

# Congo peace deal reveals continuing instability

Chris Talbot  
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All the participants in the Congo war, including six outside countries, the present embattled Kabila regime of the Democratic Republic of Congo and three rebel factions, finally agreed to the cease-fire agreement laid down in the Lusaka, Zambia accord of July 10. The six countries involved are Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi—who have backed the rebels—and Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, who have backed Kabila.

Only the rebels, the Congo Liberation Movement (MLC) and the two wings of the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), had refused to sign the agreement because of internal divisions in the RCD. Over the last two weeks the split in the RCD resulted in armed conflict in the city of Kisangani between Ugandan and Rwandan troops. After dozens of troops were killed, the fighting was halted by a top-level meeting between President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Vice President Paul Kagame of Rwanda.

The growing rift between previous allies is symptomatic of the instability in most of central Africa, which the present cease-fire talks will do little to resolve. The agreement is the latest of over 20 initiatives sponsored by the Organisation for African Unity (OAU), the South African Development Community (SADC), Zambia, South Africa and other countries over the last year. Its most likely outcome is the de-facto division of the Congo into regions run by cliques relying on the military support of one or more neighbouring countries in exchange for a share of the Congo's diamonds, gold, timber and other resources.

Kabila has relied on support from Zimbabwe and Angola from the start of the war last year. His break with Rwanda and Uganda—whose military backing enabled him to come to power in May 1997—would otherwise have quickly led to the rebel forces they had organised taking over the whole of the Congo. Angola is heavily involved in its own civil war and Zimbabwe is engulfed in an economic crisis that makes funding its operations in the Congo prohibitive, as well as increasingly unpopular.

Rebel forces have now taken the bulk of the east and north of the country, as well as much of the Katanga region in the

south. From the beginning of this year it became clear that Kabila and his backers have no possibility of retaking the rest of the country. Apart from the capital Kinshasa, they have managed to keep hold of Mbuji-Mayi, the big industrial diamond centre. It is encircled by Zimbabwean troops, and part of the peace deal is that Zimbabwe will keep its mineral concessions in the area and be allowed to station troops there to protect them.

One of the major factors militating against a peaceful settlement of the war is that Kabila has recruited into his army over 10,000 of the Hutu militia, the Interahamwe, who were responsible for carrying out the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Although the peace deal is supposed to involve the disarming of this militia and the handing over of war criminals to the UN International Tribunal, the chances of any UN forces carrying this out are minimal. Because of its determination to defeat the Interahamwe, it is most likely that Rwanda or its proxy rebel forces will continue to hunt them down, as well as continuing to attempt to take control of Mbuji-Mayi.

Divisions within the rebel forces fighting the Kabila regime reflect the different interests of Uganda and Rwanda in the Congo. As they have effectively won the war, the differences between them have intensified. The Congo Liberation Movement (MLC) was set up at the beginning of the war by Jean-Pierre Bemba after the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) made it clear they didn't want him. Backed militarily by Uganda, Bemba's forces control the northern Equateur region and are now moving down towards Kinshasa. Recently they took the strategic town of Gbadolite, a military supply base with an airfield. Bemba is married to the former dictator Mobutu's daughter and financially backed by former Mobutists. In the area his forces control there are gold mines such as those at Kilomoto. Gold from these mines is shipped out through Uganda to finance the war.

The Rwandan-backed RCD split in May this year when its leader, the elderly history professor Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, was ousted and replaced by Emile Ilunga. Wamba

dia Wamba was opposed in the leadership of the RCD by Mobutists such as Mobutu's former prime minister, Lunda Bululu. After being ousted he moved from Goma, the town in eastern Congo where the RCD have their headquarters, to Kisangani where he set up a rival organisation. He has no military forces in Kisangani, but relied on the Ugandan army. It was the dispute between RCD-Goma, led by Ilunga, and RCD-Kisangani, led by Wamba dia Wamba, over who had the right to sign the peace agreement on behalf of the rebels that prevented the conclusion of the deal in July.

Ugandan and Rwandan troops control Kisangani airport and various parts of the city. The recent armed conflict between them was partly an attempt by the Rwandans to finish off Wamba dia Wamba (he and his followers have now fled to the Ugandan capital, Kampala), but also over the control of diamond, gold and coffee concessions in the region. Both Uganda and Rwanda have always claimed that their involvement in the war was purely for security reasons. Uganda wanted to deal with Sudan-backed armed groups based in the Congo stirring up civil war in Uganda; Rwanda to deal with the Hutu militia, the Interahamwe. In fact both also want control of vital resources. Their differences make any solution to the conflict that maintains the Congo as an integral nation state even more unlikely. As the International Crisis Group—the privately funded multinational organisation, which advises Western governments—put it in their recent report:

"Hostilities between Uganda and Rwanda might lead to the fragmentation of the rebellion into small factions that will be impossible to co-ordinate. These different factions will be paying lip service to their masters in Kampala and Kigali, instead of joining the National Dialogue and Reconciliation Debate and becoming part of the Congolese solution. This would lead to a critical loss as they are clearly part of the problem and could lead to a de facto partition of the DRC, with each army occupying a sector."

The Lusaka agreement calls for an immediate cessation of fighting and the establishment of a Joint Military Commission (JMC) made up of the various countries and rebel forces involved—excluding the Interahamwe, UNITA fighting the Angolan government, or groups fighting in the civil war against Uganda. These outfits are supposed to be identified and disarmed, and after that all foreign troops withdrawn over a period of several months. There is then a Congolese National Dialogue, to begin the process of establishing a new regime, as well as the formation of a new Congolese national army.

All of this depends on the UN agreeing to provide a peacekeeping force to monitor operations. Given the attitude of Western governments, especially the United States, this is unlikely. A study by the UN estimated that 100,000 troops

would be needed to make such a peacekeeping force effective. President Mbeki of South Africa has called for a force made up largely from the warring factions themselves, but it is unlikely that even South Africa would commit troops to this force. Thus the JMC will be left to preside over a bogus peace, in which the combatants are expected to police themselves.

Most international aid agencies have moved out of the Congo and the situation facing the mass of the population is desperate. According to the UN, around 200,000 people have been displaced from the South Kivu region, which is facing a prolonged drought. In North Kivu the devastation caused by the war is shown by one statistic—the number of cattle has decreased from 500,000 in 1994 to 5,000 today. In the regions which have been at the centre of the conflict, local aid workers are reported in the *South African Mail and Guardian* as saying there is a "lack of will" by international agencies to help in the Congo, using the excuse that they "need Kabila's permission to work in the region [controlled by the RCD]".

Whatever the immediate outcome of the peace accord, it is clear that the Congo will be run by rival wealthy cliques who will exploit the country's resources at the expense of the people. Western bankers will hope to get some of their loans repaid; Western companies will continue to extract their profits (20 percent of the Mbuji-Mayi industrial diamond company MIBA is owned by Sibeka of Belgium). The legacy of United States and Western support for the corrupt regime of Mobutu Sese Seko for over 30 years in the Congo has resulted in Mobutu's henchmen, who still possess billions of dollars looted from the country, resurfacing in the various rival factions. Combined with this, the support by France for the Hutu regime over a similar period in Rwanda—resulting in a genocide which the UN and Western governments chose to ignore—has resulted in the continuing destabilisation and disintegration of the heart of the African continent.



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