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Congo, By and For the Congolese: Comparing Congolese and  
Western Perspectives Through the Lens of Mineral Exploitation

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December 2009

Master's Thesis

MA in International Care and Community Development

Northwest University

### Abstract

Although the West has turned its attention to the crisis in Eastern DR Congo (DRC), the advocacy movement lacks strong engagement with Congolese perspectives on the broader issues. Through qualitative research with Congolese in the DRC and the diaspora, this paper seeks to identify common threads among Congolese perspectives. The emerging consensus suggests that tougher legislation on conflict minerals is constructive, but that the West must be guided by Congolese perspectives on the following issues: pressure on the Congolese government to battle corruption and pursue a just and lasting democratic process, unjust mining contracts with multinationals in Katanga province, foreign policies on Rwanda and Uganda, and a comprehensive approach to issues which underlie sexual violence. It will be years before US conflict minerals legislation directly impacts the DRC. Thus, the West must act now in other ways to use its far-reaching power for the benefit of the Congolese.

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The aim of this paper is to contribute to the conversation about the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Like any outside observer, it will include my analysis based on research. However, the particular aim of this project is to capture the perspective of Congolese on many issues facing their country, including mineral exploitation. Thus, the reader will find lengthy quotations based on my interviews with Congolese. This was a deliberate choice and not a stylistic oversight. My aim is to capture as much of the Congolese voice as possible. Furthermore, in a later section on the Congo minerals policy debate in Washington, I also quote at length from several interviews with American policymakers, non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, and other experts. My intention is for the reader to enter the debate through the direct words of these Western actors. We now begin with an old story that captures the contrast between Congolese and Western perspectives.

On June 30, 1960, Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected prime minister of the Republic of the Congo (also known then as Congo-Kinshasa), delivered an unexpected speech in the presence of King Baudouin of Belgium. The setting was the independence ceremony for a new nation that was emerging from 75 years of colonial rule, including 23 years as the personal property of King Leopold II. Baudouin had just given what is difficult to regard as anything other than a patronizing speech in which he extolled the civilizing mission of his great-grand-uncle. Most of the Congolese in the audience, however, would have been more

familiar with stories of severed hands and other atrocities committed by colonial rulers under Leopold. Lumumba rose to give an unscheduled speech and declared:

We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom, and we are going to make the Congo the focal point for the development of all of Africa. We are going to see to it that the soil of our country really benefits its children. We are going to review all the old laws and make new ones that will be just and noble (Van Lierde, 1963, p. 222).

Perhaps because of words like these, some members of the foreign press were aghast, including correspondents from *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*. Under a heading about royal dignity, Britain's *The Guardian* (1960) portrayed the ceremony as one of those "poignant" moments in history when a colonial king cedes power to a nationally elected indigenous leader. Did the correspondent mean to use poignant in the sense of "keenly felt" or with a tinge of sadness? It is hard to know for sure. Yet, his thoughts about the timing of the ceremony seem clearer. To mark Congo's "hasty" march to independence, Lumumba gave what the correspondent thought was difficult to regard as anything but a "pugnacious," "unpleasant," and "offensive" speech. The eyewitness reported that the king did not apologize for the Belgian's colonization but instead vindicated it. To Baudouin, King Leopold II was a "genius" (para. 4, 20, 2, 3, & 7, respectively) who courageously brought civilization and development to Congolese tribes. To most scholars today, however, Leopold, who never actually set foot in his colonial playground, was an adept global politician who presided over the deaths of millions of Congolese. One estimate put it at 10 million people (Hochschild, 1998). Hard as it is to believe now, these newspapers praised the nobility of the outgoing colonial ruler and rebuked the new Congolese leader, a man who had risen to power, not by means of the gun, but through the ballot.

However, to *The New York Times* correspondent, Harry Gilroy (1960), it was a “militant” speech that “marred” the ceremonies. He also wanted the Cold War-saturated readers to know that the Soviet diplomats in attendance seemed pleased at the consternation caused by Lumumba’s speech. Sure, Lumumba was democratically elected, but Gilroy spilt ink to point out that his electors were recently primitive, tribal people who, yes, among 200 tribes had some who were at war. His readers also apparently needed to know that, before King Leopold, “the wheel was not used, language was not written, cannibalism and witchcraft were common, and the site of the capital, Leopoldville, was still a dense jungle” (para. 1 & 19, respectively).

Before these Western perspectives would be read the next morning, the prime minister declared near the end of his speech:

And in order to achieve all this, dear compatriots, rest assured that we will be able to count not only on our tremendous strength and our immense riches, but also on the assistance of many foreign countries, whose collaboration we will always accept if it is sincere and does not seek to force any policy of any sort whatsoever on us (Van Lierde, 1963, p. 223).

But Lumumba would not be so fortunate. Secessionist movements soon broke out across the new country and he was brutally assassinated six months later. His assurance about the assistance of foreign countries was either naïve or overly optimistic. Indeed, it was Belgian officers who forced imprisonment, torture, and death upon Lumumba, all with the indirect involvement of the CIA. According to Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002), the United Nations was at least an accessory to his assassination.

A few years before his death, in a book entitled *Congo, My Country*, Lumumba (1962) said, “My aim must be interpreted merely as a desire to take part in the free discussion of the

complex problems confronting the country” (p. 7). One may not necessarily expect such humble words from a man who would become prime minister, but he saw his participation in the context of an insistence that the Congolese elite play a role because of their special place in the country. For better or worse, the Belgian authorities had selected and educated a group of young Congolese to be part of administering the country. Lumumba was one of those young men. In his view, he merely wanted to make a contribution to the search for solutions to the problems of the Congo. He believed it was his right as a citizen of the continent to speak in the debate about issues facing Africans. There were “mysteries of the African soul” (p. 7) that the outside world needed to understand, namely what the Congolese thought about daily affairs, including affairs with the outside world. Thus, he and others needed to make contributions toward the search for effective solutions for the progress of the Congo. After all, he argued, the elite are reading, discussing, and paying attention to what goes on in their own country and even the world.

### *Defining Intelligentsia*

Elite is a loaded word in the current African context. Indeed, part of the legacy of today’s corrupt elite is that they were hand chosen by colonial authorities and systematically trained in the ways of non-accountable governing. Some may have been democratically elected, but over decades many, if not most, have refined what they learned from the colonists. Thus, perhaps a better word with less baggage to capture Lumumba’s vision is *intelligentsia*. Kenyan writer, Binyavanga Wainaina (2008), captured the idea well in a recent interview about foreign aid. Essentially he argued that within each African country, just as in any country, there is a class of intelligent, concerned, and educated people who have ideas about what should be done in their homeland to address problems. For Wainaina, a nation’s intelligentsia is made up of writers, intellectuals, and artists who have a unique window on many of these problems. They

have an ability to “communicate this acutely” (Solzhenitsyn, 1970, para. 5) to their fellow citizens. Many of the problems in newly independent countries were compounded by national elites who set up systems of patronage and exploitation, almost immediately upon decolonization. Today Lumumba’s country, known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is suffering under similar systems. These will be explored later in greater detail. But for now, it is important to consider the place of the intelligentsia in the current debate about the ongoing crisis in the Eastern DRC. Intelligentsia, like elite, is a word loaded with baggage. But in Wainaina’s understanding, the intelligentsia need not be unnecessarily linked with negative aspects of the elite. Indeed, it is important to separate the corrupt, neocolonial elite from what I want to present as the African “global class.” Here I seek to expand upon Wainaina’s definition and, for my purposes, include other intellectuals such as professors, students, and members of civil society. The global class certainly involves Congolese who, in our case, went abroad to be educated and may now be part of a large diaspora. But it also involves concerned and educated Congolese at home who have become connected to this globalized world. What does this global meaning imply, however, for the common man or woman on a Kinshasa street who reads a newspaper and devours the news? Are they not educated? Are they not connected? They most certainly may be intelligent and concerned, but this new global class, this *intelligentsia*, is made up of those who, through their education and experience, have a greater ability to influence societal change.

Andy Alo is a great example. Born in Bunia, capital of Ituri province in northeastern DRC, Alo is an educator who is now a doctoral student in translation studies. In 1997 he was working in a hospital in the now-famous village of Nyankunde. He fled under fire when the first Congo war began and has since lived off and on in this troubled region of the country. Alo has



much to say about the problems surrounding his region and nation, including a perspective on mineral exploitation in his home province. His voice may be merely one voice, but it is a voice that needs to be heard. Of course, every outside scholar has his or her Congolese sources. But how often do we hear the voice of the Congolese themselves? In the early days of interaction between Congolese and Westerners, the “vast river of words” (Hochschild, 1998, p. 5) was written entirely by the latter. Many in the West will be content with reading a summary from a Western reporter or analyst, put on their wristband and take up African causes, but from where, for example, do we get our views of Congolese culture and opinions?

### *Thesis and Methodology*

In the following pages I, a Westerner, will attempt to address, through the eyes of Congolese, important issues facing the DRC. I will weave in words and perspectives from Congolese themselves, comparing and contrasting how in relation to outsider perspectives they view the issues in their country. Outsider perspectives will come from eight in-depth interviews with various Western experts, including Capitol Hill staffers, NGO representatives, and academics. However, this paper will primarily discuss what I understand to be an emerging Congolese consensus through 20 in-depth interviews with Congolese, both currently in the DRC and in the diaspora. Most interviews were done over the phone, but some were through email correspondence. When agreed, telephone calls were recorded for note-taking purposes and future translation, if necessary. All translations from French are mine<sup>1</sup>.

Three points will be important as we consider this qualitative research. First, obviously perspectives will vary among these 20 Congolese, and a Congolese from Kinshasa sees the world much differently than a Congolese from the east of the country. Both would undoubtedly see things differently from someone living in the diaspora. Large countries like the DRC are

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<sup>1</sup> I received help from Emmanuel Pinault for Eric Kajemba’s interview.

especially prone to broad and diverse perspectives. Second, a search for Congolese consensus is by no means an attempt to identify the majority opinion of the Congolese. It is not a quantitative research project filled with polls and data analysis. Rather, I am “looking for patterns that emerge from the ‘thick descriptions’ of social life” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 119) as illustrated by Congolese, both in the DRC and in the diaspora. Third, my aim is not to find the universal, objective voice of the Congolese. That would be impossible. Rather, any astute observer will see that upon listening to a small but broad range of Congolese, threads of consensus do appear and are useful to compare and contrast to what the outside world is saying about their country.

This paper will argue that the international community, namely the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, and international institutions like the World Bank and IMF must engage with and seek to be guided by the emerging consensus of the Congolese intelligentsia.

According to this emerging consensus the international community must exert greater pressure on multinational corporations that originate from each respective country through specific legislation that creates binding rules for transparency and trade. Today there is a great lack of due diligence in the supply chains of products that originate from the DRC. The US Congress has taken steps in this fight, but it must continue and lead other nations toward similar approaches.

However, the consensus also suggests that the Western advocacy movement must move beyond a singular focus on the crisis in Eastern Congo and embrace a comprehensive approach to the DRC. A new, broader approach would entail a focus on four key issues. First, the international community should encourage the democratic process in the DRC through increased

diplomatic pressure on the central government in Kinshasa and support of civil society groups. Second, the international community must address the complicity of multinational corporations in unjust industrial mining contracts that do not ultimately benefit the Congolese people. Third, the US in particular must review and be willing to change its policy toward Rwanda and Uganda in light of recent and ongoing behavior. Fourth, policymakers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should develop a comprehensive view of sexual violence in the East and address the systemic issues of peace and insecurity that underlie rape as a weapon of war.

### *The Rape of the Congo*

For nearly all outside observers, the DRC is a land filled with complexity and controversy. But one enduring fact that is clear and nearly undisputed is the exploitation of the Congo since the days of King Leopold of Belgium. Even before Leopold, however, Portuguese and Arab slave traders were robbing the land of its people. As Adam Hochschild (1998) documented in his masterpiece, *King Leopold's Ghost*, the king skillfully used the Arab slave trade as the pretext for his acquisition of the Congo. Among European and American outsiders, the vast territory in Central Africa was acquired through clever diplomacy and a grand lie about a humanitarian mission to save the Congolese from the slave trade and bring civilization. Among the Congolese, however, their land was acquired through manipulation and violence. Slowly but surely, reports of atrocities began to trickle out of the Congo. Leopold's men were committing grievous acts, including mutilation and rape, to force the Congolese to go deep into the rainforest and collect vast amounts of rubber for the global market. The widespread rape of the Congo had begun. Starting with the Berlin Conference in 1885, mass exploitation of the Congo's resources took on an international dimension and continues to this day.

The Congo may no longer be the personal colony of one man, but ongoing misrule has contributed to a situation where outsiders, whether neighboring countries or multinational corporations, take advantage of the DRC's chaos to further exploit its resources. Among the Congolese I interviewed, consensus is strong regarding the exploitation of their homeland. Most outside observers focus on the exploitation of minerals in Eastern Congo. Much like the situation with rubber in Leopold's time, the exploitation of minerals like tin, tungsten, columbite-tantalite (coltan), has been fueled by a global demand for products like cell phones, laptops, and video game systems. Following the destabilization of the region after the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the ensuing Congo wars from 1996-2003, various militias and the Congolese army have exerted control over mines to fund their ongoing operations. The fight over land and resources since 1996 has led to the deaths of over 5 million people, the displacement of millions (International Rescue Committee, 2007), and over 200,000 cases of sexual violence (UN Security Council, 2009). Attention is growing in the international community to the root causes behind these numbers. Moreover, the horror of the magnitude and nature of the crimes has led to very specific attention by many in the international community. Specific atrocities will be addressed later in relation to Congolese perspectives. But for now, what are Congolese saying about the general exploitation of their country?

### *Congolese Perspectives*

Andy Alo witnessed blatant exploitation near his hometown in the Ituri province of northeastern DRC. In the last ten years, this area that is roughly the size of Sierra Leone has seen massive bloodshed. But for Andy there is a broad historical context to what is going on, not only in Ituri, but also throughout the Congo. He explained:

The mines in Ituri District have attracted everybody's attention since the colonial time. State mining companies have been established since then. At the heights of their operation they have provided Congo government with lots of money.... What the government did with that money is another question. There was not direct benefit for the local people.

In one case, Human Rights Watch (2005) documented the relationship between one of the largest gold companies in the world and a local warlord in Ituri. Alo explained:

Testimonies of people who lived in that area confirm that all the multinational mining companies were solely concerned with the exploitation of gold. They did not care who was in control of the area. They cooperated with any group, provided they got gold. The local warlords were selling gold for buying arms. The bottom line which is applicable to all the multinationals is the same: they are here to make profit by all means. None of them has ever cared for the well being of local people living in the exploitation zone.

This sounds cynical, but it is a fact. If the powerful multinationals are in connivance with stable democracies and are doing that, where can one expect help from outside? It is like the world is a jungle where the law of the strongest is the one we have. The weak are to be condemned because there are not powerful (personal communication, September 26, 2009).

It is important for any observer and advocate of the Congo to hear the voices of Congolese who view the exploitation of their country from a deeper and broader perspective. Kiripi Katembo, a film director and photographer from Kinshasa who is currently working on a documentary about mining in Katanga province, understands a similar history: "It has been since colonial times until today that the political ideology of our country is based on minerals. It is a policy that only

benefits the strongest. The people understood that the minerals do not serve their needs” (personal communication, October 20, 2009).

Congolese filmmaker, Said Kakese Dibinga, who is making a film about the Congo wars, grows frustrated by how easily outsiders cite the complexity of his country’s situation. He responded:

If you make the Congo a complex situation, then people are gonna pull away. People don’t want to read the footnotes. With the Congo, it’s easy: You get Congo, you get Africa. It’s basically that simple.... A destabilized Congo allows people to exploit it for minerals, land, and political purposes (personal communication, October 14, 2009).

Kambale Musavuli, civil engineering student at North Carolina A&T University and activist with Friends of the Congo, explained that he sees five forces at work against the Congolese: local elites, neighboring countries (namely Rwanda and Uganda), multinational companies, multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and the humanitarian industry. He believes that:

All these forces work in cahoots and at the end of it, when you see the clutches of multinationals, foreign governments, the local elites, and neighboring countries, the local population is the one suffering at the end. The question remains: who is going to control Congo’s resources and for whose benefit? Even [Chinese chairman] Mao said, “whoever controls the Congo controls the world.” Thabo Mbeki [former president of South Africa] said that, “there cannot be a new Africa without the Congo” (personal communication, October 6, 2009).

For some Congolese, the history of exploitation runs so deep that it is hard to even know how to respond. A Kinshasa-based NGO representative working on development in South Kivu replied,

“I don’t know how to respond to your questions. The country is a victim of an international conspiracy” (personal communication, November 10, 2009). Conspiracy or not, suspicion can run deep, even of those who come to the Congo on humanitarian grounds. Yet, can we blame those whose grandparents or great-grandparents were murdered or mutilated by an outsider who initially presented himself as a humanitarian? Musavuli gave one example of a humanitarian partnership that makes him suspicious:

While millions are coming through the front door in terms of humanitarian aid, billions are going out the back door through mining deals. An example will be CARE [International], when you see that they are funded by the same company, Banro, who is plundering the Congo. Banro, who has been exploiting the people of the Congo, are giving funds to CARE, and CARE is working in the Congo. So it shows the face of Banro doing good work for humanitarian aid. No amount of humanitarian aid will end the conflict in the Congo. In most cases those international humanitarian NGOs are almost like the false face of the mining companies that are also plundering the resources of the Congo. (personal communication, October 6, 2009)

Musavuli was referring to the UN report (United Nations Security Council, 2002), in which Banro Corporation, a Canadian-based mining company, was found by the UN Panel of Experts to be in violation of international guidelines because of their operations in the DRC (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2008; see also Global Witness, 2009b). Under a banner of “Corporate Social Responsibility” (Banro Corporation, n.d.), Banro announced a partnership with US-based CARE International in 2008. At least one community development project is slated to last 10 years (CARE International, n.d.). In July 2009, a network of Congolese civil society organizations raised concerns about Banro’s mining

contracts with the government (Southern Africa Resource Watch [SARW], 2009). One Western scholar included Banro as one of the companies funding Laurent Kabila's war machine (Turner, 2007). The days of severed hands by Belgian machetes may be over, but for some Congolese, Lefranc's "refinement of evil" (as quoted in Hochschild, 1998, p. 121) has taken a more subtle form and is just as sinister. Andy Alo does not implicate all outside NGOs, but nonetheless contended that, "many NGOs spend 95% of their budgets on administrative services. They are as corrupt as one can imagine. They shy away from real development projects and maintain a system of permanent dependence" (personal communication, September 26, 2009). Western NGO leaders may respond with shock or derision at this accusation, but the reality remains that, for many Congolese, this is the impression about many aid agencies. They have seen their fair share of shiny Land Rovers being driven by foreigners in a destitute land.

Nevertheless, some Congolese find that Western NGOs are both helpful and unhelpful. For example, Horeb Bulambo<sup>2</sup> (personal communication, November 20, 2009), who works with the UN Mission to Congo (MONUC) in Goma, North Kivu, stated that Western NGOs are very helpful in one sense because they have the capacity to help the very destitute in extreme situations. However, he argued, the overall situation in the East has not changed much since 1996. Thus he believes that advocacy on state sovereignty and good governance is more important than the aid that NGOs can provide right now. In his role as director of a local Congolese NGO, Eric Kajemba (personal communication, November 24, 2009) has worked with and seen Western NGOs up close. Like Bulambo, he noted that they are useful in some sense because they bring resources. The problem as he sees it is that although they are trained to work

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<sup>2</sup> Upon his interview, Mr. Bulambo requested the following disclaimer: *What Mr. Bulambo states is only his opinion and not that of any of his partners, employers, or collaborators who have worked with him in the past, the present, or in the future.*



on the ground, they don't always work "on site" and don't go to where the real needs or real information can be found. For example, in the case of conflict minerals, he recalled an organization that did lots of report and consultations and eventually recommended a boycott of Congolese minerals. According to Kajemba, this would only hurt the local and regional economy, destroying livelihoods in the process. The recommendation, he concluded, was based on a lack of good information. Marie<sup>3</sup>, a Congolese banking and microfinance professional, responded this way:

I would describe NGOs as important as they could give a platform. However, I personally believe that this platform must be occupied by Congolese people to convincingly fight this struggle. Well-educated, eloquent, internationally-known, and well-connected personalities, either from in the country or the Diaspora to start a movement. (personal communication, November 19, 2009)

Other Congolese like Béatrice Kabamba Bapemacho are generally welcoming of the international NGO presence. In her role as coordinator for a local NGO that trains nurses to help women and children who have been raped and suffer from HIV/AIDS, she has interacted extensively with outside organizations. Like other interviewees, her praise was less about what the foreign NGOs are doing on the ground, but more on how they use their global spotlights to shed light on issues. For example, Ms. Bapemacho had this to say about the role of the international community:

Here we welcome the role of some NGOs such as IANSA [International Action Network on Small Arms], Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others who continue to denounce the abuses they see in relation to the exploitation and unfair contracts signed

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<sup>3</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

by the state.... I must say that in this matter they are helping us denounce many things.

(personal communication, November 28, 2009)

Mvemba Dizolele, Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, explained to me his perspective as a Congolese who has viewed foreign intervention up close and from afar:

So, the problem with what's happening in Congo...you have foreigners who come and look in and see whatever they want to see for whatever interests they have. And the Congolese who live with the reality are living with things they don't want to live with and want to change that. And unfortunately that doesn't always rhyme with what the outsiders are looking at. The outsiders may have an agenda that is beyond Congo. So an NGO may be working in other countries; so they're not just looking at Congo by itself, they're looking at it as part of a long-standing issue that they're dealing with; so they're not paying close attention to what the natives, if you will, the Congolese themselves, want.... Because the West looks at things in terms of fad, in terms of what's sexy, in terms of what's "in" at the moment, so you can get your funding. What makes it easy for you to rile the masses? And by masses I mean the college students who can go to rallies and all that stuff. So they try to keep it as simple as possible. (personal communication, November 23, 2009)

#### Mineral Exploitation in the DRC: What is the Solution?

The fact of Congo's exploitation is virtually undisputed. Yet, as we have seen, the nature and extent of the exploitation varies greatly depending on the perspective. Moreover, opinions on potential solutions are even more disparate. This section will explore exploitation in two key areas. First, we will consider the illegal mining and trade in "conflict minerals" in Eastern

Congo, “one of the key drivers of the conflict” (Enough Project & Grassroots Reconciliation Group, 2009, para. 1). Congolese perspectives will be shown amidst Western analysis and advocacy on potential solutions, which over the past year has taken the form of a lesser-known policy struggle in Washington, DC. Second, we will consider exploitation in the industrial mining sector in the Katanga province. Although it attracts less attention, it likely has even greater ramifications for the overall development in the DRC. In my conversations with Congolese, the two were usually mentioned in tandem, whereas it seems that many outsiders who focus on the East have either very little awareness of the Katanga issue or simply neglect it. From a Congolese perspective, why is this issue being neglected in the West, even though multinational companies are deeply involved in shady contracts and massive profits? Later I will explore various perspectives on this issue and highlight advocacy by Congolese civil society.

### *The Struggle Over An Approach to Conflict Minerals*

The confluence of natural resource exploitation and armed struggle is nothing new. Much has been written about the idea of a resource curse in development (Global Witness, 1999). However, recent years have also shown that the end of the Cold War played a role. The new global order severed the ties that some governments and rebel groups relied on for the funding of their military operations (Nzongola-Ntalaja, n.d.; see also Ross, 2004). Thus, with the onset of a new era of globalization in the 1990s, the world slowly woke up to a new problem in this global system. Long before DRC’s conflict minerals would come on the global radar, one solitary mineral across the continent began to take center stage.

On September 11, 2001, Sarah Johnson<sup>4</sup> (personal communication, September 11, 2009), a representative of a large NGO, was in London attending a meeting of Kimberley Process participants. The events of that unforgettable day brought together citizens of several countries as

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<sup>4</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

they watched the news and shared the horror. The unity of that moment helped to implement an approach to a problem that has helped to claim countless more lives than those killed on 9/11. That approach, commonly called the Kimberley Process due to its start in Kimberley, South Africa, is a joint initiative between industry, governments, and international civil society to combat the trade in conflict diamonds. It resulted in a landmark UN resolution in 2000 supporting the creation of an international framework for rough diamonds. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) was created in late 2002 as a result of negotiations between the aforementioned parties. It went into force in 2003 when member countries began to implement measures to track conflict diamonds and ban them from importation (Kimberley Process, n.d.). But Johnson, the lead US NGO representative at the Kimberley Process, distinctly remembered a conversation she had with an ambassador from a leading diamond-exporting country and a leading representative of the newly formed World Diamond Council (WDC), a body in the diamond industry with the mandate of combating trade in conflict diamonds. Despite the steps taken by the Kimberley Process, the WDC representative seemed to concede that it was doomed without stringent enforcement mechanisms. Johnson recalls him saying that he was concerned about “those kids in Sierra Leone,” but he needed a legal framework for his industry. Otherwise, the diamond industry will not take action, he implied.

Eight years later, many are dubious about the efficacy of the Kimberley Process, including two NGOs that spearheaded its implementation (Global Witness & Partnership Africa Canada, 2008). In a recent survey of Kimberley Process enforcement activity, they found that in many cases enforcement is nonexistent. Much like the United Nations, this international initiative is only as strong as its member countries allow it to be. Each Kimberley Process participant is responsible for oversight and enforcement of the illegal trade within its borders.

Many of the 49 members, however, cite confidentiality as the reason for their lack of response to questions posed. It has led groups like Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada to believe that these participants either do not know the answers or have completely abrogated their responsibility to enforce.

In many ways this is no surprise to Sarah Johnson, one of the initial organizers of the US campaign to eliminate conflict diamonds. As an NGO representative she also played a lead advisory role in drafting and enacting the Clean Diamond Trade Act (H.R. 1584). She explained:

We knew that when a deal was being cut there would be tension between principles and potential difficulties. There was not sufficient monitoring as part of the process. But the politics of the time were that countries were not willing to do this (personal communication, September 11, 2009).

Despite its shortcomings, Johnson believes three important outcomes came from the Kimberley Process:

First, it stopped two major wars in Sierra Leone; awareness of the diamond issue led to political action. Second, it brought greater political focus to Liberia. Again, conflict diamond awareness led to galvanization on the Liberia issue. Finally, the Kimberley Process enshrined a principle around conflict resources and the whole concept of natural resources that are used to fund conflict (personal communication, September 11, 2009)

Sasha Lezhnev is a former Policy Adviser for Global Witness, where he led the organization's U.S. advocacy on conflict resources. He recounted the following about the situation in Sierra Leone in the 1990s:

There were local [Sierra] Leonian groups that were saying, "we need to solve [the problem]; we need peace." But there was no real targeted strategy on how to do it and

how to influence the actors that had this potential to impact it. So you had this conflict diamonds campaign strictly in the UK with Global Witness leading the charge and in North America with Partnership Africa Canada and they basically got a lot of attention, particularly of the diamond industry. They basically got de Beers to recognize that they were buying the diamonds and to lead a charge. (personal communication, October 27, 2009).

Two key Western-based groups have taken the principle from Kimberley and sought to apply it to the Congo situation. UK-based Global Witness (2009a) has argued that there is a “direct causal link between the metals trade in eastern DRC and atrocities perpetrated by armed groups against Congolese civilians” (para. 2). Along with the US-based Enough Project, led by former Clinton Africa aide, John Prendergast, Global Witness has helped to lead the global awareness and advocacy campaign against mineral exploitation in Eastern Congo. Despite the cessation of continental war after the implementation of the Lusaka Accords in 2002, hostilities in the east have continued due to the presence of armed groups. Seven years after those peace accords, the atrocities continue.

### Congolese Perspectives

In response to this ongoing situation, specific Congo-focused groups have formed. Congo Global Action and Friends of the Congo are both relatively new organizations that were formed as networks of concerned individuals and NGOs. For nearly all Congolese interviewed and researched, the greatest area of concern revolves around their own government and its inability to address problems. This important topic will be explored later, but for now, the question remains: what can outsiders do, particularly those whose countries are home to many of the multinational corporations that are traders or consumers of conflict minerals from the DRC?

What are Congolese saying about the plans and actions of foreigners, most of whom seem to have good intentions as they advocate for Congo? Andy Alo's home district of Ituri has been the site of some of the worst exploitation. Thus, although he remains skeptical of most foreign companies, he understands that there are some people in the international community working to address the problem. He explained:

There have been many articles published by experts explaining how multinationals were making profit in connivance with the rebels in Eastern Congo. The arms that killed about 6 million Congolese were provided by those multinationals. They do not care about the death of people. If it can make business boom, even if the entire population in the East was decimated, that would still be "business." Having said that, we know that there are many people outside there who came out to denounce the exploitation of "blood coltan and blood gold." (personal communication, September 26, 2009).

Nita Evele is vice chair of Coalition Pluraliste de Patriotes Congolais and executive committee member for Congo Global Action. In a recent interview (Evele, 2008) she explained that Congolese within the DRC are very aware of the relationship between multinational corporations and what is happening in their country. Knowledge of that relationship has been growing in the West in the last few years, despite at least one prominent report of Congolese conflict minerals over eight years ago (Harden, 2001). Following in the footsteps of U.S. Congressional action on conflict diamonds, the Congo Conflict Minerals Act of 2009 (S. 891) was introduced in April. It is "a bill to require annual disclosure to the Securities and Exchange Commission of activities involving columbite-tantalite, cassiterite, and wolframite from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and for other purposes." Evele, also an advisor to *Friends of the Congo*, commented:

The Act wasn't bad, but companies have to be accountable. The details didn't do much for the Congolese people. It is difficult to talk about all minerals and the situation is so different in each province. A better way to go is to expose the exploitation through transparency (personal communication, September 25, 2009).

Some Congolese, however, are talking about more than transparency. Djo Matangwa, a medical officer working for an international NGO in North Kivu, believes that the American government should punish companies that cannot ensure a clean supply chain, "because Congolese minerals are soiled with the blood of war victims and various crimes and violence" (personal communication, November 26, 2009).

In the problem of illegal mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at least seven minerals are involved. The task of implementing an effective process for one mineral like diamonds has been difficult for the international community. Simply envisioning a process for several minerals has led to paralysis and almost total inaction on the part of governments. At least in the United States, some policymakers are taking action. The steps being considered will be discussed later in more detail. The hope is that other governments will also take necessary steps. Margot Bokanga, graduate student at American University and advocate among the Congolese diaspora, has observed a growing awareness in the international community, but said:

With the Congolese resources there is still something missing...there's a lack of will by the international community to rally like we had with blood diamonds to really push multinational corporations and their consumers to be more aware of what is going on in the DRC so that the conflict can end once and for all.... For blood diamonds we had the movie and we were able to link our love for diamonds and bling-bling to what was happening on the ground (personal communication, October 5, 2009).



Kambale Musavuli, student coordinator for Friends of the Congo, shared the following perspective on Congo's natural resources:

The resources of the Congo are needed for the war to function. The exploitation of the resources has been at the root cause of the suffering where we know that it's mainly because of greed. We want to understand that the resources of the Congo are not the curse, because this is how it's always presented. They're actually a blessing. For anyone who believes, who is a Christian, who believes that God created the earth, he created coltan [another name for the mineral tantalum], gold, and all those things and put it on that land before he even placed the Congolese. So that's a blessing. But the exploitation, the scramble for the resources, we all bear a responsibility, the US bears a responsibility, Great Britain bears a responsibility, but the responsibility is the exploitation of another human being, another member of humanity. So what we can do, we can play a critical role in ending that (personal communication, October 6, 2009)

But how exactly is that role envisioned? Elsewhere, Musavuli (2009) argued that:

Contrary to presentations by Western scholars and thinkers, the conflict in the Congo is not intractable. If the correct policies were implemented, the conflict could end quickly or at least be mitigated. The two basic goals of today's global movement in support of the people of the Congo are:

1. To bring an end to the resource war being waged on the backs of the Congolese people, particularly women and children, and
2. To ensure that the people of the Congo take control of their own future so they can determine how best to use their enormous resources for the benefit of their people and Africa at large (para. 20 & 21).

Understandably, Musavuli's second point is foremost in the minds of the Congolese who participated in this research and will be addressed later in more detail. Yet, if this is indeed a dual-goal process, how does the "resource war" in his first point get addressed? As Alo noted, there are indeed outsiders working to end illegal exploitation. But what is the best approach for the international community? Margot Bokanga and other Congolese advocates are aware of the Sierra Leone/Kimberley Process example. Bokanga explained the challenge from her perspective:

When I say a Kimberley-like process, what I mean by that is the ability to track Congolese resources. It's difficult to know their origin exactly, but we should be able to look at certain components within those resources that distinguish them from others. For example, Canada and Australia have coltan as well. They have the ability to track those resources. There should be an ability for companies like Sony and Apple to let the consumers know that their product didn't come from the DRC. And they should be able to say, "we didn't buy this from Congo," which isn't rocket science, correct? So, there has to be a system-level of honesty. But that kind of advocacy shouldn't be done by the NGO community alone. There's a missing link where the role of the government is about access and, although I love the work that the NGO community does and the fact that they are supported by various governments, the Congolese government has to step up and say, "Okay, enough is enough. Let me join the fight and figure out how we can do this right" (personal communication, October 5, 2009).

One Congolese expert who may know better than most how to "do this right" is Eric Kajemba, director of the Center for Governance and Peace (*OGP: L'Observatoire Gouvernance et Paix*) based in Bukavu, South Kivu. As a consultant to the UN Group of Experts and other Western

observers (see next section), Kajemba is close to what is happening on the ground. In our interview he described the reality of what is noted by Western advocates: the primacy of strengthening local institutions. According to Kajemba (personal communication, November 24, 2009), the entire licensing system for mining in Eastern Congo is not straightforward. There are problems with the management of licenses and the enforcement of licenses by police. The stark truth, he argued, is that the local administration is overwhelmed and does not have the capacity to overcome the obstacles. Moreover, just like in the federal government, endemic corruption is seen in the distribution of mining licenses.

Another local observer is Stéphane Etsik'ea Wenge<sup>5</sup>, an independent analyst who lives and works in Goma, North Kivu. Part of the problem as he sees it is the impunity of those involved. Regarding the role of the Congolese government, one thing that needs to happen is “Empowering courts to prosecute all the Congolese who are cited in the plundering of natural resources in the East (several reports of independent investigations are available): the lethargy of the Congolese government in this matter is worrying people” (personal communication, December 12, 2009).

### *Policy Debate in Washington*

I will get to the issue of Congolese views of the DRC government and its misrule, but for now, if solutions are not up to the NGO community alone, as Margot Bokanga argued, and Congolese institutions are weak, is there any role for the policies of other governments? Despite

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<sup>5</sup> Name changed to protect privacy

tangible obstacles on a local and national level in the DRC, Eric Kajemba believes that foreign governments should strengthen the reforms that they are trying to implement.

In the last year there has been a struggle in Washington, DC, in particular, over how exactly to confront American multinational corporations that are end-users of Congolese minerals. Here I step away from Congolese perspectives for a short time in order to present the policy debate from the perspective of those behind the scenes in Washington, DC. The discussion of the recent policy debate will begin with reference to the Senate bill (S. 891) but will discuss points of contention in the debate that eventually led to the very recent introduction of H.R. 4128, the Conflict Minerals Trade Act, by Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA).

Sarah Johnson said that she “doesn’t know of any serious groups calling for a wholesale ban on conflict minerals. Stopping the flow of resources from conflict to militia groups is our main concern” (personal communication, September 11, 2009). But when it comes to the NGO community’s position on this, there has clearly been some division. Sasha Lezhnev, who currently serves as a consultant to the Enough Project, was forthright on the issue of legislation:

The reality is that [The Congo Conflict Minerals Act, S. 891] is going to be one part of a larger strategy. No single initiative from any player—whether it’s from Congress, the Administration, or electronics companies—is the answer to this. Anyone who thinks that is just deluding themselves. It is something that has to have multiple parts. Frankly, either the Senate or the [forthcoming] House bill helps accomplish that (personal communication, October 27, 2009).

For Johnson, just like in the conflict diamonds issue, the problem still goes back to the issue of a stringent legal framework. She contended: “Business can’t self-regulate! Enforcement needs to be backed by laws and consequences” (personal communication, September 11, 2009).

Regarding S. 891 and any future legislation, Jayme White, former Legislative Director for Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA), cautioned:

Is it enough? That's in the eye of the beholder. You're not going to know whether something is enough until you start implementing it. There's a number of ways you can go at this issue. But there's passing a bill and then there's implementing it. So that's the difficulty here. How do you pass a bill that can be implemented? You can say: This stuff can't come in, but then, can [the enforcement mechanism] be implemented? To some extent you have to listen to industry. Rather than saying, this stuff can't come in, to say, okay, it can come in, but we're going to identify who's importing it and make that public (personal communication, October 9, 2009)

One step envisioned by S. 891 that would help to implement legislation with more enforcement is the creation of a map, made available to the public, of mineral-rich zones and armed groups in Eastern DRC. Jason Stearns, perhaps the West's foremost Congo authority, led the UN Group of Experts researching support to rebel groups in the DRC. The Group's investigation led to the groundbreaking 2008 report to the UN Security Council that definitively linked mineral exploitation and armed groups. Congolese experts like Eric Kajemba of the Center for Governance and Peace were consulted for the investigation. In a recent blog post Stearns described how a "policing option" (2009, para. 13) would work with mapping mineral zones. In a follow-up interview he explained:

There needs to be a local mechanism in Eastern Congo that would be able to distinguish between conflict minerals and non-conflict minerals and at the moment that is, logistically speaking, very difficult. So, this is why, in the short term I think the policing option would make more sense whereas we should be simply working to strengthen local

institutions to eventually reach a point where we can implement something like certification.... I think hand in hand with this policing mechanism it would be useful to have this bill passed by Obama. Apparently [The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010] has the Defense Department start using their capability, their knowledge of this kind of research, to help the Congolese government set up a database of no-go areas and areas from which one can safely export.... Look, what they really need at the end of the day, because the complaint of the *comptoirs*<sup>6</sup> has always been that they don't know where this stuff comes from. And the problem that a policing mechanism would throw up is that it would establish a norm that there would be policing (personal communication, November 6, 2009).

Sasha Lezhnev has worked with Stearns before and had this comment about his approach:

I think the drunk driving test<sup>7</sup> is a great idea because it provides independent monitoring of a process, and then the problem is that you still need those market forces at work to incentivize or disincentivize the right or the wrong behavior. I like [Stearns'] idea. I think we do have to have that monitoring and policing but we also have to have a process that really engages these companies and puts some real transparency on the whole supply chain. I think we can do both (personal communication, October 27, 2009).

“The map is there,” said Johnson, “but what good will it do if there is no enforcement mechanism to deal with companies whose products ultimately derive from those zones and benefit those armed groups” (personal communication, September 11, 2009)? For others who have a hard time trusting the intentions and capacities of industry, is there currently any legal

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<sup>6</sup> Licensed exporters of Congolese minerals (United Nations Security Council, 2008, p. 20).

<sup>7</sup> Stearns' analogy to help explain the policing option (2009, para. 13).

framework that will provide some sticks in a sea of carrots? David Sullivan, Research Associate for the Enough Project, believes that:

It's important to keep in mind that on the international level there is a sanctions regime for Eastern Congo where violations of the arms embargo through trade and natural resources is a sanctionable act. Also, the US has designated members of the FDLR<sup>8</sup> as folks with whom one is prohibited from doing business through our own sanctions regime. So there are some sticks out there, and through improved transparency, these sticks can be used. They are by no means perfect, but they're there (personal communication, October 16, 2009).

In Jayme White's view, the question is again about implementation. He believes we have to listen when companies cite difficulties in implementation. He gave the following example:

How does Motorola know which mine the mineral came from? Up until now they've just done what you and I would do. There's some contractor out there that's willing to build a phone that I want for the cheapest price. Why the hell do I care how they're doing it? I just want the product. Well, now they have a reason to care, because they're learning that some of the minerals in the components are financing conflict (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

One big question in this policy struggle is: to what extent are companies being taken at their word? It has been noted how understandably skeptical Congolese are of multinational corporations. But in the context of US policy toward the DRC, how do American NGO leaders and policymakers view industry? Regarding these businesses, Johnson stated:

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<sup>8</sup> *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*, Hutu guerrilla group based in Eastern DRC (Prunier, 2009, p. xi)

The motive of businesses is their bottom line and protecting their products. People in those companies don't want to see components of their products funding human rights abuses. However, we need to help incentivize businesses. And they need a legal framework to do that. Because otherwise, if you don't have a legal requirement that requires all businesses to play by the same rules, the need for profit will drive their actions more so than even the social consequences.... Part of the role of government is to regulate so that the market is not crushing those who are abused and poor (personal communication, November 25, 2009).

Stearns, who is best known for his knowledge of what is happening “on the ground” in the DRC, weighed in on the US policy process:

The right thing is to incentivize companies to try to support a mechanism of transparency in Eastern Congo, whatever that mechanism would be. I think it's important that the US government works together with these companies to say, “Look, at the end of the day, if you continue buying in the Congo and there's no mechanism, then you're going to suffer reputational cost.” At the same time we don't want them to boycott the trade from Eastern Congo altogether because you would affect the lives of 400, 500—who knows how many different people—but you would affect the economy of the Eastern Congo (personal communication, November 6, 2009).

On the question of whether these multinationals have the capacity to track their supply chain, White responded:

Well, they say they don't. But is there an interest in having the capacity? There could probably be more ambition put to capacity building to understand their supply chain.... Clearly there ought to be some new expectations on sellers of these products so that



they're doing more due diligence, but the reason we care about this is, as a public policy matter, we care about stopping these horrific abuses of human rights. And so, given that we care about that, it makes sense for us to work with industry and help them with capacity building, help them identify problems in their supply chain, in addition to identifying where the bad mines are, who the bad actors are and who the good actors are. There has to be a partnership, because we have a public policy goal, which is to stop the conflict in the DRC (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

Lezhnev, who recently served as consultant to *60 Minutes* on its recent exposé of gold mining in Eastern DRC, understands the difficulties in putting together a comprehensive policy, especially one that will work with industry for the best solution. He told me that he recently attended a conference in San Francisco with a total of 80 companies, including Dell, HP, and Motorola. He and his team were told that this is one of their top two agenda items on the corporate social responsibility "radar screen." He took this to mean:

That basically the reason is that Congress is lighting the fire under their feet. So by introducing some pretty serious reporting requirements, electronics companies are saying, "ok, we don't like the legislation but what can we do to avoid it or what can we do to address this issue because so many of these people care?" Electronics companies may have knowledge of a couple of steps in their supply chain, but we're also educating them a lot on this to the point where they get it. When we started this conversation a year ago none of them had any idea what minerals they were using, where they come from, and what the steps in their supply chain. I sat around the table with Intel, HP, and all these companies and they were saying, "do you have any idea, because we don't." (personal communication, October 27, 2009).

In a recent blog post, Stearns (2009, para. 4), stated what he thought about the idea of industry policing itself. But what about overall corporate motivation? Are analysts like White and Lezhnev correct in giving corporate boardrooms the benefit of the doubt? Stearns had this to say about whether or not to judge a company's desire to have a cleaner supply chain:

They're interested in profits; that's the way they work. First of all, for some of these companies, the Congolese product is not a large part of their supply chain, so they can pretty much say, "Look, we don't want to buy this stuff anymore. We don't want to risk our reputation." For some of them it's not, some of them it's larger. I'm not aware what percentage it is for these companies. But in any case, for all companies, they want to maximize their profits. So, the reputational risks come into play when it actually jeopardizes how much they're making in profits. They care about that, so yes, I'm skeptical that they are interested in promoting the rights of the people in the Congo. But that's not what business is supposed to do. Business is there to maximize their profits within the rules and regulations. So I think that the job is creating an environment conducive for them to be able to maximize their profits while not fueling conflict in Eastern Congo (personal communication, November 6, 2009).

At the time the Senate bill was released, several policymakers and NGOs embraced the start that they felt the bill had given. The Enough Project, for example, a relatively new organization working to end genocide and mass atrocities, saw the Senate bill as a step forward and actively used it for advocacy purposes in the run up to the tougher House bill. According to David Sullivan, the Enough Project supports S. 891 but is calling for an amendment to establish independent auditing of a company's supply chain. He explained:

We support the Senate bill but we're also calling for an independent audit provision to be incorporated into that through an amendment; that would give it some more teeth so that you would have some independent verification of what companies are declaring.... The problem is that without having much better knowledge of what's coming out and where it's going, then legislation that would amount to an import ban or something like that would disproportionately affect the people who are dependent upon this trade without effectively getting at the conflict actors who are benefiting from it. We want something that is going to improve the situation (personal communication, October 16, 2009).

What improved the legislative situation for many was the introduction of H.R. 4128, the Conflict Minerals Trade Act. Key measures in the bill include:

- A map of conflict mineral zones to serve as a guide for enforcement
- Support of the UN Group of Experts mandate to continue investigations
- A list of approved and established third-party auditors to audit the worldwide processing facilities of conflict minerals
- An auditing protocol to determine mines of origin
- Published list of conflict mineral importers into the Federal Register
- Import ban on unrefined conflict minerals

Immediately upon its release, organizations like the Enough Project, Global Witness, and the Information Technology Industry Council welcomed H.R. 4128 (McDermott, 2009). Various companies like HP commended the legislation (HP, 2009). NGO representative Sarah Johnson, who overall was disappointed by the Senate bill, had this to say about the House bill:

The big thing that I thought was the most important, which won me over, was the prohibition. There's actually a prohibition. You could say, "oh, it's unrefined conflict

minerals.” It’s very significant that it’s still prohibiting conflict minerals into the US. It sends a very clear signal to the market that there’s actually a prohibition. The fact that there’s a prohibition in this legislation is huge! (personal communication, November 25, 2009)

According to Jessica Rodgers, Legislative Aide to Rep. McDermott, there may be certain points of opposition that come along, including a charge that the bill is anti-business (personal communication, December 1, 2009). However, as seen by HP’s endorsement, she believes that advocates will be able to point out that they worked with five electronics companies to come up with this bill. It was not necessarily a tough fight, she implied, because companies are already well aware of press like the recent CQ Weekly cover showing a BlackBerry covered in blood.

As Johnson said in response to McDermott’s bill:

It’s making a direct link to human rights abuses and global economic trade in a way that’s smart, because companies can still source from there, so it’s not illegal to import conflict minerals, but do you really want to deal with your blood cell phone? No, of course not. And, in fact, you can source from other parts of the Congo that are clean (personal communication, November 25, 2009).

According to Rodgers, the industry has an incentive to get this right (personal communication, December 1, 2009). They are being given the basic framework of an auditing protocol that can then be fleshed out with established auditing firms. Some of these same firms are those that have experience with the Kimberley Process and have their reputations staked on correct results. She also emphasized that the bill calls for the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to investigate the auditing process. Again, as someone skeptical of the first bill in the conflict

minerals approach (S. 891), Johnson welcomed this other part of what she sees as “teeth” in the House bill:

These companies will be audited every four months, which is quite rigorous... And then there's a stipulation of what the contents of the audit reports will include. That's important. So the audit just isn't, you have your taxes, etc., but you have to go all the way back to the mine of origin. So that means you're gonna have to go through all the Rwandese middlemen and all the different middlemen who handle this to trace it back. That's very important and that's a requirement of the contents in the audit report. That's very good (personal communication, November 25, 2009).

Whether other policymakers, companies, and lobbyists see the bill as too rigorous and not good remains to be seen. Beyond the stipulations in the legislation, part of what makes seeking a process like this difficult is the staggering to-do list for policymakers. Health care, climate change, two wars, and a growing debt are merely a handful of the issues facing political and civil society leaders. How will things change, then, for the DRC, as far as US policy is concerned?

How will US advocates and policymakers continue to look at this issue? For Johnson, although, Congress has huge domestic priorities right now and the administration is missing key people, raising awareness is a small piece but it can help generate a public outcry, which can then result in action. My axiom for change has always been: public outcry equals political will. Media plus the masses can help move policy and change. Congress responds to its constituents (personal communication, September 11, 2009).

Jayne White knows what it is like to be on the Congressional side, hearing from constituents.

Referring to his former role as McDermott's legislative director, he said:

We feel sure that when Americans know a product they're purchasing is being constructed or is being obtained through sweatshops conditions or human rights abuses, they don't want to buy it. It's one thing if it's a pair of tennis shoes, and we've seen the practices of major US companies like Nike completely turn around because of consumers' tastes and what consumers want. I think it's even more so with something as personal as a cell phone or electronics device (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

Furthermore, according to Johnson, "a threat on industry or government [i.e., being voted out of office] can create political will. What we need is folks pushing policy objectives that will address the issues of injustice" (personal communication, September 11, 2009). White would seem to agree. The problem, as he sees it, is that there is a very narrow group of stakeholders on the Congo issue. He mentioned a few NGOs like Enough Project, Human Rights Watch, and Global Witness who have "been great on this," but admitted that:

There are so many issues before the Congress! It's not whether Congress cares. It's just, which is the priority? Is it trying to figure out where you are on a free trade agreement with Korea, or whether troops are gonna stay in or leave Afghanistan. You know, climate change, health care, the list goes on and on. This issue probably doesn't reach the Top 500 or 1000 for most members of Congress. So, most members are only going to dedicate a certain amount of energy championing.... My view and what I know that McDermott's hoping for and what other members will strive for is some sort of consensus between both sides; all the stakeholders. And I think it can be achieved (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

To what extent does the “Top 500 or 1000” list reflect what some analysts have called “conflict fatigue” (Thomas-Jensen & Feeley, 2009) in the West? White replied:

I’ve had the good fortune of working for members of Congress who do care and have the time to care about something that their constituents don’t give a darn about. That is the aberration, not the rule. But, you know, members of Congress, from what I’ve seen, what’s on their mind is how they’re going to vote for the budget that decides to provide supplemental funds to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It’s those big questions that they’re concerned with and there just isn’t the bandwidth to deal with the crises that exist everywhere. Obviously, it’s falling apart in DRC and no one has been paying attention... (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

White was likely referring to the foreign affairs attention span of the American public. And Americans are probably not alone. Do Thai citizens, whose country hosts many of the mineral smelting companies, know that more people have been killed in the DRC than in any conflict since World War II? Are a majority of Finns aware that end-user cell phone companies like Nokia may be using minerals that are mined illegally in conflict zones? This is why Congolese will continue to call on the entire international community for action. For they see in their homeland a global struggle that has been going on for generations. They are undoubtedly paying attention. For decades now their country has been pillaged, not only by a European king and his state apparatus, but also by various international actors who have used instability to exploit the Congo.

*Whose Eyes Are On Katanga?*

For good reason the international community has turned its attention, albeit scant, to Eastern Congo. Perhaps Jayme White is right. When enough Americans and Europeans learn that their cell phones, laptops, and PlayStations may be tied to conflicts in which millions have died and hundreds of thousands have been raped, perhaps companies may then be compelled to ensure cleaner supply chains. For my Congolese interviewees, this is certainly part of the hope. But many of them have also turned, or rather, already had, their attention hundreds of miles south to the industrial mining heart of the country. Illegal mining and the funding of armed groups in the East have caused great instability in the DRC. Yet, in terms of overall effect on the country, the West has paid much less attention to the behavior of multinational corporations in a sector that has, at times, provided 75% of government revenue (Stratfor, 2006). It is also the country's primary foreign currency earner (Bavier, 2009a). For many Congolese, any talk of mineral exploitation in the DRC necessarily involves discussion of exploitation in the vast, resource-rich Katanga province. Mvemba Dizolele, Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, explained the similarities and differences between the two:

For the Congolese it's about the fact that we have resources, in the East and in the West and we need to get better management of this thing. The situation in Katanga is slightly different because then it's not tied to the conflict, because it's actually more tied to the mismanagement, the corruption, all this stuff at a higher level than what you see. Because in the mines, in the East, if you can just get the militia out, maybe things are gonna work. In Katanga there is no militia to get out. [US-based mining company] Freeport [McMoRan] isn't dealing with a militia; they're dealing with the government. And people might not feel like they want to take on the government in Kinshasa for whatever reason. (personal communication, November 23, 2009)



Professor Peter Rosenblum of Columbia Law School is one of the few prominent Western experts who has worked on mining issues in both Eastern Congo and Katanga province. In our interview he responded to the observation that most Western activists and NGOs focus on the exploitation in the East:

I think [the conflict minerals discussion] is really fascinating and important and valuable. But it's a story of conflict and the East. It's not a story of wealth, development, and the consolidation of democracy in the West and in the rest of the country. The industrial mining sector is intimately connected to that. The minerals in the East, sure, some of it is finding it's way into the hands of Kinshasa politicians, but by and large it isn't represented in the budget at all. There's no industrial mining going on. The money's really supporting different militarized factions.... What's really striking to me is that in all the time I've spent around the Ministry of Mines, the East almost never comes up in discussion.... And so I regret the fact that the East has to be the tail that wags the dog and it keeps us from being able to pay attention, and I think that it's been a factor in letting everybody off the hook in terms of trying to keep the pressure on the companies and the country and the bilateral donors and the others to ensure that there's actually a mining policy long term that's going to contribute to any kind of development or consolidation of democracy. (personal communication, December 11, 2009)

Antoine<sup>9</sup> is a Congolese interviewee who has overseen mining contracts in the region and has knowledge of the mining and banking industry in the DRC. He agreed to be interviewed on condition of anonymity because, as he explained, "It's really tricky [in Katanga]. It's extremely complicated." Regarding one deal that he oversaw, he said:

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<sup>9</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

It gave me quite a bit of awareness of what's going on... that things are not negotiated in the public eye. Almost nobody in the country knows about those transactions. Nobody knows what's going on, actually; that's the drama, I would say (personal communication, October 3, 2009).

The deals he is talking about are the dozens of contracts that were negotiated between the Congolese government and multinational corporations during a time of national upheaval. Recently, as the DRC has begun to slowly recover from 15 years of war, many like Antoine have been calling for greater transparency and even renegotiation of those deals. In June 2007, the Congolese government, following the 2006 elections, responded to pressure by launching a committee to review the mining contracts in Katanga. Pressure came from various players, including Congolese civil society. However, perhaps the greatest pressure came from the Congolese government's own agreement to review mining contracts as part of the 2002 Pretoria peace accords. The peace deal required the transitional government to create a commission to "examine the validity of economic and financial contracts signed during the war (from 1996 to 30 June 2003)..." (Global Witness, 2006, p. 38). The Lutundula commission, as it became known, published a report in 2005 in which it recommended the amendment, renegotiation, or cancellation of dozens of contracts, including over 50 deals in Katanga province alone. As is often the case with the government in Kinshasa, criticism has mounted about even the lack of transparency in this review process (Peter Rosenblum, personal communication, December 11, 2009). Despite the perceived lack of transparency, in July 2009 a network of Congolese civil society organizations issued a detailed report with recommendations on two of the largest contracts (Southern Africa Resource Watch [SARW], 2009). The report detailed how American company Freeport-McMoRan and Canadian company First Quantum have refused requests from

the current Congolese government to renegotiate their terms. This deadlock threatens the entire renegotiation process. According to the report, some companies have already renegotiated their contracts and now, because of these two companies, may be tempted to not honor their commitments.

It appears that pressure may be working. In August 2009 the Congolese government cancelled First Quantum's \$500 million copper project. First Quantum then filed a lawsuit in the DRC's highest civil court but lost in October. It has been required to pay \$6 million in damages (Bavier, 2009b). Freeport-McMoRan's \$1.75 billion project at Tenke Fungurume (Freeport-McMoRan, 2009), the world's largest deposit of copper and cobalt, is also in jeopardy. As of October 2009, the company was still in talks with the Congolese government to renegotiate the contract under review. According to CEO, Richard Adkerson, "We have offered to do some thing differently" (James, 2009). It is not clear what the difference, if any, will mean for the Congolese state and its people. Indeed, the controversy over Freeport-McMoRan is a good case study for an overall review of Congolese perspectives on mineral exploitation. In several interviews with Congolese, the name "Freeport" came up often. As Antoine said, dealings in Katanga are complicated. Whatever is true about Freeport-McMoRan in the DRC, the reality is that, for many Congolese, this affair has become another huge example of the scramble for their nation's wealth.

Kambale Musavuli has been one of the leading Congolese advocates on mineral exploitation and the struggle for peace in Eastern DRC. Yet, almost within the same breath he will mention what is happening between the Congolese government and multinational corporations in Katanga. For him, as we have seen, they are both part of the "five forces against the Congolese":

You look at Freeport McMoRan, \$400 million from OPIC<sup>10</sup>; these are projects in the Congo that displace the local population and put them in tents. They have the largest reserves of copper in the world: the Tenke project. But when you see what they've done, with US taxpayers' [money], with the backing of the US embassy in Kinshasa, and the lady who facilitated that deal today works for Freeport in Congo. And no one knows that (personal communication, October 6, 2009).

According to OPIC, the agency "operates on a self-sustaining basis at no net cost to taxpayers" (OPIC, n.d.). A press release about the Tenke project described the \$400 million investment as a blend of financing and political risk insurance (OPIC, 2007). Fortunately for US citizens, there are avenues to verify if the loan is repaid and indeed comes at no net cost to taxpayers. For Congolese citizens, however, the avenues are dark and paved with corruption.

Veteran news anchor Dan Rather was the first to break the news about US government complicity in what has been widely seen as a dubious contract between Freeport-McMoRan and the Congolese government (Nelson, 2008). As Musavuli referenced, there was indeed a US embassy official in Kinshasa, Melissa Sanderson, who facilitated the deal between Phelps Dodge (later acquired by Freeport-McMoRan) executives and the Congolese government. Less than a year later she took a job as vice president with the company. But what is perhaps an even shadier aspect of this contract is the likelihood that Phelps Dodge, with the help of US embassy officials, violated an informal moratorium that had been instituted due to a concern about suspicious contracts. Peter Rosenblum described to me his investigations into this issue:

I have, over and over again, in conversations with people from Freeport and Phelps Dodge, pushed them on this subject and said the [World Bank] thought there was a

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<sup>10</sup> *Overseas Private Investment Corporation [OPIC]*. A US government agency that helps American businesses invest overseas (OPIC, n.d.).

moratorium in place. There was no basis on which this deal should have gone through at that time. Why was the US government pushing for a deal to go through? Why was this happening when the [World Bank] was arguing strongly that they had to stop because they knew there were problems in the contracts. And at the most they had some level of agreement from the Congolese side that they wouldn't conclude any agreements while this review was happening. Now who had made the agreement, how far it went, I don't know. But nobody in the Freeport structure and the guys who've been involved in negotiating the contract have admitted to any knowledge that there was a moratorium in place. (personal communication, December 11, 2009)

In light of these problems with multinational corporations, one might expect a certain backlash in a region previously caught up in the Cold War. However, it would be a mistake to assume that most, or even many, Congolese are calling for nationalization of the mines. They have seen the track record of their government and would not trust having this vital sector completely in its hands. Yet, despite previous corruption, the argument is still made for greater involvement by the government owned company, *La Générale des Carrières et des Mines* (hereafter Gécamines). For now, this seems to be the best way for the Congolese people to get a share of their land's vast resources (Nita Evele, personal communication, September 25, 2009). Congolese scholar Mvemba Dizolele agreed from a historical perspective, but in our conversation he was frank about the problem of corruption:

Katanga used to be the backbone of Congo's economy...because of institutions like Gécamines...and other companies. But there were clear companies that were controlled by the government. Even though there was corruption...there was a lot of money that went directly to the national coffers. Today because of all the contracts you've had, that

money doesn't go to the government. So it's not clear what the government is really reaping from that.... There's this chaos in the way things are run.... Whatever little there is to go to the government, it will go to the government, if there's any such thing.

Katanga itself has become problematic because for many years, a long time ago, they had this mining giant [Gécamines] that really worked. It functioned. When Mobutu nationalized in 1967-68, one year later on they had these partnerships. These places worked.... There were companies that you reckoned with. They had trading representatives in Brussels.... People forget that. But those things worked. In fact they worked so well that Mobutu was able to use that money to keep himself in power.

(personal communication, November 23, 2009)

Because of Mobutu's legacy and the endemic corruption in the Kinshasa government, Congolese like Antoine are adamant about nationalization. He explained:

I'm completely against nationalization, because the country now really needs foreign direct investment. That's one thing. In this process we need to ensure that human rights, social rights are respected; environmental issues as well. The government should at least get a decent share of those projects. I think something like 25% would be more decent. For example, if you look at the agreements with the Chinese, it's at 62%/38%, which seems quite fair, I would say. If you look at Tenke [Fungurume; Freeport-McMoRan's project], it's something like 17%; that's way too low, I think. And the central problem is corruption. And to get rid of it, this will take ages. So I'm not really optimistic about getting all those things done. This company which owns those shares really has to be supervised. The problem is that, even if your contract gets renegotiated, you can walk in with a wallet of cash and get it done. The Congolese/Chinese deal looks much more fair

from an economic point of view. Now, from an environmental, social, and human level, I have no idea. The Chinese are not known to be very sensitive to these issues. (personal communication, October 3, 2009)

The US-supported dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, perfected the corruption Antoine previously mentioned. When Laurent Kabila overthrew Mobutu in 1997, the mining industry was in shambles following decades of kleptocracy and neglect. Yet, Kabila relied on a similar strategy of patronage for handling mining operations in Katanga. As late as 2004, although an institution was set up to remove individual interference in mining contracts, international businessmen told the International Crisis Group (2006) that, “all the important deals are still negotiated with senior politicians” (p. 9).

It is in this kind of political and social climate that Congolese civil society has been persevering. As noted, it appears that efforts by many players have succeeded in challenging First Quantum’s contract. Now many are waiting to hear the court’s decision about Freeport-McMoRan. What will happen to the contract for the world’s largest copper and cobalt mining project? According to the SARW (2009) report, which was the conclusion of several Congolese groups working in the natural resources sector, the vast resources in the Tenke mining basin are vital to the development of the DRC. As it stated:

If there is one country where there is an outrageous paradox of abundance and poverty, it is the DRC. The DRC has abundant natural resources which contribute in a significant manner to the growth and development of the country. In spite of this abundance of natural resources and their general exploitation, the majority of Congolese live on less than one dollar per day. Two simple but fundamental questions arise: why do Congolese minerals not benefit the Congolese nation? Why do others succeed in using the profits

from their minerals to build cities, provide inhabitants with potable water, electricity, construct schools and hospitals? (p. 8)

The report spent a good deal of time on the issue of corruption among the Congolese elite. This problem will be taken up in more detail in the next section when we consider Congolese perspectives on the democratic process in the DRC. The scourge of corruption and mismanagement is tied up in the Katanga mining issue, and no one laments it more than Congolese citizens. Thus, this section will naturally lead into a discussion on views of governance (or the lack thereof) through the eyes of Congolese.

### *Governance and Corruption*

For now, I focus on the behavior of multinational corporations and outside interests. Corruption usually involves many players. Most of the time it is at least a two-way street. Yet, how often do Westerners focus their gaze primarily upon the Fat Cat, African Big Man who builds palaces while his people starve? Perhaps we feel that we already know the gist of the story: African wars and deprivation are caused by the Fat Cats fighting over money that is probably coming from our government, and the pathetic-looking, swollen-bellied children are their victims and our image of the continent. However, as simplistic as this Western notion may be, many, if not most, Congolese do hold their leaders most responsible. As Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) put it so bluntly: “If it is true that the corrupted cannot exist without corrupters, it is in the former group that the major culprits are to be found” (p. 236). He is one Congolese voice. If many Congolese voices are willing to join him and concede the responsibility of their leaders, why are not more in the West willing to even consider the culpability of North American or European companies? Of course, conspiracy theories do abound. One needs only fifteen minutes in the blogosphere to “learn” that under every rock in Congo there hides an evil



capitalist empire. Even among some serious academics there can be a tendency to view DRC's problems mainly through a prism of Western corporate greed (see Kern, 2007; Renton, Seddon, & Zelig, 2007; also see critique of Renton et al. in Stearns, 2009a). Renowned scholar on Africa, Gérard Prunier (2009), said it best:

This is always the problem of conspiracy theories applied to Africa: they purport to denounce the evil visited upon Africans by ill-meaning foreigners and they end up with Africans looking like perfect dolts, manipulated here, pushed there, used for this, deceived into that. In thirty-seven years of studying Africa I have seen more whites manipulated by blacks than the other way around. But lingering postcolonial racism makes it hard for the victims to admit to themselves that they have been taken for a ride; the implicit notion that all things being equal the white fellow is smarter than the black one is still the unspoken assumption of a large number of white diplomats, international civil servants, and businesspeople. Conspiracy theorists do not represent an exception: their evil whites are more cleverly evil than their evil blacks, an assumption I seriously doubt.

So where is the balance? Why is it so easy for many outside observers to end up on one extreme or another? Perhaps it is because they are mostly that: outsiders. Whether one has spent more time in Africa, taken an African into their family, or simply read more scholarship on Africa than the next outside observer, there is a temptation to think that one has figured out the continent. Indeed, many may even claim insider status. Some outsiders are surely more informed and better at nuance than others. But he or she, like me, is never a true insider. Therefore, this is precisely why, in the context of mineral exploitation or any other Congo issue, the West should

engage with and be guided by Congolese perspectives. Moreover, any hint of an emerging Congolese consensus must be the focus of the outside world's attention.

If not a full consensus, there seems to at least be a dominant Congolese perspective which can hold in tension the culpability of both Congolese leaders and multinational corporations. Thus, when it comes to the exploitation of Congo's resources, it is helpful to be guided by the nuance found, for example, in Nzongola-Ntalaja's (2002) analysis:

While many of the foreign enterprises do engage in legitimate business, there are rogue groups and individuals who would stop at nothing to achieve their aims. The intricate networks and lobbies of legitimate and rogue operators, together with the assistance and protection they often receive from their national governments.... While these [foreign] networks and lobbies are an important factor of the crisis and a major contributor to the repression of the Congolese people, their role should not be overly exaggerated. For they cannot operate without the willing complicity of Congolese nationals and the rulers of neighboring African states, who together have allowed mercenaries, merchants of death and adventurers of all kinds to continue plundering our land and plunging our people into deeper poverty and destitution. (p. 236)

### *Dubious Contracts*

Thus, as an outsider who ought to consider the plundering role of a foreign enterprise, despite the willing complicity of Congolese nationals, the question may be asked: would Freeport-McMoRan stop at nothing to achieve its aims? Following a brief interlude, we thus return to the Congolese civil society report that details the nature and history of these dubious contracts. For those who fall in the extremes described above, there is often an inclination to play the blame game. Who is most at fault? Yet this report by a network of Congolese organizations did not

play that game, but rather took a look at the facts and provided recommendations. One way it interpreted the facts was to argue that, “there is still an ore processing structure which benefits foreigners” (SARW, 2009, p. 8). The past to which it refers is, of course, the colonial economic structure set up by King Leopold II and the Belgian authorities that followed. But then the report claimed:

The Congo continues to exist as it did during colonial times. The country’s natural resources are mined to the benefit of other nations. Western countries in collaboration with Congolese political leaders continue the pillaging. The spoliation is facilitated by the Congolese elite which makes do with the crumbs that the capitalist mining companies offer it while the Congolese nation wallows in poverty. Of course the pillaging methods used change with time and circumstances. It has gone from an illegitimate system during colonisation to a legal form of pillage which is currently characterised by the signing of one-sided contracts. The objective is the same. It is a matter of extracting as much as possible of the natural resources for next to nothing (if not free of charge). (SARW, 2009, p. 8-9)

Notice again the tension felt in the phrase, “in collaboration.” Like Nzongola-Ntalaja’s culprits, there may be a major culprit, but there is always at least one who is minor. Freeport-McMoRan is a case in which the Congolese advocates are certainly not alone. Westerners have joined in the chorus, naming Freeport-McMoRan as a culprit in what has been labeled a “shocking” (Prunier, 2009, p. 319) contract that it inherited. One legal analyst, John Reboul, cited this deal and others in the Katanga mining sector as “some of the most one-sided agreements I have seen in 30 years of practice” (Carter Center, 2008). The problem overall, according to the Congolese analysts, is that “mining companies operating in Africa benefit from too much tax exemption and

concessions. There is a high level of tax evasion on the part of mining companies through secret mining contracts, company mergers and acquisitions” (SARW, 2009, p. 9). Indeed, the concessions in the Tenke Fungurume deal are staggering from a purely factual perspective. According the SARW report, prospecting began in 1908 and has not yet been completed. The concession covers 1,600 square km (600 square miles) in the Katanga province (Freeport-McMoRan, 2009), and contains more than 198 hills to be mined. The company estimated for shareholders that it expects to produce 250 million pounds of copper per year. The mining lifespan is about 100 years, thus equaling a potential of 25 billion pounds of copper produced by the company. It is not surprising that estimates of Congo’s mineral wealth have ranged from \$24-27 trillion dollars (Morgan, 2009, and LeMelle, 2009, respectively).

In light of this potential, it is also no surprise that Congolese like Antoine mention the word “fair” when it comes to the recent Chinese deals (personal communication, October 3, 2009). Moreover, it is easy for Congolese to be dubious of Western concerns about the Chinese contracts for the following reasons. First, although in a recent report the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation [hereafter IFC] (2008) had listed the DRC as the worst place to do business, their plan for growing the Congolese economy was to open it up more to private investment. Moreover, the World Bank’s influence on the 2002 Mining Code and restructuring of the state mining company gave more power to foreign investors (Global Witness, 2006). According to the Congolese civil society report, “In the worst cases, some contracts have exempted companies from paying any taxes or royalties” (SARW, 2009). For many Congolese, foreign direct investment is important, but the environment into which that investment arrives is crucial. Second, international institutions like the World Bank, IFC, and the International Monetary Fund (hereafter IMF), which are essentially run by the West, have been implicated in

questionable dealings in the DRC. For example, the IFC, which is the private sector arm of the World Bank, was a shareholder in the First Quantum/KMT deal, a contract that was recently nullified by a Congolese court. The IFC had a 7.5% stake in that contract (IFC, 2009). If the contract was indeed unfair to the DRC, as the Congolese civil society and courts contend, why did the IFC involve itself? What role did it play in this lopsided contract? Or, what role did it fail to play in failing to review a dubious contract years ago? The IMF and other Western players may have legitimate concerns over China's human rights record, but for many Congolese, the Chinese contracts make sense economically and should not be held hostage by the IMF's stated concern over Congolese debt (Wroughton, 2009). Moreover, one Asian analyst pointed out that if the Congolese got their wishes on the renegotiation of the Freeport-McMorRan/Tenke contract, it would contribute to the debt resolution (Lee, 2009). What will happen with that contract remains to be seen. In the meantime, Congolese like Andy Alo are not holding their breath. As he argued:

Multinationals have their goals: to make money, not to help Congo solve its problems. It is up to the Congolese to use the multinationals' royalties for developing Congo. That is where our problems come from. Our leadership is not accountable. Corruption is everywhere. We have evidences that external forces have always been negative.... World Bank and IMF are doing business, not really offering a solution to DRC (personal communication, September 26, 2009).

There may seem to be at least a triangulation of forces against the Congolese: their own inept government (which will be discussed in the next section), international institutions, and multinational corporations. However, it is not hard to notice a certain word chosen by the authors of the Congolese civil society report. As previously cited, the report stated that Western

“countries” (SARW, 2009, p. 8), not merely companies, are complicit in the pillaging of DRC’s natural resources. Today’s “enlightened” Western capitals may object to this point, but it is not hard to see why Congolese link the companies with their host countries. Freeport-McMoRan provides the perfect example. Part of the role of embassies is to encourage business links between their companies and host nations. Yet, how is it that the US embassy’s political officer pushed for such a lopsided contract during a time of national instability in the DRC? Moreover, how was her quick move from the public to the private sector not questioned in light of the State Department’s ethics policy (Nelson, 2008, p. 8)? These questions are surely not lost on the Congolese. As Columbia Law professor, Peter Rosenblum, explained:

My friends inside the Congo said, "The United States is pushing for good governance here? Are you kidding? Look at what they've just done. They-- they-- they pushed us to sign a contract when we shouldn't have signed it. And then the lady who pushed now she's making money off that contract. And you're trying to tell us that we should come clean about problems in our contracts?" (Nelson, 2008, p. 9).

As previously argued, corruption is usually at least a two-way street. The example of US embassy official, Melissa Sanderson, and US-based company, Freeport-McMoRan, is important to keep in mind as we turn to a section on Congolese perspectives on good governance in their country. For outsiders, this example is vital lest we dive into discussions about the Congolese government and begin to think that corruption is exclusively their problem. If US companies like Freeport-McMoRan are part of the problem, what more can be done to rectify the situation? Mvemba Dizolele, a Congolese scholar whose perspectives have been shared on the *Newshour* and other media outlets, called specifically for action by the US government:

Congress should be putting a lot of pressure on these companies.... But let's not kid ourselves here. There's all these Western nations that don't really care about making things straight, then nothing can work over there. So if people think [Freeport McMoRan] is being improper in their contract and they think they can get away with it over here, than what's gonna stop them from doing it in Congo because it's gonna be easier to do it there.... Remember there have been many reports by the UN about the exploitation of resources in Congo. But those [reports] never seem to go anywhere because the countries where these countries are headquartered don't care. No American company has been under pressure here because of what happened in Congo in 2002 or 2003. No Belgian company has been under pressure. These campaigns are done by people like...John Prendergast and other people. They're not by any institution of any serious standing. By that I mean the government or anyone who can bring serious repercussions to the bottom line of those companies. (personal communication, November 23, 2009)

Peter Rosenblum concurred about the power of American companies in the DRC and also shared this view about the lack of US government oversight:

The story of Africa generally is that when you've got a big American company involved, they can have an unbelievably disproportionate impact on policy because there's so few other constituents that are affecting the behavior of the embassy on a daily basis. Freeport McMoran...is effectively the only big US business that is investing in the country. It means that they have a disproportionate impact. You know, [Freeport CEO] Adkerson calls the US Ambassador and the Ambassador answers the phone. So one point is just that at the executive level, by and large there's nothing happening. No serious pressure

on US businesses or on other mining businesses to behave responsibly in some major way to ante up, to come to the table and help plot the high road to doing business in the right ways in the country. None of that. The US government has played no role in that. And the US Congress has not really played any role in that either. (personal communication, December 11, 2009)

### *Congolese Perspectives on Good Governance in DRC*

Any spotlight on Katanga catches Kinshasa, DRC's capital, in its beam. Despite the decentralization of power in the constitution, shady mining deals usually involve the central government. For years now the DRC has been at or near the bottom of corruption rankings (Transparency International, 2009). Whether it involves natural resource exploitation in Katanga province or the east of the country, Congolese have been quick to lay most of the blame at the feet of their government. More than any topic, my Congolese interviewees spoke about the responsibility of their government to its people. Thus, this section will focus most heavily, if not exclusively, on the voice of the Congolese. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is their country. As Kongo ethnographer Simon Bockie (1993) said, "Until today, the West has done most of the explaining of African existence. The time has come for Africans themselves to set forth their values and identities as only they are capable of doing" (p. ix). Not much seems to have changed since Bockie wrote those words 16 years ago. Contributions from African scholars notwithstanding, the West seems to like to hear itself talk. A few examples come to mind. One recent panel discussion on the conflict in the DRC at a prestigious US law school featured one Congolese among four Western panelists. Airtime from the panelists varied, but the lone Congolese was completely overshadowed by an American NGO representative who



monopolized the entire panel. A second example is from a *Charlie Rose Show* episode on the DRC conflict (Rose, 2008). The 17-minute show featured a French scholar, a former US AID mission director for the DRC, and an African with more professional experience on the continent than the other guests combined. The African was not invited to speak until 10 minutes into the show. The American dominated the show and the African ended up with about three minutes to share his perspective. Most surprising was Rose's question, not to the African, but the French scholar: "Do you think they will find the, sort of, political will, the United Nations, or from Africa, to do what is necessary to bring a beginning of an end?"

It is in this kind of global political neglect that Congolese like Margot Bokanga are speaking out, saying, "The greatest responsibility lies in the hand of the Congolese government. As a member of the international community, the US might help the Congolese government, but ultimately, the Congolese government should be accountable to its own people." Specifically on the issue of Kinshasa and the provincial governments she said:

When we talk about mismanagement of resources in the DRC we always focus our attention to the central government in Kinshasa. Our constitution calls for decentralization of power to enable the provinces to be more autonomous from Kinshasa in the management of their own affairs, yet, we never talk about the provinces' ability to create infrastructures and institutions to govern and be accountable to their constituents (personal communication, October 2, 2009).

The concern over the provinces apparently stems from the fact that, given a historically corrupt central government, the new 2006 constitution called for greater provincial authority. Forty percent of the taxes are now redistributed to the provinces (Jean-Jacques, personal communication, October 3, 2009). Understandably, accountability was a word heard over and

over again. Regarding the growth of democracy and accountability in the DRC, Jean-Jacques, with his knowledge of the industrial mining sector in Katanga, said:

I think the key is reducing the corruption. Corruption is essential to everything. You have to go there to visualize it... The problem is that those guys need to be held accountable. But you really need to look at it from down to earth. It's the sum of individual issues. For individuals, I mean, you get nominated, for example, minister or something else. Most of those guys, they didn't put any money aside during their whole life. They come into a position, they're already 60 years old. And they maybe have 2-3 years to guarantee their retirement. Because when they retire, forget about the Congolese state. You know, so it's really a human problem. Those guys...it's about their own living. It's not just stealing money for fun or just to get money. If you don't do it, you end up with nothing (personal communication, October 3, 2009).

Regarding any short-term solutions to a long-term problem, he was somewhat optimistic:

First of all, there have been some good signs, because some guys have been put into jail. They've slowly started fighting corruption. There's been a start, but a lot needs to be done.... You need to ensure that all the officials in key positions are decently paid. Otherwise you never have a solution to this problem.... They just presented the budget for 2010. It's \$5.3 billion USD, which is big progress...but half of the money comes from abroad (EU, World Bank, Chinese, etc.). So, you need to tackle several things at the same time. On one hand you need to ensure that all those mining operators are paying their taxes, and when you talk about a budget of \$5 billion and half a billion is missing for this year, you see that it's 10% of the budget.... It's a vicious circle (personal communication, October 3, 2009).

What will it take to end this vicious circle? There seemed to be a strong consensus among my Congolese interviewees that, despite a lack of confidence in the Kabila administration, there was hope in a stronger democratic process. Some were more confident than others about a challenger rising up to take Kabila's place through the ballot. Yet, as Nita Evele (personal communication, September 25, 2009) argued, the democratic process has to continue. This is the only way for the people to hold their elected officials accountable, she said. Evele explained how she, like many Congolese, envisions a democratic system where two to three cycles of elections will produce the kind of participation and result that will benefit the Congolese people. Like Evele, Said Kakese Dibinga described ways the international community could help, but cautioned that "if someone does it for [the Congolese], then they can't take ownership of it... It has to start with us. Unless we do it, it will not change" (personal communication, October 14, 2009). "[The US] can't export democracy, we have learned that for the past 8 years," said Margot Bokanga. "It is up to the Congolese people to determine what kind of democratic rule they want to have" (personal communication, October 2, 2009). Doctoral student Andy Alo believes that "the Congolese must become more patriotic and devoted for the development of the DR Congo" (personal communication, September 23, 2009). He referenced a consensus of what he called the "true [Congolese] intelligentsia," meaning:

...scholars and academics who study the conflict more objectively as opposed to "leaders" who manipulate the truth for their personal gain. Despite the diversity and size of DRC, enlightened experience tends to be the same: (1) the central government lacks the political will to solve some of the DRC problems. The struggle for power is the ultimate goal of many leaders; (2) the "international community" is more interested in the raw materials than the destiny of the Congolese people; (3) the "international

community” takes advantage of the poor leadership to gain more in the exploitation of mineral resources (personal communication, September 29, 2009).

As noted earlier, some Congolese like Djo Matangwa, medical officer for an international NGO in Eastern Congo, have seen so much devastation from the exploitation of minerals that outright prohibition seems necessary. From his local vantage point, he argued that, “the international community should punish and prohibit the sale of minerals from the DRC,” because... (personal communication, November 26, 2009). Outright prohibition seems to be a minority view among Congolese, but Dr. Matangwa and others do see credible alternatives. Through the transparent allocation of industrial mining revenues, political decentralization, and a stop to corruption, he envisions job creation and the revival of agriculture, which he sees as the ideal for DRC’s development. Given the inadequacies of the government, he said, “Civil society must educate people to work on aspects of development other than mining” (personal communication, November 26, 2009). Although he did not advocate outright prohibition, Stéphane Etsik’ea Wenge<sup>11</sup> (personal communication, December 2, 2009), an independent analyst in Eastern Congo, agreed that economic development projects must be diversified. In a long list of ideas he mentioned agricultural projects several times. Pierre<sup>12</sup> (personal communication, November 18, 2009), a Congolese NGO representative based in Bukavu, had a similar list and claimed that DRC’s potential meant that it could be the main agricultural exporter in Africa. When I asked Congolese banking industry expert Antoine<sup>13</sup> what needs to happen in the private sector to make it work for the Congolese, he replied:

I think first of all I would not focus this much attention on the mining sector. Of course, everybody looks at it. It’s not the biggest potential of the country. If you look at

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<sup>11</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

<sup>12</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

<sup>13</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

agriculture, there's only 3% of arable land that is correctly cultivated and not at an industrial level. The biggest potential is there. Nevertheless, the mining sector is extremely important. (personal communication, October 10, 2009)

When it comes to agriculture, local Congolese know first-hand what outsiders have only noticed: the unrealized potential of the DRC's land. An old adage goes something like this: Drop anything in Congo's soil and it will grow something. One report citing global food policy experts claimed that the DRC "has the potential to become a breadbasket for the developing world" (Bavier, 2008).

Whatever the economic potential of any industry, the core problem for my Congolese interviewees is the incompetence and corruption of the Congolese government. As Andy Alo stated:

Many analyses have argued that if the Congolese government and Congolese elite do not put order in the politico-social and economic system, DR Congo will remain exploited by the multinationals and other powers forever. Solutions must come from inside. The intelligentsia has become negative about any help coming from outside. It is only politicians who are eager to count on the outside powers for maintaining themselves. (personal communication, September 23, 2009)

Regarding the democratic process there is certainly a potential threat to the cycle of elections envisioned by Evele and others. It appears that President Kabila may be one of those trying to "maintain themselves." Recently in a proposed review of the constitution, he suggested that he may call for an extension of presidential terms and even a rejection of term limits altogether. Perhaps more troubling, in a country where the rule of law has been virtually absent, is his other potential idea to become the head of the nation's most powerful judicial body (Economist, 2009).

Developments like these are what lead some Congolese to call for appropriate outside pressure by the international community. Student activist Kambale Musavuli called for this by saying:

We need to put outside pressure on the government, provide support to local institutions that are doing the work on the ground, and create the political space for the Congolese to be able to clean their dirty laundry and regain sovereignty of their land (personal communication, October 6, 2009).

One Congolese analyst I interviewed specifically mentioned that outside pressure from the international community in this case would be to “support the Government in the establishment of an independent judiciary” (Stéphane Etsik’ea Wenge<sup>14</sup>, personal communication, December 2, 2009). Horeb Bulambo<sup>15</sup> (personal communication, November 20, 2009), MONUC staff based in North Kivu, believes that sovereignty will ultimately be strengthened by a stronger Congolese state. That is, he argued, the authority of the state must be strengthened and the international community must reinforce this authority. In Bulambo’s view, good governance is not even the primary issue. I took him to mean that even if good governance appeared out of thin air, the state would still lack authority in the nation and the region. That is why Pierre<sup>16</sup>, an analyst with a Congolese human rights NGO in Bukavu, believes that, “The government should fight to extend its authority throughout the territory...” (personal communication, November 18, 2009). Mbemva Dizolele, Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, believes the answer lies in “in finishing the war so the government can do its job of enforcing the rule of law. And if we have that, then those institutions can work” (personal communication, November 23, 2009).

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<sup>14</sup> Name changed to protect privacy

<sup>15</sup> Upon his interview, Mr. Bulambo requested the following disclaimer: *What Mr. Bulambo states is only his opinion and not that of any of his partners, employers, or collaborators who have worked with him in the past, the present, or in the future.*

<sup>16</sup> Name changed to protect privacy

Of course, there is good reason for many local Congolese to mistrust the government's fight. Jean-Jacques Bagalwa Murhandikire (personal communication, February 25, 2010), an analyst with Action for Development and Peace (AEDPAE) based in Bukavu, referred to a report by London-based International Alert (2010) that details the high-level collusion of the Congolese military with illicit mining activities and horrific human rights abuses. Remy Murhula (personal communication, November 12, 2009), a Congolese training specialist with the United Nations Development Program in Goma, participated in the drafting of a 2008 report that declared the following about the Congolese military:

The FARDC are the official protectors of the Congolese state and its population....

However, in the margins of this central conflict military units retain positions in remote areas where their main motive for deployment is to enrich themselves and their superiors.

The FARDC are involved in a wide array of illegal trade, for example: the trade in tropical timber in Beni, the trade in illegal drugs (hemp) in Lubero, which is a joint business operation with the FDLR, and the coltan trade in Shabunda. Several units have a bad human rights record. (International Peace Information Service, 2008, p. 3)

Nevertheless, other locals like Pierre<sup>17</sup> (personal communication, November 18, 2009) know all too well how armed groups and criminal gangs operate with impunity in Eastern Congo. Given the lack of an effective international force with stronger rules of engagement, the best hope seems to be the strengthening of state sovereignty. Mvemba Dizolele, a Congolese scholar who was embedded with UN peacekeepers in war-torn parts of the DRC, sees a direct correlation between the UN Mission in the Congo (MONUC) and the lack of state sovereignty. In response to my question about what Western governments could do vis-à-vis the DRC, he argued:

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<sup>17</sup> Name changed to protect privacy

They need to start preparing for MONUC to leave the country because MONUC has become a hindrance to peace in Congo. And it's also become a hindrance to progress in the sense...look, without MONUC things would be worse. So they play a certain role now but...it's not a role of solving the problem. It's a Band-Aid role that is not even done well. MONUC was supposed to be there so that in time the government could build its army. But it hasn't worked that way and MONUC has been there for nearly 10 years now. So at the pace we're going today MONUC may be in Congo for another 10 years and nothing will happen. So we need to start putting pressure on MONUC so that MONUC will help the government actually build an army...but as long as MONUC doesn't do that the government get away with not carrying out its duty, that is, to build its army, provide law enforcement and security, and territorial integrity of its own country. And as long as that's not happening, MONUC claims, "oh, we are still needed here, we cannot leave yet because our job is not finished." So those two institutions play off each other; one scratches the other's back. (personal communication, November 23, 2009)

Congolese like Nita Evele describe what they see as the details of creating the "political space" that Musavuli mentioned above. The Unity Statement of Congo Global Action (2007) says, in part, "The people of the DR Congo must be empowered to hold their government accountable. The international community must provide adequate and sustained support for these efforts in order to save lives, keep people safe, and end economic exploitation" (para. 5). I asked Evele, a member of Congo Global Action's executive committee, what "adequate and sustained support" would actually look like. "Sustained means to commit to be with the Congolese until there is a solution," she replied, referring to the international community, namely the UN and its multinational force known as MONUC (personal communication, September 25, 2009). In



regard to “adequate,” she argued that financial support has to be longer, but offered several caveats. She insisted that the international community needs another plan to get aid directly to people, saying, “The government is too corrupt or doesn’t show willingness to do something. They are not part of the solution; they are actually part of the problem.” Thus, like others, Evele believes that in addition to Congo’s debt burden being cancelled by international institutions, Congolese civil society must be rebuilt and sustained with financial help. She cautioned, however, and said that the international community, through diplomatic pressure, “needs to work with the government because civil society cannot see the big picture. All money going to NGOs won’t solve the problem.” When asked for specific ideas on pressuring the Congolese government, she mentioned putting travel bans on corrupt officials and condemning, or “naming and shaming,” undemocratic behavior.

Assessing undemocratic behavior in the DRC is difficult due to the track record of the international community, namely the West. One of the reasons why it has been hard for US leaders, for example, to speak strongly against undemocratic behavior in places like DRC is because the US lacks credibility due to its history in the region. Another reason, of course, is that it is hard for American leaders to confront despotic regimes when those regimes control the natural resources that America wants. Professor Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja is perhaps the strongest Congolese voice to confront the undemocratic behavior of the West toward the democratic process in the DRC. He has both studied and lived the history, the crux of which is Congo’s “struggle for national liberation” (2002, p. 9). Thus, his “People’s History” has been relied upon by many Western scholars (see, for example, Turner, 2007). Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) was intimately involved with Congo’s struggle for multiparty democracy during Mobutu’s “reign of terror” (p. 4). The struggle at that time culminated in the Sovereign National

Conference (CNS), a “major watershed in Congolese history” (p. 197) because of its potential to peacefully oust Mobutu by democratic pressure. By 1992, the Cold War was effectively over and the democratic process in the DRC could thaw from its frozen state (Prunier, 2009).

Congolese interviewee, Andy Alo, confirmed this analysis, even from his vantage point far in the northeast of the DRC (personal communication, September 29, 2009). Indeed, it was not hard for most Congolese to see that the USA was cautiously abandoning its longtime African Cold War ally, Mobutu Sese Seko (Gambino, 2008). Yet ultimately, the international community would not effectively rally behind multiparty democracy in the DRC in 1992, and the CNS failed. Mobutu would not be ousted from power until a Rwanda/Uganda-backed rebel force, headed by Laurent Kabila, drove him out of the country. Nzongola-Ntalaja (2002) set the stage for his historical narrative with this stinging rebuke to the international community:

The message that the world community of nations sent to the people of the Congo and Africa as a whole in these two instances is loud and clear. Changes through democratic means and the rule of law in Africa are not as deserving of unequivocal support as changes through the barrel of a gun. The first changes are slow and somewhat confusing, and seem to rely on universal principles of governance that some believe are not applicable to Africa. The second, on the other hand, are decisive and led by politically astute African leaders who are likely to establish stable political orders and market economies compatible with the interests of the developed North. (p. 1).

Peter Rosenblum (2009), professor of human rights law at Columbia and an expert on Katanga mining issues, echoed this version of the history. In a recent panel discussion on the Congo wars and mineral exploitation, he offered the following argument:

If George Bush Sr. had been willing to let go of Mobutu Sese Seko, and a process that had been underway that was launched by civil society in the Congo had been able to move forward, I don't think any of this would have ever happened. Because the forces were in place to make something come about in the Congo. Democratic transition or something, but transition, and they were stopped, in part, by the lingering support of the world community for Mobutu.... The fact that we weren't willing to support the people of the Congo in the democratic process that they themselves had started. And instead we helped to birth a military-inspired transition in the Congo.

Nzongola-Ntalaja's "barrel of a gun" and Rosenblum's "military-inspired transition" are direct references to the overthrow of Mobutu by Laurent Kabila's *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo* (AFDL). The AFDL's primary backer was Rwanda (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002) but also included Uganda and Burundi, two other neighbors with exploitative interests in the Congo. Both Congolese and Western scholars argue that the US gave direct and indirect backing to Rwanda's moves at that time. Whole sections of recent books have described the tripartite network that toppled America's old ally in 1997 (Clark, 2002; Nest, Grignon, & Kisangani, 2006; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002; Prunier, 2009; Turner, 2007). But for our purposes here, suffice it to say that a US Africa policy, soaked in guilt over the 1994 Rwandan genocide, supported an undemocratic power grab in the Congo.

### *Congolese Anger and Western Defensiveness*

It is easy for some Americans to become frustrated and defensive with an alleged Congolese preoccupation over Rwanda's intervention. Westerners sometimes dismiss Congolese anger over reference to the 1996-97 war as a "civil war" as Congolese remaining in the past. Why can't the Congolese move on and solve their own problems? Why focus on the past and

not the future? In the American historical context, African Americans have rightly called for historical perspective and lament in the fight to move forward and address today's lingering racial injustices. Legacies from the past impede current progress. Indeed, it is argued, we cannot simply move on from history. It needs to be remembered, acknowledged, and even wept over. As far as the public record is concerned, there has been no weeping over America's role in the recent African Great Lakes tragedy. Past actions are justified, history is labeled as too complex, and all sins seem to be washed away by a new resolve to move forward. Of course the Congo has to move forward, but when it is outsiders who get angered over Congolese preoccupation with history, one wonders who has been writing the history. Defensive responses to Congolese anger may also be due to what Gérard Prunier (2009) called the "feel-good factor" (p. 358) common in diplomacy and humanitarian circles. Essentially it means the ease by which well-intentioned people become uncomfortable with complex situations that they, their organizations, or their countries cannot solve. Sincere attempts by someone to "help" the Congolese people boil over into rage and resentment toward educated Congolese who challenge his or her worthy endeavors.

The feel-good factor of the West has in some ways led to defensiveness about current approaches. Westerners who are working on Congolese issues may easily become upset when Congolese criticize their efforts. One way to analyze this tension is through the lens of short-term versus long-term orientation (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Although many in the international community have been late to this issue, they are understandably anxious to see the killing and rapes stopped. "Something must be done now!" is the palpable feeling among Western advocates for the Congo. Moreover, despite banalities about the future democratic process in the Congo, the West's orientation is short term. However, although my Congolese

interviewees also seek solutions for today, there is a noticeable long-term orientation. Part of this orientation is a natural tendency to look back with a historical perspective on today's issues. The other part is the vision articulated by Nita Evele to imagine several election cycles on the road to better governance and accountability. There is perhaps no better issue to illustrate this tension between Congolese and the West than the tragic reality of sexual violence in Eastern Congo.

*Western vs. Congolese Perspectives on Sexual Violence in Eastern Congo*

In October 2008, Kambale Musavuli, spokesman and student coordinator for Friends of the Congo, was featured in a live web chat on Washingtonpost.com to discuss the situation in the DRC. The second question, which was more like a statement, came from a participant in Fairfax, Virginia, who wrote:

I think there is less outrage about the human tragedies in Africa for several reasons. First, it is so impossible to imagine. Most can imagine being raped once; none can imagine being tied to a tree for days/months and being raped endlessly. Second, it happens too often in Africa; it's Hutus vs Tutsis, it's Rwanda, it's somewhere else. Third, it does feed into the "savages" idea; wrongheaded, but there nonetheless. And what the heck can anyone do? It is such a vast area, remote, rugged, etc etc. So many ingrained beliefs and customs to overcome.

Musavuli responded:

The conflict in the Congo is not as complex as you may think. The conflict is not about tribal rivalries as you are portraying it. It is fueled by exploitation. I always say that these crimes are mastermind for a mass displacement of the people in the areas where minerals are found. A few key points:

1. The rape is a weapon of war against women. Its aim is to destroy the society especially considering the central role of women in African societies, hence the entire Family is affected by the rapes
2. The source of the rapes is the conflict
3. The source of the conflict is the scramble for Congo's wealth

Hence, ONE cannot talk about the rape of the women without talking about the rape of the land as the two are inextricably linked. To stop the rape, you must stop the conflict and to stop the conflict, you must END the exploitation (Musavuli, 2008, para. 10-12).

*So many ingrained beliefs and customs to overcome.* Was this participant's perspective a minority perspective? Fairfax dismissed the "savages" notion, but did he or she think that mass rapes by Serbs in the Balkan war in the 1990s fed the idea of savages in Europe, or at least the Balkans? What are other outside observers saying? In a recent podcast interview from Human Rights Watch [hereafter HRW] (2009), arguably the leading documenter of human rights abuses, Jessie Graham interviewed Marianne Mollmann of HRW's Women's Rights division.

Mollmann discussed the new UN special representative on women and conflict who could potentially make progress on the issue of rape as a weapon of war. Mollmann mentioned rapes in the Balkan conflict as part of the historical background for this new UN position, and then had this interchange with Graham:

*Graham:* There's no science to this. How do you stop men from raping when they're at war? It does seem kind of insurmountable.

*Mollman:* It does.... A question I get quite often get is: Why does this happen? Why are we not stopping this? At the most basic level, rape happens in war, and outside of war, because we're allowing it to. Once you start analyzing it, it happens because women in

many cases are seen as extensions of men, or are seen as bearers of culture or seen as values to the community; as an object.

Again, “*so many ingrained beliefs and customs to overcome?*” Philemon Uchay, Congolese graduate student and former Deputy Legal Representative for a church mission in Bunia, had this perspective on soldiers who rape:

I heard a Congolese soldier saying in Lingala: *Ekoki soldat abala*. It is to say it is a right for a soldier to have wives wherever he goes. For those soldiers, when they have taken their drugs, they don't care which human being they can use to satisfy their sexual drives, whether it is an old woman, a young girl, even another man (homosexuality), sick or not; only his sexual satisfaction. (personal communication, November 30, 2009)

In the HRW interchange, Western analysis of the situation is claimed, but how do other Congolese view the attention that rape in Eastern Congo is getting in the international community? Margot Bokanga explained her perspective as a Congolese woman:

Western media and the NGO community are not looking at the complexity of the issues that continue to foster conflict in the east. To a certain extent, they do understand these complexities. However, they tend to focus on the issue of sexual violence because it is one that might resonate more with their constituencies if we are talking about policymakers. Regarding the NGOs, they might receive considerable funds from donations of good-hearted individuals who care about the state of women in developing countries, particularly in conflict zones. Sexual violence is marketable, brings attention, and can be addressed by sending doctors to help with reconstructive surgeries, get women to donate funds to help a fellow women in a conflict zone. However, issues of state

reconstruction, power sharing, and other politically and economically sensitive issues are set aside (personal communication, November 12, 2009).

Film producer, Said Kakese Dibinga, used even stronger language:

Basically what it boils down to is two issues: the Congolese issue is being hijacked by other organizations. How they get from a slaughter of 35,000 a month to a situation where rape is now the crisis? Because it's been hijacked by people because that's what they can relate to. It's similar to how Bush got people to talk about oppression in Afghanistan: he talked about the oppression of women. It's the same thing in the Congo: people are now talking about the oppression and slaughter of women. There's a big difference, though. When it comes to Africa, a lot of people just think Congo is part of the continent; they don't think it's a country. They're talking about black women and Africans who fit the stereotype of savages anyways. So it's like the gang violence in the ghettos between the bloods and crips and the blacks; that's what they do (personal communication, October 14, 2009).

Perhaps in response to this kind of stereotype, Stéphane Etsik'ea Wenge<sup>18</sup>, an independent analyst who lives and works in Eastern Congo, noted that, "For years, the Congolese have not known sexual violence. It is a peaceful people with legendary hospitality" (personal communication, December 3, 2009). Nevertheless, it appears that at least some Western observers have failed to hear this perspective. In 2002, a British left-wing magazine, *New Statesman*, published an article by Victoria Brittain (2002) entitled, "A Nation that Hates Its Women." Brittain noted what almost every article on the Congo situation has noted: that the world has paid very little attention to this horrific conflict. Perhaps in response to a deaf world

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<sup>18</sup> Name changed to protect privacy



she described some of the horrors in graphic detail, as documented by HRW. She wrote of a war within a war, namely a war on women and girls who are victimized by a “culture of violence” (para. 1). However, with no reference to sexual violence being used as a weapon of war in other parts of the world, a Congolese may rightly wonder how this one Westerner surmised from one HRW report that *their* country hates its women. Perhaps it was mere hyperbole. After all, the prevalence of rape in Eastern Congo has been used strategically by some organizations to mobilize awareness about the broader issues of mineral exploitation and the connection to consumer’s electronics (see *Confronting Rape and Other Forms of Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones*, 2009). But despite the attention that some groups put on the root causes, Kakese Dibinga sees a problem with the growing attention on sexual violence:

They won’t talk about the mass rapes by the Serbs in Bosnia; when they talk about child soldiers you think about Rwanda, Congo, or Liberia and Sierra Leone but they forget that the biggest group of child soldiers is over there in Burma, Sri Lanka, and other places. So my situation with the rape issue is that it’s really kind of irritating and people get offended by that. So what? Quote me if you want. It’s irritating because they’re hijacking a segment of what’s going on and making it their cause, but they’re not answering the question: how did they get in the situation in the first place? I will tell you how. The same people bitching and moaning about the sexual violence in Eastern Congo are the same ones that said, “We need to integrate the negative forces into the Congolese army and then leave them where they are.” What did they think was going to happen? That’s how they got into the situation. You didn’t see mass rapes like this before 1996-98. When the Rwandans invaded Congo back in 1996, the women said it back then, the pastors said it back then, it was the Rwandan Tutsis who started raping all the women.

Then the Hutus started doing it. Then everybody else started doing it. But no one talks about it. Give me a break. That's how I feel about that sexual violence aspect. Because a lot of people are making money off of that. A lot of people don't want peace in Eastern Congo. People have to start recognizing that and address that question. Give me a break. You're having a fundraiser, selling T-shirts, and you're saying partial proceeds will benefit the women in Eastern Congo. Where do you think the rest of the money is going? It pays salaries, it's paying rent, and it's paying air travel. That's what's going on. It's not helping [the Congolese]. They're still dying out there (personal communication, October 14, 2009).

For most Congolese, the underlying issue is one of peace. Amani Lwanzo is Chief Operating Officer for Pro-Microfinance International. She explained:

Sexual violence against women in the Congo is a result of the general conflict in the DRC. It is only logical that one solves the cause instead of treating the symptoms. The Congolese community realizes that if help is only given to victims, but nothing is done to stop the violence, the number of victims will only increase. Both issues need to be treated simultaneously (personal communication, November 23, 2009).

Stéphane Etsik'ea Wenge stated a similar belief:

It is clearly demonstrated by work, by domestic production, that we can improve our socio-economic conditions. But the main condition is peace. Any development program calls for peace. In other words, sexual violence, malnutrition, thousands of internally displaced people and others, are only CONSEQUENCES. *We must address the issue.* (personal communication, December 3, 2009)

George Atido agreed, but also tied sexual violence to Congo's resource exploitation: "Sexual violence is effectively the result of lack of peace. Lack of peace is the result of outside countries envying Congo's wealth. Unless the oppressors stop their oppression, there will be no solution to sexual violence in Congo" (personal communication, November 18, 2009). A Congolese NGO representative based in Bukavu argued that peace would allow the state to organize the mineral sector and actually benefit the people. For local analysts like him there is a vicious cycle that includes lack of peace, mineral exploitation, and human rights abuses, including sexual violence. He addressed how and why the main issue is not being addressed:

The fight against impunity constitutes a priority to punish all those who have engaged in the illicit exploitation of raw materials, sacrificing human lives and maintaining militias who, alas, are conspicuous due to massive human rights violations humans. In the name of peace, amnesties are granted to people who on principle should end their days in prison. (Pierre<sup>19</sup>, personal communication, November 18, 2009)

Béatrice Kabamba Bapemacho is coordinator for a Congolese NGO based in Bukavu and has worked closely with women and children who have been raped and suffer from HIV/AIDS. Her main role has been to train nurses in response to this crisis of sexual violence, but in response to my questions she actually spent more time addressing what she sees as a root cause, including the lack of an adequate international response:

The sad history of our country reveals that the conspiracy against the Congo was planned in support of the major powers. That truth is absolute. However, some time later, after we learn that international and local NGOs have denounced the exploitation and plundering of Congo's minerals that have financed the war, the major powers will bring down the prices of minerals (e.g., coltan). Rwanda had been published as being one of the major

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<sup>19</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

exporters of coltan, knowledge of its products is widespread, and it's not a miracle that the international community was aware of nothing. Today when we speak of violence and sexual exploitation of children in the mines, what does the international community do? Is it not UNICEF that provides three small notebooks, two pens, and an eraser? To express support for education? This is simply a way to make a mockery of people.

(personal communication, November 28, 2009)

The issue of Rwanda will be addressed in the next section, but essentially Ms. Bapemacho was making the link between mineral exploitation by outside countries, the instability and abuses caused by the exploitation, and what she sees as an overall absurd response by the international community. Jean-Jacques Bagalwa Murhandikire (personal communication, February 25, 2010), an analyst with Action for Development and Peace (AEDPAE) based in Bukavu, consulted for a recent report that had this critique of the international response:

International aid focuses on the most glaring manifestations of conflict, but finds it difficult to be preventive. The strategies and perceptions of players who act at the heart of these aspects remain unknown. The strategies of donors, however, tend to multiply and evolve without knowledge of the underlying land. (Channel Research, 2010, p. 38)

Jeffrey Gettleman, *The New York Times* Africa correspondent, has written extensively about the conflict in the DRC. In an article about Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's August 2009 trip there, Gettleman (2009b) described the situation as "dizzily complex" (para. 4). Phrases like these are becoming more and more common among outside observers. Indeed, given the number of militias and their acronyms, companies involved in mining projects, and politicians vying for power, it is easy to get confused. But among Congolese like Musavuli and Kakese Dibinga, one does not hear about complexity. Is this a problem? Should they be addressing the complexity or

at least assuaging outside observers' suspicion and confusion? Of course, there are times when one Western observer might help to correct another. In the same article, Gettleman referenced a previous article where he reported how some men are now raping other men in Eastern Congo. The victims are often ridiculed as "bush wives" (2009a, para. 13). Following Victoria Brittain's (2002) logic, then, it is a nation that might also hate its men. But whether the topic is rape or some other attention-grabbing aspect of the conflict, Congolese like Musavuli are calling for a deeper perspective. In an article for African Press International he wrote:

If more stories were presented that clearly articulate the true nature of the conflict – that of a resource war and that there are major identifiable players in Western backyards that we can hold accountable – we would see a dramatically different response from consumers of the mainstream media. We almost never see a Congolese scholar, thinker activist or intellectual articulating the issues of the Congo. Our people are almost always presented as hapless and in need of saving by Western do-gooders, usually a Hollywood star. Slain gorillas usually get more sympathy and in-depth analysis than the Congolese people.... Contrary to presentations by Western scholars and thinkers, the conflict in the Congo is not intractable. If the correct policies were implemented, the conflict could end quickly or at least be mitigated (Musavuli, 2009, para. 17, 18, & 20).

Judging from our conversations it is safe to assume that Musavuli would not see Hillary Clinton's 2009 trip as a step toward correct policy. Mvemba Dizolele addressed Secretary Clinton's visit and had strong words for the Obama Administration:

It's great Hillary Clinton came. It's great because it shows the US cares. But what did she do while she was there? What was the salient thing that came out of her visit? What did she promise the Congolese? She promised \$17 million dollars to help the victims of

sexual violence. Look at that. What does that mean? It doesn't mean much in terms of finance because those people don't need finance. So if you've been raped today and you say, "okay, we're gonna train more gynecologists." What the hell does that mean? Does that mean we're gonna let the militia continue raping people? We're ready to treat anyone you rape. That's not the policy. There's no outrage about these things. The question is, this is what I'm saying, we need to go after these militias, put pressure on their sponsors and their backers, whether it be in the West or in Rwanda or Burundi or wherever else they are, so this thing will stop! But otherwise we're putting on a Band-Aid...so you're gonna train 20 more gynecologists. Then what? How does it solve the problem for women who cannot go to the field because if they go to the field they'll be raped? And their communities are starving. That's where the Obama Administration, if it doesn't catch itself very soon, will lose all its credibility in that region. (personal communication, November 23, 2009)

### *The Congolese and Two Neighbors*

In direct response to a history that involves exploitative intervention by its regional neighbors, including rape by foreign soldiers and militias, many Congolese are voicing strong concerns about the behavior of Uganda and Rwanda in their country. They often bitterly decry the support given by the West to its "new breed of African leaders" (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002, p. 260) like Paul Kagame and Yoweri Museveni. In reference to the former, Nzongola-Ntalaja reported how Kagame boasted about Rwanda's "crucial role" (p. 226) in the 1996-97 war. Apparently there are those in the West who are not listening to the claims of their own allies when they describe histories about Congo's "civil" war. Others, however, have detailed not only outside military intervention, but also these players' natural resource exploitation after the

conflict ended. Adam Hochschild's (1998) afterword to the new version of his book claimed that within a two-year period Rwanda had extracted \$250 million worth of Congo's natural resources. At one point the Rwandan army, which was directly involved in the extraction, was taking out roughly \$20 million per month of the mineral coltan (Montague, 2002).

My Congolese interviewees had various comments about the DRC's neighbors, especially Rwanda. Ituri province native, Andy Alo, took issue with the common Western notion that ethnic, tribal tension over land and politics is the main cause of the problem. This popular understanding was given greater credence by French scholar Severine Autesserre's (2008) column in the influential journal, *Foreign Affairs*. Alo, who is currently a doctoral student in Nairobi, had this counter perspective:

In terms of security and the rule of law on its entire territory, DRC is a failed state. That is where the problem is. I have visited Uganda and Kenya to know that they have more land problems than DRC. The sense of belonging to an ethnic group is stronger in Kenya than in DRC.... From another perspective (in addition to Congo being a failed state because of poor leadership), the external forces are gaining by having a failed state in Congo. They can have access to resources by corrupting official 'elected' leaders or by cooperating with 'rebels' (personal communication, September 29, 2009).

In reference to these "external forces," George Atido, another Congolese graduate student, recommended the following as one of the steps the international community should take to help the DRC become more self reliant: "Punish the countries that are violating DR Congo integrity and sovereignty, including the western countries who are concerned" (personal communication, November 18, 2009). Congolese banking executive, Amani Lwanzo, named Congo's neighbors directly and said, "The international community should guarantee that international trade laws

are obeyed and stop buying minerals of the Congo from Uganda and Rwanda, which legitimizes the looting of Congo's mineral resources” (personal communication, November 23, 2009).

Regarding Rwanda, Congolese filmmaker Said Kakese Dibinga has the strongest comments:

Rwanda invaded Congo; they couldn't take over the Congo, so they said, “We'll keep the Kivus.” Rwanda has no natural resources, but look at when they started exporting all this coltan, gold, and other minerals: 1996-98. Before they never had this stuff, they never exploited it, and everybody knows this stuff. So the situation is that Rwanda wanted the resources; everyone else was using Rwanda as a proxy to get the resources, and people want control of Congo (personal communication, October 14, 2009).

On the understanding that he sees real US steps for peace in the Congo as ceasing direct support to Uganda and Rwanda, he replied:

Oh, it's really easy: all you have to do is cut off economic aid to Rwanda for six months and it would change their policy overnight. Same goes for Uganda. Museveni gave up a \$14 M jet when the IMF/World Bank threatened to cut off aid. Why do you think he's not trying to kill Kony of the [Lord's Resistance Army]? Kony is more valuable to Uganda alive than dead. Because as long as Kony's alive he can justify spending money on the military. Rwanda is a subsidized state. They have nothing; they grow nothing; they export everything they're taking out of Congo (personal communication, October 14, 2009).

Eric Kajemba (personal communication, November 24, 2009), director of a Congolese NGO based in Eastern Congo and consultant to Western observers, was less direct in his response but said that surrounding countries need to be pressured about their behavior. Work needs to be



done in the region, not just Congo, he argued. One idea came from Stéphane Etsik'ea Wenge<sup>20</sup>, an independent Congolese analyst based in the region bordering Rwanda and Uganda. He called for “lobbying at the international community level: an international conference on Rwanda (Hutu and Tutsi) to allow the return of FDLR<sup>21</sup> and arrest all the perpetrators of the genocide who are still hiding in Eastern DRC.” He explained further by suggesting how the international community can impact the regional situation by helping Rwandans rebuild their country. Part of this rebuilding is so that “the moderate Hutus can return home and establish their political parties in a democratic manner” (personal communication, December 2, 2009).

Sasha Lezhnev, an American who has been part of the conflict minerals policy process and is also author of *Crafting Peace: Strategies to Deal with Warlords in Collapsing States*, took issue with a strong focus on Uganda and Rwanda, particularly in response to the idea that US policy might be mostly driven by guilt over the 1994 Rwandan genocide:

Frankly, these countries play up way more than necessary. People also don't realize that [Rwandan President Paul] Kagame doesn't care that much about what others think. He grew up as kind of a Marxist, so he sees the strategic alliance with the US because we give him money and support him in terms of legitimacy and that kind of thing. But if we really start hammering down on him, he could just say, “whatever, I'll take money from the Chinese.” The other thing about that is the Congo/Rwanda relationship has improved at least. And so that is actually positive in terms of on-the-ground impact and operations. That is a little bit less clear...but it has potential and the potential for Rwanda's positive

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<sup>20</sup> Name changed to protect privacy

<sup>21</sup> *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda*, Hutu guerrilla group based in Eastern DRC (Prunier, 2009, p. xi)

impact is there. It's certainly better than where we were five years ago (personal communication, October 27, 2009).

Despite what Lezhnev said about the situation today and what he sees as exaggeration over Rwanda, he did voice to me what many Congolese may view as an encouraging US approach to Rwanda and Uganda:

I absolutely agree that we need a different US policy on Rwanda/Uganda, particularly on Rwanda because Rwanda's a lot more militarily active while Uganda is more active in terms of smuggling gold, as well as Burundi, by the way. But absolutely, that's got to be a really strong measure that has to be put in place. That's something that we've put into our materials and something we're gonna continue to push and as the [Obama] Administration's policy roles out on Congo, that's one of the top three things that we advocate. So I totally concur with that. But there's some personal and some history stuff that goes on there. [Enough Project co-founder, John] Prendergast was part of the [Clinton] Administration that had a different policy towards Rwanda and so people blame him or identify him with that policy. But this is a different era and John, as well as the rest of us, is fully behind a shift in policy recognizing that the Rwanda genocide happened 15 years ago, but right now the fire is burning in Congo, and how do we put out that fire? We've got to come up with creative tools, and strategies and shifting policies toward Rwanda and Uganda are paramount (personal communication, October 27, 2009).

Jayme White, former Legislative Director for Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA), cautioned that any change in policy would be difficult because of the overall lack of foreign policy focus on Africa.

Regarding the legacy of Rwanda, he said:

There may be some guilt among the elite who were involved back then; I don't think it's driving a lot of US policy. I think if you say "Kagame" to 99.9% of Americans, they have no idea who you're talking about (personal communication, October 9, 2009).

Americans' knowledge of Rwanda's and Uganda's leaders notwithstanding, many Congolese like Kambale Musavuli and Bodia Macharia of Friends of the Congo are calling for a tougher, clearer policy on Rwanda in particular. Musavuli has been quoted at length in this paper and Macharia is president of Friends of the Congo/Canada. In a recent article (2009) they wrote:

It is amazing that proponents of the conflict mineral approach shout loudly about making sure that the trade in minerals does not benefit armed groups, yet the biggest armed beneficiary of Congo's minerals is the Rwandan regime headed by Paul Kagame.

Nonetheless, the conflict mineral approach is remarkably silent about Rwanda's complicity in the fueling of the conflict in the Congo and the fleecing of Congo's riches.

We have already seen how quickly world pressure can work with the sidelining of rebel leader Laurent Nkunda and the demobilization and/or rearranging of his CNDP rebel group in January 2009, as a result of global pressure placed on the CNDP's sponsor, Paul Kagame of Rwanda. More pressure needs to be placed on leaders such as Kagame and Uganda's Museveni, who have been at the root of the conflict since 1996 (para. 5 & 11).

Musavuli and Macharia also link those who focus on problems in the East with those who "incessantly push for the balkanization of the Congo. Their focus on 'Eastern Congo' is inadequate and does not fully take into account the nature and scope of the dynamics in the entire country" (para. 9). This paper has already discussed the dearth of Western NGOs that focus on injustice in the Katanga province in the south vis-à-vis the east, but Musavuli and Macharia

capture well the nationalistic insistence that many Congolese have in seeing peace and justice for the entire DRC.

### *Congolese Nationalism*

Indeed, perhaps more than any other theme, the nationalism of the Congolese people is what came through in my interviews with Congolese. Any student of African history has learned that colonial powers drew up arbitrary borders and separated tribes in different nation states. This history has led to the modern oversimplification that therefore Africa's problems are mostly tribal and likely intractable. This year the influential *Foreign Policy* magazine published an article entitled, "There is No Congo," which argued in part that the international community should bypass the national government in Kinshasa and work instead with local and regional players on the ground (Herbst & Mills, 2009). Despite the logic of finely-tuned aid and diplomacy, Herbst and Mill's argument is quite drastic given that the DRC is, in fact, a sovereign nation with a democratically elected president and parliament. As a citizen of that sovereign nation, Congolese graduate student Margot Bokanga had a specific reaction to Herbst and Mill's article, saying:

Congolese people are the most patriotic people that I've met in my life.... It took me a week to read that article because it's really provocative and I found myself really being upset. But it was unfortunate that no Congolese scholars actually wrote another piece to defend the country (personal communication, October 5, 2009).

Delphine Schrank's (2009) response was published by *Foreign Policy* the following month. Although she is not Congolese, Schrank argued that nationalism is what is indeed keeping the DRC together (see also Englebert, 2006). Her acknowledgement of a "staunchly embedded nationalism" (para. 4) is in direct response to Herbst and Mills' claim that Congo lacks enough

common culture to be unified. I point out their article because, despite even glaring contradictions, it was published in one of the leading international affairs journals in the United States. Sure, serious international relations academics may dismiss popular forums like *Foreign Policy*, but the magazine and its website, FP.com, remain widely read. In a political culture where even well-versed Harvard international relations professors have admitted ignorance of Congo's issues (Walt, 2009), and Congolese are not heard, what informs the opinions of policymakers and their staffs? Despite the low place of the DRC on the political radar, one wonders how many influential people in Washington, DC, read or heard about "There is No Congo" and were swayed by its arguments.

Tension and violence in Andy Alo's home province have been analyzed primarily through the lens of ethnicity (Hayes & Burge, 2003; see also Mealer, 2008). Alo, however, had a more nuanced understanding based on his "lived reality" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 230) as a Congolese educator in Ituri:

I think that the conflict between these groups is ideological and based on prestige. The hatred for one another is maintained through socialization of the younger generation. In times of political troubles, it is used by some political leaders to gain influence. It has no economic foundation or any competition for resources. The evidence is that there are many more ethnic groups in DR Congo who do not fight or kill each other for economic resources (personal communication, September 29, 2009).

Kambale Musavuli provided a larger focus to his perspective on ethnicity in the DRC:

Congo is the one example of ethnic collaboration. There is not one country that has 252 ethnicities and the largest concentration of ethnic groups is in Kinshasa. If there was any ethnic issue, that would be in Kinshasa and it would blow, but yet that country is still

together. So we know that there is ethnic collaboration (personal communication, October 6, 2009).

When asked what aspects of Congolese culture might be missed by outsiders, Said Kakese Dibinga responded:

The nationalism of the Congolese! When they were talking about partitioning Congo like they did in Yugoslavia, even the warlords said, “oh hell no! Breaking up the Congo is not happening.” And the one thing about the Congolese is that they’re very nationalistic when it comes to the Congo (personal communication, October 14, 2009).

Referring to Western analysts and advocates who, for example, overlook cultural and religious issues, he said:

What’s overlooked the most is the impact of the church; a lot of the churches are what are providing much needed aid to the community; a lot of them; and a lot of them have tried to start a political movement... [Western advocates] completely miss it because they don’t understand the connection that the Congolese have with their land. A lot of these advocates do not. They can only focus on what they can see. They can talk about the mineral exploitation, they can talk about the rapes, but they can’t talk about the nuances of what’s really helping that country to be stabilized or what’s being wiped out in the country. They don’t have that connection. That’s why they can’t really go deep and talk about the churches. That’s why they can’t go deep and talk about what’s really going on in Eastern Congo: annihilation. To me, it’s my relatives being wiped out (personal communication, October 14, 2009).

*Conclusion*

My aim has been to analyze the relationship between Congolese perspectives and Western perspectives as they relate to mineral exploitation, as well as broader issues in the DRC. One may certainly find agreement between the two perspectives on many issues. As Congo's first prime minister proclaimed, the Congolese will always welcome healthy partnership with the West or any free nation (Lumumba, 1962). Thus, in light of the preceding interviews and research, it is possible to identify several areas in which there is both agreement and disagreement. Because Congo should be by and for the Congolese people, I have argued that the international community must engage with and be guided by the emerging consensus of the Congolese intelligentsia. Overall, this global class of interested, concerned, and educated Congolese welcomes the work being done by many players on the crisis in Eastern Congo. Thus, there must be a continued push by NGOs and policymakers to increase transparency in the supply chains of minerals in Eastern Congo to stop the funding of armed groups. As several in Washington have told me, this is only one step. Moreover, its final passage and implementation is years down the road. Thus, it is important that these players and the larger international community take a more comprehensive approach to the DRC and focus on the following four areas that have been voiced by my Congolese interviewees:

- There must be more pressure on the Congolese government to battle corruption and pursue a just and lasting democratic process.
- There must be a greater push by policymakers and NGOs for transparency and fairness on the part of Western multinational corporations that benefit from unjust mining contracts with the Congolese government. Freeport-McMoRan is a great place to start.
- There must be a strategic and comprehensive review of the recent and ongoing behavior of the US allies and Congolese neighbors, Rwanda and Uganda. This review should result in a

willingness to shift policy toward these allies for the benefit of the Congolese people, even if it means threatening the withdrawal of aid, especially military support.

- There must be a shift to view the issue of sexual violence on a comprehensive level. It is possible to still care for the victims of sexual violence while addressing the systemic issues of peace and justice in Eastern Congo. As the largest supporter to the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC), the US in particular can pressure the UN and Kinshasa to develop a stronger plan for civilian protection while strengthening local institutions on the ground. Local institutions, such as the courts and law enforcement, are what will ultimately serve the people with justice.

An insistence on a broader approach by the international community is not meant to directly criticize any of the current efforts on conflict minerals in Eastern DRC. That issue is important. But it remains to be seen if H.R. 4128 will even make it out of committee in its current form. Big business is working hard to lessen its blow (Prendergast, 2009). Then, with all the issues on the Congressional plate at the moment, who knows when any conflict minerals bill might make it to President Obama's desk. Moreover, should the president sign the bill as it currently stands, companies would have two years to implement the approach therein.

Meanwhile the violence and suffering continues for the Congolese. Of course, as both my Western and Congolese interviewees maintained, the solution is ultimately in the hands of the Congolese. Yet, the power of the American megaphone could be used now to pressure the Kabila government on its alleged undemocratic aims. Secretary of State Clinton should continue to address violence against women, but she should also address the systemic conditions that underlie the atrocities. The latter focus will offer fewer bangs for the buck in terms of media exposure and political capital. Indeed, the vast majority of the media coverage of her recent trip



to the DRC focused on sexual violence in the East. It cannot hurt to have the US Secretary of State speaking out against this, but the Congolese people must see Western actions to pressure the Congolese government and military on its role in the overall crisis, even if it means jeopardizing Western multinational corporations. It may be naïve to call for any government to check its economic interests at the door, but if Western advocates and policymakers are to take the exploitative context of the Congo seriously, the voice of large companies like Freeport-McMoRan must get a lower priority than the voice of the Congolese people. Moreover, no matter how sympathetic any African leader may be to the War on Terror or other US military aims, the days of supporting undemocratic “friends” must cease.

It can be easy for any human rights activist to believe that he or she has settled upon *the* issue in the world. Advocates against mineral exploitation in Eastern Congo are no exception. In many ways this is understandable. For good reason, in almost any publication, from a blog to a scholarly tome, one currently finds a reference to the fact that more people have died in the DRC than any conflict since World War II. Why hasn't the world paid more attention? The history is tragic, the politics are complex, the foreign intervention is exploitative, and the atrocities are horrific. Indeed, often it seems that writers on this issue try to outmatch each other in the “shock and awe” arena. If one is simultaneously immersed in the generally apathetic West and detailed atrocity testimonies from Africa, he or she can easily become agitated. Perhaps some readers need to be shocked into action. Yet, perhaps some have stopped reading period because they don't feel they can handle any more bad news.

As a Congolese, graduate student Margot Bokanga cannot easily escape the bad news. Yet, despite the trials of her homeland, she holds out hope:

Congolese in particular still believe in a prosperous and peaceful future. . . . Of course, as you might have learned, Congolese people love politics and they love to talk about politics—to talk about things that are going wrong. But there is a generation, university students and young professionals of my generation, that are thinking critically and strategically about creating a vision for the Congo. We love the West and are grateful for all the opportunities these host countries have given us, but we have a patriotic duty that we must fulfill. We are very patriotic people. We love a state that has continuously failed to protect and to provide for us. But our love is to our fellow Congolese and the desire to see our country shine on the continent – and not be portrayed as the heart of darkness (personal communication, October 2, 2009).

Patrice Lumumba had a similar vision before he was assassinated. Like young Congolese today such as Bokanga, Lumumba (1962) saw himself as merely making a “contribution towards the search for the effective solutions and new methods which are essential in view of the evolution of the Congo” (p. 9). Yet his contribution was so much more and remains a timeless inspiration for most Congolese. I can think of no better way to conclude than by quoting at length this Congolese voice who continues to inspire his fellow Congolese today. While imprisoned and suffering from torture in early 1961, Lumumba was able to record one final message to his people, part of which says:

In good fortune as in bad, I will always be at your side. It is with you that I have fought to liberate this country from foreign domination. It is with you that I am fighting to consolidate our national independence. It is with you that I will fight to safeguard the integrity and the national unity of the Republic of the Congo. We have made a choice, that of serving our country loyally and faithfully. We shall never depart from this path.

Freedom is the ideal for which, in all times down through the centuries, men have fought and died. The Congo could not fail to experience this truth, and it is thanks to our heroic and glorious struggle that we have valiantly won our independence and our dignity as free men.... Our one political program has always been the Congo for the Congolese. Congolese affairs in the hands of the Congolese, aided by technicians willing to serve the country, whatever their nationality (Van Lierde, 1963, p. 426-428).

Before his murder a short time later, he penned one final letter to his wife. While undoubtedly suffering from loneliness, he wrote:

We are not alone. Africa, Asia, and the free and liberated peoples in every corner of the globe will ever remain at the side of the millions of Congolese who will not abandon the struggle until the day when there will be no more colonizers and no more of their mercenaries in our country. I want my children, whom I leave behind and perhaps will never see again, to be told that the future of the Congo is beautiful and that their country expects them, as it expects every Congolese, to fulfill the sacred task of rebuilding our independence, our sovereignty; for without justice there is no dignity and without independence there are no free men.

Neither brutal assaults, nor cruel mistreatment, nor torture have ever led me to beg for mercy, for I prefer to die with my head held high, unshakable faith, and the greatest confidence in the destiny of my country rather than live in slavery and contempt for sacred principles. History will one day have its say; it will not be the history taught in the United Nations, Washington, Paris, or Brussels, however, but the history taught in the countries that have rid themselves of colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its

own history, and both north and south of the Sahara it will be a history full of glory and dignity.

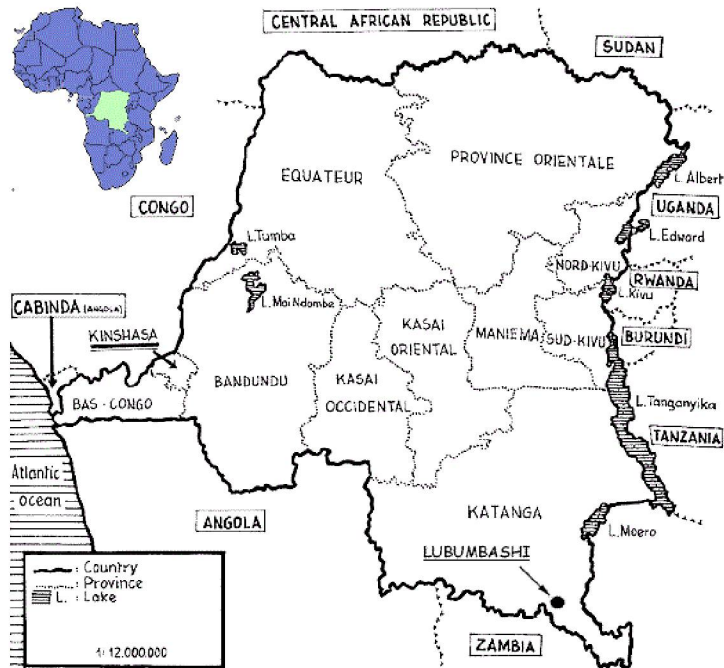
Do not weep for me, my companion, I know that my country, now suffering so much, will be able to defend its independence and its freedom. Long live the Congo! Long live Africa! (Van Lierde, 1963, p. 422-423)

The title of this paper, *Congo By and For the Congolese*, borrows that famous phrase from Lumumba's final recorded message. But it also uses the word "by" to argue that any attempt to analyze, aid, and develop the Congo must be led by the Congolese. That is why, in the case of conflict minerals and the DRC's overall exploitation, I have argued that the West must engage with and seek to be guided by Congolese perspectives. Perhaps the strongest lesson from this entire endeavor is that whereas the West is focused on treating the symptoms, or consequences, the Congolese seek to focus on the root cause of the problems in the DRC. The overwhelming consensus from my Congolese sources, at least on this larger question, is that the lack of peace is the root cause. They look around at an international community that intends to help but seems either unwilling or unable to address the main issue. At worst its unwillingness stems from a lack of political will on sensitive issues like Rwanda and Uganda. Or, addressing symptoms like sexual violence is easier because it generates broader media and public support. At best the international community is simply unable to deal with the root cause due to a lack of political unity and resources. The Congolese will be the first to argue that ultimately the solution to the root cause is up to them and their compatriots. A sustainable peace should be by them and for them. But as the interviews in this paper have shown, the Congolese, like Lumumba, welcome support from the international community. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the West, especially those who are trying to help, is to humble itself to be guided on what that help should

be. Yes, it will call for better consumer choices and a greater awareness of what is happening to destitute Congolese. But more than anything it will call for stronger political will to address the root causes of a conflict that plagues our consciences. We owe it to the Congolese to find the courage and act.

Appendix A

Maps of Kivu and Katanga provinces



## Appendix B

## Congolese interviewees

1. **Alo, Andy**: Doctoral student in Translation Studies from Bunia, Ituri, DRC
2. **Atido, Georges Pirwoth**: Assistant, Shalom University of Bunia, Ituri, DRC
3. **Bagalwa Murhandikire, Jean-Jacques**: Analyst with Action for Development and Peace (AEDPAE) based in Bukavu, South Kivu
4. **Bapemacho, Béatrice Kabamba**: Coordinator of AFIA-FEV, Nurses of Congo working on HIV/AIDS and sexual violence issues
5. **Bokanga, Margot**: Graduate student at American University, Washington, DC
6. **Bulambo, Horeb**: MONUC staff, Goma, Nord Kivu, DRC
7. **Dizolele, Mvemba**: Distinguished Visiting Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution
8. **Etisk'ea wenge, Stéphane**<sup>22</sup>: Independent analyst who lives and works in Goma, North Kivu
9. **Evele, Nita**: Vice Chair of Coalition Pluraliste de Patriotes Congolais and executive committee member for Congo Global Action
10. **Jean-Jacques**<sup>23</sup>: Had oversight over a mining contract in Katanga and has overall knowledge of the mining and banking industry in the DRC
11. **Kajemba, Eric**: Coordinator of NGO Observatoire, Gouvernance et Paix (Monitoring Governance and Peace), Bukavu, Sud Kivu
12. **Kakese Dibinga, Said**: Filmmaker and educator, Los Angeles, CA

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<sup>22</sup> Pseudonym

<sup>23</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

13. **Katembo, Kiripi**: Film director and photographer from Kinshasa who is currently working on a documentary about mining in Katanga province
14. **Lwanzo, Amani**: Chief Operating Officer for Pro-Microfinance International
15. **Marie**<sup>24</sup>: Banking/Microfinance professional
16. **Matangwa, Djo**: Medical Officer with Int'l NGO, Merlin, Lubero, Nord Kivu; also affiliated with the Order of Congolese Doctors
17. **Murhula, Remy**: Training specialist with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Goma, North Kivu
18. **Musavuli, Kambale**: Student coordinator, Friends of the Congo
19. **Pierre**<sup>25</sup>: Affiliated with a Congolese NGO in Eastern Congo
20. **Uchay, Philemon**: Deputy Legal Representative (Vice Bishop) of Immanuel Mission in Nyankunde, Ituri, DRC

#### Non-Congolese interviewees

1. **Johnson, Sarah**<sup>26</sup>: Representative of a large NGO
2. **Lezhnev, Sasha**: Executive Director of Grassroots Reconciliation Group and consultant to Enough Project
3. **Rodgers, Jessica**: Legislative Aide to Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA)
4. **Rosenblum, Peter**: Professor of human rights law at Columbia Law School and an expert on Katanga mining issues

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<sup>24</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

<sup>25</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.

<sup>26</sup> Name changed to protect privacy.



5. **Stearns, Jason**: Led a UN Group of Experts researching support to rebel groups in the DRC and produced a report in 2008
6. **Sullivan, David**: Research Associate for Enough Project, Washington, DC
7. **Turner, Melissa**<sup>27</sup>: Former post-conflict analyst and advocate
8. **White, Jayme**: Former Legislative Director to Rep. Jim McDermott (D-WA)

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