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AFRICA'S LEAKY GIANT

According to the un's Human Development Index, the Democratic Republic of Congo is just about the world's worst place to live.* Bad things in Niger, and some very marginal improvements in the drc itself, have recently moved it up from the bottom spot it occupied in 2011, but you get the picture. Not incidental to this dismal ranking was a seven- or eight-year international war in which, according to the *Lancet*, nearly four million people died.[1] There are reservations to be entered about both of these results: the kind of complex comparisons included in indexes like the undp's are capricious, with rankings changing according to the relative weight you assign to each of the proxy indicators—life expectancy, education, per capita gdp. The narrow range of the proxies included also conveys a rather stunted idea of what is, at times, the most delightful place. One can imagine that if the Human Development Index had given great pop music, a sense of irony, or antelope stew with sorrel and palm nuts their due, then Congo would have scored rather better. Likewise, it is hard to know what to make of mortality estimates in a region where there has been no census since 1984. Whatever the exact figure, only a small proportion of the deaths during the Second Congo War were caused by direct violence: the majority succumbed to collapses in food production, health systems and wider infrastructure.

While exacerbated by war, these deteriorations can themselves be traced much further back in time, across three decades of economic regression, in which Congolese gdp shrunk to less than a fifth of its former peak and industrial capitalism, however underdeveloped, ceased to be the dominant mode of production.[2] This essay will examine the origins of the drc's current malaise and, in the process, take issue with some of the arguments put forward in the burgeoning literature on the country. For though it gets few column inches in Western newspapers, the catastrophic mess that Congo represents has generated an impressive

Democratic Republic of Congo

Distribution of Languages in the DRC

Kikongo	*Lingala*	*Tshiluba*	*Swahili*
Bas-Congo	Kinshasa	West Kasai	Orientale
Bandundu	Bas-Congo	East Kasai	Katanga
	Bandundu		Maniema
	Équateur		South Kivu
	Orientale		North Kivu

quantity and variety of serious scholarship. The DRC is not only the largest country in Sub-Saharan Africa, covering nearly a million square miles, and, at an estimated 67 million, its third most populous (the capital Kinshasa is now a mega-city, its breeze-block sprawl encompassing somewhere between 7 and 9 million souls).[3] It is also, symbolically and geographically, the heart of the continent. As the biggest 'failed state' in the world, nowhere offers a broader canvas for rumination about the wealth of nations, the failings of the inter-state system or the condition of Africa itself.

The central question at stake here may be posed like this: why have the processes of accumulation failed to produce a consolidation of capital, an economically powerful ruling class and sustained patterns of national investment? The standard explanations—low demographic pressure, reliance on primary commodities, deterioration in the terms of trade, structural adjustment, a violent history, corruption—cannot in themselves explain why the post-independence trajectory of Central Africa diverges so far from that of other late-developing regions. This article will also criticize the two currently most popular, though contrasting, diagnoses: first, that too many restrictions on markets and free enterprise stifle growth; and second, that African forms of clientelism, or 'neo-patrimonialism', oblige the ruling class to dissipate resources that would otherwise give rise to capitalist forms of accumulation. These arguments go hand-in-hand with a marked shift in African studies, away from explanations that favour 'dependency' and towards those that emphasize 'agency'. Africa's problems are, so this story goes, made at home—foreigners are merely used by regional actors as part of indigenous political projects. On this reading, poverty, loan-dependence and

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* I would like to thank Ian Phimister, Zoe Marriage and Patrick Neveling.

[1] Benjamin Coghlan, Richard Brennan, Pascal Ngoy, David Dofara, Brad Otto, Mark Clements and Tony Stewart, 'Mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo: a nationwide survey', *The Lancet*, vol. 367, no. 9504, 7 January 2006.

[2] Andreas Exenberger and Simon Hartman, 'Extractive institutions in the Congo: checks and balances in the *longue durée*', in Frans Buelens and Ewout Frankema, eds, *Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development: The Belgian Congo and the Netherlands Indies compared*, London 2013, p. 31.

[3] One hears figures of up to 13 million bandied about, but UN–Habitat estimated 9 million for 2010: *State of the World's Cities 2009–10: Bridging the Urban Divide*, Nairobi 2008. In conversation with colleagues in the demography department at the University of Kinshasa, they expressed scepticism about anything over 7 million.

violence are political strategies chosen by African elites.[4] A corollary of the 'local agency' approach is the rejection of theories that identify Western capitalism or imperialism as part of the explanation for Congo's plight. Arguing in part against Congolese conspiracy theories that depict 'the whites' as committed to a project of central African balkanization, a majority of Western scholars now tend to argue that the DRC's problems do not have a 'singular logic' and interpretations should therefore resist attempts at 'simplification'.[5] According to this version of events, the 'Congo problem' results from too *little* Western interest: conflict minerals, or the deals signed by dodgy businessmen, are only the fault of core capitalist countries in a very limited sense—as disinterested sins of omission, committed by rich countries too lazy to engage with the Congo's complexities and too apathetic to legislate.

This essay goes against these trends. Denying the 'agency' of powerful outsiders is even more implausible than denying it to powerful Africans, and urban myths should not be used to discredit all theories of political interference. To be sure, such elites don't always agree, and don't always get their way; the social outcomes that result are, as always, not quite what anyone intended. Nevertheless, analysis needs to be clear about which groups have greater leverage. And while there is much to be said for 'complexity', there are serious problems with the ways in which this trope is used to explain the Congo's trajectory since the end of the Cold War while excluding, as causal factors, the (complex!) dynamics of the DRC's integration into international capital circuits and the international state system that defends them. What follows, then, hopes to combine a critique of these prevailing explanations with a disciplined investigation

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[4] The two most influential works in this vein are Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, London 1993, and Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Oxford 1999.

[5] John Clark, Miles Larmer and Ann Laudati, 'Neither War nor Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Profiting and coping amid violence and disorder', *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 40, no. 135, 2013. This perspective informs some of the best recent research on the DRC, to which my account is greatly indebted; critique of this aspect of these authors' analyses entails no dismissal of their scholarship. See for example Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of Congo and the Great War of Africa*, New York 2011; Gérard Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War: The 'Congolese' Conflict and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa*, London 2009; Filip Reyntjens, *The Great African War: Congo and Regional Geopolitics, 1996–2006*, Cambridge 2010; René Lemarchand, *The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*, Philadelphia 2009; Thomas Turner, *The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth and Reality*, London 2007.

into the DRC's political and economic path since independence. It will pay particular attention to the processes by which integration into the world economy has helped to undermine local capital formation while, overseen by a weak state, the wealth of the country has leaked away abroad. First, however, it will briefly consider the impact of pre-colonial conditions of instability and coercion, and the developmental legacies of the late colonial state.

Demographics and development

An influential account of central Africa's history focuses on the problems that land abundance and low population pose for the consolidation of political power. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the Congo basin, much like Western Europe, underwent an increase in both economic activity and war. But while for some European states internal and external conflicts were a laboratory for new and more productive forms of debt financing, African leaders tended to raise the capital needed to finance authority by selling the means of production, both human and ecological. Historians have located the origins of this strategy in Africa's relative labour shortage: unable to control subordinates who could easily disappear into the vast tracts of unoccupied land when things got tough, rulers saw forms of 'outsourced exploitation', notably the transatlantic slave trade, as an attractive alternative.[6] There is substantial empirical evidence in favour of such a hypothesis: labour was clearly the pre-eminent factor of production in these low-tech, agrarian societies; a significant part of a population that was relatively sparse to begin with, and already severely affected by the epidemics and low fertility caused by European encroachment, was sold on to obtain imported currency objects—bolts of cloth, muskets, copper wire, cowries, etc. The other trade goods that capitalism demanded of African modes of production, like ivory or rubber, were reliant on the harvesting of natural systems until their collapse.[7]

[6] Influential variations on this argument have been put forward by, amongst others, Fredrick Cooper, 'Africa's Pasts and Africa's Historians', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2000; Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, Princeton 2000; Gareth Austin, 'Resources, techniques and strategies south of the Sahara: Revising the factor endowments perspective on African economic development, 1500–2000', *Economic History Review*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2008.

[7] African rubber was gathered from a creeper: harvesting involved killing the plant.

In this way central African social formations do appear to have become locked into a dynamic, reinforced by European merchants, where individual prosperity—conceived of as rights in people and theatrical dispersals of wealth over retinue—became dependent on aggregate impoverishment, by exporting, or pushing beyond breaking point, the means of production. These factors seem to have produced an instability that has permeated wider aspects of social life. Thus the frantic fluidity, inventiveness and creativity of Congolese cultural forms, social structures and political formations—but also their incessant tendency towards fragmentation and division—reflect desperate attempts by people to control or remain attached to networks of patronage; patronage that is always leaking out of the region, networks that are themselves constantly in the process of being violently disrupted. But while demographic explanations provide important parameters, low populations on their own explain little. Indeed, densely populated Rwanda and Burundi suggest the opposite conclusion. Since independence, these 'false twins' have been open sores of violence and Malthusian poverty, with genocides and mass migrations repeatedly destabilizing their neighbours—above all the Congo itself—though neither has been subject to the features generally invoked as the 'deep' causes beneath central Africa's current woes: spared the worst incursions of the European or Arab slave trades, both have fertile soil and a relatively old state tradition.[8] The relationship between earlier trajectories and the present problems of the DRC or the wider region are not straightforward. The violence of economic extraction and the low populations in the nineteenth-century Congo basin are part of the story, but their impact cannot simply be read off in the politico-economic situation of today.

Violent extraction reached its apogee under the Belgians, following the establishment of King Leopold II's Congo Free State in 1885, gifted by the European powers assembled at the Congress of Berlin. Seeking to generate a fast profit, the 'Free State' began to exploit commodities that required little investment. Principal among these was rubber, for which industrial demand had soared after the invention of 'vulcanization', a process that rendered it heat-resistant. It was initially harvested from the wild, extracted as sap from a variety of tropical plants, trees and creepers found in remote, rainforest regions. Most of those involved in the harvesting

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[8] Lemarchand, *Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*.

of wild rubber—the inhabitants of the tropical forests of the Congo and Amazon basins—were not fully integrated into the capitalist system and could only be persuaded to meet the rapidly growing demand through a series of ever more violent impositions: Leopold's 'Free State' was a paradigmatic *Raubwirtschaft* (predatory economy). Adding economic urgency to this coercive dynamic was the fact that rubber-tree plantations had been established in Malaya and elsewhere and it was apparent that the high price of wild rubber was not going to last forever.

The incredible brutality of social relations in the early colonial period led to falls in the population on a scale that may have been even greater than those wrought by the transatlantic slave trade.[9] Disruption and disease killed more people than direct violence, and population decline was linked to an epidemic of venereal disease that drastically cut fertility. But the disruption was obviously caused by the incursion of capitalist trade, and the upsurge in venereal disease was closely connected to the brutalizing of social relations, which extended to the sexual sphere.[10] In some respects, this drew on longer histories of violence—rubber and ivory trading began before Leopold's rule, and the area had been at the epicentre of European and Arab slave trades. Once again, Africans were the victims, but were also intermediaries and perpetrators.[11] The Belgians, like the slave and commodity traders before them, relied heavily on local specialists in violence, investing authority in a series of warlord figures whose retinues did most of the dirty work. This 'decentralized despotism' has been invoked as another explanation for the failure of post-independence

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[9] The lowest estimate is that there was a 20 per cent decline in the population of the wider Central African region; others put the figure close to 50 per cent. Given that the estimates of excess mortality range from 3,000,000 to 13,000,000, perhaps the only reliable conclusion is that it was a large decline. Isidore Ndaywel é Nziem's well respected *Histoire générale du Congo: de l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique*, Paris 1998, is the source for the highest figure.

[10] Nancy Rose Hunt, 'An Acoustic Register, Tenacious Images, and Congolese Scenes of Rape and Repetition', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 23, no. 2, May 2008.

[11] Aldwin Roes, 'Towards a History of Mass Violence in the Etat Indépendant du Congo', *South African Historical Journal*, vol. 62, no. 4, 2010; Robert Harms, *River of Wealth, River of Sorrow: The Central Zaire Basin in the Era of the Slave and Ivory Trade, 1500–1891*, New Haven 1981; Harms, 'The World Abir Made: The Margina-Lopori Basin, 1885–1903', *African Economic History*, no. 12, 1983; Jean-Luc Vellut, 'Réflexions sur la question de la violence dans l'histoire de l'Etat independant du Congo', in Pamphile Mabiala Mantuba-Ngoma, ed., *La nouvelle histoire du Congo: mélanges eurafricains offerts à Frans Bontinck*, Paris 2004.

Africa to thrive.[12] It is certainly a crucial factor in the subsequent woes of the region, but such alliances were the stock-in-trade of commercial dealings in many parts of the world. On their own they are an insufficient explanation for what sets central Africa apart.

After Leopold

But 'red rubber' and the wider economy that accompanied colonial plunder differed from pre-colonial violence in some important ways. By the 1920s, at least, this involved not merely pillage but also processes of state-led primitive accumulation, with the resources garnered providing the seed capital for a later period of industrial-paternalist development. Forced labour was still important, especially in the rural sector, but there was a marked shift from despotic to capital-intensive forms of exploitation.[13] While it is less talked about in the West than the Free State era, this later industrial-paternalist period is much more present in popular memory in the DRC—as also in Belgium. In order to comprehend the disasters to come, it is necessary to understand something of this late colonial state. The institutions which structured African lives in the post-Leopold colony were fourfold: the state, the church, the corporations and the 'customary' sphere.[14] The corporations which dominated the economy were predominantly Belgian-owned, but British capital also played an important role. Alongside Unilever's palm-oil plantations, the Tanganyka Concession Limited (TCL) owned a 16 per cent stake of the Union Minière de Haut Katanga (UMHK), the vast and startlingly profitable complex of cobalt and copper mines in the south-east of the country. The churches, above all the Catholic Church, were responsible for education and health provision. They were thought critical to the colonial project in ideological terms, 'capable of changing the native mentality' with ideas of discipline and authority.[15] Beneath this, life in the rural

[12] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism,* Princeton 1996.

[13] Lord Leverhulme's industrial complex was heavily dependent on a coercive labour regime in the palm-oil plantations of Bandundu, which spanned most of the post-Free State period.

[14] The next three paragraphs draw on three seminal works: Crawford Young, 'Background to Independence', *Transition*, no. 25, 1966; Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, Madison, WI 1985; and Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*, London 2002.

[15] Catholic cleric quoted in Young, 'Background to Independence', p. 35.

sector was run by 'medallioned chiefs', who combined elements of the intermediary system inherited from the pre-colonial and Free State period with bureaucratic and ersatz-traditional functions. The state itself, headed by around 10,000 white administrators, penetrated all the other spheres, offering generous concessions to corporations and subsidies to the Catholic Church, while overseeing the rural hinterlands via the 'micro-administrative grid' of officially appointed chiefs, who were given the unpopular but profitable responsibility for collecting taxes and recruiting labour from the villages.[16]

At independence the Congo had become, after South Africa, the most industrialized country in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 35 per cent of the adult population engaged in wage labour.[17] For this sizable minority, the 1950s had been a period of rising incomes and expectations. In an effort to stabilize its workforce, the UMHK had improved pay and conditions for its employees in the south-eastern copper and cobalt mines; from the mid-40s onwards, turnover of staff was just 3 per cent, whereas across the border in British Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), the copper mines had a 50 per cent turnover.[18] Education was also expanded in the late-colonial period, pensions, child allowances and a minimum wage were introduced for (some) African workers, and the public health system was said to be 'the best in the whole tropical world'.[19] Yet the benefits of social transformation were highly uneven, and deep fault-lines traversed the colonial state. While the towns experienced a rapid advance in living standards, the countryside, home to perhaps 90 per cent of Congolese in 1955, remained a zone of poverty and forced labour.[20] Areas of extreme abandonment were sometimes quite close to the most privileged enclaves of welfare capitalism. One such was the Kwilu district, not far from the capital Kinshasa (then Leopoldville). Another was north Katanga, which was relatively close to the industrial complexes of the UMHK in the south

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[16] Young and Turner, *Rise and Decline*, p. 35.

[17] Michel Merlier, *Le Congo de la colonisation belge à l'indépendance*, Paris 1962, p. 166; Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War*, p. 76; Frans Buelens and Danny Cassimon, 'The industrialization of the Belgian Congo', in Buelens and Frankema, eds, *Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development*.

[18] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila*, p. 74. Although trade unions for black workers were legalized after the war, just 6,160 of almost 1.2m Congolese wage-workers had been unionized by 1955—less than half of one per cent: David van Reybrouck, *Congo: The Epic History of a People*, London 2014, pp. 213–4.

[19] Jean Stengers, quoted in Young and Turner, *Rise and Decline*, p. 38.

[20] Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila*, p. 73.

of the province. Kwilu and the north of Katanga would be centres for violent pro-Lumumba resistance in the years that followed independence.

A further contortion in this uneven social geography was caused by the Belgian practice of favouring peoples from one geographical area and then 'exporting' them to do work in another, setting in train processes of intense economic rivalry and ethnogenesis. The initial cause of such favouritism could be quite contingent, but the social dynamics set in motion then acquired a strong degree of path dependence. Favoured groups received greater access to education and were considered particularly suitable for certain types of work. Over time, members of these groups—by now self-identifying—acquired networks that they used to secure jobs for friends, relatives and ethnic confrères 'back home'. This imperative to help ethnic fellows was often felt all the more acutely given the fierce resentment that such groups had, by now, come to attract from other Congolese.[21] The epicentre of rubber-based primitive accumulation lay in the forested region in the north of the country, while the subsequent industrial expansion this permitted was concentrated in the copper mines of Katanga in the south-east. The violence necessary for effecting this accumulation had been carried out by the Force Publique, the white-officered body that would become the Belgian Congo's army, and in the main the ranks had been recruited within the northern regions. One group particularly favoured were the Bangala, 'the people of the river'—an ethnic category the Belgians had more or less conjured from nothing, assigning the term, and a supposedly 'superior' and 'warlike nature', to the heterogeneous peoples who lived along the middle stretches of the Congo River.[22] As independence suddenly appeared upon the horizon and Western intelligence agencies scrabbled around to find Congolese leaders who could 'get things done', a number of their most useful contacts traced their origins to the forests of the north. Among them was Joseph Désiré Mobutu, a native of Équateur province, educated by the Christian Brothers, who had served in the Force Publique for seven years before turning his hand to journalism.

Perhaps the most crippling weakness of the state lay at the apex of the system. At independence in June 1960 there were just sixteen university graduates in a total population of 20 million: the first university, with thirty-three students and seven professors, had been opened in 1954.

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[21] Thomas Turner, *Congo*, Cambridge 2013, pp. 74–119.
[22] See also Turner, *The Congo Wars*, pp. 56–7.

There were no Congolese doctors, engineers, lawyers or economists—and no black officers in the Force Publique either.[23] Educational advancement and career progression for Africans was severely and explicitly limited; the future Congolese president Laurent Kabila's father had arrived at the highest possible position available for an African on becoming 'main postal clerk second class'.[24] *Pas d'élite, pas d'ennuis*—'no elite, no trouble'—was a popular catchphrase in Belgian colonial circles.[25] In the settlement hurriedly put together when agitation for independence became irresistible, almost all of the top grades within the civil and military services were still occupied by Belgians. The main levers of economic power would remain in Belgian hands.[26] It was made clear that for the majority of Africans, independence would offer little prospect of improvement. The commander of the Force Publique, General Émile Janssens, famously explained the situation to his troops by writing on a blackboard: 'Before independence = After independence', triggering the mutiny that precipitated a slide into chaos.

Stillbirth of a nation

There is no doubt that Western forces played a central role in the botched and bloody processes that followed, from the secession of Katanga to the murder of Patrice Lumumba and elevation of Mobutu, who had been taken up by the Belgians in 1957, and became a key member of the close-knit 'Binza group' centred around the CIA station chief in Kinshasa, Larry Devlin.[27] To understand Western hostility to Lumumba

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[23] Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, pp. 218, 266.

[24] Eric Kennes, *Essai biographique sur Laurent Désiré Kabila*, Paris 2003, p. 18.

[25] Crawford Young, 'Background to Independence'.

[26] Mobutu later discussed his own role in the pre-independence talks with surprising candour: 'There I sat, a silly, unmannered journalist, at the same table with the great white sharks of Belgian finance!'—'I was like one of those cowboys in a western who lets himself be bamboozled time and again by professional con men . . . our partners in the discussion used a whole series of legal and technical ruses to successfully safeguard the hold which the multinationals and the Belgian capitalists had on the Congolese pocketbook.' Van Reybrouck, *Congo*, pp. 262–3.

[27] Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station, Congo: A Memoir of 1960–67*, New York 2007, pp. 142–5. Named after the affluent Kinshasa neighbourhood in which they lived, the Binza group also included the Congolese foreign minister, Justin Bomboko and Victor Nendaka, head of the security forces. A good recruiter of agents will forge strong emotional bonds, and all of these men seem to have become part of the CIA 'family'—something that explains the brotherly warmth later evident between Mobutu and George Bush Sr.

it is necessary to look at the economic conjuncture the new government confronted at independence. The infant state had inherited a higher debt burden than other colonies in Africa; the tax base was narrower and over-reliant on rent from concessions, while most of the downstream profits generated by Congolese commodities were made in Belgium.[28] The obvious conclusion was that, to be viable, the state would have to get a better deal from the Belgian and British-owned copper and cobalt mines in Katanga. Global copper prices were high and Western leaders were nervous about any suggestion of economic nationalism.[29] The sense of alarm was heightened by the fact that Katanga had supplied the uranium used to destroy Hiroshima. In London and Brussels, hostility to Lumumba was also shot through with far-right and white-supremacist ideology—Janssens lived out his span in Belgium deeply involved with far-right politics, while independent Katanga had its cheerleaders in the Conservative Party's Monday Club.[30] But it was also wrapped up with an attention to profits: the average return on industrial investments in the Belgian Congo during the years leading up to independence had been 12 per cent.[31]

When the governor of Katanga, Moise Tshombe, took advantage of the Army mutiny to declare the province's independence in July 1960, his move was strongly backed by the UMHK, which immediately loaned the new state 1.25 billion Belgian francs and began to pay its taxes directly to Tshombe. While there was a domestic constituency for independence in the south of the province, above all among the Lunda, it was fiercely opposed in the north, where the Luba-Katanga were in the majority.[32] Flush with UMHK money and surrounded by Belgian advisors, the Katanga government recruited a force of white mercenaries who committed a series of atrocities. One of the figures formed by this conjuncture was Laurent Kabila; from the Luba-Katanga group himself, he was one of the young militants in Jeunesse Balubakat, pitted against

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[28] Leigh Gardner, 'Fiscal policy in the Belgian Congo in comparative perspective', in Buelens and Frankema, eds, *Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development*.

[29] Ian Phimister, 'Corporate Profit and Race in Central African Copper Mining, 1946–1958', *The Business History Review*, vol. 85, no. 4, Winter 2011.

[30] Susan Williams, *Who Killed Hammarskjöld? The UN, The Cold War, and White Supremacy in Africa*, New York 2011.

[31] Buelens and Cassemon, 'The industrialization of the Belgian Congo', p. 241.

[32] For historical reasons Luba from Katanga and Luba from Kasai consider themselves distinct ethnicities: indeed, they have often been politically antagonistic.

Tshombe. But though the war had a strongly ethnic character, there were also class and generational aspects to the struggle. Many 'elders' within the Luba-Katanga—older men who had been privileged as part of the state, either as Belgian-appointed 'chiefs' or as petty functionaries—also supported Tshombe's separatist party, CONAKAT, as the protégé of white capital. Kabila's own father was one such elder: he was executed by his son's militia.[33]

Within twelve weeks of the independence ceremonies, Lumumba had been ousted. Dulles had cabled Devlin ten days before to say his removal was 'a high priority'.[34] The UN troops that Lumumba had naively called in to put down the secession had an American commander. They effectively safeguarded Tshombe's regime, and allowed Lumumba to be overthrown by Mobutu and Joseph Kasavubu in September 1960, after he had appealed to Moscow—unavailingly—for help. Devlin mentions in his memoirs that he 'explored the feasibility' of killing the Congolese leader, acting on a request from Eisenhower, but it seems to have been Belgian forces that did the deed.[35] With Lumumba out of the way, and the CIA working closely with the new central government, Washington changed its line on Katanga, now seeing the continuing warfare there as a source of destabilization. In late 1962 Kennedy authorized an all-out assault by the UN. This brought Tshombe's surrender and the reintegration of the province in January 1963. The externally circumscribed limits to Congolese autonomy had been clearly defined.

Mobutu's Zaire

But if he was in part a CIA creation,[36] there was a significant level of popular support for Mobutu in 1965 when, as Army chief, he moved to 'clear away the squabbling politicians' and assumed full emergency powers, proclaiming himself Lumumba's true heir. Buoyed up by high copper

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[33] Kennes, *Essai biographique sur Laurent Désiré Kabila*.

[34] Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, London and New York 2001, p. 17.

[35] Devlin, *Chief of Station*, p. 260; De Witte, *Assassination of Lumumba*, chapter 5.

[36] US National Security Council official Roger Harris estimated that Mobutu may have received $150 million in direct payments from the CIA during the first ten years of his reign, not including funds diverted from military and foreign-aid programmes: Steve Askin and Carole Collins, 'External Collusion with Kleptocracy: Can Zaire Recapture Its Stolen Wealth?', *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 20, no. 57, July 1993.

prices and generous Western loans, Mobutu initiated a lavishly funded campaign of cultural nationalism that included renaming the country as Zaire. His economic advisers organized a successful devaluation of the currency, curbing wages and inflation; trade unions were brought under government control. Nationalization of the UMHK—subsequently called Gécamines—in 1966 gave a sheen of popular legitimacy to the regime's economic policy, though the deal was a con: the UMHK's parent firm, the Société Générale de Belgique, was granted a lucrative contract to manage the state-owned company and continued to market Gécamines copper for years, with a hefty mark-up; foreign companies still reaped the downstream profits on processing Zaire's ores.

From the early 70s, when copper prices plummeted, foreign loans became an important addition to mineral rents. To begin with most of the money came from private creditors and was often used to pay for grandiose projects, like the Inga hydroelectric dams. These initial loans did leave some infrastructure in place, but there was clearly a large amount of *folie de grandeur* involved, with scope for kickbacks on a massive scale.[37] From the other side of the deal, anticipation of a stake in Zaire's economic growth surely ceased to be a realistic ambition long before private lending by Western banks actually dried up. In this, Zaire's catastrophe emerges not as *sui generis*, but as an extreme variant of a wider pattern of financial *mise-en-dépendance*. Investment dynamics in faraway places may have pushed apparently irrational investment behaviour elsewhere. One incentive came from 'loan origination fees', paid upfront to the lender. Loans brought lucrative business to Western financial centres, with the money often re-transferred abroad into accounts managed by the creditor banks. Private lending started to decline from the mid-70s, and by the early 80s had largely been replaced by loans from Western governments and multilateral financial institutions, which in theory came with tougher conditions. But for this staunch Cold War ally, IMF and World Bank evaluations proved

[37] In 2000, when Congolese debts were in excess of $13 billion, nearly 80 per cent of this sum related back to private loans for infrastructure projects made before 1976. Four big projects accounted for 60 per cent of this, the largest being the Inga hydroelectric project and the high-tension power lines from the hydroelectric station to the mines of Katanga. This added a billion dollars to the national debt; perhaps 7 per cent went to Mobutu in kickbacks: Askin and Collins, 'External Collusion with Kleptocracy'.

remarkably understanding; in 1986 the IMF described Mobutu's economic policies as 'broadly satisfactory', and lamented the fact that his efforts had not been rewarded with larger increases in foreign loans and grants.[38]

In the Zairian system that consolidated itself in the 70s and 80s, a small political inner core—as much a court as a class—would be kept on board with appropriated assets and spadefuls of cash derived from import monopolies, rents on mineral resources and international loans channelled directly into Mobutu's account. Confidential World Bank reports noted that in 1978 the governor of the Zairian central bank had instructed Gécamines to deposit 30 per cent of its export earnings into a presidential account, while the following year, off-the-books sales included 200 tons of cobalt to Switzerland, 10,000 tons of copper to South Africa, and 20,000 tons to China.[39] Clothed in the vocabulary of economic nationalism, the 1970s 'Zairianization' programme amounted to little more than a chaotic grab for medium-sized firms and assets by the ruling class, which left the multinationals well alone. Much of the Zairian business elite built their subsequent fortunes on assets acquired though Zairianization.[40] This was accompanied with constant reminders of their precariousness—a spell in prison was as much the mark of the inner circle as a Swiss bank account. The wages of government employees were paid through printing money: a strategy that, in the absence of adequate economic resources to back it up, had predictable inflationary results. The rest—the vast majority—would have to survive as best they could.[41] On one calculation, median living standards declined by over 2 per cent a year under Mobutu, with over 70 per cent of the population

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[38] James Boyce and Léonce Ndikumana, 'Congo's Odious Debt: External Borrowing and Capital Flight in Zaire', *Development and Change*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1998.

[39] Boyce and Ndikumana, 'Congo's Odious Debt'.

[40] Askin and Collins, 'External Collusion with Kleptocracy'.

[41] The classic account of this—and the best book about Mobutu's Zaire—is Young and Turner's *Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*. Other sources drawn on in this account are Buelens and Frankema, eds, *Colonial Exploitation and Economic Development*; William Reno, 'Congo: From State Collapse to "Absolutism", to "State Failure"', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2006; 'Le Nouvel ordre politique et les enjeux économiques du conflit en République Démocratique du Congo', *Rapport du groupe d'expertise congolaise de Belgique*, Brussels 2001; and Michael Schatzberg, *Mobutu or Chaos? The United States and Zaire, 1960–1990*, London 1991.

in absolute poverty by the mid-80s—by which time his personal fortune had risen to $4 billion.[42]

Neo-patrimonialism or capital flight?

In these circumstances, a large literature has argued that some distinctively African pattern of government 'resource dispersal' has underlain the continent's woes. Mobutu's personal handouts and Zaire's particularly catastrophic economic decline are seen as an almost ideal-typical example of such 'African despotism'. This form of distribution is often referred to in Weberian terms as 'neo-patrimonialism'—the 'neo' indicating that the apparatus of a modern state is used to administer patronage, yet without the forms of institutional separation between individual networks and office said to be characteristic of modern forms of authority.[43] There can be no doubt that this represents an important phenomenon. Stealing money, corralling economic opportunities, motivated in part by the desire to acquire or maintain social networks, are certainly notable and long-standing features of political life in the DRC. But the problem with this hypothesis is that almost all industrialized economies, from Europe to East Asia, were remarkably corrupt during the early stages of their economic take-off, from the rotten boroughs of eighteenth-century England to the mafia-like *Chaebol* that have controlled growth in modern South Korea.[44] The institutional separation of individual and office, insofar as it ever really happens, is usually the consequence, not the cause, of economic development. Conscious of this problem, many writers contrast Asian and African 'corruption', and point to a more 'developmental' form of patrimonialism, related to forms of initial accumulation.[45] In

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[42] Boyce and Ndikumana, 'Congo's Odious Debt'.

[43] The literature on the subject is vast—see Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, 'Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa', *World Politics*, vol. 46, no. 4, July 1994 for an overview. A welter of alternative terms used by scholars end up meaning something fairly similar—'the politics of the belly', 'clientelism', etc.

[44] Mushtaq Khan, 'Corruption and Governance in Early Capitalism: World Bank Strategies and Their Limitations', in Jonathan Pincus and Jeffrey Winters, eds, *Reinventing the World Bank*, Ithaca 2002.

[45] David Booth, Diana Cammack, Frederick Golooba-Mutebi and Tim Kelsall, 'Developmental Patrimonialism? Questioning the orthodoxy on political governance and economic progress in Africa', *Africa Power and Politics Working Paper*, no. 9, 2010; David Booth and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi, 'Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Rwanda', *African Affairs*, vol. 111, no. 444, 2012.

East Asia (and in Africa's new high-growth states), so the story goes, money appropriated is accumulated—and thus available for investment in production—by an individual or a small group. In most of Africa, by contrast, a moral economy which prizes dispersal over a retinue, together with the existence of competing politico-economic networks, dissipates the resources that could otherwise lead to capitalist accumulation.

This argument may be a step up from the platitudes of the development industry about 'corruption', but it still does not withstand close scrutiny. African elites have a higher level of capital flight relative to GDP than their equivalents in other parts of the world, and keep a larger proportion of their wealth abroad.[46] This conclusion emerges starkly from the pioneering work of Boyce and Ndikumana in estimating African capital flight—unrecorded capital flows—by examining discrepancies in balance-of-payments and direction-of-trade data, including misinvoicing and unrecorded remittances. During most of Mobutu's reign, they estimate average annual capital flight at around $1 billion a year in constant 2010 dollars, with a dip to $446 million in the late 80s corresponding to lower commodity prices.[47] The significance of this is that—*contra* neo-patrimonial explanations of low growth—Africa's big men would appear to devote a much smaller part of their resources to clients than their counterparts in other regions.

There is an inherent contradiction between the reality of African capital flight and the idea of excessive cultural imperatives on the Big Man to redistribute: money stashed in tax havens has, by definition, resisted the clamour of extended social networks. This is not to discount the political importance of patron–client ties, or the conspicuous dispersal of wealth. Indeed, the Mobutu regime was a kind of theatre state, where singing and

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[46] Paul Collier, Anke Hoffler and Catherine Pattillo, 'Flight Capital as Portfolio Choice', *World Economic Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2001.

[47] James Boyce and Léonce Ndikumana, 'Capital Flight from Sub-Saharan African Countries: Updated Estimates, 1970–2010', *Political Economy Research Institute Report*, October 2012. A further problem with the 'developmental patrimonialism' thesis is that rents *were* concentrated in most African states—indeed Frederick Cooper talks of the African state as a 'gatekeeper state', organized around the capturing of rents from the interior by small elites in the capital: Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present,* Cambridge 2002. The fragmentation of rentier networks in Zaire from the late 1970s is best seen as a consequence, not a cause of economic stagnation, as dissatisfied factions formed around the competition for a shrinking pie.

dancing in return for cash from the Big Man became a central feature. The point is that this was a kind of fetishism, with the person of the powerful cast as generative of wealth. Yet while the powerful cultivated their image as a fruitful bough, the gifts made to underlings in these performances were in reality a tiny fraction of the whole, obscuring the fact that most wealth was being funnelled offshore. Gifts *between* members of the ruling class can be quite substantial, and for this reason patronage and class are not, as is often assumed, contradictory. The greed shown by African rulers with regard to foreign loans was not unusual, nor were their card tricks with regard to debt and credit. As Marx wrote in the nineteenth century: 'The only part of the so-called national wealth that actually enters into the possession of modern peoples is—their national debt.'[48] But the African trajectory differs in an important respect from the classic capitalist one. Here the alienation of public debt incurred from foreign loans involved re-shipping it offshore—and thus undermining capital formation. Though it is ignored or pushed to the margins by conventional Africanist accounts, capital flight provides a far more elegant and empirically robust explanation for the failure of accumulation in Sub-Saharan Africa than 'neo-patrimonialism' or 'the politics of the belly'. This pattern, which would continue and even quicken after his overthrow, was a central aspect of Mobutu's disastrous legacy.

'Transition'

By the end of the 1980s, this politico-economic haemophilia had begun to generate a qualitative change in the social formation. Hyper-inflation, a series of massive pyramid-selling scandals, and the collapse of the banking system pulled away the monetary underpinnings of Zaire's economy. Wages, shrunk by inflation to virtually nothing, were paid with months or years of arrears. Government employment was valued not for the salary but as a position from which to negotiate patronage, cut deals, or sell off the accumulated stock. Ostensibly large bureaucratic institutions like the civil service or the army were in fact nests of small, quasi-familial cells. More senior figures within the government services packed out the rolls of employees with '*fictifs*'—non-existent staff who nevertheless drew a salary. The sums accumulated in this way were often diverted into the hands of money changers plying their trade on the

[48] Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, London 1976, p. 919.

street, who managed conversions in an increasingly dollarized economy and doubled up as a kind of informal banking system.

Against this backdrop, opposition to Mobutu had been growing, spearheaded by the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS), a political formation launched by disaffected Mobutistes in 1982. By the late 1980s it had become a force to be reckoned with, drawing mass support in many parts of the country. Meanwhile the Cold War, whose imperatives had protected Mobutu for so long, had come to an end. A massacre of opposition students in Lubumbashi by the security police in 1990 prompted Belgium, the USA, and the World Bank to suspend aid. Mobutu, sensing that his Western allies were drifting away, played a final hand. He unbanned political parties, and in 1991—under considerable pressure—allowed the Conférence Nationale Souveraine to be established, charged with drafting a new constitution as a preliminary to multi-party elections.

So began *la transition,* which, while it would not arrive anywhere much, spawned a series of political motifs that would recur throughout the 1990s and 2000s. One such motif was the use of proliferation and imitation. In place of the old party-state, hundreds of parties were established—many of them simply '*partis alimentaires*', ideology-free 'eating parties' designed to sell their support to various power-brokers, and filled with hungry cadres in search of (often pathetically small) financial rewards. Splits could be fomented within real political formations as leaders were tortured then bribed, rivals appointed then dismissed. Another motif that would repeat itself *ad nauseam* in the decades to come was the inability of Étienne Tshisekedi—leader of the UDPS and of the 'radical opposition'—to take his chances when they came. Bizarrely legalistic in a state where the rule of law counted for nothing, Tshisekedi was repeatedly pulled into constitutional wrangles about who was to chair the Conférence Nationale Souveraine or whether or not he was the prime minister, and failed to mobilize his vast popular support at the moments when it might have counted. Cautious where he needed to be bold, choosing the path of action when it was too late, bargaining with a weak hand; worst of all, he was unlucky. As the 1990s wore on, it became clear that Mobutu had the measure of his domestic opponents, with the street calling the whole thing Connerie Nationale Souveraine—sovereign national bullshit.

Gécamines had continued to function until the early 90s, with copper still a pillar of the economy. The company possessed a degree of operational independence and had held up comparatively well: the ruling class mostly just stole the profits, rather than pillaging the productive infrastructure. Nevertheless, it was clear that decades of underinvestment were taking their toll. September 1990 saw the collapse of the Kamoto mine, which alone had accounted for 30 per cent of all Gécamines production in previous years.[49] Still more damaging were the divide-and-rule tactics deployed by Mobutu as he tried to cling on to power. This is what finally wrecked industrial mining in Katanga in the 1990s. Having entered into a secret pact with Mobutu, an erstwhile member of the opposition, Kyungu wa Kamwenza, was named governor of the province. Within days, Kyungu had launched a wave of incendiary propaganda against Katanga's 'non-native' ethnicities—above all the Luba-Kasai, who made up an important section of Gécamines' skilled workforce and were the support base of the UDPS. Trumpeted by the state media, Kyungu's declamations sparked a series of pogroms that left thousands dead, forced tens of thousands to flee and gutted Gécamines of most of its key personnel.[50]

Artisanal mining had been on the rise since the mid-80s, but with the further regression of the economy in the following decade it became the predominant form of extraction, employing millions of diggers using largely pre-industrial techniques. As the country's infrastructure disintegrated and roads became impassable, heavy lifting was largely done by hand. In these conditions, mining became both less productive and less profitable. With de-industrialization, diamonds—mined in the lawless interior by teams of urban migrants, using techniques that would have been familiar in the Bronze Age, or smuggled across the border from Angola—became the mainstay of the economy. This economy was controlled by a series of violent and flamboyant warlords,

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[49] Benjamin Rubbers, 'L'effondrement de la Générale des Carrières et des Mines: Chronique d'un processus de privatisation informelle', *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, vol. 46, no. 181, 2006.

[50] While this violence illustrates the power of identity in political mobilization, it also underlines its fluidity—the Luba-Katanga and the Lunda, fierce enemies at independence, were united in support for this pogrom: Dibwe dia Mwembu, 'L'épuration ethnique au Katanga et l'éthique du redressement des torts du passé', *Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, vol. 33, no. 2–3, 1999.

who were surrounded by retinues of women, praise-singers, and street children—Mobutu's son Kongulu, popularly known as Saddam, was one such character. In these circumstances, popular *jacquerie* was not directed by any kind of hegemonic leadership and went nowhere. This was particularly evident in the case of the two great street-level lootings that swept Kinshasa in the 1990s. Unpaid soldiers ransacked the property of regime supporters and foreign businesses deemed to be supportive of Mobutu, with help from the capital's civilian population. A rebellion that could have seized the strategic nodes of an illegitimate power instead merely imitated the predatory conduct of the Zairian elite. It was as if the stormers of the Bastille had arrived to find the king already selling the stones for building materials.

Invasion from the east

It was against this backdrop that the Rwandan genocide, and the huge influx of Hutu refugees into Zaire which followed, took place. Paul Kagame's Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) had taken power in Kigali, ousting the French-backed *génocidaires*. Kagame and his principal ally, the Ugandan leader Yoweri Museveni, now turned their attention to the refugee camps in eastern Zaire, where the remnants of the old regime had taken shelter. The RPF saw the camps as an existential threat, supplying a base to Hutu revanchists as they plotted their return to power (with Mobutu's tacit support). But the refugees also had every reason to fear the RPF. A suppressed report, written for the UN by Robert Gersony, showed that Kagame's troops had killed tens of thousands of civilians between April and August 1994; Gersony emphasized that the 'great majority' of those killed had played no role in the massacre of Tutsis.[51] The report was buried at the insistence of Kagame's new Western allies: the Clinton administration was scrambling to make up for having looked the other way during the genocide and rushed to embrace the RPF. Many refugees who refused to return home did so not because of guilt, nor because of coercion by Hutu extremists—although both factors certainly played their part—but because they were all too well informed about the reception that was waiting for them.[52]

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[51] Human Rights Watch, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, New York 1999, pp. 726–30.

[52] Johan Pottier, *Re-imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 132–3.

In 1996, having told Washington in advance that he was planning to intervene, Kagame sent the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) across the border, with Ugandan troops backing them up.[53] While their initial plan was to disperse the camps, Kagame and Museveni soon realized that the Zairian Army was hungry, unpaid and in no mood to fight. They pressed on towards Kinshasa to dispose of their old enemy Mobutu altogether. As they ploughed ahead, the RPA force harried and killed Hutu refugees, making no effort to separate those responsible for the slaughter from the broader population.[54] Between 200,000 and 300,000 refugees died in the course of the RPA's offensive. The operation had the blessing of Rwanda's new allies, who ran interference for Kagame at the UN. Susan Rice—then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, later to become Obama's UN ambassador—returned from her first visit to the region with a simple message for her colleagues: 'Museveni and Kagame agree that the basic problem in the Great Lakes is the danger of a resurgence of genocide and they know how to deal with that. The only thing we have to do is look the other way.'[55] The Clinton Administration did not just look the other way, but actively supplied the RPA with logistical support and training.[56]

Recognizing that a full-scale invasion to overthrow Mobutu would need a Congolese face, Rwanda and Uganda cobbled together a new movement, the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du

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[53] Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, p. 47.

[54] As Roberto Garretón wrote in his UN-commissioned report on the destruction of the camps: 'One cannot of course ignore the presence of persons guilty of genocide, soldiers and militia members, among the refugees . . . it is nevertheless unacceptable to claim that more than one million people, including large numbers of children, should be collectively designated as persons guilty of genocide and liable to execution without trial.' Prunier, *Genocide to Continental War*, pp. 147–8. The US ambassador to Kinshasa took a different view, telling journalist Howard French that concern about the refugees was misplaced: 'They are the bad guys.' French, 'How Rwanda's Paul Kagame exploits US guilt', *Wall Street Journal*, 19 April 2014.

[55] Howard French, 'Kagame's Hidden War in the Congo', *New York Review of Books*, 24 September 2009.

[56] Human Rights Watch, *What Kabila is Hiding: Civilian Killings and Impunity in Congo*, New York 1997, pp. 51–5. Prunier suggests that there was a strong element of narcissistic projection in the relationship: 'Still shaken by their Vietnam defeat and their poor showing in Somalia, US army officers loved Kagame and the RPA who, as one American colonel told me, "really knew how to kick ass". In the frustrated macho environment of the 1990s US army, this was an important factor in bending the rules to help the RPA': *Genocide to Continental War*, p. 401.

Congo-Zaire (AFDL), which assembled the leaders of several largely defunct rebel groups. The two most important figures in the new alliance were André Kisase Ngandu and Laurent Kabila. When Kisase clashed with his Rwandan sponsors, they had him killed, leaving the more pliable Kabila as the AFDL's front-man.[57] Kabila had taken part in the Lumumbist Simba rebellion of 1964, and briefly fought alongside Che Guevara during his ill-fated Congolese adventure. While his supporters maintained a certain presence as a *maquis* in South Kivu over subsequent decades, Kabila himself was principally based in Tanzania: by the time he was plucked from obscurity to head the AFDL, he was more of a small-time businessman than a revolutionary.[58] Kagame's government, backed by a largely supportive international media, insisted that it was the AFDL, not the RPA, that was leading the fight against Mobutu. In May 1997, as his army crumbled, Mobutu fled to Togo, then Rabat, where he would die a few months later. Kabila was installed in Kinshasa, and Zaire became the Democratic Republic of Congo.

There is no doubt that the majority of the Congolese people welcomed Mobutu's departure. But enthusiasm for Kabila's administration soon wore off. The new president sidelined the civilian opposition and eventually banned their parties altogether, sending Tshisekedi into internal exile. Dissidents were imprisoned, demonstrators were shot. Kabila's Rwandan backers made themselves deeply unpopular in eastern Congo, where they acted like an occupying force.[59] Western governments soon tired of the new ruler as well. Kabila's autocratic tendencies were no worse than those of the 'new African leaders' like Kagame, Museveni or Ethiopia's Zenawi, then being feted by the Clinton Administration; but they had an ear for the rhetoric of the times, while Kabila sounded like a 70s time capsule. He was also broke. Per capita GDP had sunk to \$134; external debt stood at \$13 billion—over 200 per cent of national income. In demanding that international creditors simply write off the debt accumulated by Mobutu, on the grounds that it was their fault anyway, Kabila's logic was impeccable; but for a man who had witnessed the Congo's post-colonial history at first hand, his grasp of where power lay was astonishingly weak.

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[57] Prunier, *Genocide to Continental War*, pp. 123–4, 130–1.

[58] Kennes, *Essai biographique sur Laurent Désiré Kabila*.

[59] Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, pp. 144–55.

Congo's second war

Having been chosen because he was considered easy to manipulate, Kabila was also proving quite intransigent in his dealings with Kigali. The RPA massacre of the Hutu refugees had put the Congolese president in a fix: to deny all responsibility for the killings would be tantamount to saying he had exercised no control over the RPA as it brought him to power. Trying to escape from this dependence on external support, Kabila dismissed his Rwandan advisers and ordered the RPA to leave Congolese territory in 1998. Kagame and his lieutenant James Kabarebe responded with a lightning offensive on several fronts, again with Ugandan support, hoping to overwhelm and decapitate the administration they had installed. Instead they managed to alarm the most powerful military force in the region, Angola, which suspected them of trucking with its own UNITA rebels. With Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia weighing in on Kabila's side, it soon became clear that there would be no rapid victory for the Rwandan–Ugandan alliance. The war would drag on for years, with horrendous consequences for the Congolese people.[60]

Following the template that they had used for the AFDL, the Rwandans and Ugandans created another proxy force, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD), while Uganda also nurtured a group of its own, Jean-Pierre Bemba's Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC). The MLC had a stronger indigenous base than the RCD, at least in Bemba's home region of Équateur. A media magnate (and admirer of Berlusconi) whose father had been one of Mobutu's closest associates, the MLC leader saw the formation of his own militia as a sensible business venture. Asked if he had elicited the support

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[60] David van Reybrouck's recent history of the Congo has great scholarly and literary merit. A grand narrative appropriate to its subject, it combines an impressive synthesis with rich details gleaned from his own extensive interviews. As is inevitable in a work of this scale, however, some sections are weaker, and his account of the causes of the 90s war is one example. The claim that Fidel Castro prompted Angola to enter the war at Kabila's side is dubious; Congo has nowhere near 80 per cent of the world's coltan supply; and van Reybrouck's assertion that 'everyone at every level of the pyramid' had a stake in war-profiteering is quite wrong: while it is important to stress the motivations for war 'from below', most lost out massively and fled to the swollen towns. *Congo*, pp. 445, 456, 458.

of Mobutu's old business cronies, Bemba had a simple message: 'If they want to invest, now is the time. When I get to Kinshasa they'll have to queue up to reach my office.'[61] As the war progressed, similar motivations came into play for all of the belligerent parties—especially Rwanda and Uganda, whose armies pilfered gold, diamonds and coltan from eastern Congo, harvesting big profits on the world market. Rwanda's income from coltan alone was estimated to be $80–100 million in 2000.[62] It was in part because of disputes over the Congolese booty that Uganda and Rwanda came to blows: their troops clashed in Kisangani, the centre of the diamond trade, and the RCD splintered between pro-Ugandan and pro-Rwandan factions, adding another layer of complexity to the bloody conflict.

Kagame's second invasion of Congo again received the green light from Washington, as Robert Gribbin, the US ambassador to Rwanda, later acknowledged: 'The United States accepted Rwanda's national security rationale as legitimate. We also recognized that the RCD was a proxy, directed in many respects from Kigali.'[63] It was clear from an early stage that the US and other Western states were determined to back Kagame come what may—an attitude that had serious implications for the development of the conflict. The RPF received a great deal of political and economic support from the leading Western powers—aid typically accounting for 40–50 per cent of the Rwandan national budget—even as a series of reports highlighted its particular responsibility for the persistence of the fighting in the Congo. Time after time Kagame's government issued angry denials; time after time powerful friends had their back. As recently as 2012, Obama's envoy Susan Rice intervened at the UN Security Council to dilute its condemnation of another Rwandan proxy force in eastern Congo and to ensure that Kigali was not identified

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[61] Prunier, *Genocide to Continental War*, pp. 204–5.

[62] Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, pp. 224–31. The dynamics of plunder differed for the two states: while the RPA's 'Congo desk' ensured that most of the profits were channelled into government coffers, Uganda's officer corps kept a greater share of the loot for themselves.

[63] Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, p. 195. Gribbin was proud to recall that Kagame had invited him to his ranch and offered him a cow—'a mark of esteem in Rwandan society'—when he completed his term. Filip Reyntjens acidly observes that 'Gribbin probably did not realize that the gift of a cow also marks the link between a patron and a client': *Great African War*, p. 176.

by name as the guilty party.[64] It is hardly surprising if Congolese conspiracy theorists have come to believe that 'the whites' and international capital are in league with Rwanda to balkanize their country and ransack its mineral wealth.[65]

But this narrative is overstated.[66] The immediate triggers of the war—long-standing hostility to Mobutu on the part of many regional actors; the security concerns of the RPF (and its desire for revenge)—preceded the desire to profit from Congolese ores. Western mining giants have long profited from the copper belt, but they have done so under contracts signed by Kinshasa. The Clinton State Department's central Africa policy seems to have been driven not so much by economic lobbies as by its own self-image as enabler of a better future for the countries under its dominion, even as it bankrolled the butchers. Kagame acted with the Americans' blessing, but not at their behest. And while minerals were indeed essential to the perpetuation of the war, given the scale of de-industrialization most of the mining was artisanal: ores dug out by hand. As we have seen, this low-productivity extraction is far less profitable than capital-intensive mining. When the price of coltan fell in 2001,

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[64] Helene Cooper, 'UN Ambassador Questioned on US Role in Congo Violence', *New York Times*, 9 December 2012. Kagame's indefatigable admirers include Bill Clinton, who bestowed his 'Global Citizen Award' on the Rwandan leader in 2009; Fareed Zakaria, who has described Kagame's Rwanda as 'a model for the African renaissance' (*Newsweek*, 2 February 2009); and, predictably, Tony Blair, who pays regular visits to Kigali (in a private jet paid for by the Rwandan government), and has made Rwanda into a showcase for his Africa Governance Initiative, employing several advisers to shadow government ministries. Blair's tireless shilling for Kagame has been complemented by the work of *New Yorker* journalist Philip Gourevitch. One lengthy profile of the Rwandan president dismissed all the evidence of plunder in a single throwaway sentence: Gourevitch, 'The Life After', *New Yorker*, 4 May 2009. For a critique of Gourevitch's highly influential reportage, see Tristan McConnell, 'One Man's Rwanda', *Columbia Journalism Review*, 1 February 2011.

[65] A view to which American political scientists have contributed with their speculations about dismembering the country: Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills, 'There is No Congo', *Foreign Policy*, 18 March 2009.

[66] Those in the DRC who blame the Rwandans for the conflict often draw on an inverted version of colonial race theory, as baseless as the original, claiming that the Tutsi are 'Hamites' or 'Nilotics': quasi-Caucasian intruders, whose supposedly innate greed and blood-lust makes them covet the riches of the noble 'Bantu' (the non-Tutsi Congolese).

much Congolese production was rendered uneconomic.[67] The disorder of war may have allowed people at local and regional levels to profit from the exploitation of Congolese minerals, but it is unlikely to reflect the wishes of international capital. Overall, the Congo war hindered the penetration of capital far more than it encouraged it.

Can we then dismiss the dynamics of international capitalism as a major cause of the conflict—as much liberal scholarship has done? I believe not, and to understand why, we need to look at class. This is something that is deeply unfamiliar in African studies, where it is taken for granted that 'vertical' social ties rooted in ethnicity and patron–client relations are inimical to class. But, as René Lemarchand has argued, one of the fundamental social realities underpinning the disasters of the Great Lakes region has been the huge class of 'masterless men'—excluded youths in an economically stagnant region, who have been the foot-soldiers of war as well as the diggers of minerals.[68] The haemorrhage of money from the DRC into Western banking systems has produced the worst of both worlds: a violent dispossession, bringing to mind classic accounts of primitive accumulation, which has made traditional peasant life almost untenable in large parts of the Congo just as more and more young people have come of age.[69] At the same time, the capital necessary to generate higher levels of productivity, which might incorporate some of the rural dispossessed as wage-labourers, has seeped north.

From Kabila to Kabila

Laurent Kabila's assassination in 2001 opened up a new phase in Congolese political life. Much about the killing remains unclear. We know that Kabila fell victim to disgruntled *kadogo*—teenage soldiers from Kivu who had played a key role in the 1996 offensive, and who served as the president's bodyguards. The *kadogo* had good reason to hate Kabila after a series of betrayals, but were most likely encouraged

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[67] Stephen Jackson, 'Making a Killing: Criminality and Coping in the Kivu War Economy', and Saskia van Hoyweghen, Stefaan Smis and Theodore Trefon, 'State Failure in the Congo: Perception and Realities', both in *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 29, no. 93–94, Sept–Dec 2002.

[68] Lemarchand, *Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa*, p. 4.

[69] Jackson, 'Making a Killing'. By the late 90s, 48 per cent of the population was under fifteen.

by more powerful agents.[70] Whatever the truth may be, Kabila's death opened the way for his son Joseph, who quickly moved to shore up his position. Western media sang the praises of a 'modernizer' who knew how to push the right discursive buttons. Kabila's maiden speech before the Congolese parliament indicated that he was ready to make compromises with all parties to the conflict, and wanted to secure a better relationship with donor countries. His offer was grasped by the West, and in short order both aid and (some) debt rescheduling materialized. In 2002, hostilities between the major parties were officially declared at an end. This was not matched by the reality on the ground, where plunder and disorder continued, especially in the eastern provinces; but it did allow for some degree of institutional consolidation by elites in Kinshasa, in concert with the international partners who had sponsored the peace deal.

Augustin Katumba Mwanke—often simply referred to as AKM—now emerged as one of Kabila's closest advisers. AKM had returned to Congo after the fall of Mobutu and used his connections with the AFDL leadership to secure a post as governor of Katanga, his native province, where he forged some lucrative ties with mining interests. Joseph Kabila appointed AKM as a minister, and his influence over the new president's economic programme was obvious. The mining code was rewritten, and a series of deals saw the majority of Congo's mineral assets sold off to foreign companies. A transitional government, replete with warlords, has-beens, *partis alimentaires* and curiosities plucked from nowhere, helped themselves to the spoils of office.

The 2006 elections—the first held in Congo since 1965—blended a carnival atmosphere with flashes of deadly violence. Étienne Tshisekedi blundered once again: still insisting that he was the legitimate prime minister, the UDPS leader disastrously misread the popular mood by

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[70] Kabila had antagonized Lebanese diamond merchants by giving a near-monopoly on the trade to a brash young Israeli, Dan Gertler, in exchange for $20 million in cash. One theory suggests that the merchants entered into a plot with the Rwandan government, making use of the *kadogo* for their purposes. Others point the finger at Angola. Questions also surround the role of the US: an American military attaché, whose business card was found on the body of one of the assassins, flew out of Kinshasa on the day of the killing, and later admitted to having met with some of the conspirators. See the Al Jazeera documentary *Murder in Kinshasa* (2011), made by Arnaud Zajtman and Marlène Rabauld.

calling for a boycott; some of his supporters decided not to register, while many others defected to the new party established by Jean-Pierre Bemba. As a result, the only political organization with a genuinely national reach was absent from the poll. Joseph Kabila defeated Bemba in the second round of the presidential election, and his supporters were the largest group in the new Congolese parliament. The country was deeply polarized in the aftermath of Kabila's victory. In opposition strongholds like Kinshasa, few believed that Kabila had really won; his challenger was only persuaded to concede by the threat of prosecution at the International Criminal Court. Kabila then cemented his electoral triumph with a military one: Bemba had to flee to Belgium after clashes between his militia and Kabila's troops that left hundreds dead in Kinshasa.[71]

It was clear nevertheless that Kabila *fils* had forged a viable electoral coalition. Although there were substantial irregularities in the poll, the Swahili-speaking regions of the country had voted for him by a thumping majority. Kabila had also managed to attract some votes in Bandundu, thanks to the support of Antoine Gizenga, a veteran of Patrice Lumumba's government who had come third in the first round of the presidential election and urged his supporters to transfer their allegiance to Kabila; this prevented Bemba from making a clean sweep of western Congo. Gizenga was rewarded with an appointment as prime minister. Many were tempted to explain this electoral divide between eastern Swahili-speakers and western Lingala-speakers as the manifestation of a deeper ethno-political identity: Kabila's supporters often cast the westerners as die-hard Mobutu loyalists. In fact the east–west polarization was highly contingent, as events were to prove. Kabila's backing in the war-ravaged eastern provinces came above all from the perception that he was the best man to secure the fragile peace.

Open veins

While Kabila was consolidating his position, the Congolese economy began to recover from its catastrophic plunge during the war. Most of the growth after 2003 was concentrated in the mining sector, where

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[71] Human Rights Watch, *We Will Crush You: The Restriction of Political Space in the Democratic Republic of Congo*, New York 2008. Bemba was subsequently handed over to the ICC anyway, to face charges over atrocities committed by his troops in the Central African Republic.

production rose sharply: riding the China-driven global commodities boom, copper output had surpassed its mid-70s peak by 2011.[72] The new wealth was most evident in the south-east, the heartland of the mining industry (and the home region of Kabila and other regime barons). But it could also be seen elsewhere: Kinshasa, whose apocalyptic pre-modern indigence had long made it an exception to the shopping malls and squalor of contemporary African cities, began to fall into line, with improved roads, ATMs, a speculative property boom and a branch of Zara. Signs that all was not well lay close to the surface, however. Local elites and their global creditors had pushed through the privatization of Congo's subsoil without taking any account of popular opinion, which was strongly opposed to such measures.[73] Infant, juvenile and maternal death rates started getting worse again after 2007, having registered modest improvements in the first half of the decade.[74] It could have been that such phenomena constituted 'just so many idyllic methods of a primitive accumulation', in Marx's famous phrase, evident in many a transition to capitalism. But all the signs were that the great river of money was sweeping out to sea, just as in the past, leaving little in its wake.

The mining sell-offs encompassed multiple actors, with several re-appropriations, annulments and conflicts along the way, but certain elements are nonetheless clear. In contrast with earlier times, very little employment has been generated in the post-2002 mining boom: Freeport, the largest company in the sector, has created fewer than 5,000 jobs. Furthermore, the growth of industrial mining has the potential to displace the vast number of Congolese who depend on artisanal mining for their livelihood—indirectly, perhaps as many as 10 million.[75]

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72 Stefaan Marysse and Claudine Tshimanga, 'La renaissance spectaculaire du secteur minier en RDC: où va la rente minière?', in Marysse and Jean Omasombo Tshonda, eds, *Conjonctures Congolaises 2012: Politique, Secteur Minier et Gestion des Resources Naturelles en RD Congo*, Paris and Tervuren 2013.

73 Zoe Marriage, *Formal Peace and Informal War: Security and Development in Congo*, London 2013.

74 Claudine Tshimanga Mbuyi, 'Évolution de la pauvreté en Republique Démocratique du Congo', in Marysse and Tshonda, eds, *Conjunctures Congolaises*. Anecdotal evidence from my research in Kinshasa indicate that higher food and transport prices have put greater strain on household budgets, even among somewhat better-off Kinois.

75 Marie Mazalto, 'La réforme du secteur minier en RDC: enjeux de gouvernance et perspectives de reconstruction', *Afrique Contemporaine*, vol. 227, no. 3, 2008.

Table 1: *Capital Flight in African Countries, 1970–2010*

Country	*Total capital flight ($ billion)*	*Ratio to 2010 GDP (%)*
DRC	34	258
Ethiopia	25	84
Mozambique	21	225
Nigeria	311	158
Sierre Leone	10	524
South Africa	39	11
Total 33 countries	814	79

Source: Boyce and Ndikumana, 'Capital Flight from Sub-Saharan African Countries: Updated Estimates'. Capital flight in constant 2010 dollars.

The revenue accruing to the state from mining concessions is therefore essential if Congolese society is to benefit. Mines were flogged off at bargain-basement prices by Kabila Jr and Mwanke, with the bulk of mineral rents not flowing through official channels and not staying in the country.[76] Capital flight, now routed for the most part via tax havens linked to the City of London, appears to have increased since Mobutu's fall. Between 2005 and 2010 nearly $7bn was spirited out of the country, with a record $3bn in 2007 alone.[77] All in all the DRC had lost close to $34bn in capital flight over the period from 1970 to 2010—more than 250 per cent of its 2010 GDP (Table 1).

One of the key figures in this maelstrom has been Dan Gertler. Gertler first came to the DRC in 1997 at the age of twenty-three, and struck up

[76] Nicholas Garrett and Marie Lintzer have argued that Congolese elites are keeping most of the rent generated by the mining boom, while other sources suggest that foreign companies are getting the lion's share—albeit with considerable help from the Congolese ruling class: Garett and Lintzer, 'Can Katanga's mining sector drive growth and development in the DRC?, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, November 2010; Marysse and Tshimanga, 'La renaissance spectaculaire du secteur minier en RDC'; Global Witness, *Digging in Corruption: Fraud, abuse and exploitation in Katanga's copper and cobalt mines*, Washington 2006.

[77] Boyce and Ndikumana, 'Capital Flight from Sub-Saharan African Countries: Updated Estimates', indicates a higher rate of capital flight from the DRC over the last decade, which chimes with other, more qualitative sources, some of which are cited below.

a friendship with Joseph Kabila, who trusted the young Israeli enough to send him as a diplomatic envoy to Condoleeza Rice in 2002. Gertler now has stakes in companies that control almost 10 per cent of world cobalt production, and a personal fortune of $2.8 billion.[78] According to the NGO Global Witness, 'five of his deals have resulted in the Congolese state losing out on some $1.4 billion, almost twice the country's annual spending on health and education combined'.[79] In 2010–11, the state-controlled Sodimico sold a batch of mining licences—estimated to be worth $1.6 billion—to Gertler-linked companies registered in Hong Kong and the Virgin Islands for just $60 million.[80] As the political environment stabilized, bigger players began to invest in the DRC, and Gertler has been their middleman of choice. The Anglo-Swiss giant Glencore worked closely with Gertler to acquire a majority stake in one of the DRC's leading copper producers, Katanga Mining, employing complex financial chicanery and funnelling half a billion dollars in soft loans to Gertler's offshore empire.[81] Meanwhile, Kabila's henchman Augustin Katumba Mwanke helped mastermind economic pivots towards Pretoria and Beijing. In 2010, an important oil concession on Lake Albert was granted to Caprikat and Foxwhelp, two companies registered (again) in the Virgin Islands. The named beneficiaries were both South African: Khulubuse Zuma, nephew of Jacob, and Mark Hulley, the president's lawyer. Mvelaphanda Holdings, a firm owned by ANC veteran Tokyo Sexwale, took part in the deal.[82] Mvelaphanda's CEO Mark Willcox also helped to establish offshore trusts that control important mining concessions in the DRC, with the ubiquitous Gertler very much involved.[83]

AKM's fingerprints were all over another business arrangement, this time with China, that was part diplomatic triumph, part scandalous fire sale. With Kabila under pressure to deliver something tangible after

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[78] Franz Wild, Michael Kavanagh and Jonathan Ferziger, 'Gertler earns billions as mine deals fail to enrich Congo', *Bloomberg Markets Magazine*, 5 December 2012.

[79] Global Witness, *Glencore and the Gatekeeper: How the World's Largest Commodities Trader Made a Friend of Congo's President $67 Million Richer*, May 2014.

[80] Wild et al, 'Gertler earns billions'.

[81] Global Witness, *Glencore and the Gatekeeper*.

[82] William Wallis and Simon Mundy, 'S Africans stake claims to Congolese oil', *Financial Times*, 1 August 2010.

[83] See the 'List of Offshore Companies Dealing in DRC Assets' compiled by British MP Eric Joyce in 2011—available at ericjoyce.co.uk.

his election triumph, a consortium of Chinese banks and state-owned enterprises signed an agreement with Congolese parastatals, reserving a 62 per cent stake for themselves. Envisaged at first as a $9 billion loan, the deal contained a strong barter element, with the Chinese consortium helping to build infrastructure and being paid back in minerals rather than cash.[84] Mobutu's odious debts still hung around the DRC's neck at the time, and Kabila's government had no independent access to capital markets: the only way of securing credit lay through the IMF's Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) programme, where debt relief was tied to the usual requirements of the Washington Consensus. Congo, whose post-war stability depended on various parties being given a slice of the (aid-dependent) government pie, was not considered a good pupil, and debt forgiveness had not advanced very far. The Chinese deal gave the DRC something to bargain with, and it graduated from the HIPC programme in 2009 with nearly all of its debts written off.[85] The Chinese companies also built some useful infrastructure where there had been nothing before.

So far, so good. But the loans came at an extortionate price: the Chinese consortium was originally granted huge tax exemptions, worth at least $20 billion over the lifetime of the deal—by which point the DRC would have exhausted most of its copper reserves. Some of these exemptions at least appear to have found their way into the final agreement.[86] The IMF's hand lay behind some of the other dubious aspects of the deal. At its request, state guarantees for repayment were cancelled, the loans were reduced in size and the barter element was pared back drastically. The last point was especially controversial: one of the great advantages of the barter arrangement is that it is difficult to stash a road or a bridge in a tax haven. The same cannot be said of the cash proceeds from the joint venture that will now come on-stream sooner, thanks to the IMF.

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[84] Johanna Jansson, 'The Sicomines agreement revisited: prudent Chinese banks and risk-taking Chinese companies', *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 40, no. 135, 2013.

[85] Johanna Jansson, 'The Sicomines Agreement: Change and Continuity in the Democratic Republic of Congo's International Relations', South African Institute of International Affairs Occasional Paper no. 97, October 2011.

[86] Stefaan Marysse and Sara Geenen, 'Win-win or unequal exchange? The case of the Sino–Congolese cooperation agreements', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 47, no. 3, September 2009; Johanna Janssen, 'China Deal Back on Track', *The Africa Report*, 4 August 2014; Janssen, 'The Sicomines Agreement Revisited'.

At the same time there has been much more to the Chinese presence in the DRC than infrastructure and impersonal loans. Many Chinese have established small shops in major urban centres and, unlike earlier waves of Lebanese and South Asian traders, most of them are based outside the downtown areas. The influx of cheap goods from *Ngwanzu*—tellingly the slang Lingala word for China is derived from the southern manufacturing city of Guangzhou, where cheap consumer durables are bought—has provoked an ambivalent response from the Congolese. In Kinshasa the Chinese speak the local language, Lingala. At the same time, they are the subject of a tense and often hostile mockery. Part of this relates to the poor-quality goods the Chinese sell—*ya Ngwanzu* has become an adjective in Lingala, denoting fake or no good, a quality that is opposed in the local ideology by *mikili*, an appreciative term for the fetishized version of northern Europe to which Congolese youths dream of escaping. Hostility also relates to the fact that the Chinese have tended to supplant Congolese themselves in the petty import trade; well into the 2000s it was the Congolese who profited from selling Chinese goods in the neighbourhoods. And part of it relates to the actions of the Chinese government discussed above. A slogan used by Kabila Jr about the *cinq chantiers* or 'five building sites' of national reconstruction was quickly rendered by the street as *Chang Chang Che*, a clear and dismissive reference to the perceived Chinese support for Kabila's project.

Life after Joseph

In the meantime, the political coalition assembled behind Kabila in 2006 had fallen apart. His re-election in 2011 proved a shambles. Tshisekedi, by now 78, decided to run, and the UDPS fielded a slate of candidates for the national assembly. The vote was rigged by Kabila's party in such a clumsy and transparent fashion that both the Carter Centre and the EU's observation team deemed the final result to lack any credibility. The Catholic Church had bought mobile phones for an army of poll monitors in remote districts: Kabila's government responded by cutting phone signals for several days. Votes from the opposition stronghold Kinshasa were disallowed on a gargantuan scale; the results from Congo's regions were rife with anomalies. There had been plenty of manipulation in 2006, but there was little doubt that Kabila would have won anyway. The same cannot be said of 2011. Western governments prevaricated: they had never warmed to Tshisekedi, and many had some lingering attachment to Kabila. But the DRC's president could in any case rely on stronger backing from his new business partners—China was a staunch ally, while South Africa's Jacob Zuma was the first to recognize the election result.

Kabila's valued advisor AKM died in a plane crash the year after the election, and since then his government has often seemed paralysed. Under the constitution, presidents must stand down after their second term, but Kabila's associates have a lot of blood and treasure riding on the status quo: several kites have been flown for an extension of his time in office. Spurious attempts at 'national reconciliation' have been combined with the brutal repression of opposition protests. Municipal and regional elections have been repeatedly postponed: in January 2015 the government's latest gambit, linking the elections to a new census, provoked major demonstrations in a number of cities—including eastern towns like Goma and Bukavu. Popular anger was often directed at Chinese-owned shops, but also at more straightforward government targets. The police responded brutally, killing at least twenty-one protesters in Kinshasa, but the opposition won a confidence-boosting victory, forcing Kabila to retreat.[87] Former allies such as Katanga's multi-millionaire governor Moise Katumbi have started to posture as alternatives.[88] Nothing is certain yet, but there are signs that rulers and ruled alike are starting to think about life after Joseph.

There is little immediate hope that a change of administration will disrupt the fundamental pattern of capital flight and haemophiliac appropriation identified in this text.[89] 'Dissident' elites are as much a part of that system as Kabila himself. At the same time, copper prices have plunged with China's slowdown, falling below $6,000 a tonne in early 2015 for the first time since 2009, and mining giants are cutting their production forecasts.[90] Whatever the future may hold, two points with clear political implications emerge from the preceding analysis. The first is that, in line with the perceptions of the Congolese street, and *contra* the view cherished by Africanist scholars and the development

[87] Human Rights Watch, 'DR Congo: Deadly Crackdown on Protests', 24 Jan 2015.
[88] Katumbi's candidacy got a full-page puff in the *Financial Times*: Katrina Manson, 'Congo: "Katumbi will decide the election"', FT, 20 January 2015.
[89] The idea of 'haemophiliac appropriation' is borrowed from Christopher Cramer's *Civil War Is Not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries*, London 2006.
[90] Henry Sanderson, Neil Hume and Josh Noble, 'Copper slumps on Chinese selling', FT, 14 January 2015.

industry, Congolese development would be greatly encouraged if the DRC's ruling class was under more intense pressure from below to distribute resources among clients—the more they distribute, the less they have to put away in tax havens. The second point is that scholarship cannot isolate Congo from the dynamics of global capitalism. This is not just a matter of resource privatization and giveaway mineral rents, oiled by multi-million-dollar kickbacks. The channels for funnelling value away from on-shore jurisdictions into a netherworld of 'treasure islands' benefit from a state-of-the-art grid that Western elites have a big stake in leaving safely buried. The various tax havens are 'spider's webs' with, at their centre, northern financial hubs like Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland or the USA.[91] The British Virgin Islands, which seem to be the major destination for much of the DRC's recent capital flight, have a very strong connection to the Square Mile. The flows that have helped sap capital formation in Africa's giant involve a considerable shift of economic surplus from the many to the few, and from South to North.

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[91] Nicholas Shaxson, *Treasure Islands: Tax Havens and the Men who Stole the World*, London 2011, pp. 103–23.