

Security Council

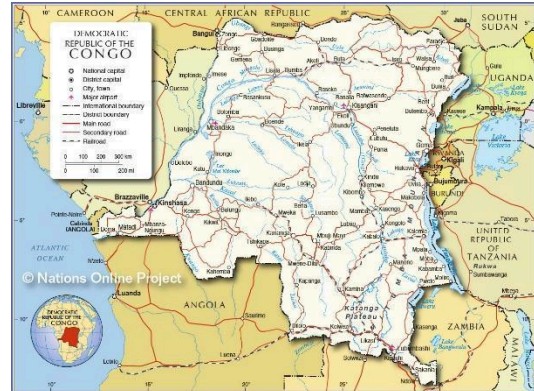
The situation in the Democratic
Republic of Congo



Forum	Security Council
Issue:	The situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo
Student Officer:	AK Adeler
Position:	Deputy President

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has faced instability in practically every form ever since before it was a Belgian colony. It faces issues such as widespread violence, humanitarian crises and displacement of its civilians. There has been international intervention in multiple forms, involvement of multiple armed groups such as the M23 rebellion and neighboring countries which have in turn seemingly prolonged the conflict.



*Fig 1. Current day map of DRC
Source: Klaus*

The conflict within the Democratic Republic of Congo has been a persistent challenge, mainly due to its complex nature. The dynamic in the DRC has the potential to destabilize the entire African continent, which can be seen by the involvement of neighboring countries such as Rwanda and Uganda who have allegedly backed rebellion groups such as M23 rebellion furthermore escalating the violence. Furthermore, the humanitarian crises are a prevalent issue which moreover need attention, similarly to the issue of the political instability within the country.

National elections in December of 2023 has furthered this even more, the fighting in the eastern region, where the violence has primarily focused, has intensified. These elections were supposedly flawed for a variety of reasons, such as a landslide victory which has led to calls for reruns (“DRC Misses Another Opportunity to Build a Democracy | ISS Africa”). In short, “The quest for stability remains elusive, even as the conflict’s duration defies easy calculation. The DRC’s struggle is not merely a regional concern; it is a global challenge that demands urgent attention.”, (Chaturvedi).



Definition of Key Terms

The Congo Free State

The Congo Free State is the current day Democratic Republic of Congo, and was first a private region owned by the King of Belgium, Leopold II.

Humanitarian Crisis

A humanitarian crisis is a certain series or extended sequence of events or happenings which is a threat to the wellbeing of a certain defined community.

African Union

The African Union is a continental body with 55 nations which together comprise the nations in the African Continent.

Colonial expansion

Colonial expansion refers to the urge of countries to establish colonies around the world in an attempt to increase power in the geopolitical and social aspects. This may also be to gain access to certain excludable resources over the world.

Congo river basin

The Congo River Basin is the second biggest rainforest in the world, only second to the Amazon. It is the river basin of the Congo River, and also takes not only part of the DRC but also for example CAR and Gabon.

Militia

A militia is a military force which partakes in (violent) activities in regard to rebelling against the government and the people within those institutions.

General Overview

The Berlin West Africa Conference

First and foremost, the history behind the DRC is extremely pivotal in understanding the conflict at hand. Key information surrounding this runs back all the way to the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885. The Berlin Conference of 1885, (also known as the Berlin West Africa Conference), was a conference suggested by Portugal whereby the goal was to conclude on the issues relating to the Congo River basin in Central Africa ("Congo Free State | Historical State, Imperialism, Africa |



Britannica”). Portugal proposed this in hopes to lay claim to the Congo estuary, and desires of colonial expansion in Africa ran deep in the European powers. This led to suspicion and jealousy growing between them. However, the main conclusion of the conference was that the Congo River basin should remain a neutral territory, allowing trade freedom i.e. economic integration and rejecting Portugal’s claim to the estuary.

The Congo Free State

The Berlin West Africa conference also had another important established recognition. This was when a private holding of King Leopold II of Belgium was officially recognized and named the Congo Free State. King Leopold II of Belgium was considered to be a personal ruler or sovereign of the Congo Free State, instead of this being a Belgian colony. However the Congo Free State had an extremely troubling dynamic leading to tremendous amounts of death as European exploitation continued through Leopold II furthermore starting the drain of natural resources at the expense of civilians there. This in turn sparked controversy and outrage ultimately leading to this becoming a Belgian colony in 1908.

Post Colonial DRC

After this, in 1960 the DRC finally got their independence. With this the first President and Prime Ministers were placed into power, that being Patrice Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu as president. Furthermore, the Congo Free State was finally renamed to the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, their collaboration was short lived and the Prime Minister was dismissed due to disputes between the President. Furthermore, he was assassinated in January of 1961. The battles in the eastern part of the DRC and widespread violence in general both grew. This trend of violence and instability still remains prevalent today. The rest of the recent history of the DRC is outlined in the timeline of key events which showcases the instability within the DRC.

The heart of the issue within the DRC is the violence between Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups which are represented within the militias. For example, M23 Rebellion, a rebel group which consists primarily of CNDP fighters (something which is explained in the major parties section), fights primarily for the better treatment of the Tutsi people. Furthermore, the natural resources which are located within the DRC also are a major part of the battle. Neighboring states like Rwanda and Uganda both would like to control these areas, moreover which has led to an increased violence and accusations



that Rwanda is backing the M23 Rebellion by logistical and military means. This is also the opinion of large member states like the USA agreed with this.

The DRC has also held questionable elections in the December of 2023, also leading to the resurgence of the M23 Rebellion which had gone dormant for a while. Coups have taken place which added to the political instability and fighting has only intensified. This is all outlined in the timeline of key events.

Major Parties Involved

African Union (AU)

The African Union is one of the key bodies involved in the situation currently in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They have been extremely important in regard to the conflict as the AU amongst other initiatives wishes to create a framework whereby the DRC and Rwanda amongst other regional leaders settle political differences. This was also called upon by the Chairperson of the AUC, Moussa Faki Mahamat, who also stated that they were “very concerned about the continuous tension in Eastern DRC”. Furthermore, on the 25th of April 2024 the East African Leaders released a statement suggesting that they should “deploy a regional force to restore peace and stability in the DRC”, (“Democratic Republic of Congo | African Union”).

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO)

The MONUSCO is a UN peacekeeping operation which took over from the MONUC in the DRC on the 1st of July 2010. Authorization was given to carry out its mandate which ultimately is relating to the “protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts”. MONUSCO has nearly 18,000 total personnel as of February 2024, with another roughly 16,000 military total uniformed personnel. MONUSCO has a variety of military and police contributors which are all found on their website in the appendices of this report.

M23 Rebellion



The M23 rebellion is in essence a group of CNDP fighters, which was a political armed militia established in 2006 which opposed the government, which felt that the 2009 peace agreement was not being honored by the government as they were neglecting the needs of the Tutsi community, something the CNDP sought to protect as a militia. In 2012, these soldiers banded together to create the M23 rebellion, named after the date of the 2009 agreement (March 23). The rest of the CNDP soldiers were integrated into the FARDC, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The March 23 Rebellion aims to represent the Tutsi side of the ethnic conflict which has plagued the region. Both Rwanda and Uganda were accused of supporting the M23 Rebellion by militarizing them and providing logistical support. This is due to M23's fight for control over the eastern portion of the Democratic Republic of Congo, due to this region being extremely rich in natural resources which has been a major driver of conflict. There are a variety of militias, nations and armed groups which wish to control this as to control the resources and the trade routes which are reliant on this area. Furthermore, M23 has critiqued the DRC government by stating that they are corrupt and have disserved the country and have a lack of control, which can be seen in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Neighboring Nations (Rwanda/Uganda)

Neighboring nations such as Rwanda and Uganda are also heavily involved in the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Due to the previously mentioned abundance of natural resources in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, many search for control of this region. "The DRC is the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, characterized by its vast territory, diverse ecosystems, and extensive mineral wealth." (Chaturvedi). Furthermore, they are also affected by the turmoil, as this has led to the displacement of people internally and externally in regard to the (eastern) DRC, and therefore also on the civilians on the borders on the eastern side.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Description of event
1885	The Congo Free State was placed under the authority of King Leopold II of Belgium. This was done through the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 where European nations came together in regard to the partitioning of Africa. This in turn gave Leopold II a platform where he



could formally cast a claim over the Congo Basin, which was ultimately recognized by this conference. This recognition was that Leopold II personally owned the Congo Free State, and not that it was a Belgian colony. It was exploited heavily by Leopold, leading to millions of deaths and casualties.

1908 The Congo Free State became a Belgian colony due to international outrage at the treatment of people in the Congo Free State under King Leopold II's rule.

June 30, 1960 This date marks the independence of the DRC, and appointed Patrice Lumumba as prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu as president. Furthermore, the Congo Free State was finally renamed to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

September 1960 The first Prime Minister of the DRC was dismissed due to turmoil.

January 1961 Patrice Lumumba is captured and assassinated by militia, suggesting political instability in the country.

1965 Joseph-Désiré Mobutu overthrows the government in the form of a coup.

1971 Mobutu then changes the Democratic Republic of Congo's name to Zaire.

1990 Due to economic instability and overall decline, high levels of unhappiness with the political system in the country, multiparty politics is now allowed by Mobutu but he still remains in power.

1994 Refugees from Rwandan Genocide enter in masses into the DRC.

1996 Marks start of the First Congo War. Laurent-Désiré Kabila launches a rebellion against Mobutu backed by Rwanda and Uganda.

May 1997 Marks the end of the First Congo War. Capture of Kinshasa and Laurent-Désiré Kabila becomes President furthermore renaming the country to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

August 1998 Kabila's allies who supported him in his coup started to turn against him. Regional powers start to be involved in regards to the power struggle. This marked the start of the Second Congo War.

1999 The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was signed.



- 2001** Laurent-Désiré Kabila was assassinated.
- 2002** A transitional government was formed in regards to which steps were next.
- 2003** This year marks the official end of the Second Congo War, however, especially towards the eastern side of the Congo, the violence and fighting continues.
- 2006** Laurent-Désiré Kabila's son wins the Presidency when the first multiparty elections are held.
- 2012-2013** M23 rebellion emerges, capturing Goma but then defeated by a joint effort between government forces and UN intervention, (MONUSCO).
- 2015** The DRC experiences a rise in political tensions as Kabila's term is nearing its end whilst there are no plans for new elections to be held.
- 2016-2018** Widespread protests and violence is prevalent throughout the DRC, however especially present in the eastern region again.
- December 2019** Elections are finally held after President Kabila. Allegations of electoral fraud surround the winner who then assumes the presidential seat, Félix Tshisekedi.
- 2023** Rebel group M23 resumes activities in regards to fighting and widespread violence in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is also as questionable elections are held in DRC.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- MONUC – a first stage UN peacekeeping operation in regard to civil safety. Follows the Mandate regarding the DRC and has received authorization to follow it.
- MONUSCO – a UN peacekeeping operation which took over from the MONUC in the DRC on the 1st of July 2010.
- Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 – Previously explained in the general overview and the



timeline of key events.

- Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement – Asked for the withdrawal of troops from a variety of member states and called for the demilitarization of violent zones of the DRC.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

One of the previous attempts to solve this issue was the Lusaka Ceasefire agreement. This was an agreement which between Uganda, Angola, the DRC, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Rwanda aimed to end the fighting in regard to the DRC territory. It asked for the “withdrawal of foreign groups, disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating of combatants, release of prisoners and hostages, re-establishment of government administration and the selection of a mediator to facilitate an all-inclusive inter-Congolese dialogue.”, (“Ceasefire Agreement (Lusaka Agreement) | UN Peacemaker”). It does this through calling for the establishment of a joint military commission between the aforementioned countries. This agreement also requests a UN peacekeeping force to monitor the ceasefire and to moderate the JMC, along with requesting assistance for the previously mentioned issues. This led to the establishment of MONUC.

Another example of a previous attempt to solve this issue is the imposition of MONUSCO which is the follow up measure of MUNOC. MONUSCO is a UN peacekeeping organization which is aimed at the “protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel and human rights defenders under imminent threat of physical violence and to support the Government of the DRC in its stabilization and peace consolidation efforts". This is explained in greater detail in the general overview and in the major parties involved.



Possible Solutions

Due to the complex nature of this issue, solutions are hard to come by to appease all parties. Firstly, to define the issues. Political instability plagues the DRC, whilst widespread violence targets the east and is made worse with ethnic disputes between the Tutsi and the Hutu people. One possible “solution” obviously would be to let the situation run its course with next to no intervention besides the already implemented MONUSCO.

However, a more active approach would be to implement a mandate similar to that one approved by the League of Nations in 1922, where the British were given control over the current Israeli and Palestine regions which consisted of both Arab and Jewish majorities to help establish new territories for them. This as we see even today, led to a number of conflicts however and did not have the intended effect. However, a more multilateral version of this with regard to consulting representatives of various Tutsi and Hutu groups could be a possible route of action as to solving this issue. This could be done by MONUSCO or a new organization or similarly to the aforementioned mandate by a third party nation, the latter of the two then allowing MONUSCO to run its course in regard to civil safety, and to establish that the natural resources in the east are in safe hands.

Another option could be to increase the UN troops in the east and proactively try to stop M23 Rebellion and other militia from attacking and controlling villages, cities and more like it. This would be a more active approach typically taken by the UN and may not even be possible depending on the boundary at which the conflict is placed however this proactive approach could help avoid the humanitarian crises at the minimum.

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Appendix or Appendices

I. Information regarding MONUSCO

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