The Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo: 
A Mosaic of Insurgent Groups in a Web of State Constraint

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is twofold. First is to analyze the role of insurgent groups in the anti-Kabila civil war in the Congo within the statist approach, which endows the state with considerable autonomy in defining the nature of states’ preferences and developing solutions to them. The essay also contends that the statist approach is not sufficient, however. Once enmeshed in a stalemated war, the belligerents’ motives are best explained by the greed approach, which maintains that the duration of war depends, among other things, on factors that influence the costs of war and the expected payoffs from war. The article shows that the 1998 civil war was dominated by autonomous state players using rebel groups as proxies to achieve state’s goals. Nonetheless, as the war dragged on the goal of combatants changed to greed. Interestingly, the Congo case contrasted with several African civil wars where warlords’ interests dominated state’s interests. Therefore, the Congo conflict created a new idea of predation in which looting a neighbor’s resources without attempting to conquer the neighbor was deemed acceptable by the international community.