Redefining the Security-Development Nexus: Peace and Sustainable Development in Eastern Congo

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Redefining the Security-Development Nexus

Peace and Sustainable Development in Eastern Congo

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Abstract

In recent years, policymakers and scholars have increasingly debated the relationship between security and development. National and global policymaking currently reflect consensus that the relationship between security and development exists and is significant, but various questions remain as to how the “security-development nexus” is understood and employed. Also unexplored is the extent to which United States policymakers can, or should, address this security-development nexus and incorporate it into foreign policy. I will argue that U.S. foreign policy should embrace the relationship between security and development.

Using an interdisciplinary approach that draws from the fields of history, political economy, international relations, and peace studies, I intend to examine the various perspectives on the security-development nexus and delineate the various arguments until I reach my own conclusion regarding the role of the security-development nexus in policymaking. This conclusion will be informed by analysis of a specific case study.

After addressing the various arguments concerning the security-development nexus and placing the nexus within the context of a case study to better understand its dynamics, I will conclude with some thoughts on the following: relationship between peace and development, the implications of this relationship for U.S. policymaking, and what should be done by whom and for whom in the name of a security-development nexus, especially in the context of the case study.
Introduction

The world in which we live appears increasingly complex, and its challenges unsolvable, its crises intractable, and its divisions pronounced and threatening. We are overwhelmed with images of incredible prosperity, wealth, and power in stark contrast to incredible poverty, exploitation, and deprivation. As people and societies across the globe are becoming more and more interconnected and intertwined, the challenges of our present world come closer and closer to home.

Many have dedicated their efforts to engaging pressing issues, addressing global inequality, working toward peace, and alleviating extreme poverty. They do so with an understanding that many, if not all, of the challenges and crises in the world today are connected. In particular, security and development have come to be deeply associated with one another. Thus many have come to understand that security and development are intimately intertwined; there undeniably exists some relationship between the two.

In the context of contemporary global issues, concerns for sustainability infuse all efforts at affecting change. Not only is environmental increasingly a major influence on development work and peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts, but we are currently seeing a renewed emphasis on sustainable practices, relationships, and institutions of all types. Sustainable development takes into account not only the needs of the present generation, but of future ones and of the larger global community and environment. The relationship between peace and sustainable development is therefore incredibly important to understand and implement.

In order to examine these dynamics of peace and sustainable development, I offer a glimpse into one of the modern world’s most bloody and intractable conflicts in an attempt to
illustrate the linkages between peace and development and demonstrate the need for local, national, regional, and international actors to address these challenges in specific ways.

\textit{Thesis}

As it is currently understood, the security-development nexus is insufficient as a guiding framework for U.S. foreign policy and development policy. While security and development should both be priorities for the United States in formulating its policy and carrying out interventions abroad, the security-development nexus is not defined specifically enough and does not include elements critical to successful intervention in the name of security and development.

In order to demonstrate the limited nature of the security-development nexus in its ability to adequately address issues of poverty and violence, I will examine the crisis in Eastern Congo, where a lack of development has contributed to instability and violence has contributed to poverty. The Eastern Congo crisis demands a response from the U.S. that addresses both security and development, but not using the limited framework of the “nexus.” It calls for a new approach to security and development, one which incorporates concerns for environmental sustainability, addresses local dynamics and incorporates local actors, and emphasizes creative thinking beyond the traditional resort to violent intervention in the face of intractable conflict.
Peace and Development

I will begin the discussion on the “security-development nexus” with a brief introduction to the arguments regarding the relationship between peace and economic development. The relationship between peace and development has been taken for granted by some scholars and practitioners, and hotly contested by others. It is important to first understand the fundamental assumptions of the relationship between peace and development before exploring the formal “security-development nexus” which links the two in much of the current policy and scholarly realms.

Lloyd Dumas, Professor of Economics, Political Economy, and Public Policy at the University of Texas at Dallas, summarizes the major positions in this debate over the relationship between peace and development. According to Lloyd, “liberals” and “neoliberals” argue that development encourages peace: people in better economic condition are less likely to initiate violent conflict both because they are more content and they have more to lose from the physical danger and economic disruption that war brings. Others believe that development discourages peace. “Dependency” theorists argue that the continued development of some depends on the forceful suppression or control of others. “Neorealists argue that development increases the capacity to build and mobilize military power. Lastly, “realists” argue that development and peace have no significant connection to each other.1

Inherent in this discussion of the relationship between peace and development are debates over the true definitions of peace and development. Currently, however, liberalism dominates the international relations landscape, and the accepted definitions of peace, development, and the relationship between the two tend to derive from this liberal, Enlightenment school of thought.

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Since the eighteenth century, liberals have argued that political development has a direct connection to peace, and additionally believe that economic development can help build peace within and among nations.

The arguments are as follows: militarization and war are impediments to development, and development can be a path to demilitarization and peace. The first argument asserts that war leads to the destruction of both labor and capital, and also leads to resource diversion. Public funds and political attention are channeled towards militarization and not the other needs of society. War inhibits political and economic freedom, which curtails development. As the Nobel Laureate economist Amartya Sen says, “Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means.”² Militarization and war also lead to concentration of economic power, which is again detrimental to development and inhibits economic freedom. Dumas writes, “If war and militarization create so many obstacles to development, it is logical that peace and demilitarization can help to remove them.”³

The second argument is the “democratic peace” argument, which maintains that democracy allows a way to resolve conflict without force and therefore fosters peace and development. But not only can political development foster peace; economic development can build peace, as poverty is a breeding ground for violent conflict. Economic development creates the kinds of economic relationships that provide positive incentives to avoid war, as international economic relationships bind together nations in ways that increase security and tend to prevent war. Simply put, “…economic and political development promote the conditions that support and encourage nonviolent conflict resolution and peace.”⁴ These are, very simplistically

³ Dumas, “Development and Peace: A Virtuous Circle?”
⁴ Dumas, “Development and Peace: A Virtuous Circle?”
articulated, some of the assumptions undergirding the “security-development nexus,” to which we now turn.

The Security-Development Nexus

The “security-development nexus” has emerged among scholars and policymakers as a way to conceptualize and articulate the relationship between peace and economic development. In this nexus, security and development are intimately intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Considerable attention has been given to the ‘nexus’ as a concept, but the implementation of understandings of the nexus is ongoing. While the policy world adopted the idea of a nexus and formulated reductionist conclusions, research and practitioners remained more skeptical, and the idea of a nexus still struggles with credibility. Nevertheless, more attention is being paid to how conflict can be prevented through a greater focus on development. The political priority of emphasizing the nexus has led to the securitization of development policy, though the concept of security has undergone redefinition.

Many questions remain as to how the policy incorporating the idea of the security-development nexus will lead to tangible action on the ground. There have been significant coordination gaps between different agencies and their policies in connecting security and development; the coordination needed has been limited to rhetoric only, and efforts to effectively coordinate among agencies and actors regarding the nexus is ongoing.

Questions also remain as to what should be done by whom and for whom in the name of a security-development nexus. Often the short-term security considerations of rich and powerful nations override the long-term developmental challenges of poorer regions.
Understanding and Defining the “Nexus”

The end of the Cold War gave birth to a multipolar world characterized by great turbulence and an increased awareness of global inequality. Disparities in wealth, development, security, and stability have become increasingly obvious, leading to a range of international initiatives to combat poverty and underdevelopment, and to resolve conflicts within and between states. These disparities and challenges have global implications in an interdependent and globalized world. There have been calls, therefore, for “a holistic understanding of the relationship between conflict, security and development.”5 Reflections on the relationship between development and peace became unavoidable, especially post-9/11, and now there is broad consensus at least that development requires security and security requires development. As authors Danielle Beswick and Paul Jackson write, “The truism that development requires security and security requires development has become firmly entrenched in the lexicon of state-building.”6

Policy makers define the security-development nexus as a “description of, and solution to, the pressing and interrelated problems commonly understood to belong under the rubrics of security and development.”7 References to the nexus, then, can often take the form of reductionist conclusions to address extremely complex issues. The very definitions of security and development are open to discussion, much less the relationship between the two. The success of policies implemented in the name of security-development remain “dubious.”8 Yet authors Ramses Amer, Ashok Swain, and Joakim Ojendal of Stockholm University, Uppsala University,

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6 Beswick and Jackson, 2.
8 Amer, Swain, and Ojendal, The Security-Development Nexus, 14.
and University of Gothenburg, respectively, conclude that, “for the foreseeable future, the way we perceive, pursue, and produce ‘the nexus’ will be of crucial importance.”

**Redefining Security**

The increased attention to the linkage between security and development in both academic and policy terms is due partly to the widening and deepening of the meaning of security. First, the definition of security has widened beyond formal militaries and national security to include new issues such as environment, resources, and poverty. Second, it has deepened to include individual human security instead of focusing only on the security of the state.

The idea of human security integrates development discourse into discussions about security. This new security agenda moves away from the traditional approach to security which addresses formal security services such as the state military, police, and intelligence. Human security, by focusing on the security of the individual within society, allows for a more diverse range of options for development interventions.

The most widely cited definition of human security can be found in the 1994 Human Development Report, which suggests that the concept of security must change in two ways: (1) From an exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people’s security, and (2) From security through armaments to security through sustainable human development. The report identifies seven main categories that indicate sources of threats to human security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political. According to the report, organizations and individuals at all levels must work towards the attainment of two

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9 Amer, Swain, and Ojendal, 34.
freedoms: freedom from fear and freedom from want. This definition of human security aligns with Johan Galtung’s idea of “positive peace.” Galtung argues that peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but an environment in which people are free.¹¹

Thus achieving human security, or positive peace, requires development and transformation of structures at the local, national, and international level. The involved actors range from states to regional organizations to local government to grassroots and community initiatives. Essentially, human security necessitates a system-wide approach and incorporates development concerns. Development is critical to this new definition of security, though the focus on human security has led to the securitization of development, in which development is defined in terms of its impact on security.

**Human Security and Development in Africa**

Security has thus been redefined to embrace insecurities driven by non-military challenges and is tied to the complex challenges of development. Despite this shift, however, many parts of Africa have “remained stubbornly bound to the traditional imperatives of state interests, power, military force and geopolitical instability.”¹² According to the Ghanaian political economist Nana Poku, Coventry University professor Neil Renwick, and professor of peace studies at Bradford University Jaoa Gomes Porto, the result of this has been an inability to actively pursue security in terms of development and human need. The African Union (AU) has embraced the notion of human security, and acknowledged that state security is often threatened not by conventional armed attack from other countries but by “more insidious dangers, many of

¹¹ Beswick and Jackson, *Conflict, Security and Development*.

which arise from the African state itself.” In 2004, the AU offered the following definition of security in the African context:

[In Africa] security means the protection of individuals with respect to the satisfaction of the basic needs of life; it also encompasses the creation of the social, political, economic, military, environmental and cultural conditions necessary for survival, including the protection of fundamental freedoms, access to education, healthcare, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his/her own potential.

African leaders are becoming increasingly aware that they must embrace a cooperative approach if they are to successfully address their countries’ and the continent’s security and development challenges. Various regional bodies and mechanisms have already been established toward this end, but the task of building stable, prosperous societies remains immense.

Poku, Renwick, and Porto argue that “the key to attaining stability and prosperity in the continent lies in overcoming key obstacles hampering Africa’s progress towards meeting the MDG [Millennium Development Goals] targets,” specifically these four challenges: ensuring peace and security, fostering good governance, tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases, and achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. These authors go on to emphasize that “the biggest obstacle has been the challenge of creating viable states in order to generate development.” Many states in Africa, including the Congo, have struggled to claim a legitimate monopoly of force. There are large areas where state legitimacy is challenged by rebellion and internal lawlessness. In such states, “though government may be accepted, the political institutions through which its powers are exercised are often treated with remarkable indifference by large sections of the citizenry.” Often, the state is entirely absent and does not provide basic services to the population, including security and development. Clearly, there is an

13 “Human security and development in Africa,” 1158.
15 “Human security and development in Africa,” 1156.
16 “Human security and development in Africa,” 1156.
17 “Human security and development in Africa,” 1157.
understanding of the intimate connection between security and development and a recognized need to build peace and foster development in Africa.

**Sustainable Development**

Over the past two decades, economic growth has led vast numbers of people around the world to escape poverty and has raised the income levels of millions. Too often, however, this development has come at the expense of the environment and the poorest of the poor. The World Bank affirms, “Through a variety of market, policy, and institutional failures, the earth’s natural capital has been used in ways that are economically inefficient and wasteful, without sufficient reckoning of the true costs of resource depletion.”¹⁸ For example, the burning of fossil fuels has supported rapid economic growth for decades, but is leading to dangerous consequences: climate change now threatens to roll back decades of development progress.

Additionally, economic growth patterns have left hundreds of millions of people behind: 1.2 billion still lack access to electricity, 870 million are malnourished, and 780 million are still without access to clean drinking water.¹⁹ Development has clearly not been as just and equitable as it could be. Sustainable development thus encompasses two key concepts: the limitations on the environment’s ability to meet present and future needs, and the needs of the poor.²⁰

Sustainable development, then, recognizes that economic growth must be inclusive and environmentally sound to reduce poverty and build shared prosperity for today’s world, and to continue to meet the needs of the future generations. Sustainable development uses resources efficiently and listens to local voices who know their environment best. According to the World

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¹⁹ “Sustainable Development Overview.”

Bank, there are three major pillars of sustainable development: economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social inclusion. The most frequently used definition of sustainable development is found in the document *Our Common Future*, or the Brundtland Report, which defines sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

Sustainable development requires systems thinking. The world is seen as a system that connects space and time. In this system, air pollution from North America affects air quality in Asia, and pesticides sprayed in South America could harm aquatic life off the coast of Australia. The regions of the world are interconnected, economically and environmentally. The world is also a system over time: decisions made by previous generations affect our environment today, and the policies we make today will impact the lives of our children.

Quality of life is a system, too. To illustrate this point, the International Institute for Sustainable Development asks:

> It's good to be physically healthy, but what if you are poor and don't have access to education? It's good to have a secure income, but what if the air in your part of the world is unclean? And it's good to have freedom of religious expression, but what if you can't feed your family?

Sustainable development goes beyond addressing material deprivation and the quantitative reduction of global poverty. It recognizes the interconnected nature of aspects of individual life as well as communal life. There are manifold components of true development, and sustainable development understands this holism and seeks to address all of these components. This is absolutely critical in our world today, as material poverty is indeed quantitatively lessening, but global inequality and injustice remains. The World Bank argues that, “The question facing

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21 “Sustainable Development Overview.”
23 “What is Sustainable Development?”
24 “What is Sustainable Development?”
countries, cities, corporations, and development organizations today is not whether to embrace sustainable development but how.”25

**Natural Resources and Conflict**

Since the 1990s, analysts of conflicts have focused their attention on the role of resources in wars. Drawing from arguments of the well-known “doomsday” economist Thomas Malthus about global carrying capacity, some analysts have concluded that the world will increasingly face crises and conflicts generated by fast-growing populations competing for declining resources.26 Thomas Homer-Dixon, Chair of Global Systems at the Centre for International Governance Innovation at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, argued that the world’s renewable resources were becoming more scarce through three main processes: human activity reducing the amount or quality of a resource faster than that resource is renewed, population growth reducing the amount of resources available per person, and changes in the ways resources are distributed reinforcing unequal access to available resources between groups.27 All three of these processes are intrinsically bound up with the processes of economic development, thus necessitating a focus on sustainable development.

In addition to this “environmental conflict theory” proposed by Homer-Dixon, the “resource-curse” thesis, coined by British economist Richard Auty, suggests that poor governance allied to irresponsible economic behavior is closely related to corruption surrounding high value resources, for example, oil. In 1993, Auty argued that countries with relatively high

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25 “Sustainable Development Overview.”
26 Beswick and Jackson, *Conflict, Security and Development.*
27 Beswick and Jackson, *Conflict, Security and Development.*
reserves of valuable mineral resources, and therefore the economic means to develop, actually experienced lower levels of economic growth and less development.\textsuperscript{28}

Over the last two decades, there has been much statistical modeling, data, and case study documentation illustrating the link between resource abundance and conflict. Beswick and Jackson argue that environmental factors affect conflicts, but in a contingent and not a deterministic way.\textsuperscript{29} If one examines the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however, I believe one would find that this country’s resources have indeed played a deterministic role in war and continued violence.

**Case Study: Eastern Congo**

The fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is one the most intractable, prolonged, and deadly conflicts in the world.\textsuperscript{30} The conflict has encompassed two international wars and multiple invasions from neighboring countries, with combatants from numerous armed groups, both foreign and domestic. While Congo enjoys abundant natural resources, it is the world’s poorest country per capita according to the United Nations.\textsuperscript{31}

Eastern Congo continues to be characterized by instability, though Congo is home to the largest and most expensive United Nations peacekeeping mission in the world, MONUSCO, which has more than 20,000 personnel and an annual budget of $1.4 billion. The conflict in Congo is notorious for serious violations of human rights, including violence against women and the use of child soldiers. The International Rescue Committee has calculated that since 1996,
approximately 5.4 million people have died from war-related causes.\textsuperscript{32} In 2012, Congo ranked lowest on the United Nations Human Development Index.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{A History of the Conflict}

In order to address the conflict and the dynamics that have consumed the DRC for almost two decades, it is critical to understand the history of the country. The story of the DRC is an incredibly complex one, one which has led people to embrace a “Congo reductionism”\textsuperscript{34} by which they do not have to tackle the complexity of the DRC. The conflict is sometimes written off as tribal or barbaric, and the deeper motivations and sources of tension are left unexplored. Jason Stearns, in his acclaimed book \textit{Dancing in the Glory of Monsters}, searches out the political rationales and motives that underpinned the violence in the DRC. Stearns, who has been working on the DRC since 2001,\textsuperscript{35} argues that a rational explanation for this chaotic conflict is absolutely necessary,\textsuperscript{36} because there is nothing about the DRC that makes it inherently predisposed to evil.

The roots of the conflict in the Congo can be traced back for centuries, though the Rwandan genocide of 1994 served as the immediate trigger for the most recent violence. This violence can be divided into three phases. The first war occurred from 1996 to 1997, when the infamous klepocrat Mobutu Seke Seso was ousted from power after 32 years of ruling the Congo. The second war occurred from August 1998 to 2003, and the third phase of violence that

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{32} “Eastern Congo”
\item \textsuperscript{34} Jason Stearns, \textit{Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa} (New York: Public Affairs, 2012), xxi.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Stearns has has worked for Héritiers de la Justice, the United Nations peacekeeping mission, and as a senior analyst for the International Crisis Group. In 2008, he led a United Nations investigation on conflict in eastern Congo. He is currently managing a research project for the Rift Valley Institute on Congolese armed groups, the Usalama Project. His articles and opinion pieces have appeared in the Financial Times, The Economist, Africa Confidential, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post. He blogs at congosiasa.blogspot.com.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Stearns, 4.
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followed was characterized by continued fighting, particularly in the eastern region of the Congo (consisting of the provinces of North and South Kivu).

*The Rwandan Civil War*

The immediate cause of the Congo conflict was the Rwandan civil war, which resulted in the movement of the defeated the Armed Forces of Rwanda (FAR) and half a million mostly Hutu Rwandans crossed into the Congo after the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took power from the Hutu-led government. Mobutu had supported the FAR against the RPF, and following their defeat the FAR regrouped at the border of the Congo. The exiled FAR war council organized two army divisions (22,000 soldiers) at the north and south of Lake Kivu, and planned guerilla warfare (Operation Insecticide) against the new RPF regime in Kigali.37

At Lake Kivu, the soldiers were not separated from the Rwandan refugees. The refugee camps became places of extreme suffering and death, so much so that it could be called a second genocide. The crisis in the Congo could have been averted had the international community, Zaire, and Rwanda took steps to separate the soldiers and refugees. Zaire’s prime minister at the time, Kenyo wa Dondo, did recommend the forceful repatriation of the Hutu refugees, but the operation did not reach fruition. The response of the international community was to throw money at the unfolding humanitarian crisis instead of addressing the political causes. In this way, the Rwandan civil war continued to smolder in eastern Congo.

*The First War*

By July 1995, Rwanda had launched three strikes against the refugee camps in Zaire. In October 1996, the Rwandan army invaded under the guise of a homegrown Congolese rebellion… The refugees dispersed, and half a million went back to Rwanda while 400,000-

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37 Stearns, 27.
600,000 refugees fled into eastern Congo. This invasion was led by Rwanda but included allied anti-Mobutu rebel groups and the support of the United States, South Africa, and the United Kingdom. These powers convened and established the Lemera Agreement, and chose a leader for the rebellion they were piecing together known as the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL), Laurent Kabila. This conflict was not a civil war in the Congo, but a regional conflict led by Rwanda. Congo was to be liberated from Mobutu by foreigners, under the guise of a rebellion led by Kabila that was really a “smoke screen for Rwandan and Ugandan involvement” in the Congo.

The rebellion mobilized the Banyamulenge in the Kivu region of the Congo, many of whom joined the Rwanda-led movement against Mobutu. The Banyamulenge are a small community of Tutsi (the minority ethnic group in Rwanda) who emigrated to the Congo between the 18th and 19th centuries and settled in the highlands south of Bukavu. The Banyamulenge were victims of anti-Tutsi hyperbole typical of Congolese politicians, and were hated by the Congolese population due to their ethnic ties to the new Rwandan government. Most of the fighting at the beginning of the war was carried out by the Rwandan army and these Congolese Tutsi who joined in the run-up to the rebellion.

Many young Congolese Tutsi were mobilized to become to vanguard of the rebellion of the ADFL, which sought to liberate the Congo from Mobutu with the backing of Rwanda. The RPF planners of the rebellion “desperately tried to foist ideology and sincerity upon the

38 Stearns, 44.
39 Stearns, 88.
40 Stearns, 89.
41 Stearns, 58.
42 Stearns, 122.
Congolese they had handpicked.43 While there were many actors involved in the supposed liberation of the Congo:

On the face of it, the Rwandan-led invasion was an amalgam of different nationalities, chains of command, and military cultures. There were Ugandan artillery units, Eritrean speedboats, Tanzanian military advisors, and Congolese soldiers. When it came down to it, however, the people calling the shots were Rwandans, at least for the first half of the war.44

The rebels became known as liberators, but at the local level, the rebels were involved in bitter feuds and committed terrible atrocities. The Rwandan troops and its AFDL allies killed tens of thousands of refugees as they undertook a death-ridden march through the jungle, unable to return to Rwanda and fleeing desperately further into the Congo.

Though the AFDL massacred refugees, everyone still felt that the rebellion was liberation, citing that no Congolese were killed. For local populations, this paradox was resolved by separating the rebels into two groups: aggressive Tutsi-killers and the Congolese freedom fighters.45 Many soldiers in the AFDL were children, 12-25 years old, poor, unemployed, and uneducated. This was an attempt to instill revolutionary doctrine at a young age to overthrow Mobutu. In total, approximately 10,000 child soldiers participated in the AFDL rebellion.

Despite so many deaths, the international community did not act to prevent this mass violence. Many blamed the U.S., who could have stopped the violence if they wanted to.46 The moral shock of the Rwandan genocide eclipsed all subsequent events in the region. Stearns asks, “Why do they have to measure one injustice in terms of another? Was the massacre of thousands

43 Stearns, 90.
44 Stearns, 120.
45 Stearns, 134.
46 Stearns, 133.
of innocent people somehow more acceptable because hundreds of thousands had been killed in Rwanda?"  

The last battle of the war occurred when Kisangani fell in March 1997, “sounding the death knell for Mobutu’s government.” On May 4, 1997, a physically ailing Mobutu met with Laurent Kabila in a meeting mediated by Nelson Mandela. Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo and Laurent Kabila was installed as president. The new government, led by Kabila, was not a democratic one: an immediate opening to multiparty democracy and elections could have led to a rebound by Mobutuists. Kabila was an authoritarian dictator, and many politicians and human rights activists were punished. Direct funding to NGOs was outlawed. The ADFL’s brushfire advance across the country, coupled with foreign domination of the rebellion, had produced a weak and fractured government.

Early discussions within the international community revolved around the massacre of the Rwandan refugees, and this refugee question snuffed out any chance for rebuilding the country. In terms of reconstruction, local leaders proposed development priorities but after also condemning the government, development became solely top-down. The government was held to no accountability, and Kabila was plagued by paranoia and fear. By early 1998, diplomats and government officials were fueling rumors of his demise. After Kabila had ruled for 15 months (May 1997 to August 1998), war broke out once again.

_The Second War_

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47 Stearns, 141.
48 Stearns, 125.
49 Stearns, 167.
50 Stearns, 171.
51 Stearns, 173.
The war to topple Mobutu had caused serious security problems back in Rwanda. The Rwandan attacks on the refugee camps in the Congo had caused hundreds of thousands of refugees to stream back into Rwanda. Vice President of Rwanda Paul Kagame thought it best to fight these refugees on Rwandan soil than in the Congo, so Rwanda let the refugees stream back but also dispatched at least 10,000 soldiers to northwestern Rwanda in the months following the invasion of the Congo. The insurgents sparked the worst fighting since the genocide; but the end of 1997 the region was in upheaval. They used terror tactics instead of conducting conventional battles, and hundreds of Tutsi (including Congolese refugees) were killed. Thus the Rwandan civil war started up again after a three-year hiatus.

The Tutsi-led Rwandan government responded with overwhelming force to the instability in northwestern Rwanda. President Kabila felt his power threatened by the Rwandans and Congolese Tutsi who would remove him from power if he waited too long to make his own move. Kabila needed to construct his own force, so he desperately drew on the largest mercenary troops available in the region, the ex-FAR, the former army of President Habyarimana which his AFDL rebellion had sought to defeat. Stearns says, “It was a deal with the devil, one that precipitated Rwanda’s new invasion.” Kabila sacked Colonel Kabarebe, the Rwandan officer who had been commander of the Congolese army, and asked all Rwandan troops to leave the Congo. Hostility against Tutsis escalated, and so did tensions between Kinshasa and Kigali.

Anti-Tutsi sentiment in Kinshasa gained momentum, “whipped up by Kabila’s politicians but also fed by the beatings and humiliations that residents of the capital had endured at the hands of the Rwandans.” Malik Kijege, the highest-ranking Congolese Tutsi in the Kinshasa

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52 Stearns, 181.
53 Stearns, 183.
54 Stearns, 184.
garrison, gathered other Tutsi soldiers who were dispersed throughout Kinshasa’s various military camps. He hoped to secure safety in numbers by concentrating all the Tutsi soldiers who had refused to go to Rwanda simply because they were Tutsi. They had fought the first war to defend their Congolese citizenship. Malik’s soldiers numbered 586, and on the night of August 1998, the fighting began, marking the start of the second Congo war.

The Rwandans took control of much of eastern Congo within hours. While commander of the Congolese army, Colonel Kabarebe had prepositioned troops loyal to him with stockpiles of weapons in eastern Congo. When he was sacked, he gave orders to these units to rebel against Kabila. The Rwandan troops quickly took the border towns, and then, in one of the most daring operations in the region’s military history, Kabarebe decided “to go straight for the jugular by leapfrogging Kabila’s ramshackle army and attacking the capital, 1,000 miles away.”

There were two major rebel groups that rose up against Kabila and advanced on Kinshasa. One was the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) led by Ernest Wamba dia Wamba. This rebellion was pieced together by Kigali in early 1998. The RCD seemed bent on responsible and functional government to western diplomats, but it was clear from the beginning of this rebellion that RCD independence would be seriously limited by Rwandan influence. Various problems plagued the Rwandan-backed RCD from the beginning. It lacked political and social strategy by focusing solely on being a military machine. Additionally, Rwandan influence initially was subtle, but soon the Rwandans lacked cohesion and indicated that they were not sincerely interested in democracy. In early 1999, Wamba was toppled as RCD president. The RCD had achieved some military success but was a political and social disaster.

55 Stearns, 188.
The other rebel group to emerge against Kabila was the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) started and led by Jean-Pierre Bemba, “a millionaire-turned-rebel leader” who received his support from Uganda and former Mobutuists. Bemba had been close to Mobutu and fled to Europe when the AFDL arrived in Kinshasa. Bemba was able to build a rebel movement that controlled a large part of the country while maintaining popular support, all without excessive outside interference.

Bemba had met with the Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni, who then recommended Bemba to General Kagame and the RCD. Bemba, however, didn’t approve of the RCD because it relied “exclusively on its Rwandan ally to the detriment of developing a Congolese capacity.” Indeed, Museveni’s approach was different from that of Rwanda; he wanted the Congolese to learn how to manage and rule themselves. The MLC was well-organized and more successful than other rebellions, but it suffered from financial limitations and conflicts over resources and ethnicity. The MLC broke up after the war, and failed to become a political party. The failure of even this well-organized, well-led rebellion to materialize shows the limits of rebellion in Congo: little ideology took root at the grassroots level other than opposition to the enemy and tribal loyalty.

The worst episode of urban warfare occurred at the city of Kisangani starting in May 1999. Rwanda and Uganda had decided to split Kisangani into operational sectors; the Ugandans would control the north and the Rwandans the south. The violence at Kisangani led to the end of the Rwandan-Ugandan alliance and the plunder of Congo’s riches. Tensions had been building as the two countries attempted to jointly control the city: the Congo wars saw the Rwandans usurp the role of regional power from Uganda, leaving Ugandans extremely resentful. Additionally,

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56 Stearns, 224.
57 Stearns, 233.
Uganda disproved of Rwanda’s influence on Congolese politics, preferring to let the Congolese develop their own rebellion and run their own country. On June 5, 2000, the Ugandans launched a huge offensive, leading to six days of fighting and the deaths of at least 760 civilians in the crossfire.

Though all Congolese belligerents and their foreign allies signed the Lusaka Ceasefire in August 1999, Kabila wanted to fight until the end, consistently blocking the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission. But by August 1999, Kabila was alone in still believing in victory; the MLC and the RCD still held strategic positions throughout the country. The government prepared for a decisive standoff in the village of Pweto, which became a symbol of resistance for Kabila. This, the most important front of the war, was being fought almost entirely by foreign troops on both sides.\(^58\) Ultimately, the Congolese army, under the command of President Kabila’s son Joseph Kabila, was forced to retreat into Zambia.

On January 16, 2001, Laurent Kabila’s rule came to an abrupt end when he was assassinated by one of his bodyguards. Most accounts attribute the assassination to a former child soldier (kadogo), Rashidi Kasereka. There are, however, several indications that Rwanda may have been involved, and possibly Angola too. But as is often true in the Congo, the truth may never be known, since information tends to be rooted in hearsay and rumor.\(^59\) Ultimately, Kabila became a true heir to Mobutu in many ways, and his ultimate legacy was the war.

Joseph Kabila succeeded his father as president, and launched a peace process and paved the way for elections. Governed by pragmatism, Joseph Kabila immediately abandoned his father’s purely military approach and embarked on a diplomatic offensive. While Joseph Kabila respected the frontline cease-fire, he did provide weapons and supplies to fuel the Mai-Mai

\(^{58}\) Stearns, 273.
\(^{59}\) Stearns, 283.
insurgency on his enemies’ turf. In February 2002, the Inter-Congolese Dialogue was held in South Africa, but despite this formal peace, by 2003 Rwanda, Uganda, and Congo had over 12 rebel proxies and allies battling each other.

Post-War?

Since 1998, civilians in eastern Congo have been caught in the crossfire of local and foreign militias, the Congolese army (FARDC), and UN forces. In 2007, new waves of fighting caused even more massive displacement, and again in August 2008. There has been an overall decrease in violence recently, “the plight of people across Eastern DRC remains dire.”

In 2012, more than 1,000 former rebels who had been integrated into the Congolese army (FARDC) mutinied and formed M23, after the date of a failed peace deal between the two warring parties on March 23, 2009. Most of the rebel commanders are Tutsi, but Rwanda denies any involvement. The M23 grew to control various towns and mines along eastern Congo’s border with Rwanda and Uganda, even setting up a system of tax levies and local administrators.

In November 2012, hundreds of M23 marched into Goma, a commercial hub located on the Rwandan border. As the Congolese soldiers retreated from Goma, they raped more than 106 women and 33 girls, some as young as 6 according to United Nations investigators. Riots broke out across the Congo, even in Kinshasa, threatening Kabila’s government. Within two weeks of seizing the city, the rebels withdrew as a result of heavy international pressure. Regardless, the temporary loss of a major city humiliated the government.

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In March 2013, the UN Security Council authorized a new intervention brigade of 3,000 peacekeepers that, according to its mandate, would take “all necessary measures” to protect civilians. With this new mandate, MONUSCO (United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), under the command of Major General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, decided to take pre-emptive action. The Congolese army was also becoming better equipped and more disciplined.

The rebels pulled back a few miles from Goma and continued to shell the city. In August 2013, the fighting became fierce. Congolese forces were now backed by the new peacekeeping brigade. In October 2013, the last major population center controlled by M23 fell to the Congolese army, marking the end of the M23 as a military force. Then, for the first time, the UN gave MONUSCO peacekeepers orders to go on the offensive and neutralize the rebels, not just wait for civilians to come under threat.

On November 5, 2013, the M23 rebels announced that they were laying down their weapons for good, “a major turnaround brought about by a rare combination of pressures from around the world, including a more aggressive approach to peacekeeping by the United Nations.” The defeat of M23 demonstrates the important role for the international community in exerting pressure: the US, EU, Britain, and other nations cut aid to Rwanda, which was suspected of helping arm, coordinate, and recruit fighters for the M23 insurrection. One reporter said, “The rebel surrender offered new hope for a region where conflict—and the failed international attempts to stop it—has gone on for so many years that it has often come to seem

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63 “Rebel Stronghold Falls to Congolese Army.”
64 “Rebel Stronghold Falls to Congolese Army.”
unresolvable, even inevitable.”66 Jason Stearns commented, “This would be the first time since 1996 that the Congolese Army defeats a major armed group and that Rwanda has no armed all in the eastern Congo.”67

Despite many of the M23 rebels laying down their weapons, “numerous armed groups still operate in the region and an end to the M23 could quickly lead to a new successor organization if underlying dissatisfaction among the public, which lacks many basic services, is not addressed.”68 This is a clear articulation of the security-development nexus: a lack of development and a failure to address human security could likely lead to insecurity and continued violence. One senior UN official remarked, “Are they still going to be happy a month from now or six months from now when there are no medical services or schools open?”69 Stearns warned against complacency, as one victory does not mean peace, especially as numerous armed groups still exist.

Analysts have said this victory would prove fleeting unless the government addressed the root causes that have led groups to take up arms.70 A top UN official noted that military action will not be sufficient to stabilize the region. Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson told a meeting of regional leaders in Addis Adaba, Ethiopia that a “comprehensive strategy that addresses the root causes of the violence” is needed, and cited the “urgent priority” of extending state authority to the areas retaken from the rebels and undertaking security sector reform (SSR).71 Eliasson also emphasized amnesty, as well as a comprehensive disarmament,

66 “After Outside Pressure, Rebels in Congo Lay Down Their Arms.”
67 “After Outside Pressure, Rebels in Congo Lay Down Their Arms.”
68 “Rebel Stronghold Falls to Congolese Army.”
69 “Rebel Stronghold Falls to Congolese Army.”
70 “After Outside Pressure, Congo Rebels Lay Down Arms.”
71 “Amid military gains, root causes of violence must be addressed, says UN official,” UN News Centre, January 31, 2014,
demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process for the rebels, repatriating those who are from neighboring countries.

After defeating M23, the UN force and the Congolese army aimed to take on the ethnic Hutu militia, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), whose core members include perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. They also have begun operations against another armed group, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Some armed groups did actually say they were ready to lay down their arms following M23’s defeat. Various militias have declared their willingness to be demobilized. A number of NGOs have called on the Congolese government to revive a program for demobilizing Congolese combatants and helping them rejoin civilian life. The African Union (AU) has been monitoring security throughout the process of arriving at peace deals, and is working with its international partners to help the Congolese government defeat the various armed groups and maintain security.

Human Rights Watch reported continued human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict in eastern Congo in 2013, despite the regional and international initiatives to end the violence. The M23 committed serious abuses, and eastern Congo saw a rise in inter-ethnic violence as the Congolese army, focused as it was on defeating the M23, “left a security vacuum that other abusive militia groups sought to fill” including the FDLR and Mai Mai fighters. The Congolese army itself has been responsible for killings, rapes, and ill-treatment of detainees.


Additionally, Congolese security forces have carried out politically motivated arrests and abuses against members of opposition parties, journalists, and human rights activists.

**Resources in Eastern Congo**

Natural resources play a critical role in the sustained conflict in Eastern Congo. Its resources could have been harnessed provide economic growth, but unfortunately, both internal and external actors have instead fought each other, in the absence of a strong central state with a monopoly of force, for control of these resources. This has led not to development, but to death: “The region is rich in gold and diamonds, and minerals like coltan and casserite, but instead of making its people wealthy they have only tempted invaders and local warlords.”

During the rule of Mobutu, one can clearly observe the “resource curse” thesis, which was previously described in this paper. Poor governance and irresponsible economic behavior did lead to corruption. The second Congo war was indeed a resource war: from 1998 to 2003, the principal objective was to exert territorial control over parts of eastern Congo to extract and trade resources. Currently, the relationship between resources and conflict is characterized by “conflict minerals.”

Various rebel groups have survived off the exploitation and trade of minerals, prolonging the conflict in eastern Congo. According to the Enough Project, armed groups can earn millions of dollars each year by trading conflict minerals. Government troops and armed groups have fought to control mines and smuggling routes, murdering and raping civilians to further fracture the structure of society. They force locals to take part in this illicit mining economy.

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75 “A Reason for Hope in Congo’s Perpetual War.”
77 Enough Project.
There have been some signs of hope in addressing this relationship between resources and the continued conflict. In July 2010, the United States Congress adopted the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act. Section 1502 requires American companies to ensure that the minerals they use to make their products are not tied to the conflict in the Congo, by tracing and auditing their mineral supply chains. The Act provides the commercial leverage to catalyze reform. In August 2012, the Securities and Exchange Commission issued rules and regulations for how companies should report on the source of the minerals in question (gold, tin, tungsten, and tantalum). These attempts to certify a clean minerals trade in Congo are encouraging, though independent monitoring is needed.

There have been other initiatives outside of the United States focused on methodology for due diligence, for example the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD)’s Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Materials from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas (December 2010) provides management recommendations for responsible global supply chains of minerals to help companies respect human rights and avoid contributing to conflict through their mineral or metal purchasing decisions and practices. Various nations, especially Germany, have shown a commitment to such initiatives.

However, in order for initiatives for these to be successful, governance issues must be addressed. There is clearly a lack of administrative capacity in the Congo, and the integrity of the administration and the militarization of production sites should take priority. MONUSCO has set up four trading centers in North and South Kivu to centralize production and facilitate control and certification by Congolese authorities, and is training police officers to ensure security at

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78 Enough Project.
80 International Crisis Group.
these centers. Much more needs to be done, however, to encourage political and not just technical solutions to the issue of conflict minerals. One major problem is the transition of control from armed rebel groups to the army. Rebels are being integrated into the army (FARDC) while control of the mining zones is being transferred from the armed groups to the army. This obviously does not spell a decrease in the violence and exploitation perpetrated against the population. Governance, then, must be addressed.

Policy Responses

The issues in eastern Congo are obviously manifold, interconnected, and daunting. Fortunately, recent years have seen increased attention to these challenges, on the national, regional, and international levels. There must be continued dialogue and action at each of these levels if the challenges of peace and development are to be effectively addressed and the Congolese people are to receive peace and justice at long last.

National Response

On the national level, President Kabila has articulated a commitment to both peace and development. At the 68th United Nations General Debate, Kabila said that without peace, sustainable development is “only hypothetical.” Kabila voiced concerns that the selfishness of some states could threaten efforts to set a new sustainable development agenda for the years ahead. He also spoke of “our common desire to prioritize the economic, social and

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81 International Crisis Group
82 International Crisis Group

Regional and International Response

The Framework of Hope is a regional agreement signed by regional and international leaders in Addis Ababa on February 24, 2013. The regional signatories were the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Angola, Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Tanzania, and Uganda. The Framework was also signed by UN Secretary-General the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community.

The Framework of Hope affirms that the Congolese government has begun some reforms, with partners’ support, that are intended to lay the ground for economic recovery and the democratization of the country. However, it reads, “eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued to suffer from recurring cycles of conflict and persistent violence by armed groups, both Congolese and foreign.” There have been “devastating” consequences of this violence, which includes sexual violence and violations of human rights used regularly as weapons of war. There are still two million displaced, and “The implementation of the country’s reconstruction, security sector reform and poverty alleviation program is regularly disrupted.”

Yet the Framework reads that, “Despite these challenges, the recent crisis has created a window of opportunity to address the root causes of conflict and put an end to recurring cycles of

84 “DR Congo President calls for altruism in new global push for sustainable development.”
violence.” The Framework then lists the commitments for the Congolese government, the region, and the international community.

For the Congolese government, the commitments include: deepen security sector reform, consolidate state authority and prevent armed groups from destabilizing neighboring countries, further economic development (infrastructure, basic social services), decentralize, further structural reform of the government, and further the agenda of reconciliation, tolerance, and democratization.

For the region: not interfere in the affairs of neighboring countries, neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups, respect the sovereignty of neighboring countries, strengthen regional cooperation (deepen economic integration “with special consideration for the exploitation or natural resources”), respect the legitimate concerns and security interests for the neighboring countries, neither harbor nor provide protection of any kind to persons accused of war crimes, and facilitate judicial cooperation.

For the international community: the Security Council should support the long-term stability of the DRC and the region, bilateral partners should renew their commitment to remain engaged and ensure long-term sustainability, work towards the revitalization of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, review MONUSCO, and appoint a UN Special Envoy to support efforts to reach a durable solution.

This Framework is guided by a regional oversight mechanism, consisting of the 11 regional leaders who signed the Framework and the four leaders of international and regional bodies (known as the 11+4 mechanism). The Framework is historic in that it is the first agreement regarding the conflict in the Congo to be signed by all regional actors, which is a

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86 Peace, Security and Development Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region
promising sign. The Framework assures that the oversight mechanism will operate in full respect of the Congo’s national sovereignty.

The United States’ Response

The United States has also responded to the crisis in eastern Congo. While its engagement in the past has not been extensive, there are calls for increased attention. On February 26, 2014, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations (SFRC) held a hearing entitled “Prospects for Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Great Lakes Region.” The first panel consisted of the Honorable Russell Feingold, US Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the DRC. The second panel was: the Honorable Roger Meece, former US Ambassador to the DRC and former UN Special Representative for the DRC; Dr. Raymond Gilpin, Academic Dean of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University; and Ben Affleck, founder of the Eastern Congo Initiative.

These expert panelists at this SFRC hearing gave various perspectives on the situation in the Congo and offered numerous recommendations. They emphasized supporting the Framework for Hope; broader political dialogue; security sector reform (SSR); preparation for the 2016 elections; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs; local conflict resolution; economic and social development; and targeted investment. These are all excellent recommendations, and the panelists did provide details in terms of mechanisms through which these initiatives can happen as well as timeframes. If the Senate incorporates their input into Congress’s foreign policy agenda towards the Congo, this will mark a solid commitment to sustainable development and, hopefully, peace. Ultimately, the members of the SFRC articulated


a “cautious optimism” regarding the Congo and appeared to receive the recommendations of the panelists, though the panelists’ thoughts are admittedly unlikely to transfer directly to US foreign policy. However, the fact that credible and influential figures are testifying to a receptive Senate is encouraging.

**Redefining and Implementing the Security-Development Nexus**

**Incorporating Environmental Sustainability**

Development in the Congo must be sustainable, as natural resources have played a central role in the violence and a failure to address issues surrounding these resources prevent true development. Critical to achieving peace in eastern Congo is improving governance and security issues regarding mining sites. Only when the minerals trade is fair and clean will economic development be possible for the people of eastern Congo. Any development initiatives that fail to incorporate conflict minerals will not be effective in the long term. What the Congolese people need is not simply economic development in terms of quantitative short-term growth, but sustainable development.

**Deforestation**

In addition to conflict minerals, other environmental issues pose threats to sustainable development in the Congo, specifically deforestation. Much of the Congo basin rainforest is being sold off under the illusion that Congo’s timber industry will kick-start the economy and encourage development. However, international logging companies are just causing social chaos and environmental havoc. Efforts by the World Bank to control the logging industry are failing: their favored strategy of using taxes collected from logging companies to fund development for local communities has not been effective. Greenpeace has also documented “contracts of
shame,” in which companies give communities gifts in exchange for the rights to log timber worth much, much more. Greenpeace claims, “Schools and hospitals promised by the loggers also fail to materialise but the communities are also forced to sign away their right to protest. Those who do are often met with intimidation and sometimes arrest as the local authorities side with the loggers.”89 The unregulated and often illegal extraction of timber puts local communities and economies at risk.90

In addition to these social problems, the loss of the rainforest in the Congo due to logging is leading to issues related to climate change. If current trends continue, according to Greenpeace, by 2050 deforestation in the Congo will release about the same amount of CO2 into the atmosphere as the United Kingdom has over the last sixty years.91 This spells trouble for the global community, not just the Congolese people. Greenpeace thus concludes that the international community and international donors like the World Bank must work with the Congolese government “to development alternative solutions” to their traditional development models.92

These environmental concerns must be among the pressing issues being addressed in the Congo, right alongside local peacebuilding and economic development initiatives. The WWF articulates the need for sustainable development:

Today, environmental issues are just one of the items on the ‘to-do’ list of several Congo River Basin countries. Better education and infrastructure, employment opportunities, improved public services, more foreign investments are some of the many priorities vying for support. Clearly, environmental concerns need to be well integrated in all of these areas if they are to be successful.93

91 Greenpeace.
92 Greenpeace.
93 WWF.
Indeed, development must be sustainable in every way in the Congo in order to be effective and to increase security and development.

**Engaging Local Actors and Structures**

Action at national and international governance levels is critical to developing peace and prosperity in the Congo. However, effort on the part of states, particularly the Congolese state, will not be enough. As Poku, Renwick, and Porto note, “the state in Africa has been much less part of the solution and rather more a major part of Africa’s security problems.”⁹⁴ They, among other scholars, argue for a people-centered approach that utilizes AU agencies, civil society initiatives, and the discourse of Africa’s intelligentsia.

Even though initiatives should commence at a local level, based off the input of local actors who understand the situation on the ground best, the Congolese government and the international community, in particular the United States, must be involved in fostering peace and sustainable development. The Congolese state must commit to building peace and economic prosperity in the Congo, and must be held accountable to these goals. The international community must be instrumental in this accountability, and should provide the necessary resources and support to make these goals a reality.

Local actors will need the support—financially, logistically, and diplomatically—of the government and the international community. The Congolese cannot establish nationwide peace and sustainable prosperity by themselves. As Poku, Renwick, and Porto write, “The international community’s role in providing sustained support to the initiatives being promoted in Africa by

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⁹⁴ Poku, Renwick, and Porto, 1170.
Africans, grounded in the developmental needs of everyday existence faced by millions of Africans, therefore remains critical and inescapable.”

Séverine Autesserre developed a study of the Congo’s transition from war to peace and democracy (2003-2006), drawing from 330 interviews, multi-sited ethnography, and document analysis to argue that “local agendas played a decisive role in sustaining local, national, and regional violence.” However, Autesserre says, the postconflict peacebuilding frame shaped the understanding of violence and intervention in such a way that local conflict resolution appeared irrelevant. It completely overlooked the decisive role of local agendas in sustaining violence. This frame was comprised of four elements: international actors labeled the Congo a “postconflict” situation; they believed that violence in the Congo was innate and therefore acceptable even in peacetime; they conceptualized international intervention as concerned only with the national and international realms; and they saw elections as a “workable, appropriate, and effective tool for state- and peacebuilding” as opposed to local conflict resolution. This four-part frame, Autesserre concludes, “authorized and justified specific practices and policies while precluding others, notably local conflict resolution, ultimately dooming the peacebuilding efforts.”

Recent work in comparative politics and international relations suggests that the continuation of violence during peace agreement implementation is at least partly driven by local

95 Poku, Renwick, and Porto, 1170.
97 Autesserre, 275.
99 Autesserre, 249.
agendas, yet international actors often fail to address the local causes of violence.\textsuperscript{100} Especially in modern Congolese history, local agendas have a source of violent conflict. Autesserre says,

Micro-level rivalries over land, resources, and traditional or administrative power produced a series of cleavages both at the local and at the national level. Most of the conflicts only involved only a few villages, communities, or provincial leaders—most notably the conflict between the Rwandophone minority and the “indigenous” communities of the Kivus—were reinforced by top-down manipulation by national and provincial actors.\textsuperscript{101}

Mobutu’s ruling strategy then enhanced local antagonisms, and the arrival of thousands of Rwandan Hutus after the genocide precipitated the two wars in the 1990s.

After 1999, most violence continued behind the official frontlines, with most of the fighting remaining concentrated in Eastern Congo, specifically the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, northern Katanga, and the district Ituri, while the northern and western areas of the country experienced relative stability. Civilians were the primary victims of the violence. More than 3.3 million died between 1996 and 2003, most of them in Eastern Congo.

Since the beginning of the first war, African and Western diplomats started supervising the Congolese peace processes. MONUC, the initial UN peacekeeping mission, became the largest and most expensive UN mission in the world. The peace agreements were ineffective for several years, but in June 2003 the warring parties reached a peace settlement, which, according to many international and Congolese interviewees of Autesserre, was imposed on them by the international community. During the years 2003-2006, the years officially dedicated to the transition from war to peace and democracy, “diplomats retained a tremendous influence on Congolese affairs, to the point that numerous top Congolese political leaders, international actors, and journalists equated the situation in the Congo to that of a ‘protectorate.’”\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{100} Autesserre, 250.
\textsuperscript{101} Autesserre, 256.
\textsuperscript{102} Autesserre, 258.
After June 2003, this international pressure led to a relative settlement and the assistance to, and manipulation of, Congolese militants by regional actors decreased. Important developments occurred at the national level: the official reunification of the country, the formation of a unified government, the preparation for democratic elections, and a progressive integration of the different armed groups into the national army. Yet more than 1,000 civilians continued to die every day. In late 2007, large-scale fighting destabilized North Kivu and local conflict persisted in fueling massive violence. In North Kivu, Kabila’s allies fought the RCD for provincial and local reasons, not national or regional ones. In South Kivu, local conflicts remained unresolved. Autesserre concludes that,

…the during the transition, just as during the war, violence was motivated not only by the regional and national causes usually emphasized in the civil war literature but also by longstanding bottom-up agendas, whose main instigators were villagers, traditional chiefs, community chiefs, or ethnic leaders. Local manifestations of violence, although often related to national or regional struggles, were also precipitated by distinctly local problems.

Autesserre does say, however, that local, national, and regional dimensions of the violence remained interlinked. The fact remains, though, that most of the massacres, human rights violations, and displacement occurred not on a national scale but were perpetuated by local actors.

Thus, “addressing local issues was key to ending violence and to ensuring the stability of the national and regional settlements.” Autesserre says that, because the causes of violence varied greatly between and within each province, peacebuilders should have tailored their strategies to specific local contexts. Diplomats and UN agencies, however, almost never got involved in local conflict resolution and instead relied on MONUSCO to quell local violence.

103 Autesserre, 258.
104 Autesserre, 258.
105 Autesserre, 260.
106 Autesserre, 260.
simply by being a deterrent presence. They left the responsibility for local peacebuilding to the Congolese authorities, religious leaders, and NGOs, all of whom were mostly unable to address all the local tensions.

The most important element of this flawed frame, according to Autesserre, was the labeling of the Congo as a “post-conflict” situation. The 2002 peace agreement signaled an end to the war for many diplomats, but most field-based actors initially contested the categorization of the Congo as post-conflict. However all actors eventually starting adopting the post-conflict language; NGOs and the Congolese people noticed the changes enacted by external actors as and interpreted them as cues that the Congo had indeed entered a post-conflict environment. They initiated development and post-conflict reconstruction programs, which reinforced the belief that the Congo was post-conflict, thereby diffusing this faulty interpretation further.\textsuperscript{107} This new categorization led international actors to use new tools that were appropriate for peaceful environments, not ones still embroiled in conflict.

One specific way the “post-conflict” designation hampered peacebuilding efforts was the inability of diplomats to meet with certain parties. Since the Congo was not at war, subnational actors could not be conceptualized as rebels or warring parties. The post-conflict designation drew a distinction between who could be a legitimate partner and who could not, and therefore who diplomats could negotiate with versus actors continuing to wage violence and were considered “illegal.” Mediation, then, between different combatants was now not an option because at least one of the parties was considered illegitimate.\textsuperscript{108}

Various human rights and humanitarian agencies wrote reports documenting the continuation of violence in the eastern Congo and pleading for immediate international assistance.

\textsuperscript{107} Autesserre, 262.
\textsuperscript{108} Autesserre, 263.
intervention. Unfortunately, their interpretation remained marginalized due to an understanding of violence in the Congo as normal, even in peacetime. This was another flaw in the post-conflict peacebuilding frame, as international actors imagined Congo to be a country of inherent turbulence and violence.

This understanding of violence as acceptable dates back to the nineteenth century, when the Belgian colonizers pictured the Congolese people as irrational savages and constructed their actions as senseless and foreign. Even in the twenty-first century, policymakers, journalists, and most people upheld the belief that the Congolese were brutal by nature and violence was normal for the Congo, often referring to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* to support this view. Of course, activists and Congolese civil society actors contested this understanding, but their interpretation remained marginalized. To sum, Autesserre writes that,

>The understanding of violence as normal strengthened the international lack of interest in the ongoing conflict, which reinforced the financial and human resources constraints on action at the local level, which in turn heightened the international actors’ feelings of powerlessness. This vicious cycle was interrupted only rarely, when unusually shocking events took place.109

When especially shocking events did take place, international actors did intervene, but they continued to blame regional and national leaders for the shocking violence in the Kivus (eastern Congo) and the goal of international involvement remained to bring the violence back down to a “normal” level.110

International involvement thus remained solely at the macro level. This understanding of intervention at the macro level as the only legitimate task for international actors predetermined the peace- and state-building strategy of choice to be elections. Autesserre writes,

Reconstructing a state entails many measures, including the (re)building of a bureaucracy, a justice system, effective and disciplined coercion forces, and the selection of appropriate leaders. In the Congo, the international peacebuilders focused disproportionately on one of these tasks: the selection of leaders.

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109 Autesserre, 265.

110 Autesserre, 266.
through elections. Apart from ad hoc action aimed at stemming crises or at ensuring that elections would proceed smoothly, the other tasks were postponed to the postelectoral period.\textsuperscript{111}

During the transition, all embassies and UN agencies considered elections to be the first priority and the main goal of the transition, and apportioned their resources accordingly.

This preoccupation with elections reflects the dominant “liberal peace” paradigm in Western policymaking, which views democratic elections as the best tool for state-building and thus for peacebuilding. Autesserre says, “Instinctively, international peacebuilders saw free and fair elections as the primary political institution that could connect democracy assistance and peacebuilding.”\textsuperscript{112} This instinct, however, was misguided in the Congo, where, “it was neither natural nor obvious that…international actors should choose elections as their main state- and peacebuilding strategy.”\textsuperscript{113}

Autesserre points out that elections can only be democratic, and thus provide legitimacy, when certain preconditions exist, such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press, which Congo lacked during the transition period. Some Congolese and international actors warned that, “elections organized within the short timeframe of the transition would fuel ethnic tensions and generate a renewed cycle of violence.”\textsuperscript{114} In fact, in the years following the elections, fighting and riots took place in the capital and various provinces.

Not only was this a poor strategy, election organization proved incredibly difficult: “Logistical, financial, and human resources constraints hampered the organization of free and fair elections to a similar degree as their hampering of local peacebuilding work.”\textsuperscript{115} However, international actors viewed these constraints manageable in the case of elections and not local

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\item \textsuperscript{111} Autesserre, 269.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Autesserre, 270.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Autesserre, 270.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Autesserre, 270.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Autesserre, 270.
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peacebuilding because election organization was something concrete, a technical endeavor. They considered local peacebuilding as “a multidimensional, abstract problem with no predefined solutions and indicators.” Elections yield quantifiable results; the success of local conflict resolution programs is much less tangible. Elections are a short-term duty with a clear beginning and end; local peacebuilding is a long-term endeavor. It was only because of the massive awareness-raising programs financed by foreign donors, Autesserre argues, that urban Congolese came to regard elections as the solution to the Congo’s problems.117

International actors clearly did not address the situation in Congo as effectively as they might have. Their attempts to grow the “security-development nexus” and build a liberal peace did not include the vital local component. This is why Autesserre suggests a new approach to international interventions, and says international actors should question the widespread understandings of violence and intervention that make local peacebuilding appear irrelevant or inappropriate which would lead to alternative framings of the situation. In her book The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding, Autesserre provides the following policy recommendations: facilitate cultural change; develop expertise and bureaucratic structures for local peacebuilding; work through local actors whenever possible and intervene directly if necessary; conceive of local peacebuilding as a part of the broader task of peace- and state-building; and consider a new approach to postconflict intervention.118

One example of building peace through local efforts is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)’s efforts to support a government project to replant banana trees in an area extremely affected by violence, the town of Minova in South Kivu. The farmers receiving

116 Autesserre, 271.
117 Autesserre, 272.
banana shoots are those who were forced to flee and those who returned and must start over. Through growing bananas, these farmers can sell their produce locally and receive a locally-set price. The ICRC’s aim in such projects is to kick-start food production by people who have suffered the effects of armed conflict. The ICRC also supports local farmers’ associations.119

Other organizations, such as the Eastern Congo Initiative (ECI) founded by Ben Affleck, seek out local groups already working towards peace and sustainable development, and empower them. ECI “believes that these local, community-based approaches are the key to creating a successful society in eastern Congo.”120 ECI advocates on behalf of the eastern Congolese people by: increasing investments from private and public funding to strategically support established Congolese-led programs that build safe and sustainable communities, raising public awareness about the need the region, and driving policy that increases United States’ engagement in the Congo. ECI also supports Congolese organizations through direct grants to support local solutions for survivors of sexual violence, vulnerable children and former child soldiers, and community-level peace and reconciliation programs.121

**Fostering Creative Responses**

The recent international response to the conflict in the Congo through MONUSCO reflects a typical resort to force to counter violence. It can be easily argued that the end of M23 was largely due to forceful UN intervention; however, rarely do policymakers and analysts offer other creative solutions to situations of seemingly intractable conflict. Policy aimed at furthering


121 *Eastern Congo Initiative.*
the security-development nexus usually holds this assumption of force being sometimes necessary.

But one area of research that has yet to be explored is the role of nonviolent action, or “civil resistance,” in promoting security and development. John Paul Lederach challenges practitioners and policymakers to use their “moral imagination” to find creative ways to address conflict.122 Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan provide compelling evidence, in their recent book Why Civil Resistance Works, of nonviolent struggles being more successful than violent ones.123 Nonviolent resistance presents fewer obstacles to moral and physical involvement and commitment, mobilizes more participants which enhances resilience, provides greater opportunities for tactical innovation and civic disruption, and ushers in more durable and internally peaceful democracies which are less likely to regress into civil war. Perhaps we should think of ways to build peace and sustainable development in the Congo that utilizes such an approach. Nonviolent resistance is certainly more sustainable, as suggested by Chenoweth and Stephan.

**Conclusion**

The conflict in the DRC is one that reflects numerous intertwined security and development challenges. Poku, Renwick, and Porto articulate the security-nexus in the Congo brilliantly: “Redefining security in Africa is fundamentally a problem of sustainable development. It is a classic catch-22: chronic underdevelopment in Africa has generated the conflicts that have merely served to justify the conditions of underdevelopment and the

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economic and social injustices lead to further conflict.”124 After years of seemingly intractable conflict, eastern Congo is still deeply torn by violence, its people suffering from poverty and war.

The security-development nexus appears to provide a way to frame the issues still facing the Congo, but the framework is incomplete, so using it as a way to understand how the world, the region, and the nation should respond to the Congo’s crises will ultimately prove ineffective. Instead, the nexus must be redefined, deepened and broadened, to include other elements critical to true peace and development. The nexus must address environmental concerns, engage local actors and structures, and imagine creative responses to the violence, as outlined above.

Incorporating the nexus into policy, however, requires a great quantity and quality of attention and resources, much less a redefined nexus. As Stearns cautions, “We cannot do peacemaking on the cheap, with few diplomats and no resources. It will not only fail but also lead to simplistic policies that can do more harm than good.”125 Stearns also is wise when he reminds us that before we formulate policy, however well-intentioned, we must understand the Congo on its own terms. He writes,

> The story of the Congo is dense and complicated. It demands that all involved think hard. This means diving into the nuts and bolts of Congolese politics and working to help the more legitimate and responsible leaders rise to the top. This means better, more aggressive, and smarter peacekeeping and conflict resolution; more foreign aid that is conditional on political reforms and not just on fiscal performance; and more responsible corporate investment and trade with the Congo.126

This is exactly the role for the international community: empowering local leaders and engaging smarter peacebuilding, foreign aid, and investment. The United States can, and should, play a critical role in each of these efforts in addition to others, such as establishing a clean minerals trade and supporting local initiatives to heal wounds, build peace, and develop communities.

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124 Poku, Renwick, and Porto, 1170.
125 Stearns, 336.
126 Stearns, 336.
Stearns has further wisdom to offer policymakers, analysts, leaders, scholars, and practitioners:

There are no easy solutions for the Congo, no silver bullets to produce accountable government and peace. The ultimate fate of the country rests with the Congolese people themselves. Westerners also have a role to play, in part because of our historical debt to the country, in part because it is the right thing to do. This does not mean imposing a foreign vision on the country or simply sending food and money. It means understanding it and its politics and rhythms on their own terms, and then doing our part in providing an environment conducive to growth and stability. 127

Those external actors who were involved in the Congo must accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions, and must commit partnering with the Congolese in pursuing security and development. More importantly, the form this partnership takes should embrace not only the “security-development nexus.” International actors must partner with Congolese actors to build a just peace that is durable, as resilient as the Congolese people, and to foster development that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable.

127 Stearns, 337.