

# **RESOURCES, INTERESTS, AND CONFLICTS IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

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## **Introduction**

In various attempts to identify, describe and analyze the root causes of African conflicts a number of approaches have been taken. Some students of African conflicts have emphasized socio-anthropological factors such as ethnicity. Others have placed greater stress on political and social grievances and the struggle for power. A third category have concentrated on economic factors such as poverty, greed and relative deprivation. In almost all these approaches there exist at least three common elements, which tend to weaken their explanatory and predictive capacity particularly with regard to assessing and projecting actor orientations towards peace processes and specifically the implementation of peace agreements.<sup>1</sup>

One element is that the approaches basically concentrate on processes be they of conflict formation, conflict transformation or resolution rather than the substantive issues.<sup>2</sup> Thus they tend to show little concern for root causes and are usually preoccupied with either the symptoms of the conflicts, exacerbating factors or, indeed, trigger events. They also tend to assume that all parties to the conflict have an interest in peace making. Facilitation of negotiation, agreement and implementation processes therefore, become the consuming concern as we witnessed in the Sun City event over the DRC.<sup>3</sup> What seems to be emerging from the experience with protracted conflicts in the Great Lakes region is that the pre-occupation with process rather than substance is not merely a misguided but honest error of a conceptual or technical nature. Rather, this approach may express the strategic and tactical choices of particular actors especially if these actors are in a position to decisively influence the outcomes of the process in favor of their particular interests in the conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent discussion concerning problems of actor behavior in implementing peace agreements see S. J. Steadman, D. Rothchild and E. M Cousins, *Ending Civil Wars: The implementation of Peace Agreements*. (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner, 2002)

<sup>2</sup> For a concise discussion of structural conditions and proposed solutions see; Richard Griggs, *Geostrategies in the Great Lakes and Spatial Designs for Peace*. (Center for World indigenous Studies, 1999)

<sup>3</sup> This is the origin of what I call the fallacy of all-inclusiveness in peace negotiations, which fails to identify peace spoilers and avoids the deliberate targeting of strategic actors on the basis of their interests, capacity and potential to influence minor actors.

This also means that the substantive issues that gave rise to the conflict, in the first place, are ignored, sidestepped or postponed to a future and usually indefinite time. In certain cases, issues of substance are even regarded as divisive, diversionary or unnecessary encumbrances likely to wreck or at least to derail the process. However, these very same processes may, themselves, be equally diversionary. The problem is that, while seemingly providing a temporary respite, most agreements arrived at without taking into account actor interests have consistently proved difficult to implement. In fact, such agreements may create conditions for the aggravation of the conflicts where some actors use the agreement as a mechanism to buy time in which to change the facts on the ground in their favor. This would seem to be our experience with the successive Angola Agreements as well as the Lusaka DRC agreement in which the collusion of imperialist interests with warlordism in the region, for example, have obstructed progress in the implementation of the agreements.<sup>4</sup>

The second element is that these approaches tend to be, by and large, internalist or statist in the sense that they usually define conflicts by territorial boundaries. Consequently we have the Sierra Leone conflict, the Burundi conflict, and the DRC conflicts even when such conflicts clearly transcend and indeed defy national boundaries. It is rare that violent conflicts can be completely contained and restricted to particular areas. Even if the violence is successfully contained, there are always over-spill effects in the form of refugees or insurgent groups retreating to regroup and fight back. The Great Lakes region features both phenomena in abundance with refugee flows (sometimes back and forth) from DRC, Rwanda and Burundi to Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and even as far a field as South Africa. The existence of Interahamwe militia and Ex-FAR forces in Eastern DRC, for example, is believed to be at least one of the legitimate reasons for Rwanda's presence in the DRC.

It is for this reason that concepts of regional conflict formations, complexes, systems, matrices, etc. have emerged. These concepts do not only refer to interconnections between conflicts in terms of reciprocal effects but also to explicit linkages and interactions (overt or covert) among actors in the conflicts including their involvement in the same conflicts in a regional setting. A clear example of this would be the interactions between warlords, gun runners, drug barons, money launderers, weak states and imperialist interests, for example. Moreover, such conflict formations may emerge on the basis of physical geography (e.g. the occurrence of minerals over particular geological formations), politics, ethnicity, etc. but they are always defined and mediated by actor interests. For this reason these formations are not stable or fixed in time or space but are always shifting according to actor and/or interest dominance, interaction patterns and alliances between interests. Thus to refer to a DRC conflict does not quite portray the scope and magnitude of the conflict which may be temporarily concentrated in the DRC but is spatially and dynamically more expansive taking on regional as well as international dimensions in the globalized struggle for strategic resources such as coltan. By the same token the superficial distinction between internal and external actors is not analytically helpful once we focus on actor/ interests and their strategies rather than processes and paces of negotiating the termination of conflicts between 'internal parties.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> It is suggested here that recent progress in Angola and DRC arises from changes in imperialist actor interest dominance from diamonds (plunderers) to Oil (globalizers) in Angola and from moral imperatives (genocide) to national interests (resources) in the DRC.

<sup>5</sup> Recent work in this direction includes M. Berdal and D. Malone, *Greed and grievance: Economic Agendas in*

The third common element, which follows from the second, is that these approaches have adopted a limited definition of conflict parties who are narrowly identified as those individuals or groups of actors who are immediately and visibly involved in the conflicts. The Inter-Congolese dialogue, for example, is conceived in these terms. That is the basis on which 300 or so political groups were recently facilitated by the European Union, the United States and South Africa in Sun City, (South Africa) to come to some agreement on the appropriate political order in the DRC. What is interesting and instructive is that what came out of those talks was not a compromise between the numerous political groups. Rather it was a coalition between two major actors, i.e., the Kabila government, which enjoys considerable support from the EU, and particularly the French government and Bemba's MLC, which is backed by Uganda and partly through Uganda enjoys some support from the United States. This outcome, arrived at behind the back of the official facilitator, Sir. Ketumile Masire, was not surprising. It was arguably the outcome most favored by powerful but invisible actors such as the U.S. (on the side of Bemba) and the European countries particularly France (on the side of Kabila). Therefore, at the international level of actor interaction therefore, the agreement may be interpreted as a Franco-American compromise.<sup>6</sup>

This narrow approach to defining parties to the conflict in the form of political parties, for example, leads to the fallacy that, in order to reach a stable and sustainable agreement, all self-appointed political groups have to be included in any negotiations with all parties carrying roughly the same weight. The outcome, as we have witnessed in the Lusaka Accord process and more recently in the Sun City process, is that we end up with a protracted stalemate either at the point of reaching the agreement or at the point of implementation. It is at these points that that we have observed the intervention of powerful interests, who arm-twist the parties to an agreement that is consistent with their interests. One of the fundamental flaws of this approach, therefore, is that the less-visible, but quite powerful, actors with interests in the conflicts are left out of the open negotiation process.

Even worse, some actors may present themselves, and become regarded as, impartial mediators or arbitrators in the conflict on the basis of their claims while, in reality, they are acting in the defense and pursuit of their particular interests. An interesting example relates to ambulance chasers such as the UNHCR. A recent statement by the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defense and Security in Tanzania suggests that the organization is obstructing the ongoing voluntary repatriation process because it would put their personnel out of work. The same report argues that there is considerable refugee fatigue in the host areas. Kigoma Region, for example, has resolved not to open new refugee camps and demanded complete repatriation of existing ones by the year 2005.<sup>7</sup> Another interesting case relates to the recent US bombing in Afghanistan in search of *al-Qaeda* terrorists. It was interesting to note that rather than restraining military action in Afghanistan, the UNHCR brought considerable pressure upon Pakistan to open borders and provide areas for refugee settlements.

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*Civil Wars*. (Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner, 2000) and A. Adebajo and C. Sriram (eds) *Managing Armed conflicts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. (London & Portland, Ore.: Frank Cass, 2001)

<sup>6</sup> See the discussion that follows regarding the inter-imperialist rivalry in the DRC. See also *The Economist Intelligence Review*, 19 Aug. 1994.

<sup>7</sup> *Mtanzania*, Fri. Jul. 13, 2001.

This paper therefore seeks not only to broaden the definition of conflict parties and widen the scope of actors in conflicts but it also sets out to identify actor orientations to peace initiatives on the basis of the logic of their interests. In summary, the underlying argument is that most peace agreements in the Great Lakes and indeed in Africa as a whole have not worked mainly because they have been based on three fundamentally flawed premises. One such premise is that the conflict parties are to be found solely in the countries in conflict. This premise is partly a result of the adoption of the concept of “parties,” which suggests some harmony of interests conceptually associated with the “prisoner’s dilemma.” We are contending that “actors” rather than “parties” is a more inclusive and dynamic concept. It allows for the inclusion of entities, who are otherwise considered external to the conflict simply because of geographical location. The second false premise is that all or most conflicts arise from grievances rather than interests. Paul Collier and others have challenged this assumption and advanced hypotheses that economic opportunities rather than grief underlies most African conflicts.<sup>8</sup> This is a particularly illuminating proposition especially when the territorial assumption is relaxed allowing the analyst to trace economic opportunism beyond national borders and domestic warlords. The third false premise is the assumption that all parties to the conflicts are, albeit to different degrees, committed to peacemaking or can be persuaded to this position. In reality nothing could be further from the truth because commitment to peace is a direct function of the interests at stake. To this end we have identified three sets of actor orientations which define and structure the responses of particular actors to peace initiatives and have a fundamental bearing on the processes and outcomes in terms of peace agreements and their implementation. The identified orientations are: peacemakers, peace spoilers and peace opportunists.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Regional Conflict Situation in the Great Lakes**

The Great Lakes is a geopolitical concept, which implies that the region constitutes a conflict and security complex.<sup>10</sup> This, in turn, suggests that conflicts in the region are interrelated with reciprocal effects. This interrelationship further indicates, among other things, that conflicts in the region stem from common or at least interrelated root causes and are propelled by common driving forces. Since the identification of root causes and driving forces is the *sine qua non* for successful conflict transformation, it is necessary to identify and describe such root causes and driving forces and to distinguish them from exacerbating factors and trigger events.

In thinking about root causes and driving forces of conflicts in general it would be helpful to advance a diachronic framework in which these causes can be analyzed. Since contemporary conflicts embody both the historical features of the region as well as manifestations of the

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<sup>8</sup> A concise exposition of this theory is presented in Paul Collier, *Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective*. In M. Berdal and D. Malone, (eds) *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. (New York: International Peace Academy, 2000)

<sup>9</sup> The definitions of actor orientations appear later on in the paper. For an initial discussion of these ideas see M. Baregu, *The Southern Africa Conflict Matrix: Perceptions, Reality, actors and Interactions*. (Mimeo. 2001.)

<sup>10</sup> The concepts of conflict systems and security complexes are presented and applied by Barry Buzan, *Peoples, states and Fear: An agenda for International security studies in the Post-Cold war Era*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991) and P. Wallensteen, (ed) *Preventing violent conflicts: Past Record and Future Challenges*. (Uppsala: Uppsala University Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Report No. 45, 1998)

present it would be useful to categorize root causes and driving forces into two dimensions. First, there are causes and driving forces that emanate from historical legacies, some of which may go back several centuries. These we shall categorize as belonging to the organic dimension. A clear example is the legacy of colonialism, whose onset in the 19th century defined the region essentially as an area for resource exploitation and established metropolitan access to human (cheap labor) and material (mineral, flora, fauna, etc.) resources. In this sense European imperialism defined the position and role of the region in the international division of labor under the capitalist world economy. The system of economic exploitation was under girded by a parallel system of government, which placed strong emphasis on divide and rule tactics in order to 'pacify and control the natives.'<sup>11</sup>

The second category of causes and driving forces is rooted in contemporary or more recent developments. Current developments in the international system including the dissolution of the socialist block of countries, the rise to near exclusive dominance of the United States and the transformations in the capitalist world system generally identified as globalization are of particular significance. Also of importance are the developments in the regional power structure (hegemonic rivalry particularly in a region where there is no clear hegemon and the potential one (DRC) is reeling in protracted conflict), regional socio-political norms (e.g., the decline of authoritarianism and the ascendancy of democratic norms) are in a state of flux; dismal economic performance and the ideological hegemony of neo-liberalism (resulting in de-industrialization, massive retrenchments and generalized unemployment) and mounting pressure for access to land as the only means of earning a livelihood on the part of Rwanda and Burundi, in particular. Rwanda's appetite for the Eastern DRC and talk of an ancient Greater Rwanda should, at least in part, be understood in these terms. This second category of root causes we shall describe as the conjectural dimension. Needless to say, the organic and conjectural forces may frequently converge in what are historically known as times of revolutionary change. The Great Lakes region would seem to be going through such a historical conjuncture.

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<sup>11</sup> For an elaborate description and discussion of the system in the African setting see Lord Hailey, *An African Survey; Revised 1956: A Study of Problems arising in Africa South of the Sahara*. (London, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1957)

## **The Organic Dimension**

The most outstanding features of the organic dimension are the legacy of settler colonial rule, particularly in its economic essence. Many conflicts in the region bear the stamp of this legacy. Here we shall confine ourselves to those features with a direct bearing on resources, warlordism and imperialism. These include at least two:

- a. Un-even distribution and access to resources between countries and peoples partly arising from arbitrary colonial borders. Resource struggles among competing interests within countries and between countries have been increasing, and numerous land and land resource related clashes have been reported across all countries in the region. The war in the DRC partly encapsulates these competing interests but it is by no means exceptional. Conflicts have occurred between pastoralists and agriculturalists, mining companies and local peoples, artisanal and large-scale fishermen, etc.
- b. The second, and perhaps the most important, legacy that is embedded in the organic dimension is the legacy of armed conflicts and warfare, which spawned structural warlordism in the region. Apart from the wars of resistance waged against colonial conquest and occupation in the 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, such as the Maji Maji insurrection in Tanzania, recent history has witnessed the persistence of armed conflicts in the region. These conflicts have been both intra and inter state in character. They include:
  - Kenya's Mau Mau struggle against British settler colonialism in the 1950s;
  - secessionist wars (Katanga) in the Congo in the 1960s and continued armed struggles culminating in the removal of Mobutu and installation of Kabila in 1997. This has unleashed the current war in the DRC which, like a vortex, has sucked in nearly all countries in the region;
  - the National Resistance Army (NRA) struggle in Uganda which brought Museveni to power against a backdrop of continued resistance in the North, North-east and Eastern Uganda linking up with the war in Southern Sudan;
  - Tanzania's war with Uganda leading to the overthrow of Amin but triggered by the invasion of the so-called Kagera salient - a border dispute between the two countries which continues to fester like an old wound;
  - internecine conflicts in Rwanda beginning in the 1950s and culminating in the 1994 massacres, the military overthrow of the Habyarimana government and imposition of military rule by the RPF and later Rwanda's invasion of the Eastern DRC in pursuit of the perpetrators of genocide; and finally
  - Burundi's intra-ethnic conflicts which have led to the imposition of military rule and the setting up of guerilla armies by opposition groups. These armies are believed to be encamped in Tanzania refusing to participate in the Burundi peace process which has proved extremely difficult to negotiate and is on the verge of collapse threatening to trigger a war between Tanzania and Burundi.
- c. This history of continuous and contiguous armed conflicts seems to have bequeathed the region (with an already low threshold for violence) conditions of warlordism and

structural militarism. Structural militarism stems from at least four sources. One source is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are easily available and accessible to individuals and groups. The region is awash with all kinds of gun-runners who team up with private military companies, warlords, weak states, drug barons and money launderers to perpetuate what some has called the terror trade. The second source of structural militarism is the culture of impunity in which violence does not only go unpunished but is rewarded either by the capturing of political power or economic gains such as the plunder of minerals in the DRC by Uganda and Rwanda. The third source of structural militarism is the retribution-revenge vicious circle. Most of the settlements of conflicts have failed to address root causes mainly because the other has terminated them not by negotiated political compromises but by the military defeat of one side and imposition of terms. This has created the mentality of living to fight another day even after several generations as witnesses in the endless cycles of violence in Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

- d. The fourth source, which is related to the last one, is what we may call, for a lack of a better term, embedded mistrust between the conflicting parties. Because of the strategies of militarism, revenge and impunity levels of confidence in peaceful methods of settling conflicts are very low. This, in turn, translates itself in the form entering agreements merely to buy time in which to re-arm and prepare for another round of violent confrontation.

### **The Conjunctural Dimension**

The conjunctural dimension is inevitably linked to the organic, but is quite distinct in the sense that it embodies concrete manifestations of what is historically embedded in the organic dimension. This is the sense in which one can say dialectically that the past lingers in the present. Some of the conflicts of conjuncture arise from longer-term historical processes but at the same time they carry features of the specific period under review. It is important to know how the organic impacts upon the conjunctural in order to arrive at effective modalities of conflict prevention, management and transformation. This should make it possible to avoid the pitfalls of treating symptoms (which may appear as causes in the conjuncture) while neglecting the root causes of (which may lie in the organic dimension).

There are at least two critical features of the conjuncture:

- (a) Inter-imperialist rivalry. The Great Lakes region has become a cauldron of multiple interests competing for the resources of the region particularly in the post-cold war period. One of the features of this competition is the three-cornered rivalry between the Western powers. In one corner stands the U.S. with its insatiable appetite for the strategic minerals of the region to feed its military-industrial complex (a la Eisenhower) incorporating electronics, aeronautics, nuclear medicine, missile technology, etc. interests and to bring to an end the old colonial spheres of influence. In another corner lies the traditional Franco- Belgian interest seeking to maintain their foothold, albeit in a conflict and collaboration mode, with Belgium unable but France intent on expanding

its sphere of influence into traditionally British areas. In the third corner stands the rest of the EU and Britain in particular seeking to dislodge the privileged position of France in collaboration with the U.S.. This is what has been variously termed the second scramble for Africa seeking to impose a post- Berlin Conference order, which was somewhat postponed by the Cold War in the wake of the end of formal colonialism. In effect this is a struggle to reverse the gains of independence and re-define the position and role of the region and Africa as a whole under new forms of domination. The prize is composed of niobium (15% of the world's reserves to be found in Africa, 80% of which in DRC) coltan (80% of the world's reserves in Africa and all of it in DRC). Among the multinational interests in the region are Kenrow International of Geithersburg, Maryland, Little Rock Mining Ltd.; Tenfields Holdings Ltd.; Sapora Mining Ltd. Intermarket; Barrick Gold Corp. ( with major share holder George Bush Sr.); Russel Resources Inc. (Australia); Kraall (Austria); Banro (Canada)<sup>12</sup>

- (b) Globalization and economic decline is the other important feature of the present conjuncture. Globalization has been variously defined and in most cases presented largely as a positive force particularly by the West. What has become progressively clear, however, is that globalization engenders contradictory tendencies with varying consequences for the different regions of the world. In Europe and America, for example, globalization has had an integrative impact resulting in the formation of large trading blocks (NAFTA) and even forging political unity in Europe as recently proposed by France and Germany. In the African region however, globalization has not promoted regional integration. On the contrary, globalization has had disintegrative effects. Regional integration in Africa is encouraged by the west only if it promotes the interests of the western businesses by facilitating resource extraction, integrating markets by linking them to the north and minimizing national control and harmonizing regulations in favor of western trade and investment. This process cannot lead to regional autonomy with internally integrated, self-sustaining regional economies and markets. Instead it undermines regional ownership and control over the exploitation and utilization of their resources. This is the essence of liberalization and foreign dominated privatization.

Economic decline, persistent poverty, state disintegration, social decay and fragmentation, and ethnic polarization have become the hallmarks of globalization in the region. Perhaps the most tragic irony and paradox of the conjuncture is that globalization has tended to centralize and intensify the access to and exploitation of Africa's resources while it has the effect of marginalizing and pauperizing Africa's people by alienating us from our resources. A good case is the Lake Victoria fish fillet industry (exporting to the EU countries). Dominated by private foreign and local companies, the industry has virtually liquidated indigenous artisanal fishing by criminalizing the activity. Apart from denying them access to fish for nutrition this development has terminated a thriving local industry. This has spawned conflict between the governments and the people living in the Great Lakes region leading to the pervasive popular belief that Lake Victoria has been sold to the EU!

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<sup>12</sup>See Richard Griggs, *Winners, Losers and wild Cards in the Great Lakes Conflict*. Center for world indigenous studies, 1999)

Unlike the earlier periods when Africans featured as labor (either as slaves, plantation workers, mine labor or colonial crop peasants), it is now possible for the West to access and exploit Africa's resources without needing the people themselves. This is one of the crucial challenges facing the region as it responds to globalization pressures centered on the resources of the region.

### **Major Conflicts in the Region**

The scope of conflicts in the region can be understood on at least three levels; the national, the regional and the international. It should be noted, however, that although these levels might be analytically helpful, they are not mutually exclusive and that is why an integrated framework of analysis such as a matrix might be more reflective of the dynamic reality. Such a matrix, as we have tried to construct in a larger work, tries to capture the various actors and interests, not in *situ*, but in their dynamic interaction. What needs to be noted, perhaps, is that the multiplicity of actors and the patterns and degrees of interactions will depend on the intensity of the conflict. This, in turn, is a function of the stakes at hand. Briefly stated, the higher the intensity of the conflict (on a scale of Low, Medium and High),<sup>13</sup> the greater the potential to involve diverse actors with contending interests and the higher the likelihood to spread across the region and beyond.

To this end, the highest intensity conflicts, such as the wars in Angola and the DRC, all have a regional as well as an international character. The war in the DRC, in particular, has involved not only Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe very directly but also, at some points, the other neighbors such as the Central African Republic, Sudan, Tanzania, South Africa, and Zambia all have been involved in one way or the other. Furthermore, other interests such as countries outside the region, mining, illicit arms, mercenaries, private militaries, money launderers, sans frontiers, UN agencies, etc have been deeply involved although their role needs to be made more explicit. The major conflicts in the region are shown in Table 1.

#### **Table 1 - Major Conflicts in the Region by Countries**

***Burundi*** - Invasion and plunder of DRC resources (exporting internal problems?); politicized ethnic cleavage with interminable negotiations; refugees in Tanzania and IDPs internally; dispute with Tanzania over refugee dissidents; generalized political instability; territorial ambitions (from population pressure?); under transitional ethnic minority military rule.

***DRC*** -Civil War from 1997 emerging from predatory rule under Mobutu; invasion by Rwanda and Uganda in 1998 and subsequent intervention by Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe; 2.5 million dead, refugees in and out and numerous IDPs; multiple powerful interests in mineral wealth; contested governance with weak state.

***Kenya*** - Natural resource struggles (land, water, fishing, grazing, etc.); constitutional and

<sup>13</sup> Low = being negotiated; Medium = Negotiation abandoned for open demonstrations; High = Violence

succession problems; socio-ethnic disputes; border dispute with Somalia and Uganda; leading Sudan IGAD initiative.

**Tanzania** - Contested governance (Zanzibar/Union) conflict; religious (Christian/Muslim); border disputes with Malawi, Uganda and Burundi; refugees, armed dissidence and crime; resource conflicts (mining) between locals and mining companies in Shinyanga, Arusha and Musoma; human/wildlife; illicit drug traffic. Quietly withdrew military training contingent from DRC at outbreak of war.

**Rwanda** - Invasion, occupation and plunder of DRC resources; politicized intra-ethnic cleavage with high political tensions; genocide trials in Rwanda and at the International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania; territorial ambitions due to land scarcity and population pressure; Interahamwe and ex-FAR infiltrations from DRC; maintains aggressive stance in the region. Enjoys US military support.

**Sudan** - Generalized war between SPLA (supported by US against Islamic Fundamentalist government) and the government; resource conflicts in oil, water, pastures; religious conflict - intra-Muslim, Muslim/Christian; Nile waters contestation with Uganda and the countries surrounding Lake Victoria to the South and Egypt to the North. Sent a detachment in support of the Kabila government in 1999.

**Uganda** - Invasion, occupation and plunder of DRC resources; border conflicts with Tanzania, Sudan, DRC, Rwanda, and Kenya; collaborated with Rwanda and later clashed with it in DRC; insurgencies in north, west and east; conflicts between locals, refugees and IDPs. Enjoys US and British military support. Leading Great Lakes peace initiative!

### **Actors, Motives and Interactions in Regional Conflicts**

One of the vexing features of conflicts in Southern Africa and in Africa, as a whole is the question of the multiplicity of actors. Apart from the visible conflict parties, who are relatively easy to identify, there are always other actors either lurking in the background or actively working in the foreground. These other actors normally play roles that may, intentionally or otherwise, promote the peaceful transformation or intensification of the conflicts. Furthermore, some of these actors are quite powerful and capable of influencing conflict patterns and trends in significant ways.

The visible other actors may have the most noble stated motives, but in certain cases their actual activities on the ground may not be consistent with their stated motives and goals. This may arise either from deliberate strategies of deception or from weaknesses of peace orientation. It may be a fine combination of both. Furthermore such actors as the Red Cross, UNHCR, WFP, etc. may have the best of intentions but may fall prey to the unilateral designs of imperialist actors in the Security Council, for example. The problem is that such visible 'humanitarian' actors are usually studied either as disaster relief organizations or as peace facilitators. Rarely are they ever perceived as a hindrance to peace making efforts.

The invisible but quite powerful actors are even more problematic. Some may work invisibly to promote peace but more often than not they work to subvert it. Such actors as the intelligence and security services (CIA, MI6, regional security organizations) are by definition secret service organizations. Private military and security companies, drug dealers, arms merchants and money launderers operate in the seamy and gray areas of criminality. The plunderers (diamond and gold diggers), lords of poverty, International Financial Institutions, weak states, and warlords all work together in complex interdependencies.

The activities and impact of these actors may be decisive in determining the eventuality of a violent conflict in the region. Yet they are hardly ever studied and when they are, the tendency has been either to give them casual treatment or to treat them as peripheral actors. Furthermore little attempt has been made to link their activities as integral and sometimes determinative in the conflict dynamics.

What follows in Table 2 is therefore an initial attempt to identify and describe some of the most important actors in the conflicts and to map out their interests and modes of action as well as their commitment to and reliability in peace-building initiatives. In this paper we shall only deal with imperialists and warlords in some detail but we should not lose sight of the complex patterns and degrees in which they interact with the others.

### **Table 2 - Identities and Descriptions of Actors**

***Imperialists*** -Largely the Western countries led by the United States under the G8 or OECD with an interest in stable but weak states. They may operate overtly or covertly but always with an eye towards power and wealth. Imperialists weaken states and pave the way for their economic agents in collaboration with arms dealers, PM/CS, lords of poverty, warlords, moneybags, globalizers, and ambulance chasers. They are frequently the most powerful actors. Their peace orientation is opportunistic.

***Robber Barons*** -Individuals, companies, and states essentially involved in activities of plunder and pillage. They thrive under conditions of relative anarchy with little or no government control over licensing or taxation. High but quick returns are key, such as diamonds, gold, genetic resources, etc. They prey upon weak states in collaboration with drug barons, arms dealers, mercenaries, PM/CS's, warlords, lords of poverty, and money launderers. Their peace orientation is spoilers.

***Drug Barons*** - Individuals or companies involved in drug trafficking, including networks usually supplying warlords, mercenaries and child soldiers in war zones as well as civilians at large. Close collaboration with arms dealers, mercenaries, PM/CS's, warlords, and money launderers. They thrive under conditions of anarchy. Their peace orientation is spoilers.

**Gun Runners** - Individuals or companies involved in the procurement and supply of arms and ammunition either legally or illegally to any or all sides in conflicts. Thriving on armed conflicts in collaboration with drug barons, mercenaries, PM/CS's, warlords, weak states, and imperialists. Their peace orientation is spoilers.<sup>14</sup>

**Mercenaries** - Individuals or companies who are hired to take part in hostilities for private gain; normally not being nationals, members of the armed forces a party to the conflict or a state. Also known as soldiers of fortune. Working closely with weak states, PM/CS's, plunderers, and warlords. Their peace orientation is spoilers.

**Private Military/Security Companies (PM/CS's)** - Companies providing a range of military and security services in conflict situations or extremely weak or collapsed states. They may include combat and operational support, military advice and training, arms procurement, intelligence gathering, hostage rescue, etc. Private security services are supplied in crime prevention, protection of businesses, people and property in non-conflict situations where state police capacity has diminished. Major clients are weak states, globalizers, ambulance chasers, plunderers, imperialists, drug barons. Their peace orientation is spoilers.<sup>15</sup>

**Warlords** - Individuals or bands of (usually) rebels who organize and lead armed groups operating either as bandits or conventional forces carving out certain areas, which they continue to control and exploit by military force. They may capture political power and become legitimized but warlordism continues to dominate their behavior. They work closely with imperialists, plunderers, drug barons, arms dealers, mercenaries, and PM/CS's. Their peace orientation is spoilers.

**Weak States** – States that suffer from legitimacy, authority and capacity deficits. This means diminished capacity to exercise legitimate authority over governance including the capacity to administer government, maintain law and order, provide social services, defend state sovereignty, etc. Worst cases are called collapsed or failed states. They fall prey to imperialists, warlords, drug barons, plunderers, PM/CS, globalizers. They may be opportunists or peacemakers depending on whether they are seeking protection or autonomy from spoilers.

**Lords of Poverty** - Named after the 1989 book of the same title by Graham Hancock sub-titled "Power, Prestige, and Corruption of the International Aid Business." These are self-serving individuals and organizations that have perpetuated poverty and thrived on it through aid or donor organizations. They prey upon weak states and collaborate with imperialists, moneybags, globalize, ambulance chasers, and PM/CS. Their peace orientation is opportunists.

**Money Bags** - International Financial Institutions include the World Bank, the IMF, and international commercial banks moving money swiftly across the globe with the effect of

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<sup>14</sup> For a description and analysis of the products, producers, trade and distribution, see *Small Arms survey 2001: profiling the problem*. A Project of the Graduate Institute of International studies, Geneva. (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of the magnitude of the problem and strategies to address it see, International Alert, *The Privatization of security: Framing a Conflict prevention agenda*, 1999 and *The privatization of security and peacebuilding*, 2000. For a view of the problem in Africa see; Jakkie Cilliers and Peggy Mason, *Peace, profit or plunder? The privatization of security in War-torn African societies*. (Halfway House, South Africa, ISS, 1999)

weakening the economies of weak states and keeping them in debt. Preying upon weak states in collaboration with imperialists, globalizers, lords of poverty, and ambulance chasers. Their peace orientation is opportunists.

**Globalizers** - Multinational corporations, gigantic companies with enormous bargaining power and technological capacity, directing capital movements in search of medium to long-term resources and markets. Their holdings often far exceed the GNPs of many African states. Preying upon weak states they are facilitated by imperialists and moneybags. With an interest in long-term stability, unlike the plunderers, globalizers are essentially peacemakers.

**Blue Berets** - The United Nations is the ultimate custodian of world peace. Constrained by the domination and marginalization of the General Assembly by the Security Council and the subordination of the Security Council to the United States, the UN is losing legitimate authority among the smaller and weaker member states. Dominated by imperialists and driven by globalizers it is wavering between defending sovereignty and promoting hegemony. Like the imperialists their peace orientation is opportunists.

**Money Launderers** - Network of banks and other companies involved in transactions intended to “clean” ‘dirty’ money obtained from criminal activities such as drug pushing, gun-running, plunder of resources, etc. The idea is to conceal the illicit source of the money. It is estimated to be a US \$500 billion industry. They work in close collaboration with arms dealers, drug barons, plunderers, and mercenaries. Their peace orientation is spoilers.

**Ambulance Chasers**- A range of international humanitarian organizations, including those in the UN system such as Department of Peacekeeping Operations, OCHA, UNHCR, Inter-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, Non - governmental organizations, which respond to natural and manmade disasters. Preying upon weak/collapsed states in collaboration with blue berets, lords of poverty, warlords, plunderers, and PM/CS’s. Their peace orientation is opportunists.

### **Actors and Interests in the DRC Conflict**

Focusing on the case of the DRC, this paper will now attempt to examine the activities of selected actors in relation to their postulated peace orientation with the view to determining whether, in their actions, these actors have tended to promote or obstruct peace in the region. Drawing upon the above observations the paper will seek to deepen these insights and to explore what they suggest in terms of alternative modalities of conflict resolution/transformation and peace building strategies in the Great Lakes region. The underlying concern is that too many attempts at resolving conflicts in the region have failed. We argue that these initiatives have not failed because of faulty processes, lack of political will or inappropriate timing, though these factors may account for some of the failure. We contend, instead, that the fundamental cause of these persistent failures is the faulty diagnosis of the problems particularly in terms of identifying the range of actors and their particular interests in the conflicts. Many peace agreements have not worked because they have been partial and subject to the rather vague and tenuous notion of 'political will' for their implementation. It is strongly suggested here that it is

the 'logic of interests' rather than 'political will,' which ultimately determines the fate of any peace initiative. For this reason, not only do we urge a comprehensive approach to actors and interests, but we also suggest that various actors have different orientations towards peace initiatives. In this regard we have evolved three clusters of actors comprised of:

A. - Peace makers - Actors whose interests are negatively affected by the conflict or who are likely to enjoy a peace dividend. They perceive the peace negotiation process as a positive-sum game, e.g., civil society, globalizers, weak autonomous states.

B. - Peace spoilers - Actors whose interests are promoted by the existence or prolongation of the conflict or whose interests would be threatened by the termination of the conflict, e.g., plunderers, drug barons, gunrunners, mercenaries, private military and security companies, warlords, money launderers.

C. - Peace opportunists - This is an enigmatic and unpredictable group of actors. They may promote peace as easily as spoiling it. They may gain or lose through protraction or termination of the conflict, e.g., imperialists, weak and acquiescent states, lords of poverty, ambulance chasers.

The strategic implications for peace making among the above clusters differ. “A” should be embraced and encouraged; “B” should be exposed, isolated, condemned and sanctioned. The newly formed International Criminal Court, assisted by an appropriate international policing mechanism (Interpol?), could be given the mandate to deal with such cases among others; and “C” may be converted to peacemakers through peace confidence building measures as well as through a judicious use of carrots and sticks.

In what follows we will briefly examine the role played by two groups of important actors in the DRC conflict in order to demonstrate that it is the logic of their particular interests that has influenced their behavior and the manner in which they have interacted with others. To do this we shall take the *imperialists* (particularly the EU and United States) as peace opportunists and *warlords* as the quintessential peace spoilers. The choice of these two particular actors, the imperialists and the warlords, in the Great Lakes region is not accidental. It emanates from the fact that these two actors seem to have the highest rate of interaction with each other as well as with the other categories of actors. Together they have had the greatest impact on the conflicts and are, by and large, responsible for the situation that prevails.

At least two recent developments may serve to demonstrate this point. One is that the agreement between Kagame and Kabila for the former to withdraw his forces from the DRC was essentially reached under U.S. pressure. The other development is that the differences that arose between Museveni and Kagame leading to the clash in Kisangani continue to receive the attention of No.10 Downing Street. This raises important questions concerning the relationship between the western countries and warlordism in general and in Africa, in particular.<sup>16</sup> For the purposes of this study, as we shall demonstrate later, Kagame and Museveni are defined as warlords in power.

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<sup>16</sup> A BBC news report on Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>.2002 stated that the US was supporting warlords in Afghanistan even as it claimed to build up a central government and promote democracy in the war-torn country.

In analyzing the interactions of the two actors therefore we are interested in finding out how they have behaved in the pursuit and protection of their interest and how such behavior has promoted peace or otherwise. We will attempt to look at the following indicators:

- The identity of their interests;
- Strategies and resources employed in pursuing them;
- The extent and modes of involvement in regional conflicts;
- Visibility, or the extent to which the actor's actions are overt or covert;
- Commitment to peace, signaled by the degree to which they have consistently supported peace initiatives; and
- Reliability, the extent to which actors have been willing to negotiate and implement, or support, peace agreements in the region.

### **Imperialist States**

The Congo has historically been a target and corner stone of various imperial designs. Since it became King Leopold II's personal colony in 1885 to the coming of independence, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the instauration of Joseph Mobutu by imperialist forces in the early 1960s, the country has remained contested territory.<sup>17</sup> More recently, one of the most enigmatic roles in the current crisis in the DRC has been played by the Western countries right from the days of Mobutu's rule, during the process leading to his removal, and in the post-Mobutu period. While Western interests in the natural and particularly the strategic resources of the Congo are easy to discern through the direct involvement of mining companies and other enterprises, their geopolitical interests have been in a state of flux. This is mainly because the DRC conflict is going on at a critical juncture in the capitalist world system. This juncture is marked by the end of the Cold War and the reconfiguration of the structure of power in the international system; the intensification of the globalization process, and the rise of the United States to global dominance. All these developments call for major adjustments in the international system and some of the struggles attending these adjustments are being played out in the DRC conflict.

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<sup>17</sup> There is no shortage of literature dealing with the tortured history of the Congo. Joseph Conrad's , *The Heart of Darkness* is a well known classic. A more recent account of the continuing tragedy of the Congo is Adam Hoschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*.

The United States, for example, which supported the predatory and profligate Mobutu regime rhetorically, and did so only partly to stem the encroachment of communism but mainly to promote its own interests in Africa during the Cold War.<sup>18</sup> The United States is consistent in this goal and that is why it displayed some ambivalence mixed with considerable hostility towards the new government of Laurent Kabila. This was partly because the U.S. (through Amb. Richardson) in collaboration with South Africa (through Pres. Mandela) had failed to bring about some kind of government of national unity which would have bought time for Mobutu and for the United States to secure its interests. This move would also have installed South Africa as the dominant actor in the region. The coming of Kabila to power without the blessing of the US meant that the regime had to be isolated and eventually sanitized so that the geo-strategic interests of the United States could be secured. Some of the latest developments, particularly after Joseph Kabila assumed his father's place, suggest that the United States is finally succeeding in placing its interests at the center of the peace process, putting South Africa in a strategic position and directing the Lusaka process.

The immediate reason why the Kabila government<sup>19</sup> courted the wrath of the United States and the Western countries in general, however, is that it displayed what one writer has described as 'strident nationalism'<sup>20</sup> in at least five ways – none of which carried favor with the West.

1. The government sought to cancel and/or re-negotiate most of the mining concessions which it decided were not consistent with the interests of the DRC. It actually cancelled some concessions and was taken to the International Court for the Settlement of Investment Disputes.
2. The government expressed the intention to repudiate the international debt accumulated under the Mobutu regime.
3. It rebuffed UN efforts to investigate the genocide committed largely by Rwanda forces against Hutus in Eastern DRC in the campaign towards Kinshasa.
4. It resisted pressures to democratize the country instantly and banned political parties and the political activities of the erstwhile non-armed opposition to Mobutu.
5. It expelled its Rwandese and Ugandan allies who enjoyed the support of the United States and invited the SADC allied forces. This was a surprise factor, which suggested a different configuration of power in the region from that anticipated by the West under a Pax- Pretoriana.

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<sup>18</sup> For critical studies of US policy during this period see Gibb, D.N. *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines and US Policy in the Congo crisis*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Kelly, S. *America's Tyrant: the CIA and Mobutu of Zaire*. (Lanham, MD: University press of America, 1993); Schatzberg, M.G. *Mobutu or Chaos? The US & Zaire*. Lanham, MD: University press of America, 1991; Sullivan, M.J. *US Foreign Policy in the Periphery: A 50-Year Retrospective*. Los Angeles; International Studies Assoc, 1995. e. Los Angeles; International Studies Assoc, 1995.

<sup>19</sup> For a review of some of the immediate regional and international responses to Kabila's government see Mwesiga Baregu, (ed) *Crisis in the democratic Republic of Congo*. (Harare: SAPES Books, 1999)

<sup>20</sup> Youssuf Bangura, Comments on Regional Security and the War in Congo. In M. Baregu (ed) *Crisis In the Democratic Republic of Congo*, pp. 10 – 18.

It should be noted that the Western countries have not always taken the same position on the situation in the DRC. France and Belgium, the ex-colonial powers in the region with entrenched interests, have not always agreed with the United States. Indeed, as we pointed out earlier, there exists considerable inter-imperialist rivalry in the region resulting in a conflict and collaboration mode of interaction. On one side, the United States and Britain are seeking to dislodge France and Belgium from their traditional colonial positions of privilege in the region. On another, France is determined to resist Anglo-American encroachment while expanding its own sphere of influence. Belgium, on yet another side, is becoming progressively unable to pursue such grand unilateralist goals.

Consistent with this conflict and collaboration mode, Britain and the United States have, by and large, played an obstructionist role in the DRC conflict particularly when it has come to the UN deployment of peacekeeping forces insisting on the withdrawal of the allied forces led by Zimbabwe as a pre-condition. Britain, in particular, has linked its support for the white settler farmers in Zimbabwe to the peace process in the DRC. The French, on the other hand, have tried to bring about an early end to the conflict in the DRC. They have undertaken a number of initiatives including the Franco-Africa Summit of November 1998, as well as bilateral diplomatic activity to bring the parties to some agreement. Apart from openly condemning Rwanda's and Uganda's invasion of the DRC long before the Security Council did so, France has also acknowledged the presence of the allied forces as a stabilizing factor. To this end it has been more positively pre-disposed to Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. It may be helpful to recall also that the RPF invasion of Rwanda in 1994, which triggered the genocide in Rwanda was sprung from Uganda and supported by Britain and the United States. It found the French on the opposite side having been busy re-organizing and supplying the FAR under the 1975 France Rwanda Defense Pact.<sup>21</sup>

At this level, therefore, the conflict in the DRC is an expression of the inter-imperialist rivalry between the French on the one hand, and the Anglo-American alliance, on the other. Thus, the war is about high international politics as opposed to low domestic politics (i.e., democratization, human rights, ethnicity, etc.). It is, first and foremost, an imperialist war and like all imperialist wars in modern history, it is a war about the distribution of wealth and power. At the regional level this war is, among other things, about re-defining the position and role of 'post-apartheid' South Africa in a 'post-liberation' Southern Africa characterized by weak states, weak societies, and weak economies all debilitated by two decades of armed struggles, destabilization raids, and structural adjustment policies.

At the international level the war is about reconciling the new American hegemony with the post-World War II colonial possessions and spheres of influence. On this score it is a war about re-drawing the map of African geo-strategic and economic interests to replace the Berlin Conference order, which was only marginally modified by the two world wars without explicitly accommodating American interests. To some extent therefore Africa is only beginning to experience what Latin America experienced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and Asia (Laos, Cambodia, Korea, Vietnam, etc.) has been undergoing since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>21</sup> L. Martens, Genocide in Rwanda in N. Abdulla (ed) *Genocide in Rwanda*, 1999.

Behind the pro-democracy, pro-growth rhetoric, the less publicized role of the United States in Africa has been the steady supply of arms, ammunition and military training – all stoking the fires of armed conflicts in the continent. In the Great Lakes region in particular, the United States has supplied arms to virtually all countries variously involved in the DRC conflict. From 1989 to 1998, the US provided over \$227 million in weapons and training to African militaries. Of this, some \$111 million (excluding \$75 million emergency aid to Rwanda in 1994) went to countries that have been involved in the DRC war. They included Angola, Burundi, Chad, DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Of the \$19.5 million in U.S. arms and training delivered to Africa in FY1999, \$4.8 million went to these countries, with Uganda alone receiving \$1.6 million. As a proportion of total US arms sales globally, which was \$16 billion in 1999, this may not be very significant but in relation to the conflicts in the region, it is not only substantial but also represents a tacit endorsement of the involvement of countries such as Rwanda and Uganda in the DRC war. It also clearly demonstrates the connection between the rise of warlordism in the region and U.S. foreign policy in Africa.<sup>22</sup>

### **Warlords and Warlordism**

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that the emergence of warlords and militarism in the region has been linked with imperialism in at least in two senses. The first source is the legacy of armed struggles against imperialism and settler colonial occupation as in the case of Mau Mau in Kenya. The second and more immediate source, however, is the close relationship forged between warlordism, inter-imperialist struggles, and the defense and protection of Western interests.

Warlordism has become a structural feature in African conflicts. There are at least two types of this phenomenon. Warlords may be defined as individuals or bands of rebels or dissidents who organize and lead armed groups operating either as guerillas or conventional forces carving out pieces of territory in a country which they control and exploit by military force either with the intention to secede or as a base to capture the whole country. They may impose or earn legitimacy in the areas they control but more often they rule by force. These we will call ‘warlords seeking power.’ They collaborate closely with gun-runners, plunderers, drug barons, mercenaries, private military companies, and, as we shall see, the imperialist interests in the region. The second group of warlords may be defined as the highest leaders in a regime which, having come to power by military force, maintains itself by the same means. These regimes tend to maintain themselves in power by repressive regimes at home and aggression against their neighbors. The conflicts in the Great Lakes are essentially driven by both types of warlordism, fueled by imperialist interests that are frequently in competition with each other for political power and resources as UN reports on the plunder of DRC resources have indicated.<sup>23</sup>

In the year 2000, when demand for coltan was rising while supplies were falling, a kilo was internationally priced at \$200 while the obtaining price in DRC was only \$10. At that time the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) was exporting nearly 100 tons a month making \$20 million a

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<sup>22</sup> W.D. Hartung and Dena Montague, *Deadly Legacy: U.S. Arms and Training Programs in Africa*. Arms Trade Resource Center, World Policy Inst. 2001.

<sup>23</sup> UN. Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal exploitation of Natural Resources and Other forms of wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo, UNSC, 12 April, 2001.

month and nearly \$250 million in 18 months. This created a vicious cycle in which the RPA provided protection and security for individual and corporate plunderers who, in turn, shared their profits with the army to ensure continued protection and further resource exploitation. It is this situation which has led to the vicious circles of violence, which pervade the whole social and political life linking the whole region in a process of plunder, war and destruction as may be witnessed in the cycles of massacres and carnage and in pillaging and robbery sometimes reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> century raiding parties.

Behind these vicious cycles of violence and destruction lie very powerful interests. It is reported, for example, that when the UN report first came out it was not taken lightly. Several members of the UN panel received death threats. Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi also protested so vehemently that the UN Security Council dropped some of the members of the original panel and authorized an addendum which watered down some of the recommendations and reversed others. This is not surprising given the power of the high tech industry for which “tantalum is the magic dust, a key component in everything from mobile phones made by Nokia and Ericsson and computer chips from Intel to Sony stereos and VCRs.”<sup>24</sup>

Addressing the problem of militarism, Robin Luckham (1998) came to the conclusion that armed struggles for national liberation as well as military coups were not a new phenomenon in Africa: “What is novel is the geographic spread of armed revolt, the increasing rejection of political authority as such, the collapse of entire states, administrative systems and repressive apparatuses, *and the emergence of warlords seeking power or personal enrichment rather than a broad national vision of national liberation, social revolution or development.*”<sup>25</sup> (my emphasis)

Perhaps there is no better area to demonstrate the rise of warlordism thesis propounded by Luckham above, than the Great Lakes region. The region is awash with both kinds of warlords – those in power and those in search of power with the former striving to hang onto power while the latter fight to wrest it from them. This is sometimes played out in a tragic serial process of an endless spiral of violence. In Uganda, for example, Joseph Kony of the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) is fighting Yoweri Museveni of the UPDF (formerly the National Resistance Army) of the National Resistance Movement, which is now in power. Museveni himself came to power in 1976 by overthrowing Tito Okello who had overthrown Milton Obote in 1985. Obote had replaced Idi Amin in 1980 after a year of political turbulence. The latter, in turn, had been removed by Tanzania in an invasion of Uganda, which started with a border dispute in 1979. With the exception of Obote, the rest are military people. In Rwanda, Paul Kagame, the commander of the Rwanda Patriotic Army, which overthrew the civilian government of Habyarimana, initially served as Vice-President and Minister of Defense under civilian President Bizimungu from 1994 (after the genocide) until he overthrew him in April 2000 and more-or-less declared himself President and Commander in Chief. Meanwhile, like Museveni, he faces internal dissent, due to his blocking democratic reform policies, and hostile borders, not only from the invaded Congolese in the form of Mai Mai but also from ex- FAR and Interahamwe warlords encamped in the DRC, without a clear political process for ensuring their safe return to Rwanda and future participation in democratic politics in the country.

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<sup>24</sup> Kristi Essick, Guns, Money and Cell Phones. *The Industry Standard*, Jun. 11, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Robin Luckham in E. Hutchful (ed.) *The Military and Militarism in Africa...*

Achille Mbembe refers to warlordism as ‘military princeships’ which he says have appeared in Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and, to a lesser extent, in Eritrea and Ethiopia. They are characterized by the persistent use of force in putting their internal and external policies in effect. “Having come to power through violence and faced with internal disorder they are obsessed with security. So they build a rampart around themselves against groups they have earlier driven out by force, and then they clone themselves elsewhere, particularly in neighboring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo whose state structures have proved fragile and unstable.”<sup>26</sup>

What should perhaps be noted is the umbilical cord that binds Kagame and Museveni to the imperialist countries. The RPF is the product of the Ugandan army supported by Britain and the United States. Britain trained the RPF at the Jinja military base in Uganda while Kagame trained at Ft. Leavenworth, USA where he emerged to take command of the RPF. In a re-creation of inter-imperialist rivalry, the RPF was first pitted against Zaire, France, and Belgium who supported the Habyarimana government and built its military force. “The RPF was established as a result of an NRA demobilization exercise for which Uganda received British and American funding. They demobilized by crossing the border in completely equipped units, taking their insignia off their shoulders as they crossed.”<sup>27</sup> Ex-president Binisa of Uganda says; “Only one conclusion can be drawn that the present conflict in Rwanda was started by Uganda and it would be a fiction to call it a civil war.”<sup>28</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This paper was our initial attempt to apply our actors and interests model to regional conflicts in the Great Lakes region. As we pointed out initially, I chose to examine the role of warlords and imperialists in the regional conflicts. What emerges is that there is a very close relationship between the two actors not only in terms of their intimate interactions but also in terms of the origins and sustenance of warlords by the imperialists. It is thus not accidental that when President Clinton made his highly publicized tour of Africa he not only praised the warlords as Africa’s new crop of leaders, but also made more stops in countries with warlords in power than in those with civilian leaders. He stopped in Accra (Rawlings), Kampala (Museveni), and Kigali (Kagame). In the case of the Great lakes region he even summoned a meeting of the regional leaders, as if to install Museveni as the regional warlord. This all goes to suggest that claims of promoting democracy to the contrary, the United States has a preference for warlords. Presumably because of their strong-arm, high handed, and undemocratic politics, they are considered to be better suited for the protection of United States’ interests.

There are therefore at least three strategic policy options for dealing with this relationship between warlordism and imperialism. In the short term, all efforts should be made to place the burden of war termination and peacemaking on the shoulders of these two groups. The imperialists, in particular, should be prevailed upon to rein in their protégés in order to ensure the implementation of peace agreements. To facilitate this process special, UN panels, such as those created on the illicit exploitation of the resources of the DRC, should be established to

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<sup>26</sup> A. Mbembe, *Efca’s Frontiers in Flux.*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Nov. 1999

<sup>27</sup> *Economist Intelligence Review*, 19 Aug. 1994.

<sup>28</sup> G. Binisa, *Open Letter to Youth of Uganda*, 8<sup>th</sup>. Juna, 1994.

investigate relationships between imperialists and warlords and between them and other actors.

In the medium term, efforts should be made to address the problem at its source by convincing imperialists that it is in their long-term interests to promote genuine democracy in the interest of long-term political stability. This would also entail abandoning a policy of maintaining stable but weak (repressive but illegitimate) states and weak societies in favor of stable and strong states under-girded by strong societies.

In the long term, the Great Lakes region as a whole can benefit from convening a Great Lakes Peace, Security and Development Conference involving, as much as possible, all the vested interests. Such a conference would seek realistic ways of making peace without ignoring or negatively affecting legitimate interests. By the same token, however, the conference would identify systemic peace spoilers and sanction them accordingly. The development component would aim at establishing an enabling environment for co-operation in joint development programs and conflict transformation mechanisms.