

The Impact of Armed Conflict on Africa of the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Abstract

The incidence of armed conflicts in Africa and the consequences on its population have become not only worrisome, negatively impacted on the socio-economic, political resources of Africa but increasingly ideological across the continent. The Study aims to examine the impact of armed conflict on Congo DR as defining instance of African armed conflict. It identifies the major causal factors of conflict as external interference in domestic affairs and gross lack of political will to enforce and abide by regional agreements, anti-corruption measures, non provision of needed political goods, and the overarching impact of DRC natural resources. The consequences are prevalent low human capital development indices, poor socio-economic indicators, escalating national crises- high civilian death rate, sexual abuse, national apathy, displacement and humanitarian crisis. The study proffers effective regional reconciliation plan among other proactive measures for rehabilitating, re-orientating and reintegrating the warring factions as panacea to consolidating DRC leadership and democracy.

Keywords: Armed Conflict, Congo DR, Human Development Index, State Failure

1. Introduction

The Democratic Republic of Congo has experienced since the beginning of the 21st century, various sums of national political implosions, regional instability, armed conflicts and proliferation, child soldiering, human and eco terrorism, insurgencies, corruption, poverty, diseases and humanitarian crises. These violent situations were precipitated by endemic ethno-centric regional rivalries and escalated by interregional collaborators and international criminal gangs fighting for diverse interests and ulterior motives in the region.

Notwithstanding the conflict debilitating impact on the state and what appears to be programmed distortion, destabilization, destruction and reconstruction of the entire people's ideology, socio-cultural values, and physical environments, the conflict further threatens not only the sanctity of the national integrity and sovereign independence of Congo DR but largely questions the entire interregional integrity and politico-economic capabilities of Africa as independent, sovereign nations. The research is geared towards assessing the nature of conflict, identifying the causes on course and their impact on DRC. The study shall also attempt to find ways of mitigating the crisis to avert further escalation since in regionalism what affects one nation and region directly affects other interregional geographies.

2. African Conflict Redefined

Conflict refers to such actions, clash, struggles, feelings that are at variance with the other; struggle(s) between opposing principles, interests, aims, beliefs that could be implosive, emotional (internal) or physical, explosive and externally expressed; it connotes the idea of contention, armed fighting, war, violence, collision (The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (2004). It implies that conflict is an intrinsic part of human existence since man is essentially gregarious. The defining precipice is the gravity and lethality of conflict, that is, the impact and threat of conflict to human coexistence. Globally, an estimated 1,000 people die every day due to the use of Small Arms ((International Action Network on Small Arms, 2007). This figure which is apparently on the increase with the continual disruption of internal democracies and resultant implosion of polities across the continents – in the Western, Eastern, Middle East, Southeast, Asian and African hemispheres, captures only a fraction of the human imbroglios. The greater part of the human death results not from deaths and injuries due to combat but indirectly from the loss of health and livelihood caused by the disruption of economies and societies across the globe. In Africa, indirect deaths were 14 times greater than death occurring in combats (Muggah 2007) while in the Middle East, since the ravaging Arab Spring of December 17, 2010* armed conflict, crime and insurgencies have taken the greatest toll on human peace and death and recently the escalating Africa-Middle East refugee or humanitarian crises in the West. Africa's experience of armed violence and armed crime are largely due to the rising proliferation of lethal arms and ammunitions and consistent weakening of national economies and polities. Between 1990 and 2003, thirty eight percent of the world's armed conflicts occurred in Africa. In 2006, almost half of all "high-intensity" conflicts were in Africa. There are still conflicts where the human toll is enormous with glimmering hope of settlement, such as Darfur, Somalia as well as a considerable number of protracted and lingering conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Algeria. The millennial disruption of polities (2010-2015) was remarkably high in the Middle East in the course of the Arab Spring and its overwhelming spiral after-effects. There is also the tendency for some of the conflicts to be

regionalized or internationalized, for instance, the conflict in Darfur has drawn in neighbouring Chad and the Central African Republic while conflict in Mali drew France and African Union's (AU) interventions (UNDP, 2005), while most recently the coup of Burkina Faso drew Sierra Leone and Senegal.

The causes of these conflicts in Africa include but not limited to the following; arms proliferation and criminality, ethnic rivalry for control of the state power, liberation struggles, secessionist rebellions, mutinies, protracted conflict within politicized militaries, border disputes, conflicting foreign interests in the struggle and partition of African natural and mineral resources, greed, fundamentalist religious oppositions to secular authority, political and economic warfare, political apathy and blatant neglect in the provision of political dividends to the people. From Ethiopia to Sierra Leone, Algeria to South Africa, incidences of (implosive) armed conflicts proliferate the entire African continent with the causes related to one or most of the factors mentioned above. The following cases instantiate the fluidal nature of armed conflict across Africa.

2.1 Overview of Conflict Incidence in the Region

Democratic Republic of Congo:

The history of pre- and post-Independent Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been charged with seemingly unrelenting political turbulence. From the Rise of Kongo empire, centred in modern northern Angola including extreme western Congo and territories around lakes Kisale and Upemba in central Katanga in the 1200s to the 16th-17th centuries arrival of European merchants- British, Dutch, Portuguese and French engaged in slave trade, down to the conquest of colonization of Congo in 1879 – 87, decolonization 1955 – 1959, to the Independence in 1960, the DRC has witnessed arrays of conflicts locally and internationally fomented to destabilize the polity for politico-economic reasons (BBC News Africa, 2014).

Incessant political turbulence characterize post-Independence Congo from the reign of Patrice Lumumba as first prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu as president in the 1960s to the reign of Mobutu Sese Seko in the 1970s and climaxed with the vicious Rwandan genocide of 1994 perpetrated by the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Interahamwe militia against the Tutsi people and in which more than 3.9 million people lost their lives and untold effects (Coghlan, et. al., in SIPRI 2007). The imminent danger of reprisal attack from the Tutsi rebels that successfully overthrew the Rwandan Hutu-led government led to the exodus of over 1.4 million Hutus including the dissident members of the FAR and the *Interahamwe génocidaires* into Zaire. The ex-FAR and *Interahamwe génocidaires* aided by President Mobutu built resilient military base at the refugee camps from where they launched several attacks against the ruling Rwandan government. As expected, the new Tutsi-led government unable to bear the increasing attacks from the ex-FAR and *Interahamwe génocidaires* dispatched the armed forces into Zaire in September 1996 in a fierce counterattack against the Hutu rebels expanding in the Kivu provinces of Congo. Then started sporadic military attacks from regional states in defence of their interests in Congo. First, Uganda sent troops into Zaire to destabilize the Ugandan rebel group – Allied Democratic Forces (ADF); second, Burundi followed up against the Burundian rebel group – Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD). Third, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda formed an alliance, which sponsored and supported Laurent-Désiré Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo to overthrow Mobutu. Kabila became President and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo in May 1997. Thus soared the spiral and sporadic attacks, counterattacks and reprisals among the divergent insurgent groups wrestling for political and economic power in Congo. At this juncture, it is significant to observe that President Kabila's failure to demobilize, disarm and dismantle the Hutu camps in Zaire as agreed with neighbouring states largely precipitated the Second Congolese war on August 2, 1998. The war was disastrous and ravaged the economy and polity of Congo; some critics described it as Africa's world war because of the involvement of major Southern African and Central African countries directly or by proxy in an intricate mix of rebels and insurgents switching allegiances and making dangerous tactical manoeuvres as circumstances dictate. At one time the disgruntled Tutsi soldiers with Rwandan and Ugandan armies and RCD insurgents on one side against Kabila while Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe including the ex-FAR and Mai-Mai rebels fighting with Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) on the government side (Lanotte in Damien Fruchart 2007). Fruchart puts it this way:

One of the defining features of the second Congo War was the proliferation, splintering and shifting allegiances of armed groups and militias. For example, with Ugandan support, Jean-Pierre Bemba's Movement for the Liberation of Congo (Mouvement de libération du Congo, MLC), made up of ex-FAZ soldiers, joined the fray in November 1998. The RCD, however, fell victim to internal factionalism and to the growing friction between its Rwandan and Ugandan patrons, splitting in May 1999 into RCD-Goma and RCD-Liberation Movement (RCD-Mouvement de libération, RCD-ML), backed by Rwanda and Uganda respectively. This meant that not only were Rwandan and Ugandan proxies fighting Rwandan Hutu (later called the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, FDLR), the Mai-Mai, the ADF, the FDD and other armed groups in the DRC, but former Rwandan and Ugandan allies were also fighting each other (Damien Fruchart, SIPRI, 2007).

With staggering increase in civilian death, over-stretched humanitarian crises, wielding child soldiering, sexual abuse of women and girls, kidnapping and torturing of local civilians, ravaging hunger and diseases across the region; there was the burning need for concerted and committed intervention on the part of the international community to mitigate the crisis and achieve peace and political stability in Congo and the region (Lanotte in Damien Fruchart, 2007). The peace initiatives of the regional communities like i) the OAU/AU and the SADC in defusing tension and achieving relative détente in the region is remarkable; ii) The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, signed in mid-1999 by the governments of the DRC, Angola, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe, as well as the MLC and RCD rebel groups ushered in the desired peace at the time (UN Document 1999). iii) the inter-Congolese dialogue that led to the signing of the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement by Joseph Kabila's government and rebel groups in November 2002 (UN Document 2003); and iv) the UN Security Council Resolution 1493 adopted July 28, 2003 imposed an arms embargo on armed groups and militias operating in these regions and those not party to the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement inter alia; this resolution impacted significantly on the proliferation and illicit trade of arms and their supply in the region; v) the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) as international peacekeeping force, contributed remarkably in maintaining the regional Peace Agreements despite accusations of complicity trailing the force (UNSC Resolution 1493).

Algeria:

The Algeria Civil war was an armed conflict between the Algerian government and various Islamic rebel groups (Armed Islamic Movement (MIA), Islamic Army of Salvation (AIS), Movement for the Islamic State (MEI), Islamic Armed Groups (GIA), Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), Islamic Front of Jihad in Algeria (FIDA), Salafi Combatant Group (GSC), Salafi Group for the Jihad (GSPD), Guardians of the Salafi Call (HDS), and Islamic League for Preaching and Jihad (LIDD) led by Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) between 1991 and 2002 over the failure of government to liberalize its policies of governance. There is no available accurate causality but it is estimated that the conflict cost over 150,000 lives in which averages about 4 per cent of prewar population of Algeria (Schulhofer-Wohl, 2007).

Mali:

Tuareg rebellion, a regional secessionist led by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, an Islamist group, supported by Ansar Dine and Al-Qaeda took up arms in January 2012 and captured northern Mali, and declared 'Independent state of Azawad'. This led to the intervention of French and African Union Forces. The conflict was reported by Amnesty International to have created Mali's worst human rights situation since 1960, as a result of documented instances of gang rape, child soldiers and extra-judicial executions (Lacher, 2013).

Angola:

The incidence of armed struggle for state control erupted since independence in 1975 to 2002 between the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Estimated 500,000 people were killed while about 3.6 million were displaced (Shillington, 2005).

Liberia:

This West African country experienced her own armed conflict in the civil war of 1989 to 1996 led by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and other rebel groups for the control of State power. About 150,000 people were killed with Liberia's economy and infrastructure devastated. It also recorded very high rate of human rights violations and historic incidence of child soldiering (Outram, 1997). There is also incidence of armed conflict in Ivory Coast though timely controlled by the ECOMOG forces.

Sierra Leone:

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh rebellion against the ruling government in 1992 led to the five-year-long civil war. Internecine violence, conflicts and insurgency lasted up to 2002. There are recorded incidence of armed conflicts across the country, abduction of women and children forced into combats. The conflict exacerbated humanitarian crisis, civilian deaths and wanton destruction of lives and properties (Human Right Watch, 1999).

Rwanda:

The Rwanda Civil War provoked the 1994 genocidal mass murder of the Tutsis by the Hutus which claimed about 500,000 to one million lives or as much as 20% of the country's total population. It was the culmination of a longstanding ethnic rivalry and tension between the minority Tutsi who had controlled power for centuries, and the majority Hutu peoples, who had come to power in the 1959 – 1962 rebellion. It is a clear case of inaction on the part of international community to intervene in such humanitarian disaster (The History Place, 1999).

Sudan:

This is one of the African countries that have also experienced armed conflicts and insurgency from the first civil war of 1955-1972, the second civil war of 1983 to 2005, the Darfur guerrilla conflict to the independence struggle of the Republic of South Sudan. The civilian death toll of the 1983 – 2005 war was rated as one of the highest of any war since World War II (US Committee for Refugees, 2001).

Nigeria:

The history of armed conflict in Nigeria span through the 1960s – 1970 with the Biafran-Nigerian civil war that claimed over one million lives and unleashed unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. In the 1980s through 1990s to the millennium, Nigeria experienced violent eruptions from various Islamic religious fundamentalists, secessionist groups to the current catastrophe unleashed by the notorious Boko Haram Islamic sect in the North-eastern part of Nigeria. The *Jama`at Ahl al-Sunna li al-Da`wa wa al-Jihad* known as Boko Haram is an Islamic jihadist organisation that aims “to expel the prevailing political establishment, remove all Western influences, and eventually overthrow the national government and establish an Islamic state in its place.” (Asfura-Heim, 2015) Though its main operational base is in Maiduguri, the Borno State of Nigeria, Boko Haram deadly attacks transverse most metropolitan cities and towns of northern Nigeria. It started in 2009, by 2010, it became an active national threat to peaceful existence and national integrity. States and cities like Jos, Kaduna, Kano, Maiduguri, Yobe, Bauchi, Katsina, Nassarawa were terribly devastated; churches, theatres, market places, police formations, public places and utilities, and political gatherings soon became prime targets. In 2011 through 2012, Boko Haram carried out series of coordinated lethal attacks on government establishments through the use of bombs, wield shootings of people and burning down of buildings and properties including the United Nations building and Police Force Headquarters in the FCT Abuja. These attacks took the lives of hundreds of people in the northern Nigeria and the nation’s capital. In 2013 through 2015, there was notable change of tactics, Boko Haram went fully political, killing anybody or groups of people and destroying institutions considered inimical to its politico-religious agenda (Offu, 2015). In April 2014, the kidnap of about 270 schoolgirls from Chibok in northern Nigeria largely generated the local and international calls for intervention in the clandestine activities of the sect. In the aftermath of the rising incidence of kidnappings, killing and abductions of innocent citizens, Nigerian Government solicited the assistance of international community and allies to rescue the abducted Chibok girls and control the lethal and obnoxious operations of the organization (Asfura-Heim, 2015). On Tuesday, March 24, 2015, Boko Haram on a reprisal attack on the northern town of Damasak previously recaptured by the Nigerian Joint Task Force and allied troops from Niger and Chad, kidnapped more than 400 women and children, killed many and abducted some hundreds. Souleymane Ali reports: “They took 506 young women and children (in Damasak). They killed about 50 of them before leaving,”; “We don't know if they killed others after leaving, but they took the rest with them.” (The SUN, 2015) Muslims, Christians, the poor, the rich, religious clerics, business moguls, politicians, security agents, police and members of the armed forces were terrorized and killed in thousands and hundreds, women, children, boys and girls were forcefully kidnapped, abducted, killed or gang-raped. This reign of terror spread through major northern state capitals and hinterlands, and among terrorist strongholds in northeast Nigeria. Ely Karmon observed that: “Boko Haram targets include police stations, government buildings, churches, politicians, newspapers, banks, and schools. Tactics include drive-by shootings on motorcycles, the use of improvised explosive devices, and starting in 2010, suicide bombings.” (Ely Karmon, 2014) UNICEF reports that “some 500,000 children have been forced to flee Boko Haram militants in the last five months after an upsurge in attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger,... The additional numbers of children made homeless has taken the total number of youngsters in the Lake Chad region who have been forced to flee to 1.4 million, Unicef said in a statement. Nigeria was worst affected, with nearly 1.2 million children — more than half of them under five — uprooted by the Islamist insurgency, which is concentrated in the country’s remote northeast.” (Vanguard, 2015)

However, the renewed and concerted efforts of Nigerian and regional governments to rid Nigeria and its neighbours of all forms of Boko Haram terror activities and deadly insurgency started to yield positive gains with the overwhelming recapture of thirty-six Boko Haram strongholds, Local Government Areas, towns and cities with only three cities including Gwoza under the sect control at this time. Mike Omeri, the national security spokesman states that “36 towns had been retaken from Boko Haram since the start of a four-nation military offensive, voicing hope that the operation could lead to the group’s “total defeat” (Press Release: Vanguard, 2015). There is relative peace and security across the north-eastern Nigeria since the launch of the ongoing (February-March 2015) major offensive against the sect by Nigerian Joint Task Force (JTF), regional allies and intelligence support from France, and other members of international community. Nigerian government invested heavily in military arsenals including drones deployed for the operation in order to ensure a hitch-free national elections slated for March 28, 2015 and April 11, 2015. The elections were adjudged by international observers as free, fair, transparent and very credible. The incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan has since acknowledged defeat and has since handed over power to the new President, General Muhammadu Buhari of the Action Progress Party (APC) on May 29, 2015. Reports from the Nigerian Army Public Relations Acting Director, Colonel Sani Usman indicate that the Special Forces have rescued 293 ladies, comprising 200 girls and 93 women, during an earlier operation in the Sambisa Forest making the total of 553 rescued abductees including women, girls and children while the BBC reports that about 700 women have been rescued from Boko Haram Sambisa stronghold over the past week as the army continues its operation against the insurgents (Soriwei, 2015). The new President however while decorating new service chiefs directed them to end Boko

haram insurgency in three months (December 2015): “While commending the efforts of the armed forces so far, you need to brace up and continue to team up with other stakeholders to come up with a well-coordinated joint effort which will bring a desired end to these insurgencies within three months.” (PUNCH, 2015) According to the Acting Director Army Public Relations, Colonel Sani Kukasheka Usman, Nigerian troops are already winning the war with the massive surrender of the Boko Haram terrorists: “The new strategies being employed by the military have started yielding positive results with scores of terrorists surrendering to troops and many more willing to surrender. The new strategies employed included sustained offensive operations, pre-emptive air strikes by the Nigerian Airforce and routes blocking by ground troops all geared towards constricting and snuffing out the Boko Haram terrorists.” (Sahara Reporters, 2015) Nigeria also witnessed the incidence of armed conflict and vandalization of national resources in the course of the Niger Delta militancy led by Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND). The conflict claimed so many lives and properties and drastically reduced oil exploration and exports from 2007 – 2010.

Somalia:

Somali conflict has been as intriguing as devastating on the nation, the people and the entire region with an ever reverberating consequences on the international arena. Mark Bradbury and Sally Healy argue that the changing nature of the somewhat intractable Somali conflict spanned over two decades from Cold War to civil war in the 1980s (1988-91), through state collapse, clan war, intense famine and concerted international humanitarian intervention in the 1990s to a globalised ideological conflict in the first decade of the new millennium (Bradbury, 2010). Somalia in the past twenty years became the stronghold of multiple Jihadist extremists like the traditionalist sufi orders, Al Islah, Salafi, Wahhabi and the Al Itihad Al Islamiya covertly seeking to foist Islamic state or pursuing regional or international interests- a situation that convulsed the political governance and sovereignty of Somalia and its peoples (Bradbury, 2010).

Ivory Coast:

Apart from the historic rise and fall of political regimes that fomented various levels of conflict in Ivory Coast since independence from France in the 1960, the post election crisis of October 2010 – April 11, 2011 undermined the national unity of Ivory Coast. The lack of majority vote between the major contenders – the incumbent Gbagbo against Alassane Ouattara in the first round of the Ivorian presidential elections in October 2010 prompted the second round of elections in which Independent Electoral Commission declared Ouattara winner with 54% of the total vote cast. Gbagbo overturned the results declaring himself winner. His swearing on December 4, 2010 was both nationally and internationally resisted. There was high incidence of violence and conflicts across the nation but the Republican Forces of Ivory Coast defending the mandate of Alassane Ouattara with the tacit support of the UN troops, the French and ECOWAS defeated Gbagbo and restored democratic rule in the country. The conflict casualty is estimated about 3,000 people with lots of personal and national effects destroyed (Peace Direct).

International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), Oxfam and Safer world, estimate the economic costs of armed conflicts to Africa’s development in 23 African countries around 300 billion dollars. The countries include Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Cote d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sudan, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa and Somalia (IANSA, Oxfam and Saferworld, 2007). It is estimated that Africa loses around \$18bn per year due to armed conflicts and insurgencies. On the average, armed conflict shrinks an African nation’s economy by 15 per cent conservatively. African countries in conflicts have an average: 50 percent more infant deaths; 15 percent more undernourished people; life expectancy reduced by five years; 12.4 percent less food per person; 20 percent more adult illiteracy and 2.5 times fewer doctors per patient. The value of Human Development Index (HDI) drops, pushing the average conflict country from medium to low development, and GDP per capita is reduced by \$1120 (63 percent) (UNDP, 2005). Additionally, Africa is disproportionately affected by internecine violence from firearms. The continent has about 14 per cent of the world population but 20 per cent of the world’s firearm homicide, second to Latin America. This is perhaps not surprising as the guns made available through armed conflicts are one factor dictating levels of armed crime and billion dollar armed business across the continent (Collier, 2007).

3. The Incidence of Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo with an area of 2.3m sq/km and a population of 75 million people (2013 estimate) is a giant of Central Africa bordering nine other countries- Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is blessed with enormous mineral wealth – Gold, Diamond, Copper, Uranium, Cobalt, or Coltan and cassiterite (ores of tantalum and tin respectively) and potentially large reserves of oil and natural gas. It has the second largest rainforest in the world and is the most biodiverse African country. “Although citizens of DRC are among the poorest in the world, having the second lowest nominal GDP per capita, the country is widely considered to be the richest country in the world in terms of natural resources;

its untapped deposits of raw minerals are estimated to be worth in excess of US \$24 trillion” (Kuepper, 2010). BBC News Africa reports that: “The war had an economic as well as a political side. Fighting was fuelled by the country's vast mineral wealth, with all sides taking advantage of the anarchy to plunder natural resources, and some small militias fight on.” (BBC News Africa: DRC Profile) This buttresses the grave negative impact of natural resources which rather than provide sufficiently for the people, most times turn the area into theatres of conflict, criminality and violence – in tacit and tactical effort to subvert the riches of the people. Fruchart highlighting the United Nations Panel of Experts Report on the pervasive illegal exploitation of the natural resources and commonwealth of DRC argues that:

The DRC's mineral wealth became an end in itself for many of the armed forces operating in the DRC, as war fronts were concentrated around localities housing gold and coltan mines. Rwandan President Paul Kagame described the conflict as a ‘self-financing war’. A UN Panel of Experts advanced the thesis that the illegal exploitation of the DRC's resources directly funded the participation of neighbouring states, with an estimated 80 per cent of the expenditure of the Rwandan Army (Rwandan Defence Forces, Forces rwandaises de défense, RDF) in 1999 covered by its commercial activities in the DRC (UN Document S/2001/357).

Ironically, this resource-richest country became the theatre of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The conflicts of 1996 and specifically 1998 through 2003, have resulted in massive disruption of the social, religious, environmental, political and economic wellbeing of the country (IRC, 2008). Researchers like Collier (2007), Ntalaja (2005), Andres (2011), Reyntjens (2001), estimate the number of victims of the numerous armed conflicts that have ravaged Congo between 1996 and 2008 at 5.4 million deaths out of the 75 million population of the country. This implies that about 8 per cent of the population died in the conflict within that period, excluding an inestimable number of the labour force infected and rendered redundant by HIV/AIDS, hunger and other diseases. International Rescue Committee (IRC) asserts that “this is the most deadly war ever documented in Africa, indeed the highest war death toll anywhere in the world during the past half-century” (IRC, 2008). However, BBC News Africa claims that the war claimed about six million lives: “The war claimed an up to six million lives, either as a direct result of fighting or because of disease and malnutrition. It has been called possibly the worst emergency in Africa in recent decades.” (BBC News Africa: DRC Profile) Most of the victims were non-combatants or civilians who died as a result of the breakdown of economic, social and health infrastructures or from hunger, diseases, insect and snake bites, as well as attacks by wild animals. This intractable war in Congo DR has devastated the country and her neighbours to the extent that experts refer to it as the “African world War” because of the inextricable involvement of nine African countries and more than twenty armed groups. However, in early 2013 the UN secured a regional agreement from the regional stakeholders to end the M23 rebellion in eastern part of DRC. Although there is still smouldering violent skirmishes hither thither, the surrender of Bosco Ntaganda the founder of M23 to the International Criminal Court in the Hague was a big boost to peace building and reconciliation in the DRC and entire region (BBC News Africa: DRC Profile).

4. Literature Review

In a most obvious way, the impact and consequences of armed conflicts and humanitarian catastrophe in Africa are compelling tactical studies to unravel the *raison d'être* of Africa's protracted and persistent theatrical history of violence and armed crisis. It is instructive to notice that most strategic studies on the primary causes of African conflicts point to a) the quanta of concentration and/or plethora of uncommon natural and human resources scattered across the continent b) Africa's inability to detect and control subversive and spurious armed businesses pervasive in the continent, c) somewhat planned, organized and unending production, trade and recycling of ‘viral disease criminal business’ in Africa; d) inability to rise above ethnic chauvinism, parochialism, internationally undermined but spurious interests in African natural resources. These foreign interests are often pursued and executed in multivariate ways including, strategic deceptions, colonialism, collaboration and sponsoring of insurgencies and terrorist acts across the region, political subversions, unfair trade policies in the Africa's largely non-renewable resources, capital market manipulations and enforcement of dangerous, repressive and volatile international fiscal regimes and austerity measures across the continent and, at the most part waging psycho-ideological warfare on the sanctity of African culture and peoples in the guise of modernity. These factors among other critical cluster of African problems are reasoned argumentations advanced by this paper as the central precipitating cause of armed conflict in Africa. It behooves African leaders and peoples to take conscious quantum leap to knowledge economy that will unlock the inestimable and globally enviable potentials of these critical resources that are in dire global demand. It is the conscious reawakening to African renaissance that heralds new thinking and new ways of building and transforming Africanity devoid of tractable diseases or armed vulnerability, ignorance, ethnic rivalries, impotent and implosive political architecture and resource curse while not jeopardizing the humanity of other peoples and/or preying to their nefarious caprices. How has the incidence of armed conflict in Africa been examined by critics as meaningful contribution to African renaissance? Shekhawat, (2009:4) observes that the costs of armed conflicts in Africa are tremendous. It

includes besides mass death and destruction of live fortunes, large-scale displacements of persons, women and children, and incalculable traumatic condition of belligerents and survivors. Other humanitarian costs include negative impact on women and other vulnerable groups, increase in the post-trauma stress syndrome and the resultant psychiatric problems for the victims. The economic cost of armed conflict cannot be confined to a particular sector of industry or investment prospects. Besides exacting extensive damages to the infrastructural investments, armed conflict directly and indirectly affects the capital sources of livelihood of the local people, discourages private investments and stagnates the entire economy in the long run. Shekhawat tactfully underpinned the subtle relationship between armed conflicts in DR Congo as in most African states and 'bad governance' or non provision of political goods to the needy populace (Shekhawat, 2009)

On the other hand, Collier defines conflict as one of four 'traps' that keeps the world's poorest countries poor and confines the world's 'bottom billion' people to a life of poverty in stagnant or shrinking economies. He argues that Africa is further from attaining the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) than any other region of the world as a result of armed conflicts. Average African countries in conflict have more infant deaths, reduced life expectancy, more undernourished people, more adult illiteracy, more general poverty and disease, and the value of Human Development Index (HDI) drops, pushing the average conflict countries from medium to low development while per capita GDP reduces by 63 percent (Collier, 2007:5). Expressing concern on the impact of armed conflict on civilian population, Schauer observes that in 2004, political scientists counted more than 42 wars and armed conflicts worldwide with almost all of them ravaging developing countries. According to her, the observers of these 'New wars' or 'complex political emergencies' noted that the main target of the parties is the civilian population, and systematic atrocities, massacres, and bombings are often applied as rational strategies within the current warfare. The proportion of civilian casualties in armed conflicts has increased dramatically and is now estimated at more than 90 percent. More than half of these victims are children and women over the last decade (Schauer, 2009).

Commenting on international arms proliferation and the costs of conflicts in Africa, Johnson Sirleaf argues that the price which Africa pays for armed conflict and small arms proliferation could cover the cost of solving the problem of HIV and AIDS crisis in Africa, provide education, water, prevention and treatment for TB and malaria. She lamented that literally thousands of hospitals, schools, and roads could have been built which would positively affect millions of people; that not only do the people of Africa suffer the physical horrors of violence, armed conflict undermines their efforts to escape poverty (Sirleaf, 2007).

Messele argues that armed conflict has dislocated Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) and trapped the region into poverty, child trafficking, and poor socio-economic right for women and children who suffer from lack of access to education and effective protection. He contends that the first 10 poorest countries in the world are in the Sub-Sahara African (SSA) region as the GDP of the region which stood at US\$74 billion was equivalent of 28% of China's GDP, 69% of Brazil's GDP. He contends that armed conflict in Africa triggered vast array of issues including low life expectancy, high mortality rate, profuse youth illiteracy, prevalent child malnutrition and generally ranked among the countries of low human development index (HDI). He insists that the present economic situation in Africa is not only unacceptable but largely threatening as the SSA countries continue to be the home of the world's poorest people (Messele, 2002).

Meanwhile, Andres, agrees with Collier's study of 'development in reverse' that typical civil war comes close to almost doubling a country's military budget'. According to him the implications of this increase in military spending can mean for the development and security of some of the poorest countries in the world is better imagined. Observing that war is inherently negative and incredibly damaging to a society, he contends that it is in the best interest of the international community to play active role in preventing situations from ever escalating or falling back into an armed conflict (Andres, 2011).

Erturk while analyzing the impact of armed conflict on women in eastern Congo, painted a gloomy picture of violence against women in North and South Kivu as 'unimaginable brutality'. He insists that all armed forces involved in the conflict are guilty of sexual crimes of making women sexual slaves and other inhuman behaviours of the captivators. He maintains that "Most victims, as ever, are women and girls, some no more than toddlers, though men and boys have sometimes been targeted too. Local aid workers and UN Reports also exposed incidence of gang rapes, which left victims with appalling physical and psychological injuries; rapes committed in front of families or whole communities; male relatives forced at gunpoint to rape their own daughters, mother or sisters; women used as sex slaves were forced to eat excrement or the flesh of murdered relatives. Some women victims have been murdered by bullets fired from a gun barrel shoved into their vagina" (Erturk, cited in Shekhawat 2009). According to Egeland there are few places on earth where the gap between humanitarian needs and available resources is as large or as lethal as in Congo DR. The DRC is emerging from a decade of political instability and violent conflict that led to the near collapse of the economy and caused annual per capita income to plummet to \$120 in 2005 (down from \$380 in 1985). This is referred to as 'development in reverse' (Egeland, cited in Shekhawat 2009).

Reyntjens (2001) reiterates that the unstable situation provided the needed enabling environment for

conflict stakeholders to exploit the natural resources or wealth of DRC with impunity. He strongly argues that “Entrepreneurs of insecurity are engaged in extractive activities that would be impossible in a stable state environment; the criminalization context in which these activities occur offer avenues for considerable factional and personal enrichment through the trafficking of arms, illegal drugs, toxic products, mineral resources and dirty money.” (Reyntjens, 2001) Ntalaja noted that as a result of the conflict situation in Congo DR major foreign powers represented by their transnational Corporations, transnational criminal networks, regional gangsters, rebels and warlords are in alliance in the transaction of illicit businesses that plunder the natural resources of DRC with impunity. The trade in cobalt, diamond, gold, timber and other resources of DRC’s soil and forests has enriched individuals all over the world and the rebels and warlords use the illicit finance to obtain and proliferate small arms and sustain the armed conflicts in the resource-rich areas like North-eastern Congo (Ntalaja, 2005:5).

Raeymaekers opines that the political economy of armed conflict in DRC has degenerated into dramatic commoditization of people’s productive labour even after the second DRC war, particularly in the eastern parts. The self acclaimed rebel warlords, militia group commanders, tribal protectors; ‘proxy’ army commander sponsored by neighbouring countries and transnational criminal networks form different armed groups, simulate and generate armed violence, predate and cause massive displacements of local people. This increasingly stimulates the emergence of a ‘hyper-mobile’ form of livelihood, which revolves around economic activities in the mines, farmland and ‘spontaneous’ urban settlements close to major cities. These ‘informal’ domains become growing magnets for non-agricultural activities as urban markets and cross-border trades consequently become major alternatives to eroding agricultural economies. He further argues that the blame for Congo’s post war permanent state of emergency is Kabila’s weak government – which is increasingly awash with corruption and authoritarianism (Raeymaekers, 2012). Similarly, the United Nations (UN) report (2001) and UN Security Council (2002) Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and other Forms of Wealth of the DRC clearly pointed that all parties involved in the conflict profited by looting resources of the DRC. The overall situation remains fragile and poverty is all pervasive. The final report of the panel of experts identified 85 illegal business enterprises which were reported as “unscrupulous business people”. These are clear manifestation of the active involvement of these networks in fuelling the crisis in the DRC to their selfish advantage. IANSA, Oxfam and Saferworld (2007) estimate that the cost of armed conflict to Africa’s development has been a shocking over \$284 billion from 1990 to 2005. According to the report, this is almost certainly an under-estimate, as this calculation only covers periods of actual combat, but some costs of war such as increased military spending and struggling economy continued long after the fighting has stopped. Neighbouring countries also suffer economically, due to reduced trade, political insecurity, or an influx of refugees. They argue vehemently that at least 95 percent of Africa’s most commonly used conflict weaponry and assault munitions come from outside the continent. The most common weapon among them is the Kalashnikov assault rifle and the well-known type of AK-47, none of which are made in Africa. It implicates largely the dubious desire of some unscrupulous arms dealers and multinational conglomerates for lopsided arms trade in the DRC and Africa generally (IANSA, Oxfam and Saferworld,2007). Collaborating the reports of IANSA (2007) Heidelberg Institute for International Research, reports that thirty eight percent of the world’s armed conflict are being fought in Africa and in 2006 almost half of all high-intensity conflicts were in Africa. The Institute agreed with Oxfam, IANSA, and Safer World in their estimation of the economic cost of armed conflict to Africa. Though they also agreed that their data is approximate, but insisted that for the first time, it will provide a figure to help show the scale of the threat facing development in Africa. (HIIK, 2006).

UNDP reports that the 2010 survey data available in 2012 estimated that Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) figure for Congo DR shows that 74% of the population lived in multidimensional poverty, while an additional 15.1% were vulnerable to multiple deprivations. The intensity of deprivations, that is, the average percentage of deprivation experienced by people living in multidimensional poverty in the country was 53%. It noted this abhorable situation as a function of the long term effect of armed conflicts and the protracted armed violence and insurgencies in the Congo DR. [UNDP, Explanatory note (30)] The Enough Project argues that the crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo has ‘many layers’. It noted that Congo’s vast natural resources have continually attracted violent interventions from abroad and stoked internal conflicts since the late 19th century. Congo’s government has never effectively represented or protected its people, and has all too often served as a source of unchecked powers and personal enrichment for individuals. It also observed that the ongoing crisis in eastern Congo is rooted both in the history of predation and corruption, and the continuing aftermath of the 1994 genocide in the neighbouring Rwanda. “Today, Congo continues to struggle with an explosive combination of conflicts of local, regional and national levels”, and innocent civilians, women and children have tragically paid the cost (The Enough Project 2013). Enough Project defined Congolese abundant mineral resources as ‘conflict minerals’, which are minerals (Gold, tin, tantalum, tungsten) mined in conditions of armed conflict and human rights abuse, most notably in the eastern DR Congo. It lamented that it is not coincidence that the mineral mines are situated in the areas home to the bloodiest violence and conflict; and that the mines are either controlled by

the government troops or the rebels they are fighting. The mines and the communities around them are controlled with an iron fist and the conditions for the men and children who serve as miners and porters are extremely tough. Virtually all the thousands of tones of the raw minerals are not exported by Congo DR itself as they are smuggled across borders into neighbouring countries where they are sent to smelters and processed to avoid trace of origin and then exported all over the world (The Enough Project, 2014).

International Rescue Committee in the documentary on the humanitarian impact of conflict through mortality surveys, noted that the first four studies conducted between 2000 and 2004, estimated that 3.9million people had died since 1998. It argued that about 10% of all the deaths were due to violence and 90% were due to diseases and malnutrition. In the fifth survey, which covered the period of January 2006 to April 2007, it concluded that “5.4 million deaths have occurred between August 1998 and April 2007 with as many as 45,000 people dying every month” (IRC, 2008). In the same vein, the United Nations Office for the Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) puts the figures of internally displaced persons as a result of the DRC crisis at 1.16 million. It also put the figure for Congolese refugees in the neighbouring countries of Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda at 310,000 in October 2007 (UNHCR, 2007). Human Rights Watch (2001) on the other hand, accused DRC’s neighbouring countries particularly Uganda of committing both economic and physical abuses: “...while Ugandan commanders were plundering gold, looting timber, exporting coffee and controlling illicit trade monopolies in the Ituri District, their troops were killing and otherwise abusing the local population” (Human Right Watch, 2011).

Further, it alleged that the security forces of the DRC as well as rebel groups were committing crimes against humanity – killing, looting, torturing and raping women, and contended that the situation could get worse without international pressure (Human Right Watch, 2011).

Overall, armed conflict and its consequential ancillary of child soldiering and humanitarian intervention are intertwined as they form intrinsic characteristics of African tractable and intractable conflicts. With specific reference to DRC, armed conflict is summarily perceived as resource-based serving the triangular interests of both belligerents, international criminals and rogues states and the least, common populace. We argue that though the conflict in the DRC is in all intents and ramifications tractable and soluble, it has protractedly defied all concerted and consolidated approaches to end conflict and enthrone responsible popular governance due to the insatiable interests of the parties at war over and against all meaningful efforts to empower constitutional government in larger freedom of persons and democratic self governance. Therefore we are resolved that the case of DRC is overwhelmingly the case of ‘man’s inhumanity to man’; the poor are in all instances disproportionately disenfranchised, socio-economically deprived in the midst of inestimable and incalculable natural commonwealth of the people and ipso facto have apparently become politically ungovernable. The result is staggering and tripling poverty indices which naturally fan insurgency, insurrection, insubordination, armed civil unrest, social violence and political anarchy – in an all effort to reclaim and rebuild battered nationalities and nationhood. These inhuman and apolitical conflict-ridden situations are prevalent in the Sub Sahara Africa than elsewhere around the globe. The research submits that DRC conflict will be extremely managed in the absence of the underscored factors and/or willful execution of the arms proliferation treaty to dissuade illicit arms trade and consequent political cannibalization – cut the illicit arms trade and financing of rogue regimes, insurgents/terrorists and manage the crisis to reasonable level. The post war civilian government should implement policies that encourage national unity, educate the masses on the untold effects of armed criminality and violence and provide positive political dividends as deterrents to insurgency.

5. Implications of Armed Conflicts on Democratic Republic of the Congo

5.1 *The failed State Paradigm*

According to Robert Rotberg Nation-states fail because they are convulsed by internal violence and can no longer deliver positive, practical, beneficial political dividends to their citizens. Their governments lose legitimacy and are characterized by pervasive political impunity and lawlessness; consequently, the very nature of the particular nation-state itself becomes illegitimate and unpopular in the eyes, hearts and attitudes of a growing plurality of its citizens. The result is weakening of political institutions, rise of violent and insurgent groups, internecine conflicts of interests, implosive insecurity, corrosive political apathy, corruption, political ineptitude across public sectors, violent struggle for state power and territorial integrity between government and different criminal, insurgent and terrorist gangs and, if uncontrolled, will lead to eventual state failure and/or collapse (Rotberg 2003). The situation in DRC is overly paradigmatic of state failure if not collapse. Proponents of this theory like Zartman (1995:5), Milliken and Krause (2003:1-21), Stewart (2006:27-53), though diverse in the arguments about failed state are apparently agreeable on two basic dimensions: *institutional and functional dimensions*. This paper plans to carefully conceptualize from this approach particularly on the factors that characterize the conflict in the DRC:

a) The basic understanding of failed state is “a polity that is no longer able or willing to perform the fundamental jobs of a nation-state in the modern world.” (Rotberg 2003:6) In this connexion, Rotberg describes *Failed* states

as “tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions. In most failed states, government troops battle armed revolts led by one or more rivals....official authorities in a failed state face two or more insurgencies, varieties of civil unrest, different degrees of communal discontent, and a plethora of dissent directed at the state and at groups within the state” (ibid, 5). The above descriptions are typical of DRC conflict-ridden situation of which some of the warring factions implicated in the DRC conflict include: Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Congolese Armed Forces (FAC), Armed Forces of the Congolese People/Congolese Union for Peace and Democracy (FAPC/UCPD), Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR), Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), Zaire Armed Forces (FAZ), Forces for the Defence of Democracy (FDD), Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), Front for Integration and Peace in Ituri (FIPI), Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), RCD–Liberation Movement (RCD-ML), Rwandan Defence Force (RDF), Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC), Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF), Front for Patriotic Resistance in Ituri, Front for the National Liberation of the Congo, Interahamwe, Lord’s Resistance Army, Mai Mai Kata Katanga, March 23 Movement, Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo, Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo, Army for the Liberation of Rwanda, Congolese Revolutionary Movement, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda et cetera (Damien Fruchart, 2007).

b) The state is unable to meet the basic needs of her citizenry by making little or no investments in security, education, health and other infrastructural and social welfare services;

c) The state is bedeviled by protracted conflicts propelled by internal and external interests, thus the central government loses the monopoly of the means of security and control of violence;

d) The state is deeply infested with bitter and ferocious warring factions that establish authority over sections of the territory, while the official power is limited to the capital and some other major cities;

e) As the state authority weakens and fails, citizens naturally lose faith in the state and turn to warlords and strong figures that activate or express ethnic solidarity for security and protection;

f) In failed states, anomic behaviours become the norm, leading to high rate of urban criminality, arms and drug trafficking and the rise of criminal syndicates in the form of terrorism, insurgency and powerful proxies of international criminal networks, which testify to an underlying anarchy and wanton political desperation;

g) There is endemic corruption in the system, democracy and rule of law pay dearly to produce corrupt dictators and “leaders”.

On the contrary, Strong states are effective, efficient, popular and proactive. They command and control their territorial integrity. They prioritize the provision of human and national security as public good to the citizens. Strong States perform very well in critical sectors like Economy as reflected in the GDP per capita, the UNDP Human Development Index, Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, Freedom House’s *Freedom of the World Report* and political stability alongside other socio-economic indicators. As Robert Rotberg puts it: “Strong states offer high levels of security from political and criminal violence, ensure political freedom and civil liberties, and create environments conducive to the growth of economic opportunity. The rule of law prevails. Judges are independent. Road networks are well maintained. Telephones work. Snail mail and e-mail both arrive quickly. Schools, universities, and students flourish. Hospitals and clinics serve patients effectively. And so on. Overall, strong states are places of enviable peace and order” (Rotberg, 2003:4) while weak and failed states are volatile, vulnerable, susceptible, chaotic and prone to violence, insecurity and instability.

Generally, State failure is a fluidal phenomenon; states change from one political condition to another which largely determines the political status at the time as weak, strong, or failed; sliding forward to weakness and backwards into weakness or failure (as is the case in Sub Sahara Africa) depending on the overall capability of the political leadership. This is to say that state failure is not only preventable, impermanent but statutorily changeable. This is because failure is human made not natural or accidental but direct and/or indirect outcomes of political actions, inactions, decisions or ineptitude of political elites and decision makers. There is no doubt about the position of DRC as failed state at one time haven met all the criteria for this classification as stated above but with the consolidation of peace agreement and consistent democratic dispensations on the move, in addition to the provision of other vital political goods including unquestionable control of its territorial integrity, it is positively tilting towards weak state (Rotberg, 2003:5-10)

5.2 *Impact of Armed Conflicts on Human Development Index*

Conflicts and Life Expectancy

This analysis shall concentrate on key parameters of the Human development Index (HDI), as summary indicators for assessing long-term progress in three basic areas of human development: a) long and healthy life, b) access to knowledge and, c) decent standard of living between 1980 and 2012. This is to ascertain the situation before the conflicts, peak of the conflict and low or post conflict period.

i). According to the 2011 Human development Report (HDR), a long and healthy life is measured by life

expectancy, that is, the optimum number of years defined in terms of quality and quantity of lifestyle a healthy and normal individual is expected to live in a life-time. The International Rescue Committee reported that by the end of the second Congo DR civil war, 5.4 million people have died, about 8 percent of the country's population of 68 million then. According to the estimate, 45,000 Congolese die every month (half of them children), from hunger, preventable diseases, and other consequences of violence and displacement (The Enough Project, 2013:2). According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 800,000 civilians were displaced in the DR Congo's conflict by 2008 (UNOCHA, 2012). By 2012 between 1.5 and 2 million people fled their homes within Congo, some 60,000 people fled into neighbouring Uganda and Rwanda, while Eastern Congo perhaps remains the worst place to be a woman on earth. The Guardian estimated abduction, gang rape and sex slavery of women and girls from 1998 – 2008 between 200,000 – 300,000. (The Guardian, 2008) Eastern Congo in particular, according to WHO has one of the highest cases of HIV/AIDS, STD/STI in the world. This is a consequence of high incidence of rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery coupled with the virtual collapse of some of the most basic types of public health services provided by the state (Mealer, 2008).

ii). Between 1980 and 2012, DR Congo's life expectancy at birth only increased from 45.9 to 48.7 years. In spite of the increase, the country's progress in this area was still below sub-Sahara Africa's life expectancy of 54.9 and UNDP benchmark of 59.1 years. These protracted wars in Congo DR were not fought with only professional trained soldiers as they were in obvious and severe deficit. The forceful conscription and exploitations of children and youths as combatants, militias, porters, sex slaves et cetera resulted drastically in persistent loss of lives and strained the human resource development thereby putting the future of the country in jeopardy.

5.3 Armed Conflicts and Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

According to Collier's economic analysis of conflicts worldwide, the average length of a civil war is seven years while its average economic cost is at a growth reduction of 2.3 percent per year. What this means is that by the time the conflict is stabilized, there is a high likelihood that the country would be about 16 percent poorer than it would otherwise have been if it did grow at all during the same time span (Collier, 2009). The obvious implication for DRC five-year (1998-2003) intense conflict is that DRC is about 12 percent poorer than it was before the war. It also means that despite the 2003 South African peace agreement between the government and the warring factions which enabled the formation of government of national unity, the country remained deeply conflicted and extremely divisive, volatile and vulnerable. It will require decades of years to stabilize and attain the incremental and persistent growth in economic average of minimum 7 percent per year for at least ten years needed for a low-income country to transform to middle-income status.

However, critical review of Congo economic indices, despite the recent glimmering economic average of 7 percent in 2010-2012 is overly unsustainable. For instance, the GDP (purchasing power parity) of Congo DR in 2011-2013 averages \$25.82 billion (2011 est.), \$27.66 billion (2012 est.) and \$29.39 billion (2013 est.) while its Current account balance for 2012 and 2013 is estimated at -\$2.254 billion (2012 est.) and -\$2.544 billion (2013 est); Exports accounts for: \$9.936 billion (2013 est.), \$8.872 billion (2012 est.) while Imports accounts for: \$8.924 billion (2013 est.), \$8.187 billion (2012 est.); Reserves of Foreign exchange and gold: \$1.582 billion (31 December 2013 est.) and \$1.633 billion (31 December 2012 est.) (The World Factbook, 2015). With such very poor economic outlook relative to quanta of natural resources in the country, DRC may not be able to overcome its deep economic problems which require radical macroeconomic investments in critical sectors of economy, at least in the short term. A necessary turn around macroeconomic investment implies that huge, massive, mega development policy plan in human capital development, medium term macroeconomic development, gigantic spirited investment in result-oriented, transparent, independent anti-corruption measures; strengthening of political institutions, electoral processes and democratization are imperative indices for national stability and economic growth but appear untenable in over five decades. This is collaborated in the various articulated research reports, Human development Index (HDI) reports of the United Nations Development programme (UNDPs), reports of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Institute for Statistics (UIS) and the IMF/World Bank (WB) reports on DRC economic policy inter alia.

5.4 Armed Conflicts and Educational Attainment

Access to knowledge according to the HDI report of the UNDP is measured by mean years of schooling for adults, which is the average number of years of education received in a life-time by people aged 25 years and older; and expected years of schooling for children of school-entrance age, which is the total number of years of schooling a child of school-entrance age is expected to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates stay the same throughout the child's life. Apart from the negative socio-economic implications of the armed conflicts on the country, a review of the DR Congo's progress in each of the HDI indicators shows that the country has suffered reverse in development in national HDI with respect to educational attainment (see Table 1).

Table 1: DR Congo's HDI trends based on consistent time Series data, new Component indicators and new methodology

Years	Life expectancy at Birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean Years of Schooling	GNI per capita (2005 PPP \$)	HDI Value
1980	45.9	7.1	1.2	0.763	0.286
1985	46.4	6.9	1.5	0.706	0.294
1990	46.9	6.5	2	0.577	0.297
1995	45.9	6.2	2.7	0.307	0.263
2000	45.7	4.4	3.2	0.237	0.234
2005	47	5.5	3.4	0.260	0.258
2010	48.1	8.5	3.5	0.297	0.295
2011	48.4	8.5	3.5	0.307	0.299
2012	48.7	8.5	3.5	0.319	0.304

Source: UNDP, HDI Report 2013

A critical assessment of the human development indicators in the table above shows that the periods of 1990s to 2005 which fell within the peak periods of the conflict witnessed retrogression in all the human development indicators. This is a reflection of the impact of the armed conflict which has deprived children of school age from attending schools. Homes, schools and communities were deserted as a result of armed attacks, resulting in displacements for working class and their families, who ran into refugee camps and bushes for safety. These exposed them to more torture in the hands of other armed groups, forced recruitments, rapes and sex slavery, insect and snake bites, diseases and massive death tolls. All these reflected as well in the lowest human development index value of 0.234 and 0.258 of the period under review, and ever recorded in the country. Mean years of schooling increased from 1.2 to 3.5 years and expected years of schooling increased from 7.1 to 8.5 years, as against Sub-Sahara Africa's mean year of schooling of 4.7 years, expected years of schooling of 9.3 years and UNDP's 4.2 years and 8.5 years respectively. Also Congo DR's 2012 HDI of 0.304 is below the average of 0.466 for countries in the low human development group and below the average of 0.475 for countries in sub-Sahara Africa (See Table 2).

Table 2: DR Congo's HDI Indicators for 2012 relative to selected countries, Sub-Sahara Africa and UNDP benchmark for low HDI

COUNTRY	HDI VALUE	HDI RANK	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH	EXPECTED YEARS OF SCHOOLING	MEAN YEARS OF SCHOOLING	GNI PER CAPITA (PPPUS\$)
Congo DR	0.304	186	48.7	8.5	3.5	0.319
Nigeria	0.471	153	52.3	9	5.2	2.102
Ethiopia	0.396	173	59.7	8.7	2.2	1.017
Sub-Sahara Africa	0.475	-	54.9	9.3	4.7	2.010
Low HDI	0.466	-	59.1	8.5	4.2	1.633

Source: UNDP, Human development report, 2013

When compared to other countries in the ranking of Human development Index, DR Congo ranked 187 out of 187 countries in 2011 and 186 out of 187 countries in 2012 (UNDP, 2013). This clearly shows the gross negative effect on the national basic education plan.

From Sub-Sahara Africa, countries which are close to the Congo DR in 2012 HDI rank and population size are Nigeria and Ethiopia, which ranked 153 and 173 respectively, while DRC ranked 186 out of 187 countries and territories with Niger Republic ranking last. This also could be attributed to the effect of armed conflicts which affected human resources development of both countries – DRC and Niger Republic.

5.5 Armed Conflicts and Social Indicators

A long-term progress assessment of Congo DR human resource development in relation to other countries in terms of Human Development Index value will also show a clearer picture of the impact of armed conflicts on the country. For instance, during the period between 1980 and 2012, Congo DR, Central African Republic and the Gambia experienced different degrees of progress towards increasing their HDIs as represented in these graphs.

Figure 1: Trends in Congo (Democratic Republic)'s HDI 1980-2012/2013 (UNDP, 2013/14)

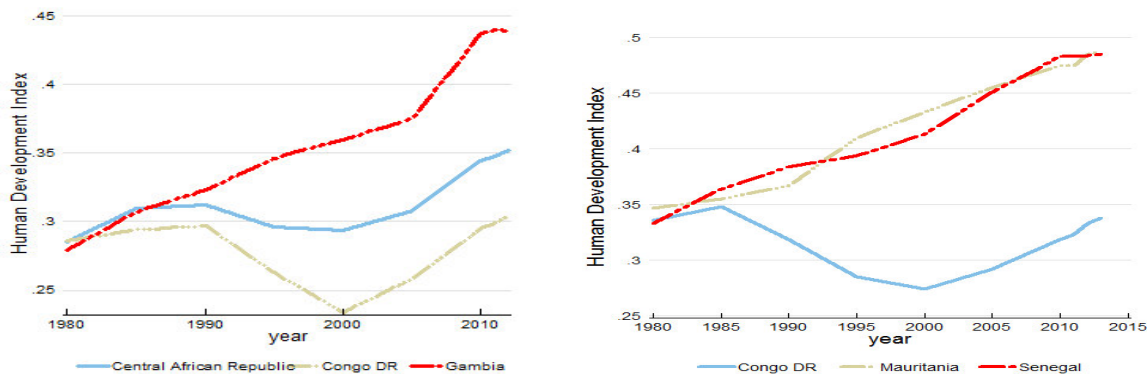
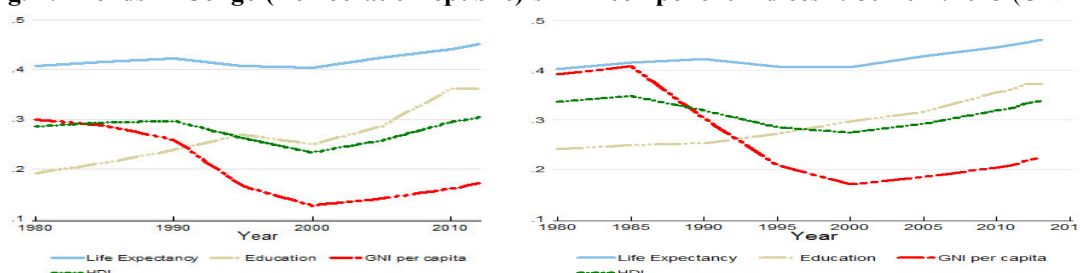


Fig. 2: Trends in Congo (Democratic Republic)'s HDI component indices 1980-2012/2013 (UNDP, 2013/14)



A look at the human development index graph above shows clearly that DR Congo suffered sharp decline in human development index between 1998 and 2003, and continued to drag far behind Central African Republic which suffered the same crises of a lower dimension. The Gambia which has not experienced any major incidence of armed conflict has kept stable all-time increase in human development index. Fig. 2 shows the contribution of each component index to Congo DR Human Development Index (HDI) since 1980. A look at the graph shows that all the component indicators curved downwards at the peak of the conflict period (1998-2005), with the HDI indicator showing a sharp decline in human resource development within the peak period. Notably, life expectancy indicator which appeared highest among the component indices was at 48.7 still below the sub-Saharan Africa's 54.9 and UN average low HDI of 59.1. Between 1980 and 2012, Democratic Republic of Congo Human Development Index (HDI) only rose by 0.4% annually from 0.286 to 0.304, which gives the country a rank of 186 out of 187 countries with compatible data. The HDI of Sub-Sahara African region increased from 0.366 to 0.475 between 1980 and 2012, placing Congo DR below the regional average.

5.6 Armed Conflict and Standard of Living

Standard of living on the other hand, is measured by Gross National Income (GNI) per capita expressed in constant 2005 dollars estimates converted using Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) rates. Annual per capita income in the DRC plummeted to \$120 in 2005 (2005 estimates) as against \$380 in 1985 (UNDP, 2012). According to the same report, Congo DR is ranking low in the entire three major human development indicators of health, education and standard of living or income parity as follows: while the life expectancy at birth in Congo DR is 48.7 years, the regional rate of Sub-Sahara Africa is 54.9, whereas the UNDP benchmark for low human development index (HDI) is 59.1. In education, the mean year of schooling in DRC is 3.5 years as compared to the Sub-Sahara Africa's 4.7, while UNDP's low HDI on education is 4.2. Economically, the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita income, in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) of Congo DR is \$0.319, while the regional benchmark for Sub-Sahara Africa is \$2.010 and UNDP's low HDI is \$1.633 respectively (UNDP, 2013).

The conflicts which led to the forceful recruitment and deployment of child soldiers in war fronts by both government and rebel forces, torture and inhuman treatment of the populace have accounted for premature death of children and adults (low life expectancy), low level of education, as children who are supposed to be in schools are forcefully recruited into armed forces, thereby disrupting their educational life and showing negative effect on mean years of schooling and percentage of children in schools (Human Right Watch, 2001). The displacement of the civilian populace by soldiers and rebels in their fight over mineral wealth and other war crimes have also resulted in creating and/or escalating unemployment, hunger, poverty, general low GDP and productivity in the country. The devastation caused by the conflicts has as well been responsible for the deplorable state of the health sector as the health care conditions and facilities remained in ruins. It is plausible to state that a nation's standard of living is always affected by the levels of armed criminality and conflicts.

6. Conclusion

The study explored the incidence of armed conflicts in Africa of the Democratic Republic of Congo commonly referred to as Africa's World War. Specifically, the paper explored the implications of armed conflicts on human development in the Congo DR. The paradox of poverty in the midst of wealth and 'development in reverse' as it affects Congo DR were used to demonstrate the impact of these human existential problems on Congo DR and her citizens.

While review of relevant literature was done, the theory of failed state was utilized to determine and justify the major causes, enormity, and volatility of the conflict to Congo DR. The study reveals that Congo DR state has been engulfed in armed conflicts and insurgences as a result of the state's failure to effectively control its territorial integrity, monopolize violence, provide popular political dividends to basic needs of the citizens (security, health, education, infrastructure and other social welfare services), promote democracy, rule of law and eschew corruption. The conflicts battered the economy and destroyed primary infrastructure with decades of mismanagement, authoritarian and corrupt rule. Health and educational services were also severely damaged. The persistent conditions provide enough evidence that recovery from conflict in the DRC can take many years but not entirely irredeemable and intractable.

On the whole, there is an urgent need for a general regional peace Agreement for all DRC frontier states – Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Angola, including other interregional states like Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa and the AU. This will strengthen not only the internal democracies of the states in the region but will enhance the interregional cooperation in building strong democratic institutions across the region.

Realizing that one of the basic origins of the conflict drew from the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and the unprecedented consequences of inaction, lack of political will and tactful reticence and compromise of DRC leadership to implement regional agreement to rout the Hutu rebels camps and contain reprisal attacks which could have averted the escalation of conflict; there is need for regional stakeholders and decision makers to take a positive and proactive position on moving the region forward while finding lasting solutions to intra-communal clashes in DRC in particular and the region generally to avoid the repeat of DRC experience in any other region of Africa. There is also the urgent need to strengthen political and democratic institutions in the DRC and across Africa as a whole; respect regional and international treaties on non interference in domestic affairs and sovereignty of nation states while investing in intelligent, charismatic and visionary leadership across the region. Also there should be maximum political will to develop time-framed macroeconomic policies to lift the country out of poverty and underdevelopment by positively exploiting the vast riches and domestic capacities of its inestimable natural resources.

The arms embargo placed on the region by the United Nations is commendable but should be reviewed and made resolutely enforceable. This will discourage criminality and criminal gangs smuggling arms and dangerous substances around the region in exchange for natural resources. Immediate concerted and committed action is needed from national and regional stakeholders to consolidate the gains of the current political stability, the rule of law, citizenship education, good governance, eschew corruption, demobilize, rehabilitate, re-orientate and reintegrate war "casualties" and belligerents as sine qua non to building a resilient, peaceful, stable and prosperous Congo DR state.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, it is recommended that parties that seek to satisfy their identity and security needs through conflict should realize that conflict resolution can truly occur and last if satisfactory amelioration of underdevelopment occurs as well. Experiencing protracted conflict should lead one to understand that peace is development in the broadest sense of the term.

The Educational and Health institutions and services should be given serious attention by the government to ensure that children of school age are given adequate education, and health services adequately provided. Peace agreements between government and conflict parties must include measures for the demobilization, release and rehabilitation of child soldiers for proper reorientation and reintegration into the society. There is urgent need for Africans to assume full responsibility for their own problems by establishing a proactive African Stand-by Force and effective regional Early warning systems. The African Union's Proposal in this direction is a welcome development and deserves the support of all African regions and stakeholders.

The need to articulate regional beneficial economic trade policy in Africa is urgent. Africa should be allowed to determine the patterns of trade for her natural and mostly non-renewable resources as is the case with the resources of other developed and developing regions. The difference largely is resource technology and African leaders should invest massively in relevant technology that will uplift the region. It is thence imperative for African leaders and stakeholders to realize the enormity and time-valued significance of the African natural resources which is more than enough to liberate Africa from the shackles of poverty, regional conflicts and vulnerability.

Finally, corruption is essentially a crime of complicity. Africa especially the DRC should invest

massively in anti-corruption technologies to rid its people and nations of corruption, unlock the massive wealth tied to corruption and be in vantage position to provide meaningful and targeted political dividends, leadership and goods to their nations and peoples.

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