
**DRC'S Regional Positioning, in Between the
African Great Lakes and Southern Africa**

Cyril Musila

May 2015

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ISBN: 978-2-36567-426-3
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Ifri
27 rue de la Procession
75740 Paris Cedex 15 – FRANCE
Tel : +33 (0)1 40 61 60 00
Fax : +33 (0)1 40 61 60 60
Email : ifri@ifri.org

Ifri-Bruxelles
Rue Marie-Thérèse, 21
1000 – Bruxelles – BELGIQUE
Tel : +32 (0)2 238 51 10
Fax : +32 (0)2 238 51 15
Email : info.bruxelles@ifri.org

Website : www.ifri.org

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DRC's Regional Positioning, in Between the African Great Lakes and Southern Africa

Introduction

How transparent are the Democratic Republic of Congo's regional strategies? The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), in which the State participates, was conceived as the executive organ of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region¹. Over the last two decades, the Congolese government has increased its overtures towards South Africa while simultaneously pursuing an inconsistent policy in the Great Lakes and East Africa, as well as curbing its commitments in central Africa.

With 10,744 kilometres of border shared with nine States, the DRC occupies a central position which forces it to be active in four large regional areas (see maps below):

an Atlantic zone to the west of the country, oriented towards the Gulf of Guinea;

a central area around the Congo River basin forest which places it firmly in central Africa;

a southern dynamic in the "Copper Belt" mining basin, which links it to South Africa;

1. The Pact on Security, Stability and Development for the Great Lakes Region was signed in Nairobi on 15th December 2006 by the Heads of State of the countries which participated in the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) under the aegis of the UNO and the African Union. These countries were Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

an eastern dynamic through the Great Lakes region, pushing it towards East Africa and the Indian Ocean;

Logically, therefore, the DRC's geography means that the country encompasses three regions: central Africa, southern Africa and eastern Africa. The challenge for the DRC should be to maintain a unified territory covering all three zones, thus ensuring the country's stability, development and security, while presenting a united position in foreign affairs. Each of these dynamics is linked to one or several regional institutions of which the DRC is or ought to be a member. But apart from the fact that each institution operates in its own way, multiple memberships give the impression that the country is being pulled apart. Not only does this mean that the DRC's regional commitments appear inadequate or incoherent, but what stands out is their apparent inability to satisfy the requirements of a position where several dynamics converge. Nor do they seem appropriate for a country of this size (2.3 million km²), and still less for the challenges, risks and future prospects implicit in the domestic situation of the DRC's nine neighbours. Consequently her territory seems to be dislocated, particularly due to the inadequate transport and communications infrastructure which fail to connect the four regional blocs.

**LA RÉPUBLIQUE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO
DANS LES ORGANISATIONS RÉGIONALES**



- Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique centrale (CEEAC)
- KENYA
- Communauté économique des Pays des Grands Lacs (CEPGL)
- Conférence Internationale sur la Région des Grands Lacs (CIRGL)
- Communauté de développement d'Afrique australe (SADC)

In reality, these four regional dynamics have always functioned differently and make it difficult for the Congolese government to adopt appropriate positions². Thus, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which seeks to establish a common market, faces a regional conflict in the Great Lakes and has been slow to put the free trade zone it announced in 2004 into operation. Similarly, the customs union has not been set up and policy harmonisation for the key sectors covering regional integration with the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa (CEMAC) is still at a preparatory stage³. As for the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC) and the ICGLR, these are handicapped by the security situation in the provinces of North and South Kivu and the mistrust which exists between several member States.

The East African Community (EAC), on the other hand – to which the DRC does not belong, but whose members all belong to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), as does the DRC – has implemented its free trade zone, and in 2013 announced its plan for a customs union⁴. As for the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), this body has harmonised its intra-regional road haulage policy for the Central Corridor, which starts from the port of Dar es Salaam, by ratifying the framework agreement (standardised toll cost, simplified customs formalities, etc.) and by installing the RADEX system to enable road information to be transmitted more quickly and to allow goods to be tracked. But so far the DRC, despite being a member of SADC and the Northern Corridor, has failed to ratify these protocols⁵.

All this creates tensions and distortions between the border provinces of Katanga (Lubumbashi, in the south) or North and South Kivu (Goma, Bukavu and Butembo, in the east) and the capital

2. Interview with a former Minister (2006-2012), Kinshasa, 20th November 2012.

3. *Observatoire des Grands Lacs en Afrique*, Note no. 3, 2012 and interview with a civil servant responsible for regional integration at the ICGLR, Kinshasa, 3rd December 2012.

4. COMESA – the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa – is made up of Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, North Sudan, Uganda, DRC, Rwanda, Seychelles, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. CEPGL – the Great Lakes Economic Community – comprises Burundi, DRC and Rwanda. EAC – the East African Community – comprises Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. ICGLR is made up of Angola, Burundi, Congo-Brazzaville, Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic, DRC, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia, in other words DRC's nine neighbours plus Kenya. CEMAC – the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa – comprises Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Tchad. ECCAS – the Economic Community of Central African States – comprises the CEMAC countries with the addition of Angola, Burundi, Rwanda (as an observer) and Sao Tomé.

5. Interview in Lubumbashi on 13th March 2012 with a civil servant from the Transport Division for the province of Katanga. See also in World, *Le camionnage sur la Nationale 1 en République Démocratique du Congo. Study by CARANA, February-June 2012*, interim report, Washington, 2012.

Kinshasa, in the west. The former find they are affected by SADC and EAC's regional dynamics, but derive no benefit from these because the DRC has still not ratified SADC's various agreements and is not a member of the EAC. Locally these provinces believe that Kinshasa is using political or administrative tactics to try and stifle regional dynamics.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the need to unify the country and provide a transparent strategy were at the root of the government's decision, in 2012, to establish a unit with responsibility for economic analysis, development and forecasting, linked to the Prime Minister. This unit is tasked with assessing the opportunities available to the Regional Economic Communities (REC) and with formulating and applying a clear, consistent regional policy⁶.

This text analyses the DRC's involvement in the forces at work in southern and eastern Africa. It is based on data gathered during two trips which took place in 2012: a trip to Kinshasa in November-December 2012 on behalf of IFRI, and another between February and June for the World Bank, looking at mining exports and haulage from Katanga.

⁶ Interviews with a civil servant from the Prime Minister's Office and an ICGRL executive in Kinshasa on 26th November 2012.

The Great Lakes and East Africa Strategies

To understand the DRC's strategies for playing a part in the regional environment, the nature of the dynamic forces at work in this zone need to be identified.

Firstly, the dynamic forces in the eastern DRC are directed towards the Indian Ocean along the "North Corridor" towards the port of Mombasa in Kenya and along the "Central Corridor" towards the port of Dar es Salaam.

This zone, which includes Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, eastern DRC, Rwanda, South Sudan and Tanzania, is also a significant demographic hub with a density of 453 inhabitants per km²⁷, with a string of twinned towns, all skirting the borders with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi. Thus, from the north to the south there are:

Aru (DRC) and Arua (Uganda);

Beni (DRC) and Mpondwe or Kasese, a little further away (Uganda);

Goma (DRC) and Gisenyi (Rwanda);

Bukavu (DRC) and Cyangugu (Rwanda);

Uvira (DRC) and Bujumbura (Burundi).

Some of these towns are separated by lakes (Lake Albert, Lake Edward, Lake Kivu and Lake Tanganyika) and rivers (Semliki and Ruzizi) which also constitute cross-border areas where regional cooperation or disputes are at stake, notably in terms of sharing resources, namely the waters of the Semliki (a tributary of the White Nile), oil production in Lake Albert, or methane gaz production and fishing in Lake Kivu.

The dispute between the DRC and Uganda is primarily territorial, arising from the demarcation of the lakeside borders on Lake Albert, where both countries particularly covet Rukwanzi Island

7. Compare this with Nigeria, the most populous country in the African continent with a density of 178.18 habitants per km², while the equivalent is 335 in Burundi, 172 in Uganda and 30 in the DRC. Sources: *Perspectives Monde*, Sherbrooke University, Canada, 2012; see also in Cyril Musila, *Le Kivu, charnière entre l'Atlantique et l'Océan Indien Kivu*, Note de l'Ifri, March 2009.

on the lake's southern tip. Its waters are reputed to be rich in oil and fish. In actual fact, there have been numerous extremely complex border clashes between the DRC and Uganda as the border between the two countries had become illusory during the Ugandan occupation from 1996 to 2005, and because of the presence of the Ugandan rebel groups - the Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) and the Allied Democratic Forces (the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU)).

The harshest conflict is over oil in Lake Albert⁸. In September 2008 the Canadian oil group Heritage Oil announced that an oilfield had been discovered close to the lake. The company has stated that this may be the largest oil reserve ever discovered in Uganda, with a potential daily production of 14,000 barrels. There are recurrent clashes and tensions between Congolese and Ugandan soldiers and fishermen from both countries, especially since Uganda stepped up the pace of its oil activities. Yet even before the deposit was discovered, there was trouble between Uganda and the DRC in early August 2007, when a British engineer prospecting for Heritage Oil on the Ugandan part of the lake was found murdered. Kampala then accused the Congolese army of being responsible for the murder. In addition to oil, tensions have also arisen between the two States⁹ over the coveted mineral resources and particularly gold, which is plentiful in this border region of Ituri.

As for Lake Kivu, the common border between the DRC and Rwanda, it is brimming with methane gas of a volume estimated at 65 billion m³ (the equivalent of 50 million tonnes of oil equivalent (toe)). This is a virtually inexhaustible energy source for both countries. In July 2009 the DRC and Rwanda signed an agreement protocol for joint production of this gas with a view to producing 200 megawatts of electricity. Under this agreement, each country agreed to take 100 megawatts to solve the electricity deficit in this part of the Great Lakes region. Rwanda immediately started production and the Data Environnement Company designed a pilot extraction station with the aim of using methane for energy. Another company, Contour Global, announced that it had signed an agreement with the Republic of Rwanda to develop the Kivuwatt project mobilising 325 million dollars in order to provide an additional 100 megawatts of electricity for the region. In point of fact, the Rwandan gas installations are visible off Gisenyi on the Rwandan side of the lake.

As regards the DRC, towards the end of 2009 the World Bank had allocated three million dollars to the Ministry of the Environment,

8. Cf. in particular Benjamin Augé: *L'Afrique de l'Est, une géopolitique pétrolière à haut risque*, Note de l'Ifri, November 2012.

9. Interviews with a special adviser to the Governor of North Kivu and the proprietor of a Congolese company, Goma, April 2012; International Crisis Group, *L'or noir du Congo : risque d'instabilité ou opportunité de développement ?*, Africa Report no. 188 – 11th July 2012 and Pole Institute, *The shifting sands: oil exploration in Graben and the Congolese conflict*. Pole Institute, report by Dominic Johnson, Goma, 2003.

Nature Conservation and Tourism to degas the Kabundo peninsula in the north of Lake Kivu, as methane is extremely dangerous. Yet no degassing has ever taken place, and there has been no sign of an energy plant either. "What are the reasons behind this?" wonders a Goma businessman¹⁰. Quite apart from the lack of transparency in the DRC in relation to this project, as the interview with the businessman suggests, at this period the two countries barely trusted each other even though their armies were conducting what were officially joint operations tracking the FDLR rebels (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), while Rwanda continued its close watch over the rebellions in the eastern DRC.

Nevertheless, this area of East Africa is at the forefront of long-distance cross-border cooperation (between the member states of the Northern Corridor, for example) in terms of road haulage for goods as well as cross-border cooperation over shorter distances through the ECGLC, which allows the movement of people and goods¹¹. However, with the development of cross-border cooperation it has been clear that the DRC is to some extent isolated from the pull towards integration in east Africa. In fact, since it is not a member of the East African Community, the DRC is deprived of the benefits and advantages which flow from the regional integration mechanisms, namely the planned construction of vast regional infrastructure (including a railway and an oil pipeline connecting Nairobi, Kigali and Kampala) and the establishment of a single zone for tourism with a single tourist visa, which has been in operation since 2014 for Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda, and which will be extended to include Burundi and Tanzania, etc.

10. Information obtained from Radio Okapi-MONUSCO's Economic Service in Kinshasa, November 2012.

11. See Bio Soulé and Cyril Musila, *Dynamiques transfrontalières dans la région des Grands Lacs*, INICA-OCDE, 2005 and 2006; see also Cyril Musila, *Le Kivu, charnière entre l'Atlantique et l'Océan Indien*, Note de l'Ifri, March 2009.

The gradual disappearance of the CEPGL

Formerly very active within the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC)¹² where she did to some extent have a leadership role (funding ECGLC higher education scholarships for Rwandan and Burundian students, particularly in the Universities of Kinshasa and Kisangani), Zaïre (which became the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1997 with Laurent-Désiré Kabila) saw this dynamism gradually subside in the early 1990s, only to disappear when the ECGLC entered a period of lethargy following the Rwandan genocide in 1994 and the subsequent refugee crisis in Kivu. The institution was never dissolved, but none of the States took an interest in it¹³. Indeed, from 1989 Burundi was in the throes of inter-ethnic massacres on a huge scale. In 1993, the country entered a civil war after the first Hutu President, Melchior Ndadaye - democratically elected in October - was assassinated. The deaths of his successor Cyprien Ntaryamira and the Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana when their aeroplane was attacked in Kigali in April 1994 accelerated the crisis. The coup d'état against Ntaryamira's successor Sylvestre Ntibantunganya aggravated the civil war. From the Zaïri perspective, in 1991 Kivu was in turmoil over matters of nationality, land and political representation, particularly at the National Sovereign Conference in Kinshasa, pitting the "natives" against peoples of Rwandan origin or against Kinyarwanda speakers. In Kivu, these tensions were felt twofold as millions of Rwandan refugees arrived, fleeing the fighting in their country; in the early 1990s Rwanda had been pitched into a civil war which led to the 1994 genocide. Thus, fragile domestic preoccupations meant that none of the three countries paid any attention to the ECGLC. The former Rwandan rebels from Uganda, who had won the civil war, displayed hostility towards this institution and had no desire to work with people who had collaborated with the previous government. Since they were mainly from the English-speaking sphere of East Africa, their intention was to anchor themselves firmly in that zone.

12. The Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC), created in 1976, is a subregional economic organisation. It comprises the Republic of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Rwanda. Its head office is in Gisenyi, in the Republic of Rwanda.

13. During the genocide, the previous government and its army and administration fled from the Rwandan Patriotic Front rebels and took up quarters in the ECGLC's premises in Gisenyi, the Rwandan town twinned with the Congolese town of Goma. After they had left for the refugee camps there was a long period, beginning in 2000, when Mr. Roger Nsibula (nowadays an economist at the ICGLR) was the only civil servant in charge of the premises and the few surviving archives.

Although civil wars and the regional conflict in the DRC defeated the ECGLC, regional integration projects and other actions continued, and in due course - in 2005 - these formed the basis for reestablishing the institution, although it was never as dynamic as it had been in the 1970s or 1980s. In fact, the ECGLC had instituted free movement for people living in the border areas. A straightforward pass, issued free of charge by the customs authorities, was all that was required to cross the border. These are still in use. Similarly, some of the infrastructure put in place by the ECGLC is still there, such as the Ruzizi 1 and 2 dams on the Ruzizi river, built to produce hydroelectric power for all three countries. A notable feature of these dams is that they are in South Kivu, in Congolese territory; that they are operated by a regional production and sales company founded and based in Burundi; and that they employ staff from all three countries.

Nevertheless, the geopolitical turmoil in the Great Lakes, together with régime changes in all three ECGLC countries, has redefined the direction and approach each has adopted in the region, to the detriment of the ECGLC. Thus the diplomatic and military tensions between the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi which caused the DRC to join SADC in 1998 with support from Masire (Botswana), Dos Santos (Angola) and Mugabe (Zimbabwe), and which caused Rwanda and Burundi to join the East African Community (EAC) in 2005, for example, diverted the three States away from the ECGLC.

In spite of attempts to revive it and notwithstanding a large number of tripartite ECGLC working groups, the institution never regained its momentum. When the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) convened in Bujumbura in late 2006¹⁴, it subsumed the ECGLC and tolled its knell. In our view, the new regional geopolitical and security challenges which emerged with these conflicts extended beyond the borders of the three countries to the point where the ECGLC no longer had any role at all. It is also our view that these same challenges have long been a sticking point preventing the DRC from moving closer to the EAC.

However, in recent months the DRC has begun a process of rapprochement with the EAC. According to the Prime Minister's Analysis and Forecasting Unit, ignoring the EAC or considering it merely as an organisation whose members are plundering and destabilising Kivu, is no longer acceptable¹⁵.

For the Congolese government, this membership is a strategic objective with threefold benefit in the fields of economics, geopolitics

14. The ICGLR consists of eleven member States, namely Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

15. Interviews with a civil servant in the Prime Minister's office and an ICGLR executive in Kinshasa on 26th November 2012 (see note 6).

and security. Economics because membership will, for example, enable her to harmonise her customs rules with Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. In fact, although the DRC is a member of the "Northern Corridor" which provides road and rail links between the port of Mombasa (Kenya) and the Congolese town of Kisangani via Uganda and Eldoret (Kenya), Congolese traders in Kivu and the Eastern Province believe that their imports and exports are penalised by the customs policies pursued by these four countries.

There is also a geopolitical objective, because the EAC reflects the whole Swahili-speaking demographic cultural pull of the eastern DRC (movement of peoples and refugees from Kivu).

And thirdly, a security objective, because the EAC would allow the DRC to engage in direct discussions about political security and how natural resources in Kivu and Ituri are being plundered, instead of debating this within the ICGLR, which is too broad. Nevertheless, some Congolese political groups (parties, study groups, political movements, coalitions and associations of a political nature) supported by the media and civil society organisations have persistently objected to this plan, which they seem to see as an attempt to "balkanise" the DRC. There are those who believe that joining the EAC would allow President Paul Kagamé to legitimise the plunder of Kivu's natural mining resources via the commodities exchange which is currently being set up in Kigali by the Rwandan authorities, so that it becomes official. This would mean collaborating in the laundering of "blood ore", given the extent to which the armed Congolese, Ugandan, Burundian and Rwandan groups are producing and selling ore in the eastern DRC, where there is virtually no official mining industry¹⁶ since the vast majority of production is artisanal.

Security and the armed groups: the stumbling block

Although this strategy of joining the EAC seemed to have got off to a successful start and is due to be discussed in the National Assembly, the DRC remains preoccupied by peace and security in the east, which remains precarious. She still believes that her eastern neighbours (members of ECGLC, EAC, COMESA and ICGLR) are permanently engaged in developing a strategy designed to destabilise the DRC. In 2012, the UN¹⁷ Group of Experts confirmed

16. Series of interviews with the Congolese press and Civil Society Organisations, Goma, April-May 2012, and Kinshasa, November 2012.

17. United Nations – Security Council, S/2012/843, Appendix. Letter dated 12th November 2012 addressed to the President of the Security Council by the President of the Security Council Committee created by resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of Congo, General distribution 15th November 2012, French. Original: English.

See also: <blog.lesoir.be/collette-braeckman/2013/01/30/au-nom-des-experts-de-lonu-steve-hege-se-defend/>.

that the M23¹⁸ armed group received political, military, strategic and logistical support from Rwandan and Ugandan officials. As for the peace plan based on two-pronged negotiations between the Congolese government and the aforementioned armed group (on the one hand), and on a neutral African force to ensure that the eastern DRC was secure (on the other hand), it was slow in coming to fruition but was stepped up once the rebel movement had been defeated.

18. M23: Movement dated 23rd March, in reference to the date (23rd March 2009) when the peace agreement was signed between the National Congress for the People's Defence, an armed group to which the mutineers belonged, with the Congolese government. According to M23, the rebellion stemmed from the fact that the government failed to observe the agreement.

The SADC's strategies

With the birth of M23 in April 2012, SADC was seen to move to the forefront of attempts to resolve the conflict. The Tanzanians and South Africans, also members of SADC, are trying to influence the composition of the future neutral International Force in order to play a geopolitical and economic role in Kivu. One school of thought considers that their current strategies are determined by the prospect of producing oil in Lake Tanganyika, a small part of which is shared between Tanzania and Burundi, and a larger part of which is shared between Tanzania and DRC, even to the point of using the different regional platforms offered by SADC, EAC and ICGLR¹⁹.

The province of Katanga provides the DRC with a presence in the SADC countries' regional zone of influence. Katanga, with its mining-based export economy (and the mining resources which it imports) relies on the road network linking it with the port of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania and, for exports, on the southern African ports of Beira in Mozambique, and (in South Africa) Port Elizabeth, Durban and Cape Town via Lusaka and Harare. Long-distance cross-border trade from the DRC to this vast zone goes through the border post at Kasumbalesa – Chililabombwe (120 km from Lubumbashi) – the only road to Lusaka. The main challenges as far as this trade is concerned are customs harmonisation and the regulation of haulage between the DRC and SADC.

The economic and strategic influence of South Africa and Angola

Since President Nelson Mandela's attempted mediation between President Mobutu and Laurent-Désiré Kabila in 1997, and since troops from Angola (in 1997), Namibia and Zimbabwe intervened in the Congolese conflict between 1998 and 2003, SADC has maintained a strong influential presence in regional Congolese

19. See: <radiokapi.net/revue-de-presse/2013/01/29/la-prosperite-accord-cadre-sur-la-paix-de-la-rdc-pas-de-compromis-addis-abeba/>.

And also Colette Braeckman, *Kivu: le plan de paix de l'ONU attendra*, which can be consulted at <blog.lesoir.be/colette-braeckman/2013/01/30/kivu-le-plan-de-paix-de-lonu-attendra/>.

strategy. This presence was sanctioned by the fact that the DRC became a member in 1997, the first tangible step towards a change in regional policy, introduced by the new President Laurent-Désiré Kabila. He brought about a complete change of direction in the way the DRC (or Zaïre as it was at the time) viewed the region and moved the country towards a region which had been hostile to President Mobutu's policy²⁰.

In fact, the haste with which Laurent-Désiré Kabila made the DRC a member of SADC – only a few weeks after he came to power – was transparently a strategy to counterbalance the political and military influence exerted by Uganda and Rwanda both in his entourage and in terms of the direction the country had been taking. In actual fact, after Laurent-Désiré Kabila had appealed to SADC for help in August 1998, when the DRC was under attack from a rebellion orchestrated and supported by Rwanda and Uganda, a military engagement took place involving Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, who supported the Congolese government against the rebellions in which "Mobutist" generals were also implicated²¹.

Other analysts consider that since the DRC joined SADC - chiefly because of the pressing need for security in the light of her military weakness - the DRC has deserted the centre of Africa and other regions where she should have been in the forefront, such as Sudan and South Sudan, for example²².

Since the DRC joined SADC it is evident that the country is trying to appear as a mainstay of the organisation notwithstanding her considerable weakness in the post-conflict period. For instance, the DRC used her influence to ensure that French became one of the organisation's official languages, and placed a Congolese national, Émilie Mushobekwa, in the post of deputy executive secretary for finance and administration (the organisation's number two official) as well as placing a high-ranking Congolese officer in the post of deputy planning officer for SADC's Standby Force²³.

As a positioning strategy, this breakthrough is very clear, but in reality the DRC's membership of SADC is part of a logical

20. SADC is made up of the countries which formed the "Front Line" against South Africa when the apartheid system was in force. These countries supported the Angolan Communist regime in its conflict with South Africa. President Mobutu, for his part, supported Jonas Savimbi, a rebel and armed opponent of the Angolan regime, and thus found himself in the opposite camp to the Front Line countries. Furthermore, the assistance Jonas Savimbi received from South Africa and the CIA (for the struggle against Communism) transited through Zaïre.

21. Filip Reyntjens, *La guerre des Grands Lacs. Alliances mouvantes et conflits extraterritoriaux en Afrique centrale*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 1999. Reyntjens' analysis is confirmed by Ambassador Antoine Ghonda (Series of interviews in Kinshasa, November 2012).

22. Interview with Professor Philippe Biyoya (political commentator), University of Kinshasa, on 3rd December 2012.

23. Interview with two SADC officials in Gaborone, Botswana in September 2011.

sequence reflecting a number of ideas which underline the rivalries and diverging interests of several circles of influence or decision-making within the Congolese executive.

The detrimental influence of the Katanga business communities on regional integration

Because of its geographical proximity, Katanga province is naturally more involved in SADC than any of the other Congolese regions. Since Laurent-Désiré Kabila (who originates from Katanga) became head of the DRC, a preferential relationship has been established between this province and the SADC countries. According to the UN Panel of Experts²⁴, agreements have been made between Katangan businessmen and politicians and their counterparts, particularly those from Zimbabwe, in relation to military intervention by Zimbabwean forces. Rather than benefiting the State of Zimbabwe, which financed the defence force's intervention in Congo, these agreements have benefited private operators. For example, the haulier Billy Rautenbach, who is well established with the Zimbabwean President, was thus chosen to manage Katangan mining interests²⁵.

Following the withdrawal of foreign troops from Congolese soil after the Lusaka peace agreements were signed in 2003, when Namibian and Zimbabwean troops left the DRC, and following the termination of several unconscionable contracts²⁶, the Katangan mining sector is now in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand – at the instigation of Congolese and international NGOs – there is evidence of progress in achieving transparency in mining contracts (the Extractive Industries' Transparency Initiative – EITI - for example), but on the other hand delays combined with a lack of administrative engagement are delaying harmonisation of Congolese regulations for a SADC free trade zone.

24. United Nations Organisation, *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, New York, United Nations Security Council, S/2002/1146 dated 16th October 2002.

25. *Ibid.* See also Benjamin Rubbers, "The dislocation of the mining sector in Katanga (DRC). Plundering or reshaping?" in *Politique africaine*, no. 93, 2004/1, pp.27-29.

26. United Nations Organisation, *op. cit.*

Parallel diplomacy and economic rivalry in the oil dispute with Angola

Diplomatic relations between Angola and the DRC have been gravely jeopardised in the last two or three years because of Angola's oil production in the Atlantic. Joint committees were established to resolve the border dispute after a parliamentary group tried to claim compensation by taking the matter to the International Court of Justice in The Hague²⁷. Congolese envoys were tasked with finding an amicable solution in order to avoid an international trial, as well as requesting political and military support from Angola against the M23 rebellion in Kivu. There had been talk of agreements between the Angolan company SONANGOL and the Congolese company COHYDRO with the creation of a joint-venture for joint production. This project is not yet operational although negotiations are apparently under way²⁸.

The same envoys had contacted Angola and South Africa for assistance in resolving the conflict in Kivu, not just as members of SADC but also in their individual capacities. Indeed, in October 2012 when the M23 rebels were making a strong push to take the town of Goma in northern Kivu, the Angolan President - then President of SADC - did get involved as President of CIRGL and tried to foster peace negotiations²⁹. Subsequently, a delegation of Angolan and South African officials visited Kigali, Kampala, Brazzaville and Kinshasa³⁰ between November and December 2012, while agreement was obtained for an intervention of this nature as part of an SADC force. Ultimately, this force was transformed into a MONUSCO Intervention Brigade in during the last quarter of 2013. Was this the reason why, in January 2013, the South African president refused to sign the first version of the peace agreement for the eastern DRC in Addis Ababa? Even though Jacob Zuma did not give clear reasons for his refusal, one can take the view that he had preferred the SADC solution to all the other initiatives. He did finally ratify the agreement creating the Intervention Brigade with a mandate to impose peace and dismantle the armed groups in the eastern DRC. South Africa was one of the first countries to provide troops for the Brigade.

27. Series of interviews with a high-ranking Congolese diplomat, Kinshasa, November-December 2012.

28. Idem.

29. Cyril Musila, "Kabila at his summit" (of French-speaking nations), *Afrique Magazine*, no. 325, October 2012.

30. See the radio and television news broadcast by Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise, the RTNC of that period.

Conclusion

With territory extending over four zones of influence in which unequal regional forces are at work, the DRC is much more active in the southern Africa and Great Lakes zones than in central Africa and the forest basin of the Congo River. This dual dynamism has been in evidence since 1997 when Laurent-Désiré Kabila's rebellion, supported by the Great Lakes countries (essentially Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda) and Angola (southern Africa), overthrew Marshal Mobutu's regime. This change of regime was the consequence of the civil wars and geopolitical turmoil which succeeded each other in the early 1990s, from Burundi to the eastern DRC via Rwanda. In the DRC this change, together with the regional turmoil and the alliances made in this new context, was a starting point for a change in the DRC's regional strategy. After being active in the CEPGL during the 1970s and 1980s as the organisation's leader, the DRC then turned back to SADC both to counterbalance the increased influence exerted by Uganda and Rwanda, and to find diplomatic and military support from the organisation for the conflict in the east.

Interviews with various Congolese officials show that this conflict – orchestrated by rebel groups, of which the main ones were supported by the neighbouring States to the east of the DRC, according to different UN reports – is one of the reasons behind the DRC's lengthy hesitation and even refusal to become involved in the EAC, in which Uganda and Rwanda are active members. In the last few months, however, the Congolese government has taken steps towards a rapprochement with the EAC whilst at the same time, the DRC is increasingly trying to involve the SADC countries in the quest for diplomatic and military solutions to the conflict in the east. For some of these countries, like South Africa and Tanzania, investing in the Kivu ores would be an economic boon. Although within SADC the DRC is demonstrating a truly dynamic approach to taking up positions, paradoxically the country is in no hurry to develop a strategy for harmonising customs, transport, free movement and other areas of policy with SADC policy. Economic relations between the DRC and the SADC countries are still influenced by networks and spheres concerned with private interests. For the most part they take place outside the framework of regional institutions.

Although Congolese opinion remains divided between joy and concern that the country now has an analysis and forecasting unit designed to assess the challenges associated with the regional institutions, one may however wonder whether ultimately this instrument of the Congolese government will come to a simple logical conclusion and adopt balanced regional strategies based on the four dynamics which define its territory.