Explaining the Great War in Africa: How Conflict in the Congo Became a Continental Crisis

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Modern conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is complicated. Competing networks of local rebel groups, insurgents from neighboring countries, and African states have combined to ravage the DRC since the mid-1990s. This series of interconnected conflicts seems to have an equally confusing array of causes: local disputes over land and resources, the acquisitive goals of rebel groups and predatory neighboring states, and ethnic and political grievances all help explain the outbreak and continuation of war in the DRC.[1] A less well-understood feature of the war is its expansion—specifically, why did the conflict known as the Second Congo War that began in August of 1998 draw in states from across Africa?

Susan Rice, then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs under President Clinton, offered one potential answer to this question in October 1998 when she said, "[t]he more countries we have involved, the more complicated it becomes to unravel … this is becoming akin to Africa's first 'world war.'"[2] This allusion to World War I is not exact. Unlike the First World War, which was global in scope, fighting in "Africa's World War" was limited to African actors on the African continent. However, Rice's reference to World War I suggests a plausible explanation for the spread of the Second Congo War. The same dynamics that caused the widening of war in 1914 also led fighting in the DRC to expand into a continental conflict.

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In particular, war was stimulated *by* the operation of the security dilemma and the formation of a large and complex network of alliances that resulted *from* this security dilemma.

Historians and international relations scholars have exhaustively studied the causes of World War I and the reasons it engulfed all of Europe.[3] This work has produced a deeper understanding of that war, as well as a broader set of theories that neo-realists believe help explain the outbreak and spread of war in general. Thus far, there has been no serious attempt to apply these neo-realist explanations for war to the dramatic expansion of the Second Congo War during the summer of 1998.[4]

Applying key neo-realist concepts such as the security dilemma and the balancing behavior of threatened states to the Second Congo War is a useful exercise. If neo-realism is an appropriate fit, the application of theory can shed light on the fundamental dynamics of the war, and help clarify why and how events unfolded as they did. If, on the other hand, neo-realism is poorly equipped to explain war in the DRC, the application can expose shortcomings of the theory and help identify key drivers of the conflict for which neo-realist theory does not account.[5]

The purpose of this paper is to begin the process of theoretical application. Its goal is to apply the key concepts that neo-realists use to explain the outbreak and expansion of World War I to the case of Africa's World War. I begin by articulating the neo-realist explanations for the causes of the First World War, focusing on the general concept of the security dilemma and how it can facilitate the spread of alliance networks.[6] I then discuss the deteriorating security environment in central and eastern Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s, paying particular attention to the Rwandan Genocide and the First Congo War. This context is necessary to understand the evolution of the security concerns of each state as well as the growing security dilemma throughout the region. Next, I apply neo-realist theory to the Second Congo War by examining the motivations of the primary state participants. My central finding is that neo-realist explanations are, in fact, quite helpful in understanding the dynamics that transformed war in the DRC into Africa's "World War."

In the run-up to the Second Congo War, the realist logic that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" pervaded an insecure regional environment.[7] This caused the "widening and tightening" of alliances among states and non-state rebel groups as each state or group sought security through the addition of allies.[8] These attempts to balance against potential threats exacerbated a burgeoning security dilemma throughout much of Africa, as steps taken to enhance the security of one state heightened the insecurity

of others. Thus, when the Rwandan-Ugandan alliance began the Second Congo War to unseat Laurent Kabila in August 1998, they set off a chain reaction, activating a network of alliances that stretched throughout central and eastern Africa. As a result, powerful centripetal forces dragged nine African states into the conflict.

THE SECURITY DILEMMA AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In his classic article "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," Robert Jervis explains, "many of the means by which a state tries to increase its security decrease the security of others."[9] This security dilemma, combined with the anarchic nature of international politics, can lead states that would be happy with the continuance of the status quo into war. According to Glenn Snyder, "even when no state has any desire to attack others, none can be sure that others' intentions are peaceful, or will remain so; hence each must accumulate power for defense. Since no state can know that the power accumulation of others is defensively motivated only, each must assume that it might be intended for attack."[10] As states wind deeper down this spiral of insecurity, they attempt to balance against their adversaries by either building more weapons of their own or forming alliances with states that share their interests.

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Jervis explains the severity of the security dilemma through a pair of variables: "whether defensive weapons and policies can be distinguished from offensive ones, and whether defense or offense has the advantage."[11] Determining whether the offense or defense has the advantage means assessing whether it is easier to attack another's army and territory or defend one's own. This assessment is carried out by evaluating two additional variables: geography and technology. Geographic impediments like rivers and mountains make it harder to invade and thus give defense the advantage. Conversely, borders without such major obstacles encourage invasion. Similarly, weapons such as bombers are highly vulnerable and encourage the offense because they must be employed before they are attacked and neutralized. Other weapons, such as the machine gun, can weather an initial attack and are likely to have more utility when deployed as part of a prepared position to impede invasion, giving defense

the advantage. If the offense is understood to have the advantage, insecurity is increased; knowing that attacking first is advantageous incentivizes possible opponents to strike preventively.[12]

The second variable that determines the severity of the security dilemma is whether offensive weapons and policies can be distinguished from defensive ones. If this distinction is possible, and neighboring states are understood to be status quo-oriented, then the security dilemma is mitigated. If the distinction is not possible, then states will fear their neighbor's potentially hostile intentions, thus exacerbating the security dilemma. The security dilemma is at its most pernicious when it is easier to conquer than to defend, and when it is unclear whether the opposing state's intentions are offensive or defensive.[13]

Much of the scholarship examining the First World War illustrates the security dilemma concept. In particular, Stephen van Evera's "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War" argues that a belief in the superiority of offensive strategies by military and civilian leaders was a principal cause of the war.[14] Van Evera establishes how a belief in the superiority of offensive strategies prior to World War I led to the adoption of "more aggressive foreign policies, both to exploit new opportunities and to avert new dangers which appear when the offense is strong. Expansion is more tempting because the cost of aggression declines when the offense has the advantage." For the purposes of this paper, a particularly important effect of offensive advantage is the impact it has on alliance relationships. According to Van Evera, "alliances widen and tighten as states grow more dependent on one another for security, a circumstance which fosters the spreading of local conflicts. Moreover, each state is more likely to be menaced by aggressive neighbors who are governed by the same logic, creating an even more competitive atmosphere and giving states further reason to seek security in alliances and expansion."[15]

The question for this paper is whether a similarly deadly logic worked to draw states into the war in the DRC in 1998.

In the years immediately preceding World War I, alliances were offensively oriented and unconditional in character. The expansion of these unconditional alliances, combined with the heightened security dilemma that accompanies the perceived dominance of the offense, was an important reason why a war that began in the Balkans soon engulfed all of Europe.[16] The question for this paper is whether a similarly deadly logic worked to draw states into the war in the DRC in 1998.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF WARFARE IN AFRICA

An understanding of the expansion of the Second Congo War begins with the shifting patterns of modern warfare in Africa. Until the late 1970s, wars in Africa were primarily anti-colonial struggles or conflicts against white minority-ruled states. However, in the 1980s, a new type of conflict emerged, spurred by what William Reno labels "reform rebels." These groups targeted indigenous African rulers who they viewed as repressive and corrupt.[17] Alex de Waal writes that their goal was to "wage revolutionary warfare to fulfill what they saw as the thwarted promises of independence, namely true social, economic, and political transformation."[18] Many of the leaders of these revolutionary movements attended or were associated with the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. They returned to wage insurgencies in their home countries throughout central and eastern Africa and gradually took power. By the end of 1994, the leaders of Uganda, Rwanda, Eritrea, and Ethiopia, as well as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in southern Sudan, were all reform rebel leaders. The success of these campaigns did not bring peace. Instead, as de Waal writes, "the movements in power—and their enemies—have contributed to the militarization of the entire region and the spread of armed conflict. The combination of the movements' Pan-Africanism and militarism has led them into attempts to 'liberate' their neighbors through sponsoring domestic liberation movements and direct military action themselves."[19]

The increasingly popular strategy of sponsoring rebel movements to destabilize enemy nations led to growing insecurity throughout the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region. This was a distinct change from the previous generation of African leaders, who were more prone to prop up embattled fellow leaders than dethrone them.[20] Although Jeffrey Herbst is correct to point out that these new conflicts were not about acquiring territory, his assertion that "without having to compete for territory, Africans could devise rules by which all could become more secure" does not follow.[21] Instead, the traditionally immutable nature of African boundaries since decolonization described by Herbst has shaped a uniquely African way of war—one in which the goal is to overthrow a rival regime rather than conquer an opponent's territory.[22] Contrary to Herbst's assertion, the security dilemma operated throughout Africa. More than the loss of territory, leaders feared the end of their rule, and the growing trend of state support for rebel movements during the 1980s jeopardized the rule of many African leaders. By the mid-1990s, competing networks of alliances among states and non-state rebel groups stretched across much of

the continent. The threat of regime destabilization created an acute security dilemma in the region.[23]

A clear preference for offensive strategies among African states exacerbated this security dilemma. Offense appeared to be easier than defense because of porous borders and the availability of insurgents and rebel groups eager to infiltrate them.[24] The widely employed strategy of sponsoring proxy rebel forces is inherently offensive; these forces are intent on attacking for their own reasons and the sponsoring state enables them to do so. Since attacking was considered relatively easy, states had an incentive to preventively attack rather than deal with the difficulty of defending their easily penetrable borders against a diffuse insurgent threat. A special consultation of African Civil society groups and the OAV on conflict in Africa describes what happens in such an insecure environment, "the deadly logic of escalation sets in… If one state is hosting or sponsoring an insurgent in the territory of another, the latter is likely to respond in kind."[25]

Offensive strategies were also popular because they held the potential to be decisive. While defending against cross-border attacks merely fends off a threat, an offensive strike against a rebel base of operation can eliminate a threat. Finally, the Rwandan military was particularly enthralled by its own offensive ability, having captured the country in 1994 and successfully removed then-Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko from power in 1997.[26] When Rwanda next perceived a threat—this time from the Interahamwe or ex-members of the Hutu-dominated Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) in the eastern DRC—it is not surprising that it chose an offensive strategy to deal with the threat. In sum, the nature of warfare in central and eastern Africa convinced leaders that offensive strategies, often channeled through proxy groups, were most effective. This perception of offensive dominance heightened insecurity in the region.

THE CONTEXT OF A CONTINENTAL WAR:
GENOCIDE IN RWANDA AND THE FIRST CONGO WAR

In the spring of 1994, Rwandan Hutu leaders began a policy of exterminating their Tutsi neighbors. In the space of 100 days they killed approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The genocide was halted when the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) invaded Rwanda with support from Uganda. The RPF's victory prompted over one million Rwandan Hutu refugees, including thirty thousand FAR and tens of thousands of militiamen, to flee from the invading Tutsi army into the DRC.[27] This was not the end of the conflict. Instead, Jason Stearns observes that

the FAR "used the protection provided by the border to regroup, rearm, and prepare to retake power in Kigali."[28]

This massive influx of refugees into the Congolese provinces of North and South Kivu disrupted an already volatile situation. As Severine Autesserre writes, "[m]icro-level rivalries over land, resources, and traditional or administrative power" had "produced cleavages both at the local and at the national level."[29] These cleavages led to the formation of alliances between the Rwandan Hutus now in the Kivus and local Congolese Mai Mai groups against Congolese Tutsis. In addition, President Mobuto of Zaire supported the Rwandan Hutu forces against Congolese Tutsis.[30] At the same time, ex-FAR soldiers conducted raids across the border into Rwanda. Though the "intensity and frequency of these raids were limited, they were an undeniable security problem for the Rwandan government."[31] These cross-border strikes, combined with attacks on Congolese Tutsis, spurred Kigali to action.

Rwanda provided training as well as organizational and logistical support to Congolese Tutsis in the provinces of North and South Kivu. Encouraged by Kigali, these Tutsis rose up against Mobutu's regime in the fall of 1996. Rwanda then sent its forces across the border to support the rebellion it had nurtured.[32] At this point, the RPF-led Rwandan government had two basic objectives: "hunting down Rwandan Hutu rebels in the Kivus, and protecting the Congolese of Rwandan ancestry [Tutsis] there."[33] The invasion set off the First Congo War, and the Rwandan Army's mission quickly expanded to include the overthrow of the Mobutu regime. It was not difficult for Kigali and its Congolese Tutsi allies to find support for this goal. Zaire was the sanctuary for a bevy of rebel groups fighting against Angola, Uganda, and Burundi, as well as Rwanda.[34] All these states were happy to eliminate Mobutu and the base he provided to their enemies. To legitimize their invasion, they fostered the *Alliances des Forces Democratiques pour la Liberacion du Congo* (AFDL), a group of exiled Congolese revolutionary parties led by Laurent Kabila. Most Congolese warmly welcomed the ADFL, as they resented the kleptocratic rule of Mobuto. Fueled by support from throughout the African continent, the AFDL moved westward.[35] A rebellion that had broken out on Zaire's eastern border in the fall of 1996 covered nearly a thousand miles and captured the capital city of Kinshasa in May of 1997.

KABILA'S BRIEF HONEYMOON

President Kagame of Rwanda and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda quickly soured on their choice to lead the newly renamed

Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire). The International Crisis Group summarizes the reasons for the growing frustration with Kabila in Rwanda and Uganda. He was seen as:

> …incapable of conducting a coherent policy in regard to commerce, thus preventing the economy from stabilizing; incapable of creating a national consensus because he excludes all opponents from power, as well as those in favor of a regional or ethnic balance; [and] incapable of preventing extremist Hutus and the Ugandan guerillas of the Allied Democratic Front (Islamic and supported by Sudan) from attacking Rwanda and Uganda from Congo.[36]

Kabila's ineptitude was exacerbated by his lack of a political base. It was clear that he had come to power on the coattails of his Rwandan and Ugandan backers, and his initial inability to separate himself from these sponsors became a major domestic liability. The dominant presence of Rwandan troops in Kinshasa especially angered Congolese civilians.[37] Rather than a liberating force, Rwandan troops were increasingly seen as a force of occupation, and Kabila as a puppet of the Rwandan and Ugandan leaders who had empowered him.[38] The longtime Congo expert Herbert Weiss describes the dilemma faced by the DRC's new leader: "On the one hand, the Congolese public quite widely resented the Rwandan/Tutsi presence and wanted Kabila to free himself from their control or influence. On the other hand, the Congolese Tutsi wanted Kabila to reward them for having played a large part in putting him in power."[39]

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In an attempt to carve out his own power base, Kabila began to distance himself from Rwanda and the Congolese Tutsis who had supported his rebellion.[40] The DRC's new president became increasingly paranoid and distrustful of his former backers. Desperate for new allies, he made two fateful moves. First, he established warm relations with Sudan, seriously antagonizing President Museveni in Uganda.[41] Second, in June of 1998 he reached out to the Interahamwe/ex-FAR militiamen that his rebellion had sought to defeat only eighteen months earlier. Jason Stearns writes that Kabila believed that "if he waited too long, the Rwandans and Congolese Tutsis would remove him from power … He needed his own force, and

in desperation he drew on the largest, most determined mercenary troops available."[42] The relationship between Kinshasa and Kigali spiraled downwards. In late July, Kabila gave a speech requesting that all Rwandan forces exit his capital city. Only a few days later, on August 2, 1998, the DRC's 10th Brigade stationed in Goma declared itself no longer loyal to President Kabila. That same day, Rwandan army units crossed the frontier into the DRC. Another war had begun.

AFRICA'S WORLD WAR

Two days after the war began, the Rwandans and their Ugandan allies mounted a daring attack that almost ended the conflict before it gathered momentum. Two hundred soldiers were loaded into a Boeing 707 in Goma and flown across the DRC to the Kitona airbase, 250 miles west of Kinshasa. When these troops landed, the soldiers at the base quickly defected from Kabila to join the rebellion.[43] The rebels sponsored by Uganda and Rwanda now had a convenient base to which they could send supplies for an assault on Kinshasa. At the same time, Rwanda hastily convened a meeting of disparate Congolese rebel leaders to once again provide their invasion a patina of legitimacy; as Filip Reyntjens ironically notes, what would become the *Rassemblement Conglais pour la Democratie* (RCD) was only given a name and leadership several days after the "rebellion" in eastern Congo had begun.[44]

By the middle of August, Ugandan and Rwandan forces, along with their Congolese allies, were steadily advancing on the capital to overthrow the seemingly doomed regime of Laurent Kabila. However, Kigali and Kampala failed to appreciate the differences between this war and their first attempt at regime change two years before. Mobutu's sponsorship of foreign rebel groups had united much of the continent against him, making that war widely popular, but Kabila was still seen as a useful ally by many states in the complex geopolitical milieu of Africa. Instead of joining with Rwanda and Uganda to overthrow Kabila, Angola and Zimbabwe backed the embattled Congolese leader. On August 23, 1998, Angolan troops beat back Rwandan-Ugandan forces in the Lower Congo.[45] A few anti-Kabila forces made it to Kinshasa, but they were met there by the city's population and massacred. The war continued,

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with battle lines slowly taking shape. The axis of Rwanda and Uganda, now joined by Burundi, held much of the eastern DRC, while Kabila, backed by Angola and Zimbabwe, as well as Namibia, Sudan, and Chad, controlled the western half of the country. In addition, a number of rebel and insurgent groups—Congolese and foreign—joined both sides of the conflict. Africa's World War was underway.

THE MOTIVATIONS FOR WAR

In discussing the reasons why so many African states became embroiled in the Second Congo War, Weiss states that "the war has involved numerous African states in interlocking alliances which often appear to be motivated only by the principle: the enemy of my enemy is my friend."[46] If this analysis is correct, neo-realist theory possesses significant explanatory power. Zeev Maoz and his coauthors describe how the balance of power logic espoused by neo-realists holds that:

> Enemies of allies are considered enemies because—even if such actors have not been directly hostile to the focal state—its allies may draw it into an—intended or unintended—conflict. Likewise, states view allies of enemies as potential enemies, because they perceive themselves as potential targets of alliances forged by their enemies, thus they act to counterbalance potentially hostile alliances or initiate preventive conflict against them.[47]

To further explore the utility of neo-realism in understanding the DRC conflict, it is helpful to survey the considerations of each state protagonist.

Rwanda

Rwanda's stated reason for intervening in the DRC repeatedly during the 1990s was to eliminate the bases of the Interahamwe/ex-FAR located just over the Rwandan border in Eastern Congo.[48] The Rwandan attempt to end cross-border Hutu raids by installing Kabila in Kinshasa in 1997 failed; by early 1998, the Interahamwe/ex-FAR were striking Rwanda more often than before Kigali's 1996 invasion of the DRC.[49] This reinforced the deep insecurities of Rwanda's Tutsi leaders. David Shearer writes:

> Ever present behind the machinations of Rwanda's Tutsi leadership is the specter of the 1994 genocide that killed around 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. This element has shaped the Rwandan use of force. The elimination of Hutu insurgents—most of whom were implicated in the genocide—was to Rwandan eyes, both a question of justice and critical to their very survival.[50]

This sense of insecurity in Kigali was exacerbated by the small state's geographic vulnerability. Rwanda is slightly smaller than the state of Maryland. With such little strategic depth, the state has only a minimal ability to absorb insurgent attacks—an attack on its borders threatens the core of the state. That Kabila was not able to restrain Hutu attacks was bad enough, but when Rwandan officials received intelligence that he was training and arming the Interahamwe/ex-FAR, the Congolese president became a friend of Rwanda's primary enemy, and therefore an enemy of Rwanda. It is not surprising that Kigali mounted another invasion of Congo to eliminate this threat.

Security was not the only reason for the Rwandan invasion of the DRC in August of 1998. Humanitarian concerns also played a role, specifically, the protection of Congolese Tutsis who were increasingly in conflict with native Congolese opponents and Rwandan Hutu refugees now in the DRC. Timothy Longman describes the strong connection that Rwandan Tutsis have with their Congolese counterparts and concludes that "the concern for Congo's Tutsi was real, and the interest in defending Congo's Tutsi was probably, at least initially, more than a pretext or fig leaf to justify intervention."[51] However, Longman also makes clear that Rwanda had additional motivations less noble than either humanitarian intervention or national security, including "the need to quell domestic unrest, opportunities for personal and national enrichment, and the desire to be a regional power."[52]

Kigali feared that continued Hutu raids, especially with the support of Kabila, might destabilize Rwanda. Following the logic of the security dilemma, this created incentives for Rwanda to push its Congolese Tutsi allies to revolt and then to support their rebellion with an invasion of the DRC.

Despite these other motivations, it is unlikely that Rwanda would have invaded the DRC absent the security threat posed by the Interahamwe/ex-FAR insurgents. Security concerns were thus a necessary condition for the Rwandan invasion. Kigali feared that continued Hutu raids, especially with the support of Kabila, might destabilize Rwanda. Following the logic of the security dilemma, this created incentives for Rwanda to push its Congolese Tutsi allies to revolt and then to support their rebellion with an invasion of the DRC. Plagued by insecurity, and worried that Hutu insurgent attacks would increase, Rwanda decided to go on the offensive, reigniting war in the DRC.[53]

Uganda

Much like its Rwandan ally, Uganda justified its involvement in the Second Congo War with a security rationale. First, a Ugandan resistance group, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), was launching audacious cross-border attacks from its sanctuary in eastern Congo and abducting Ugandan youth.[54] Kabila's inability to stop these attacks certainly was one motivation for intervention. Second, Kabila's close relationship with Khartoum antagonized Uganda. Sudan backed several Ugandan resistance groups, including the ADF, the West Nile Bank Front, and the Lord's Resistance Army, in their fight against Kampala. Gerard Prunier reports that, in 1997, President Museveni said: "We have run out of solutions with the Sudan. We are now seeking a solution on the battlefield."[55] A month into the Second Congo War, Museveni ordered Ugandan forces to take several key airports in Eastern Congo to prevent the Sudanese from using them against Uganda.[56]

Though undoubtedly important, John Clark believes that these security motivations were secondary to President Museveni's concern about the Rwandan-Ugandan alliance. He writes that, "a number of developments inside Congo and between Congo and Rwanda had put the regime of Paul Kagame at risk by late 1998. In turn, Museveni could not afford to see the Kagame regime fall from power at that time without suffering major security problems of his own."[57] Therefore, Clark believes that Uganda's decision to intervene in the DRC was primarily motivated by the importance of the Rwandan-Ugandan alliance. Finally, there is substantial evidence that Uganda had an economic rationale for its war in the DRC.[58] In particular, its army benefited handsomely from involvement in Congo's mineral trade.[59]

Neo-realist theory helps us understand Ugandan security and alliance motivations for involvement in the Second Congo War. As predicted, Uganda viewed allies of enemies as enemies themselves; Kampala turned on Kabila because of his close relationship with Sudan and his toleration of Ugandan insurgent groups fighting out of bases in the DRC. In addition, as the security dilemma becomes more acute, neo-realist theories predict that allies will stick close to each other, believing that their security is interdependent.[60] This explanation fits well with John Clark's theory that Uganda entered the war because it saw its security and stability as closely tied to that of Rwanda.[61] Though the desire to exploit Congo's resources certainly contributed to the Ugandan rationale for war, it is unclear how much of a factor opportunities for enrichment were initially. Clark cites the fact that, at first, the Ugandan army—later the largest beneficiary of the war—was hesitant to re-enter the DRC in 1998. The United Nations-commissioned "Report

of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo" contravenes Clark's assessment. It states that: "There are strong indications that, if security and political reasons were the professed roots of the political leaders' motivation to move into the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, some top army officials clearly had a hidden agenda: economic and financial objectives."[62] Though further investigation is required to determine the weight of these various explanations for Uganda's war, it seems that both personal pecuniary and national security concerns played a role in Uganda's decision to intervene. What is clear is that once the Ugandan military entered the DRC to confront the security threats posed by an array of insurgent groups supported by Sudan it took advantage of the opportunity to plunder the portion of the mineral-rich country it occupied.[63]

Burundi

Burundi's motivations for entering the Second Congo War were somewhat similar to Rwanda's. The two countries share the same ethnic divisions and Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi have often been in conflict.[64] The Forces for Defense of Democracy (FDD), a Burundian Hutu rebel group, used the DRC as a sanctuary throughout the 1990s. When Rwandan-Ugandan forces attempted to unseat Kabila, he responded by arming Hutu groups throughout eastern Congo, including the FDD. This placed pro-Kabila forces, including the FDD, on one side and Burundi on the other with its allies in Kigali and Kampala.[65] Though allied with Rwanda and Uganda, Burundi did not share its allies' ultimate goal of overthrowing Kabila or their pecuniary interests in the DRC. Burundi's principal concern was repelling the FDD, and to that end it stationed a small number of forces just inside the DRC. Neo-realist theory accurately anticipates Burundi's behavior. Bujumbura joined with the enemies of its enemies to better protect its borders and ensure its security needs were met.

Neo-realist theory accurately anticipates Burundi's behavior. Bujumbura joined with the enemies of its enemies to better protect its borders and ensure its security needs were met.

Angola

The most important pro-Kabila state was, without question, Angola. When the conflict seemed most bleak for the DRC's leader, Angolan

President Jose Eduardo dos Santos decided to intervene on the side of Kabila—a move that saved his regime. Dos Santos had several reasons for supporting Kinshasa. First, his primary interest was in defeating the Angolan rebel group UNITA (or, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). The reason Angola had backed Rwanda and Uganda in their overthrow of Mobuto two years earlier was that Mobuto had provided a sanctuary for UNITA. In 1998, however, reports surfaced that the leadership of UNITA had visited Kigali and Kampala.[66] The possibility that Rwanda and Uganda were working with UNITA drove dos Santos to support Kabila. In addition, the Angolan president resented the audacity of the Rwandan-Ugandan airlift to the Kitona airbase, located next door to Angola's oil-rich Cabinda province.[67] Together, these factors were enough to convince dos Santos to intercede on the side of Kabila. Rwanda and Uganda were unable to accurately gauge the security interests of their erstwhile ally, and were thus surprised when, on August 23, Angolan forces mounted a devastating strike with attack helicopters and MiG 23 fighter bombers that halted the Rwandan-led drive to Kinshasa.[68]

Angola's behavior conforms to the expectations of neo-realist theory. In August 1998, Luanda had two primary objectives: to preserve the security of its territory—particularly its oil-rich territory—and to beat back an increasingly powerful UNITA.[69] The Kitona airlift brought Rwandan and Ugandan forces to Angola's doorstep, thus increasing its insecurity. At the same time, reports that Rwanda and Uganda were working with UNITA made Kigali and Kampala the ally of Angola's enemy, and therefore the enemy of Angola.

Zimbabwe

Economic and ideological factors seem most salient to comprehending why Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe decided to enter the Second Congo War in support of Laurent Kabila. First, Kabila's government had taken out several large loans from key Zimbabwean businessmen, and these investments would be lost if he fell. Second, Zimbabwean businesses, especially mining companies, had negotiated potentially lucrative contracts with the DRC and hoped to keep Kabila in power to cash in on these opportunities. With the economy in Zimbabwe deteriorating rapidly, Mugabe had an interest in protecting Zimbabwean business interests to ensure the support of his inner cabal.[70]

In addition, Mugabe's desire to be a leading force in Africa is also considered a motivating factor for the intervention. Reyntjens writes that, "Mugabe saw the Congolese crisis as an opportunity to reassert some of

his leadership in the region, lost to Mandela's South Africa, and to short-circuit the new leaders of the 'African Renaissance,' such as Museveni and Kagame, who were being promoted—notably by the Americans—much to Mugabe's dismay."[71] In addition to his desire to reassert his leadership role in Africa, Thomas Turner notes that the Marxist revolutionary ideology that Mugabe shared with Kabila may have influenced Zimbabwe's leader to come to Kinshasa's aid.[72]

It must be mentioned that Zimbabwe, along with Angola and Namibia, received a legal justification for their participation in the Second Congo War through the South African Development Community (SADC). The SADC's newest member, none other than Laurent Kabila's DRC, formally asked the organization's Inter-State Defense and Security Committee to protect it from the invasion of Ugandan and Rwandan forces.[73] The case of Zimbabwe is the only one in which neo-realist motives for war are not clearly present. Instead, with a legal justification available, Mugabe moved to defend Kabila with the goals of protecting the economic investments of the Zimbabwean elite and regaining prestige in Africa.

Namibia

The rationale for Namibia's entry into Africa's World War combined security, ideological, and personal motives. Namibian President Sam Nujoma was a close friend of Robert Mugabe and shared the same Marxist ideology as dos Santos, Mugabe, and Kabila.[74] In addition, Nujoma believed that UNITA forces were supplying Namibian separatist groups with arms and assistance. Partly in an effort to cut off this support, Namibia sent 2,000 soldiers to the Congo, believing, according to the *New York Times*, that "Angola was finally in a position to crush UNITA."[75] Again, operating under the neo-realist logic that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," another nation became involved in the DRC.

Sudan

Since the mid-1980s, Khartoum and Kampala have fought an unde-clared war. The source of this conflict was President Museveni's assistance to the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its leader John Garang, as well as Sudan's support for Museveni's defeated Ugandan rival, the Ugandan National Liberation Army.[76] For Sudan's leaders, who held the view that "Museveni was a key to Garang's survival," battling Uganda was considered critical to breaking the southern rebellion.[77]

Chaos in the DRC during the latter half of the 1990s presented a

perfect battlefield upon which to continue the Sudanese-Ugandan conflict. To harass Uganda, the government in Khartoum sponsored a number of Ugandan insurgent groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces, the Lord's Resistance Army, and the West Nile Bank Liberation Front. When Laurent Kabila became estranged from his Rwandan and Ugandan backers, Sudan quickly moved in to provide him with support.[78] Sudan facilitated additional assistance for Kabila's regime during the Second Congo War by pushing Chad to send troops to the battlefront.[79] For its part, Kampala provided increased assistance to the SPLM, and, at times, Ugandan forces even crossed the border to fight in support of their SPLM allies.[80] Throughout, the logic of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" dominated strategy in Khartoum. This neo-realist mindset prompted Sudan to ally with states as well as insurgent groups, in an effort to destabilize its opponent in Kampala.

CONCLUSION

Exploring the motivations of the key states in the Second Congo War lends support to the thesis that neo-realist explanations help illuminate why much of central and eastern Africa became engulfed in the conflict. By 1998, there was widespread insecurity in the region due to the increasingly popular strategy of states using rebel groups as proxies to destabilize competing states. Targets of this strategy often chose to respond in-kind, forming an alliance with a rebel group that could destabilize the opposing state. In other instances, those states with common enemies banded together to rebuff attack. This tit-for-tat strategy of escalation created a destabilizing network of competing alliances, including both states and rebels, throughout much of the continent. Rather than make states more secure, the menacing nature of these alliances only fed the insecurity of competing blocs, further exacerbating the security dilemma. When Rwanda made the decision to invade the DRC and remove Kabila from power, its attack unleashed a chain reaction. Insecure states operating under the driving neo-realist logic of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" plunged into the war. As a result, Africa sadly experienced its own Great War, caused by a very similar constellation of forces to those that mired Europe in conflict more than eight decades before. ∎

Rather than make states more secure, the menacing nature of these alliances only fed the insecurity of competing blocs, further exacerbating the security dilemma.

ENDNOTES

1 Some examples of the literature on economic factors include: Léonce Ndikumana and Emizet Kisangani, "The Economics of Civil War: the Case of the Democratic Republic of Congo," in *Understanding Civil Wars: Evidence and Analysis*, eds. Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2005); Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, "Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo," April 12, 2001; and, Paul Collier, "Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective," in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, eds. Mats Berdal and David Malone (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000). For the local factors that contributed to war in the Congo, see: Séverine Autesserre, "Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention," *International Organization*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Spring 2009).

2 Susan Rice, quoted in Lynne Duke, "Congo Allies Beef Up Anti-Guerilla Forces," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1998.

3 A few noteworthy examples include: Scott D. Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense and Instability," *International Security* 11, no. 2 (Fall 1986); Samuel R. Williamson Jr., "The Origins of World War I," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988); Marc Trachtenberg, "The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91); James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (Essex, England: Pearson Education Limited, 1992); and, Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984).

4 How to distinguish the distinct but overlapping wars that the Congo has endured since 1996 is not agreed upon. This paper will use the term "First Congo War" to refer to the conflict that began in October 1996 and the term "Second Congo War" or "Africa's World War" to refer to the second conflict that began in 1998. For a discussion of the connection between the two wars and their distinction, see: Filip Reyntjens, *The Great African War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 194.

5 Kevin C. Dunn, "Introduction: Africa and International Relations Theory," in *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory*, eds. Kevin C. Dunn and Timothy Shaw (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

6 Alliance relationships play a prominent role in Tatiana Carayannis' network-centered analysis of the Congo Wars. See Tatiana Carayannis, "The Complex Wars of the Congo: Towards a New Analytic Approach," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2-3, (June 2003): 237.

7 Herbert Weiss, "War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Current African Issues No. 22 (Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2000), 1.

8 Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War."

9 Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1978): 169.

10 Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma and Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461.

11 Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," 187.

12 Robert Jervis, "Offense, Defense and the Security Dilemma," in *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Contemporary Issues*, eds. Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2011), 95-97.

13 Jervis, "Offense, Defense and the Security Dilemma," 99-100.

14 Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," 63.

15 Ibid, 64.

16 Ibid, 96-99.

17 William Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 119.

18 Alex de Waal, "Left-Wing Militarism from Asmara to Kigali" in *Liberators in Power* (unpublished manuscript, 2004), 1.

19 Ibid, 3.

20 Reno*, Warfare in Independent Africa,* 121.

21 Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 104-106.

22 Ibid, 103-104.

23 See: Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 106.

24 I conceptualize insurgent proxy war as a "technology" that favors the offense in the offense/defense framework.

25 Alex De Waal, ed., *Who Fights?…Who Cares?: War and Humanitarian Action in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, Inc., 2000), 17. William Reno agrees with this assessment. In discussing Sudan, Uganda and Zaire's proxy wars during this period, he writes: "None of these governments wanted to strengthen their proxies to the extent that they could actually seize state power or pursue separatist agendas. Each gave only enough aid to remind the government in the neighboring country's capital that they could respond in kind to proxy attacks." See: Reno, *Warfare in Independent Africa*, 125. Many of the other factors for the spread of wars enumerated in *Who Fights…Who Cares?* apply to the case of the Second Congo War, including porous borders, insurgents employing refugee camps in neighboring countries as sanctuaries, state inability to control insurgent groups operating within their borders, and military entrepreneurship, 16-17.

26 Timothy Longman, "The Complex Reasons for Rwanda's Engagement in Congo," in *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, ed. John F. Clark (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 137-139. See also Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 141-142.

27 Jason Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), 15.

28 Ibid.

29 Autesserre, "Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention," 256.

30 See: Weiss, "War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo," 2-3 and Severine Autesserre, "The Trouble With Congo," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (May-June 2008), 99.

31 Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 30.

32 Reyntjens writes, "Rwanda had clearly exacerbated a latent problem in order to create a pretext for launching its operation. Although the Banyamulenge had genuine grievances, the decision to engage in military action was not taken by them, but in Kigali." Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 48.

33 Autesserre, "The Trouble With Congo," 99.

34 Jason Stearns provides a helpful chart on this point. See: Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, 51.

35 Other states that supported the ouster of Mobutu included Eritrea, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Tanzania.

36 International Crisis Group, "Congo at War: A Briefing on the Internal and External Players in the Central African Conflict," November 17, 1998.

37 Thomas Turner, "The Kabila's Congo," *Current History* (May 2001): 217.

38 Tatiana Carayannis, "The Complex Wars of the Congo: Towards a New Analytic Approach," 241-242.

39 Weiss, "War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo," 8.

40 Howard French, "New Congo Ruler Facing Rebellion by Former Allies," *The New York Times*, August 4, 2006. See also: Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, 177.

41 Weiss, "War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo," 13.

42 Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, 183.

43 Ibid, 188-189.

44 Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 238. Most Congolese also saw through the Rwandan attempt to make the uprisings origins seem indigenous. Reyntjens notes, "many Congolese refer to the 1996-97 war as the 'war of liberation' and to the one that started in 1998 as the 'war of occupation.'" Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 194.

45 Weiss, "War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo," 14.

46 Ibid, 1; and Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 201.

47 Zeev Maoz, Lesley G. Terris, Ranan D. Kuperman, and Ilan Talmud, "What is the Enemy of My Enemy? Causes and Consequences of Imbalanced International Relations, 1816-2001," *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 69, No. 1 (February 2007): 102.

48 Ian Fisher, "Rwanda's Huge Stake in Congo's War," *The New York Times*, December 27, 1998.

49 Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 193.

50 David Shearer, "Africa's Great War," *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 2 (Summer 1999): 94.

51 Longman, "The Complex Reasons for Rwanda's Engagement in Congo," 131.

52 Ibid, 130.

53 Once Rwandan troops invaded the DRC, they took full advantage of the territory's mineral resources. See: Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, "Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo," April 12, 2001.

54 John F. Clark, "Museveni's Adventure in the Congo War: Uganda's Vietnam?" in *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, ed. John F. Clark (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 148.

55 Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 196.

56 Alex de Waal, "The Politics of Destabilization in the Horn," in *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Alex de Waal (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 209. Also, the International Crisis Group reports that Museveni claimed in September 1998 that Sudanese soldiers were rumored to be in the DRC's Isiro province. Humanitarian Organizations working in the area corroborated this claim. See: International Crisis Group, "Congo at War: A Briefing on the Internal and External Players in the Central African Conflict."

57 Clark, "Museveni's Adventure in the Congo War: Uganda's Vietnam?", 151.

58 Ian Fischer, "Uganda's helping Hand to Congo Rebels Raises Questions About Motives," *The New York Times*, December 21, 1998.

59 Clark, "Museveni's Adventure in the Congo War: Uganda's Vietnam?" 153-154.

60 Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990): 140. These authors clarify how the perception of offensive advantage will lead to unconditional alliances. See also Snyder's discussion of how alliance "entrapment" can occur when "one state values the preservation of the alliance more than the cost of fighting for the ally's interests." Snyder, Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," 467.

61 Several authors dispute Clark's theory. See: Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 195-196

and Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 196. Regardless, these authors do emphasize Uganda's security motives.

62 Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, "Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo," April 12, 2001. Clark's assessment that Ugandan military leaders were not eager to go to war in the Congo differs from that of the UN Report which also states, "numerous accounts in Kampala suggest that the decision to enter the conflict in August 1998 was defended by some top military officials who had served in eastern Zaire during the first war and who had had a taste of the business potential of the region…There are strong indications that, if security and political reasons were the professed roots of the political leaders' motivation to move into the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, some top army officials clearly had a hidden agenda: economic and financial objectives."

63 Clark, "Museveni's Adventure in the Congo War: Uganda's Vietnam?," 153-154; and Shearer, "Africa's Great War," 95-96.

64 Ian Fischer, Norimitsu Onishi, Rachel L. Swarns, Blaine Harden and Alan Cowell, "Chaos in Congo: A Primer," *The New York Times*, February 6, 2000.

65 International Crisis Group, "Africa's Seven-Nation War," May 21, 1999, 27; and Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 198.

66 Thomas Turner, "Angola's War in the Congo War," in *The African Stakes of the Congo War*, ed. John F. Clark (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 85. Prunier also discusses these reports but cannot confirm their veracity. See: Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 189.

67 It is unclear whether dos Santos was *informed* of the Rwandan and Ugandan operation and objectives before or after the Kitona airlift. Regardless, it seems clear that he was not *consulted*. See: Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, 191; and Prunier, *Africa's World War*, 189.

68 Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, 197.

69 Turner, "Angola's War in the Congo War," 75.

70 Stearns, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, 192.

71 Reyntjens, *The Great African War*, 202.

72 Turner, "The Kabila's Congo," 217.

73 Rupiya, 96.

74 Weiss, "War and Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo," 16.

75 Fischer et al., "Chaos in the Congo: A Primer," and Donald G. McNeil, "Tangled War in Congo Now Snares Namibia," *The New York Times*, August 6, 1999.

76 The nature and extent of Uganda's initial support for the SPLA seems to be debated. See: De Waal, "The Politics of Destabilization in the Horn," 185-186. For an alternative view, see: Gerard Prunier, "Rebel Movements and Proxy Warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986-1999)," *African Affairs,* Vol. 103, No. 412 (2004): 364.

77 Prunier, "Rebel Movements and Proxy Warfare: Uganda, Sudan and the Congo (1986-1999)," 365. Other, less important factors for the conflict according to Prunier include Museveni's pro-U.S. stance and Khartoum's eventual goal to Islamize the Great Lakes.

78 Ibid, 377.

79 Ibid, 378.

80 De Waal, "The Politics of Destabilization in the Horn," 209.