

**United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
Academy for Genocide Prevention
Monitoring Roundtable: Great Lakes**

Talking Points - Suliman Baldo
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1. Violence in Eastern DR Congo is primarily driven by the following factors:

- *Struggle for political power in Kinshasa among members of the transitional government*

The parties to the transition were all supported by foreign regional governments who were fighting over Congo's strategic mineral and natural wealth directly and through their local proxies. The parties do not represent social movements, and are ideologically bankrupt. Because of this background, their legitimacy is questionable. Factionalism is rife, and continued splits are cause to question whether the different factions are representative at all.

The defining characteristic of the transitional government has been its weakness and the opportunism of its key members, who have little appetite for the approaching elections. None of the signatories of the Sun City Agreement, which ushered in the transition in 2003, has strong control of either its military or political wing.

- *Localized conflict over resources*

The province of North Kivu levies \$1.1 million a month in declared revenue, mostly from taxes on cross border trade with Rwanda and other neighboring countries. Some 85 per cent of this revenue is supposed to go to the Central Bank in Kinshasa but is mostly embezzled at the source. Provincial officials often grant waivers to traders to import and export goods without paying customs duties and receive generous kickbacks in return.

The November / December 04 fighting around Kanyabayonga in North Kivu was seen by many as an attempt by the governor of the province Serufuli to gain control over le Grand Nord, the Beni-Lubero territory formerly held by the RCD-Mouvement de Libération (RCD-ML). This territory used to generate over 60 per cent of North Kivu's revenues, mostly through customs duties at the Uganda border.

But much of the revenue in North Kivu passes outside of administrative channels and leaves no paper trail. This is the case for many mining proceeds. The most lucrative mines are around Walikale in the far west of the province, where there are rich deposits of cassiterite, an ore processed to make tin. Due to a 300 per cent rise in tin prices over the past two years, huge profits were being made there. Between January and August 2004, 1,760 tons of cassiterite was flown out of Walikale. At the current world price, this amounts to between \$12 million and \$17 million. Most of the profits are made by the dealers in Goma and Bukavu, who buy the ore for around \$2/kg and resell it for \$6-\$7/kg.

According to pilots and lawyers who had to deal with quarrels between traders and aviation companies, Rwandan army officers were deployed to Walikale to control the airport. Much of the ore was processed across the border in Gisenyi, at a smelter operated by the South African Metal Processing Association (MPA). MPA is associated with an individual who has in the past been a substantial financial backer of the RPF. Mineral wealth has placed Walikale at the centre of the fighting in North Kivu. In June 2004, fighting broke out there between Nyanga and Hunde ex-Mai-Mai and Hutu and Tutsi ex-ANC units. While some of this was linked to the mutiny in Bukavu at that time, control over mining and land rights were the real stakes, according to the local administration.

- *Politicization of identity*

The fighting in North Kivu erupted within the context of communal tensions that have been politicised and manipulated as a consequence of the past two wars. The communal conflicts concerning the Kinyarwanda-speaking communities of North and South Kivu were left unaddressed by both Laurent Kabila's AFDL and the subsequent rebel movements. Like Mobutu before, the RCD-G, Kabila (father and son), and Kigali have all seized upon the conflicts between the Kinyarwanda-speaking people of the region and other communities to further their own interests.

The Kinyarwanda speakers -- called Banyarwanda in North Kivu and Banyamulenge in South Kivu -- are caught between two mutually reinforcing ideologies. On the one hand, the Goma political leadership has recently tried to bind the various Hutu and Tutsi communities together behind a new rwandophone concept, claiming that their very survival is at stake. This rhetoric is used to justify their campaign to keep the economic and political assets of North Kivu away from Kinshasa. On the other side of the country, politicians in the presidential camp have roused popular sentiment against the Rwandan threat, attributing all the Congo's woes to Kigali's meddling and describing all Kinyarwanda-speakers as foreigners and puppets.

These discourses fuel each other and transform a crisis with a specific political history into one of irreconcilably opposed identities. More importantly, this manipulation has contributed to the possibility of communal fighting in North Kivu, a region that saw bloody ethnic clashes in 1993. In order to understand the importance of this development, a brief overview of the history of the Banyarwanda in North Kivu is useful.

- *Intervention and manipulation by outsiders*

This dimension is explained at great detail in the accompanying presentation by Alison Des Forges. Its most illustrative example is the conflict in Ituri. Uganda was the occupying foreign power of large swaths of northeastern Congo during the second war (1998-2002). Its unilateral decision in 1999 to make of Ituri a province, and to nominate a Hema business lady as its first governor was the triggering factor in a localized conflict between the Hema business and agro pastoral community and their Lendu neighbors who are primarily agriculturalist providing the bulk of manual labor in ranching and mining

businesses owned by the Hema. Because of the absence of any legitimate Congolese authority, and Uganda's vested interest in keeping control of the region's rich mineral and agricultural resources, the conflict gradually expanded, leading to increasing ethnic polarization and new levels of communal violence at each eruption.

The world looked the other way, and failed to use its influence over the state party to this conflict, Uganda, in order to arrest the localized violence. On the contrary, Uganda and Rwanda continued to be among the top recipients of international economic assistance for their worthy economic recovery at home, while at the same time they were agents of massive destruction and death in a neighboring African country.

2. Several factors that are already in play could possibly trigger a significant expansion of the scope of violence:

- *Elections with ethnic mobilization*

None of the transitional partners is interested in the elections. The peace agreement suited them well as it helped legitimize them and allowed them to negotiate a lucrative power and wealth-sharing package. But most of the participants are going to lose power in elections.

The politicians are counting on mobilizing their ethnic constituencies to win seats. They have also shown considerable reluctance to disarm their groups or to integrate these in the reformed national army (FARDC).

Parliament is becoming more effective in terms of political reform

- *Parallel command structures*

The crux of war is military not ideology. If there is sufficient recognition of the urgency of military integration, this would cut off the "Plan B" of the spoilers by removing their ability to resort to violence

- **Further outside meddling by Rwanda/FDLR actions**

Rwanda benefits by having Eastern Congo in chaos--allows them to exert more military/police control of their state

3. Questions for Policy Deliberations

- Training and integration of the Congolese army
- Strengthening UN arms embargo
- Identifying and supporting those in government that are committed to political reform
- Strengthening Congolese institutions such as the Ethics Commission for the Fight Against Corruption
- Promoting transparency in international mining contracts
- Strengthening the rule of law
- Implementing a more coherent foreign aid policy, particularly in relation to Rwanda and its actions in the DRC