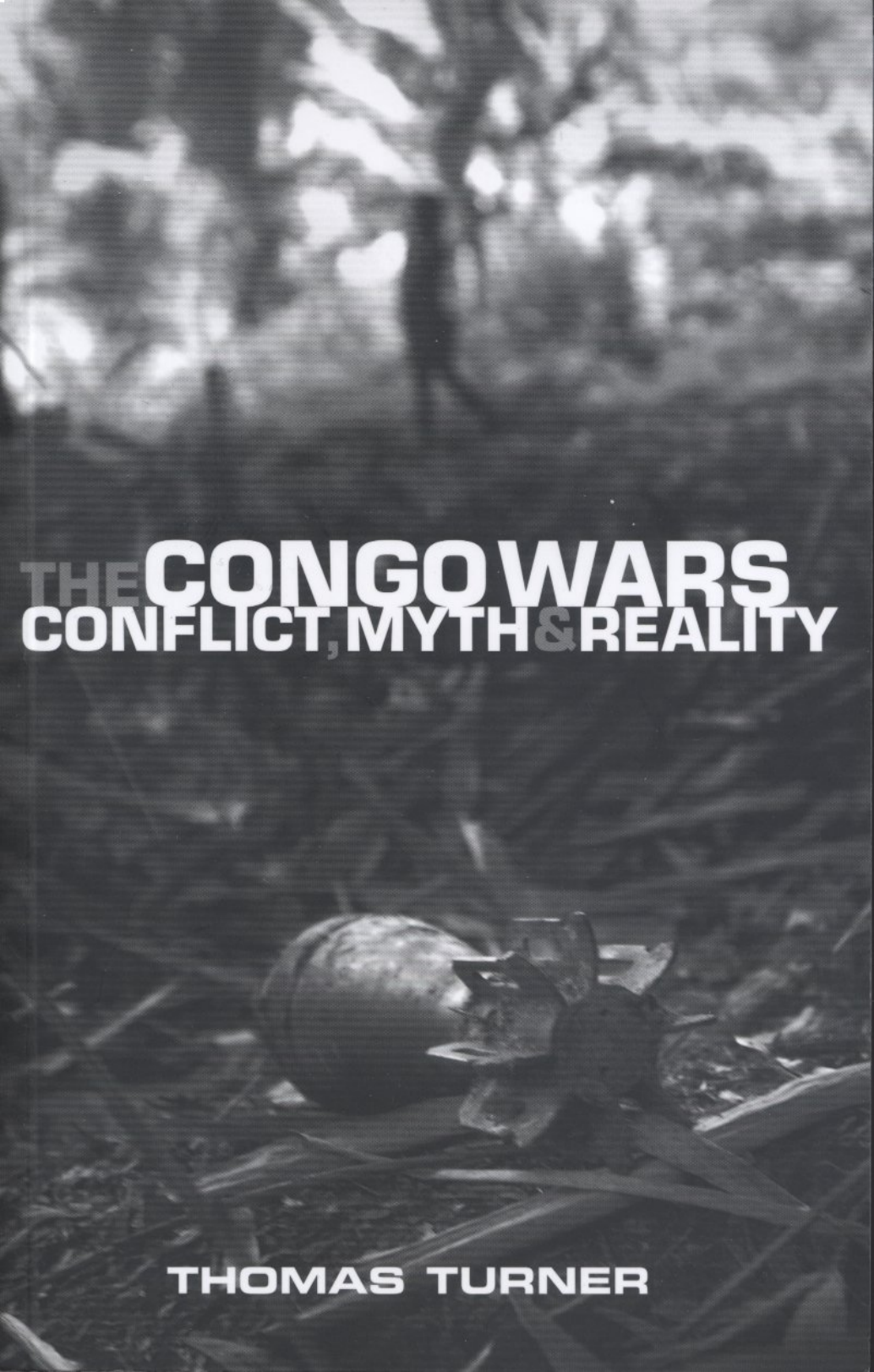

THE CONGO WARS
CONFLICT, MYTH & REALITY

THOMAS TURNER

About this book

Since 1996 war has raged in the Congo while the world has looked away. Waves of armed conflict and atrocities against civilians have resulted in over three million casualties, making this one of the bloodiest yet least understood conflicts of recent times.

In *The Congo Wars* Thomas Turner provides the first in-depth analysis of what happened. The book describes a resource-rich region, suffering from years of deprivation and still profoundly affected by the shockwaves of the Rwandan genocide. Turner looks at successive misguided and self-interested interventions by other African powers, including Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia, as well as the impotence of United Nations troops. Cutting through the historical myths so often used to understand the devastation, Turner indicates the changes required of Congolese leaders, neighbouring African states and the international community to bring about lasting peace and security.

About the author

Thomas Turner teaches at Victoria Commonwealth University. He has previously taught in universities in Congo, Kenya, Tunisia and Rwanda. He is the author of *Ethnogenèse et nationalisme en Afrique centrale: les racines de Lumumba* (2000) and co-author of *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (with Crawford Young, 1985).

Thomas Turner

The Congo wars: conflict, myth and reality

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Preface and acknowledgements

This book is the fruit of a decades-long love affair with Africa in general and Congo-Kinshasa in particular. I have visited more than twenty African states, and have lived and worked in several of them for extended periods: Kenya, Tunisia and Rwanda, as well as Congo.

Congo is a miserable place these days, as will be discussed below. But it is a magical place as well, where some of the world's great art has been produced. The pre-colonial sculptures of the Luba people (Roberts and Roberts 1996) are marvellous. The contemporary Lingala dance music is appreciated all over Africa and beyond. 'The Congo makes Africa dance,' as the saying goes. The contemporary paintings, sold door to door in many cases, but sold from studios in the cases of the more successful artists, are extremely inventive. The cooking – meat, poultry or fish in sauce, eaten with cassava, maize, banana or rice, and a vegetable (amaranth, sorrel or cassava leaves) – is a joy.

At the centre of all this, one finds the Congolese themselves. They are lovable and infuriating, wise and foolish. As an example of wisdom, I think of Mr Kabambi, who wanted to meet my mother (and did), when my mother visited me in Kisangani. 'Where would we be without our mothers?' he asked.

I think also of John XXIII, a madman (I think) whom I met in Sankuru, while I was doing my doctoral research. He recounted to me the genealogy of the Anamongo (Tetela) people, beginning with their ancestor Mongo, passing through Membele, Onkucu and the three brothers, Ngandu, Njovu and Watambulu, and winding up (not unreasonably) with himself, John XXIII. I did not tape this performance, as I did with more conventional interviews. How I wish I had. I think it might constitute a popular version of history, comparable to the paintings of Tshibumba (see Chapter 3).

Still in the category of Anamongo (but no longer in the category of madmen), I think of Dr Michael Kasongo (Methodist pastor and professor of history), who taught me a bit of his language and a great deal about the culture of his people. The late Monsignor Paul Mambe, whom I met for the first time when he was an assistant at Lovanium University in Kinshasa, and saw for the last time at Kindu where he was bishop, was another invaluable contact. Abbé Paul, as he then was, provided an entrée in the circle of pioneers of the MNC-

Lumumba, people who were understandably suspicious of a foreign researcher. In later years, Mgr Mambe was a model of resistance to the Mobutu dictatorship, during years when many of his brother bishops were less forthright.

I did my undergraduate studies at the University of Michigan, and will always have a soft spot for the Maize and Blue. I retain a liberal orientation to domestic and international politics that crystallized during my years on the staff of the *Michigan Daily*. I learned a lot from my fellow student journalists – Richard Taub, Tom Hayden and the others – and wish to thank them here.

It was on another Big Ten campus, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, however, that I was introduced to the study of Congo. In different ways, Professors Crawford Young (political science) and Jan Vansina (history) both greatly influenced my subsequent research. My doctoral research represented a topic suggested by Vansina (the divided Tetela-Kusu community) analysed especially in terms suggested by Young (differential modernization). I owe a particular debt to the late Professor Murray Edelman, whose views of symbols and politics have guided me in this book.

We students learned from one another as well. I am particularly grateful to Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, whose historical materialism does not blind him to value dimensions of Congolese politics. Catherine Newbury and David Newbury, friends since Madison days, have helped me to learn about Rwanda and eastern Congo. Robert Smith, historian of Congo, was also helpful as I prepared this book.

Over the years, I have learned a great deal from African colleagues and students, in Kisangani, Lubumbashi, Nairobi, Tunis, Butare and Bukavu. When they have difficulty understanding my argument, or I theirs, the initial frustration sometimes leads to illumination. I once gave a talk to professors in Kinshasa, entitled something like, 'The Tetela Lineage System, Myth or Reality'. A Congolese colleague protested (and he was right) that 'a myth can be a reality'.

Lecturing on democratization in Africa to professors in Madagascar, I presented a summary of Kenyan politics, based on newspaper accounts and conversations with Kenyans. The Malagasies were unable to understand that Kenyans speak openly about ethnicity, and somehow thought that I was introducing those categories. The Malagasies, as good Francophone intellectuals, would have been much more comfortable with categories like 'bourgeoisie' and 'peasantry'. This was a good lesson in the continuing relevance of colonial socialization. Maybe it was also an example of the chilling effect of a Marxist dictatorship on academic discourse.

Teaching in Africa has been a bit like time travel. Authors such as Gabriel Almond and David Easton, whom I thought I had left behind me in Madison, live on in the classrooms of Tunisia, Rwanda and Congo. Some of the lecture notes, by which today's African students learn about systems theory, may even be versions of notes taken when I taught about this topic, thirty years earlier. One Congolese lecturer told me recently that he still had (and presumably used) my political sociology notes from 1974. He did not accept my suggestion that he burn them. I hope I have learned a great deal about political sociology since 1974. (To be fair, not all African lecturers are peddling ideas that far out of date. Some, including Semujanga [1998] make good use of more recent approaches such as that of Foucault.)

Sitting in Tunisia, on the African side of the Mediterranean, I spent four years teaching political science and American studies to Tunisian students. The misunderstandings uncovered in classroom discussion and informal conversation were instructive. One example stands out. I summarized and criticized the main ideas of Samuel Huntington on 'The Clash of Civilizations'. The students could not accept my criticism; they, like Huntington, believe that civilizations are hermetically sealed units, rather than (as I believe) interpenetrating networks.

I owe a great debt to Professor Hamadi Redissi of the faculty of law and political science at the University of Tunis III (as it then was), on both the personal and professional levels. His insights, and those of the Tunisian intellectuals I met through him, helped me understand a bit of what was going on around me.

I also gained great insight in Tunisia into the process of rewriting history for political purposes, as well as the apparent limits to such efforts. The modernizing autocracy of Zine el Abidine Ben Ali is trying to convince Tunisians that they have a long history antedating the Muslim conquest. Many of them resist these efforts. Similar efforts to rewrite history are going on in Rwanda, and to a lesser extent in Congo. In analysing these, I am able to draw on my Tunisian experience.

The subsequent five years (2000–05), in which I taught full time in Rwanda and gave occasionally courses as a visiting professor in Congo, brought this book into focus. I don't mean simply that I learned that there are two sides to every story. What I learned is more interesting. The two sides or two stories are based on a number of shared misapprehensions, concerning the relationship between race and language, for example, or what happened at the Conference of Berlin (1884–85).

I am going to write about Congo and Rwanda in the same book,

knowing full well that neither Congolese nor Rwandans will agree with me. Congolese believe strongly in 'the myth of the yoke', that all their problems come from abroad. If Rwanda invades Congo, and the Rwandan regime is backed by the UK and the USA, then Congo is a victim of Anglo-Saxon aggression.

Rwandans, on the other hand, suffer from an extreme case of nombrilisme (navel-gazing). My Rwandan students believe in exceptionalism without having heard of it. Students cannot bear to compare their country even to its 'false twin' Burundi, let alone to Congo.

There is also a heavy dose of jealousy. Rwandan papers discuss whether there is too much Lingala (Congolese) music on the radio in their country, or not enough. A Kigali restaurant presents 'chicken Congolese style' (so-called, but it bore no resemblance to Congolese cooking). No one in Congo thought about listening to Rwandan music or emulating Rwandan cuisine, even before this long and dirty war.

In this book, I have cast my net a bit wider than before, as to what evidence to consider in political analysis. Thirty years ago, teaching in Lubumbashi, I bought 'popular' paintings, as did my colleagues Young, Fabian and Jewsiewicki. Since then, I have done less with this 'sideline' than have my colleagues. I agree, however, that this art, enjoyable in its own right, also provides insight into Congolese ideas regarding history and politics. I discuss it, briefly, in Chapter 3, drawing on the ideas of Edelman.

Robert Molteno of Zed Books initially accepted my proposal for a book on the Congo wars. To him, and to the press's current staff, I want to express my appreciation.

My courage to write this book derives in large measure from the support of my wife, Irène Muderhwa Safi. Irène has an interdisciplinary background (licence in rural development from the Institut Supérieur du Développement Rural, Bukavu). She has worked with women's organizations and human rights organizations, both in DR Congo and in Rwanda. She has taught me a lot about what is going on, in this corner of the world, from a Congolese point of view. One small example will suffice here. During the transitional government period, Joseph Olenghankoy denounced warlord and vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba as 'Théâtre de chez nous'. From Irène, I learned that this is a reference to a Congolese TV soap opera ('As the World Turns', or perhaps 'Desperate Housewives'). Since Olenghankoy now has become campaign director for Bemba's presidential campaign, what are we to make of his earlier characterization?

My colleagues, students, and friends – Congolese, Rwandan, Tunisian, American and others – have taught me a great deal. May

I take this opportunity to thank them all, singling out three of my recent students, Messrs Auguste Mwilo, Yves Musoni and Geoffrey Chihasha. None of them will agree with everything I have written, in part because they do not always agree among themselves. The responsibility for what I have written is mine.

Thomas Turner
Butare (Rwanda), 2005/Harrisonburg (USA), 2006

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO
National capital
District capital
City, town
Major airport
International boundary
District boundary
Railway
0 100 200 300 km
0 100 200 mi
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
SUDAN
UGANDA
RWANDA
BURUNDI
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
ZAMBIA
MALAWI
ANGOLA
CONGO
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Bangui
Bangassou
Juba
Kampala
Jinja
Kigali
Bujumbura
Goma
Bukavu
Butare
Kisangani
Kindu
Kananga
Lubumbashi
Kolwezi
Likasi
Kamina
Luanda
Lobito
Luena
Saurimo
Dilolo
Kinshasa
Brazzaville
Pointe-Noire
Cabinda (ANGOLA)
Boma
Matadi
Mbanza-Ngungu
N'zeto
Mbandaka
Kisangani
Lubumbashi
Kolwezi
Kamina
Kalemie
Kigoma
Tabora
Mbeya
Sumbawanga
Kasese
Gulu
Ituri
Bunia
Beni
Butembo
Goma
Uvira
Makobola
Kasongo
Kongolo
Manono
Kabalo
Kabamba
Moliro
Pweto
Kasenga
Kipushi
Sakania
Ndola
Solwezi
Likasi
Kapanga
Mwene-Ditu
Kabinda
Mbuji-Mayi
Tshikapa
Kahemba
Bulungu
Kikwit
Kenge
Bandundu
Inongo
Lac Mai-Ndombe
Bolobo
Kutu
Liranga
Mbandaka
Boende
Bolomba
Basankusu
Ikela
Ilebo
Kole
Lodja
Bena Dibele
Lusambo
Mweka
Kananga
Tshikapa
Kabinda
Mbuji-Mayi
Lubao
Samba
Kilembwe
Kibombo
Ubundu
Yangambi
Ekoli
Basoko
Banalia
Bafwasende
Isiro
Buta
Aketi
Bumba
Lisala
Gbadolite
Zongo
Libenge
Gemena
Businga
Impfondo
Imese
Ouesso
Faradje
Watsa
Mungbere
Bondo
Punia
Lubutu
Peneluta
Kasongo
Mwene-Ditu
Kapanga
Dilolo
Luena
Lobito
Luanda
Kahemba
Kwango
Kasai
Ubangi
Congo
Oubangui
Lualaba (Congo)
Lualaba
Lake Tanganyika
Lake Mweru
Lake Bangweulu
Lake Victoria
Lake Albert
Lake Kyoga
Lake Edward
Lake Kivu
Lake Malawi
Zambeze
Katanga Plateau
PROVINCE ORIENTALE
EQUATEUR
KASAI ORIENTAL
KASAI OCCIDENTAL
BAS-CONGO
BANDUNDU
MANIEMA
KATANGA
NORD-KIVU
SUD-KIVU
KINSHASA
Democratic Republic of the CONGO

ONE
Half a holocaust

§ The bloodiest war since the Second World War unfolded in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) – the former Zaire – in the mid-1990s. In 1996, Rwanda launched an invasion of DRC. This invasion was provided with double cover; that is, it was presented as the work of the Banyamulenge, a small community of Kinyarwanda-speaking Tutsi herders, living in Congo's South Kivu province, and of a coalition of anti-Mobutu elements, including the Banyamulenge. After seven months of warfare, dictator Mobutu Sese Seko had been driven out of Congo. The leader of the coalition, or front-man for the Rwandans, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, had taken Mobutu's place.

In 1998, Rwanda launched a second war, to overthrow the leader they had just installed. Again, a coalition of opponents of the Congo leader was presented as the driving force. This time, however, a stalemate ensued, and the war dragged on for four years. Millions of Congolese died. Even after a ceasefire had been signed in 2002, low-scale warfare continued in various parts of eastern Congo. Some of this warfare clearly was home-grown, but there was evidence of foreign (especially Rwandan) involvement.

From the beginning, there was disagreement as to what was going on. Some interpreted each war as international, i.e. an invasion of Congo by some of its neighbours. The war to overthrow Mobutu, in 1996–97, was hailed by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, spokesman for African liberation, as the work of Africans and not outsiders.[1] For him, the implicit model was Tanzania's overthrow of the Idi Amin regime in Uganda, as contrasted to proxy wars of the Cold War era. The second war, 1998–2002, was widely characterized as 'Africa's First World War'.[2] In other words, this was the work of Africans, too. In each instance, however, there were charges of extra-continental involvement, charges that we shall have to examine.

Both in 1996 and again in 1998, some people accepted the definition of the war as a civil war against dictatorship, rather than an international war. Many Congolese supported the first war as a fight against the long-standing Mobutu dictatorship. When the second war began, a number of scholar-activists in the West took seriously the

claim of Congolese colleagues that the war was a struggle against the new dictatorship of Laurent Kabila.[3] International organizations have split over this question: the World Bank continues to regard the Congo conflict as a civil war, while the United Nations has come to adopt the contrary view that emphasizes foreign involvement.[4]

The question of the type of war is linked directly to another major question, that of the responsibility for the extremely high number of deaths, especially among non-combatants, and of cases of sexual abuse. The war of 1996–97 involved few pitched battles. The number of military casualties was correspondingly small. However, many civilians were massacred, in particular Rwandan Hutu refugees.[5] The numbers are unknown, since the United Nations was prevented from completing its investigations.

During the second war and its sequels, Congo suffered millions of casualties. The International Rescue Committee estimated the total at 3.8 million deaths for the period 1998 to 2004. In contrast, the Sudan civil war produced 2 million deaths in twenty-two years. The Rwandan genocide and massacres of 1994 may have involved 1 million deaths. The Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 killed around 300,000 people, and the terrorist attacks of '9/11' around 3,000.

Clearly, the Congolese catastrophe has not received the attention it deserves, when compared to these other horrible events. However, the message has been there, for those who want to hear it. In 2002, Refugees International had warned of a 'slow-motion holocaust' unfolding in eastern Congo. By 2003, the International Rescue Committee asserted that more people had been killed in Congo than in any war since the Second World War, and Nicholas Kristoff of the *New York Times* wrote of 'half a holocaust'. At the beginning of 2005 (at a time when the total number of dead from the tsunami was not yet known), the Belgian paper *Le Soir* referred to 'two tsunamis' in Congo every year.[6]

The wars on the ground have been accompanied by wars of words, fought to define what is or is not happening. In this chapter, I shall discuss the labelling of these wars – world war, civil war, holocaust and so on – and the realities reflected or concealed by the various labels.

The first section deals with the death toll. In subsequent sections, I will present brief outlines of the Congo wars, introducing themes to be developed in later chapters, such as pillage, disputed nationality and so on. A series of controversies regarding the nature of the Congo wars, the causes and the stakes, will be summarized. Finally, I will present the approach I shall be taking in this book.

The Congo death toll

Whether or not one accepts the terms 'holocaust' or 'tsunami' – the former term implies intentionality, the second a natural phenomenon – it must be stressed that the casualty figures in Congo are derived from serious study. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has conducted a series of epidemiological studies. The first of its reports was published in 2000. IRC concluded that 1.7 million people had died during the previous two years as a result of war in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. About 200,000 of those deaths were the direct result of violence. The vast majority of deaths were caused by the destruction of the country's health infrastructure and food supplies.[7]

Two years later, the IRC estimated that at least 3.3 million Congolese died between August 1998, when the war began, and November 2002. Again, most deaths were attributable to easily treatable diseases and malnutrition, and were often linked to displacement and the collapse of the country's health services and economy. A third study, in 2004, raised the likely death total to 3.8 million. More than 31,000 civilians continued to die every month as a result of the conflict.[8]

Some may ask, how is it possible to go into the heart of a war zone and tally up the casualties? The IRC hired American Les Roberts, an epidemiologist from Johns Hopkins University, to map out an area of eastern Congo, go door-to-door, and ask families who among their relatives had died during the war and why. Roberts and his team of Congolese researchers interviewed members of 1,011 households. They primarily interviewed mothers on the assumption that mothers would have the most detailed knowledge of the health histories of their children.

Reference to a relatively small number of people killed by violence – 'only' 200,000 as of 2001 – as compared to millions dying as a result of the war, should not mislead the reader into thinking that soldiers die in fighting while civilians die in 'collateral damage'. The war has been a 'war against women', as Colette Braeckman argues. The UN has charged that various rebel groups have used rape, cannibalism and other atrocities as 'arms of war'.[9]

The first Congo war

The genocide of Rwandan Tutsi in 1994 and the seizure of power in Rwanda by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front led to the exodus of 2 million Rwandan Hutu to North and South Kivu provinces of the Congo. Most of them were regrouped in camps near the towns of

Goma (North Kivu) and Bukavu and Uvira (South Kivu), controlled by the authorities of the overthrown Hutu regime and its armed forces including the Interahamwe militia. From these camps, attacks were launched against Rwanda proper and against Tutsi in Congo.

In October 1996, it was reported that 'Banyamulenge' had attacked the town of Uvira. On 24 October, Uvira fell to the invaders. This could be seen as a local event. The Banyamulenge ('people of Mulenge', a small community of Tutsi pastoralists, speaking Kinyarwanda) had been in conflict with their neighbours in Uvira territory. On 7 October 1996, the governor of South Kivu had announced that all Banyamulenge would have to leave the province within a week. (For the war in South Kivu and its antecedents, see Chapter 4.) It soon became apparent, however, that this was not a local conflict. The so-called Banyamulenge quickly moved north. On the 30th, they took the provincial capital, Bukavu. On 1 November, Goma (capital of North Kivu province) fell. In each case, the refugee camps were attacked and their inhabitants dispersed.

After the offensive had begun, it was announced that it was being conducted by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (Alliance des Forces démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo, AFDL). The AFDL supposedly united four opposition groups to the Mobutu regime: these were the People's Revolutionary Party (Parti de la Révolution populaire, PRP), headed by Laurent Kabila; the National Resistance Council for Democracy (Conseil national de résistance pour la démocratie, CNRD), a small Lumumbist guerrilla group headed by André Kisase Ngandu; the Democratic Alliance of Peoples (Alliance démocratique des peuples, ADP), a group of Congolese Tutsi led by Déogratias Bugera; and the Revolutionary Movement for Liberation of Zaire (Mouvement révolutionnaire pour la libération du Zaire, MRLZ), a group of Shi and others from South Kivu, led by Anselme Masasu Nindaga. Of the four, the ADP and (perhaps) the MRLZ included Banyamulenge.

At its unveiling, the AFDL had two ostensible leaders: Kabila was the spokesman while Kisase Ngandu was military commander. Kisase died 'in mysterious circumstances' in January 1997, according to Georges Nzongola Ntalaja.[10] Masasu was arrested and gaoled for 'indiscipline' in November 1997, and killed by the Kabila regime in November 2000. Bugera served as secretary general of the AFDL, then (after apparently plotting against Kabila) was sidelined to a meaningless post of minister of state at the presidency. The only survivor of the original group, since the assassination of Laurent Kabila in 2001, Bugera has allegedly been living in Kigali, attempt-

ing to persuade Rwanda to back him in another rebellion once the current transition failed.[11]

By April 1997, Kabila and his backers had taken the mineral-rich provinces of Katanga and the two Kasais. Angolans poured across the border to reinforce the anti-Mobutu forces and, on 17 May, Kinshasa fell. The ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko was forced to flee.

Kabila proclaimed himself President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, as Zaire now was to be known. He formed a regime in which Rwandans and Kinyarwanda-speaking Congolese held a number of key posts. James Kabarebe, a Rwandan army officer, was chief of staff of the Congolese armed forces (Forces armées congolaises, FAC).

In July 1997, President Kagame of Rwanda admitted (Dunn and Nzongola use the term 'boasted') that Rwanda had planned and directed the so-called rebellion. In particular, Rwanda had sought out the PRP and other groups to provide a Zairian face for what was in fact an invasion.[12]

In the meantime, reports of massacres in eastern Congo began to reach the outside world. The United Nations attempted to carry out an inquiry into the alleged massacres, despite stonewalling by Kabila and his government. On 24 August 1997, a UN team began to investigate the fate of those Hutu refugees who had fled westwards when the camps were emptied, rather than returning to Rwanda. A preliminary report identified forty massacre sites. The following April, the investigators withdrew, unable to finish their work.[13]

Despite Kabila's steadfastness in resisting the UN inquiry, relations between the Congolese president and his Rwandan and Congolese Tutsi backers soon deteriorated. In May 1998, Bugera was removed from the AFDL job. In July, Kabarebe was removed as army commander and named adviser to the president. On 28 July Kabila announced that he was sending Kabarebe and the other foreign officers home. This probably was done in order to pre-empt a coup d'état against Kabila.[14] At any rate, its immediate consequences were a military 'rebellion' in Goma and an attempt to seize Kinshasa.

Africa's world war

In August 1998, Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia foiled an attempt to overthrow Laurent Kabila. This was the opening round of the second war, which lasted until 2002, and even beyond. It began on 2 August, with a mutiny at Goma and an invasion of Rwandan troops. Ten days later, 'Congolese patriots and democrats' announced formation of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie, RCD), which supposedly had happened on

1 August, also in Goma. The RCD listed a series of grievances against Kabila, including corruption and tribalism.[15] However, as Nzongola argues, the war was 'above all a manifestation of the desire of his former allies to substitute for Kabila a new leadership team, much more competent and better able to do the dirty work of the Rwandan and Ugandan authorities vis-à-vis the armed groups fighting them from Congolese territory'.[16]

Rather than move from east to west as in 1996, the Rwandans adopted a daring strategy designed to decapitate the Kabila regime. Rwandan troops and Congolese rebels were flown to Kitona military base in Bas Congo province, west of Kinshasa. They freed and recruited a number of former troops of Mobutu being 're-educated' there. Others seized the nearby hydroelectric complex at Inga and the country's major port at Matadi.

By 26 August, 'rebels' and Rwandans were hiding in houses surrounding Kinshasa's Ndjili airport. Across the river at Brazzaville, 7,000 former members of Mobutu's Special Presidential Division awaited their hour of revenge. That hour did not arrive, however. Instead, Zimbabwean troops disembarked at the airport, took up position around the periphery, and began bombarding the rebel positions. Angola had already entered Congo three days earlier. Its troops moved from Angola's Cabinda enclave into Congo's coastal towns of Banana, Moanda and Boma. This was in response to occupation of Matadi and Inga by Rwandan troops.

The intervention of Angola and Zimbabwe (and a small force from Namibia) deprived Rwanda of the quick victory it had been expecting. Rwanda and Uganda jointly intervened in Congo in 1998, and jointly sponsored the RCD. However, the two allies soon fell out, and Uganda went on to sponsor its own Congolese rebel movement, the Congo Liberation Movement (Mouvement de Libération du Congo, MLC) as well as breakaway factions of the RCD.

What Nzongola calls the war of 'partition and pillage' saw Congo divided into three main sections. Kabila, from his base in Kinshasa, controlled a southern tier of territory running from the Atlantic through the southern portions of West and East Kasai, to the southern portion of his home province of Katanga. With oil from the coast, diamonds from the Kasais, and cobalt and other minerals from Katanga, this provided an adequate resource base for running his portion of the state and paying off his African partners.

A swathe of the north, including much of Mobutu's home province of Equateur, was controlled and exploited by the MLC under Jean-Pierre Bemba. As for the RCD and the Rwandans, they held a huge

zone, centred on the former Kivu (the present North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema) but including parts of Katanga, the two Kasais and Orientale.

The division was not stable. In mid-1999 the Kabila regime appeared to be on the ropes. In June, Rwandan army forces crossed the Sankuru river and seized the town of Lusambo, in Kasai Oriental province. Congolese forces fled, leaving behind their Zimbabwean and Namibian allies. By early July the Rwandans held Pania Mutombo and Dimbelenge and were only 75km from Mbuji Mayi, capital of the diamond industry. A second Rwandan force, advancing from North Katanga, had reached Kabinda, about 120km east of Mbuji Mayi. It looked as though Kabila's zone was about to be cut in half. James Kabarebe, former chief of staff of the Congo army and now deputy chief of staff of the Rwandan army, was quoted as saying: 'If Kananga, Mbuji Mayi and Kabinda are taken, then Kinshasa will fall.'[17]

Intense pressure on all the parties persuaded them to sign the Lusaka ceasefire agreement (July–August 1999), which promptly was broken by all concerned. In Equateur province, Bemba's MLC moved westwards with Ugandan support, and threatened to take the provincial capital of Mbandaka. In the east, Kabila's forces and the Zimbabweans failed to break through to Lake Tanganyika and South Kivu, while the Rwandans took the strategic border town of Pweto. From Pweto, they threatened the Katanga capital of Lubumbashi. Again, it is hard to see how Kabila could have held out without his home base of Katanga.

At the beginning of 2001, Congolese president Laurent Kabila was assassinated, apparently by one of his bodyguards. In a scenario reminiscent of the JFK assassination four decades earlier, the bodyguard was killed in turn.[18]

The Congo wars are not wars between persons – Kagame and Museveni against Laurent Kabila and his friends Mugabe, Dos Santos and Nujoma – but there is a personal dimension to these wars. There was a general recognition that the murder of Kabila and the succession of Joseph Kabila might lead to peace. Joseph Kabila was warmly received in Brussels, London and Washington and the way appeared open to a settlement. In fact, it took a year to reach a ceasefire, and another year to create a transitional government to lead the country to elections.

The logic of the transition was that each of the posts in the government of the supposedly reunified Congo, from the presidency down to seats as deputy or provincial vice governor, 'belonged' not

to the individual holder but to the *composant* (component) that had nominated him. This made it impossible to create a unified government or even a unified opposition. When a minister displeased the *composant* that had put him there or, worse yet, the foreign backer of that *composant*, he would be replaced by someone more acceptable. Thus, public opinion interpreted the replacement of Foreign Minister Antoine Ghonda and of Defence Minister Jean-Pierre Ondekane as reflecting the displeasure of Uganda and Rwanda respectively.[19]

Under the ceasefire agreement signed at Lusaka in 2002, all foreign forces were to be withdrawn. However, some of the Rwandan Hutu forces (ex-Forces armées rwandaises and Interahamwe, as they were known) remained in Congo, even though they were to be disarmed and repatriated. Rwanda supposedly withdrew its forces, but the UN Mission (MONUC) reported a continued Rwandan presence. A series of incidents provoked fears of a 'third war' (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Classifying and explaining the Congo wars

The wars of 1996–97 and 1998–2002 were civil wars, according to some. They were international wars designed to overthrow a dictatorship, according to others. They represent a continuation of Rwanda's Hutu–Tutsi conflict, pursued on Congo soil, for still others. They were resource wars, according to an abundant literature. The interventions of Congo's neighbours, Rwanda and Uganda in particular, were acts of self-defence. These neighbours were pawns of great powers from outside the continent. There seems to be an endless choice of descriptions and explanations. This book is meant to establish, first, what has happened in Congo, second, to sort out the explanations and, third, to offer some recommendations for the future.

At the outbreak of both wars, the theme of the battle against dictatorship was evoked. The Congolese insurgents, led or fronted by Laurent Kabila, supposedly launched the campaign to overthrow President Mobutu because of the latter's dictatorial, corrupt regime. Certainly, Kabila and the AFDL won some support on that basis.

A second theme evoked, particularly in 1996 and in scholarly circles, was the collapse of the Congolese state. Supposedly the insurgency of Kabila and his Rwandan and Ugandan backers was sucked into a vacuum, caused by the disappearance of the Mobutist state. This metaphor from Aristotelian physics – 'nature abhors a vacuum' – is ideological in that it absolves the actors of responsibility for their actions.

Some scholars argued that the time had come for Africans to solve

their own problems, revising frontiers inherited from colonialism. On this point, the argument of scholars dovetailed with the declarations of the Rwandan authorities, who regularly maintain that their country had lost 30 per cent of its territory during the colonial partition of Africa. Most of that territory had been lost to what is now the DRC; so another argument for Rwandan intervention was their (tenuous) claim to territory in eastern Congo. The highly ideologized histories of Rwanda and Congo will be discussed in Chapter 3.

There is no question that many residents of eastern Congo speak the Rwandan language, Kinyarwanda, as their mother-tongue. Some of these are refugees. Others, including the Banyamulenge, have legitimate claims to Congolese citizenship. The question of their nationality and allegiance is complex, and will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The first Congo war apparently was designed to replace Mobutu. Laurent Kabila, the eternal anti-Mobutist, was supposed to defend the interests of Rwanda, Uganda, and perhaps their extra-African backers. The second war, from 1998 onwards, degenerated from a war to overthrow Kabila into a war to control and exploit one slice or other of the Congolese pie. The mutual slaughter between Hema and Lendu in and around Bunia (Ituri) has been referred to as 'ethnic' or 'tribal'. It is that, of course, but it is also fighting for control of Ituri district and its gold mines and other resources. The resources of Ituri, more than the nature of the opposing ethnic coalitions, explain the ongoing involvement of Uganda and Rwanda, backing first one group, then another.[20]

Most authors agree that the huge numbers of casualties in the east in general, and Ituri in particular, resulted from the efforts of Congolese and foreigners to control territory and resources. Braeckman, however, takes the argument further. She argues that the people of Ituri, like the Native Americans, are being driven off their land so that it can be exploited by newcomers: perhaps white farmers leaving Zimbabwe or South Africa, maybe even Israelis. Where, I wondered, was Braeckman getting this stuff about Native Americans? There was no footnote. Earlier in the chapter, however, she cited Pierre Baracyetse on mining and exploitation. Baracyetse also compares Congolese to Native Americans. Braeckman added the whites from Southern Africa and Israel. The parallel is not helpful. Native Americans lost their land due to a tidal wave of Europeans sweeping over North America but no such wave seems imminent in Ituri.[21] In contrast, the idea of a tidal wave of foreigners is a standard image in tracts concerning Kivu, where the foreigners are seen to be Rwandans, not Afrikaners or Israelis.

The waves of foreigners belong in the world of ideology and

discourse, not the world of observable reality. Both westerners and Africans have contributed to the elaboration of this world. As Dunn explains: 'The current war in the Congo has been shaped by long-term discourses on its identity – images and ideas authored not only in the West but within the Congo and Central Africa as well.'[22] One of those discourses, perhaps the most common one, presents a passive Congo, vastly rich, preyed on by outsiders. The debate about the motivation of the various actors in the first and second Congo wars becomes almost meaningless. Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi intervened to secure their respective western frontiers *and* to secure some of Congo's resources for themselves. Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola defended Kabila, Congolese sovereignty, *and* their own material interests.[23] Clearly, Laurent Kabila did not trust his SADC allies to act on principle alone.

Pillage dates back to the days of Leopold II but a more useful starting point for understanding the present situation is the reign of Mobutu, himself a major warlord and pillager.[24] Kabila was a small-scale warlord in South Kivu in the 1970s and '80s.[25] In recent years, many Congolese have participated in the trade in diamonds, gold and coltan, as a survival strategy in an environment that offers few alternatives.[26]

Vast amounts of Congolese wealth – including minerals, timber, ivory and coffee – have been and continue to be siphoned off through neighbouring states, processes that have been documented by the United Nations. Rather than analyse how pillage occurs, most authors have contented themselves with what David Moore calls 'a new literary genre', 'a combination of political thriller, stark moral tale of right and wrong, travel-writing/journalism, and angst-ridden quest of what to do to save the world, you with the white man's burden'.[27] This literature doubtless is useful for consciousness-raising and for fund-raising. To understand what is happening on the ground, and in particular to clarify the Congolese role, it would be more useful to separate pillage (already an emotive term) from ideas about pillage, as Stephen Jackson has attempted to do, and to show how the international and local aspects of pillage are linked, as Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers do for Ituri district.[28]

Nationalism and state collapse

There is broad agreement that the Zairian state of Mobutu Sese Seko decayed, and then collapsed in the face of the invasion, and that this led to the killing and pillaging. As the eminent Congolese political scientist Nzongola puts it:

> the major determinant of the present conflict and instability in the Great Lakes region is the decay of the state and its instruments of rule in the Congo. For it is this decay that has made it possible for Lilliputian states the size of Congo's smallest province, such as Uganda, or even that of a district, such as Rwanda, to take it upon themselves to impose rulers in Kinshasa and to invade, occupy, and loot the territory of their giant neighbour.[29]

Belgian-American political scientist and old 'Congo hand' Edouard Bustin offers a similar argument. The title of his chapter refers to 'The Collapse of "Congo/Zaire" and Its Regional Impact', but he explains in the text that the 'paralysis of state institutions and the collapse of Zaire's economy and public finance resulted more from the ineluctable decay of a system long rooted in pillage, than from some Machiavellian "scorched earth" policy deliberately concocted by Mobutu'. Two key state functions continued to operate under Mobutu's watchful eye, coercion and (through the national bank) the direct uncontrolled appropriation of foreign-exchange earnings by the President, or by selected warlords in his entourage.[30] Another way of saying this is that the Congo/Zaire state had been transformed into a warlord regime, as Reno argued.[31]

Braeckman of *Le Soir*, the most influential journalist writing about the Congo, discusses 'state failure' not as a reality on the ground but as a *concept qui tue* (an idea that kills) that is, an academic notion that supposedly determined America's decision to back the invasion by Rwanda and Uganda. She cites Marina Ottaway of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Indeed, Ottaway argued: 'many of the states that emerged from the colonial period have ceased to exist in practice … The problem is to create functioning states, either by re-dividing territory or by creating new institutional arrangements such as decentralized federations or even confederations.' The United States and other outsiders should be wary of assuming a 'colonial role', Ottaway advised. Instead, she advocated, 'allowing African countries to find solutions on their own', which apparently meant that the USA and Britain should continue to aid Rwanda and Uganda as they 'found solutions' by carving up Congo. [32] Braeckman presents no evidence that the Clinton administration listened to Ottaway. What she is presenting as a direct cause (an idea that kills) should be seen as an indicator of the context of understanding, within which certain policy propositions seem reasonable, others unthinkable.

As the Mobutu regime and the state itself decayed, the Congolese people paradoxically clung to the idea of their potentially rich,

potentially strong state. Since the seizure of power by Laurent Kabila and his Rwandan and Ugandan backers, Congolese nationalism has not ceased to grow. The Congolese understand that these are not civil wars but foreign invasions with some Congolese participation.

Braeckman's journalistic approach occasionally crosses the line into the 'new literary genre' identified by Moore, but she is on target when she writes, '*le peuple dit non*', that is, the Congolese refuse the attempts to control their government and/or dominate part of their territory. However, I have trouble with the argument reflected in her subtitle, 'The policy of the powers in Central Africa'. She seems to suggest a direct tie between the pillaging of Congo and decisions taken by the USA, Britain and other western powers. Again, however, no proof is provided. As Kennes demonstrates, even the links between African producers, small mining companies and the major corporate actors are complex and problematic.[33]

Many, perhaps most, Congolese are convinced that the Rwandans and Ugandans invaded Congo as agents of the West and/or that the UK and USA back the Rwandans and Ugandans for economic or political reasons. There is something to this, but in that form the allegation is much too simple.

The material base of politics (control of territories and minerals, for example) is real. Representations of competition at the base (ethnicity, nationalism, state collapse, pillage and the like) exist on a different level of the same complex reality. Neither level can be reduced to the other. The task of the analyst is to understand and explain without over-simplifying, and without forgetting that millions of lives have been lost or ruined through the years of warfare and disorder in the Congo.

Levels of analysis

The Congo wars can be analysed on three levels. As John Clark has suggested, much of the behaviour of Rwanda, Uganda, Angola and other actors in the first and second Congo wars can be explained in terms of classical realism. I participated in the Clark project and in my chapter I demonstrated that Angolan behaviour can be understood in terms of the overriding foreign policy objective of the regime; that is, victory in the decades-old war against the UNITA of Jonas Savimbi. The state level of analysis is a useful place to start. However, use of state labels – Rwanda, Angola and the like – should not be allowed to obscure the role of small groups and even individuals in shaping policies and profiting from their success.

Clark sets out three fundamentally different perspectives on why the

Congo wars took place, and what this tells us about the evolution of African politics and international relations. The first sees the Congo wars 'as largely an issue of state collapse, succeeded by a scramble of unscrupulous neighbors for the lush spoils left unguarded and unclaimed'. The failed decolonization, followed by Cold War rivalries and 'the long and ruinous rule of Mobutu Sese Seko', led inexorably to the recent disasters. This view has been criticized, above.

A second, broader perspective – represented in the Clark book by the essay of Crawford Young – sees the Congo war or wars as part of a continental trend. The current varieties of internal war have a different set of motivations than early generations of warfare. Anti-imperialism and socialism have disappeared, as has secessionism (with the exception of Eritrea). World economic processes, often referred to as globalization, have made the conduct of business between the corporations of the developed world and non-state actors (including warlords) ordinary events in Sub-Saharan Africa. External state actors have withdrawn their support from client regimes in the post-Cold War era. A number of the cases of so-called 'state collapse' – Somalia as well as Congo/Zaire – can be explained in these terms. In the case of Congo, the withdrawal of support by the international financial institutions (IFIs) complemented the withdrawal of American political support. Clark adds that both the casual attitude of the major powers towards state collapse and the predatory behaviour of private business dealing with African natural resources 'may be manifestations of an emergent ideology that shuns regulation and collective management of social problems in the continent'.

A third broad perspective focuses not on state collapse but on the foreign-policy-making of the states that chose to intervene. Congo's weakness may have been a permissive condition but it was scarcely an efficient cause. Here, Clark turns to Mohammed Ayoob and his theory of 'subaltern realism'. The contemporary leaders of developing states are supposedly emulating the leaders of European states in the early modern era, building up their states through a variety of means, including war fighting. Such an approach might explain the behaviour of Museveni's Uganda and Mugabe's Zimbabwe, he suggests. Whatever the motivation, however, the outcome of Zimbabwean intervention 'has been enrichment for several of Mugabe's cronies and impoverishment for the Zimbabwean state'.

It is possible that the interventions of states sharing a border with Congo (that is, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Angola, but not Zimbabwe, Namibia, Chad or Libya) might be explained in terms of their often-expressed desire to protect themselves against insurgencies