

Mandela's Call for a Negotiated Settlement of the Congolese Conflict



By Sehlare Makgetlaneng

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela was a leader of the national liberation struggle for human rights, democracy, development and political governance conducive for their advancement. He was imprisoned for his commitment to their realisation. Following the end of the apartheid rule in 1994, Mandela put these goals at the centre of his administration's Africa policy.

For the first time in the history of South Africa's role in African and global affairs, South Africa through Mandela called for a new renaissance in the conduct of African and global diplomacy based on human rights, democracy, development and political governance issues and processes. Central to this approach are the interests, needs and demands of the people of Africa and the rest of the world, not their heads of state and governments.

As Mandela explained to the US Congress on 10 June 1994, the 'unending process of the betterment of the human condition' is best served if we 'cease to treat tyranny, instability and poverty anywhere on our globe as being peripheral to our interests and to our future'. 'The new world order that is in the making must focus on the creation of a world of democracy, peace, and prosperity for all humanity.' This is in essence the core of Mandela's call for a new renaissance in the view of issues of sovereignty and national interest in the conduct of diplomacy in African and global affairs. In his words:

In an age such as this ... much revision will have to be done of ideas that have seemed as stable as the rocks, including such concepts as sovereignty and the national interest.

What we speak of is the evolution of the objective world which inexorably says to all of us that we are human together or nothing at all.

The DRC as the strategic heart of African continental transformation

The DRC constitutes the strategic heart of the structural transformation of Africa. The advanced capitalist countries in advancing their strategic interests in the DRC and in using the country for their own interests, particularly in Central and Southern

Africa, increased this challenge to Africa.¹ According to Steven Metz, they have always viewed it as the 'linchpin' in Central Africa. 'Because of its great size and natural wealth, Zaire has the ability to serve as either the locomotive of development or an agent of destabilization'.² Used as 'an agent of destabilisation' means, among others, that it serves as Africa's challenge in its movement towards its development and progress. This reality means that there is a structural and fundamental need for African countries to play an active role in contributing towards the resolution of the DRC's problems.

Africa has socio-political, economic and ideological obligations to actively contribute towards the transformation of the DRC. Its contribution to the transformation of the DRC is its investment in its own transformation. The country's centrality, size and enormous natural resources make this investment in the interest not of the DRC and its people, but also in the interest of the future of the African continent and its people. The fact that the advanced capitalist countries have been maintaining in practice that any government in the DRC must serve their strategic interests opposed to those of the people of the country and the continent is such that they cannot be expected to contribute towards the resolution of the DRC's problems. This view is articulated by Claude Kabemba who states that 'the problems of the DRC are Africa's problems, to be solved by Africans themselves', not by the West.³ For this reason African countries must coordinate their policies in support of the Congolese people. The DRC as the heart of African continental transformation is articulated by Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja in his analysis of Congo's subordination to 'an externally determined dynamic'. In his words:

This dynamic, whether it is based on the global interests of major world powers, the expansionist aims of external actors seeking economic and commercial advantage, or the security interests of neighbouring states, is a function of the size, the strategic location and the resource endowment of the Congo. Thus, throughout its history as a modern state, this country has been subject

*to external interests and meddling consistent with its strategic importance geographically and economically, as well as its potential role as a regional power in Africa. The present crisis cannot be properly understood without reference to this fundamental reality.*⁴

It shares borders with nine countries. They are Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia in Central, East and Southern Africa. Its river, the Congo River, is one of the five longest rivers in the world and the first with respect to hydroelectric potential. Part of this hydroelectric potential has already been harnessed through the Inga Dam. Its hydroelectric potential has 'the potential of lighting up the whole African continent, from Cairo to Cape Town'.

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The DRC's 'strategic and economic importance' underlines its 'centrality to the African revolution and the African renaissance'. The global actors who did not 'wish to see' the DRC 'play this emancipatory role with respect to the liberation of Africa did their best to destabilise' it and 'place it under the control of reactionary elements like Moise Tshombe and Mobutu Sese Seko'. Nzongola-Ntalaja points out that Gerhard Mennen Williams, as the United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, wrote in his article in the August 1965 edition of the Africa Report that "since whoever controls Congo is likely to have enormous influence over the

whole continent of Africa, it was in Uncle Sam's interest to make sure that the country's rulers were America's friends'.⁵

For the West and its settler colonial allies in South Africa, 'Congo in disarray under the Mobutu kleptocracy was preferable to a strong and well-organised state under the control of patriotic and pan-African elements', as they would have played 'a critical role in the liberation' of Southern Africa.⁶ He points out further that the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the support of 'the Katanga secession' by Belgium, France, Britain and 'white settlers' from the Congo and South Africa, and the Mobutu regime's involvement in Angola's 'wars on the side of the reactionary forces were all part of this strategy'.

Key reasons behind Mandela's call for a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict

There were key reasons behind Mandela's call for a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict. Central to this was for the Congolese people to be able to create a national space to define their own future by exploring and offering a viable and alternative agenda to that imposed on their country by the United States and its regional allies.⁷ This was an integral part of his call for a new renaissance in the conduct of African diplomacy based on human rights, democracy, development and political governance issues and processes of material concern to the Congolese people. He was concerned with the needs and interests of the Congolese people, not of Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent Kabila and their regional, continental and global allies. Nelson Mandela throughout his term as the president of South Africa made it clear that he was representing the people of Africa and the rest of the world not his fellow heads of state and government.

Mandela called for a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict at the turning point in the history of Congo. It was in 1997 when the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) was on the verge of victory over the Presidential Guard under the leadership of Mobutu Sese Seko. His administration offered

to facilitate dialogue between Kabila and Mobutu for them to resolve their national conflict through negotiations in the interests of the Congolese people. They rejected this offer. Mandela regarded his policy as a means to enable the Congolese to resolve their national conflict without the United States and its regional allies interfering in their internal affairs against their interests. He was basically calling for the right of the DRC to its national self-determination and the free, independent exercise of its sovereignty and domestic and foreign policies in the interest of its people.

In explaining South Africa's contribution towards the resolution of the Congolese conflict, Cedric de Koning pointed out that the 'DRC conflict can only be resolved by political will through negotiations'⁸ and that peace was 'thus in the hands of the Congolese peoples, and those bordering the DRC'.

The Mandela administration's contribution towards the resolution of the Congolese conflict was based on the situation of the Great Lakes. Its situation was characterised by war, violence, extreme and persistent suffering and instability from 1996 when the war in Congo started to 2006 when elections ended its transitional government of national unity. Filip Reyntjens provides an account of these issues, processes and developments in his book on the war and its regional geopolitics.⁹

Given the Great Lakes situation at that time, if the AFDL was a proud national organisational product of the Congolese people, it should have made efforts to settle the Congolese conflict through negotiations as a means to save the DRC from external actors who were advancing their own interests antagonistic to those of the Congolese people. The forces led by Mobutu were practically already defeated. Their defeat on the battlefield was not going to be reversed at the negotiation table. The problem was that Kabila was a captured leader serving the strategic interests of external actors.

The United States strategy and tactics were some of the key reasons behind the Mandela administration's call for a negotiated settlement of

the Congolese conflict. Upon the realisation that Mobutu and his regime had outlived their usefulness to its strategic interests, the United States looked for a replacement to serve the satisfaction of its needs, demands and interests in the country. It forged an alliance with leaders of Rwanda and Uganda to achieve this strategic objective. This reality is supported by Wayne Madsen in testifying on the war in the DRC in May 2001 as follows:

DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency] trained young men and teens from Rwanda, Uganda, and eastern Zaire for periods of up to two years and longer for the FPF (Rwanda Patriotic Front) /AFDL-CZ (Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire) campaign against

“ Missing from this analytical perspective of critics of Mandela's call for a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict is the consideration of the interests of the masses of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Angola.”

Mobutu. The recruits were offered pay between \$450 and \$1,000 upon their successful capture of Kinshasa.

... When the AFDL-CZ and their Rwandan allies reached Kinshasa in 1996, it was largely due to the help of the United States. One reason why Kabila's men advanced into the city so quickly was the technical assistance provided by the DIA and other intelligence agencies. According to informed sources in Paris, US Special Forces actually accompanied AFDL-CZ forces into Kinshasa. The Americans also reportedly provided Kabila's rebels and Rwandan troops with high definition spy satellite photographs that permitted them to order their

*troops to plot course into Kinshasa that avoided encounters with Mobutu's forces.*¹⁰

The role played by external actors under the leadership of the United States which led to Kabila being the Congolese president is explained by Saragen Naidoo as follows:

Laurent Desire Kabila became president of the DRC through an externally contrived plan that backed neighbouring states to replace the devalued Mobutu Sese Seko. Thus, the Kabila leadership was expected to be amenable to the economic, political, and security interests of western governments and other states in the region. This agenda involved allowing mainly Belgian, Canadian and United States-based mining conglomerates to exploit the country's enormous mineral wealth, and allowing Rwanda and Uganda to take charge in Kinshasa. However, once at the helm of the impoverished state, Kabila began to ignore the terms and conditions of his ascension to power in a careless and arrogant manner.

*His death knell sounded when he reneged on deals made with those who put him in power. When he cancelled mining concessions awarded to American Mineral Fields Inc (AMFI) and Barrick Gold Corporation, contracted even before he assumed the presidency, he committed a grave offence. His next mistake was to try to purge the Rwandans and Ugandans in his government and military. After being expelled for their attempt to assassinate Kabila in July 1998 and take control of the DRC, these former allies launched a military campaign to oust the president.*¹¹

For Naidoo, these issues, processes and developments constituted the rise and fall of Kabila.¹²

American Mineral Fields was the prime beneficiary of the United States leadership of the alliance that brought Kabila into power. Headquartered in Hope, Arkansas, President Clinton's hometown, it signed a \$1 billion deal with Kabila in May 1997 to mine cobalt, copper and zinc in the DRC. The replacement of Mobutu with Kabila was a means used by the United

States and its regional allies to achieve its strategic objective. According to Madsen:

*American Mineral Fields directly benefited from America's initial covert military and intelligence support for Kabila. It is my observation that America's early support for Kabila, which was aided and abetted by U.S. allies Rwanda and Uganda, had less to do with getting rid of the Mobutu regime than it had to do with opening up Congo's vast mineral riches to North American-based and influenced mining companies.*¹³

Rwanda, which played a key role within this alliance led by the United States in the struggle to replace Mobutu with Kabila, is a main beneficiary of North American and British support. Thanks to the support it enjoyed from the United States, Britain and Canada, Filip Reyntjens maintains that Rwanda, a 'Lilliputian state', a country of only 10,169 square miles, with a population of about ten million people, has achieved 'the status of regional superpower' and developed 'a formidable intelligence, security and military apparatus, which became the most effective in the region'.¹⁴ From being 'an army [70,000-strong] with a state, rather than a state with an army' and the 'master player' of the region, it 'emerged as a major factor of regional instability'. Another reason behind this achievement is what Reyntjens refers to as the 'genocide credit', or 'genocide dividend', namely 'the tolerance inspired by international feelings of guilt after the genocide' or the killing of about one million people from April to June 1994.

This socio-historical development has been and continues to be used by Rwanda in justifying its interference in the internal affairs of the DRC, including invasion in the name of ensuring its security. As a means to justify its intervention in the DRC, leaders of Rwanda 'relentlessly put forward the security issue'.¹⁵ According to Colette Braeckman, President Paul Kagame has pointed out on several occasions that 'at any time, if' its 'security was threatened, Rwanda reserved itself the right to openly send back its troops to the Congo'. Braeckman continues:

In spite of this military retreat, whose reality is ceaselessly disputed by actors on the ground, and Congolese witnesses, Rwanda tried to maintain its structures of exploitation of the resources of Kivu and the Eastern Province (Kisangani): the commercial networks which forward to trading posts, stores or factories of transformation of Kigali raw materials extracted from the Congo, as gold, diamonds, as well as the cassiterite, Colombo-tantalite and other precious ores; small private planes, on the airports in the middle of nowhere, bring weapons and depart again with ores.

Mahmood Mamdani maintained that the resolution of the Congolese conflict needed African intervention as the DRC lacked the appropriate political leadership to solve its problems. Given the nature of divisions among African countries, South Africa was the only country in a position to take the initiative in contributing towards resolution of the Congolese conflict.¹⁶ This was 'the first litmus test' of its 'claim to political leadership on the continent'. This claim was rightly understood by Africa and the world. He maintained that for it to pass this test and for its initiative to be credible, it should be independent of the United States. His position was based on high expectations placed on South Africa by individuals and organisations continentally and globally for it to play a leading role in African affairs. With its qualitatively largest and strongest diversified economy, relative international strength and considerable African continental and Southern African regional strength and under the leadership of Mandela as an international icon, it was viewed as a country with enormous advantages and privileges to play a leadership role in African affairs, especially in the resolution of continental conflicts.

Its contribution towards the resolution of the Congolese conflict was an integral part of South Africa's struggle in contributing towards the achievement of the transformation of Africa in the interest of its people. It was an investment in its future security and that of the continent. In Mandela's words in 1993:

*South Africa cannot escape its African destiny. If we do not devote our energies to this continent, we too could fall victim to the forces that have brought ruin to its various parts.*¹⁷

In his message on the death of Kabila, Mandela explained his administration's efforts to contribute towards the resolution of the Congolese conflict as follows:

We had worked with President Kabila from the period before he became President of the DRC. After he had captured Kisangani and Lubumbashi Deputy President Thabo Mbeki and I met with him and gave him our support in the efforts to bring change to the political situation in Zaire. We prevailed upon Mr Kabila and President Mobutu Sese Seko to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Zaire and to avoid bloodshed in a battle over Kinshasa. We spent much effort in persuading President Mobutu to step down from office and hand over power.

After Mr Kabila took over the political leadership of the DRC we frequently defended him on international forums. We hoped that he would abide by the agreed programme of establishing an inclusive interim government that would lead the way to democratic elections within a reasonable period. Unfortunately for the people of the DRC as well as for the wider region this did not happen and the situation did not stabilise or improve in the expected manner.

*When South Africa was asked to join those countries that intervened in the DRC on the side of President Kabila's government we declined and warned against such a course of action. We pointed out that in a country such as the DRC it was unlikely that any one side could win such a war. All that would be achieved was the destruction of the infrastructure of the country, the slaughter of innocent civilians and an end to possibilities of development. Unfortunately, once more, these pleas fell on deaf ears.*¹⁸

Mandela was fully aware that his call for a negotiated settlement

of the Congolese conflict through the establishment of a government of national unity was going to be criticised. The fact that it was going to be criticised was a secondary issue for him. The key issue was the correctness of his approach to the Congolese conflict and its service to the Congolese people and their country. He was a leader whose pursuit of truth was a substantial and welcome addition to the contribution of the resolution of the Congolese conflict which required tactics based on the concrete situation of the DRC and the Great Lakes region. This was necessary to defeat efforts of the global and regional actors whose position on the DRC was antagonistic to the advancement of the interests of the majority of the Congolese people and their brothers and sisters of other African countries.

One of the key reasons why Mandela called for a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict and the establishment of a government of national unity was because Laurent Kabila was not a free leader independent from those who put him in power. He was structurally not in a political position to advance the right of the DRC to its national self-determination and the free and independent exercise of its sovereignty and domestic and foreign policies.

Mandela could not support a leader who was for the continuity of misfortunes of the Congolese people. As Lynne Rice points out:

The “Congo,” ... still harbors that “heart of darkness” uncovered by Joseph Conrad. The names of places and the faces of leaders have changed over the years, but the underlying reality of outside forces lusting for power remains the same. From the time of King Leopold’s rule to the present, the history of the Congo can be traced as a movement from tyranny to chaos to tyranny and chaos combined.

For five years following independence, the people of the Congo struggled unsuccessfully with and against one another to forge a political order to fit their own needs and further their own interests at home and in Africa. Almost from the beginning, however, international

political forces tried to shape that struggle for their own ends.¹⁹

Critics of the Mandela administration’s Congo policy

Some African scholars and leaders criticised the Mandela administration’s call for a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict. Their opposition to this policy was a call for a military settlement of the conflict by African leaders whose position on human rights, democracy, development and political governance is popularly criticised continentally and globally. Commenting on the Congolese conflict in 1997 and South Africa’s efforts to contribute towards its resolution, Mahmood Mamdani pointed out that:

South Africa emerging from

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apartheid is not the same as Congo emerging from Mobutuism. At least two political differences are worth noting. The South African transition was a compromise between forces for and against apartheid; the Congolese transition is marked by military victory of the anti-Mobutu forces. Whereas the South African transition was worked out mainly through an internal arrangement, with foreign influence limited to an indirect role, the transition in Congo is being worked out through a more direct regional involvement. These differences explain why South African diplomacy failed to achieve its intended objectives over the past few weeks [of mediation]. South African diplomats publicly sought a transition authority led by forces

other than Laurent Kabila and the Alliance [of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire], and tried to convince Kabila to acquiesce in this. The initiative asked Alliance forces to turn from the brink of victory and sign a compromise! Was this breathtakingly naïve because South African diplomats read the Zaire situation through South African lenses?²⁰

There was nothing ‘naïve’ or ‘missionary’ about South Africa’s policy on the DRC conflict. South Africa did not seek a transitional government not led by Kabila and the AFDL. It did not try to ‘convince’ Kabila to agree not to lead a transitional government. Its ‘initiative’ did not ask it to ‘turn from the brink of victory and sign a compromise’.

The fact that the AFDL forces were about to be victorious over the forces under the leadership of Mobutu did not negate the importance of a call for the negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict. The AFDL forces had nothing to lose to have dialogue with their fellow Congolese who were practically already defeated. History does not deal with what might have happened. What has happened has happened. What has not happened has not happened. This does not mean that we should not raise the question as to what would have happened if particular things were done and the question as to what would not have happened if particular things were not done. The negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict might have helped to prevent horrible sufferings brutally visited upon the DRC and its people. It might have helped to reduce if not end the involvement of the external actors in the internal affairs of the DRC; actors who still today constitute dominant forces in its internal relations.

South Africa’s efforts to contribute towards the resolution of the Congolese conflict through the establishment of a government of national unity was criticised by other scholars. Ibbo Mandaza criticised it by deploying an argument that it was an integral part of the ‘conjuncture’ in the 1990s and ‘the global political order’. For him, central to a government of national unity were efforts to ensure that ‘no

popular movement' in Africa should successfully seize state political power 'without the "blessing" of those who supervise our globe'. In his words:

This new global paternalism towards organic democracy in Africa will no doubt have pre-empted some genuine movements, compromised others, and ensured that those who emerge into state power are so emasculated as to lack real initiative in the affairs of their countries. So, we have seen the emergence of the peculiar "governance model" for Africa, an externally imposed recipe for political settlements: the Government of National Unity! Not only is it assumed in such a model that Africans cannot manage their "first past the post" or "winner takes all" system of government but, more important, there is always the fear that a popular movement might prove difficult to keep under rein unless compelled to "share power" with its adversaries.

In this regard, neither the conventional national liberation movements of Southern Africa nor the second phase of popular movements in post-colonial Africa have been able to transcend this superimposed (and externally imposed) notion of 'modern African democracy' during this era of the dominance of international capital. Mandaza continues with the comment:

*These are obvious lessons for Laurent Kabila and his Alliance; and also for those progressive African governments and people determined to take their destiny into their hands.*²¹

As this work demonstrates, Kabila was against the Congolese people taking their destiny into their own hands. He marginalised the Congolese people in their national agenda to serve as social agents of their development and progress. Given the fact that it was impossible for external enemies of Congo to be defeated without some Congolese playing an active role in the process, he was, structurally speaking, enemy of his country and his people. He made the DRC more vulnerable to the external actors.

Mandaza regarded South Africa's efforts to serve as 'impartial arbiter between the Mobutu regime and the

rebel alliance' as 'the entire farce'. His support of his argument is the fact that the AFDL forces were relentlessly advancing towards victory and the United States 'declaration that Mobutu had suddenly become creature of history' (ibid). This was Moose's declaration. He pointed out that Moose read out 'the final epitaph for Mobutu and his regime' by declaring: 'It is clear that Mobutu, the Mobutu regime is a thing of the past'. Despite this reality, Mandaza regarded South Africa's policy to have a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict as a 'compromise' which should have been avoided at all costs as a matter of principle.

Criticism of South Africa's efforts to contribute towards the resolution of the Congolese conflict through the establishment of a government

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of national unity by scholars such as Mamdani, Mandaza, Che Ajulu, Yusuf Bangura²² and Alexactus Kaure²³ do not take into account key reasons responsible for the victory of the AFDL over the Mobutu regime and the strategy and tactics of the external actors led by the United States.

The United States, realising that Mobutu was no longer useful to its strategic interests, looked for a leader of the DRC to take care of its needs and demands in the country. It was for this reason that during the efforts to remove Mobutu from power, it sought to lay a ground for the justification of the deployment of its military forces in Africa. Warren Christopher, as the United States Secretary of States, provided the rationale for the formation of the Africa Crisis Response

Force in 1996. Its criticism by some African leaders and Mandela's strong opposition to it forced the United States to change its name to the Africa Crisis Response Initiative.²⁴ This military project was promoted in the guise of enhancing the capacity of African countries to respond to humanitarian crises and peacemaking challenges by having rapidly deployable, interoperable units. Christopher was rebuked by Mandela who maintained that the issue of ensuring peace and security in Africa is the responsibility of the African people.²⁵

Mandaza's view of South Africa's position on the Congolese conflict is characterised by contradictions. He criticised it for having not 'pronounced publicly a position on the Zairean conflict, let alone neither condemn Mobutu or hail Kabila'. Pretending not to understand that it could not do so precisely because as he correctly pointed out that it wanted to serve as an 'impartial arbiter' between the Mobutu regime and the AFDL forces, he concluded:

*It is a sad indictment on African diplomacy which, even at its very best, is nothing but an extension or front for contemporary global politics. Like many other African revolutionaries before him, Kabila and his alliance have reason to be worried about the difficult months ahead. Nevertheless, Kabila has established himself among most Africans and progressive forces the world over as yet another veritable symbol of the African struggle and its resilience against global forces that have so far done more to thwart than aid the continent's recovery.*²⁶

Profound problems faced by Kabila as the Congolese president did not mean that he was a revolutionary. Indeed, during his rule he was not a revolutionary. Revolution as an internal process means that the masses of the people truly regard it as their own creation and defend it with their power and authority.

Mandaza's position that Kabila was a revolutionary is disputed and rejected by Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja. Pointing out that Paul Kagame, interviewed by Mahmood Mamdani in August 1997 and the Washington Post in July 1997,

stated clearly that the war that led to Mobutu's removal from power was planned in Kigali, Rwanda, by Rwandan military officers, he concluded that this was not 'surprising' since Kabila had no 'credible autonomous organisation and no coherent social project or political programme'.²⁷ He pointed out further that Kabila was 'recalled from his business ventures by the coalition of states led by Rwanda and Uganda with the aim of ending the Mobutu dictatorship, to provide a Congolese façade for what was actually an external military intervention'.

According to him a serious error consisted of hand-picking Kabila as the leader to replace Mobutu. A national leader, as Nelson Mandela declared in 1990 when he got out of jail, is chosen at a national conference. He or she should not be chosen by foreign governments or be self-proclaimed. What needed to be done was to convene a roundtable of Congolese patriots and democrats so they could choose the leader and a broad-based government of national unity.

Nzongola-Ntalaja's position is supportive of South Africa's policy approach to the Congolese conflict. It is against the position of Mamdani and Mandaza dismissing its efforts to contribute towards a negotiated resolution of the Congolese conflict through the establishment of a government of national unity. Relating to Mandaza's position that Kabila was a revolutionary, especially before he was hand-picked by 'the external coalition', we should take into account Ernesto Che Guevara's frustration with him. According to him, Kabila was ever absent from the frontline of action against the forces of oppression in Congo, always in Cairo, Dar es Salaam and Paris, 'in the best hotels, issuing communiques and drinking Scotch in the company of beautiful women'. He hoped that one day he would be 'able to overcome his defects' and get down to serious action against forces of oppression and exploitation.²⁸ He never overcame his defects and did not embark upon a revolutionary programme of actions.²⁹

Nzongola-Ntalaja states that Kabila had no 'credible autonomous organisation and no coherent social

project or political programme'.³⁰ This was his profound weakness characterising his political, economic and ideological position on the DRC political governance, democracy, human rights, democracy and development issues and processes. He points out further that:

Having no solid political base in the country, Kabila established personal rule based on nepotism, cronyism and hero worship, which was characterised by incompetence and a general lack of political direction. Instead of a national leader with vision for the country's future, he gave the impression of a leader cut off from the people and relying primarily on a small circle of associates chosen on the basis

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of family, ethnic or clientelist ties. Moreover, he sought to turn the clock backwards politically, by denying the significance and legacy of the Sovereign National Conference, banning political activity and jailing opposition leaders, and attempting to close the space of democratic freedom and civil liberties that the people of the Congo had dearly won against the decadent Mobutu dictatorship.

Kabila was not a free leader. He was put in power to advance the interests of the members of the alliance which put him in power. Failure to deliver on this mandate meant being removed from power by those responsible for his being the president of the DRC. This

reality is supported in the literature used in this work. It is also supported by Mahmood Mamdani when he pointed out that:

No one disputes any longer that Laurent Kabila's government was installed by foreign forces. Few would deny that the parameters of Congolese politics for the first year of Kabila's power was defined by a twin reality. One, Kabila did little by way of political reforms to expand his domestic political base, and two, most Congolese came to see the Rwandans as an army of occupation. It was not difficult to foresee that a government in search of instant popularity would have one trump card at its disposal. That card was the demand that Rwandan troops leave.³¹

This reality is also supported by Richard Dowden. Pointing out that Kabila had 'spent the intervening years in exile as a bar owner in Tanzania', he concluded that:

Desperate to find a Congolese to front their invasion, the Rwandans and Ugandans picked him up to head a puppet government. Two years later, when Kabila began to wriggle out of Rwandans tutelage and build his own political military power base, the Rwandans tried to do the same thing again. They accused him – like his predecessor – of supporting the Interahamwe, and invaded Congo.³²

Nzongola-Ntalaja regards Laurent Kabila as a warlord.³³ According to Meike J De Goede, a warlord is 'a predatory leader that exercises power through intimidation, violence and exploitation of natural resources and people, supported by armed force'.³⁴ It refers 'more to a style of leadership and violent predatory politics than to his background'.

Laurent Kabila was not a free independent governance force. Human rights, democracy, development and political governance problems continued to be faced by the Congolese people during his administration.

Kabila did not make serious efforts to move towards the resolution of the Congolese national question. According to Andre Mbata Betukumesu Mangu, he 'tribalised' or 'ethnicised' power

'even faster than it was under Mobutu's rule'. He succeeded within 'a very short' period of 'time – just a few months, where Mobutu spent years – to build up his ethnically based power and dictatorship'. He amended the AFDL charter as an integral part of achieving this objective. By amending of the AFDL charter, he confiscated 'all its power'. As a result of this action, the 'majority of the members of the cabinet, senior officers in the administration, the security services and the army were appointed along ethnic lines among the Balubakat'.³⁵

Che Ajulu explained why Kagame, Museveni, Jose Eduardo dos Santos and Laurent Kabila were against the Mandela administration's proposed negotiated settlement of the DRC conflict in his analysis of South Africa's Great Lakes diplomacy. He maintains that Kagame and Museveni supported the AFDL and Kabila, given the role of Mobutu and his regime in the 'proxy wars of destabilisation'.³⁶ For Angola, the defeat of Mobutu was regarded as of strategic importance in its war against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) under the leadership of Jonas Savimbi. Kagame and Museveni, the key actors behind the rebellion that led to the removal of Mobutu from power were 'totally opposed to any solution that did not equate to total victory and ousting of Mobutu'. Ajulu, like some other individuals opposed to and criticising South Africa's position, concludes that:

Within this broader context, Mandela's mediation was, for all intents and purposes, an exercise in futility. Kabila, with the support of his allies and with outright victory in sight, was not interested in Mandela's diplomacy and refused to settle for anything less than Mobutu's immediate departure from Kinshasa.

Missing from this analytical perspective of critics of Mandela's call for a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict is the consideration of the interests of the masses of Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Angola. It takes the viewpoint of their leaders. These leaders are confused with the people under their leadership.

The African National Congress, as the organisation known for its determination not to lose sight of the tactical means in its struggle to achieve its strategic objectives, was mindful of the possible profound consequences of a military solution to the Congolese conflict for the Central Africa, Southern Africa and the continent and its people. It is for this reason that it was opposed to a military solution.

South Africa under the leadership of Mandela had the requisite information on the Great Lakes situation and the strategy and tactics of the United States in its efforts to replace Mobutu with Kabila. Its foreign policy towards Africa is articulated by Wayne Madsen as follows:

America's Africa policy is morally corrupt. Its commercially-influenced orientation has directly

“The lack of the satisfactory provision of the Angolan people with their basic social services has survived the end of the civil war.”

*promoted ethnic rivalries and some of the worst bloodshed of the 20th century. US military and intelligence involvement in Africa, far from creating a sanguine and stable environment for a 'new world order,' has taken the continent back to another era, namely, the 'old world order' of Western tutelage, tribal preferences, commercial chicanery and continued underdevelopment.*³⁷

Rwanda and Uganda, which formerly supported the AFDL and Kabila because of the role of Mobutu and his regime in the 'proxy wars of destabilisation' have now become actors in these proxy wars in the advancement of the interests they share with their global allies. This has been the case since they waged a war of invasion to remove Kabila from power and replace him with their servant. They have proved to be interested in

the mineral resources of the DRC, not to contribute towards the resolution of its problems.

The main security problem Rwanda is facing is internal to itself. A truly democratic Rwanda with its people satisfied with how they are governed and with national resources being used for their development and progress would see no need to be militarily present in the DRC to take care of the needs and demands of their socio-political and economic security.

As for Angola, some critics of the leaders of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) maintain that some of them have used the civil war as a means to enrich themselves, rather than seriously deploying resources to isolate and defeat UNITA. The civil war served as their excuse in not adopting and implementing policies to satisfy the needs and demands of the Angolan people. Its end, the killing of Savimbi and subsequent military and electoral defeat of UNITA did not lead to the MPLA deploying resources to substantially improve the material conditions of the masses of the Angolan people.³⁸

Writing before the end of the civil war, William Reno in his work focusing on the political and financial role Angolan raw material exports played in the civil war maintained that the Angolan rulers and their external allies, especially transnational corporations extracting Angolan mineral resources, agreed that order, regardless of the way it was achieved, was more important than taking care of the needs and demands of the people. The control of resources, their common strategic aim, was compatible with the MPLA's provision of Angola with policy direction in its internal and external relations. He concluded that the Angolan rulers and their external allies would justify their actions advancing their strategic interests as preferable to the continuation of the civil war by any means necessary.³⁹ The lack of the satisfactory provision of the Angolan people with their basic social services has survived the end of the civil war.

In his message on the death of Kabila, Mandela wrote that as we 'throughout persisted to encourage

all parties involved to continue negotiations with President Kabila and his government', it was 'our fervent hope that reason shall now prevail and that all concerned will revert to negotiations and a committed search for peace'. He wrote further that:

*Tragic as the violent death of President Kabila is, we trust that this provides the opportunity for the government, the armed opposition and the unarmed opposition in the DRC to sit down as compatriots and place the common good of their country's people paramount in their considerations.*⁴⁰

Conclusion and Recommendations

Thabo Mbeki, upon becoming the national president, continued with the policy pursued under the leadership of Mandela, aiming at a negotiated settlement of the Congolese conflict. It led to a transitional government of national unity which was brought to an end by the results of the 2006 general elections.⁴¹ This means that South Africa's policy approach towards the Congolese conflict prevailed over that of leaders and scholars who opposed it.

It is of vital importance for African scholars to be truly independent in their role of recording the genuine transformation of their national state, societies and economy. Going beyond appearances means going beyond the idea and the thought in the struggle to achieve a synthesis of reality. In our dialectical examination of the past and the present of the antagonistic social forces in action in the struggle to achieve their objectives, we should, as progressive and revolutionary forces, subject our theoretical position on issues, processes and developments to a critical scrutiny. We should ask ourselves questions relating to policies and actions as to whether or not they service or disservice the popular interests of the countries they are declared to serve.

The essence of Mandela's call for a negotiated resolution of the Congolese conflict in the interests of the Congolese people is best and tangibly articulated by Ernest Wamba dia Wamba after the Congolese Rally for Democracy – the Goma group led by Emile Ilunga – and the Kisangani group under his

leadership signed the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. He said at a press briefing in Lusaka, Zambia:

*Please do not look at me, Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, not look at Laurent Desire Kabila, not look at Emile Ilunga, Bizima Karaha, etc., but at the people of Congo who have suffered so much and who need, want and have been demanding peace, democratisation, reconciliation, security and genuine people development. Supporting them, in good faith, is the way to build a long lasting peace and security in the region. As you know Congo is surrounded by nine countries whose security, peace and stability closely depend on its stability.*⁴²

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