

UGANDA AND RWANDA: FRIENDS OR ENEMIES?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 1999, only a month after the signing of the Lusaka ceasefire agreement, a new dynamic of conflict emerged within the anti-Kabila alliance and further complicated Africa's seven-nation war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). A major battle took place between the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), resulting in the death of over six hundred troops and civilians.

The underlying cause of the conflict that erupted was persistent and serious differences over the objectives and strategies of the war in the DRC. Uganda's strategy has been to mobilise the Congolese people to fight Kabila and empower them to develop an alternative leadership. Rwanda, on the other hand, is under more pressure to overthrow Kabila, who is arming its enemy. Sceptical of the capacity of the Congolese to develop an immediate solution for their country, the Rwandans' first priority has been to establish a secure border with the DRC.

The immediate crisis was managed, with the leaders of both countries agreeing on a ceasefire, removing their commanders from Kisangani, reaffirming their commitment to the Lusaka agreement, and finding a compromise proposal to enable their two proxies – the competing factions of the Rally for the Congolese Democracy (RCD) – to sign that agreement.

Eight months after the Kisangani clashes, however, the relationship between the two countries has not much improved. Communication is at a minimum between Presidents Museveni and Kagame. Tension is building up again in Kisangani. Despite the commitment to unite the RCD factions, the Congolese rebels remain more divided than ever.

Much remains to be done to heal the rift and end suspicions created by the failure to find a common approach to the DRC war. If not properly managed, the relationship could significantly complicate attempts to resolve the conflicts in the region. Moreover, any further conflict between Uganda and Rwanda themselves threatens to be extremely bloody, not least because the armies know each other's strengths and weaknesses so well. If early efforts are not made to ease tensions, Africa could see another war between "brothers", as happened between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The Lusaka Agreement may well be the only unifying factor between the Rwandan and Ugandan leaderships at this point. The commitment of both countries to the new ceasefire in the DRC which came into effect on 14 April 2000, and their call for rapid deployment of the UN peacekeeping force, are signs that they are both aware that they cannot win the

war unilaterally with an alliance that remains so fragile.

If Lusaka is implemented, the military competition may well be transformed into a political struggle between Presidents Museveni and Kagame to determine the political approach that should prevail in the ultimate resolution of the DRC problem. But political differences, while they carry their risks, are much to be preferred to trials of military strength.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To Uganda and Rwanda

1. Implement the recommendations of the UPDF/RPA Joint Inquiry concerning the demilitarisation of Kisangani, and seek to reach agreement once and for all on a definitive version of the Kisangani clashes.
2. Conduct a summit between Presidents Museveni and Kagame to establish a new basis for a strong bilateral relationship, and understandings about dealings with third parties.
3. Institutionalise better channels of communication between political leaders, organisations and institutions in both countries, and technical co-operation between ministries.

To the United Nations Security Council

4. Support the renewed commitment to a ceasefire by the parties to the DRC conflict, and the call of regional leaders to implement the Lusaka Agreement, by deploying immediately the 500 observers and 5,500 troops under the second phase of the UN Mission in the DRC.
5. Support the implementation of all aspects of the Lusaka Agreement, including the disarmament of militias and armed groups, and the withdrawal of foreign forces according to the timetable established in that Agreement.

Nairobi/ Brussels, 4 May 2000

MAPS



UGANDA AND RWANDA: FRIENDS OR ENEMIES?

I. INTRODUCTION

Fighting between the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) erupted on 7 August 1999 and again on 14 August in Kisangani, the third largest city in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), located in rebel-held territory. After three days of heavy fighting that caused 600 casualties and forced the population to flee the city, on 17 August Rwanda and Uganda agreed on a temporary ceasefire and on the necessity to send a joint Commission of Inquiry to investigate the responsibilities for the clashes. Although the relationship between Rwanda and Uganda had grown increasingly strained during the first year of the DRC war, this violent and open confrontation came as a surprise. Uganda and Rwanda were considered as strong allies since the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took over in Rwanda after the genocide in 1994, and were the instigators of the anti-Mobutu war in 1996 and of the anti-Kabila war in 1998. This report examines the causes of tension between the former allies and their implications for the Lusaka peace process, and assesses the chances for improving the relationship.

II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A. Museveni's Bush War (1981- 86)

The relationship between the Rwandan Patriotic Army and the Ugandan People's Defence Forces dates back to the early 1980s. At that time, Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA), now the UPDF, led the guerrilla war that brought him to power¹. This resistance movement included Rwandan Tutsis who had fled to Uganda as refugees in 1959 in response to the Hutu revolution that led to the massacre of the Tutsi minority.

In an effort to escape persecution from the Ugandan government forces under Milton Obote, thousands of Rwandan youth, following the example of (the now Rwandan President) Paul Kagame and former RPF leader Fred Rwigyema, joined Museveni's NRA between 1981 and 1986. The NRA provided them with an opportunity to acquire military skills and experience that would eventually enable them to return home. It also introduced Rwandans to Ugandan power politics.

¹ The National Resistance Army (NRA) was created as part of Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM), which was the rebel movement that overthrew the Obote regime in 1986. When Museveni established legitimate leadership of Uganda, he transformed the National Resistance Army into the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

Although some had served in the highly unpopular army of Idi Amin until 1979, the Rwandans had not before been directly involved in Ugandan politics. Ugandans were unsympathetic to the inclusion of a people considered to be refugees and outsiders. Their rejection was based on nationalism bordering on xenophobia.

B. Rwandans Enter Ugandan Politics

After capturing power in 1986, President Yoweri Museveni appointed Rwandan senior military officers to key positions in the Ugandan army. Fred Rwigyema was awarded the rank of Major General, at a ceremony ironically attended by late President Juvenal Habyarimana of Rwanda², and was later appointed Deputy Minister of Defence. Paul Kagame was promoted to Major and appointed as director of military intelligence. By appointing Rwandans to senior positions in security, Museveni prompted criticism from some Ugandan members of the National Resistance Army (NRA). They disapproved of the fact that Museveni had placed the security of the country in the hands of those still perceived to be foreigners. This political pressure finally forced Museveni to drop Rwigyema as Deputy Minister for Defence, and to send Paul Kagame out of the country in 1990 to attend a US government sponsored military strategy training course at Fort Leavenworth Academy.

The dismissal of senior Rwandan military officers from positions of power alarmed the Rwandan soldiers who remained in the Ugandan army. Some radical Rwandan officers who interpreted this move as a betrayal began planning a return to Rwanda through the use of force, and organised secret strategy meetings in both Kampala and Nairobi.

On 1 October 1990, news broke out that elements of the Ugandan army had attacked Rwanda while Museveni was attending a UN conference in the US. He later claimed that this attack took him by surprise, but it is largely assumed that he knew about the plan. After Museveni took over power in 1986, he had tried to establish a dialogue with Rwanda's President Habyarimana concerning the repatriation of the Rwandan refugees, which specifically centred on the presence of Rwandan fighters in the NRA. The talks did not result in a concrete agreement, as was demonstrated by Habyarimana statement that the refugees should be given citizenship in their countries of exile (Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania) since there was no Rwandan land available to them for return to due to demographic pressures.

The launching of the RPA war was the beginning of an era that would redefine the relationship between Uganda and Rwanda and shape power relations in the Great Lakes region.

C. Allegiances and Competition among Individual Rwandan and Ugandan Army Officers

During the five years of fighting in the bush with the NRA, Ugandan and Rwandan officers formed key alliances that continue to shape relationships between the two armies and their leaders. Major General Salim Saleh, President Yoweri Museveni's brother, developed a close friendship with the first Commander of the Rwandan Patriotic Army, the late Fred Rwigyema. Other senior Ugandan army officers such as Major General Mugisha Muntu, the former Army Commander, and Colonel Kiiza

² Who would become his enemy on the battlefield in 1990.

Besigye, Adviser to the Minister of State for Defence, formed close relationships with Paul Kagame. Unfortunately, General Salim Saleh was not able to develop the same type of friendship with Kagame as Rwigyema's successor. The two officers in fact developed personality clashes resulting from different approaches to leadership. Paul Kagame tends to be disciplined and reserved while Salim Saleh is more outspoken and business-oriented. There are also said to be some tensions around the fact that Salim Saleh was senior to Paul Kagame in the National Resistance Army (NRA). Sources in the Ugandan army talk of a grudge between the two men that can be traced back to a disciplinary action during the Ugandan bush taken against Salim Saleh when Kagame was in charge of a disciplinary committee for NRA.

The competition between these two influential leaders has greatly affected the way that both armies relate today. Since the beginning of the second DRC war on 2 August 1998, there has not been much contact between them. It is likely that better communication between them would have helped to contain the tension that erupted into violence between the two armies in the DRC in August 1999.

III. RWANDANS BECOME INDEPENDENT OF UGANDA

A. Rwandan Patriotic Front's War (1990-1994)³

The Rwandan Patriotic Army's war against the former Rwandan government received strong material, diplomatic and moral support from the armed forces and politicians in Uganda. When the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) attacked Rwanda in 1990, they carried weapons from Ugandan army barracks, where a majority of them had been serving.

During the first months of the war, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) lost key leaders including Major General Fred Rwigyema and Majors Bayingana and Bunyenyezi. Uganda gave refuge to the remaining fighters while they regrouped and reorganised under the command of Major Paul Kagame, who had to cut short his military course in the United States to return to Uganda.

Ugandan support of the RPF can be explained by two factors. Some Ugandans genuinely supported the RPF cause, especially the right to return home that they had been denied by the Habyarimana regime, and felt indebted to Rwandan fighters for their role in overthrowing the Obote and Okello regimes. However, other Ugandan military officers and politicians also had a personal interest in protecting their jobs, which they believed the Rwandans would compete for.

The RPF declared itself grateful for support that Uganda gave, but was aware of the diverse motives for Uganda's approach. What mattered at the time was that Ugandan support enabled the movement to fight a successful war against the then Kigali regime, take power and return home.

B. Rwandan Patriotic Front in Power After 1994

In July 1994, when the RPF took over power in Rwanda, Ugandans took advantage of the victory and rushed to Kigali to sign business deals. Civil servants and casual

³ The Rwandan Patriotic Army is the military arm of the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

labourers brought their skills for sale. As a result, Rwanda has quickly replaced Kenya as Uganda's first trading partner. Uganda also offers advice to Rwanda on economic reform, investment and taxation.

After the war, Rwanda relied on Uganda for basic commodities (salt, sugar and soap) and foodstuffs (milk, bananas and beans). However, as Rwanda's economy grows and becomes self-sufficient, goods and services from Uganda are becoming less necessary. Most of Rwanda's imports and exports continue to pass through Uganda to and from the port of Mombasa, but the Rwandan government has been trying to diversify trade routes and has reached an agreement with the Tanzania government to use the Dar Es Salaam port and with the Burundi government to use the Bujumbura port on Lake Tanganyika. In November 1999, following the Kisangani clash in August 1999, import bans were placed on foodstuffs from Uganda.⁴

Since 1994, both countries have also co-operated on security matters. For example, Uganda has offered training to Rwandan police and army officers. Rwanda intervened militarily in support of the government in Uganda after a combination of Hutu rebels and Ugandan rebels overran Kisoro town on Uganda's southwestern border in November 1996. Both armies also joined efforts to hunt down Hutu rebels responsible for the killing of western tourists in Bwindi National Park in early 1999.

President Yoweri Museveni and Vice-President Paul Kagame developed a good personal relationship, which they relied upon to conduct state business after 1994 with important issues between the two countries being left to the two of them to resolve: ministers appointed to address such issues have rarely met. So although this relationship has been beneficial, it has also inhibited the development of a sustainable institutional relationship between the two countries.

C. War Against Mobutu (1996-1997) and Post-Victory Management

Rwanda was put in the spotlight when it led the regional effort to topple late President Mobutu in 1996. The war was motivated by the security challenge posed by thousands of ex-FAR⁵ and Interahamwe based in refugee camps in eastern DRC. On the one hand, Rwanda's military success in Congo attracted the envy of Ugandan military officers. They were impressed by the capacity of the Rwandan army to lead a regional military campaign that was composed of various African forces from Angola, Uganda, Burundi, Zimbabwe, and Eritrea. Although Uganda was largely credited for the successful rebellion against Mobutu, Rwanda invested far more in human and material terms. This fact was brought to light in the revealing Washington Post interview with Vice-President Kagame in July 1997,⁶ which outlined the three objectives of the Alliance of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL) rebellion: dismantle the refugee camps in Eastern Zaire, destroy the structure of the Hutu army and militias based in or around the camps, and topple Mobutu. "I don't think Congolese rebels were fully prepared to carry it out alone. We did continue to take some role because we thought doing it

⁴ "Uganda and Rwanda fail to agree on milk and fish trade", PanAfrican News Agency, 3 December 1999.

⁵ Forces Armées Rwandaises.

⁶ John Pomfret, "Rwanda acknowledges supplying arms, troops, plans to Congo rebellion", *Washington Post*, 9 July 1997.

halfway would be very dangerous", Kagame said.

On the other hand, Ugandans blamed the Rwandans for the mistakes they made during the war against Mobutu and for the mismanagement of the victory subsequent to his downfall, in part to deflate Rwanda's success. They accuse the Rwandans of pushing for a quick victory instead of involving and empowering all Congolese political forces in the anti-Mobutu war. The Museveni government had been organising against Mobutu even before the RPA took power in 1994, because Mobutu was supporting Ugandan groups linked to Idi Amin and hostile to the regime. At the time "Ugandans were grooming a fairly well-regarded Zairian called Kiasu Ngandu to be the Museveni of Congo"⁷. When the anti-Mobutu rebellion broke out in October 1996, Kiasu became part of the AFDL, but died a few weeks after the beginning of the war. Col. James Kabarebe says that he was killed "in an ambush by Maï Maï militiamen between Kanyabayunga and Rubero, which was a very dangerous stretch of the road. Thus began the crisis in Uganda-Rwanda relations because many Ugandan officers held the RPA responsible for his death".⁸ After the fall of Kisangani, President Museveni says that he advised Kabila, who was then the leader of the AFDL, to hold a conference involving all political forces opposed to Mobutu, but that Kabila ignored his advice and proceeded to capture Kinshasa, supported by the RPA.⁹ After Kabila took over power, the Ugandans say that they again tried to advise Kabila to undertake political reforms and to adopt more transparent decision-making processes, but that the Rwandans prevented them from seeing him.

After Kabila took power in May 1997, the regional leaders gave the Rwandan Patriotic Army the task of re-organising the Congolese national army, since Kabila, according to Julius Nyerere, was a "regional project". The entire Mobutu army had fled to exile and those who remained in place were worn-down AFDL troops, including Katangan gendarmes, troops from Kasai, Banyamulenge soldiers and kadogos¹⁰. Kabila first appointed Masasu Nnendaka, one of the AFDL vice-presidents, as his Chief of Staff and assigned him to integrate the different entities into a single national force and to create a new national army of 600,000 men (Forces Armées Congolaises). However, that project was complicated by the different backgrounds of the forces he had managed to mobilise and by the fact that the Rwandan troops helping him to retain power were very much resented by the Congolese population. In September 1997, with tension growing, Rwanda had withdrawn the thousands of its troops in Kinshasa back to Kigali. Only 200 soldiers were left in the City."¹¹ In November 1997, Kabila purged Masasu and appointed Rwandan officer, Colonel James Kabarebe, a move that provoked anti-Rwandan hostility among many Congolese. RPA officers say that "Kabila asked Kagame to "lend" him Col. Kabarebe to help him reorganise the army. ... Kagame at first refused but relented later".¹²

⁷ Charles Onyango-Obbo, "RPA brings Kabila in; UPDF try kicking him out", *The Monitor*, 14 April 2000.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Background to the situation in the Great Lakes region*. A document issued by President Yoweri Museveni in August 1998 at the heads of state summit in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

¹⁰ The "kadogos" are young soldiers, mostly street kids, who fought in the 1996-97 war against Mobutu.

¹¹ Charles Onyango-Obbo, "RPA brings Kabila in; UPDF try kicking him out", *The Monitor*, 14 April 2000.

¹² Ibid.

At the same period, Kabila let it be known that he intended to free Congo from foreign influences and appointed his son Joseph Kabila and his brother-in-law Célestin Kifwa to key positions in the army. The new president of the DRC started to behave in an autocratic and untransparent manner. Furthermore, despite his allies' pressure to deal with the security concerns of Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, he was obviously not concerned by the intensification of attacks of the ex-FAR, Mai Mai, the Forces for the Defence of Democracy of Burundi (FDD), and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Eastern DRC in February 1998. In May-June 1998, he even started to organise those groups against Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

Angola was the first to propose to get rid of Kabila, but "Rwanda and Uganda hesitated"¹³. As of February 1998, the relationship between Kabila and his former regional sponsors started to deteriorate seriously for three major reasons: Kabila's quest for regional leadership; his tolerance of rebel groups aiming at destabilising the governments and its neighbours; and, his unwillingness to co-operate on economic projects. It reached a point where both Kabila and his former sponsors started to prepare for possible conflict.

In July 1998, as a result of that tension, the RPA decided to leave the DRC. During the departure of RPA troops, a military uprising was declared in the east of the country on 2 August 1998. The Rally for the Congolese Democracy (RCD) was formed on 1 August, a day before the war broke out, and included a number of former AFDL members appointed ministers by Kabila, some Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC) officers and independent characters like Ernest Wamba dia Wamba and Arthur Zahidi Ngoma. The RCD, officially based on criticism of the AFDL, was more a coalition of political forces than a cohesive rebel movement. But the day the last contingent of the RPA left, Kabila forces attacked the Banyamulenge recruits left in Kinshasa and started inciting the Congolese to kill Tutsis. A few days later, RPA troops with an Ugandan artillery unit of 31 soldiers launched an armed offensive in Kitona, with the objective of saving those Banyamulenge soldiers and overthrowing Kabila. But the advance on Kinshasa failed, with the intervention of Zimbabwe and Angola forcing the RPA troops to withdraw. The tense ethnic situation could have further degenerated if RPA Tutsi troops had entered Kinshasa.

IV. WAR TO TOPPLE KABILA: FROM ALLIES TO ENEMIES?

Rwandan troops were the first to move into the DRC after the breakout of war on 2 August 1998. Uganda deployed a month later. For the first three months, both armies worked together and carried out joint military operations against Kabila's forces.

A. Initial Deployment of Rwandan and Ugandan Troops in the DRC

1. Rwanda

When the war broke out on 2 August 1998, the RPA backed the mutiny begun by the Forces Armées Congolaises (FAC) in the east of the DRC. Within a few weeks, the towns of Goma, Bukavu and Uvira in the Kivus were captured. With their

¹³ Ibid.

borders secured, Rwandan troops (RPA) and the Congolese (RCD) prepared for major battles. Their first move was the fateful attempt to fly troops to Kitona, in western Congo, to capture the capital, Kinshasa; but within a few days Angolan troops defeated the Rwandan-backed rebels. After that failure, the RCD forces and the RPA captured Kisangani, the second-largest town in the DRC, on 23 August 1998 and established tactical headquarters. The defeat in western DRC forced Rwanda to change its strategy and shift to the south, which led to the capture of Fizi and Baraka in South Kivu, of Kalemie and Moba by the end of 1998, and of Kabalo, Manono, all in Shaba province, in the first few months of 1999.

On the central front, the Rwandans and the Congolese rebels captured Shabunda in South Kivu and the strategic town of Kindu on the river Congo in Maniema in October 1996, which was supposed to be a springboard for attacking rebel positions in the east. The original plan was for UPDF, RPA and RCD rebels to capture Kindu together. But the Ugandans withdrew from the operation at the last minute. The loss of Kindu dramatically diminished Kabila's capacity to launch attacks on areas held by the rebels and their allies in the east. By the time the Lusaka peace agreement was signed on 10 July 1999, fighting had spread to Katanga province and Kasai provinces. The frontline is now near Kabinda in Kasai, next to the diamond-rich town of Mbuji Mayi.

2. Uganda

Ugandan troops (UPDF) first took over Beni, Bunia, Watsa and Isiro in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The capture of Kisangani by the RCD and RPA encouraged the sending of more troops to the DRC and the establishment of headquarters in Kisangani in order to control key installations there. The idea behind the move was for the UPDF to occupy the "liberated zones" while the RPA/RCD forces could advance quickly on the frontline. UPDF then advanced through Banalia, a river 100 miles north of Kisangani, up to Buta. A number of major battles were fought on the northern front in an attempt by Chadian government forces to stop the rebels from advancing into Equateur province. A new Congolese movement emerged during that campaign: the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC), led by Jean Pierre Bemba. After defeating the Chadians, the Ugandan army penetrated the interior of DRC and fought the Angolans at Dulia and Bumba in the Equateur province.

According to President Museveni's address to Parliament on 30 August 1999, a combination of Kabila's brigade of 2,000 troops and Angolan troops attacked the Ugandan army at Lisala and were defeated in February 1999. The continued attacks by Kabila and his allies on Ugandan positions North West of Lisala in Equateur province are said to have prompted the Ugandan army and the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) to advance on Businga, a strategic town on the road junction to Gbadolite and the Central African Republic¹⁴. After Businga, Ugandan troops moved on to capture Gbadolite, a town with a modern airport, capable of using airforce planes. They now control the Congolese border with the Central African Republic and Congo Brazzaville.

¹⁴ ICG Interview with Jean-Pierre Bemba, the leader of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo, 11 October 1999.

B. Build up to the Kisangani Fighting

The fighting that erupted in August 1999 between UPDF and RPA was due to persistent and serious differences over the objectives and strategies of the war in Congo. Ultimately, Congolese rebel factions have been used as proxies in the power struggle between the Ugandan and Rwandan armies.

1. Conflicting Interpretations of the Reasons for Intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Rwanda's intervention in the DRC was based on evidence that Kabila had been identifying and training ex-FAR and Interahamwe since as early as September 1997. When asked about the reason for those contacts, Kabila claimed that he wanted to gather the Interahamwe and ex-FAR in camps to show them to the United Nations (UN), which had been accusing the AFDL of killing refugees during its 1996-1997 campaign. Some of the ex-FAR had indeed escaped the AFDL's campaign. For example, after the capture of Kisangani in March 1996, five thousand ex-FAR avoided the AFDL by going in small groups towards the northeast.

The ex-FAR and Interahamwe have assembled in Masisi and Congo's Virunga's National Park, then infiltrated Rwanda's adjoining *Parc des Volcans*. Before the second DRC war, this group was firmly established in the Ruhengeri and Gisenyi regions bordering DRC and often attacked in rural areas around Gitarama and Kigali. Their target has been Tutsi civilians and anyone challenging their presence. Among the groups who are fighting the RPA, there is also a small number of ex-FAR that have not committed genocide, who joined the RPA after 1994 but later returned to the bush. They operated further south in the mountains along Rwanda's side of Lake Kivu in Nyungu Forest, south of Gitarama. All those groups want to overthrow the RPA regime in Kigali. The ex-FAR have allied with the Burundi rebels, the Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD) and different groups of the Congolese Mai Mai, and some bands of the ex-Forces Armées Zairoises (FAZ)¹⁵ which are scattered across the country and involved in criminal activities.

There are different theories for Uganda's involvement in the DRC war. The official reason is that Uganda deployed troops to DRC purely for vital national security interests, which include fighting anti-Museveni rebel groups based in eastern DRC (the Alliance for Democratic Forces, the West Nile Bank Front and the Lord's Resistance Army¹⁶) and to prevent Sudan from taking advantage of the

¹⁵ The FAZ were the Zairian Army under Mobutu's time.

¹⁶ The ADF emerged around 1992 following a crisis within the Uganda Muslim Council. The Uganda Supreme Court had ruled that Shiekh Luwemba was the legitimate Mufti of Uganda. A group of tabliq youths opposed the decision calling it government interference in Muslim Affairs. The Muslim Youth clashed with the Police and later with the military police. Several youth were arrested and imprisoned for about one year. Upon their release, a split occurred within the leadership of the Tabliq's. A section of the group led by Jamil Mukulu, is believed to have gone underground leading to the formation of ADF. Ugandan Security claim that the ADF together with NALU has been operating from Eastern Congo.

administrative vacuum in Eastern Congo to attack Uganda.

Privately, however, some Ugandan officials contradict this public line. They say the decision to send troops to Congo was primarily to save Rwanda from a potential defeat after the failure to capture Kinshasa in August 1998. A senior Ugandan military official told the International Crisis Group that President Yoweri Museveni had to convince a reluctant high command to approve the deployment of troops in the DRC. "We felt that the Rwandese started the war and it was their duty to go ahead and finish the job, but our President took time and convinced us that we had a stake in what is going on in Congo¹⁷." Furthermore, the Ugandans feel that should the RPA lose power now, a genocide against the Tutsi more extreme than in 1994 would probably unfold and Uganda would have to bear the burden of hosting Tutsi exiles and of having a hostile regime next door. Such events could provide grounds for a number of ethnic groups in Uganda like the Banyarwanda Hutus and Bahima to begin opportunistic movements against the Tutsi hegemony. The guerrilla movement against the Ugandan government is indeed said to collaborate with the ex-FAR. This perception of Rwanda's weakness was reinforced by the fact that Rwanda would need UPDF's heavy and sophisticated equipment to fight against Zimbabwe and Angola.

In contrast, Rwandan senior military officials strongly deny the Ugandan version of the story. They claim that Uganda intervened because of security concerns and a strong belief that Kabila had to be overthrown after betraying both countries. They see the argument that Uganda entered the war to prevent a humiliating defeat as a show of arrogance on the part of some Ugandan senior army officers who deny that Rwanda has the capacity to fight on its own.

It is likely that the common disappointment over Kabila¹⁸ as well as the disagreements over how the war should be conducted in DRC were the real motives for Museveni's decision to intervene. First, the second Congo war would give Uganda a chance to demonstrate its military power in the region. Secondly, it would prove that Museveni's more political approach was the right one.

2. Creation of Rival Rebel Factions and Strategic Differences

Uganda directly accused Rwanda of forming the RCD in August 1998 without involving them. "As far as the rebels of Congo were concerned, right from the beginning, our Rwandese brothers, without consulting us, spearheaded the formation of a political committee headed initially by Professor Zahidi Ngoma. Later we were told by the Rwandese that Ngoma had been replaced by Professor Wamba dia Wamba. All these meetings were taking place in Kigali and Goma and we gave our unconditional support. However, as our army continued to stay in Congo, we noted that the rebels were not mobilising the people. They were not administering the liberated zones. They were not providing social services, and

The second Security concern is the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF). This rebel group has been operating in Aruu district of Congo. Its believed that during the Mobutu period this group was put in charge of the district at times extracting tax from the Congolese. The taxes, according to Ugandan Security would be used to finance its wars against Uganda government.

¹⁷ Interview with a senior Ugandan military official by ICG analysts, 25 September 1999.

¹⁸ See "Africa's Seven Nation War", ICG DRC Report N° 4, 21 May 1999.

they were not repairing the infrastructure, such as roads, and yet they were collecting taxes."¹⁹

Uganda and Rwanda have a deep difference in the way they see the solution to the Congo crisis. Rwanda believes in a military solution to the crisis, which meant that Kabila should have been removed as soon as possible in order to prevent him from strengthening Rwanda's enemy, the ex-FAR and its allied forces. Kagame said very clearly that there is no other option than fighting them: "We shall fight them, that is the solution."²⁰ The Rwandese do not trust any other army to carry this out and for a long time perceived the efforts to negotiate the ceasefire agreement in Lusaka as an obstacle to eradicating their enemies and securing Kivu. They finally signed it under a lot of pressure, and after making sure that the reason for their intervention was legitimised and accepted by all belligerents. Uganda, on the other hand, believes that a political approach must accompany military action in order to ensure a durable solution. According to Museveni, the Congolese need to be liberated and must be empowered to do it themselves. As early as December 1998, some UPDF officers were quoted as saying: "The RCD is nothing on the ground. They were just handpicked by Kigali after their planned coup against Kabila failed. They are just beginning to organise themselves into a serious group."²¹

According to President Museveni, the failure by the RCD to mobilise the population resulted in the creation of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) in December 1998. The creation of the MLC sent a clear message to Rwanda that Uganda had a different strategy and interests in Congo. This marked the beginning of serious tensions between the two allies, and the breaking of the RCD monopoly on rebel politics, especially their claim of military victories. Jean-Pierre Bemba, leader of the MLC, operates in his home province, Equateur. In creating the MLC, Uganda essentially opened a new front, and a parallel war in northwestern Congo. All attempts to unite the MLC and the mainstream RCD have failed so far, because neither Rwanda nor Uganda are willing to lose the military and political influence over the progression of the war afforded to them by their proxies.

In order to avoid a clash with the Rwanda-backed RCD, Bemba deliberately never undermined the other rebel groups. Museveni justifies that attitude: "We wanted him to explain to the population why we were fighting Kabila and he did it. However, when he realised that he had a lot of support, he formed his own organisation. The moment Bemba saw his group's name as a separate organisation in Lusaka, he would not listen to my proposal of joining the RCD. He became even more adamant".²²

3. Signing of the Sirte Agreement

Suspensions were rife, and each side began taking unilateral decisions. President Museveni took the initiative of signing the Sirte agreement with President Kabila on 19 April 1999 in Libya under the auspices of Colonel Kaddafi, and presidents Afeworki of Eritrea and Derby of Chad, without consulting Rwandan authorities. The agreement called for a ceasefire, the deployment of African peacekeepers, the withdrawal of foreign troops and an internal dialogue for Congolese parties.

¹⁹ President Yoweri Museveni's Address to the Ugandan Parliament, 30 August 1999.

²⁰ Paul Kagame in an interview by Michael Wakabi and Levi Ochieng, *The East African*, 5-11 July 1999.

²¹ UPDF officer, quoted by *The Monitor*, 27 December 1998.

²² President Yoweri Museveni's address to the Ugandan Parliament, 30 August 1999.

Uganda's aims in signing the Sirte agreement were to offer an exit strategy to the Chadian troops that were fighting alongside Kabila's forces in the north, and to prevent Kaddafi from giving Kabila massive quantities of military aid. Rwanda, as well as the three rebel groups, rejected the Sirte agreement, despite an invitation by the Libyan leader to Tripoli to sign it.

4. Defection of Wamba

The defection of Wamba dia Wamba from the mainstream RCD in May 1999 to form a rival RCD based in Kisangani also set the stage for the clash between Ugandan and Rwandan troops.

Wamba dia Wamba says his problems with RCD-Goma started when he exposed the corruption in the movement. "Some of the people in the RCD did not want us to address the question of accountability, and wanted to spend movement money like theirs, so in that sense they saw me as a threat", Wamba told ICG. President Yoweri Museveni blamed Rwanda for failing to appease the leadership tensions within the RCD: "Instead of working towards reconciliation of the two groups, Rwanda worked towards having Professor Wamba removed from the leadership of the RCD."²³ Doctor Emile Ilunga was elected in his place.

The Rwandans and the RCD-Goma, on the other hand, claimed that Wamba dia Wamba had established contacts with Kabila without consulting the movement. According to Bizima Karaha, Chief of Security and Intelligence for RCD-Goma, senior Ugandan officials encouraged Wamba dia Wamba's defection by raising his suspicion.²⁴ Wamba dia Wamba changed his RPA bodyguards to some provided by UPDF and left Goma in May 1999 under heavy military escort provided by Uganda.²⁵ He later claimed that RCD-Goma had tried to assassinate him twice, once in May 1999, and once during the Kisangani clash of August 1999.²⁶

The division of the RCD factions, which was supported by Uganda and Rwanda, led to the failure of the rebels to sign the Lusaka peace agreement on 10 July 1999. This embarrassed Presidents Yoweri Museveni and Pasteur Bizimungu in front of the other regional heads of state that had come to sign the agreement. In an attempt to resolve the split, President Chiluba, who was chairing the Lusaka meeting, and the South Africans were proposed a "verification exercise" to resolve leadership claims within the two RCD factions. The verification mission was composed of the South African foreign minister Zuma Nkosazana and the Zambian minister for the Presidency Eric Silwamba. But that mission became very politicised and increased tensions between the two RCDs and their backers, both competing to show the Zambian and South African ministers that they had more followers among the Congolese. On 7 August 1999, the verification team failed to visit Kisangani due to the exchange of gunfire between Congolese rebel factions and their supporters. Brigadier Kazini claims that Ugandan forces fired at the RCD forces in self-defence after they attempted to prevent the Congolese from meeting Wamba. "I deployed troops to protect people who wanted to attend the rally by Prof. Wamba, but then they attacked us, we shot back in self defence. However, RPA Lt Colonel Rutayisire said "Kazini got the issues upside down; they have

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ ICG Interview with Bizima Karaha, the chief of intelligence of the Goma-based RCD, December 1998.

²⁵ ICG Interview with Ernest Wamba dia Wamba, 16 April 1999.

²⁶ "DRC: Bid to kill Wamba, paper claims", IRIN, 26 May 1999.

corruptly tried to use their muscle to create an impression to the verification team that Wamba is in control, and cause trouble. The team may think Wamba is strong, but this is not Wamba's strength, it is UPDF strength."²⁷ The exercise took place on 12 August after the intervention of South Africa, but the verification report was overtaken by events and was never released.

The tension between Uganda and Rwanda escalated into a full-blown warfare in Kisangani from 14–17 August. On 17 August, Kagame and Museveni signed a temporary ceasefire and initially agreed that they would respect the outcome of the investigation. But they then very quickly agreed on a compromise formula, which enabled all the 51 founders of the RCD to sign the Lusaka agreement on 1 September 1999. Bringing all of the founders to sign the Lusaka agreement offered a solution to the dual claims to RCD leadership by Ilunga and Wamba and broke the stalemate in the signing of the Lusaka agreement.

5. Trade Issues

Another tenuous issue between Uganda and Rwanda is the continuous counter-accusations by both armies that they are plundering Congo's resources. Trade was a major strategic objective and prospective source of funding for the rebels and the allies from the beginning of the war but it has instead turned out to be a source of weakness and division in their struggle.

Although the war was hurriedly planned in August 1998, the rebels and the allies agreed on three basic strategies to win support of the local Congolese and throughout Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. The first was that military victory was necessary in order to develop the confidence in the local population. This strategy would create a feeling among the local people that the rebels and the allies have military power. The second strategy was to use politics and plant the seeds for the development of a political system, which would both help to empower the Congolese and help them to perceive the rebels as a legitimate force.

The third strategy was purely economic. The allies had agreed to open the borders to import primarily Kenyan goods into liberated areas in eastern DRC. Kenya was a main target because it was initially hostile to the rebellion. The rebels argued that by allowing Kenyan goods into the rebel-held territory, the Kenyan business people would help to change the Kenyan government's perception about the rebellion. The import of cheap Kenyan goods was also expected to lower market prices in rebel-held territories, which would in turn cause anxiety in areas controlled by Kabila. In the long run, the rebels would be seen to be offering a better deal.

This plan, however, did not turn out as expected. As soon as Wamba established the RCD-Kisangani under UPDF's protection, the RPA started accusing UPDF commanders, including Kazini, of getting involved in business deals and car robberies and of losing its war objectives. The *New Times*, a pro-RPF weekly paper, attacked UPDF for using the war in Congo to enrich themselves: "General Saleh deployed gold diggers. When the war broke out in Congo, they saw it as a windfall, literally a gold mine. You don't need to look far for evidence of this shameful degeneration on the part of the UPDF. All you need to do is look at the line up of UPDF commanders who have been deployed to conduct the war in

²⁷ *The Monitor*, 9 August 1999.

Congo. It is a group of men rotten to the core."²⁸ The Congolese rebel leaders themselves and their allies also got involved in a number of shoddy deals in minerals, timber and other resources. The concern of Rwanda that UPDF officers were looting the DRC was brought to the attention of the highest authorities in Uganda a number of times. Even though Museveni ordered the arrest of a few officers for this crime, it was never given a proper response.

6. Disagreements Between Local Commanders

Tension between local commanders of both armies started at the beginning of April this year, when the UPDF helped the RCD faction loyal to Wamba dia Wamba move to Kisangani in April. On 1 May 1999, some of the rival RCD-Goma top officials, led by its Vice President Jean-Pierre Ondekane and Chief of Intelligence Bizima Karaha, also moved camp to Kisangani to prevent Wamba from establishing a political and military base there. Kisangani was already very tense due to longstanding disagreements between the RPA Commander, Colonel Nyanvumba, and Brigadier Kazini of the UPDF.

Kisangani was divided into two zones and the rival factions moved to occupy different zones of town. They were not supposed to cross into each other's area of jurisdiction except with express permission; only the city centre was open to all. The Ugandan forces established their tactical headquarters in a timber factory that was just two kilometres from the headquarters of the RPA. UPDF had its own administration in Kisangani. A small force of the RCD faction occupied another part of the town. The RCD and RPA had a joint administration for arms, food and logistics.

The different approaches of the two main backers of the administration of the occupied territories are the main reason for the fallout. Brigadier Kazini, the overall commander of Ugandan troops, put in place procedures for running the city. Hours were imposed and Ugandan troops were ordered to arrest any soldier not respecting the curfew, including RCD rebels and RPA troops. There was great emphasis placed on presenting Ugandan troops as orderly and disciplined, and as true liberators, and on discrediting the RPA and the Congolese rebels for their lack of discipline and their "imperialist attitude". Both RCD-Goma rebels and RPA troops were angered by the UPDF attitude, which they considered to be arrogant. However, Colonel Nyanvumba of the RPA played down the differences in June. "I personally try to be in touch with commander Kazini as much as possible to avoid any problems. What has happened is nothing to worry about."²⁹

Another source of conflict was the management of Bangoka, the main airport in Kisangani. Initially, Rwandan and Ugandan armed forces jointly controlled the airport, which is an essential supply route; however, Rwandan troops had control of a second airport (Sim Sim) outside Kisangani. Brigadier Kazini decided then to take total control of Bangoka. Both sides deployed more troops to protect their control of Bangoka airport. Before the fighting in August, Major Gervus Mugenyi of UPDF confiscated the keys of the terminal buildings and the control tower from civilian staff, a move that was interpreted by Rwandan troops as hostile. The

²⁸ *New Times*, 12-18 October 1998.

²⁹ "Rwandans have no intention of fighting the UPDF", interview with Patrick Nyanvumba, Levi Ochieng, *The East African*, 14-20 June 1999.

incident is cited in the joint inquiry report commissioned by both forces.³⁰

Both sides used FM radio stations in their camps to broadcast hostile messages discrediting each other. Radio Television Nationale Congolaise, under RCD-Goma's control, accused UPDF of "smuggling, promoting ethnic hatred and splitting the RCD."³¹ Brigadier James Kazini threatened to arrest Jean-Pierre Ondekane, overall commander of the RCD-Goma faction.

In a letter dated 4 June 1999, he wrote: "You started the war on the wrong political platform. The war program did not have any meaningful political substance emphasising genuine Congolese national interests and was lacking a clear political programme and a clear organisational line. I am now warning you forthwith to cease provoking us. If you continue I will attack and arrest you any time from today."³² On the night of 4 June 1999, the UPDF deployed tanks on to the streets of Kisangani. The threat to attack the commander of RCD-Goma was taken seriously by the Rwandan forces in Kisangani. The following morning, the Governor, RCD-Goma commanders and a group of residents condemned the UPDF's action. UPDF commanders later explained that they were just relocating tanks from one area of town to another.³³

In reply to Kazini's letter, Jean-Pierre Ondekane described Radio Liberty, based in UPDF's headquarters, as "a system of aggression against the Congolese and a machinery to promote Wamba".³⁴ "Brigadier Kazini has been involved in disarming our soldiers without consulting us, he has been involved in the smuggling of timber, gold, diamonds and other commodities without paying taxes". Kazini has denied Ondekane's accusations: "Look around and see if there is anything to steal here."³⁵

The tensions increased dramatically over the decision enacted by a decree signed by James Kazini in early July 1999 to redraw the administrative boundaries of the Oriental province and to create a new one called Kibali-Ituri. The creation of this province comprising gold-mining areas like Kilomoto, as well as export-import measures aimed at redirecting tax income flows, was understood by the Rwandan leadership as an attempt to gain control over the region's economic assets.

C. Who Fired the First Shot?

The first incident between UPDF and RPA happened on 7 August 1999. Heavy fighting between Ugandan and Rwandan troops started in the evening of 14 August 1999 and stopped after three days of employing heavy mortars, automatic rifles and artillery. Each side accused the other of starting the fighting, which was aimed at the control of key installations such as the airport, the central bank and the major road junctions.

³⁰ See Appendix, report of the UPDF/RPA Joint Inquiry into Incidents between 6th and 17th August 1999, Kisangani, DRC..

³¹ "DRC: Rival radio stations trade accusations", IRIN, 7 June 1999.

³² Letter written by Brigadier Kazini to Commander Jean-Pierre Ondekane of the RCD-Goma, 4 June 1999.

³³ "Uncertainty, fear, confusion: Congo's predicament mirrored in Kisangani" by Levi Ochieng, *The East African*, 14-20 June 1999.

³⁴ "DRC: Rival radio stations trade accusations", IRIN, 7 June 1999.

³⁵ "Uncertainty, fear, confusion Congo's predicament mirrored in Kisangani" by Levi Ochieng, *The East African*, June 14-20 1999.

The question of who fired the first shot in Kisangani still divides both armies of Uganda and Rwanda. The findings of the Joint Inquiry headed by the heads of both armies came out in October 1999³⁶. The report largely blamed UPDF for initiating the fighting on 7 August. The report concludes that "the confrontational and antagonistic stance of Brigadier Kazini towards the RCD-Goma faction and the issuance of arrest orders for Commander Ondekane and all his soldiers, and the response of the governor by deploying military police to break Wamba's rally caused the confrontation between the UPDF and RCD-Goma faction on 7 August. The resultant heavy deployments of UPDF in the city centre, digging of trenches and deployment of heavy support weapons was seen as provocative to RPA, which accordingly made counter deployments. There was a lack of communication on the part of UPDF command regarding their changes of deployments at the airport and this was to be provocative". Regarding the fighting on 14 August, "the committee could not establish who shot first at the other at the airport since the way deployments had been designed were bound to result into a shoot-out" but says that "there is evidence that before the fight, there was battle preparation on either side, including reinforcement of manpower and equipment". Col. James Kabarebe of the RPA was sent to Kisangani between the incidents on 7 and 14 August for those preparations, where he was insulted by UPDF officers who called him "small corporal".

Rwanda accepted the report and called it "a fair assessment of the Kisangani incidents". Uganda, however, rejected it on the grounds that the investigation failed to interview key witnesses (such as Wamba) and failed to point out that the RPA had shot at a plane carrying UPDF reinforcements before the fighting on 14 August. According to President Museveni's explanation, strong support for Wamba at a rally he addressed on 7 August in the presence of the Zambian verification team had angered the Rwandan army, and was the main reason for the deployment of more Rwandan troops in Kisangani. "The show of strength and support for Wamba apparently angered the Rwandese, who subsequently started bringing troop reinforcements into Kisangani. I received information from Brigadier Kazini on the need to bring into Kisangani troop reinforcements, in light of what the RPA was doing. I allowed Brigadier Kazini to do so, but in the meantime I sent Colonel Kale Kaihura to Rwanda to seek explanations on the activities of the RPA troops in Kisangani, and on the general arrogance of the Rwandese in Congo, behaving as if they had power to veto any move they did not like, instead of looking for compromises."³⁷

D. Missed Opportunities to Avoid the Kisangani Fighting

1. Establishment of a Joint Command

There were various attempts to form a joint command to co-ordinate operations between the two armies in Congo, but the idea never took off, largely because each side preferred to work separately.

According to Colonel Nyanvumba, "The best way to manage our operations would be to have a joint command, but this issue never took off. I purposely came here

³⁶ See Appendix: Report of the UPDF/RPA Joint Inquiry into the Incidents between 6th and 17th August 1999 in Kisangani, DRC.

³⁷ Address by President Yoweri Museveni to the Ugandan Parliament, 30 August 1999.

to be part of that joint command. It was supposed to be composed of the UPDF, the RPA, and the Congolese rebel forces. Whatever it involved was not clear but co-ordination centres were set up. Nothing has been done".³⁸

Each side blames the other for inhibiting the establishment of a joint command. A senior Ugandan military official told the International Crisis Group that Uganda is reluctant to support the idea of a joint command until the two allies harmonise their objectives and strategies on the war.³⁹

2. Dividing Areas of Operation into Sectors

The areas under the control of both Uganda and Rwanda were supposed to have been divided into clearly defined sectors. Instead, each country deployed the way they wanted. Uganda deployed across the border from Beni northwards, and Rwanda deployed from Goma southwards. The only area where there was troop mix was Kisangani, creating confusion in the chain of command.

As Museveni explains it: "In the whole of Congo it was only in Kisangani that our forces were together. In the Rwandese sectors, we attached our small but crucial units to their forces - such as the tanks and anti-aircraft systems we had in Goma. Whenever we wanted to contact those forces we would do so through the Rwandese. However, when I told them to attach their forces to our army in Kisangani, they were reluctant. All these points which we have now agreed upon should have been agreed upon a year ago when we went into Congo. With such an arrangement it would not have been easy to cause confusion".⁴⁰

3. Recommendations of the Joint Inquiry

The report from the Joint Inquiry issued the following recommendations: "1) Change of top command in Kisangani of both UPDF and RPA should go along with the relocation of the troops involved in the fight; 2) Implementation of the proposed Joint Command and sectorisation of operation areas; 3) All armed factions and political Headquarters of the different factions could be shifted from Kisangani; the factions should be located in different towns; 4) Harmonisation of Political and Military strategy by the allies. The different rebel factions should be unified to avoid any other problems; 5) Regular meetings between allied commanders both at the technical and strategic level; 6) A formal Status of Forces agreement should be worked out for the Joint Operations of the two allied forces in Congo; 7) Commanders should not assume the role of, nor interfere in administrative and commercial matters. These should strictly be left to the civil local authorities".⁴¹

The recommendations aimed at demilitarising the city and at re-establishing communication between the top commanders, but so far only three out of seven have been implemented: the change in top command in Kisangani; the shift of RCD factions; and the scheduling of regular meetings between commanders.

³⁸ Interview with Colonel Patrick Nyanvumba, by Levi Ochieng, *The East African*, 14-20 June 1999.

³⁹ ICG interview with a senior Ugandan military officer, 23 November 1999.

⁴⁰ President Yoweri Museveni's address to the Ugandan Parliament, 30 August 1999.

⁴¹ See Appendix: Report of the UPDF/RPA Joint Inquiry, section VIII.

VI. CRISIS MANAGEMENT

A. Reaction of the Political Establishment in Uganda

1. Parliament challenges the Presidency

The Ugandan public and Parliament reacted angrily to the perceived defeat of UPDF forces in Kisangani, seriously threatening Museveni's political career and credibility. The Ugandan Parliament's reaction was very critical of both President Museveni and the Rwandan government. "In 1990, the RPA stole our guns. Has it occurred to the government that the RPA could be using the same guns to kill our soldiers in Congo? What steps are being taken to recover those guns?", a Member of Parliament asked. "The fighting in Kisangani between our troops and the Rwandese vindicates me and my colleagues who have been arguing that this fighting is not about liberating Congolese, but shooting them".⁴²

Museveni realised that the only way to calm his domestic critics was to verbally attack the RPA. In his address to parliament, he explained how the situation arose: "Therefore, one of my explanations is that our RPA brothers have never had time to develop sufficiently to know how to do some of the things. They think that taking shortcuts here and there will get them to their aim. Another explanation I have been hearing is that the RPA wanted to dominate Congo but that we are stopping them. For our part, we are interested in empowering the Congolese and it seems the Rwandese do not like it. However, even if we were obstructing whatever plans they had on Congo, how do they think that they could attack us and get away with it? It is very short sighted indeed. Another explanation which could make some little bit of sense could be that they wanted to kill Wamba."⁴³

The Ugandan leadership had in the past indicated a willingness to withdraw its troops from the Democratic Republic of Congo. An opinion poll carried out by *The New Vision* showed that 81 per cent of the Ugandans wanted UPDF to pull out of the DRC.⁴⁴ The withdrawal was echoed in President Yoweri Museveni's address to Parliament: "In fact, earlier on when I saw that reluctance on how to handle Kisangani in December 1998, I had met President Bizimungu in Kabale. I said to him 'Mr President, you seem to have some problems on how to manage Kisangani, so I propose that I withdraw all our forces from Congo and you handle the situation yourselves, if you are able to do so.' He said, 'No, you cannot withdraw because that will cause many other problems'." The increased attacks by the Ugandan rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces in western Uganda could have served as a reason for the withdrawal of the Ugandan troops from the DRC in order to combat the rebel threat at home.⁴⁵

Museveni's declaration was intended to show the public that the government had options and was in control of the situation. It is highly unlikely that Uganda can withdraw its troops given the extent of its interests in the DRC, which are not solely linked to Rwanda's. Museveni cannot withdraw unilaterally until at least

⁴² ICG interview with Aggrey Awori, an opposition member of Parliament in Uganda, 18 August 1999.

⁴³ President Yoweri Museveni's address to the Ugandan Parliament, 30 August 1999.

⁴⁴ "Uganda: Majority of Kampala wants army out of DRC", IRIN, 10 September 1999.

⁴⁵ "ADF attacks Bundibugyo town, the second major attack in two days", *The Monitor*, 11 December 1999.

some strategic results are achieved: either Kabila goes, and/or Lusaka is implemented, and/or the Ugandan guerrilla movement is completely eradicated, and/or the Sudanese threat is seriously reduced.

President Museveni's final message to the Parliament on the relationship with Rwanda was moderate: "In spite of what happened in Kisangani, I decided that Uganda should continue to support the legitimate interests of Rwanda, but that it would not allow Rwanda to dominate in the DRC. My strategy regarding Rwanda is now double pronged. On the one hand, we have to be as understanding to them as possible because I think the problem is not theirs alone. It is a problem of the whole of Africa. The Rwanda problem started in 1959, it was not resolved by Africa, therefore a vacuum was created, until these young people came up to their problem in their own way."⁴⁶

2. Frustration of the Ugandan Army

The Ugandan military reacted angrily to the news of the clashes. There was a strong sense of injured pride, as the media declared that the Rwandan army in Kisangani defeated the UPDF and that it lost more than 200 men. Secret meetings were held in Kampala and attended by active and retired officers to chart out a strategy to respond to what they considered "treachery" by their Rwandan allies. Some were of the view that the relationship with Rwanda should be severed. Emotions were heightened by the appearance of senior army officers in full military combat outfits at the burials of soldiers killed in the Kisangani fighting. Major General Salim Saleh, Museveni's brother and former chief of staff, was among the guests at the burials and declared that he was ready to be recalled to the army.

The Uganda People's Defence Forces' top brass also rejected the Joint Inquiry report, on the grounds that it favoured the RPA by not addressing all aspects of the conflict.⁴⁷ The report was written by Major General Jeje Odongo, the UPDF Army Commander and Brigadier General Kayumba Nyamwasa, the RPA Chief of Staff, after investigating the circumstances surrounding the Kisangani fighting.

Uganda blames the Rwandan Patriotic Army for planning the Kisangani fighting in advance. According to Colonel Kahinda Otafiire, President Yoweri Museveni's advisor on security matters who was in Kisangani during the fighting, Rwandan army officers knew that Ugandan troops in Kisangani would be outnumbered: "We never expected any trouble because we considered them our allies, even some of our repeater communication systems were mounted in the Rwandan-controlled sector."⁴⁸ They also claim that Rwanda was treacherous, because they broke a ceasefire ordered by Kagame and Museveni.

Senior Ugandan army officials say that the relationship with Rwanda will never be the same after Kisangani. Rumours are still rife of a hit list of Ugandan officers in the hands of the Rwandan army. Lately, there have been attempts to stir up anti-Rwandan feelings by implicating Rwanda in the death of a senior military official, Major Rueben Ikondere, who was killed by the Mai Mai in Beni, Eastern Congo.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ President Yoweri Museveni's address to the Ugandan Parliament, 30 August 1999.

⁴⁷ Emmy Allio "Bitterness brews over the Jeje-Kayumba report", *The New Vision*, 15 September 1999.

⁴⁸ Colonel Kahinda's interview with Shaka Ssali, *The Voice of America*, 16 August 1999.

⁴⁹ Levi Ochieng "Uganda opens probe into Army Commander's death", *The East African*, 29 November 1999.

To defend his role in the Kisangani conflict, Brigadier James Kazini pointed out that he was working under orders. "I am still the overall commander of the UPDF in Congo. I'm on deployment as an army officer. I take orders from the appointing authorities. I don't go by what other people say. It's not just a matter of saying, okay, so and so is blaming me, therefore I must relinquish my duties. It's a duty I was assigned."⁵⁰

In a face-saving move, and despite UPDF's defeat, President Yoweri Museveni has promoted the officers that were commanders in Kisangani when the fighting happened: Major Noble Mayombo, now Lieutenant Colonel, Lieutenant Rogers Munyatwali to Captain, Wamba dia Wamba's aide, Major Gervus Mugenyi to Lieutenant Colonel. These promotions were aimed at raising UPDF's morale and countering the public perception of a humiliated army.

3. Inflammatory Role of the Media

The media played a key role after the Kisangani fighting between Uganda and Rwanda. Ugandan newspapers, especially the state-controlled *The New Vision*, took sides and castigated the Rwandan leadership. "Hard though it might seem, try and find it in your heart to feel sorry for Rwanda and its people. Sparked off by those moments of madness in Kisangani, they are now viewed as treacherous and unreliable people with whom dealings become as tricky as holding a writhing snake."⁵¹

The independent paper *The Monitor* ran provocative headlines about the Kisangani fighting, questioned the deployment of the Ugandan troops in DRC and called for the immediate withdrawal of the UPDF. *The Monitor* pointed out Ugandan losses in Kisangani: "Hundreds of Ugandans feared dead, Kazini, Otafire, Mayombo under heavy bombardment."⁵²

In Rwanda, the pro-establishment *Rwanda Times* attacked the Ugandan army for starting the fighting. The paper's main target was Brigadier Kazini, whom the paper accused of harbouring hatred against the Rwandese. The *New Times* accused the Ugandan army of looting Congo's wealth instead of fighting Kabila and warned that Rwanda was not going to stand by as its interests were threatened.⁵³

B. Rwanda's Efforts to End Hostilities

Vice-President Kagame visited Kampala twice during the Kisangani fighting to hold talks with President Museveni. During the first meeting on 17 August, Kagame proposed that both he and Museveni call their respective commanders and order them to stop the fighting, instead of first going through the modalities of signing a formal and permanent ceasefire agreement. Museveni agreed and both signed a basic ceasefire framework agreement that immediately led to the end of the fighting.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Levi Ochieng "I've done nothing wrong, I was only following orders", *The East African*, October 25-31 1999.

⁵¹ John Nagenda "Rwanda owes Uganda apology", *The New Vision*, 4 September 1999.

⁵² *The Monitor*, 16 August, 1999.

⁵³ *The New Times*, October 1999 issue.

⁵⁴ See Appendix, Report of the UPDF/RPA Joint Inquiry, for the text of this agreement there annexed.

The following week, Kagame visited Uganda twice to sign another, more detailed agreement with Museveni, including a timeframe for the demilitarisation of Kisangani, a plan to redefine the role of both armies, and the election of a mayor for the town.⁵⁵

Museveni's address to Parliament on 30 August sparked off an angry internal reaction from the Rwandan leadership. Their main concern was that President Museveni was politicising the Kisangani fighting, and inciting Ugandan hostility against Rwandans. On 2 September 1999, Vice-President Paul Kagame addressed Parliament in Rwanda. In contrast to Museveni's defensive speech, his was fairly appeasing. He did not attack Uganda, but merely blamed the Ugandan leadership for not being committed to an honest political solution. Kagame regretted that not enough had been done to avoid the fighting and called on all Rwandans to work for the restoration of a normal relationship with Uganda. The Rwandan leadership blamed the fighting on elements in the Ugandan army who misled the President about what was going on in DRC. The criticism was directed at Brigadier Kazini, the Ugandan Chief of Staff, and Major General Salim Saleh for promoting antagonism between the two forces and their involvement in private business at the cost of running the army properly. Kagame stressed that the Kisangani clashes were not between the RPA and the UPDF, nor between Uganda and Rwanda, but between specific forces deployed by both sides, which had strategic differences.

Vice-President Kagame addressed Parliament again on 16 September 1999, after the conclusion of the Joint Inquiry, that, in the words of his press release, "cleared the RPA of any blame ... the report recorded no evidence of back stabbing, treachery, as some Ugandan authorities had alleged."⁵⁶ He also said that the RPA approach has been to create a joint RPA/UPDF joint command, which was rejected by the UPDF, and to organise the rebels in an unified fighting group, but that UPDF started to create other factions. Kagame's press release went on: "He blamed the fighting on 5-7 August on UPDF who attempted to give the verification team the false impression that Prof. Wamba controlled key parts of Kisangani. He added that the UPDF had begun to make reinforcements at the end of July, with the view to completely taking over Kisangani. On 7 August, UPDF deployed heavily in Kisangani town, digging trenches and foxholes in preparation for the battle. By 12 August, forces from UPDF, 3rd, 5th, 9th and 65th Battalions were in Kisangani. They were already two UPDF task forces in place before these deployments and 5 tanks. The RPA had only two Battalions-61st and 75th- deployed in Kisangani at the beginning of the fighting."

Immediately after the fighting, the Rwandan leadership took measures to ease tensions. An order barring all government officials from commenting on the fighting was issued. Grand claims of victory by some RPA officers had indeed antagonised the Ugandan leadership.

1. Move to Save Lusaka

Although in all their post-Kisangani meetings Uganda and Rwanda re-affirmed their commitment to the Lusaka accord, hostilities between them threatened its

⁵⁵ A ceasefire agreement signed between President Yoweri Museveni and Vice-President Paul Kagame, on 22 August 1999 at Rwakitura, Uganda.

⁵⁶ Press release, Office of the Vice-President, 17 September 1999.

implementation. At the time of the fighting in Kisangani, the three rebel factions had not yet signed the Lusaka ceasefire agreement. It was feared that the fragmentation of the rebellion into smaller factions could stop the peace process altogether.

Rwanda scored well on the diplomatic front by devising the formula that secured the rebels' signature on the Lusaka agreement. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) heads of state meeting that took place in Maputo in August 1999 called on both Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Pasteur Bizimungu of Rwanda to explain to other regional leaders the impact of their tensions on the implementation of the Lusaka agreement. Both leaders re-affirmed their commitment to the Lusaka agreement, and presented a proposal that led to the signing of the agreement by the two RCD factions on 31 August 1999. Rwanda prevailed over the RCD-Goma faction to allow Wamba dia Wamba of RCD-Kisangani to sign the agreement separately, as part of a comprehensive strategy to settle the rift with Uganda. After the fifty-one founders of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) signed the Lusaka agreement, international attention shifted from the conflict between Uganda and Rwanda to the implementation of the Lusaka agreement.

2. Follow-up on the Recommendations of the UPDF/RPA Joint Inquiry

Rwanda moved first to implement the recommendations of the joint commission of inquiry report issued by the army chiefs of both countries. One recommendation was that both armies transfer commanders in charge at the time of the fighting. Rwanda honoured its part of the bargain by recalling two senior commanders from Kisangani, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Nyanvumba and Colonel James Kabarebe. The transfer of the two eased the tension in Kisangani and facilitated the demilitarisation of the town. Rwanda also accepted the re-opening of the inquiry into the fighting to appease the bitterness and frustration of UPDF officers.

The leaders referred Ugandan reservations around the investigative report into the Kisangani fighting to their respective army commanders. The re-opening of the inquiry was a political success for President Yoweri Museveni and his team since the first investigative report largely blamed the Ugandan army leadership for the outbreak of fighting.

President Museveni moved Brigadier Kazini from Kisangani to Western Uganda, but left Kazini in charge of the DRC operations. Major General Jeje Odongo, the Army Commander, was relocated to Kisangani as Chairman of the Ugandan and Rwandan joint military command, a body set up in September following the Joint Inquiry report, but that has never worked. Other recommendations were to transfer the leadership of both RCD-Kisangani and RCD-Goma from Kisangani; RCD-Kisangani moved to Bunia, while RCD-Goma has relocated to Goma and Kalemie. Kisangani city centre was demilitarised, and a joint unit of RPA/UPDF military police is now in charge of security.

As another measure of crisis management, there has been a change in the Ugandan team of officials dealing with Rwanda. In the past, the relationship between the two countries was exclusively handled by the military. After the Kisangani incident, both sides felt the need to involve politicians to help normalise the relationship. "On both sides politicians dominate, which is a move in a right direction, because in the past there was little political guidance of what Rwanda

and Uganda were doing in Congo, which partly explains the fallout between the two armies.⁵⁷ In Uganda, the National Political Commissar of the ruling National Resistance Movement, James Wapakhabulo, has replaced Colonel Kahinda Otafiire, a hardliner on Rwandan matters, as the representative to the reconciliation committee. On the diplomatic front, Eriya Kategaya, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, has taken a more prominent role than Amama Mbabazi, the Minister of State in charge of regional matters, in relations with Rwanda.

Since August 1999, President Museveni has met more than five delegations from Rwanda and one delegation from RCD-Goma. Uganda has also sent a delegation to Rwanda twice. These shuttle diplomacy efforts resulted in a key summit on 8 November 1999, in Kabale, southwestern Uganda. Both Presidents of Uganda and Rwanda, Vice-President Kagame, and senior cabinet ministers attended the summit.

The central decision taken at the summit included a commitment to the unification of all rebel groups into one opposition alliance. The Kabale II task force, led by James Wapakhabulo, the National Political Commissar of the NRM, and Charles Murigande, the Secretary General of Rwandan Patriotic Front, has been given the responsibility of convening a meeting to unite the three rebel groups.⁵⁸

C. Role Played by the United States

During the build up to the fighting, President Yoweri Museveni received a message from Susan Rice, the American Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, expressing concern over Uganda's deployment of troops to Kisangani.⁵⁹ The message prompted President Yoweri Museveni to order his chief of staff Brigadier James Kazini to stop the deployment of troops to Kisangani. After the breakout of fighting, the American government sent Ms Gayle Smith from the National Security Council to Uganda to hold talks with the leadership of both countries while they were negotiating the ceasefire agreement. American Embassies in both Uganda and Rwanda are now closely monitoring the relationship between the two countries.

The fallout between Uganda and Rwanda, as well as between Eritrea and Ethiopia threatened the cohesiveness of the United States' policy in Africa. Just after the fratricidal war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, the fighting between Rwanda and Uganda has dealt a blow to some of the more optimistic assessments to Africa's future. The USA and others had openly earmarked Yoweri Museveni and Paul Kagame, as well as Issaias Afewerki of Eritrea and Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, as a "new breed" of African leaders who would ensure stability in the region. President Clinton visited both countries in his 1998 African tour.

VII. THE FUTURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP: FRIENDS OR ENEMIES?

A. New Tension in Kisangani

Just after the Kisangani clash, Rwanda withdrew the two commanders who were

⁵⁷ "Kabale must find real solutions" *The Monitor*, 10 September 1999.

⁵⁸ "Congo rebels to make up" by Julius Muchunguzi, *The Monitor*, 24 November 1999.

⁵⁹ President Yoweri Museveni's address to the Ugandan Parliament, 30 August 1999.

operating in Kisangani – Lt Col. Patrick Nyanvumba and Col. James Kabarebe. Lt Col. Nyanvumba was reassigned first to South Kivu and then to represent Rwanda at the Joint Military Commission. Brig. Kazini was removed from Kisangani after the Rwandan colonels and sent to Kasese in Western Uganda. However, he has remained in charge of DRC operations, which has been a source of tension with Rwanda. After some time, Rwanda also decided to appoint Col. Kabarebe to become the Deputy Chief of Staff of the RPA. He replaced Col. Frank Mugambage who is now head of the newly formed police.

Tension is building up again in Kisangani, where UPDF is reported to have moved three battalions and special units in violation of the ceasefire agreement signed in August to demilitarise the town. RCD-Goma issued a statement on 26 March accusing UPDF of building up troops "in a manner reminiscent of what preceded the fighting of August 1999"⁶⁰. The RCD-Goma acting chief of the department of Communications, Prof. Etienne Ngangura Kasole, said that UPDF had redeployed a large force of 65th battalion in addition to a previously existing force of one battalion in Kisangani in Kapalata camp, a military camp near Kisangani belonging to UPDF. Kasole said that in total the UPDF had increased the troop presence by two battalions on top of the existing one battalion. Rwandan National radio also reported that UPDF had cut off major roads to Kisangani, beefed up its tank and artillery capacity, and by ordering redeployment of extra forces in Kisangani was "creating the conditions for the return of Wamba in his former headquarters".⁶¹

The RPA said that they had not been informed of UPDF troop movement, and that there had been no contact between the commanders, which the RPA considers to be a violation of the recommendation made by Major General Jeje Odongo and the RPA Chief of Staff, Brig. General Kayumba Nyamwasa after the August 1999 clashes. The agreement called for the demilitarisation of the city, with only one battalion remaining from each army, and for regular meetings between commanders of the two armies. The RPA pointed out that redeployments had, however, begun in March, following what Uganda called 'major transfers' of its officers. Col. Sula Semakula replaced the UPDF officer in charge of Kisangani, Col. Edison Muzoora. Brig. James Kazini who is still the overall UPDF operations Commander in the Congo, is suspected to be behind the recent deployments. Major Emmanuel Ndahiro, spokesman for the Rwandan government, explained Rwanda's concern: "What is worrying us is that the new Ugandan commanders in Kisangani, within a few days of taking charge, are trying to reverse what was agreed upon at a high level — they have set up more road blocks, increased troop deployment in city suburbs and suspended their involvement in joint patrols and meetings."⁶²

Uganda denies those accusations and claims it has no intention of fighting with the RPA again. According to Ugandan security sources, the deployments started on 19 March. The Ugandan forces now occupy Kapalata military camp with the 9th battalion. However, the Ugandan Deputy Chief of Military Intelligence, Lt Col. Noble Mayombo, was recently quoted in the Monitor as saying that camp Kapalata originally belonged to the UPDF following the agreement between President Yoweri Museveni and the Rwandan Vice-President Paul Kagame. He said that the RPA

⁶⁰ "DRC: call for calm in Kisangani", IRIN, 29 March 2000.

⁶¹ "Fresh Military Tension Flares in Kisangani", PANA, 27 March 2000.

⁶² "DRC: call for calm in Kisangani", IRIN, 29 March 2000.

wanted to occupy Kapalata camp on 19 March together with the RCD-Goma faction. The camp is also being used as a military training school for the RCD-Kisangani rebels run by the UPDF.

Rwanda has expressed its desire to give priority to a peaceful solution. It is possible that the RPA decided to denounce the move early to deter UPDF from reinforcing its troops further. Rwanda's government spokesman, Joseph Bideri, told a conference in Germany: "Two weeks ago something similar to the clashes in Kisangani was going to happen but we flew international and local media representatives to see what was going on. This arrangement averted a possible conflict".⁶³

On 26 March, the director of military intelligence of the RCD-Goma faction, Bizima Karaha, was in Kampala to meet with Ugandan security officials over the growing tension in Kisangani. Ugandan and Rwandan military officials also held an emergency meeting in Kisangani on 3-4 April to try to avert growing tension between their troops following the recent UPDF build-up around the northeastern DRC city. The director of the UPDF military intelligence Col. Henry Tumukunde and his RPA counterpart Lt Col. Jack Nziza chaired this meeting of military officials in Kisangani to try to prevent a likely clash between their forces.⁶⁴ They agreed not to violate last year's agreement, which provides for the demilitarisation of the city centre.

However, RPA officials admitted to having added more weaponry in preparation for any UPDF attack. In order to prepare, Kigali delivered an unspecified amount of weaponry to Sim Sim airport in Kisangani on 3-4 April. However, the two forces continue to maintain a joint patrol, although the UPDF has denied the RPA access to its tank facility. A Rwandan officer was quoted as saying: "We do not want to sacrifice our soldiers, but we shall not take the challenge lying down."⁶⁵

This new tension shows that despite all the initiatives described above, the relationship between both the leadership and the military forces of Rwanda and Uganda has not improved.

B. Rebels Remain Divided

The commitment to unite the rebel movement, based on the recommendation of the joint inquiry report, was a sign that the two countries were preparing for any eventuality in the DRC. If the implementation of the Lusaka agreement begins and fighting stops, both countries could adopt a common strategy in the implementation of various clauses of the agreement. A common position on the National Dialogue would allow the rebel voice to be strengthened and survive the end of the war as a political entity. If the Lusaka agreement is not implemented the two countries and the rebel movement could constitute a strong front against Kabila.

A first meeting between all the three rebel groups was initially held 16-18 December in Kabale and called for the formation of a common front. Political and military commissions were established to work out modalities of implementation of

⁶³ Sylvia Juuko, "Journalists stopped another UPDF/RPA clash-Rwanda", *The Monitor*, 17 April 2000.

⁶⁴ Levi Ochieng, "Rwanda, Uganda brace for war", *The East African*, 10-16 April 2000.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

the Kabale agreement. The role of the military commission was to design a plan for the formation of the new Congolese army, defining its composition and mission and the merger of all four Congolese armies fighting in the country. The role of the political commission was to develop common positions to be presented at the inter-Congolese dialogue⁶⁶. However, the agreement fell short of forming one rebel movement. According to the agreement, all three rebel groups were to retain their separate identities.

The mistrust between the factions and their backers manifested itself very clearly during that meeting of the rebel allies and the three rebel groups in the DRC – RCD-Goma, RCD-Kisangani and the MLC. However, they decided to continue holding frequent meetings to chart out plans and new strategies. The next meeting was supposed to be in Kisangani in January but it coincided with the UN Security Council meeting in New York and was cancelled. It was rescheduled for 4 February in Kisangani, but was postponed again by RCD-Goma pending further consultation. The second and third venues for the rebel meetings respectively were to be in Gbadolite and Goma. Uganda and Rwanda were supposed to appoint two liaison officers to the political and military committees. It is not clear whether this has been done but sources say that there was a general feeling among Ugandan officials that they would not attend the Goma meeting. The reason given is that they do not feel safe entering a territory under RPA control. In reaction to this, Rwandan officials said that it was a sign of bad will. An official from Kigali who is involved in the process said that if Ugandan officials were reluctant to go to Goma, it meant that there was a substantial weakness in the alliance between the two countries.

It seems that Uganda and Rwanda are still more concerned with attacking each other and preparing for military competition than seriously supporting the Congolese. As a result, political power has dissolved and become more fragmented. Both RCDs are going through crises. RCD-Goma has been facing the threat of another split along regional lines and accusations of corruption from RCD-Kisangani. Some officials are reported to have fled to Uganda. Emile Ilunga, the President of RCD-Goma, has been accused of embezzling movement funds. Attempts to oust him were prevented at the last minute after a compromise that reshuffled the senior ranks

On 4 April, Ilunga suspended Alexis Tambwe Mwamba, Lambert Mende and Jose Endundo, accused of "sharing intelligence with the enemy and serious contraventions to RCD rule."⁶⁷ Wamba dia Wamba now lives in Kampala and has lost his grip on the formerly RCD-Kisangani, now based in Bunia. In early April, the finance minister John Tibasima suspended two ministers, Jacques Depelchin, Minister for territorial administration and René Ngonia, deputy Minister for security, without consulting Wamba. Mbusa Nyamwisi, the Prime minister of the RCD, called for a general assembly to discuss the direction of the movement. The point of contention between Wamba and his colleagues seems to be the handling of the Hema-Lendu conflict, which killed 5,000 people in Ituri province earlier this year. Apparently Tibasima wanted Wamba to condemn the Lendus for committing genocide against the Hemas but Wamba had refused since there has been killings by both parties to the conflict.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ "DRC: rebels postpone Kisangani meeting", IRIN, 1 February 2000.

⁶⁷ Emmy Allio, "Wamba denies fleeing Congo", *The New Vision*, 14 April 2000.

⁶⁸ "Museveni wants DRC rivals meet", *The Monitor*, 15 April 2000.

Furthermore Nyamwisi, who originally comes from Beni, considered that he was popular enough among his people, the Nande, to lead the movement without Wamba, who comes from Bas Congo. Museveni called the rebel leaders to Kampala on 15-17 April and tried to mediate between them. His adviser on the DRC, Col. Kahinda Otafiire, mentioned that after listening to them, "some issues that appeared to be serious deserved mere disciplinary measures."⁶⁹

Reacting to the news of the meeting between RCD-Kisangani and Museveni, Emile Ilunga explained to the press that the RCD-Goma had "sharp differences with Uganda". "There have been several examples of unfriendly behaviour on Uganda's part", referring to "violations of sovereignty such as the carving up of the Oriental and North Kivu provinces and the naming of a new governor without consulting us first" or the support of different rebel movements. "Uganda is not making an effort to encourage the unification of the Congolese insurrection movement."⁷⁰ Col. Otafiire replied the next day saying that Uganda doesn't recognise the Goma group: "it is just a splinter group with 10 or 15 people in Goma claiming to represent Congolese interests."⁷¹

The Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) led by Bemba and backed by Uganda, remains a one-man show without a clear political programme and with legitimacy only in Equateur province in northeastern DRC. There are reports that other militia groups such as the Mai-Mai have infiltrated both the RCD-Kisangani and the MLC. Some senior officials of the RCD-Kisangani have also been arrested in connection with the killing of a senior Ugandan military official, Major Ruben Ikondere, in Beni, eastern DRC in November 1999.⁷²

The infighting that may result from these counter-alliances will split the rebellion further and complicate the implementation of the peace process. The continuous fragmentation of the rebel groups is a serious hindrance to the Ugandan strategy to "empower" the Congolese.

C. Rwanda's Politics Criticised by Uganda

Rwanda's recent political crisis has been exploited by Ugandan officials who assess the RPF's political strategy since 1994 as a failure. For the past few years, President Museveni has been trying to advise the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) to broaden its base and to include more Hutus in government. The resignation in the past six months of three prominent officials, Speaker of Parliament Joseph Sebarenzi last December, Prime Minister Célestin Rwigyema in February, and now President Pasteur Bizimungu in March, has been interpreted by Uganda as a confirmation of the RPF's narrow political approach and as a sign of the concentration of power in a few hands.

Ugandan officials have increasingly portrayed the Rwandan regime as oppressive. In December 1999, some university students fled Rwanda and asked for asylum in Uganda on the claim that they were persecuted by the Rwandan government

⁶⁹ "Museveni reconciles Congo rebels", *The New Vision*, April 20, 2000.

⁷⁰ "Uganda won't appoint Congo rebel leaders", *The Monitor*, April 20 2000.

⁷¹ "Otafiire denies Ilunga", *The New Vision*, 21 April 2000.

⁷² Levi Ochieng "Rebel rifts imperial peace prospects in Congo", *The East African*, 22-28 November 1999.

because they couldn't take their exams in French. The Ugandan newspapers gave a lot of visibility to the issue. When the Speaker of Parliament fled Rwanda after his resignation, some Ugandans enabled him to move discreetly on to the US. When President Bizimungu, an RPF Hutu resigned after falling out with leading RPF members over the make up of a new cabinet, Uganda offered him asylum. Patrick Mazimhaka, an RPF Minister in the President's office who was accused of mismanagement by the Rwandan Parliament, was wrongly reported to have been arrested by the RPF government by *The Monitor* on 25 March.

The tension reaches a point where both regimes suspect each other of training their enemies. The Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) suspects that some Ugandan officers are training RPA deserters and Congolese Tutsi to fight against the RPF regime, while UPDF seems to accuse the RPA of supporting the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

The election of Paul Kagame as President of Rwanda at a joint session of Parliament and government on 17 April is likely to affect the relations between Rwanda and Uganda. The personal relationship between Museveni and Kagame has been strained since the Kisangani clashes. When Paul Kagame was elected, Museveni officially congratulated him and took that opportunity to "reiterate the commitment of my government to further strengthening of the warm and cordial relationship that happily exists between our two peoples. I will work closely with you towards the restoration of peace in the Great Lakes."⁷³ However, the Ugandan President was absent from the genocide commemoration in Kigali on 6 and 7 April 2000. He was also invited to the swearing-in ceremony of Paul Kagame on 22 April, but declined the invitation. His press secretary said that she couldn't confirm President Museveni's attendance because he "had some duties outside of the country". He indeed went to Zimbabwe for the summit on the land crisis on 21 April, but the Rwandan leadership interpreted his absence as a sign of remaining tension.

In an interview with IRIN, Kagame expressed his concern: "We have tried to lay the problems out on the table with our Ugandan brothers. We have had serious discussions on how to overcome this situation, but serious shortcomings keep coming in the way. We are very concerned and we think our partners in this process have to put in a lot in terms of effort to put this history behind us".⁷⁴

Paul Kagame seems to be very aware of the challenges that he faces as a new president. One particular challenge is to change Rwanda's image from a nation that instigates wars to one that promotes peace in the region.

In his inaugural speech, he insisted that he wanted Rwanda to have "good relations with all countries, especially those of the region" and defined Rwanda's interests as being strictly security. "I would like once more to tell Rwandans and foreigners here that the fact that Rwanda currently has troops in the neighbouring DRC does not mean that Rwandans like to fight or that Rwanda wants to be a superpower in the region, or that Rwanda wants Congo's wealth or to carve itself a piece of the Congo. The reasons Rwandans went into Congo was the presence there of Interahamwe and former Rwandan soldiers, who carried out genocide, were in Congo where they were allowed to carry out military training, were given

⁷³ "Museveni wishes Kagame well", *The Monitor*, 20 April 2000.

⁷⁴ IRIN Interview with Acting President Paul Kagame, 7 April 2000.

arms, and they continued to come to Rwanda to kill its citizens and destroy what has been reconstructed and built.”⁷⁵

Both the Ugandan and the Rwandan population have strongly blamed their leaders for the Kisangani fighting. During Kagame’s inauguration, the Rwandan public welcomed the speech of the Vice-President of Uganda, Speciosa Kazibwe, very warmly. A delegation of Ugandan MPs is also supposed to visit Rwanda to restore the strained relationship between the two countries. The reason for this mission, according to the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Parliament, is that they are “very worried about the tension between our country and Rwanda. A lot of things seem to be wrong, yet the government is not informing the committee”.⁷⁶

D. Uganda Tries to get Closer to Angola and Zimbabwe

Kagame’s attitude is also motivated by Uganda’s continuing efforts, as Rwanda sees it, to isolate Rwanda in the DRC war. Uganda has tried to reach a deal with Kabila and his allies since early 1999. With the Sirte agreement, Museveni succeeded only in solving the involvement of Chad in the DRC. After the signing of the Lusaka agreement, intense diplomatic activity between the Ugandan and Zimbabwean delegations took place, and resulted in the decision that the Political Committee, to which the JMC was accountable, would be co-chaired by both countries

There have also been high-level contacts between Uganda and Zimbabwe after the Kisangani fighting. Senior Ugandan military officials visited Zimbabwe in September and there was a return visit by Zimbabwean senior intelligence officers to Uganda in the fall. President Museveni himself also went to Zimbabwe several times, and choosing to go to the Victoria Falls summit on 21 April instead of attending Kagame’s inauguration on 22 April, Museveni was perceived as showing his preference for a regional approach to the DRC crisis, which officially distanced him from Rwanda’s more unilateral approach.

In addition to the contact with Zimbabwe, there has also been contact between Uganda and Angola. In November, a senior Ugandan military official visited Luanda. However, Angola has begun accusing Uganda of supporting UNITA⁷⁷, which will make a Uganda-Angola alliance difficult to achieve.

In his address to Parliament, President Museveni asked the MPs to support the army’s presence in the DRC, and justified this contact with the enemies by referring to the Lusaka agreement, according to which UPDF had become a peacekeeping force: “Uganda is no longer isolated because, with the peace agreement, Uganda is now friendly to Angola, Zimbabwe and the rest of the countries involved.”⁷⁸ In either case, Museveni needs to negotiate with both countries to put pressure on Kabila to stop attacking Ugandan troops in northern DRC.

E. Lusaka Agreement: The Best Unifying Factor

⁷⁵ Paul Kagame’s inaugural speech, 22 April 2000.

⁷⁶ Levi Ochieng, “Ugandan MPs seek peace with Rwanda”, *The East African*, 24-30 April 2000.

⁷⁷ Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola

⁷⁸ “Uganda: Majority of Kampala residents want army out of DRC”, IRIN, 10 September 1999.

If the rebel coalition falls to pieces, the Lusaka Agreement⁷⁹, which resulted from a negotiation between two alliances, has little chance of being implemented. But despite its difficult implementation, it remains the only framework that currently brings Uganda, Rwanda and the rebel groups together. As Kagame says, "continuous problems between the two allies would result in all kinds of negative things, including the strengthening of our enemies. My advice to anyone involved in this war is to work for the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement. I do not think there will be serious changes on the ground. What people didn't achieve when there was serious fighting, they should not think they can achieve now."⁸⁰ President Museveni has also repeated on numerous occasions that, in contrast to the AFDL war in 1996-1997, the lack of unity in the anti-Kabila alliance has been a major obstacle to victory.

Kabila and his allies have tried to exploit the differences between Uganda and Rwanda in order to regain ground lost to the Rwandan-backed rebels. Since September, Kabila and his allies have infiltrated the zones occupied by the RPA and UPDF to train and equip Hutu militias from Rwanda and Burundi and the Congolese Maï Maï in large numbers to counteract Rwanda's military capacity in Congo. For the Interahamwe and ex-FAR, the break-up of the alliance between Rwanda and Uganda has been seen positively. It weakens and isolates Rwanda and increases the rebels' chances of destabilising it in the future.

The fragility of the anti-Kabila alliance makes it impossible to win the war militarily. Uganda's and Rwanda's awareness of this weakness may explain their renewed commitment to a new ceasefire in the DRC on 9 April that came into effect on 14 April, and which the MONUC⁸¹ has confirmed to be "generally effective" since then.⁸² On 8 April, the Joint Military Commission drew up a disengagement plan for combatants in the DRC and for their redeployment on new defensive positions, fifteen kilometres away from the confrontation line. The chairman of the political committee, Amama Mbabazi, has also asked the JMC to establish a plan for a peacekeeping mission in the DRC, even in the absence of the UN force.

At the Victoria Falls summit, President Museveni told the press that security concerns for Uganda and Rwanda had diminished, but that the two countries needed international guarantees that exiled groups based in the Congo would not attack them. "Security for Uganda and Rwanda is of absolute importance and we hope that through the Lusaka peace accords security can be guaranteed. I see no military solution to the conflict in the Congo. The Lusaka accords must be the basis upon which a political settlement can be reached. The military line we took was also important because it applied pressure on the region and the world to take note of our security concerns, but I think it is no longer necessary to go that [military] route."⁸³ Two days later, Uganda announced that it would withdraw two battalions, citing improved security in the area. On 22 April, President Kagame also urged the UN to accelerate plans of deployment of a peacekeeping force in the DRC, although he noted that the number (5,500) was not sufficient "given the size of the country and the task", and that the "bottom line was whether our security

⁷⁹ For a full account of the Lusaka Agreement, see ICG DRC Report N°. 5, "The Agreement on a Cease-Fire in the Democratic Republic of Congo: An Analysis of the Agreement and Prospects for Peace", 20 August 1999.

⁸⁰ IRIN Interview with acting President Paul Kagame, 7 April 2000.

⁸¹ UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

⁸² "DRC: Fresh ceasefire orders issued by all parties", IRIN, 19 April 2000.

⁸³ Reuters, 22 April 2000.

concerns will be addressed.”⁸⁴

VIII. CONCLUSION

There remains a great deal to be done to heal the rift between Uganda and Rwanda, created essentially by their failure to find a common approach to the DRC war. It is crucial that the rift be healed in the interests both of avoiding further conflict between the two countries, of the kind which has already caused the loss of hundreds of lives in Kisangani in August 1999, and of advancing peace in the wider region.

Any further conflict between Uganda and Rwanda threatens to be extremely violent, not least because each side knows the other so well, with all its strengths and weaknesses. There are realistic fears that, if early action is not taken to ease tensions, another Ethiopia-Eritrea style war between “brothers” could all too easily break out. And current perceptions that each is in touch with enemies of the other is generating fears that they are prepared to fight again through proxies.

Within the region, and the DRC in particular, failure to properly manage the relationship between the two countries could significantly delay and complicate the peace process, leading to the further fragmentation of the rebel groups, because of the absence of central control and clear political objectives, or to a de facto partition of DRC territory, with each army occupying a different section.

The recent commitment of both countries to a new ceasefire in the DRC is a sign that they are both aware that they cannot win the war militarily with an alliance that remains so fragile. If Lusaka is now implemented, the military competition may well be transformed into a political struggle between Presidents Museveni and Kagame to determine the political approach that should prevail in the ultimate resolution of the DRC problem. But political differences, while they carry their risks, are much to be preferred to trials of military strength.

The major role that can be played by the international community in defusing the tension between Uganda and Rwanda is to ensure as soon as possible the effective implementation of the Lusaka peace agreement, which may well be the only unifying factor between them at this point. The UN Security Council should respond immediately to the current more stable situation on the ground, and the recent call of regional leaders to move ahead on implementation, by deploying immediately the 500 observers and 5500 troops provided for under the second phase of the UN Mission in Congo (MONUC). Beyond that the Security Council should use all its authority to advance the other key aspects of the Lusaka agreement, including in particular the disarmament of militias and armed groups, and the withdrawal of foreign forces in accordance with the timetable established in that agreement.

Uganda and Rwanda each also have important responsibilities in improving their relationship. At the most straightforward and immediate level they should ensure that the recommendations of their own Joint Inquiry concerning the demilitarisation of Kisangani are completely implemented. It would also be helpful, given the capacity of this issue to revive tensions at any time, if the re-opened inquiry into the Kisangani fighting were to produce once and for all a

⁸⁴ Reuters, 24 April 2000.

definitive version of those events, on which both sides could agree to put the past behind them.

A summit should be held between Presidents Museveni and Kagame to work through the issues which have been causing difficulty and to try to establish a new basis for a strong bilateral relationship. An important part of that process needs to be the establishment of understandings about each side's contacts and dealings with third parties, in order to avoid such contacts becoming in themselves threats to the maintenance of peace between the two countries.

In the longer term, the most crucial need is for dialogue and co-operation channels to be strengthened and institutionalised between Uganda and Rwanda at multiple levels, including that of civil society. Most urgently, better communication lines need to be established not only at the leadership and ministerial level, but between Parliaments, parliamentarians and the key political organizations (the Ugandan National Resistance Movement and the Rwandan Patriotic Front).

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