

NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONFLICT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC): THE FAILURE OF POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Historically, resources in the DRC have either been the reason for conflict, or the means to maintain it, and yet they have been largely neglected in peace agreements and post-conflict reconstruction. Although this report acknowledges the need for a holistic approach to post-conflict reconstruction (PCR), it will focus specifically on the disregarded topic of natural resources and the impact they have had on political, social and economic development.

Copious mineral deposits have yielded massive resource rents which have proved irresistible to the political elite who have spent the best part of the funds on retaining political control and maintaining a fairly ineffective national army. The centralisation of resource rent has meant that social development has been side-lined. Compared to elite and military funding, the social sector received next to nothing. This has resulted in poor human and physical capital unable to support a 21st century developing economy. The combination of insecurity, poverty and a lack of alternatives provides the youth with little alternative but to join rebel groups.

The structural failure of peace agreements and regional PCR frameworks to recognise the impact of uncontrolled resources continues to hamper the peace process in the region.

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is an example of perhaps one of the worst humanitarian disasters on the African continent. The DRC has endured a long history of violence and misery stretching back to the horrific Belgian colonial rule of Leopold II and continuing to this day. The conflict and the actors may have changed over time, but the situation in the DRC requires serious and prompt attention.

There have been several attempts at peace brokering in the DRC, all of which have been relatively unsuccessful. This report examines one of the more recent attempts at reconciliation in the DRC. The Pretoria Agreement, signed on 17 December 2002, was intended to facilitate the transition of the militaristic country into a democracy and end the conflict (IFHR 2008: 5). Eight years after the signing of the Pretoria Agreement the conflict and general instability in the DRC continues.

Conflict in the DRC is highly complex involving myriads of actors and issues and, as such, any potential resolution will have to be a holistic one wherein all the relevant aspects of the conflict are considered. Following a peace agreement, such as the 2002 Pretoria Agreement, a post-conflict reconstruction strategy should essentially be followed to avoid a relapse into conflict. The African Union (AU), through the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD,) has adopted a framework to deal with issues of post-conflict reconstruction.

Historically, resources in the DRC have either been the reason for fighting or the means to maintain it, and yet they have been largely neglected in peace agreements and post-conflict reconstruction. Although it is acknowledged that a holistic approach is needed, this report focuses specifically on the topic of natural resources and the impact they have had on political, social and economic development.

A brief overview of the conflict in the DRC will show the impact that natural resources exerted on development and conflict in the DRC. Following on from this will be an analysis of the Pretoria Agreement discussing the objectives of the document and whether or not they have been met. The report will also cover the role of the AU/NEPAD PCR framework in the DRC. The aim of the analysis is ultimately to identify the strengths and weaknesses in current PCR strategies proposed with the objective of ameliorating future conflict prevention strategies in DRC and in Africa as a whole.

CONFLICT BUILDING UP TO 2002

The DRC has a long history of instability and underdevelopment that began under brutal Belgian colonial rule. In 1960 the Congo gained its independence and Patrice Lumumba became the country's first democratically elected president. The peace and hope envisaged was brief as the new democratic leader was assassinated in 1961. Mobutu Sese Seko seized power through a military coup and promptly began to exploit the rich resources of the Congo for the enrichment of his own ethnic kin. This pattern of exploitative rule continued under Laurent Kabila and his son who succeeded him (Todd 2006).

Two events that occurred during the 1990s are believed to have ignited the civil conflict in the country.

The Rwandan genocide in 1994 had massive spillover effects on the DRC. Many Hutu Rwandans fled their country to the DRC fearing reprisal by persecuted Tutsi groups (Guenther 2008: 352).

The second major event or chain of events believed to have caused civil strife in the DRC is the manner in which Laurent Kabila came to power in 1997. Movements in Eastern DRC formed a single force and took over most of the country. Kabila financed this rebellion primarily through gold smuggling (Guenther 2008: 352). The military effort also enlisted the aid of Ugandan and Rwandan troops (Todd 2006). When Kabila attempted to decrease dependency on Uganda and Rwanda by 1998, the forces from the respective countries started supporting rebel groups in Eastern DRC.

The Ugandan border with the DRC and much of the Eastern region of the DRC is particularly rich in minerals. During the 1990s rebel groups from neighbouring states exploited the instability in the country. It is estimated that 40 tons of gold (equivalent to \$1.4 billion) is smuggled out of the DRC annually via Uganda and Burundi destined for states such as the United Arab Emirates (Wadhams 2009).

Nkurunizira (2008:1) defines civil war as “an internal violent conflict between a sitting government and a rebel organisation where at least 1000 people are killed in combat related violence, with at least five percent of the casualties incurred on each side”. The civil conflict during the 1990s and into the 21st century is believed to have cost somewhere between two to three million lives (Todd 2006). These figures clearly indicated that there is civil war in the DRC. Much of the strife stems from the rich natural resources the DRC possesses. A great deal of the conflict occurring in North and South Kivu centres around gaining and maintaining resource wealth which has severe implications for economic development and subsequently, political stability.

RELIANCE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

Elbawadi and Sabanis identify three major causes of civil war in Africa: Firstly, the high dependence on natural resources; secondly, low levels of education; and thirdly the poor level of governance (Nkurunizira 2008:10).

The economy of the DRC is characterised by a reliance on raw materials with very little diversification of goods produced and exported. The DRC’s main exports are cobalt, copper, crude oil and diamonds, and the domestic GDP is derived largely from agriculture, forestry and mining (EIU 2010: 6). These problems are certainly compounded by a lack of organisation, infrastructure and management.

Mobutu and Kabila both gained political power through military force (Todd 2006), and like other states which have endured military coups, there was an unsurprising increase in the amount of state resources allocated to the military (Thomson 2004: 131). The financing of the war in the DRC is accomplished using various techniques depending on the circumstances and the actors involved in a particular transaction. It is possible to purchase arms through direct payments, but prevalent in the DRC is a barter type transaction. For example, arms are given to a party in return for mining concessions (UN report 2001).

The quick exchange of arms for diamonds and other minerals have a severe and crippling effect on the long-term economic growth of the DRC. The resources accrued from the sale

of minerals are diverted immediately to the military budget, which means that there is insufficient tax revenue to support socio-economic growth strategies (UN report 2001). An estimated two to three thirds of the revenue from the 'Societeminiere de Bakwanga' and 'Generale des carriers et des mines' go directly into financing salaries and bonuses for soldiers (UN report 2001).

This increase in military spending was done to the detriment of social spending, for example, education, healthcare and infrastructure. The decline in service delivery in these sectors has knock-on effects that further compound the problems that created tension in the first place.

Although an increase in living standards and a diverse economy are able to decrease the risk of conflict, it should be noted that this sort of progress is highly incremental and reliant on strong political institutions and a stable environment (Elbadawi & Sambanis 2000: 260). Therefore, it is again necessary to stress a holistic approach when formulating PCR strategies.

The practice of centralisation has had negative implications on the formation of a healthy and progressive political system. Centralised states have, for instance, sought to 'neutralize' political opposition. The one-party state then seeks to manipulate power within the state with the executive by-passing peripheral institutions such as parliaments, local government and judicial restraints in order to best serve the party elite (Thomson 2004:102).

Countries emerging from a civil war are often faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges and the longer the civil war the worse the damage tends to be in terms of socio-economic development. In the case of the DRC, the country has inherited a ravaged economy with depleted physical and human capital. The diversion of resources which should have accrued to the state have been diverted to 'non-productive activities' (Nkuruniziza 2008:9).

THE IMPACT OF YEARS OF RESOURCE-BASED CIVIL CONFLICT

PCR strategies need to adopt a holistic approach. Although this report focuses on the impact of natural resources on the PCR process in the DRC, it would be impossible to fully understand the problems this aspect the PCR process faces without placing it in context. An economy needs a stable political environment and a good level of human capital to function. Resources have stunted development in all areas of the DRC. This section briefly describes the context of the DRC and its developmental shortfalls before examining whether or not (or rather where) the Pretoria Agreement failed the DRC.

POLITICAL ASPECTS

The weak political institutions have serious implications for both economic growth and sustainable and social development. The reliance on natural resources has often been coupled with elite accumulation and the DRC is no exception. Often the massive wealth

generated from the export of natural resources is amassed by the group in power and distributed among party loyalists in a bid to maintain control of political and economic power. "This political weakness at the centre has allowed military conflicts to fester on the periphery" (International Crisis Group 2005). This created tension from marginalised groups who have not benefited as they ought to have from the natural resource wealth of the country.

Yartey asserts that "weak institutions and corruption along with primary commodity dependence are correlated with civil war in Africa" (Guenther 2008: 349). Due to the fact that both the Kabila and Mobutu regimes all benefited personally and within their elite groupings from resource exploitation, no serious attempt has been made to reform institutions.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

African states have a strong reliance on natural resources. The interesting point made by Guenther is that minerals are linked not only to the outbreak of conflict but also its duration (Guenther 2008: 354). For decades this has been the case in the DRC. Laurent Kabila came to power financed by gold smuggling. Since then, rebel groups have also used minerals to fund their battles. The mineral rich Eastern region of the DRC is rife with rebel groups from the DRC as well as neighbouring states.

Population growth has led to increased commercial agriculture and therefore associated competition for land. Without proper management of resources this is a time bomb. Whether farming or livestock is considered subsistence or commercial, there is no denying that land and water form an integral part of the livelihoods of the majority of African populations. In the DRC this topic is largely ignored as the country is popularly considered fertile with abundant resources, but in reality the displacement of millions of people, as a product of conflict, results in overcrowding in certain areas.

SOCIAL ASPECTS

There has been an unprecedented increase in population which has not been accompanied by equal growth in social development. Consequently, there are huge numbers of people without access to education, healthcare and food (UN HDI 2010). Lack of basic necessities has encouraged involvement in conflict. Youth in many parts of Africa feel they have nothing to lose by joining some form of rebel group or militia – some sense of power is preferable to none at all.

The human cost of conflict includes famine, death, malnutrition and displacement – to name a few (Guenther 2008: 354). The displacement of millions of people during conflict results in overcrowding in areas considered to be safe. This perception is often erroneous, as groups of local inhabitants and refugees or displaced persons compete for scarce resources elsewhere. Serious issues such as over-grazing, deforestation and water pollution arise in situations of sustained and prolonged conflict – causing more conflict.

THE 2002 PRETORIA AGREEMENT

Collier and Hoeffler (1998) argue that the fact that a state has endured a civil war at some point in the past increases the probability of future civil wars. To avoid possible regression to civil war it was essential that the Pretoria Agreement dealt with the root causes of the DRC conflict.

The year 2002 was fairly eventful for the DRC as far as peace agreements go. From the brief overview of the conflict, it is evident that there are many catalysts to instability in the country. Although the DRC is not at war with Rwanda, Burundi or Uganda, a number of groups from these states are implicated in the DRC conflict. In July 2002 the DRC and Rwanda presidents signed a peace deal wherein Rwanda agreed to withdraw its troops and in return, the Congolese agreed to arrest armed Hutu rebels believed to be part of the 1994 Rwandan genocide (BBC 2010). In September 2002 another peace deal was signed, this time between the DRC and Uganda. The Ugandan government also agreed to withdraw its troops from the DRC (BBC 2010). These agreements were viewed as positive steps towards regional peace.

Eventually, on 17 December 2002, the DRC government signed a peace agreement with the main rebel groups within the country. The peace agreement was also signed in Pretoria, South Africa. The primary objectives of the 2002 Pretoria Agreement were: the adoption of a ceasefire; the creation of a unified army; disengagement of foreign forces; the organisation of free and fair elections; and respect for human rights (IFHR 2008: 5).

The Pretoria Agreement was based on a four-plus-one formula, meaning that President Kaila would retain his position in an interim government, and four representatives of rebel movements during the war would be appointed as vice-presidents. The four vice-presidents were each tasked with a commission: The Political, Defence and Security Commission was allotted to Mr. Azarias Ruberwa from the RCD; the Economic and Financial Commission was assigned to Mr. Jean Pierre Bemba from the MLC; the Social and Cultural Commission was allocated to the political opposition and civil society under the leadership of Mr. Z'Haide Ngoma; and lastly the Reconstruction and Development Commission was assigned to Mr. Abdoulay Ndombasi Yerodia who represented the government (Mpango 2004). This strategy was designed to give all warring factions power at a national level and thereby ensure development of all groups within the DRC.

Congolese Ambassador, Juma-Alfani Mpango, notes that the primary aims expressed by government during the transition were: the reunification of the country; the restoration of the national economic fibre which was, to a large extent, destroyed by war; the creation of a legal framework for securing investments; reduction in poverty; and the organisation, within two years, of free, democratic and transparent elections (Mpango 2004).

MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF THE PRETORIA AGREEMENT

Almost eight years after the Pretoria Agreement not much has changed. Let us examine the impact of resource wealth and conflict in the DRC and the shortfalls of this agreement in respect of the political, economic and social aspects.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS POST-2002

One of the core problems facing post-conflict reconstruction in the DRC is the quality of peace agreements. Sadiki Koko phrases this problem aptly: “parties to African conflicts themselves hardly agree to talk and solve their differences. In most cases, the facilitation teams find themselves not only dictating the terms of negotiation to parties, but also ‘imposing’ the outcome, with or without clear agreement between them. This situation partly explains why African peace processes fail to address the core issues of the conflict, that is, the root causes, and simply fail in many cases” (Koko 2007).

The first step of the agreement was the adoption of a ceasefire, followed by the disarmament of rebel groups and the creation of a unified national army. Although this step is necessary in order to create a stable environment for economic growth, the objective is entirely unrealistic when considering the goals of the various rebel groups in the DRC. There remain a substantial number of Rwandan Hutu forces that pose a danger to the safety and security of Congolese groups predominantly in North and South Kivu. The other major problem, once again related to the lack of government support, is that banditry is rife and there is no alternative means of protection. The peace agreement did not take into consideration the reason why groups on the ground believe they needed arms. Laurent Nkunda’s rebel forces, for example, still deem it necessary to protect Tutsis in the area from Hutu militias (IFHR 2008).

The Pretoria Agreement’s one-plus-four model was designed to give all parties representation at a national level and thus create a system where compromise would achieve a democratic consensus on development. Koko’s gripe with the PCR system seems valid in the case of the DRC, as Lilly notes that the one-plus-four formula is considered to have been unsuccessful as all the leaders were inflexible which led to fiefdoms (Lilly 2005: 371).

Each party was concerned with ensuring that their respective parties got a piece of the wealth rather than focusing on how to develop the country as a whole.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS POST-2002

The DRC has shown a positive real GDP growth rate over the past few years: In 2005 the rate was 6.5% which remained fairly constant until it dropped dramatically to 2.7% in 2009 as a result of the global economic crisis (The Economist 2010). The positive growth rate seems to be indicative of a thriving new developing economy. A closer look at economic growth does however suggest that it is not necessarily stable. The DRC’s exports comprise: 38.3% cobalt; 35.4% copper; 11.9% crude oil; and 10.7% diamonds (The

Economist 2010). These statistics illuminate the DRC's heavy economic growth reliance on the country's rich mineral deposits. The fact that the DRC's economy remains as dependent on natural resources as it was a decade ago begs the question whether the government is serious about its goal of poverty reduction – as stated in the Pretoria Agreement.

Collier in Guenther (2008) notes that although there are many causes of civil strife ranging from ethnic polarisation to religious factionalism, “the intensity and duration of civil conflict is influenced (Guenther 2008: 348). The government has been unable to clamp down on rebel groups in the Eastern regions of the country who sustain warfare through illegal resource exploitation. A point also worth considering is that the government has failed to provide these groups with an alternative source of income and security.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS POST-2002

The United Nations Human Development Index (UN HDI) measures the level of human development, which is useful when examining whether or not any of the visible economic growth translated into positive developments for the Congolese people.

The first dimension of the HDI is the measure of life expectancy and wellbeing. The index shows that the average life expectancy in the DRC is 47.6 years. This low average life expectancy is indicative of the years of conflict endured in the DRC, many dying directly as a result of conflict, or from indirect causes such as malnutrition and disease. The second dimension looks at education. The average adult literacy rate is 67.2%, not a particularly good score, but what is more alarming is that the gross school enrolment is 48.2%. This trend could lead to a drop in literacy rates. The last dimension of the HDI is the GDP PPP (Gross Domestic Product Purchasing Power Parity). The GDP PPP of 298 in suggests a relatively poor standard of living in the country (UN HDI 2010). It also confirms that the wealth generated in the country is not equally distributed amongst the people.

The conflict in the DRC displaced millions of people. In 2009 a joint DRC-Rwanda military operation to dismantle the FDLR troops in North Kivu and later in South Kivu led to a renewed wave of displaced people estimated at approximately two million... Although cooperation between Rwanda and the DRC to curb rebel conflict is a positive step, again it is important to emphasise the enormous impact these displacements have on social development. Many who are able to return home are unable to access services and economic opportunities (Refugees International 2010).

THE AU/NEPAD COST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION FRAMEWORK

The AU/NEPAD PCR framework was developed in 2005, three years after the Pretoria Agreement was signed. Could the situation in the DRC have been different had this document been in place?

The AU/NEPAD framework defines PCR as “a complex system that provides for simultaneous short-, medium- and long-term programmes to prevent disputes from escalating, avoid a relapse into violent conflict, and to build and consolidate sustainable peace” (NEPAD 2005).

The importance of an AU framework or strategy to deal with post-conflict reconstruction should not be understated. The strategy adopted by the AU should, according to Murithi, “ensure that it promotes, measures and proposes the establishment of institutions that will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (Murithi, 2006).

The primary goals of the AU/NEPAD PCR framework are: security; political transition, governance and participation; socio-economic developments; human rights, justice and reconciliation; and coordination, management and resource mobilization. The document highlights the importance of linking the various dimensions and states that each conflict is unique and context specific (NEPAD 2005: 8).

The AU/NEPAD PCR strategy is structured around three broad phases: the emergency phase; the transitional phase; and the developmental phase. The emergency phase occurs directly after the end of conflict and focuses on establishing a safe and secure environment with emergency response such as relief programs. This phase generally lasts 90 days to a year with a wide range of both internal and external involvement (NEPAD 2005). In the DRC, this period would have been directly after the Pretoria Agreement of 2002. At the time, Rwandan and Ugandan troops withdrew from the Eastern DRC and there was an attempt to disarm rebel groups.

The transitional phase culminated in the 2006 elections with president Joseph Kabila democratically elected. The transitional phase of PCR involves the building of a legal system and processes for reconciliation and the monitoring of human rights. A new constitution, agreed upon by former warring parties, was adopted in the DRC (BBC 2010).

The last of the three phased approach to PCR, the developmental phase, is perhaps the most important as it is the most time consuming and costly but often the most neglected. This phase has perhaps been unsuccessful in the DRC because the country appears unable to consolidate the goals set out in the first two phases of the strategy.

The objectives detailed in the developmental phase of the PCR framework include: consolidating local capacity; consolidating political institutions and participatory processes; institutionalising long-term developmental programs; establishing a functional legal system based on accepted international norms; and the development of internal sustainable processes and capacity for cooperation (NEPAD 2005: 8).

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE AU/NEPAD FRAMEWORK

The AU/NEPAD framework positively identifies a natural relationship between peace, security and development as it acknowledges that sustainable development must be a holistic process. However, it is very much all talk and no results for the DRC. The AU/NEPAD framework adopts a three phased strategy of PCR, meaning that development issues are placed on the back burner while the country grapples with security issues and creating stability. Admittedly, development would be troublesome in an unstable environment, but simultaneously, the indefinite shelving of social development results in a decrease in human capital and thus a decrease in opportunity cost involved in conflict.

The impact of regional instability has been discussed in the overview on conflict, but the provision made for this serious issue in the AU/NEPAD framework has been grossly neglected. The framework recognises the fact that conflict in Africa is interlinked and that the states involved should cooperate to end hostilities. The framework suggests that “Country specific post-conflict reconstruction systems need to seek synergy with neighbouring systems to ensure coherence across regional conflict systems” (NEPAD 2005: 17). This states the obvious but offers no specific direction on how this will be achieved.

The issue of gender is not pointedly addressed or covered in sufficient detail. If the framework does not adequately deal with gender issues it essentially sidelines half the African population. Gender is vital to socio-economic development.

The framework discusses ‘ownership’ of peace processes as an important aspect in combating conflict, and yet the document fails to provide a clear institutional interface, beyond various forums, for civil society to discuss issues (Murithi). There is no explanation of how civil society will function alongside AU/NEPAD to coordinate PCR efforts on the ground (Murithi).

SUGGESTIONS FOR POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION IN THE DRC

The DRC is a wealthy state in terms of minerals and natural resources yet this rich natural wealth has not translated into peace and stability or economic growth for the country. This section will consider the attempts made by the Pretoria Agreement at peace brokering as well as the AU framework for PCR in a bid to improve future strategies.

MAKE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT A PRIORITY

Shadowy resource traders, smugglers, corrupt local officials, arms dealers, transport operators and mercenaries all fall under what the Global Policy Forum term the “dark side of natural resources” (Global Policy Forum 2005). The DRC is a most unfortunate example of the so-called ‘dark side to natural resources’.

Irrespective of its rich mineral deposits, plentiful water supply and fertile land the life expectancy of the average Congolese does not exceed 50 years (UN HDI 2010). Every

year thousands of people die of malnutrition and disease. Of course, one cannot downplay the impact of direct conflict, but the management of resources must become a priority in the DRC.

The Kassem report identified regional players as well as major Western companies as “looting the DRC” (ISS 2002: 10). Control of these individuals would require a good level of cooperation between the AU and the UN as well as the various countries involved. There was no reference to this in either the Pretoria Agreement or the AU/NEPAD framework. The 2008 UN report suggests that countless tonnes of coltan continue to be exported to Europe every month (Totolo 2009). Goods are illegally channelled through complex rebel group networks to neighbouring states and finally to Eastern or Western states.

Totolo (2009) suggest that in order to combat this practice, it is crucial to implement legitimate certification of goods.

FOCUS ON BUILDING HUMAN CAPITAL

The reconstruction of human capital is essential for a post-conflict state. Millions were bereft of appropriate skills or education because of years of civil war which weakened the labour force and essentially stunted economic growth (Nkurunziza 2008: 10). As discussed, the extensive reliance on natural resources as a means to sustain a modern economy contributes to conflict. With the DRC so heavily reliant on mineral deposits, parties exploit as much of this mineral wealth as possible and expend little energy on developing alternative sources of income.

Much of the problem relates back to the centralised and self-seeking government with its weak institutions. The rent accrued from resource exports have been distributed amongst the elite, party loyalists and the military with a pittance going towards social development.

The old adage ‘guns don’t make war, people do’ should be kept in mind in the DRC. A nation with no skills is a nation with few options. Therefore it is suggested that funds be redirected from military to social spending.

FOCUS ON BUILDING PHYSICAL CAPITAL

Physical capital growth entails rebuilding infrastructure; this reduces the cost of doing business in a state. Roads, railways, banks are in ruin after years of civil war. Emphasis needs to be placed on reconstructing infrastructure. At present poor infrastructure translates into high production and transaction costs lowering the probability of international and domestic investment (Nkurunziza 2008: 10).

Resources should be reallocated to productive activity. During a civil war there is often a great deal of a state’s resources redirected to the military. In many post-conflict states the challenge has been to reallocate funds, previously used for military purposes, towards rebuilding. Conflict implies instability, and instability is incompatible with saving and

investment (Nkuruniziza 2008: 12). Without investment in the country it would be difficult for the DRC to diversify its economy.

In September 2007, two lucrative deals were signed with China. The first entails a \$3 billion loan to the DRC destined for railway construction, 31 hospitals, 145 health centres, 2 universities and 5000 low cost houses. The second is aimed at revamping the mining infrastructure. The DRC's side of the deal involves – no surprises – mining concessions for the Chinese. These deals will result in an increased output in mining and forestry (EIU 2007:16). From a distance these deals appear to be just the sort of investment that the DRC requires to pull itself out of poverty and instability. A closer inspection reveals that increased cooperation has been accompanied by more Chinese arms entering the country (EIU 2007: 16). China also has a sketchy environmental reputation and the danger is that China's involvement in the DRC could result in long-term environmental degradation. Therefore, it would be wise to closely monitor the involvement of external players in the DRC, however benevolent they may initially appear, because there is a growing global appetite for mineral wealth.

DISARMAMENT WITH ALTERNATIVES

The second vital requirement for post-conflict states identified by Nkuruniziza is the reduction in criminal violence, including the demobilisation and disarmament of combatants (Nkuruniziza 2008: 10).

The rebels in the North and South Kivu have not disarmed because weapons are used to protect resources. "Voluntary disarmament cannot work without the creation of alternative livelihoods" (ISS 2002: 16). A further problem is that rebel groups such as Nkunda's forces feel it necessary to shield the Tutsi tribe in the area against Hutu rebels (IFHR 2008: 6). Government must provide adequate security for all ethnic groups. The situation according to the 2001 UN report is that "business has superseded security concerns" (UN 2001). The business and the security concerns expressed by groups need to be taken more seriously in peace agreement and PCR frameworks.

GRASSROOTS COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Given Africa's diverse social structure it is recommended that democratic institutions are specifically designed to provide adequate political representation to all groups within the country. Political institutions provide a peaceful medium to resolve discord (Elbadawi and Sabanis 2000: 260).

In many post conflict situations the whole world watches the CNN or BBC coverage of the signing of a peace deal, such as the one signed in Pretoria in 2002, but the people on the ground are oblivious and carry on with business as usual. The government needs to ensure that there is increased access to information by the local populace. The Pretoria agreement failed to deal with specific issues in the eastern DRC. Major ethnic disputes in the region caused a general sense of insecurity (ISS 2002). The Lusaka agreement grouped all rebel factions together into a groups it called the 'negative forces'. To speak of

rebel groups in this way assumes that all these groups have the same agenda. This form of over-simplification is what the ISS terms an obstruction to peace (ISS 2002). A clearer channel of communication needs to be opened between factions as well as those parties involved in peace building and reconstruction processes.

A SPECIFIC PLAN OF ACTION FOR REGIONAL ISSUES

It must be noted that the frameworks created by the AU/NEPAD to deal with PCR provides an overall strategy and individual contexts of a conflict may be applied to the framework.

There is a major challenge in PCR in Africa to transform “policies into coherent and practical strategies on the ground” (Muthi 2006). The resource industry in the DRC needs to be carefully monitored. Transparent and accountable political institutions are crucial if the people of the DRC are ever to benefit from this wealth.

Stronger unity of action is required between AU and the UN and other NGO organisations as well as the promotion of a common understanding of what needs to be done.

Currently there is a major loss of natural resources in the country due to the illegal extraction and exploitation of resources. The AU/NEPAD must find a way to increase legal regional trade. Muthi makes the suggestion that African countries should develop their infrastructure through pooled resources. The hope is that states will become interdependent and thus lower the risk of conflict – much the same as the European Union.

CONCLUSION

This report explored the impact of the DRC’s abundant resources on political, social and economic development. In the overview of the conflict in the DRC it becomes immediately apparent that resources are at the very core of many of the problems facing the country.

Resources negatively impact political development. Excessive mineral deposits yield massive resource rent which is irresistible to the political elite who spend the bulk of the funds on retaining political control and maintaining a fairly ineffective national army. The centralisation of resource rent has meant that social development has been deferred. Compared to elite and military funding, the social sector has received next to nothing. This has resulted in poor human and physical capital, unable to support a 21st century developing economy. The combination of insecurity, poverty and a lack of alternatives have placed the youth in the country in a position where the opportunity costs involved in joining rebel groups is incredibly low.

The points discussed above would suggest that resource management, accountability and transparency are essential to conflict prevention in the region, and yet this issue has not been highlighted as a priority in the Pretoria Agreement, and has received minimal attention in the AU/NEPAD framework.

Post-conflict reconstruction strategies have advocated disarmament and demobilisation, but they have done so without highlighting the need for simultaneous development of alternatives for groups involved in the conflict. This point is central to many of the suggestions made for future PCR frameworks. The AU/NEPAD three phased strategy could never work in the DRC simply because alternatives to arms and illegal resources exploitation are not emphasised from the beginning.

The suggestions offered attempt to expose issues that have not been given adequate attention in the Peace Agreement or in the AU/NEPAD framework. The core of all these suggestions is that disarmament and demobilisation – however important – will not be successful unless accompanied by the resolution of resource-centered issues. Resources must be correctly managed, and revenue equally distributed if there is to be peace. Human and physical capital requires a major financial injection. Social and economic development could lower opportunity costs of fighting.

As far as external parties are concerned, regional cooperation is essential to curb conflict in the DRC. As the liberal theory goes, an increase in inter-state cooperation decreases the likelihood that states will go to war with each other. The primary problem seems to be overcoming greed and the attitude that another group may get a little more out of the deal.

The perception of countries in the West as aid donors and examples of good democracies is deceptive. Many of the companies involved in exploiting the DRC's resources are not African. Therefore it is essential that the AU works closely with the UN to limit this exploitative trend.

In conclusion, post-conflict reconstruction in the DRC has been hampered by the underestimated or poorly communicated impact that the country's resource abundance has on political, economic and social development. This needs to be promptly rectified before peace can become a reality in the DRC.

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