

Central Africa

Forecasts for insecurity and conflict in 2014



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Introduction

Central Africa displays several trends that exacerbate the propensity for violent conflict. Firstly, governance effectiveness is significantly lower than other regions on the continent, and it would take 20 years of improvement to reach a level comparable with that in West Africa and the Horn/East Africa today.¹ Secondly, the conflicts that have devastated the region have created a profound level of instability, cycles of repeat violence and a 'bad neighbourhood' from which its members have no recourse, particularly landlocked states. Thirdly, and perhaps most concerning, the region has the greatest youth bulge in Africa, with over 50% of citizens aged between 15 and 29 years old.

Conflict and insecurity is a product of a combination of these and other volatile factors. Some narratives have painted Central Africa as a region where conflict and insecurity occur naturally due to ethnic tensions and porous borders; in reality, the underlying sources and drivers of instability are critical to understanding events. This study from Open Briefing attempts to avoid generalisations by analysing specific factors and identifying forecasts for individual countries in the region.

The drivers that are examined range from those influencing ongoing events to more structural long-term factors. Hence this report draws on a number of themes, including: levels of poverty; socio-political instability; the democratic deficit; incomplete transitions from autocracy to democracy; the role of the armed forces; youth bulges; post-conflict environments; the bad neighbourhood factor; the quality of governance; the impact of natural resources; border disputes; Islamic extremism and insurgencies; narco-trafficking; and small-arms flows. These factors are analysed with the purpose of understanding the weight that they have in shaping the country's recent history and its likely future.



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The forecasts set out in this synthesis report derive from the application of the cone of plausibility method, which consists of isolating the main drivers that shape events in a country and enables the formulation of fair assumptions.

Over 50 carefully vetted sources of qualitative and quantitative data were used throughout this study, with numerous other local sources used for each individual country. Statistics and profiles from sources such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economist Intelligence Unit and the annual *African Economic Outlook*, helped to identify the main features of a country. News articles from the BBC, Al Jazeera, Reuters, Africa Confidential and local media, provided a descriptive element that contributed to a better understanding of the dynamics of insecurity along the time frame covered by this study. Intelligence and risk companies, such as Control Risks and red24, provided up-to-date, on-the-ground security overviews. And civil society organisations, such as the International Crisis Group, Human Rights Watch, Global Witness and local NGOs, provided background information on many of the factors outlined in the previous paragraph.

The forecasts set out in this synthesis report derive from the application of the **cone of plausibility method**, which consists of isolating the main drivers that shape events in a country and enables the formulation of fair assumptions. From these assumptions, three types of scenarios for 2014 have been developed: the **baseline**, which is the most likely outcome; a **plausible alternative**, which is possible but less likely; and **wildcards**, which are possible but unlikely, and usually bring about dramatic outcomes. Each of the narratives is built around different assumptions for the same drivers, which allows for the generation of differentiated but not impossible scenarios. These variables were applied according to specific features within a country. Also included are brief country overviews and short analyses of the origins of current insecurity in each case.

This synthesis report focusses on those countries in Central Africa whose drivers and internal volatility are likely to create substantial levels of insecurity and conflict over 2014. Given the high levels of poverty and lack of opportunity, the forecast for much of the region looks bleak. 2014 will see a continuation of the crisis in **Central African Republic (CAR)**, necessitating increased involvement from France and the African Union (AU). It is probable that tensions will simmer in the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo)** and **Burundi**, where spoilers have access to weapons and the indigent populations have yet to benefit from the peace dividend or economic growth. While in the **Republic of Congo** the focus will be on leadership succession after nearly 30 years of rule by the septuagenarian president.

This briefing paper is the second of three planned reports from Open Briefing forecasting insecurity and conflict in West, Central and Southern Africa during 2014.

Republic of Burundi

Burundi is ranked by UNDP as the tenth poorest country in the world.² GDP per capita is in the bottom five globally, and at least two thirds of the population live in poverty.³ Although predominantly rural, it has the second-highest population density in Africa.⁴ 65% of the population is under 25 years old and there is no obvious opportunity for them to escape poverty.⁵ International trade is severely restricted as a result of the country being landlocked and having the fifth worst infrastructure on the continent.⁶ Since independence, Burundi has experienced intra-state, non-state and one-sided violence,⁷ and has yet to recover from a devastating civil war, which raged for over a decade because of the failure to find an inclusive political settlement.⁸ The country is ranked twentieth in the Failed States Index from the Fund for Peace.⁹

Origins of insecurity

Ethnic tensions between the Hutu majority (85% of the population) and the Tutsi minority in Burundi stem from the Belgian colonial administration, which governed through the traditional Tutsi ruling class, leading to resentment by the majority Hutu and ethnic tensions. This disparity continued following independence in 1962, with Tutsi dominating the armed forces and public office. The country experienced four coups d'état in the space of three decades. When a Hutu-dominated party, Front pour la démocratie du Burundi (Frodebu), won the first competitive elections in July 1993, Tutsi radicals in the army responded by assassinating the country's first Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye. This led to the Burundian civil war (1993-2005), which claimed an estimated 300,000 lives and displaced over double that number.¹⁰

Major protagonists and recent developments

The current government is formed by the Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD), in conjunction with its armed wing, the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD), with which it won the civil war. The CNDD-FDD leader, Pierre Nkurunziza, was elected as president of Burundi in 2005, and controversially re-elected unopposed following an opposition boycott in 2010. The Hutu-nationalist armed group Front National de Libération (FNL) was the last to sign the peace treaty in September 2006, but it split into various factions, with the result that spoilers remain. The FNL is led by Agathon Rwasa, and was founded by exiled Burundians as Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu (Palipehutu), an ethnocentric name which it was forced to abandon as part of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement that ended the civil war.¹¹

Although the 2010 elections were supposed to usher in a new era of peace and stability, they became a violent farce. Over a hundred grenade attacks occurred in the run-up to the campaign, in addition to attacks on ruling party offices and restrictions on the movement of opposition parties.¹² The first round of five elections, held at commune level, saw a high turnout. But, when results gave the CNDD-FDD 90% the vote, the opposition claimed foul play. The parties then united to form a coalition named Alliance Démocratique pour le Changement (ADC-Ikibiri), which boycotted the polls.

The one exception to the boycott was the Union pour le Progrès National (Uprona), the largest Tutsi party. They had a strong incentive to participate in the polls given the imposition of a quota in the bicameral parliament that ensures a 60:40 split between Hutu and Tutsi members in the national assembly, with a 50:50 ratio in the senate.¹³ However, Uprona ended their participation in government in February 2014 in protest at the interior minister's refusal to recognise Charles Nditije as party president and the dismissal of the Uprona-affiliated First Vice-President of Burundi, Bernard Busokoza, by President Nkurunziza. Busokoza is a former army officer suspected of involvement in the 1993 coup d'état and thus was highly resented by his CNDD-FDD colleagues in government. He had replaced Therence Sinunguruza in October 2013.

Since 2010, the CNDD-FDD has cemented its grip on power, halting national reconciliation and reversing progress towards multi-party democracy.

Since 2010, the CNDD-FDD has cemented its grip on power, halting national reconciliation and reversing progress towards multi-party democracy.¹⁴ The post-election period has been marked by a campaign of violence against dissenting voices, led by a militant youth wing attached to the CNDD (taking the name Imbonerakure, meaning 'those who see far'). When Human Rights Watch released a report highlighting extrajudicial killings, the government responded by calling it a 'declaration of war'.¹⁵ Impunity is compounded by the lack of training for the police and a failure of the judiciary to assert its independence. This is illustrated by the fact that Burundi has dropped 16 points on the Ibrahim Index for the Rule of Law over the past six years.¹⁶

Extrajudicial killings have resulted in an exodus of mainstream political leaders, with the result that only extremist voices are able to present an alternative to the status quo. In 2012, a group calling itself the Front du Peuple Murundi (FPM-Abatabazi) entered Burundi from eastern DR Congo and clashed with the army in the northwest.¹⁷ Another armed faction named the FNL-Ubugabo-Burihabwa led by Aloys Nzampema, attacked the capital, Bujumbura.¹⁸ Such groups have the potential to attract disaffected youth and destabilise a country that remains volatile. In August 2013, another major spoiler, former FNL leader Agathon Rwasa, resurfaced¹⁹ and submitted a petition calling for his re-instatement as leader of the FNL.²⁰ However, the public prosecutor subsequently opened an investigation into Rwasa's role in the massacre of refugees from DR Congo, effectively neutralising any political threat that he might pose.²¹

Article 7 of the Arusha accords stipulates that no one should serve as president more than twice. Nkurunziza has argued that he was elected by parliament and not popular suffrage in 2005, concluding that his first term did not therefore count. To resolve this situation, the CNDD-FDD announced an amendment to the constitution in October 2013, which was protested by civil society, but faced no obstacles in parliament due to the party's dominance of the legislative chambers.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: In mid-2014, Nkurunziza announces his intention to stand for a third term in elections set for the following year, which violates the spirit of the Arusha accords. Leading members of the CNDD disaffected by the decision choose to establish their own party, or join an opposition alliance, in order to contest the elections. The international community condemns Nkurunziza's decision and express regret at the surge in violence, but take no proactive steps to address either issue.

Tensions escalate ahead of the presidential, legislative and municipal elections in 2015. The key driver is the exclusion of Rwasa and other opposition groups from the formal political sphere. There are clashes between militias as the Imbonerakure continue their extrajudicial killings.

Plausible alternative: Nkurunziza decides to stand down at the end of his term in 2015, but refuses to anoint a successor, leading to competition between Second Vice-President Gervais Rufyikiri, ministers and prominent youth politicians. Disunity in the ruling party, together with the return of politicians from exile, leads to both a vibrant response from civil society and increasingly frequent confrontations among rebel groups as a proxy conflict between their various sponsors. The international community welcomes the opening of the political space, but faced with an increased level of instability, and a fear that the 2015 elections will prove violent, nominates an envoy to liaise with key actors and prevent the conflict from erupting. Peacekeepers are sent by the African Union under a UN mandate to stabilise the country.

Wildcards:

- (1) Following the imposition of peace in eastern DR Congo, long-standing rebel groups linked to the FNL cross Lake Tanganyika and destabilise Burundi.
- (2) Rwasa and allies from the FNL attempt a coup d'état, holding the capital but failing to defeat the armed forces. This plunges the country back into civil war. The international community responds by sending a peacekeeping mission, which is eventually able to stabilise the country, resulting in a new round of peace talks in Arusha.

The international community condemns Nkurunziza's decision and express regret at the surge in violence, but take no proactive steps to address either issue.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic epitomises the challenges faced by landlocked countries in a difficult neighbourhood. It shares a border with five countries, of which four have experienced civil war since independence. It is ranked ninth on the Failed States Index for 2013 and has consistently been in the top 20 over the past decade.²² CAR lacks reputable institutions or a sense of national unity. Sixty nine different languages are spoken among the country's 4.5 million inhabitants.²³ Of these, Sango, a vehicular language, has been accorded official status alongside French, but neither language is widely spoken outside of the towns and cities. CAR has a Gini coefficient of 63, ranking it as one of the most unequal countries in the world.²⁴ At 48 years old, life expectancy is the second lowest on the planet.

Origins of insecurity

Following independence in 1960, CAR was subject to repeated external interference by France, Chad and Libya, and governed by a series of authoritarian and corrupt leaders who failed to develop the country or allow the emergence of resilient independent institutions. Military coups d'état became a frequent feature of political life. In 1965, France replaced the first president, David Dacko, with his cousin General Jean-Bédél Bokassa, a former member of the French Foreign Legion. Bokassa became a brutal dictator and declared himself emperor in 1976. However, while Bokassa was visiting allies in Libya in 1979, France re-installed Dacko. The former colonial power then replaced him with General André Kolingba in 1981. Ange-Félix Patassé won power by the ballot box in 1993, and ruled with the support of Libya, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, until François Bozizé seized power in 2003. A bush war took place between 2004 and 2007, in which Chad supported Bozizé against a plethora of rebel groups. Given this environment, it is hardly surprising that another coup d'état occurred in March 2013.²⁵

Major protagonists and recent developments

In December 2012, the Séléka Coalition, an alliance of rebel groups supported by Chad, began to advance on the capital, Bangui. The Séléka is primarily composed of youth from the historically disenfranchised northeast of the country, where the majority of the population are Muslim and speak Arabic. Many of the rebels had been parties to the 2004-07 bush war, and the involvement of Arabic-speaking Chadian mercenaries proved that there was a lucrative opportunity to reengage in violent conflict. In January 2013, ECCAS convened peace talks in Gabon, and sent troops as part of a peacekeeping mission, with reinforcements from South Africa. Bozizé recognised the rebels' grievances and promised to hold elections. However, progress was slow, and on 24 March 2013 the Séléka seized the presidential palace, forcing Bozizé to flee. The rebel leader, Michel Djotodia, a Muslim from northeast of the country, proclaimed himself president.

African leaders, meeting in Chad in April 2013, insisted that Djotodia establish a transitional council and hold fresh elections within 18 months, to which he agreed. He was subsequently elected unopposed as president of the council, but pledged not to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming elections. In May, the national prosecutor announced an international arrest warrant against former

president Bozizé.²⁶ Djotodia was sworn in as president in August 2013.²⁷ Regrettably, he failed to stabilise the country, prevent a worsening humanitarian crisis or convince unpaid Séléka fighters not to extort their fellow citizens.²⁸ The rebels are alleged to have committed serious human rights violations, including sectarian executions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, sexual violence, the recruitment of child soldiers²⁹ and the deliberate destruction homes.³⁰

Ethnic and religious tensions stem from the fact that the Séléka, a Muslim-dominated force, attacked a predominantly Christian area, where the rebels' Arab-speaking leaders were unable to communicate with the local Sango-speaking communities.³¹ In response to a critical UN report, and an inability to pay the fighters, Djotodia dissolved the Séléka Coalition in September 2013, but his call was ignored.³² The anti-Balaka, a vigilante group linked to Bozizé, consisting of Christian and animist youth, began to fight back. Concurrently, questions emerged concerning the arming of the Séléka by Chad, probable links to the Janjaweed of Darfur and improbable ties to Boko Haram. The conflict has been painted as primarily sectarian by the media, and the United Nations has raised the spectre of genocide, but the divisions are more complex.³³

The International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) was established under UN Security Council Resolution 2127 on 5 December 2013, incorporating troops from Gabon, Chad, the Republic of the Congo and Cameroon.³⁴ Although MISCA has an authorised strength of 6,000, only 3,700 African soldiers have been deployed to date.³⁵ The Chadian contingent of 850 troops had to leave the capital after it was found to have intervened on the side of the Séléka fighters and opened fire on Christians.³⁶ Tensions have emerged among the mission command, which is led by a general from the Republic of Congo but supported by a deputy from Cameroon. As with Chad, Cameroon risks becoming a party to the conflict, rather than a force for its resolution. President Paul Biya has accorded Bozizé refuge and publically expressed his dissatisfaction with the manner in which ECCAS has handled the conflict.

France deployed an additional 1,600 troops as part of Operation Sangaris, on the premise that these would remain in CAR for around a year. They were welcomed on the streets of Bangui in December 2013. However, the anti-Balaka had believed the French would support them in combat against the Séléka, rather than work to maintain peace, leading to initial confusion. The French have subsequently added a further 400 troops in February 2014. But even with the increased French presence, the international mission remains at only half the strength required according to UN estimates.³⁷

Djotodia was forced out on 9 January 2014 and the 135-member transitional council elected Catherine Samba-Panza, a businesswoman and former mayor of Bangui, as interim president on 23 January. She is the first woman to preside over the country and was selected due to her non-partisan nature, though she has links to all the major power-brokers, having been born in modern-day Chad to a Central African mother and a Cameroonian father and studied law in France. She will lead the country until the next elections, scheduled for 2015, and has announced former African Development Bank official André Nzapayeke as her prime minister. Critically, she has not co-opted former rebels into her cabinet, as has been the case in DR Congo.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: French soldiers remain in CAR for the entirety of 2014, accompanied by an evolving AU force with EU support. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recommends an upgrade in the deployment from the present AU-badged unit to UN blue helmets, and calls for reinforcements from the international community. Given that the Séléka forces have been displaced rather than eliminated, further troop contributions are required from EU and AU countries in order to spread beyond the capital and stabilise the rest of the country. Although EU foreign ministers have pledged to send an additional 500 troops, contributions from the Baltic, Scandinavian and Central European countries are insufficient, necessitating the involvement of either more French troops or those from another country with an enhanced military capacity.

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The appointment of Samba-Panza contributes to uniting a range of actors in the search for a political settlement. However, the Séléka and anti-Balaka are informal militia without clear leadership, and neither has been co-opted into the new government. Therefore, the interim president is unable to declare an end to the civil war until late in the year, at the earliest.

Although the fighting eventually stops, elections do not take place in February 2015 as France has advocated. This is due to the need to stabilise the northeast of the country, from where the Séléka militia draw their support, and update the voters register there so that the elections result in a meaningful representation of all Central Africans. The international community needs to commit significant resources to bring peace, stability and development to this neglected part of the country before a sustainable solution can be found to the conflict.

Plausible alternative: A lack of troop contributions from EU and AU countries leads to increased sectarian violence in urban areas. This results in the flight of the persecuted Muslim minority to regions where they are able to make up the majority of the population, such as the northeast. The absence of the government writ in this part of the country, coupled with the presence of Chadian soldiers, leads to the Séléka forces gaining international support from Chad, Sudan or Libya, enabling them to regroup and march on the capital once again.

The risk of the regime falling necessitates urgent reinforcements, but the increased media exposure deters European governments from contributing troops under such hostile operating conditions. A regional actor, such as Cameroon or South Africa, instead seeks to utilise the conflict as an opportunity to project power and distract from domestic discontent. Combined, these factors have dangerous consequences for the mission to stabilise the country.

Wildcard: Extremists from Boko Haram meet with Séléka forces exiled in southern Chad, providing a combination of religious indoctrination and terrorist training to the militia. This results in the conflict taking on a new and dramatic dimension, with serious implications for regional peace and stability.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is ranked joint bottom on the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index. It has the lowest GDP per capita in the world,³⁸ and is among the bottom ten for economic freedom.³⁹ More than 5.4 million have died as the result of conflict in DR Congo since 1998. DR Congo is the size of Western Europe and comprises 250 ethnic groups⁴⁰ and 214 linguistic groups.⁴¹ Only 10% are proficient in French, the official language, while the majority of the population is divided by its national languages: Lingala (the language of the armed forces, Kinshasa, and the northern provinces of Bandundu, Equateur and Orientale), Kikongo (Bas-Congo Province); Tshiluba (spoken in the central Kasai-Occidental and Kasai-Oriental provinces) and Kiswahili (dominant across the east and south, in Katanga, Kasai-Oriental, Maniema, Orientale and North and South Kivu provinces).

Origins of insecurity

A multitude of conflicts exist in DR Congo, with the country stuck in a cycle of repeat violence. At the meta-level there is the struggle for power in Kinshasa, the proxy war with Rwanda, and the battle for control of natural resources in the mineral-rich south and east. The first factor has in turn driven the other two, which are closely linked. Insecurity stems from systematic underdevelopment and corruption under Mobutu Sese Seko's reign, which resulted in poorly equipped security forces. Consequently, the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) failed to defeat a much smaller Rwandan force during the Congolese civil war. Rather than professionalising, it has subsequently become a vehicle for co-opting warlords into positions of power, so as to reduce their indiscriminate violence in eastern DR Congo. Diluting the numbers of professional soldiers means the FARDC has tended towards pillage and disorder.⁴² Rebel groups have thus been able to exploit the weakness of the army and the resulting power vacuums, managing to seize control of half of the mines in eastern DR Congo, and use the lucrative exploitation of natural resources as a means to demand taxes, bribes or other payments.⁴³

Major protagonists and recent developments

Joseph Kabila was re-elected as president in 2011 in controversial circumstances. Voting was peaceful across the majority of the country, but international electoral observers reported rigging and fraud, disputing the accuracy of the verdict. Etienne Tshisekedi, who was Kabila's main challenger for the presidency in 2011, but is unlikely to stand again in 2016, claimed to have won the poll. The international community failed to respond, as there is a strong imperative for national stability, which precluded the level of investigation Tshisekedi demanded.⁴⁴

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Kabila has faced pressure to engage in national political consultation and rebuild his support base.⁴⁵ He urgently needs to engage with this notion following an aborted coup d'état on 30 December 2013, during which rebels from Katanga attacked the headquarters of the Radio-Télévision Nationale Congolaise, Ndjili International Airport and the army barracks in Kinshasa, as well as sites in the Katangan capital of Lubumbashi. The elite Republican Guard quickly restored control in Kinshasa, but between 40 and 100 Congolese were killed. The leader of the attack was reportedly Paul-Joseph Mukungubila, a self-declared prophet from Lubumbashi who unsuccessfully stood for the presidency in 2006. Like many opponents of the government, Mukungubila claims that Kabila is a puppet of Rwanda. It is possible that the real power behind the attack was former Inspector General of the Police Nationale Congolaise (PNC) General John Numbi, a former Kabila ally angered by the nomination of a Congolese Rwandophone, General Charles Bisengimana, as the head of the PNC.⁴⁶

The country is still recovering from the Congolese civil war, which spawned around 20 rebel groups that fought at least 40 conflicts across an area the size of Western Europe.⁴⁷ This has led to huge degree of instability, which endured in Ituri and Province Orientale until 2007, and in North and South Kivu provinces, escalating in 2012, but dissipating in late 2013. Together with the Katangan claims for secession, which date back to independence, DR Congo is fragmented and risks balkanisation without strong leadership. This complex dynamic warrants some brief details:

North and South Kivu: The conflict in eastern DR Congo is the most serious facing the country and has been escalating since 2004.⁴⁸ The principal rebel group, the M23, grew out of the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP) led by Laurent Nkunda, now in custody. In November 2012, M23 occupied the provincial capital, Goma, for 10 days despite the presence of UN peacekeepers. This sent a clear signal that the international community needed to increase its commitment to ending the conflict, which resulted in UN Security Council Resolution 2098 (2013). This created a specialised intervention brigade to strengthen the peacekeeping operation, which included 3,069 additional peacekeepers from South Africa, Tanzania and Malawi, and advanced equipment such as helicopter gunships.⁴⁹

The tide turned in the conflict once the M23 leader, Bosco Ntaganda, surrendered at the US Embassy in Rwanda in March 2013.⁵⁰ This removed a spoiler with no interest in making peace.⁵¹ Ntaganda had previously been appointed second-in-command of the FARDC in eastern DR Congo, using his military power to control lucrative mineral smuggling networks in Goma.⁵² The M23 continued under 'Brigadier' Sultani Makenga, before surrendering to Ugandan soldiers in November 2013.⁵³

At the heart of the conflict lay international support for the rebels, which the UN Group of Experts judged to be emanating from Rwanda and Uganda.⁵⁴ But faced with international outrage, a threatened or actual reduction in aid allocations, and the prospect of a UN mission, the two countries withdrew support for their proxy.⁵⁵ It marks the first time an armed group allied to Rwanda has not been present in eastern DR Congo since 1996.

At least 10 other rebel groups remain in the two provinces. The most important is the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which is the longest standing militia on Congolese soil.⁵⁶ Largely composed of Hutu nationalists responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide, they have been unable to integrate with the local population and are accused of cooperation with the FARDC. Various local rebel groups, dubbed 'Mai-Mai', have been formed in response to FDLR attacks. The most prominent are the Mai-Mai Yakutumba (in Fizi), Raia Mutomboki (in Shabunda) and Mai-Mai Hilaire (in Beni). Others are Mai Mai Morgan (in the Okapi Fauna Reserve) and Mai Mai Sheka and Kiffuafua (both in Massisi).⁵⁷

Katanga Province: In March 2013, fighters of the Mai-Mai Ba Kata Katanga briefly entered Lubumbashi, Congo's second-largest city, and clashed with government forces before surrendering. The attack raised fears that the mineral-rich province would try to secede, as it attempted to do in the 1960s and '70s.⁵⁸ There are also tensions between the Luba and Lunda communities in Katanga that have at times, and particularly during the 1980s, degenerated into violent pogroms.⁵⁹ Although Kabila had tried to court the Katangans, and has involved many of them in government, General Numbi is one prominent figure in the region with the motive and ability to fund the Kata Katanga movement.⁶⁰

Province Orientale: The Coalition des Groupes Armés de l'Ituri (COGAI) is the main rebel group in the northeast of the country, led by 'Brigadier-General' Justin Banaloki (alias Cobra Matata), who also heads a subgroup, the Forces de Resistance Patriotiques en Ituri (FRPI). The former leader of COGAI, Germain Katanga, is on trial at the International Criminal Court. However, the group maintains strong links to the Hema community, which fought against neighbouring Lendu militia during the late 1990s and early 2000s.⁶¹

As with many armed groups, the FRPI wants to be integrated into the FARDC at their current ranks, and to receive amnesty for FRPI prisoners.⁶² Given the defeat of M23 and the failure of previous rounds of co-options, this seems unlikely to be an offer that will materialise.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) remains active in the province, although reports of its leader's decision to surrender due to ill health should be followed closely.⁶³

Equateur Province: The Dongo conflict led by the Enyele began in October 2009 and lasted until December. The exodus of the civilian population and humanitarian impact has destabilised the border with Republic of Congo, on the other side of the Ubangi River.

The victory of peacekeepers from the SADC region over militias sponsored by EAC members illustrates a new regional dynamic.

Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Kabila remains resolute, and M23's sponsors fully withdraw their support for a proxy in eastern DR Congo. The victory of peacekeepers from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region over militias sponsored by East African Community (EAC) members illustrates a new regional dynamic. The conflict subsides as rebels realise that they have limited chance of being bought-off and incorporated into the FARDC. However, Rwanda, Uganda and their allies advocate for the mandate of the UN intervention brigade to be enlarged so that it can pursue the FDLR and other Hutu rebels. This poses a challenge to Kabila's authority, but he calculates that peace in the Kivus and a détente with Rwanda would ultimately benefit his own political cause and enable him to focus on Katanga and other threats to his continued rule.

Kabila engages with the forces behind Kata Katanga and the aborted coup d'état, primarily via the Luba elite. With the east returning to normal, he is able to determine a means to grant the region increased autonomy for taxation and budgeting, while simultaneously co-opting further members of the Luba elite.

Nationally, repeatedly postponed elections for the provincial assemblies and the senate are scheduled to take place in 2014. However, given the potential to reignite tensions relating to the devolution of power and inflaming competition between Kabila's loose coalition of supporters and the opposition, the president opts to postpone these once again, along with local elections, which have yet to take place since independence.⁶⁴

Kabila faces a dilemma in 2014, as needs to consider his future and whether he runs for a third term as president. He came to office in 2001 at the age of 29, and amended the 2006 constitution in 2011, eliminating the need for a second round so as to facilitate his victory in the presidential polls. These amendments were condemned by opposition politicians, but supported by the pro-Kabila coalition in the national assembly, and swiftly approved by Kabila-appointees in the Supreme Court. However, it does not prove so easy for the president to repeat the same trick ahead of elections in 2016, and he faces a popular backlash that, in some areas, manifests itself as armed rebellion.⁶⁵

Plausible alternative: Rwanda and Uganda sponsor another proxy in eastern DR Congo on the pretext of maintaining a buffer zone. The conflict continues to simmer despite the UN intervention brigade and reinforcements from SADC members. Kabila calculates that Rwanda could provide him with a necessary 'other' against which to maintain a sense of nationhood and resist calls for regional autonomy, while forging alliances with national parties in support of a further constitutional amendment. But, with a poorly disciplined army and limited resources for political patronage, he seeks instead to engage international support via renegotiating mining contracts and making promises to investors in Katanga and their shadowy networks.

Wildcard: Rwanda finds cause to formally intervene in DR Congo to pursue Hutu génocidaires and secure its border. This pits well-trained and disciplined Rwandan troops against ineffective Congolese soldiers and threatens Kabila's rule.

Republic of the Congo

Congo has a relatively small population, estimated at 4.2 million in 2012, with over 60 different languages spoken. It is highly urbanised with most of the population residing in the capital, Brazzaville; the major port, Pointe Noire; or in towns along the railway line that links the two. The petroleum sector dominates the economy. However, international investment is stagnant, and Congo was ranked 181 of 185 countries in the World Bank's *Doing Business 2013* report.⁶⁶

Origins of insecurity

The country is heavily divided along ethnic lines. The Kongo comprises over half of the population, and are concentrated in the south and the capital; the Sangha and the Batéké both come from the north and make up 20% and 17% respectively; and the MBochi come from the centre of the country, and comprise around 12%. It is the smallest ethnic group, the MBochi, which holds the majority of government posts, including the presidency. This arithmetic underlines the reluctance of President Denis Sassou-Nguesso to pursue democratic governance and explains his careful courting of international allies, particularly France and Angola. Attempts to act as a regional peace-broker have enabled Brazzaville to retain such high-profile friends, but the implication of the Sassou-Nguesso family in a major corruption case has recently undermined its reputation.⁶⁷

Recent history and major protagonists

Congo has the third highest democratic deficit in sub-Saharan Africa.⁶⁸ Its president, Sassou-Nguesso, leader of the Parti Congolais du Travail (PCT), also served as president from 1979-92, establishing a Marxist-Leninist single-party state. At the end of the Cold War, he was forced to establish multi-party politics, and came third in the first elections in 1992. After a showdown with government forces, he seized power with Angolan support in October 1997, which plunged the country into civil war until December 1999. A post-war settlement was reached in March 2001, leading to a new constitution and fresh elections.⁶⁹ Sassou-Nguesso won both the 2002 and 2009 polls in controversial circumstances, with the main opposition parties boycotting the elections or barred from standing.⁷⁰

The majority of opposition politicians have subsequently been co-opted and now compete for a share of Sassou-Nguesso's patronage, rather than challenging him for political power.⁷¹ Given the concentration of power in the executive and the elaborate patronage networks coordinated by Sassou-Nguesso, the most significant risk of conflict would be his sudden departure from power. Under the constitution, the current seven-year term is due to be the president's last, though he has indicated that it could be extended. A constitutional age limit of 70 for candidates is another stumbling block. In light of such obstacles, his son, Denis Christel Sassou-Nguesso, appears to be being groomed to succeed him as president. The younger Sassou-Nguesso, who is approaching 40, won a seat in the July 2012 legislative election and served as Deputy Director-General of the national petroleum company, Société nationale des pétroles du Congo (SNPC).

The government is currently focussed on access to the deep-water port at Pointe Noire in the southeast of the country. This is already the most developed port in the region, far more viable than either Matadi in neighbouring DR Congo, or Cabinda, which the Angolans continually threaten to develop. Plans are currently under way to build a new bridge across the Congo River, which would provide a huge boost to trade via Pointe Noire. The three options are a \$500 million bridge at Lutembele, downstream of Kinshasa; a \$1 billion bridge at Kintambo, with a railway to Kinshasa; or a \$1.5 billion bridge at Maluku/Trechot, requiring new rail links. It is apparently the most expensive option that is preferred by Congo and DR Congo. However, this risks destabilising relations with Angola, the regional hegemon, which brought Sassou-Nguesso to power.

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Scenarios for 2014

Baseline: Sassou-Nguesso amends the constitution ahead of elections in 2016 in order to enable another seven-year term and allow sufficient time to groom his son for succession. This requires his undivided attention and necessitates the leveraging of significant state resources in order to co-opt opponents and minimise popular descent.

Plausible alternative: The incumbent president is unable to overcome popular and political obstacles to secure the possibility of another term. He instead appoints his son as a minister during 2014, sending a signal that the younger generation will be given the opportunity to run in 2016. This requires the regime to amend the constitution in order to place presidential and vice-presidential running mates on the ticket. This allows a high-ranking Kongo politician to run alongside the younger Sassou-Nguesso, thus making an electoral victory plausible.

Wildcards:

- (1) Deteriorating relations with Angola, particularly over access to Pointe Noire, spur the regime in Luanda to sponsor a candidate who has the support of the Kongo majority and is thus able to seize power by democratic means in 2016. This marks an end to the Sassou-Nguesso dynasty.
- (2) Urban Congolese protest at the president's attempts to amend the constitution and manipulate his succession. Although disorganised, marches increase in frequency, and following state repression, result in widespread rioting. The regime's traditional ally France calculates that the Sassou-Nguesso dynasty has come to an end and withdraws its support.

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