

## Conflict about Natural Resources and the Prospect of Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

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**ABSTRACT** As a departure from the general debate on the nexus between natural resources endowment and conflict in Africa, which focuses on the authoritarian nature of African states, the rise of ethnic militias, corruption and the policies and activities of foreign oil multinationals, the objective of the paper is to trace and explain the cause of conflict and underdevelopment in DRC as a product of history. Using secondary data and a qualitative analytical framework, the paper argues that the prevailing conflict on natural resources in DRC has its roots in colonial history. It found that, as in the past, there are state and non-state interests behind the exploitation of natural resources whereby groups and citizens excluded from the accumulation process resort to violence. The paper then suggests the deployment and utilization of indigenous knowledge and practices with modern approaches to the resolution of conflict and management of resources in the country.

### INTRODUCTION

Most resource based African countries face serious conflict. Examples of these include the struggle for the control of endowed resources by ethnic militia in Nigeria's Niger delta. In some instances, there is arms proliferation by ethnic groups in the face of the breakdown of law and order, as witnessed in Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi, while in some states like Sudan, in the Darfur region humanitarian problems such as famines and other socioeconomic and political epidemic often develop.

In fact distributional concerns have been identified as the major cause of these conflicts. A classical case is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (formerly Zaire) where a secessionist regime has caused all sorts of crises. The same could be said for Nigeria in 1967 where the group called 'the Biafran' raised the issue of alienation as the basis for secession. Socio-economic factors such as problems relating to the economy or discriminatory economic practices are often attributed to internal struggles and strife. Cultural discrimination against some other minority groups in a polity could lead to conflict.

Africa's vital mineral resources have also been the source of conflict between the major powers. The illegal exploitation of these natural resources is a major contributing factor to violence and instability in different parts of the con-

tinental. These conflicts always have a contagious effect on the neighboring states. In such cases, a neighboring state acts as a conduit for the shipment of men and material and could also be used as a base to launch attacks.

Generally, new displacements associated with conflict and violence by World Bank-defined region in 2015 puts the figure for sub-Saharan Africa to be 2.2 million (second largest in the world), middle East and North Africa, 2.8 million, Europe and Central Asia, 942,000, South Asia, 336,000, Latin America and the Caribbean, 231,000, and East Asia and the Pacific, 49,000. While some states including the United States, Mexico, Paraguay, Guinea, Malawi, Mozambique, Kenya witnessed socioeconomic challenges as a result of issues beyond their control, natural disaster for instance, which has led their citizens displaced, others like Nigeria, DRC, Niger, Somalia have significant proportion of their people displaced by conflict more than natural disaster. Specifically, the ratio of internally displaced people by conflict to those displaced by natural disaster among these African countries as of 2015 are 737,000:100,000, 621,000:106,000, 47,000:38,000, and 90,000:50,000 respectively, compared to only 63,000 displaced by just disaster in the United States (Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016). Given the increase in the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) as refugees all over the world with signif-

icant proportion from Africa with DRC among the countries with highest number (Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016) due to protracted conflict and the multidimensional challenge it poses to economic and human development in the country (UNECA 2015), there is need for a new and more holistic thinking about strategies for conflict management and peace building particularly in the country and Africa in general.

### Statement of Problem

One of the greatest concentrations of precious minerals and metals on earth can be found in the eastern region of the DRC. Congolese minerals have fueled the developed world's industrialization. The country's mines have provided the West with diamonds, metals and minerals. Niobium, tungsten, pyrochlore, coltan and germanium are some of the minerals used in the manufacture of a range of hi-tech devices, from mobile phones and laptops to spaceships. Despite this remarkable level of natural wealth, the DRC is one of the poorest countries in the world. For instance, the country had an average per capita annual income of about USD 184 in 2008. Agriculture accounted for 42.5 percent of GDP in 2007 (Alida et al. 2009). Many producers are subsistence farmers. Industry accounted for 28.4 percent of GDP, of which 6.4 percent was from manufacturing. Services accounted for 29.1 percent of GDP in 2007 (Bonolo 2012). Its formal economy is dominated, however, by the mining sector, with minerals as the main export. Minerals represent the single largest source of foreign direct investment. The DRC armed conflicts are fueled by a mad scramble for the country's vast natural resources (Bonolo 2012; Braeckman 2004). The devastation caused by these wars has led to incalculable losses in human lives and damage to material infrastructure and environmental resources. By the end of 2004, according to several estimates, the war in the DRC had claimed a staggering 3 to 4 million lives (Paul 2007) while there was an average of more than 50,000 cases of new displacements every month in 2015 (Global Report on Internal Displacement 2016) with the projection that the population movements could rise significantly again in 2016 if the political and security situation were to deteriorate (OCHA 2016).

Although many writers, scholars and Western media have often focused on the intensity and different causes of the protracted conflict particularly about natural resources in the DRC,

the situation persists in spite of various suggestions and recommendations. Also, despite several peace-making efforts, peace remains elusive in the DRC. This can be seen in the continuing antagonistic relationship between the rebels, known as M23, and the government (Bonolo 2012), which made the crisis complex and protracted without exit prospect (DRCHCA 2016). This suggests the need to understand the historical context of the conflict and the role indigenous knowledge and practices can play in the search for lasting peace and for development in the DRC. This historical context is particularly necessary because a nation, which does not know what it was yesterday, does not know what it is today or what it is trying to do (Woodrow as quoted in Guinsburg 1972; Oluwasanmi 1974).

### Research Questions

The paper seeks to provide answers to the following questions.

1. Has history any relevance to resource endowment and prolonged conflict in DRC?
2. If the answer to question (1) above is yes, is there any linkage between mineral resources and the prolongation of the conflict?
3. Who are the major stakeholders or actors in the resource-based conflict, and what is their interconnectedness?
4. How can mineral resources in Africa, especially in the DRC, be a tool for development?

### Research Objectives

The major objective of the paper is to place the conflict in the DRC in its historical context by examining the linkage between mineral resources and the prolongation of the conflict, with emphases on the theoretical perspectives on resource-based conflict and the interconnectedness of the major role players that have emerged since 1959. Finally, it will suggest how mineral resources in Africa especially DRC could be a tool of development.

### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The qualitative research method is adopted in order to generate a comprehensive study and address the prolong history of Conflict about

Natural Resources and the Prospect of Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Because it is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin et al. 1991), the case study approach is also adopted (Yin 1984). As a multi-perspective analysis, the researcher is availed of an opportunity to consider not just the voices and perspectives of the actors, but also those of the relevant groups of actors and the interaction between them (Bonolo 2012).

Secondary data was collected from different sources including special publications, periodicals, journals, newspaper articles, books, magazines and Internet sources, which are readily available. Secondary data is heavily relied on because it is difficult to obtain primary data due to its scarcity and/or unavailability. Where they are available, respondents are often unwilling to volunteer information due to the sensitivity of the issues involved.

The Content Analysis Approach as a systematic approach to qualitative data analysis is employed. This is considered appropriate, as it is a process of looking at data from different angles, with a view to identifying keys in the text that will help understand and interpret the raw data (Maree 2008). Comparatively, it entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images and symbolic matter, not necessarily from an author or user's perspective (Krippendorff 2004).

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### **Preamble to Historical Analysis of the Linkage between Mineral Resources and the Prolongation of the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

*'Although we must master science and technology... we need the knowledge of our past and of our cultural attainments if we are to make our own distinctive contributions to world civilization with confidence and success'* (Biobaku 1981).

It will be apt and indeed imperative to begin a historical analysis of the 'natural resources conflict' and the prospect of development in the DRC with a deeper reflection on the above statement and an appreciation of the concept of history and its relevance to the understanding of

the subject matter. Literature has provided a plethora of definitions of history. However, the concept and its meanings are often construed in two senses (Olaniyan 1985). On one hand, it means 'the sum total of human activities in the past' while on the other hand, it may be seen as 'the record of events rather than the events themselves' (Barnes 1963). Barnes's definition coincides with that which appropriately defines history as 'the memory of things said and done' (Becker 1966). However, the definition, which seems similar to the one given by Becker but more comprehensive, is that given by Robinson (as quoted in Barnes 1963) who regards history as 'all we know about everything man [sic] has ever done, or thought, or hoped or felt'. History is 'the memory of man [sic], the way by which man knows himself [sic] and just as man [sic] has his own individual memory, so also does a society have a collective memory' (Olaniyan 1985). Therefore, history as the record of all that human beings have thought and done tells of human glories and tragedies, triumphs and failures, hopes and aspirations, of the creative struggle of people to come to grips with the realities of their environment in the past (Donald 1977; Keenan 1977).

While the paper is not oblivious of the fact that history cannot be utilized in the practical way some hardcore sciences and social sciences do, its relevance and value to the effective understanding of socio-political and economic development of a nation cannot be underestimated. This opinion is in line with that expressed by Nevins (1962) that 'a knowledge of history can sharpen the consciousness of a nation by enabling it to appreciate its link with the past, cherish its continuity and help it chart, on the basis of its experience and hopes, a purposeful course of action to realize its potential and fulfil its historic destiny'. Therefore the historical perspective is important, as it helps people understand the protracted conflict on natural resources and provides insights into how to deal with the socio-political and economic development challenges.

### **Democratic Republic of Congo: Historical Overview**

The DRC has a total landmass of 2,345,410 sq. km and is bordered by nine countries. It is

Africa's third largest country and equals the size of Western Europe. It is arguably the richest in terms of natural resources in sub-Saharan Africa. Unlike Rwanda and Burundi with three ethnic groups each, the DRC is composed of between 250 and 400 ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>. Although little is known about the early history of the DRC, its people had their first contact with Europeans in 1483. In 1819, the Belgians arrived in the Congo under the auspices of the International Association of the Congo. The Belgian king, Leopold II, having discovered the enormous wealth of the Congo, sought to exploit the resources of the area. The 1884-1885 Berlin conference accorded Leopold II the right of ownership of the Congo and in return he granted concessions to European traders and missionaries to exploit the region's wealth. The area was subsequently christened the Congo Free State.

The brutality of Leopold II's rule provoked agitation for reforms and in 1906, the Belgian government took over the administration of the Congo Free State, which it renamed Belgian Congo (Pakenham 1992). It was administered by a colonial trinity (Merriam 1961) composed of the colonial administration, big foreign business and the Roman Catholic Church. The colonial policy of the Belgians was that of benevolent paternalism (Merriam 1961) in which only the physical and material needs of the Congolese were addressed while self and collective actualization and other higher degrees of their needs were ignored. The belief was that "what the Congolese needed was work, money in his pocket, food in his belly, managed education, religion and technical training" (Legum 1972) and not political enlightenment.

At independence in 1960, the administration of the Congo (now the DRC) was handed over to the people with little knowledge about governance. This was to ensure the continuous plundering of the country after independence in order to ensure the maintenance of the status quo, a policy of protracted patronage, which had its roots in colonialism. Any attempt to change the status quo was held in contempt by the Western powers as typified by their complicity in the elimination of Congo's first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, immediately after independence (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2011). Since then, the Congo (now the DRC) has never known real peace.

The Belgians, through the policy of divide and rule, fuelled the divisions within Congolese

society. The policy failed to inculcate in them the worth and importance of political ideas and values, which include accountability, equality, freedom, democracy, constitutionalism, human rights, leadership, justice, representation and responsibility, among others. In some cases, they form the basis of any ideological traditions of a political system. In other words, the Congolese were not sufficiently oriented towards politics and effective democratic governance to form attitudes to their political regime or system, other formal institutions and the basic ideas on which a polity is organized. Colonialism had ensured that the DRC was not satisfactorily integrated as a country, and as expected, the contradictions within the Congo began to manifest immediately after independence. The army, known as the *force publique* mutinied because of their Commander, Lieutenant-General Émile Robert Alphonse Hippolyte Janssen's refusal to see Congolese independence as marking a change in the nature of his command and because of the black soldiers' expectations of rapid promotions and increases in pay which they thought would accompany independence, but were said to be unrealistic (Zeilig 2008).

In addition, Belgian military officers who remained in the country after the termination of colonial rule became part of the military hierarchy, which perpetrated violence in the Congo. These military officers kept their former positions under the colonial rule even after independence, in order to guarantee the continued subjugation of the country. Having deposed the first democratically elected government, the Western powers instituted and maintained the Mobutu regime so that the legacy of protracted patronage could continue. This system of patronage of public office was to guarantee the exploration and expropriation of the country's natural resources and promote its dependence on and marginalization and domination by the Western powers.

On the basis of the above, it has been argued that the Western world 'betrayed' the Congolese as can be seen in the role of the Western powers in the assassination of Lumumba and in the blind support given to the Mobutu regime. Therefore, it is essential to turn to 'these shameful episodes of betrayal' if one is to fully comprehend the crises, both past and present, in the Congo. As argued by Nzogola-Ntalaja (2011):



*Very often, the history of the chaos in the Congo is abridged, that is if it is not completely distorted. The impression created is that the crisis started a few years ago...it is, therefore, imperative that we constantly remind ourselves of that part of Congolese history the international community would like to blot out of its memory (Nzogola-Ntalaja 2011).*

Hence, the present crisis in the DRC stems from the contradictions that the country has had to contend with since colonial times.

### **Natural Resource Wealth, Conflicts and the Roles of Major Actors: The Symmetry**

According to Richard Jackson,<sup>2</sup> there is no way of discerning the ending of Africa's wars without first understanding their origins and motivations (Jackson 2006). While it is clear that most local actors in any African conflict struggle over control and access to natural resources such as water, land or minerals, recent research has revealed the scale to which economic agendas drive many of Africa's wars (Jackson 2006). In many cases, conflict is usually a cover up for the "pursuit of accumulation in the form of direct exploitation of valuable commodities such as diamonds, the monopolization of trade and taxation, the establishment of protection rackets, the diversion of emergency aid or sanctions busting, among others" (Jackson 2006). The actions of the actors involved in the Congo conflict are examples of how conflict can be used as an instrument of exploitation. In 2001, a United Nations team set out to investigate how the parties involved in the war in the DRC had plundered the country's natural resources. A report published earlier that year had argued that economic pillaging had encouraged some nations like Rwanda and Uganda to get involved in the conflict (Hardcastle 2001). Other actors whose interests have contributed to protracted conflicts and the underdevelopment in the DRC are synoptically analyzed below.

#### ***The State***

The state has a crucial role to play in resource and conflict management by ensuring that its citizens are protected, secure and have access to basic needs and services such as food and healthcare. In most instances, state functions are greatly weakened and even maimed during conflicts and thus render the citizens' social contract ineffective. According to John

Katunga<sup>3</sup>, between 1990 and 2000, the Congo experienced severe inflation, a fall in production in manufacturing and agriculture, a collapse of the banking system, increased food prices and investors fleeing to more stable countries (Katunga 2006). He also attests that poaching, logging for fuel and construction, clearing land for agricultural purposes and the diversion of streams for mining all added to the country's failing economy (Katunga 2006). This conclusion and the issues highlighted by Katunga are mere symptoms and evidence of a much larger problem, which is the government's weak hold on the natural resource markets (Katunga 2006) as the issues highlighted above raise significant claims when it comes to the state's role and responsibility especially in a conflict.

The Congo has experienced repeated crises since the first civil war in the 1960s and this is not only because of the involvement of international powers such as the United States and Britain but it also points to what Katunga identifies as a "systematic structural pathology characterized by the inability of state institutions and leaders to mediate the internal and external competing demands on the country" (Katunga 2006). The argument is that the cyclical nature of violence, failure of service delivery and destruction of basic infrastructure are the results of incapacitated state structures (Katunga 2006). National and external forces continue to take advantage of the state's structural inadequacy to control the resources of the country. The state also has an obligation to ensure transparency and accountability in resource exploitation and that ordinary citizens have access to this information as part of their constitutional right (Global Witness 2005). This is not the case in the DRC as corruption, the illegality and ambiguity of some contracts and the insecurity surrounding many mines, inhibit the state from utilizing natural resources to their full potential (Bekoe and Parajon 2007). Politically in response to the crisis, the state has used diplomatic instruments such as the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) comprising of the Lusaka Peace Agreement and subsequent accords with belligerents (Rogier 2006).

#### ***Rebels***

The continual plunder of Congo's natural resources is directly related to the inception and the maintenance of armed conflict (UNHCR 2015). Rebel groups involved in the conflict continue to maintain their war economies through

illegal conduct, the exploitation and illegal trade of natural resources, which results in the deaths of millions of Congolese people. There are various efforts towards putting an end to the crisis. These included the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) convened in 2001 and which the parties involved signed in December 2002, and the Global and Inclusive Accord for the transition in the DRC, which resulted in the formation of the transitional government that was installed in June 2003. None of these agreements have resulted in the end of violence, of economic exploitation or of human rights abuses. There are many rebel leaders, like Laurent Nkunda, that are regarded as a threat to stability in the eastern part of the country (Guardian News 2008; The Star 2008; UNHCR 2015).

The issue of ethnicity is one that cannot be continuously ignored and requires serious attention. There are at least seven currently active armed groups who compete for the control of resources in the DRC. These include the Rally for Congolese Democracy-Goma (RCD-G), the Rally for Congolese Democracy-Liberation Movement (RCD-ML), Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), Mai-Mai, and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Each of these groups is based in a different region of the country (Afoaku 2002; BBC News 2008; Somerville 2002; UNHCR 2015). Their disastrous activities have turned the country into one of the most dangerous places in the region. As a result, Georgette Gagon, the African director of Human Rights Watch, called on the UN and governments in the region to actively work together to arrest LRA leaders wanted by the ICC (Somerville 2002).

### *Multinational Corporations*

The Department for International Development (DFID) claims that Africa has two types of resource-based conflicts: wars of resource scarcity and wars of abundance. Countries whose economies rely on natural resources such as oil and minerals have a large risk of experiencing conflict (DFID 2001). The Congo war is classified as a war of abundance as groups compete for the control of the country's resources. The DFID also recognizes that the private sector

plays a crucial role in wars of abundance as militants depend on the sector's ability to exploit and commercialize the resources (DFID 2001). The Security Council, by adopting Resolution 1756<sup>4</sup> recognizes that there is a specific link between illicit exploitation and the trade of natural resources (Security Council Report 2007). When it comes to issues of trade, there is no way the role that Multinational Corporations (MNCs) play can be avoided or downplayed (International Trade and Investment Policy 2008; SOMO 2015). Multinational corporations have, for instance, taken advantage of the absence of state authority in the mining regions of the DRC and have used that as an opportunity to build alliances with local militias in order to gain access to profitable mines (International Trade and Investment Policy 2008). Local militias in turn use the profits from these relationships with MNCs to fund their operations by buying arms, which they use to maintain their hold over the population. This relationship has fuelled the proliferation of arms and arms trafficking in the country. In this manner, MNCs and the demands of global markets have all contributed to the continuation of the war.

Another problem is that multinational corporations with mining contracts in DRC may not know whether the sale of the contract is made by a rebel group or a representative of the Congolese government (SOMO 2015). In other cases, the reality of multiple layers of ownership leads to contracts being contested (Bekoe and Parajon 2007). For example in 2007, a productive mining site in North Kivu was forced to shut down leaving 3,000 Congolese unemployed, until the ownership of the mine was clarified (Bekoe and Parajon 2007). This is evidence of how a lack of transparency and credibility in MNCs' business transactions affects the local population.

### *Role of Rwanda and Uganda*

The achievement of peace and economic development in the DRC partly depends on regional issues and circumstances. Regional cooperation in the economic, security, social and political areas are of vital importance to the DRC and its neighbors. However, the DRC's neighbors, in particular Rwanda and Uganda, have played key roles in the conflict. Katshung states, "Several interconnected elements shaped con-

licts in the Great Lake region, including the interests of neighboring countries, competition over natural and economic resources concerns over instability and lack of security and ethnic chauvinism” (Katshung 2007).

The allies involved in the conflict use security as the reason for going into the DRC. The Rwandan and the Ugandan governments in particular have emphasized the need to secure their borders (Rutagengwa 2005). They support rebel groups and exploit the country’s resources for their own benefit. Hence, the DRC’s vast amount of natural resources plays a crucial role in determining the motivations behind the interventions in its internal affairs by other countries. There is strong evidence that Rwanda has profited substantially from its involvement in the DRC conflict. Rwanda and Uganda have both become transit points for diamonds and other minerals mined in the DRC and smuggled out of the country illegally (Longman 2002). For instance, Global Witness reports that much of the cassiterite that is extracted in North and South Kivu is exported via Rwanda, much of it unreported and undeclared (Global Witness 2005). Further investigations by Global Witness have also revealed that Rwandan companies listed as importers of Congolese cassiterite do not report any of their imports from the DRC or elsewhere (Global Witness 2005). Apart from economic interests and the desire to eliminate security threats, Rwanda’s involvement in the DRC since 1998 has also been motivated by Rwanda’s interest in democracy, which is, however, very questionable (Global Witness 2005).

In his analysis, John Clark compares Uganda’s involvement in the Congo war to the United States’ involvement in the Vietnam War (Clark 2002). This is an interesting comparison because the US entered the Vietnam War at a time when it was at the height of its power but 15 years later it withdrew in a weakened state. In the same manner, Uganda got involved in the Congo war at a time when it was going through what Clark terms a “national renewal and hope” (Clark 2002). The consequences of its withdrawal are yet to be seen. The Uganda Peoples’ Defense Forces (UPDF) invaded Congo by President Yoweri Museveni’s direct order, which shows Uganda’s involvement at the highest level possible (Clark 2002). Apart from the security issue, it is a known fact that the amount of commodities in the form of natural resources, which leave the DRC

through Uganda, has increased incredibly since late 1996 (Clark 2002). This raises questions about Uganda’s initial motivation for intervening in the war and the continual presence of the UPDF in the DRC (Human Rights Watch 2008). The argument therefore, still remains that Uganda’s invasion of the DRC was to further its own economic interests. In the current crisis, soldiers of the UPDF have committed serious crimes against humanitarian and human rights law including rape, torture, forced displacement and extrajudicial executions (International Trade and Investment Policy 2008). Calls by international and national human rights organizations for all involved parties to halt the violence have fallen on deaf ears.

### Context of the Experienced Crisis

The eruption of the crisis, which has displaced 250,000 people in the region around Goma (BBC News 2008), like other preceding crises, is rooted in the colonial period. One issue that comes to light in this context is the factor of ethnicity. According to Nzongola-Ntalaja, Belgian colonialism was born out of the brutal legacy of primitive wealth accumulation by the Leopold in state and concessionary companies (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2004). The colonialists sought to impose their hegemonic authority through white supremacy and administratively enforced ethnic divisions among Africans (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2004). The Hutu-Tutsi conflict is thus seen as part a product of the implantation of the colonial ideology of racism and paternalism (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2004; Venugopalan 2016). The Belgians’ use of the divide and rule policy encouraged divisions within Congolese society whose effects still reverberate today. Rebel leader, General Laurent Nkunda claims to be fighting to safeguard and protect his Tutsi community from attacks by Rwandan Hutu rebels who fled to the Congo after Rwanda’s 1994 genocide (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2004). The war in the DRC provides an example of the abuse of ethnicity witnessed by the way elements of the government have openly provoked ethnic tensions in the Kivus with the intention of destabilizing the Rwandan controlled areas (DFID 2001).

Much of the fighting that occurred in the east of the country was driven by the desire to control natural resources (Global Witness 2005). Other ordinary Congolese citizens viewed the

conflict as an engineered move by belligerents like the Rwandan Hutu rebels. Their operations thrive in situations of conflict and instability, which keep other competitors like MNCs away from the mineral-rich regions<sup>5</sup>. However, Nzongola-Ntalaja claimed that the major determinant of conflict and instability in the DRC is the decay of the state (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2004). Interestingly, he claimed that, had the DRC maintained a capable and responsible government, it could have stopped the Rwandan genocide of 1994 (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2004). The devastating part of the surge of crisis then is the impact it has on the local population. On the night of October 29, 1994, about 20 civilians, including 5 children, were killed in Goma. Soldiers, who had a mandate to protect civilians, went on a rampage of looting shops, attacking homes, stealing cars and raping women and girls. Despite calls by UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, for countries to send reinforcements for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), no one responded and the MONUC remains unable to protect civilians (Human Rights Watch 2008). The worst of the impact has been felt by the children who are vulnerable and unable to fend for themselves. The UN reports that as fighting continues in the east of the country, children have become the target of recruitments by rebels. Before the surge of violence, an estimated number of 3,000 children were being held by rebel groups, a staggering number that must have serious concerns for the national, regional and international community.

### **Prospects for Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo**

A critical examination of the history of persistent conflicts and failures in its management in DRC shows that the employed conflict management systems have some weaknesses (Fred-Mensah 2003; Olaopa 2001; Olaopa 2010).

As earlier highlighted in this paper, there have been various efforts, strategies and mechanisms put in place towards ending the DRC crisis. All these efforts and strategies remain a myth, as they could not adequately address the root causes of the conflict and solve the problems in the DRC. Apart from mutual suspicion and distrust among the warring parties, there is also the er-

roneous belief that justice in a dispute presupposes arbitration and adjudication. Adjudication, for instance, involves arrests and trials among other activities where the judges sentence the accused to prison terms for the crimes committed, impose fines or execute the offender in order to restore peace and harmony between the warring parties. This makes the peace effort unworkable as the affected party will always feel cheated and remain indifferent to the judgment, hence the axiom, 'no one comes back from the court and becomes friendly'. However, in contrast to the stipulation and insistence of the laws in advanced and modern societies on avenging murder on the convicted murderer by judicial execution, social customs of the so-called simple and traditional societies are basically reconciliatory in spirit and content of such crimes (Olomola 2002). In addition, while the judge in the Western-type court is an independent umpire, the elders in the traditional societies are involved as benevolent neutrals, are more interested in ensuring compromise, amicable settlement and reconciliation of the parties, hence the axiom, 'when there are no elders, the community is ruined' (Ellis 1974).

The paper proposes that the crisis in the DRC can be effectively addressed through a combination of modern and indigenous or traditional methods of conflict management (Domfeh 2007). The use and practice of indigenous knowledge has been proven to be effective in the area of conflict management. The potency of this has been acknowledged by the respective indigenous traditional political institutions in the African pre-colonial societies through oaths taken. In non-literate and traditional societies in Africa, for example, the mediator cuts an indigenous kolanut (*cola acuminata*) with either his thumb or teeth, eats a part and then each party repeats the act (Olomola 2002) as a mark of agreement to the term of settlement. If palm wine or liquor is provided the mediator pours some in a utensil, drinks a portion, and the wine is passed round the concerned parties and the entire audience for a communal drink. Any refusal to drink therefrom is a registration of disapproval and non-acceptance of the reconciliation. (Johnson 1969).

Specifically with indigenous knowledge, African communities can predict the likelihood of conflict and peace from the sight and noise of some birds. Although, this view may lack scientific basis, which is a standard requirement



for an academic work, this limitation notwithstanding, it has been part of Africa's traditional and cultural beliefs, which is highly valued and respected<sup>6</sup>. Most families and households in modern times have abandoned the use of stories, folklores, proverbs, taboos, and myths to promote moral values or acceptable modes of behavior. These are translated into practice through the imposition of "intrinsic sanctions", which could be positive rewards that the people receive when they conform to the approved mode of behavior) or negative (the feeling of moral discomfort that they experience when they default) (Domfeh 2007). These media, which could be positive or negative, extol pacifism and discourage violence that leads to the destruction of lives and properties. They celebrate the great deeds, often selfless, of legendary heroes that are worthy of emulation (Akporobaro 2006). Indigenous knowledge and practices provide insights into the broad ideological foundations of society. For example, indigenous knowledge systems uphold community values, which can be used to address re-distribution problems. Traditional music and poetry are other areas where traditional and indigenous knowledge could be utilized for conflict prevention and management. This is either through praise singing or recitation of ancestral lineage otherwise called 'Oriki' among the Yorubas of southwestern Nigeria, West Africa. It is disheartening that these have been seriously affected and eroded by the process of modernization and globalization.

To make the peace more sustainable and enduring, all stakeholders, particularly the government, must encourage invention, innovation and wealth creation. Specifically, government can encourage local inventors and innovators through special vocational and technical education and training, skill acquisition and development programs, tax holidays and reliefs to encourage added value in the development of the mineral resources. People can be motivated to participate in activities like being goldsmiths, blacksmiths and traditional healers for effective utilization of resources and employment generation.

*Sustained economic growth cannot be achieved through saving or investment, macroeconomic adjustment policy, preferential taxes or subsidies unless these are accompanied by the myriad large and small inventions and discoveries, required creating greater value from natural resources (Vladimir 2002).*

Achieving lasting peace in the DRC is constrained by the proliferation of arms in the country. This is encouraged by the externalization of conflicts, which has done more harm than good in the DRC. As noted, external parties escalate the conflict for selfish interests. External actors support powerful armed groups in return for access to natural resources (Bonolo 2012). For instance, the US benefits through the arms trade and is not likely to give it up. The US should begin not only to monitor more closely all US arms transfers but also to embark on the process of disarmament and stopping the killing in the DRC and neighboring countries (Bob et al. nd). To effectively resolve the issue of arms trading and proliferation, the global community needs to unite to challenge the Western sale of arms and ammunition and promote the awareness of how it severely affects peace and security in the DRC and central Africa (Bob et al. n.d.).

One other important factor that is very critical to sustainable development and enduring peace in DRC is a stable or strong government. It is one of the essential preconditions for economic prosperity and stability. For instance, if embargos are placed on coltan and diamonds, effective enforcement by a recognized and responsible institution is required to better control the activities of those involved the country's mineral exploitation (Bob et al. n.d.).

In order to guarantee the above, it requires selfless and committed leadership with a clear vision. The leadership should place strong emphasis on human resource and capital development. It must be able to mobilize the country's resources aggressively for Research and Development (R&D). It should learn from the experience of industrialized countries of South Korea, Brazil, China, Japan and India. For instance, China is now the industrial powerhouse of the world due to its significant expenditure on R&D, about USD 29.9 Billion, which is 2.9 percent the world's total expenditure on R&D (Siyanbola 2014). Today, China is ranked 30<sup>th</sup> in the Global Competitive Index, 6<sup>th</sup> in publication citations and has 3.2 percent of the world's top 500 universities (NACETEM 2011a, b). A similar scenario exists for South Korea. The country utilized S&T to grow from one of the world's poorest countries to one of its most promising industrial powers in the span of a generation while its R&D allocation is USD 23.6 Billion (2.6 percent of the world's expenditure on R&D) (Siyanbola 2014). South

Korea is number 13 on the Global Competitive Index, number 14 in Scientific Publications and has 1.6 percent of the world's top 500 universities (NACETEM 2011a, b).

Thus with relative peace, a stable government and committed leadership, there will be opportunity for improving democratic governance, accountability, transparent and legal natural resources exploitation, successful elections and constitutional reform and buoyant markets for exports products. Democratic processes and practices have the propensity to maintain political stability in highly complex and highly differentiated or ethnically polarized societies. This can be facilitated through effective diffusion of power, a tendency that is strengthened by the development of a better educated, informed and more politically sophisticated citizenry. The way and manner by which democracy and democratic governance can contribute to peace and development in any society, the DRC inclusive, can be inferred from the advantages that have been claimed for democracy as put into perspectives below by Heywood (2000):

*Democracy protects the individual from the government, and so defends freedom, by ensuring that power is constrained and subject to popular consent. It promotes education and personal development by allowing citizens, through popular participation, to gain insight into how their society operates, it strengthens community and social solidarity by giving all people a stake in society by virtue of having a voice in its decision-making processes, it widens social and personal wellbeing by ensuring that government policies reflect the interests of citizens at large, and guarantees political stability by bringing the 'outputs' of government into line with popular 'inputs', so generating equilibrium.*

Unrest in the DRC is related to economic disparity and extreme poverty. The most effective way to deal with these challenges is effective empowerment programs, pro-poor programs. Problems created by the alienation of natural resources-endowed communities' could be resolved by active community involvement in decisions regarding the mining of natural resources. This will ensure that the wealth derived from natural resources is utilized not only for national development but also to enhance community

development (Bonolo 2012). This is important because communities bear the social and environmental consequences and therefore need to benefit immensely from the proceeds. The challenges posed by the problem of ethnicity can be resolved through effective policy that enhances better representation and efficient distribution of social, economic and political benefits. The country, given its similar nature to Nigeria, can adopt and adapt the implementation of federal character and quota system policy. This policy is about spreading and distributing the social, political and economic benefits of the country among the various ethnic groups that comprise the country without any lopsidedness. This will assist in reducing the level of grievance and armed conflicts in the country.

## CONCLUSION

Conflict is a part of life and of common or frequent occurrence in society. Its effective management and containment are vehicles of social and political change and development in the life of persons and institutions. Also, the crisis in Congo can only be understood fully within the context of its history and the fight for the controlling rights over its rich natural resources. It is also clear that the existence of natural resources in the state acts as an incentive for third parties to encourage civil conflicts and hence the reason for the escalation and continuation of the civil war in the Congo. Natural resources also act as finance for rebellion and in this case for the many rebel groups involved in the Congo crisis. The state's weak presence in the rich eastern part of the country has provided opportunities for many rebel groups and multinational corporations to take advantage and start trading amongst them and transporting much of DRC's wealth out of the country through neighboring states such as Rwanda and Uganda. However, an historical examination of the crisis in the country shows the persistent of the conflicts and failures in its management. The implication is that the employed conflict management systems have some weaknesses. In this situation therefore, persistent and prevalent violence, insecurity and poverty will make people vulnerable to various challenges including socio-economic and political problems. It is on this note that the study that indigenous knowledge and practices, in combination with modern approach-

es, should be deployed in the resolution of conflict and management of resources in the DRC for sustainable peace and citizens' empowerment.

### NOTES

1. See Zaire, a country study, Area Handbook Series, (Washington, DC: The American university, 1979), P.118; and "Whither the DRC? Causes of the conflict in the Democratic republic of Congo and the way forward" <http://www.cps.org.za>
2. Richard is a lecturer in International Politics in the Department of Government and International Politics at the University of Manchester.
3. John Katunga is senior advisor for the East Africa Region for Catholic Relief Services.
4. Resolution 1756 was adopted on 15 May 2007 and it renewed MONUC's mandate, recognised the link between natural resources and conflict in the DRC and it also urged the government to extend its authority and improve the transparent management of those resources.
5. Interview with *Wayumba Prince Pauni*, Congolese Student at Monash University.
6. The presence of bats in Ile-Ife, particularly at the Obafemi Awolowo University is a sign of peace. Any time there is crisis, be it student demonstration or war, most especially during the Ife/Modakeeke communal clash, the bats fled the area throughout the four (4) years of the war and later came back gradually as peace returns. In addition, there is also a bird called 'Koowe'. The bird does not just crow or make any noise unless a death occurs. The significance of this can be appreciated by watching a Yoruba film titled 'Efunsetan Aniwura' a strong and rich woman who was the 'Iyalode of Ibadan Land of southwest Nigeria.

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