

Special Political Committee

*“The maintenance of political stability
in DR Congo”*

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Context & Historical Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo, previously known as Zaire, became officially independent from Belgium on 30 June 1960 in a period of massive decolonization. While Congo's abundance of natural resources hinted towards promising and strong prospects, its path towards development was significantly marred by years of political instability that had far-reaching consequences on the Congolese people.

Largely, Mobutu Sese Seko's dictatorship spanning from 1965 to 1997 created an unfavourable climate for growth as corruption, human rights violations and ethnic clashes had become rife in the nation. In particular, internal disputes within the Tutsi ethnic group were gradually becoming a growing threat to Congo's military and political stability, climaxing in 1996 with the invasion of Tutsi-ruled Rwanda which began the First Congo War. The latter put an end to Mobutu's 32 years reign and while most thought this would establish a more adept and effective government, things only worsened. Subsequently, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, a leader of Tutsi forces from the province of South Kivu, accessed to presidency. Rising tensions between President Kabila and the Rwandan and Tutsi diasporas in the country sparked the Second Congo War from 1998 to 2003. Still today, the latter has become a strong and marking reminder of Congo's blood stained past as its deaths culminated to 5.4 million people and involved nine african countries and around twenty armed groups.

After President Kabila was assassinated by one of his bodyguards on 16 January 2001, his son, Joseph Kabila, took office as President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and remains the incumbent president. The DRC is still today recovering from this series of conflicts that ripped it apart and consequently, still searching for peace and stability. Since 2001, Kabila's presidency has been shaken multiple times but has succeeded to stay on top of the government by being officially elected in 2006 and 2011. However, the results of the latter were disputed by international monitors and the opposition, adding to the unrest that was already widespread in the country.

In recent years, political instability was exacerbated even more as military militias such as the M-23 rebel movement and the Mai Mai, became increasingly active. According to the

United Nations, the Mai Mai killed more than 70 civilians in east of country in February 2014. Moreover, tensions between Congolese and Rwandan troops also intensified, clashing June 2014 on the border of their two countries. Political repressions have also become prevalent as protests against executive, legislative and parliamentary decisions were stifled through mass murder, notably in January 2015 and December 2016. Even this year, the UN claims that 2000 people were murdered in ethnically-inspired violence in the Kasai province, revealing little progress in putting an end to the racial tensions that have ushered Congo in so many devastating conflicts in the 1990s.

To view the full timeline, visit:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13286306>

Today, despite numerous protests against Joseph Kabila's legitimacy as Congo's President, the latter has still achieved to remain in office. This persistence is now widely referred to as "le glissement", meaning slippage, because of the many instances in which President Kabila has deliberately delayed elections, under the pretext that the widespread insecurity and instability did not make up a proper environment for such a major democratic process. However, although the argument might have seemed valid at first, Kabila's announcement of a new government in May 2017, that did not show any significant improvement on the previous ones, thus threatening Congo's already fragile political stability and setting ideal conditions to continue to push back elections, does not bode well for Congo's political climate's future. A vicious cycle has therefore been established, as the more Kabila's actions and policies destabilise the country, the more he can stall the democratic process and thus consolidate his rule.

It is therefore imperative to restore democratic legitimacy in the Democratic Republic of Congo, as the latter keeps fueling internal conflicts and tensions that displace 4600 people every day. Moreover, political stability is crucial in terms of peacekeeping as President Kabila's persistence and constant delays are fundamentally the reason behind Congo's growing turmoil. In order to prevent utter and complete collapse, political stability is therefore key.

United Nations Involvement

The UN had a significantly large influence on recent Congolese developments in an effort to stabilize the political and military vagaries of the DRC.

The situation in Congo in the late 1990s was so dire that a specialized committee was set in place by the UN. This committee — formally known as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo or MONUSCO, acronym based on its french name *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en république démocratique du Congo* — was established in order to monitor the peace process of the Second Congo War. It has notably manifested itself by deploying troops in the country, thus protecting them from the multiple threats emanating from the numerous militias operating there.

Moreover, the Security Council also had an important role in the matter as it intervened several times to denounce and put an end to the waves of violence that have plagued the country through the years. Thus, it is consistently cooperating with MONUSCO to coordinate the peacekeeping process in DRC.

Different Perspectives

DRC:

- The current Congo President keeps delaying elections under the pretext that a democratic process would bring about unsuitable changes in the government because of the widespread insecurity and chaos in the country.

United States:

- President Donald Trump has asked President Kabila to respect democratic norms

- The United States also threatened to impose further targeted unilateral sanctions on anyone who hinders Democratic Republic of Congo's already delayed preparations for an election to replace President Joseph Kabila.

Angola :

- Sees the DRC “at the top of (its) foreign-policy priorities”, according to Stephanie Wolters of the Institute of Security Studies, a think-tank in South Africa
- Angola has helped President Kabila stay in power by pressing him to negotiate a power-sharing deal with the opposition
- However, its support is wearing thin, as Kabila’s delays have reached unreasonable extents.

South Africa:

- Of the many regional neighbors of Congo, South Africa is probably the best prepared and inclined to play a stabilising role.
- The country contributes around 13,000 troops to MONUSCO and has spent at least \$1 billion in development assistance in the DRC as part of its South-South Cooperation.
- Today, the two countries hold regular bi-national commissions to maintain close cooperation. President Jacob Zuma is also believed to have a close relationship with President Kabila. For these reasons, South Africa is often pointed to as a possible catalyst for an inclusive political settlement in the DRC.

Key Terms & Phrases

- Peacekeeping
- Monusco
- Military militia
- Political stabilisation
- “Slippage”
- Kleptocracy

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