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"Conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Dynamics, Trends and Challenges for Peace"

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ABSTRACT
In the post-independence, neither the name of the state nor peace lasted for long in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The conflict has continued in the eastern Congo that has been the epicenter of all phases of Congolese wars. The price of successive conflicts has been immense for the Congolese peoples. Based on the analytical literature review, the purpose of this study is to examine the conflict dynamics, trends and regional security dynamics as critical challenges that impede efforts to resolve successive Congolese conflicts.   The conflicts and regional Security dynamics are as complex as the challenges of resolving them are difficult. A unique combination of factors explain the unraveling of the Congolese conflicts, some intrinsic to the Congolese state and war economy, others emanating from the shifting alliances in the region, the regional geopolitics and security dynamics across borders in the smaller Great Lake Region (SGLR).   The study uncovered that Congolese conflict is strongly linked to regional security dynamic of the SGLR.   The Congolese state failure and Regional Security complex are critical challenges that impede efforts to build sustainable peace in the region.

Introduction:
The Congolese state has continued to suffer from recurring cycles of conflict. The country was ravaged by two major wars, which had brought untold sorrow to peoples of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or Congolese people (Stearns, 2012; Reyntjens, 2009). The spillover effect from the 1994 Rwandan genocide coupled with decades of misrule and state decay led to the first Congolese war that overthrown Mobutu's regime and ascended Laurent Kabila to state power by the help of Rwanda. When Rwandan fell out with Kabila - the man Rwanda had armed and supported all the way to power, the world's deadliest second Congolese war

was broken out in 1998. It has been noted as Africa's first "World War" that involved more than seven African nations and several rebel groups. After signing of peace agreements, the Congolese war was officially ended. The UN Peacekeeping operation (PKO) has been deployed in 1999. The transitional period was ended after establishment of a new national government in 2007.

Conflict has continued in the eastern Congo that has been the epicenter of all phases of Congolese wars. It is here that the most formidable challenges to Congolese stability persist today (Cammaert, 2013; Dagne, 2011). The ongoing Congolese conflict that has generated a multitude of armed groups is among the most complicated in the world. The causes of the conflicts are as complex as the challenges of resolving them are difficult. Interpretations of causes of the conflict and challenges for the success of UN PKO have considerably diverged among scholars. At a general level, three perspectives have dominated the question of why ongoing conflict in eastern DRC has continued till today. The first is intrinsic to the Congolese state; the second is related with the regional security dynamics and continuing of neighboring states civil wars along the borders; and the third is the proliferation of armed groups and the spoils of the war economy to plunder rich mineral resources. In this study, the analysis of conflict dynamics, trends and challenges for making peace in the DRC is carried out within the framework of these three perspectives.

In light of this, study has two objectives: firstly, to investigate internal and external conflict dynamics and trends that sustain Congolese conflicts from historic perspective; secondly, study examines challenges for making sustainable peace in the DRC from regional Security perspective. In terms of methodology, this study is based on analytical review of the secondary sources. This study covers the period from the year of independence to 2019.

The study is organized into three section and sub-sections. The first section, as briefly as possible, discusses the theoretical framework emphasizing on major tenets of Barry Buzan's Security Complex. The second part describes the terrain of prolonged Congolese conflicts dynamics and trends. The third part analyzes the challenges for making peace in the DRC and the last section is a concluding remark of the study.

Analysis and Discussions
Theoretical Framework: Buzan's Security Complex

Barry Buzan's pioneering study, *People, states and fear*, which is first published in 1983 and republished in 1991, was the first sustained and serious attempt to put forward guiding ideas pertaining to the concept of regional security. Buzan used and popularized the term 'security complex' to designate 'a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently and closely in that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another'(1991:190). He attempts to put forward guiding ideas pertaining to the concept of regional security. His concept enables to 'talk about regional security in terms of the pattern of relations among members of the security complex' (Ayoob, 1995:58). These patterns are confined in a particular geographical area.

 According to Buzan (1991:3), regional security refers to a weakly conceptualized but politically loaded concept that provides 'in itself, a more versatile, penetrating

and useful way to approach the study of international relations than either power or peace'. Generally, it designates the condition, relative and never absolute, under which the state, the principal referent object, strives to safeguard its basic interests and organizational stability from internal vulnerabilities and mostly from external threats in an inescapably competitive international environment where states cannot ignore each other (ibid: 22–23). Buzan posits 'the existence of regional subsystems as objects of security analysis and offers an analytical framework for dealing with those systems' (Buzan et al, 1998: 11). His contribution to International Relations theory was mostly to draw 'attention away from the extremes of national and global security and focus it on the region, where these two extremes interplay and where most of the action occurs' (ibid: 14–15).

   In security terms, a region means 'a distinct and significant subsystem of security relations exist among a set of states whose fate is locked into geographical proximity with each other (Buzan, 1991:188). According to Buzan, military and political threats are more significant, potentially imminent and strongly felt when states are at close range. He further stressed that regional security systems can be seen in terms of balance of power as well as patterns of *amity* and of *enmity* arising from 'border disputes, interests in ethnically related populations and long-standing either negative or positive historical links (ibid:190). Therefore, Buzan's conceptual framework provides meaningful insights into how different types of conflict suddenly erupt and quickly spread in space and time. This perspective helps to 'see regional security in terms of pattern of relations among members of the security complex' (Ayoob, 1995:58).

This conceptual framework uses to link prolonged conflicts in the Congolese state and Challenges that impede efforts to resolve conflicts to regional security dynamics in the Great Lake Region and States' national interests. In other words, it helps to synthesize Congolese conflict dynamics and challenges for peace from a regional perspective. However, the study does not directly applying the conceptual framework to analyze the conflict dynamics and trends Instead, the conceptual framework is primary intended to explain challenges for resolving conflicts from regional security perspective.

The Terrain of Prolonged Conflicts Dynamics and Trends in the DRC
 Historic Overview of Conflicts
The DRC straddles the equator and sits at the very center of the African continent and bordering nine African countries: Angola, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and Zambia. The DRC is, with an area of 2.3million sq/km, one of the largest countries in the continent (McCloskey, 2010). The DRC was the personal possession of Belgium's King Leopold II who named it as the Congo Free State since 1885. The Belgian government took over Congo Free State from King Leopold II as rulers of the Congo in 1908 (Hochschild, 2006; Stearns, 2012). From then on, it became the Belgian Congo till 1960.
The DRC is one of the multi-ethnic states in Africa with many different ethnic groups that speak an estimated 242 different languages (Joseph et al., 2007). It is Africa's the most generously endowed and immensely rich country in natural resources to which few countries in the world can match its mineral wealth

(Woronoff, 2010). The country is the world's largest producer of cobalt and a major producer of copper and diamond. Paradoxically, the DRC remains the poorest country in the world and most of its peoples are desperately poor. The rich resources of the country has been a curse and brought misfortunes than blessing for natives and it remained the site of one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

The DRC has endured a long history of protracted conflicts and human misery stretching back to the horrific Belgian colonial rule of Leopold II and continuing to this day (Nibishaka, 2011). The country became independent from Belgium on 30 June 1960. Earlier in May 1960, Patrice Lumumba's led Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) won the parliamentary elections. Lumumba became the Prime Minister and Joseph Kasavubu, of the Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO) was elected President (Shekhawat, 2009). As Belgium had done little to promote local elite to govern on its behalf and assume the reins of state power compared to Britain and France, the Congolese state began rapidly to implode after independence (MacNulty, 1999). Mutiny and multiple secessionist movements marred the post-independence era which foreign interests did much to foment (Woronoff, 2010). The assassination of Lumumba in 1961 marked the beginning of deep-rooted instability in the country.

The peace and hope envisaged at the independence was so brief in the Congolese state. The state was riddled with extreme instability until accession to state power by the head of national Army, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu in 1965. Mobutu seized power by ousting both President Kasavubu and PM Tshombe through a military coup (McCloskey, 2010). In celebration of the occasion by Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, the Congo river and state were given the name of Zaire, which has now been renamed as DRC and its leader assumed the name of Mobutu Sese Seko and made the Popular Revolutionary Movement (PRM) party flag the national one (Vogel, 2011: 9; Joseph *et al*., 2007, 2007:13). The Congolese state underwent many name changes, as Congo Free State, Belgian Congo, Congo-Léopoldville, Congo-Kinshasa, Zaire and DRC, consecutively. Thus, in the post-independence neither the name of the state nor peace lasted for long.

Although Mobutu succeeded in bringing political stability and in promoting short-term economic growth, his predatory and kleptocratic authoritarian rule impoverished the nation (Voguel, 2011:8-9). Corruption was integral to the system and Belgian colonial legacy of ethnicization and regionalization of politics of reinstituted (Shekhawat, 2009; Mpangala, 2004). Mobutu changed the wheel of Congolese history to Belgian era of dividing people along ethnic and regional lines. The overall internal dismal scenario accompanied by the external dimensions ended relative stability in the country. Externally, Congolese state encountered massive spillover from a number of civil wars in neighboring states (Stearns, 2012). The Rwandan genocide of 1994 had a profound effect on the fall of Mobutu regime and laid the foundation for protracted conflict in the DRC.

Congolese Conflict Dynamics and Trends
The key conflict dynamics behind the first Congolese War would be the presence of Rwandan refugees and the decay of the Congolese state. In the wake of the Rwandan genocide, many Hutu Rwandans fled their country to the DRC fearing

reprisal by persecuted Tutsi groups (Stearns, 2012:27). Large refugee camps were formed right at the Rwandan-Zaire border, mainly in the city of Goma and Bukavu. These Hutu militias formed an alliance with the Zairian Armed Forces (FAZ) in an effort to conquer Congolese ethnic Tutsis and continued to perpetrate cross-border attacks against Rwanda (McCloskey, 2010). In response to Mobutu's government support to the exiled Hutu government under the leadership of Augustin Bizimungu, the Rwandan and Ugandan armies joined the Zairian Tutsi Militia to fend off the Zairian Hutu forces or Interhamwe militias (Vogel, 2011). Laurent-Désiré Kabila's led rebel group named as the Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo- Zaïre (AFDL), the Zairian Tutsi militias and the Rwandan and Ugandan armies formed alliance against the Mobutu regime (McCloskey, 2010; Reyntjans, 2009). Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who was an exiled Congolese militant and gold smuggler, was supported by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi armies. The invasion by a coalition of neighboring states backing Kabil's AFDL marked the first phase of the Congolese war and fall of the Mobutist state.

The AFDL and invading forces fought their way across the country to Kinshasa and succeeded in replacing president Mobutu with Laurent Kabila as the new president in May 1997 (Carayannis, 2009). Mobutu fled to Togo and then Morocco, where he soon died of cancer. Although the Rwandan genocide was not the only causal source for the first Congolese war, it is an important precondition for the events that 'led to the failure of the Congolese state and the regionalization of Congolese war around Great Lake Region' (GLR) (Voguel, 2011:13). Within a year, however, the alliance was ended and Congolese state entered into another major war, the second Congolese war *(1998–2003)*. What has often been called the 'second war' was in reality the continuation of the first one. For Rwanda and Uganda, a great deal of unfinished business was left, and the rationale behind the launch of a new 'rebellion' was in large part similar to the one prevailing in the fall of 1996. Admittedly, the outcome of the 'second war' was different from the first, but it was part of one and the same war (Reyntjens, 2009:194).

The ascendancy of Kabila to power by invading forces led to the end of first Congolese war. The situation, however, could not remain stable for Kabila for a long period due to differences with his ally, Rwanda, which continued its presence in the DRC. Kabila was in fear of a coup d'état by his former allies and foreign forces (McCloskey, 2010). On the 27 July 1998, Kabila – the man Rwanda had armed and supported all the way to the presidency - orders Rwandan officers commanding Congolese troops to return home. In reaction to this, a similar configuration of neighboring states invaded the DRC to remove Kabila from power on 2 August 1998 but without their earlier success (Reyntiens, 2009; Stearns, 2012). This second Congolese War was the world's deadliest conflict since World War II.

In the Kivus, which has been the epicenter of all Congolese war, Rwanda supported several of the newly resurrected rebel factions and launched the creation of a new unified rebel movement called Rassemblement des Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy) against Kabila, which was also endorsed by the USA (Reyntjens, 2009:195; Stearns, 2012:32). The RCD was the collection of the deserted military commanders and solider of the Congolese army in the Kivus. In the same vein, Uganda supported various rebel factions; the most

prominent was the Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo (MLC) (Holt and Taylor, 2009:242). Supported by the invading Rwandan, Ugandan, and Burundian forces, the rebels groups controlled eastern DRC and marched to Kinshasa. The second Congolese war has been characterized as 'the first Africa's World War' as the armies of more than seven African nations were entered war on the Congolese soil. From 1998 to 2003, the country suffered hugely with fighting between two allied blocs. The Angola, Chad, Sudan, Namibia and Zimbabwe supported Kabila while Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda backed the Congolese RCD and MLC rebels.

The second Congolese war was ended up with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (also known as the Lusaka Accords) under the auspices of UN and Organization for African Unity (OAU) in July 1999. However, the Lusaka Accord failed to pave the way to a lasting solution to the Congolese Conflict. Due to collusion of internal and external factors, it failed to bring lasting peace in the DRC. Notwithstanding efforts to end war, widespread fighting continued. The third phase of the war followed and to some extent was carried out concurrently with the second phase of the war. This phase has been taking a long time and involved various groups that controlled more than half the national territory in the north and eastern parts of the DRC. In January 2001, Laurent Kabila got assassinated and his son, Joseph Kabila, took over. While his father believed in continuing fighting until military victory against the rebels, Joseph Kabila swiftly adopted a more diplomatic approach.

Thy Lusaka accords and other subsequent agreements eventually led to the formal withdrawal of most foreign forces by mid-2003 (Holt and Taylor, 2009). The Pretoria accord paved the way for the installation of a transitional government with the aim of reunification, pacification, and the restoration of territorial integrity and the reestablishment of the authority of the state throughout the national territory (Whitman, 2006). The Transitional Government came into being in July 2003. A new constitution was adopted on 13 May 2005. While the peace deals were successful in reuniting rival factions in a transitional government and producing credible elections in 2006, they did not still bring an end to the third phase of the war (Stearns, 2012). The province of North Kivu has once again continued to become the epicenter of third phase of Congolese wars. This phase of war has generated a multitude of armed groups, with over two dozen emerging over the past two decades. Conflicts and insecurity remain in the eastern provinces of North and South Kivu, Orientale, Maniema, and Katanga provinces. The Congolese rebel groups and foreign rebel forces continue to destabilize the region.

General Laurent Nkunda mutinied in June 2004 from interim government. He was a former RCD commander and appointed chief of the regional Congolese national armed Forces, named as Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in South Kivu after 2003 Pretoria Peace agreement. He justified the mutiny with the need to protect his fellow Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsi) from Hutu extremist attacks that re-emerged under the name Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Laurent Nkunda announced the establishment of the National Congress for the People's Defense (CNDP) in the Eastern DRC. The CNDP took over control in the area of Masisi where it managed to establish a quasi-state stronghold and emerged as a formidable rebel force in the DRC (Manrique Gil, 2012; Voguel, 2011). Conflict escalated between the FARDC and

Rwanda-backed CNDP that controlled including strategic border City of Goma. The fall of Goma in the hands of CNDP rebel exposed not only the weaknesses of the FARDC but also that of MONUC.

Following the UN–AU a high-level mediation headed by former Nigerian President Obasanjo, Goma peace agreement was signed between Kinshasa Authority and CNDP on 23 March 2009 that provided for the CNDP political party status, power sharing and military integration of rebel forces into FARDC. Despite optimism for a permanent peace, the agreement has been labeled 'little more than a charade' (Stearns, 2012). In the 2011 national election, the CNDP unable to get representation in the national Assembly and lost the election to Joseph Kabila, who was elected for the second term. Since early 2012, CNDP officers have grown increasingly frustrated. Consequently, Bosco Ntaganda, leader of CNDP and wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) himself defected with his loyal soldiers in April 2012. He announced the creation of 23 March movement (M23) in North Kivu region (Dagne, 2011). The M23 is therefore an organic evolution of the CNDP, which had in turn originated from former RCD, in May 2012 (Arieff, 2014). Despite the presence of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and FARDC, the Rwanda Backed-M23 captured the city of Goma in November 2012.

The UN has deployed a new Intervention Brigade within the command of MONUSCO in 2013. As a result, some progress in addressing recurrent conflict in the eastern Congo has been achieved since 2013. The new intervention brigade backed by FARDC launched a successful operation against the M23 and militarily defeated the rebel force in November 2013. Following the signing of Nairobi peace declarations, the M23 announced the end of its rebellion (Arieff, 2014:9). The northern Katanga and Ituri areas have seen a sharp decrease in violence. However, fighting has escalated in the Kivus and Congolese state remains a failed state. Conflict and insecurity remains in the Kivus provinces where dozens of armed groups, both Congolese and foreign forces, continue to operate. The Conflicts are reaching levels as high as they had been during earlier wars. The foreign rebel forces, such as FDLR which was founded by perpetrators of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and using eastern Congo as a safe haven; the National Liberation Forces (FNL), founded by a Burundian rebel group, and the Lord Resistance Army (LRA), along with another militia of Ugandan origin, the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NALU) are operating in the Congolese soil (Arieff, 2014; Stearns, 2012). They have been carrying out escalating attacks against civilians inside their respective country and the DRC.

The current Congolese conflict is mainly in the eastern Congo. It is bewildering in its complexity in terms of profusion of armed factions, the plethora of acronyms, and the multitude of grievances that trigger outbreaks of conflict (Stearns, 2012). Jason Stearns interpretation of the ongoing violence in the eastern Congo mainly stresses "grievances over land and identity, greedy local, regional and international elites, or a weak and venal Congolese state" (ibid: 9). Ethnic identity and nationality, especially Congolese Tutsi and Hutu nationality issues, which are linked to land and political power, have also been playing decisive role in the dynamics of conflicts in the Eastern Congo. As evidenced in the all phases of the Congolese wars, Rwanda and Uganda are primary actors in the Congolese conflicts.

They have been providing support for Congolese armed groups and, at time, directly involved in the Congolese wars since the mid-1990s. In addition to their national security concerns, they are engaged in the war economy of plundering rich resources of the DRC.

Challenges to Resolve Congolese Conflicts
Regional Security Complex in the Great Lake Region (GLR)

Great Lake Region (GLR) forms part of the rift valley in east and central Africa and Comprises seven countries: Uganda, DRC, Rwanda, Angola, Burundi, Kenya and Tanzania. The study tried to treat the GLR as a unit of analysis in its own right, a geographic area or unit that possesses its own regional security dynamic process to links with challenges that impede efforts to resolve Congolese conflicts in the east. The politico- security fate of the states in the region has always been inextricably intertwined. Barry Buzan regional security complex fits GLR as the historical patterns of amity and enmity are deeply etched in the region. The challenges for making peace in the DRC typically stem from regional security dynamics in the GLR. Using this conceptual framework helps to broadly understand how regional states' security dynamics are working that impede efforts of making peace. In this section, the study mainly emphasizes on complex regional security dynamics and trends in the smaller Great Lake Region (SGLR) consisting of Eastern DRC (Kivus), Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

As it has been noted earlier on, the current prolonged conflict in the eastern DRC is very complex due to profusion of armed factions both Congolese and foreign rebels and continuing involvement of neighboring countries under the pretext of pursuing rebels (Stearns, 2012; Arieff, 2014). The region has generated a multitude of armed groups with over two dozen emerging over the past two decades. It is in the Kivus, the epicenter of instability in the SGLR, that the most formidable challenges to stability in the DRC and neighboring countries persist today (Banda, 2012; Stearns, 2012). Over the past decades, the former Rwandan rebel forces named as FDLR use eastern Congo as safe haven and carried out many attacks against civilians in Rwanda and DRC. The Ugandan rebels, like a LRA and the ADF/NALU, were also basing in the DRC and conducting terrible attacks against civilians. In addition, the Burundian rebel group, like the FNL was also present in the DRC (Dagne, 2011). These foreign rebel forces continue to operate in the eastern DRC and are destabilizing the regional security.

The Rwandan, Ugandan and Burundian governments views these rebels as a national security threat. As a result, they have been involving frequently in the Congolese wars directly or via proxies by the pretext of pursing these rebel groups. These states were primary actors in all phases of Congolese wars and continue to sustain the recurring cycles of conflicts and instability in the DRC. This has made the Congolese wars very complex that involve a multiplicity of interlocking regional and international actors (Reyntjens, 2009; Cammaert, 2013).

Moreover, corresponding to the tenets of Security Complex thesis, historical patterns of enmity than amity are deeply etched in the SGLR states that has made peace building effort difficult in the DRC. Since the second Congolese war, enmity had continued to endure between DRC and its smaller but more powerful neighbors - Rwanda and Uganda. These two neighboring countries were continued to involve

in the Congolese conflicts and to cultivate rebel groups as proxies. It is such shared rivalry that sustain the cycles of conflicts in the DRC and in the SGLR. Beyond security concern, regional states have vested interests in plundering and exploiting the Congolese rich mineral resources either through covert support for rebel groups or in actual military engagement.

The regional states destabilization role and enmity is one of the critical challenges for resolving conflicts in the eastern DRC. Due to persistent threats emanating from their respective rebel groups operating in the DRC, the regional states have national security concerns. They have also overlapping ethnic populations along the border. As a result, they have very high and complex stake in the Congolese conflicts (Stearns, 2012; Reyntjens, 2009). These are therefore the solid indication that the regional security complex has been escalating and sustaining the cycles of conflicts in the DRC and in the SGLR. The conflict has expanded geographically and involved the countries of SGLR which is a comparatively confined geographical area and a history of colonial and ethnic interdependence (Ewald, 2004). Consistent to the tenets of Buzan's Security complex, the conflict is strongly felt and linked into politics and security of the states of SGLR's. Therefore, the countries of the region are illustrative example of Buzan's regional security dynamics as the fate of these states' security has always been inextricably intertwined to each other.

Congolese State Failure

Some scholars have depicted 'state failure' as an 'essentially contested concept'. As a result, scholars face various analytical problems in defining state failure and hence, rely on chosen indicators to conceptualize the state failure (Vogel, 2011). To analyze the Congolese state failure as a critical challenge to conflicts in the eastern DRC, I use Rotberg's indicators of failed state as a conceptual framework. These indicators provide adequate unit of analysis to the case of the DRC. Rotberg has given broadly accepted and guiding indicators pertaining to the concept of failed state. His lists of indicators include: civil wars characterized by enduring violence; disharmony between communities; loss of control over peripheral regions to out-groups; growth of criminal violence, including gangs, and trafficking of arms and guns; cessation of functioning legislatures and judiciaries; informal privatization of social services; corruption; loss of legitimacy; declining per capita GDP, with associated soaring smuggling and the supplanting of the national currency with external money (Rotberg, 2004:5-9).

However, Rotberg does not explicitly define what a 'failing state' is, but it is presumably a state that exhibits some, but not all, of the above indicators of state failure. A core part of Rotberg‟s argumentation consists of the notion that failed states are "not longer able or willing" to fulfill their responsibilities (ibid: 5). Seen from the perspective of Rotberg's indicators of failed state, the DRC is an example in numerous regards. The DRC is one of the countries in the world that frequently cited as failed state. The critical challenges to resolve recurring cycles of conflicts is Congolese state failure. As a result, vast geography with abundant resources is mismanaged and uncontrolled and plundered by internal and external forces that in turn sustain conflicts. Corruption is endemic in the country.

The Congolese state has primary responsibility to build strong state institutions to

control and govern its territory, protect its unity and territorial integrity and security of its people. As mentioned by Patrick Cammaert, who was former military advisor in the United Nations Department of PKOs and former Eastern Division commander of the UN Mission in the DRC, the UN has also stressed 'the DRC's responsibility to build a stable environment, acknowledging that "one underlying reason for the recurring cycles of conflicts and violence involving Congolese and foreign armed groups is the government's limited ability to exert full authority over its territory and to provide basic services and security to the population'(2013:12). The DRC remains a fragile state though Joseph Kabila has been in power since 2001. Kabila has made only limited progress, if any, in building strong state institutions to advance constitutionally stable political order (Banda, 2012). As a result, the Congolese state has a dysfunctional government with limited authority over its territory outside the capital. It has no effective state institution to govern its territory, especially in the eastern region.

Furthermore, the DRC has few passable roads, little infrastructure and poor or no provision of social services to its people. The Congolese political elites often appear more focused on controlling resources and augmenting their personal power than creating effective state institutions and fostering socio-economic development. In addition, the Congolese as well as elites of Kigali and Kampala have developed a stake in rebel groups, which they believe maintain their interests. In this regard, Jason Stearns (2012:42) has mentioned that:

"Almost every rebel group has leadership ties with Kinshasa, Goma, or Kigali. Indeed, an essential ingredient for long-term success for any rebel group is a solid connections to regional elites, who contribute money and equipment, broker larger alliances with other armed groups and politicians—and who can speak for the rebels in the inevitable peace talks".

The DRC is the second largest and very rich country in mineral resources in Africa. However, the Congolese state has neither the rule of law nor the force of law to manage resources and suppress armed groups that operate freely by plundering and smuggling mining resources to fund their battles (McCloskey, 2010). The Congolese government has consistently demonstrated inability to protect its territorial integrity and control its natural resources from plundering by the rebels groups. Consistent to Rotberg's indicators of the failed state, Congolese state is dominated by resource traders, smugglers, arms dealers and corrupt national and local officials. There is no effective state authority in the mineral rich eastern Congo. As a result, the region is rife with various rebel groups and local, regional and international smugglers.

The rebel groups that used eastern Congo as safe haven, such as the Rwandan FDLR, Ugandan ADF/NALU and LRA and Congolese Mai Mai militias and other armed forces apparently sustain their operations by trading lucrative minerals. They have their own mines areas to finance war inside and outside DRC (De Koning, 2010). Corresponding to Rotberg's indicators of failed state, cessation of functioning state institutions, smuggling, proliferation of small arms and light weapons facilitate impunity and hinder the implementation of effective strategies to alter incentive structures in the DRC's war economy. The protracted conflict has led to the Congolese state failure which has in turn been sustaining the cycle of conflicts by supporting the survival of rebel groups in addition to external supports

from influential and difficult neighbors. Therefore, the political economy of mining is central to sustaining the cycle of conflicts in the eastern Congo.

The Congolese state has very weak national army, named as FARDC. The army is poorly paid, badly equipped, and in need of extensive reform. Low payment and poor discipline were led members of the armed forces to desert to rebel sides and to extort payment of illegal checkpoint "taxes" from the population in areas under their control. In addition, Congolese forces have fled when rebel groups have attacked their locations and have themselves been responsible for large numbers of human rights violations (Dagne, 2011:10). While MONUSCO able to clear rebel-held territory, the FARDC has no capacity to consolidate these gains and guards the liberated areas against rebels' reprisal. As mentioned by Patrick Cammaert, UN has repeatedly noted that "the lack of progress towards building well-trained and well equipped Congolese armed forces constitutes a major threat to the stability of the DRC and the high number of atrocities committed by the FARDC presents wider challenges for partnership" (2013:10). The FARDC is little more than a collection of former rebels themselves. It struggles to militarily defeat the well-armed and well-resourced rebel groups while it is poorly equipped and has very bad discipline. The military leaders of FARDC have involved in the war economy and intensely competing to control mineral rich areas for personal fiat as the rebels have been doing.

The Congolese state failure is internal mainly political. It remains key challenges for achieving greater stability by the MONUSCO in the DRC. The MONUSCO's support in the military front has relatively advanced as demonstrated by military defeat over M23 rebel group. However, the Congolese government is lagging behind and has failed to do a catch up to consolidate the gains. The non-military solutions through peacemaking and state building to address the underlying causes are still very fragile in the DRC (Cammaert, 2013). The Kabila regime needs to take rapidly concrete steps to ensure the consolidation of gains and re-establishment of State authority in the liberated areas in the east. To win peace with conviction and persistence and to consolidate the gains achieved, transforming Congolese state failure is a priority. In addition, efforts should be geared towards building strong state institutions to end the state failure particularly the 'core five' institutions: military, police, civil service, the system of justice and leadership in the DRC.

Conclusions and Results

Despite relative stability in most regions of the country, conflict has continued in the eastern Congo that is the epicenter of all phases of Congolese wars. The eastern Congo is a region marred by civil strife and the final chord of violence is hard to predict. The first and second Congolese Wars, which was described as the first African World War, to oust, consecutively, Mobutu and Kabila begun in the city of Goma in the eastern DRC. It is here that the most formidable challenges to Congolese stability persist today. The causes of the conflicts are as complex as the challenges of resolving them are difficult. The critical challenge to resolve conflicts are related with the presence of over a dozen militia and extremist groups, both foreign and Congolese, Congolese state failure, political economy mining abundant resources and regional security complex. The SGLR is the epicenter of the conflict earthquake in the larger GLR and in Africa. This region's security

complex has significant contribution in sustaining the cycles of conflict in the DRC and regional insecurity. The DRC's neighboring states have engaged in pervasive backing of rebel groups and involved in the war economy directly or through proxies.

Another challenge to break the recurring cycles of conflicts is a competitive regional states' power struggle to gain geopolitical power in ways that are threatening to the security of other states. Whether stability and peace can be brought to eastern Congo is likely to depend on whether neighboring states, mainly Rwanda and Uganda, choose to seek new armed proxies for leverage and/or economic gain and to fight the rebel groups in the DRC soil and whether Kinshasa authority establish strong government institutions to maintain its territorial integrity and control its natural resources to prevent mineral smuggling by the rebels to fund their war and spoilers. It is better to pursue holistic and regional approach to bring lasting peace in the SGLR. To win peace with conviction and persistence and to consolidate the gains achieved, transforming Congolese state failure is a priority. Efforts should be geared towards building strong state institutions in the DRC.

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Statement of the Conflict of Interest
The author declared that I have no conflict of interest

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