



*Beyond the Headlines*

## **NAVIGATING THE FUTURE OF THE CONGO: LESSONS FROM THE PAST**

Featuring  
**JASON K. STEARNS**

Author of the book  
***Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo  
and the Great War of Africa***

A conversation moderated by  
**WARREN HOGE**  
Vice President for External Relations, IPI

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*transcript edited by IPI*

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**Warren Hoge:**

Hello. Good evening. I'm Warren Hoge, IPI's Vice President for External Relations. I'm happy to welcome you to this Beyond the Headlines event featuring Jason K. Stearns and his book, *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*.

Once called Zaire, and now called the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or DRC, the place the size of Western Europe that Jason Stearns identifies as The Congo has produced little but bad news since 1996. That year marked the beginning of a brutal war costing the lives of five million people and involving at least twenty different rebel groups and nine government armies with no clear national objectives at stake.

Though it has been a war about the future of the Congo, it has sometimes been fought by armies from other African countries on both sides of the conflict. War has distracted the Congolese from building a reliable state, and with no

institutions for people to rally around, the motivating ideology can often end up being sheer ethnicity.

International journalists have been at once confounded by the complexities of this apparently senseless violence and drawn to other conflicts on the African continent that yield more coherent storylines.

To illustrate this, Jason cites my former newspaper, "Noting that the *New York Times* in 2006 gave Darfur, one area of Sudan, nearly four times the coverage it gave the entire Congo. Those that took on the challenge of trying to turn the Congo War into 800- to 1,000-word narratives inevitably ended up focusing on the widespread and appalling acts of violence and the absence of any obvious rationale for them.

But, Jason cautions, "The Congo Wars are not stories that can be explained through such stereotypes. They are the product of a deep history, often unknown to outside observers. The principal actors are far from just savages mindlessly killing and being killed, but thinking, breathing, *Homo sapiens*, whose actions, however abhorrent, are underpinned by political rationales and motives."

Jason doesn't shy away from telling some of the horror stories, including an interview with a Congolese officer who breaks down and sobs and admits to having been part of a death squad that murdered up to 100 civilians a day. He also describes their methods of murder and massacre in shocking detail.

But in recounting these stories, Jason has a nobler purpose than indulging in the journalism of titillation. He is trying to ferret out the why--not just the how--and he conducts more than 100 interviews with protagonists of the war seeking to find out why war made more sense to them than peace did.

He explains that he wants to focus on the perpetrators more than the victims, the politicians and army commanders more than the refugees and rape survivors. He is not trying to personalize the evil, but to ask what political system produced this kind of mayhem.

"The lack of responsible politics is not due to some genetic defect in Congolese DNA," he says, "a missing virtue gene, or even something about Congolese culture. Instead, it is deeply rooted in the country's political history."

It is that twisted and serpentine history that Jason relates in a remarkably readable and straight ahead way in *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*. Jason is such a good writer and storyteller that I picked up the book one Sunday morning in April thinking only to make a start on it and didn't put it down until later the same day after reading all of it.

I mention that because, as you know, the book is for sale at the door, and Jason will be here when we finish to sign copies. And I recommend it.

Jason believes that exploring the rationale behind the war and seeking the pathways out of it lies in politics. Let me end this introduction with his final passage from the book, one that will have particular resonance with this community, which he knows well from his days of working with the UN Peacekeeping operation in the Congo.

"All development is political," he writes. "Rule of law will be created, not through a capacity building project in the Ministry of Finance, but through a power struggle

between the government, local elites, and business circles. Donors need to figure out how to most responsibly insert themselves in this dynamic and not just pave roads, build hospitals, and reform fiscal systems.”

Jason Stearns, welcome to IPI, and the floor is yours.

**Jason Stearns:**

So first of all, anybody giving a talk on the Congo, about the Congolese war is doomed to failure in the sense that they’re never going to exhaust the complexity of the war, so I’m doomed to the same failure, especially because usually I give this talk about the book, and today, I’m trying also to talk about the current situation, so I’m going to be in all of this within the space of 20 minutes, which I’m starting now. So if I fail, don’t hold it against me.

The Congo has always held a special and fateful place in our imagination. I think probably ever since, at least ever since Joseph Conrad took a fateful trip up the Congolese river in a steamboat, or Henry Stanley trekked across the country in order to claim it for King Leopold II. So let me start by talking about the pathologies of our perception and how it affects our policies, because a lot of the book is about the pathologies of the way we engage, the way we perceive the Congo.

So I begin the book with two images. The first image is of a Congolese warlord. Now picture the most stereotypical Congolese warlord you can imagine. This was in the mountainous Eastern Congo, he had a grass skirt on, he had a chain of amulets with monkey skulls and bottle caps, he was surrounded by child soldiers— I mean, literally, straight out of a picture book, you can imagine.

And I met with him, in order, as I did, with many people, to write this book, to interview him, to understand his experience of the war, and I said, I start off by saying, I just want to know what your story was, what your experiences were, and he said, what’s your agenda? What do you want? And I said, no, no, I’m just, I’m a reporter, I just want to come and get your story. I’m going to write a book. He’s like, no, no, what do you want? What’s in it for you? And we had a long discussion, and he would basically not accept the fact that I didn’t have an agenda or that I purported to be a neutral observer just telling the story.

And at the end, before I left, because he wouldn’t give me an interview, I asked him if I could take his picture, and he said, you want to take my picture? No. You’re going to take this picture to some bazungu in Ulaya, you know, white people off in Europe, who are going to think I’m some African savage monkey. He said, “Un macaque Africain” is what he said. And so he refused to have me take his picture.

And the reason I tell this story at the beginning of the book is because I think he was on to something.

And the second image that I give to explain what he was on to is the image of Ota Benga. Now Ota Benga was a pygmy from the central region of the Congo, the Kasai region, who was brought to New York City in 1904 by an American missionary. He was brought to the Bronx Zoo where he was exhibited in the monkey house next to an orangutan, and, according to *New York Times* opinion piece at the time, this was evidence of human evolution and the progress we’ve made. It was a positive, it was lauded, his being put on this expedition.

While not as shockingly racist as that, news reports from the Congo still often reduce the conflicts to a simplistic drama populated by a cast of stereotypes

ranging from the wanton killers to innocent victims. And what I'm trying to say here is that these clichés don't really help us understand the deep causes of the conflicts, and if we don't understand the deep causes, we're not going to be able to devise intelligent solutions. Simplistic understanding leads to simplistic solutions. So the book is really an attempt to combat those stereotypes and to engage in the conflicts through the protagonists, and as Warren pointed out, the book basically tells the story of the Congolese war through the eyes of its protagonists. And I'll get back to this perception problem towards the end when I talk about currently what's going on, because I think the perception problem still dogs us today.

So what does the book try to do? As I said, I try to tell the story of the war from the perspective of those who participated in it: army commanders, diplomats, child soldiers, airplane pilots, etc, etc. And most basically, I just try to provide a narrative, to put some storytelling sense into this jumble or this mess, what is often perceived as the Congo war. Why did the war happen, what happened during the war, what was the sequence of events?

Now the Cliff Notes, everybody, I think, knows, more or less. Five million people died, nine African countries were involved, it began in 1996, officially lasted until 2003, but the fighting continues until today. So that's sort of the bare bones of what I do, but I think the second deeper purpose of the book is more philosophical, which is, why did the people there do what they did? Hence, seeing it through the eyes of the protagonists. How can we apportion blame and responsibility? If five million people did die, who was to blame?

So this is pushing us to go beyond these clichés of the wanton savages to understanding the motives of those involved, and as Warren pointed out, the reason for the war is not some genetic deficiency on the part of the Congolese, and that sounds bizarre, but hanging out in bars and restaurants in the Congo, one often hears fellow UN peacekeepers say, oh, but the Congolese, they will never get it right. They are doomed, and you get, really, the feeling that there's something about the Congolese, not just UN peacekeepers, it's, you know, I lived in Nairobi for a long time, you say Congolese to people in Nairobi, and often they react, oh, they love to drink and dance, oh, and they just can never get, because they like to drink and dance, they can never get their house in order.

So let me start with the second question, this more abstract philosophical one, before I get into the nuts and bolts of Congolese history a little bit, in my 15 minutes that remain. So I'm a bit obsessed with this notion of morality in the book, and in the first chapter, I mention a story that probably everybody will know much better than the Congolese war, which is the story of Adolf Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem in 1961. Now Adolf Eichmann, I think, as many of you know, was responsible for the transport of Jews to the death in the Nazi regime in Germany, and he was then captured by the Israeli secret services and brought to Jerusalem.

Now the Jewish-German philosopher Hannah Arendt visited the trial in Jerusalem in 1961, and because she herself had been affected by the genocide, by the Holocaust, she saw this as an opportunity to understand what was driving this man, and her conclusion was that he was not a psychopath, but a conformist, that he was actually blatantly unexceptional, that he was just trying to get ahead in life, and that the massive Nazi bureaucracy allowed him to get ahead in life, and thereby, in a very impersonal anonymous fashion, dehumanize victims and what she called "the mass production of corpses in gas chambers." It

was the mass bureaucracy of the German state sort of facilitated this process of the production of corpses, and this is what she called the banality of evil.

So the reason, so the story is, sort of this thought experiment, what would Hannah Arendt say if she had gone to the Congo? If you could perform the same sort of visit, instead of visiting Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961, she visits the Congo, and now if it's true that five million people died, what was the essence of the evil in the Congo?

Now the differences are striking. There was no obliterating bureaucracy, no remote-controlled killing. On the contrary, the state apparatus and rule of law had largely decayed throughout the country by 1996. Of the five million deaths, only around, "only" 400,000 were meted out directly over the barrel of a gun or the blade of a machete. The rest, the vast majority, were people who died unsensationally of hunger and disease as a result of the conflict.

So this is the challenge of the Congo: the fact that it's so complex, a narrative with so many garbled strands and dizzying casts of characters, makes us care less. I've said before, the Congo is cursed with complexity. If we can't understand something given the clear narrative, we don't really engage with it in the same level we do as if something's a clear case of evil, and hence the quote that Warren read before, when Nick Kristof, the *New York Times* journalist was confronted and said, well, why are you writing so much more about Darfur than the Congo, when, actually, the number of people dying in the Congo—this was in 2006—is more?

He said, well, the case of Sudan is the case of a genocidal government massacring its people, whereas the case of the Congo—and I paraphrase—it's more of a mess. It's much more difficult to identify victims and killers. So in the Congo, you don't have a Pol Pot, you don't have Hitler, you don't have Arab vs. African, Hutu vs. Tutsi, freedom fighters vs. dictator, and yet, five million people have died. So the challenge in the book, to a certain extent, is not to find a convenient stereotype or binary that would make you easily pigeonhole the conflict and thereby care about it, but to tell the story, I make you care about the complexity.

So this is the reason for the colorful title for those who are wondering about what the hell the title is about: *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters*, and my editor is in the audience, and we had a long discussion about this title. It's about this idea of trying to get away from personalizing evil, trying to say, oh, this was, it was about Kabila, or it was about Mobutu, or this was about the CIA, or about Kagame, getting away from that perspective and trying to understand the political system that produced what happens.

So, the story is: Laurent Kabila is fighting his way across the country—although he didn't do much fighting—and he was being met by these crowds of people who were rejoicing in the liberation of the Congo, because this was the downfall of Mobutu. And he was met by a crowd in Mbuji-Mayi, and they were chanting "Down with Mobutu, Down with Mobutu," and Kabila, for all his faults, was a very eloquent man, stood up and said, really, is it Mobutu who's the problem here? Is everything that's evil with the Congo, can that be reduced to Mobutu? You guys, I didn't see you protesting in the streets against Mobutu. You guys were in the administration, you were taking bribes against him. It's not about the man, it's about the system. I have seen all of you dancing in the glory of the monster. So let's forget about, let's not try to find monsters where there are no monsters, or maybe, let's try to understand the political system that produces leaders who are

consistently, lack vision to bring their country forward. So that's the reason for the title.

So having said that, which is a very long preamble, let me get into a couple of things with a couple of the main themes of the book, and then we can open up, I'm sure we can have an interesting discussion. So I'm not... you have to read the book. I'm not going to... it's a terrible thing to give a talk about this kind of book, because most of the book is just the rich stories and history of the Congo, and you can't break that down into 15 minutes.

But if you had to make me reduce the conflict in the Congo to three main causes, it would be the collapse of the Congolese state after 32 years of misrule by Mobutu, one; two, the aftershocks of the Rwandan genocide that sent the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide fleeing into the Eastern Congo, prompting then the invasion of the Congo that was backed by Rwanda, Uganda, but many other countries in Africa, and local conflicts between communities in the Eastern Congo over land, power, and identity that had become compounded by this vacuum of power. So I won't thrill you with all of these explanations, but let me draw a few aspects.

Let me talk about Rwanda very briefly. Perhaps this is the most controversial aspect. I'm going to talk about two controversies. One is natural resources, and one, Rwanda. The history of Rwanda is deeply intertwined with that of the Congo. A part of the Congolese war was the Rwandan civil war continued on Congolese soil. And that does not just date back to the Rwandan genocide, as many people may believe, but predates us by hundreds of years.

Eastern Congo has been the spillover basin for troubles in Rwanda for hundreds of years. The Banyamulenge, for example, the Congolese Tutsi who live in South Kivu, fled from Rwanda probably as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, if not before that. Certainly in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the Kingdom of Rwanda was being consolidated through a series of internal wars. So this goes back a very long way, and the exodus of the Banyamulenge, and then others afterwards, for example, under the Belgian colony in the 1930s and '40s, perhaps up to 100,000 Rwandans were taken and brought by the Belgians, imported to the Eastern Congo to work on plantations and farms there, and then in the mining sector, that then sowed the seeds for what is currently still ongoing conflict in the Eastern Congo, struggles over land, citizenship, and power.

Even before the genocide, and in the late 1980s, Tutsi from the Eastern Congo were crossing the border to join the RPF rebellion in Uganda, as early as 1989, and Hutu from the Ituri area of the Eastern Congo, for example, were also crossing the border, but to fight for Habyarimana's government. So it goes back a long way. This did not just start with the refugees crossing in 1994, but when they did cross, you had a million Rwandans cross the border in one of the largest population movements of time, including most of the army and militias. Based out of the refugee camps and indirectly sustained by international aid, these militias continued launching raids and destabilizing neighboring Rwanda. That was the approximate cause of the Congolese war, breakout of the Congolese war in 1996.

So, how do we evaluate Rwanda's involvement in the Congolese war? Now there's not very much nuanced middle ground to be found in the public debate. Either people see Rwanda as the Beelzebub of the Great Lakes, the crafty manipulator, and the source of all things evil in the Congo, and believe me,

there's many of those, or you see Rwanda's action guided by a steely and principled stance of self defense against the forces of genocide.

Now, you can probably see that I don't really graft on easily to either of those positions. Rwanda did intervene primarily out of self defense in 1996, so there were other motivations as well. Even at the time of the second invasion in August 1998, Rwanda was fighting a brutal counterinsurgency in the northwest of its country against forces that were based in the Eastern Congo and who had begun to link up with Laurent Kabila's government. But that was not the only goal that Rwanda's government had, and even if it was the only goal, it would not justify all of the means.

First, I can say that Rwanda was much better militarily than it was politically at grafting the first alliance that went into the Congo. So in the book, I describe – I'm making the book sound incredibly boring, by the way, by this presentation. Nothing in the book is actually, sounds like this presentation. If I wanted to give a faithful sort of impression of the style of the book, this would be like a fireside chat, with me telling war stories. But instead of the war stories, I decided, since you're an esteemed UN and diplomatic audience, I thought that I'd give you a little bit more of the, maybe the war stories can come afterwards over some beers.

So, as I said, Rwanda was much better militarily than politically in a sense than when the AFDL rebellion started, this rebellion that was led by Laurent Kabila in 1996 came together, Rwanda basically resurrected Kabila from obscurity, picked him out of obscurity. He was in exile in Dar es Salaam, put him together with a Congolese Tutsi architect, with a young officer from the Rwandan army, and a forgotten Momombus guerilla fighter from the mountains of the Eastern Congo, and this sort of ramshackle coalition then was the rebellion. I mean, there was no... it was not a process of Congolese rising up and overthrowing Mobutu. This was a regional coalition, not just Rwanda, this was... I mean, you name it, everybody was involved. I mean, Mobutu had made so many enemies: Angola, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, everybody had a bone to pick with Mobutu, but the Congolese side of things was very, very feebly represented.

So, I tell the story in the book, for example, of Kizito, who's a young Congolese who's recruited into the AFDL in the beginning of the war, and he went to this boot camp, and he's telling me, he said, it was really weird, these Rwandans. Grueling... I talk about the experience at length in the book, grueling boot camp, but they'd also give these ideology classes, and Kizito told me, these ideology classes were really weird, because the Rwandans were telling us how to be patriotic and how to fight to free our country from foreigners, and here they were, Rwandans, telling us to be patriotic, and he said, it just, it was kind of a weird sort of thing, and then when Rwanda fell out with Kabila in 1998 and Kabila allied himself with Rwanda's enemies, Rwanda launched again an incredibly ambitious airport--what do you call these things--an airlift operation against Kinshasa to kick out Laurent Kabila, again, a sort of hubris... it's typical, very dogged, hardnosed, steely determination to push through policy, even when politically, it did not result, I mean, the coalition they put in power in Kinshasa was not a tenable coalition.

Secondly, while Rwanda has been, without doubt, very visionary in rebuilding its country after the genocide, dramatically improving education, health care, infrastructure with the help of foreign aid, this should not lead us to overlook the brutality of the occupation in the Eastern Congo. In 1996-1997, Rwandan troops massacred thousands of Rwandan refugees. Between 1996-2002, they and their

Congolese allies killed thousands of Congolese civilians during counterinsurgency operations in the Eastern Congo. And when I talk to foreign diplomats who were in charge of U.S. and foreign policy during this period, and I said, during this time, all governments in the region, Uganda and Rwanda in particular were being, not, I'd say, bankrolled, but their budgets were funded over 50% by foreign aid.

And I said to them, well you know, I understand they're doing a great job on some fronts, but can you walk and chew gum at the same time? I mean, there were massacres, and Howard Wolpe, who was a special envoy for the United States at the time under the Clinton Administration, said yeah, but we didn't have good information coming out of the Congo. We didn't know if these massacres were really happening. And my response to him is, that's not good enough. I mean, if you are, give spending literally hundreds of millions of dollars on a government, you have a responsibility to know. I mean, I went to Kasika in the Eastern Congo, and I talked to victims of the Kasika Massacre. Up to 1,000 people may have been butchered. And this was during a time when, you know... I can... so, it's this, again, you're sort of this lack of middle ground, where it's either hero or villain, and a lack of constructive engagement.

I talked to Sue Hogwood who was the UK ambassador in Rwanda for a long time, and she said, we're being very tough and asking very tough questions of the Rwandan government. But if you're very tough and ask very tough questions, and then at the same time, DFID and the British government is giving more or less unconditional aid, the message doesn't come through that clearly. And this obviously can be a much longer discussion. I'm sure it's going to be, but it's just to say that it's not black and white.

The Clinton Administration, particularly during the war, they were talking about the new African renaissance leaders: Isaias Afewerki, that's Meles Zenawi, Paul Kagame, Yoweri Museveni. And they, in some cases, they were trying to find heroes where perhaps the heroes were much more complex characters than just heroes. And you talk to many of the former officials from the U.S. administration at that time, and some of them, at least, feel a certain amount of regret and resentment for not having a more nuanced policy. So that's one issue. And I think that's, to a certain extent, also borne about the simplistic stereotypical clichéd approach towards policy in the region, that I was talking, this pathology of perception.

The second thing is natural resources. Now, there is a well-worn notion that the real cause of Congolese wars are the abundant resources. The Congo is a geological scandal--you'll often hear blood diamonds, blood coltan, blood tin, I've heard of blood cheese, blood cows, at the very beginning, when I went to the Congo--and I'm running out of time, I have all these anecdotes I wanted to tell you--at the very beginning, I went to the Congo, I got arrested when I first arrived in the Congo in 2001, and I was sent to Goma, and I was harassed, and they put me on a boat to go to Goma, and I was sitting on this boat crossing Lake Kivu, and I was sitting next to a Congolese trader, and we started chatting, it's a long boat ride, and he said, oh, you're from the United States.

We start talking about the war, and he said, do you know Bob Marley? And I said, Yeah, I know Bob Marley, I know his music. He said, do you know a song "Babylon System?" I said, yeah, I'm familiar with "Babylon System." He's like, and he starts singing "Babylon System," the lyrics go something like, "Babylon System/You're sucking the blood of the children," and he was saying Babylon System is the United States. Babylon is the United States. The children are us,



the Congolese, and the blood is our minerals. And, very commonly held view in the Eastern Congo. Not even just in the Eastern Congo, but many places in the world.

Now again, unfortunately, I guess my middle name is Complexity, which is not very satisfying for some people. Is this true? Was the main reason for the war in the Congo the natural resources? Well, minerals were not at the source of conflict in the Congo, and they will not be, and solving the "conflict minerals" problem is not going to bring an end to the conflict.

But it's true that some people got enormously rich off the war in the Congo. You had mining cowboys such as Jean-Raymond Boulle, Dan Gertler, a lot of people used to work for big mining corporations like De Beers, Rio Tinto, left, and then they took on these jobs as sort of people who thrive in context of risk. They go in, they get a hold of a concession, and then years later, they'd flip it on international market, absorbing all of the risk in the negotiation process to get a hold of the concession, and then selling it on to BHP Billiton or Rio Tinto, to other bigger companies who had a much harder time dealing with financial irregularities than these mining entrepreneurs.

Now, this does not mean that nobody made huge profits. Huge profits were made by everybody involved, and we can go more into detail about all of the different people involved, but what I'm trying to argue is that this was not a vast Western conspiracy to get their hands on Congolese wealth. In fact, if most of the Rio Tintos and BHP Billiton, et cetera, of the world would be crazy to invest in the investment climate of the Congo. They would much prefer to have a stable environment than invest in the Congo, so there has been an enormous amount of complicity through various ways in the minerals trade and in other trade in the Congo. But I think the biggest complicity of the international community in the Congo has been its sheer apathy and ignorance of the conflict, and that's what despairs me so much.

Now, having said that, let's talk a little bit about the situation now, because it gets back to this ignorance and apathy that I was talking about. Now, it's really weird, working on the Congo now. It's very anachronistic to a certain extent, for people like me. We were working... I've been involved, working on the Congo for 10 years, many people for much longer than I have, and during the war, we were knocking on anybody's door who would listen in DC, in New York, in London, and it was difficult to get people to act in a serious fashion. I mean, at the top level of government. And now you have a grassroots movement in the United States growing up, and for the first time, you have Senator Obama, when he was still a Senator, initiating a bill on the Congo. You have part of the Dodd-Frank act passed last year specifically on the Congo, you have Oprah Winfrey dedicating shows to the Congo, you have grassroots coalitions of NGOs mobilizing around this issue, and I say I feel a bit ambivalent about this, because on the one hand, it's often reducing the conflict to something that it's not really about.

The Congolese conflict, as I said, is not about conflict minerals. It's not primarily about conflict, it's not borne out of conflict minerals. And sexual violence just does not come from nowhere, and it's... women are not getting raped in order so armed groups can get their hands on minerals in the Eastern Congo. That's not... it's one of the causes, but it's not the only cause, and maybe not the primary cause.

But the reason I feel ambivalent about this is that, for the first time, they've put the Congo on the map, and you have Senators and Congressmen in the United

States waking up to this, and this ethical responsibility that I feel we should have had, since a long time ago, with regards to the Congo, has really woken up. You have Congressmen and Senators and politicians... Hillary Clinton went to the Eastern Congo, an engagement on the level that is difficult, we haven't really had throughout most of the war. So it's good, and I think this is... I think to a certain extent, the soccer moms of the world, because a lot of the movements through women in the United States on sexual violence, and they've sort of done their job, but I'm not sure the policy makers have done their job.

The key thing is, the problem, the danger of simplistic understanding can lead to a simplistic solution, and the Congo is obviously in need of a more strategic comprehensive engagement, a wholesale overhaul of state institutions, and this, as Warren... Warren scooped everything I was going to say in his introduction, by the way. It was very frustrating.

But this is an intensely political project. In other words, you know, just to give you an anecdote, Hillary Clinton sees in the Congo, she recognizes a terrible catastrophe, an epidemic of sexual violence, she went out to the Eastern Congo. The reaction? \$17 million for hospitals and health care centers. The response from the women, from civil society groups in the Eastern Congo is, to be honest with you, we don't want more hospitals. We want women to stop being raped. We don't want more hospitals to treat rape victims! It's a recognition that the crisis is intensely political, and rooted in a history that goes back a very long way. And Americans may not recognize this history, and they may not recognize their own involvement in this history.

But for Congolese, as this Babylon system metaphor sort of lays out, you say you're from the United States, and they say, they're convinced that everybody in the United States knows what's going on in the Congo, and that President Obama wakes up with his morning scone every morning and has a Congo briefing. And I try to convince them this is not the case--and I'm simplifying, obviously not all Congolese believe this--but there's certainly a feeling that there's some sort of orchestration of what's going on based in Washington, DC, or in New York, or in Paris, and that's obviously not true, but, and I think this has led to these kind of simplistic approaches to problems in the Eastern Congo, such as throwing \$17 million at building hospitals. Or I hear the State Department is looking into, for example, stoves for women in refugee camps so they don't have to go get firewood because they'd get raped. This is all great things, and \$17 million is great, it's wonderful. It's not the problem, though. And that's sort of what I was trying to, so what do we do if we want to have an intelligent approach to this? It's hard. It's incredibly hard.

But one step, I think, is to see the challenge clearly. It's one of institutional reform, not tinkering around the edges. The problem of sexual violence, for example, means reforming the Congolese army and police, which is an intensely political problem, because the government, apparently, has been very reluctant to attack, to tackle impunity, for example, by privileging loyalty and accountability, sorry, privileging loyalty over accountability, and they've been relatively afraid, apparently, of creating a strong republican army that could become an independent pole of power.

So this means the donors have to come to the table with a significant amount of money, significant resources, not the small, symbolic gestures, for example, that have been happening on security sector reform, and say they want to carry out security sector reform with the government, together in a partnership, but upon very strict terms. This means aid conditionality in many, many other sectors as

well, particularly with the World Bank and IMF, who consistently refrain from the notion that aid is political. This notion that we're just technocrats, we're coming in to fix your fiscal system and get out, and that's going to solve the problem, and there's nothing political we're doing here.

I think the other thing I would say, before ending my already much too long presentation, is that, first and foremost, we need to give Congolese the tools to solve their own problems. At the end of the day, it's their duty, their responsibility. No foreigner is ever going to come in and fix the Congo's problems. But given our past pernicious involvement in the Congo from Stanley to Leopold to Lumumba, to the most recent wars, we do owe at least that to them, of being able to give them a chance at rebuilding their own country and their own institutions.

And I think, in the case of right now, what this means is giving them the chance to have free and fair elections this year. I hear voices, given that we're sitting across from the now heavily-under-construction UN headquarters, that within diplomatic missions and the UN, saying Kabila's going to win anyway, let's just, let's make sure we don't jeopardize political interference, jeopardize our good relationships with Kabila by having too much political interference in the elections mission, in the elections process.

This is particularly the case because the new, the head of the UN peacekeeping mission has tried very hard to mend fences with the Congolese government, which is a great thing. This is absolutely necessary to have good strong relationships with the Congolese counterpart, but that cannot then feed into this fear of jeopardizing your relationship. Then, once the Congolese government recognizes that, then all bets are off to a certain extent, in terms of what they can do.

I think elections this year are going to be extremely contentious, more so than in 2006, although the opponents of Kabila do not have armed groups. I think Kabila, arguably, is much less popular than he was in 2006, and he stands a fair chance of losing the elections. There has been no polling in the Congo, so we have really no idea, but we should assume that, and therefore, we should recognize that it's going to be, it could potentially be very dangerous, it could potentially get very violent.

We don't know. But we need to engage diplomatically and politically in such a way to prevent possible escalation of violence or possible fraudulent elections. If the problem is really about rebuilding Congolese institutions, then isn't this the best chance we have, allowing Congolese people to hold their own representatives accountable? Now unfortunately, you sort of see the opposite happening at the moment in the Congo, which is, you see the EU now thinking about withdrawing their special envoy altogether, the United States is already reluctant to even name a special envoy, the UN peacekeeping mission, as I said, is reluctant about getting too involved in the electoral process, and possible UN withdrawal is sort of on the horizon, or a peacekeeping mission withdrawal is on the horizon, the Congolese government just got massive debt relief last year, so it seems that, to a certain extent, that the international community is disengaging at a moment that's crucial. These are the second elections after the peace deal. This is a very important moment.

So again, I was going to end by reading my last paragraph from my book, but Warren scooped me there as well. So all I can say before perhaps opening the floor is, it's, the Congo is an incredibly complex place. Our first ethical and moral

obligation is to understand that. As a diplomat, as an aid worker, as anything, we can't come in and try and get, and just think that we're operating in a political vacuum. We're operating within a long context in history of violence, and if you don't understand that, then the chances are that you're going to engage, and you're going to become complicit, to a certain extent, in some aspects of this violence in the Great Lakes. So it's an exhortation for us to take this seriously and not to say the Congo is too complex, therefore, we shouldn't care about it.

**Hoge:**

Jason, that was not too long, and it was very thorough. I've got a couple of questions, then I want to throw it open to the floor. There are a lot of people here who have experience and knowledge of the Congo, so I want to hear from them.

You point out in the book that Sierra Leone, Kosovo, East Timor, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia all had tribunals to deal with the past, and you say, and I'm quoting from the book once again, "Yet in the Congo, where many of the perpetrators are still in power, the victims are left to stew in their own frustration." Do you think there ought to be a special court in the Congo? It was recommended, I know, by the UN last year.

**Stearns:**

I think it's up for the Congolese to decide, but I think they should be able to, these things are complex, the... what I liked about the UN mapping report that came out was that it was part of their mandate to come up... they mapped out all of the abuses that happened in the Congo, and then they said, well, here are various different possibilities the Congolese could pursue. They could have a tribunal, an international tribunal. It's extremely costly, as we've seen in the case of Rwanda, for example, it takes years and hundreds of millions of dollars, and you're only going to try a couple dozen people.

So the recommendation was to have specialized courts within the Congolese justice system, which I think is sort of the direction that international tribunals are going in general. If you see Yugoslavia or Rwanda, Sierra Leone, mixed courts, now this would be even more integrated within the Congolese justice system, with international foreign judges, but working within the Congolese judiciary. That's what they recommend, and I think that's a good idea, and I think, and actually, on this level, the Congolese have been very proactive. President Kabila has given his go ahead. His Justice Minister has drafted a plan in this direction. Congolese civil society is engaged. The UN, the United States Special Representative on War Crimes, Stephen Rapp, has been particularly engaged in this matter and is taking the lead, the U.S. is taking the lead on many issues, this being one of them, and I think that the dynamic is growing relatively... it's a very positive dynamic at the moment.

Now, we're going to have to see how far it goes, because at a certain point for the Congolese government, that means tying your hands and saying that, okay, whoever you find guilty is going to be guilty. And that's a step to take for any government, in particular, governments that have people in them who were complicit to one degree or another in probably crimes against humanity during the last 10 years.

**Hoge:**

You know, back to your point about the elections this year. As you probably know, there are 17 elections on the African continent this year, meaning there is a lot of international attention, a lot of attention being paid from this community to elections. Could that have a positive effect on Congo, them knowing that other countries, other large countries, Nigeria and others, are having elections also?

**Stearns:**

When my book came out, and I think a week later, we started bombing Libya, and it could not have been worse timing. I couldn't get an interview on the radio to save my life. And when I did get an interview on the radio, everybody asked me, what does this message send to the Congo? And what I told them is that the Congolese actually don't really care too much about Libya. What they care a lot about is Cote d'Ivoire, Ivory Coast. Kinshasa was abuzz about what happened in the Ivory Coast, and it really sent a very, very strong signal, not because--the situation is obviously completely different, in terms of... the Congo is no longer in a state of civil war as Ivory Coast was, the country divided, we're not in a transitional government, et cetera, et cetera. But a very strong message in terms of what the reaction to fraud will be. It's difficult to rig elections if everything's in place to make sure that everybody knows what's going on. And maybe that was one. I don't know exactly what the lesson was, but they were extremely obsessed with this Ivory Coast thing.

Let me say one other thing about elections. I was having a conversation with somebody at the State Department recently, and they said, look, we had big, several huge political events in Africa this year. We had a referendum in Sudan, went, largely speaking, from our point of view, well. We had elections in Nigeria--went, on the one hand, in terms of electoral process, outstanding. With regards to past, in terms of violence, was terrible, but from the electoral point of view, very positive. Ivory Coast, strong reaction, at least from the international community. Uganda did not go very well.

So what is... the Congo is the biggest, last one. So we're now, we're only in May. For the rest of the year, according to the State Department, the biggest political event in Africa is the Congolese elections, if it happens this year. And I think that sort of shows you the amount, that some people realize that this is an enormous political event that could happen. Now I'm trying to... my reaction was, that's great, so why is nobody really... the U.S. government was not, until recently, investing one cent in the elections in the Congo. They put \$6 million into election, into a civic education program, and now they funded the Carter Center, but in terms of... the rhetoric clashed very strongly with this sort of broader disengagement with the Congo, so I have yet to figure out what exactly is the stance of Washington, particularly on the elections in the Congo.

**Hoge:**

Just one last thing. You were talking, a little earlier in your talk, about investment in Congo, how people are reluctant to do it because it's just such a dodgy place to put money, but in the book, you mentioned that there's a need for regulation of international companies which act in ways in the Congo that would be proscribed in their own countries. Could you just expand upon that a bit?

**Stearns:**

Maybe... I have a tendency of not answering the questions that people ask, people, when you first... if you ever get a briefing at an NGO about how to handle the press, they say always respond to the questions you wish people had asked you. So I'll take a little bit of creative license with your question. I'm going to talk about --

**Hoge:**

I was in the press for 40 years, and we always knew that's what you guys were doing, so we would try to --

**Stearns:**

It was a fight. So one of the things that I felt very strongly about is regulation of "conflict minerals." Now when you think, from the presentation I just gave, that I'm very critical about this effort. I am critical about reducing the war in the Congo to conflict minerals. It wasn't started by minerals, and solving this problem is not going to solve the war in the Congo. I'm a big supporter of the Dodd-Frank act,

and I've pushed hard for this regulation to go through, Dodd-Frank act being this obligation now on companies registered in the United States to comply with due diligence requirements, to publish what they are doing in terms of due diligence in their supply chains.

Now the reason I think this is intelligent, this is not going to solve all the problems in the Congo, but it acts on the conflict economy in a way that other aid doesn't. A lot of aid is diplomats coming in and wagging their fingers at Congolese officials, or clumsy aid conditionality, and that is more often than not, just doesn't work. But this acts in a way, it shapes the incentives of a very important constituency in the conflict economy, which is Congolese businessmen. Already, they're having a hard time shifting their product on international markets because they can't comply with these regulations. They can't comply with these regulations because a) they don't have the mechanisms in place to figure out where their product comes from, even if they wanted to source clean product, it would be very difficult for them, and secondly, most of the product, most of the supply chains are militarized.

So the incentive would be, we're going to boycott you until you can prove to us that you can actually produce, you can actually trace and tag your supply chain. Now because they can't do that, the reaction incentive, and they're losing money because they can't, the incentive is for them to lobby the Congolese government to demilitarize the supply chain, and for the Congolese government also, together with donors, to set up mechanisms that are necessary that will allow them to tag and trace minerals in the Eastern Congo. So it works, it's just a long way of saying that it works through, it governs through the market, and not through clumsy and often patronizing finger wagging in diplomatic circles.

Secondly, it's something that just morally and ethically touches consumers in the United States, so it should be our responsibility, not just with supply chains with regard to the Eastern Congo, but this is a burgeoning movement in supply chain management throughout, whether it's apparel, jewelry, minerals, electronics, across the sectors. So I think that, for many reasons, this is a good direction to go down, but as with many things in the Eastern Congo, in order to get from the good idea to actually the good practice on the ground, there's... what did Shakespeare say, "much a slip twixt the lip and cup, cup and lip? Much a slip twixt cup and lip." There you go. A lot of... there's a long way to go between idea and implementation.

**Hoge:**

A Congo specialist who can quote Shakespeare! Wow! Isn't there also a need, Jason, to convince the Congolese that they have to expect more of their own government? The reason I say that is, you mention in the book at one point, Congolese are quite happy to blame outsiders to blame Rwandan hegemony, that sort of thing, and they don't ever sort of say, our own government is so incompetent, they're responsible, too.

**Stearns:**

I think they are, slowly. But you have to... I mean, for 32 years, they didn't have elections. The logical thing was that whatever came, came from above, and there was very little feedback in terms of holding people accountable. We had the first multiparty election since 1965 in 2006, and at that point, it was amazing, the outpouring of people. People who say that the Congolese vote is just ethnic, and they just vote basically what the chiefs tell them to... sure, part of that's true, but the Congolese vote in 2006 was not ethnic. It was... we don't like the people who ruled us. Everybody in the East voted for Kabila because he hadn't been ruling them, and everybody in the West voted against Kabila, because he *had* been ruling them, so this time, it's going to be very, very interesting. So I wouldn't, I

think, absolutely... and I said, again and again, the future of the Congo should be in the hands of the Congolese, and everything we do should be facilitating that, but I think that's coming slowly, which is why I think, it would be the greatest shame in the world if we now saw a drift towards more autocratic regime, and some donors I speak to out there, I think, have a sympathy for the fact that we just need a strong ruler to put the house in order. That strong ruler doesn't exist in the Congo. Forget about it. We're not going to have, Kabila becomes a dictator, and all of the sudden overnight turns his country into Singapore. That's not going to happen. So democracy is going to be messy and dirty and problematic and violent and all those other things, but there's just no option there.

**Hoge:** Excellent. I have someone I recognize in the back who just raised her hand. Just wait for the, and would you identify yourself, please?

**Sharon Hoge:** Hi, my name is Sharon Hoge. We hear about China starting to turn to Africa for natural resources. What role, if any, is China playing in Congo, and if so, how are they perceived?

**Stearns:** China has a complicated role in the Congo since the peace deal, since elections, they've come in in a massive way. They had a \$9 billion deal, investment deal with the Congo, now it's \$6 billion, they've scaled down. It's basically a barter agreement. You give us access, you give us minerals, and we'll give you money, and some Congolese like this, and the reason they like it is they say, you cannot put a road in your Swiss bank account. You can embezzle money, but you can't, because what the Chinese do is they come in and they build infrastructure. The deal is, we give you minerals, and in exchange, they're building thousands of miles of roads, thousands of miles of railway line, hundreds of hospitals and schools. And some Congolese like this.

Now, there's two problems that I see with this. One is, you can't outsource a state. You cannot outsource the functions of a state, and already, you're seeing, you build a road, who's going to maintain the road? You build a hospital, who's going to work in the hospital? And to a large extent, the *cinq chantiers* program of President Kabila, which is, this is his main program, the five construction sites, is one that has been outsourced to donors and to China. The state is not doing this. In fact, it's taking a very laissez-faire attitude towards reforming the state apparatus, and that's... I think that's the wrong way to approach this problem.

The second thing is that, what was the second thing? That, it slipped my mind, but I'm sure I'll remember at some point, but I think it's more complex than most people make. The Chinese, it's very obvious what they're interested in, but they're doing, they're investing and giving, providing aid to the Congo that, to some Congolese, at least, seems less hypocritical than Western aid. Western aid comes with strings attached, and you have to do this and you have to do that. The Chinese, it's very simple. You give us your minerals, we provide you infrastructure. That's it. The second problem with the deal is that they act, it was very well negotiated by the Chinese. In other words, the amount of minerals they get in exchange is, the Congolese underpriced what they were giving the Chinese, basically.

**Hoge:** I'll go to the back, and then come to the front. Peter Gastrow?

**Peter Gastrow:** Thank you. My name is Peter Gastrow from the IPI. You referred to ethical responsibility--I think that was in relation to the U.S. Where does ethical responsibility start, where does it end? Ethical responsibility towards what has

happened and towards what is happening in the Congo. Are those who are directly or indirectly complicit with what is happening, the ones who have an ethical responsibility, or do you think it goes much further, it goes to humanity at large? The community of nations at large? It would just be interesting –

**Stearns:**

You can make both arguments. A lot of... so I get this question a lot. Why should we care? So one argumentation is the humanity at large. Five million people die, for whatever reason, and through however kind of complex causality, because it's only 400,000 through direct violence. One argument is that, if five million people die anywhere in the world, we should care. It's a matter of humanity. It's a matter, it's the cosmopolitan ethic, you could say.

Another argument is personal responsibility. "If you broke it, you fix it," kind of argument, which is that, even though most Americans don't realize that the Congo's on the map, or that it's anything but a river, that we've actually, you know, we've been intricately--not just Americans, but many other countries--intricately involved in the Congo. Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-century slave trade, you know that 39% of the Atlantic slave trade were people coming from Central Africa, and many from the Congo Kingdom in the current Congo and Angola? So 39%... I mean, chances are, if you were a slave, and it's the largest batch, it's the largest group. More than Nigeria, more than Liberia, more than the west coast. So where do those slaves end up? They ended up in South America and the United States. The rubber trade. The rubber trade benefited Firestone, etc, etc, etc. And you can go down the list, our involvement with Mobutu, our bankrolling of Mobutu, our, put the use of him as a bulwark against Communism. I mean, there's a good reason for why Congolese think that the United States knows where the Congo is. It's because we have been involved, we were the first country to recognize the Congo free state of King Leopold II.

So, the list is long, so you can make that argument as well, and it depends on how... I mean, personally, I think I would probably favor the cosmopolitan ethic, but in a... I think in a complex fashion, in the sense, that we shouldn't... we obviously can't care about all violations done everywhere in the world, and our ethical responsibility, to a certain extent, is tempered by the possibilities at our disposal. But there are possibilities in the Congo that have not been exhausted, and the book goes a long way, I think, trying to push towards more, stronger engagement, so that we would open up these other possibilities at our disposal. Not sure that was a great answer to your question, but...

**Hoge:**

Jason, I'm going to ask, I'm going to get three questions in a row, and you can answer them all at once. One, two, and three. Wait for the microphone, if you will, please. And would you identify yourself?

**Tim Reid:**

Hi, Jason. You've referred to the –

**Hoge:**

The reason you have to identify yourself, we're recording –

**Reid:**

Tim Reid –

**Stearns:**

My former boss!

**Reid:**

I picked him up in the streets of Bukavu and gave him a home!

**Hoge:**

But the reason I say this is we record this, and we have a transcript after, just say your name and association.



**Reid:** Tim Reid, former UN peacekeeper, and Jason's former chief in Bukavu. Jason, you've done a great job. You've mentioned the problem of justice, transitional justice. One of the few mechanisms that's come up is this idea of universal justice, and the French and the Spanish, for universal justice reasons, and for specific charges of murders of their own citizens, have tried to bring to trial some of the, especially Rwandan alleged perpetrators of this. Now we know from Wikileaks and from other sources that the U.S. Ambassador of war crimes has actively tried to discourage them from doing this. I wonder if you could just comment on the ongoing status of this.

**Hoge:** Okay, hold that thought.

**Diakhoumba Gassama:** Thank you. Hi, I'm Diakhoumba Gassama from UNDP, the gender team. Thank you very much. Really, it was very interesting, and for those of us working on the other side, with the survivors of sexual violence. I was a bit shocked in the beginning when you started saying that you were focusing on the perpetrators, and I would like to know why.

And actually, there was a study from a young lady in Harvard that was published two years ago, and she did a similar job, and I wanted you to... in answering that question, to tell us how you felt about the ethics to be talking to people who had done some gruesome acts, and also to, just little clarifications. When I heard that there's no tribunal prosecuting the crimes in Congo--there is one, and in the American context, it's very interesting, because it's the International Criminal Court, and I know that the U.S. has not adopted or signed the treaty, so this is a little call for those of us in the room who can influence that, and I think that, from previous experience with the tribunal in Rwanda, maybe the Criminal Court, there's a lot of articles explaining that they are not doing their job well, because they target certain people and not others, but I think at least it's a step.

And I wanted to have your views, because you were there, about, how can I say, about the structure that the Congolese government put in place regarding sexual violence, because there's a policy that many countries don't have, and there's even some special courts, but what we hear from the women while working there is that they're just there. Thank you.

**Stearns:** Thank you.

**Hoge:** There's a lot there, so why don't you answer those two questions, and then we'll get to the third.

**Stearns:** Well, Tim, on universal justice, those cases mostly have to do with cases in Rwanda, if I'm understanding correctly.

**Reid:** Not completely, partially.

**Stearns:** Partially, yeah. I'm not sure I'm going to give you a very intelligent answer on that. There have been obviously hiccups in both cases, both in terms of France and Spain. I'm not entirely sure what's currently, what the current status is on that. So instead of, like, going into details about the ins and outs of that whole thing, I would, maybe we could talk about this afterwards, because I'm not going to give you an intelligent answer on that, I think. Sorry. Probably not the first time you've heard me say "I'm not going to give you an intelligent answer on that."

**Hoge:** Okay. Why protagonist?

**Stearns:**

Diakhoundba, is that it? So obviously, it's important to listen to survivors. But I think, if we don't understand why people are carrying out the violence in the first place, it's very useful to figure out what the incentive, why there are incentives in place to do these things. People don't kill and rape just because they like to. They do it for complex reasons, and I think it's... I think that we haven't quite grasped, for example, why there's so much sexual violence in the Congo. Some people say, the common narrative is that it's a weapon of war against women, but if you take a closer look, what exactly that means is not entirely clear. In some cases, communities do use it, or, sorry, soldiers do use it as a way to punish a community for having collaborated with their rival or for intimidating the community to get more resources out of the community.

But in some cases--I think in many cases--they also use it to socialize their own combatants. In other words, you're a new combatant, you come into the group, in order to make sure that you understand that you're no longer part of civil society, we're going to make you do something terrible. And actually, we're going to make you do it in front of everybody else, which is why you see a lot of these rapes, gang rapes, happening. So there's that element to it, and then there's opportunistic rape, if I can call it such, which is soldiers growing up in a chauvinistic society, and they rape because they can. Unfortunately, it's become... the study, for example, that you mentioned, from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, one of the conclusions that they came to was that more and more civilians are beginning to also carry out sexual violence in the Eastern Congo, so it's a complex problem, and I think based on the causes, the solutions will also be different, which is why I think, I was focusing on the perpetrators, but not to say that ethically that should be privileged at all, or try to say that one should not listen to survivors and to victims.

In terms of the ICC, absolutely. In fact, in the Congo, they call it the Tribunal Penale Internationale pour le Congo. ICC, the International Criminal Court for the Congo. Because every single person on the docket is Congolese, and there's a lot of cynicism in the Congo for this. Personally, I mean, I feel, I'm a great supporter of international justice. I'm a bit cynical about the ICC's efforts in the Congo, because it's very removed from the Congolese. Not only is it very removed, they've arrested, I mean, the ICC has arrested the main political opponent of the incumbent, somebody who 47% of the population voted for. So obviously, wait, you say this is international justice? Okay, we don't really care about Thomas Lubanga, unless you're from Ituri, and these other guys... nobody in the country really cares about those guys. But Jean-Pierre Bemba, he's, I mean, he's the main opponent. Or he was. For all his flaws.

So I think there's a lot of skepticism in the Congo for that, which is another reason, I think, that the specialized courts within the Congolese justice system, as flawed as I'm sure they would be, because they are in the Congolese justice system, it would be closer to home, you would, actually, you would be able to prosecute more people, ICC's going to be like, the ICTR. I mean, it's going to be a very long process. So for, those two things could work together, you know, for certain, the big shots take them out of the game, you know, try them in ICC, but justice is much larger than that.

Anyway, so in terms of the structure, the Congo has, has ratified the ICC, has ratified the Rome Statute, and in theory, has incorporated this into their own justice system. So in theory, they would have all of the different, and there are, of course, parts of the Rome Statute that address sexual violence as well. So in theory, they could use that, and there have been Congolese tribunals that are beginning to use the Rome Statute in the prosecution, so I think that's a very

positive step, and you actually do see more and more prosecutions. The problem is, it's not really... I think you need to start hitting command responsibility within the Congolese country before it actually takes, has an impact on the commanders. In other words, a commander's not going to see that he needs to stop his troops from raping until he understands that it's his head that's at stake.

**Hoge:** By the way, we have Dr. Denis Mukwege from the hospital in Bukavu coming here next month. Now, you asked about sexual violence against women, and you know Dr. Mukwege and the work he's done. He came 2 ½ years ago. We've asked him to come back and sort of give us a progress report, so let me take one here in the front row and one, two, three.

**Jacqueline Spann:** Hello, my name is Jacqueline Spann. I'm the President of Education and Literacy Fund for Africa. I just wanted to ask you, have you tracked, have you done a very close evaluation and tracking of all of the enormous resources in the Congo. For example, cobalt, that runs ships and airplanes, is in the Congo, the computer chip, and the chip in our cell phones, come from the Congo. The Congo just has enormous resources. Have you tracked where they go and how they get out of the country, and who's actually purchasing these products, because that has a major influence on what's happening as long as the country's in chaos, it's very easy to get that. Okay, secondly, one quick thing –

**Hoge:** Just one. I've got two other people. Please, Jacqueline. That was a good question, I'm happy to have it, but the gentleman behind you, and I've got four or five more hands in the back.

**Ugo Solinas:** Thank you very much. Ugo Solinas, from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and a colleague of Jason's from MONUC days. You talked about the need for fundamental institutional reform, state building, almost a social contract, the absence of a social contract as being at the heart or the root cause of everything that's been going wrong with the Congo. I mean, how does a peacekeeping operation like MONUC or now MONUSCO even start to begin to have any kind of impact on a process like that, which in other societies has taken centuries. Where, where do we begin as peacekeepers to contribute to that process?

**Hoge:** Excellent. And right behind you.

**Wilbert Ibuge:** Thank you so much. My name is Wilbert, Major Wilbert Ibuge, military advisor for the Permanent Mission of Tanzania to the United Nations, and therefore, essentially indeed, a peacekeeper. Tanzania is very close to Congo, affected by whatever has gone in there over the history of it and up to the very present moment, so this is going to be some quiet, personal interlude, so to speak. One, I do appreciate one point. I haven't read the book, but I should read it. I have heard about it. But when you say that, indeed, the conflict in the Congo is not about the genes of the Congolese being attuned to conflict, I think you saw the beginning, because our societies, moreover, have been in conflict at one point in history. So that is something I vouch for.

But then secondly, if it comes to the fact that all politics is local, but the same case, I would think it would be all politics is economics, and I'm just wondering, when it comes to the situation in the Congo, I have recently learned in terms of what solution we need to begin adopting towards reforming the politics, but is the politics that are fueled by the economics of it, the resources that go out of the Congo, not just during King Leopold, before that, is plunder, and is what fuels it. How do we divorce that? I wanted to get into that crux of the matter. Thank you.

**Hoge:** Can you answer those three, Jason?

**Stearns:** Yes, thank you very much. So there's two questions that are more or less about resources. In this book, I don't do the tracing of the minerals, but I was also the coordinator of the UN group of experts, and there, our job was understanding the links between conflict and minerals in the Congo.

It's complex. Tantalum, which is coltan, which is used in our cell phones, the Congo provides quite a large chunk of the international market, around 20%. Between 20-25%, and prices used to be very high during part of the war. Then they plummeted, and until about 2007, 2008, coltan... and even today, coltan is not the largest mineral in the Eastern Congo. It's tin. Tin is the largest in terms of value, the largest mineral. Gold, maybe, we just don't know, because it's all smuggled. So yes, absolutely, it plays a large role.

Copper and cobalt are in areas of the Congo where there's no conflict, or very little conflict. Mostly in Katanga region. Now they play into... you could argue, they play into the weakening of the state apparatus through patronage networks and other things, but it's a different beast than tin, cobalt, sorry, tin, tantalum, tungsten, gold, and a bunch of other minerals that you can find in the East, diamonds for example as well.

How large a role do those minerals play? They play a large role, but let me tell you, from the point of view of a rebel group, they don't care if the trade is tin or palm oil. For them, it's the same thing. They tax it. For them, it's a commodity they can tax, and some armed groups, for example, in the Eastern Congo, we investigated. For them, they made an enormous amount of money off charcoal. One armed group, CNDP, for example, which is probably the strongest armed group in the period between 2004-2009, did not control any major mines. They controlled two smaller mines, but did not control major mines. They made an enormous amount of money off taxing anything they could, they had a customs post, they taxed charcoal, they probably made upwards of \$500,000 just off charcoal. They taxed, hence, cows, which hence, the blood cows and blood cheese. I mean, anything and everything.

So cannabis, palm oil, timber, to a certain extent... one of the reasons that conflict minerals is a wrong way of looking at it is that it's money, all this stuff is money, and it's about politics and money, and they want to tax the trade in any shape that they can.

Now what is the responsibility of the involvement of international system, and this is what Major, Wilbert--is that correct?--was talking about. To what extent are they involved in this. They are, I think, largely, to the extent that the Congolese traders are just trying to sell their stuff onto the international market, and there is an enormous amount of complicity between Congolese traders, to a certain extent, traders in neighboring countries, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, and armed groups in the Eastern Congo. There's that.

Now to what degree is there complicity between traders in New York, in Brussels, Shanghai, and armed groups? No direct complicity that I've been able to, but they know where this stuff is coming from, and now increasingly, the burden of responsibility is shifting onto these companies. This is what the Dodd-Frank law says. Saying that you don't know where your stuff comes from is not an excuse. This is what supply chain due diligence means. You have to know what the source of your minerals is. Now whether it's forced labor going into the shoes

that you wear, or whether it's an armed group being financed by the tin that you buy, that's due diligence in your supply chain, so I think that's the innovation that we need to be pushing for, not just in the Congo, but elsewhere, but there's no direct complicity between, I don't know, Traxis or one of these other large tin mining, trading companies, and armed groups in the Eastern Congo.

So on Ugo's question, fabulous question. Once you find out, please let me know! So the question was, the question is, how can peacekeeping missions get involved in institutional reform. I think it's very difficult, I think actually it's incumbent much more upon donors and diplomats in general. I don't think they can. I think the condition that they can is when the... I think in general, to be very simplistic, peacekeeping missions can do magic if the political agreement is there for them to do the magic. In the Congo, MONUC was very good at implementing a peace deal. They implemented a peace deal. We got to elections. People forgot that MONUC was successful politically at getting us to elections. Every time there was a crisis, anytime anything was happening in the provincial assembly or with RCD, MONUC was there, Tim Reid was there. Other people were there doing the nitty gritty, and you were there, too, doing the nitty gritty, and we were successful at that. We were really bad at the military side of things, and we were not good at the larger political things, but that's asking too much from a peacekeeping mission.

I think where the donors come is they need to provide the political framework into which a peacekeeping mission can be inserted and then operate. So for example, if there's an agreement with the government to say your army is terrible, we want to be able to help you reform it, and we have peacekeepers we can bring in to help you reform it upon these terms, or even, like, insert them within your army and in training positions you have, if you have a solid arrangement, agreement, that's going to have to come from donors, not from an SRSG. Then they can be helpful. If not, I have a hard time seeing the precedent for where they've been helpful, because I think that's why Kosovo and Timor and Liberia, you have institutional capacity building, the Congo, this institutional capacity building has just fallen off the map. It just hasn't happened.

**Hoge:** I've got more hands than I can probably recognize. I want to recognize Vanessa Wyeth, my colleague, and also the gentleman in the far back, you've been very insistent, and we'll come here to the front. That'll be one, two, three.

**Vanessa Wyeth:** Hi, thanks. I'm Vanessa Wyeth from IPI, and Jason, I'm a big fan of your work, though I have not finished reading the book, but I wanted to follow up on that question and something you said initially in your presentation, which left me a little unconvinced, which is this idea of, well, what can we do? Well, donors can throw more money at things like security sector reform. I'm not really convinced that we actually know how to do that, and it's a question, it's not a question of resources and throwing more money or paying more attention, it's what, do we actually know how, from the outside, to help reform a security apparatus, or to help assure civilian control over the military, civilian control over police, ensure that security forces are compliant with human rights norms and everything else. Can you get, can you go a little further into that as to, do we know how to do that, and is it a question of just doing it better?

**Hoge:** Okay, the gentleman in the back. Yep.

**Lansana Koroma:** Yeah, my name is Lansana, and I'm for the African Views. I'm from Sierra Leone, West Africa. I want to give brief, just a few comments, then I ask my question. Sir, like in the United States, for example--let's take New York, for example. If

you leave New York this night, free for all, I give you one hour. New York will be out of the way. People who want to steal from rich people will go and kill everybody and take all their properties. That's one. The reason why Africa is getting this problem is because Africa knows very well that the international community is not treated all with the same respect that it treats other people, so until we're free to do any diligence among ourselves, that's the basic reason. Like the right, I was talking about President Obama, when Clinton was in power, they told, he went to Somalia, the Americans start crying for American life in Somalia, but the same Americans accepted America to go to Iraq and stay course up to this point, then you talk about Qaddafi, Qaddafi, they are there, but trust me, if America was to go to Ivory Coast, the Americans would have revolted against Obama for going to Ivory Coast. Now the question –

**Hoge:** Can I ask you to get to the question, because others want to ask questions.

**Koroma:** My question is, in the absence of the respect that the West is giving to other Western countries, if they don't give that to Africa, respect on the same level, not as a substitute, but as equals in humanity, do you think our prayer will be solved?

**Hoge:** And this gentleman here will be the third question.

**Anthony Ngororano:** Thank you very much for a very rich and elaborate presentation. My name is Anthony Ngororano. I'm with the United Nations. My first question really is a call or request for you to elaborate on the salient or key differences in the causal factors between the trigger and the persistence of the conflict in Congo. The second question touches upon, I would say, more of the political and strategic considerations rather than the economic considerations of the conflict, and I'd ask you, perhaps a slightly more complex question in and around how you would reconcile the narratives on one hand about, let's say, resource driven conflict, and on the other, what you mentioned earlier, which is essentially bankrolling of the West of a number of the non-Congolese forces. Thank you.

**Hoge:** And then I will, there's a woman on the right, you've been very insistent. That'll be the fourth question, that'll be the last question. Yes, I'm pointing at you.

**Agnieszka Grzybowska:** My name is Agnieszka Grzybowska, I'm with African Views organization, and you mention from the very beginning that you're going to actually point... go away from the political aspect of it, but you're going to focus on mostly like the causal effect of the conflict, and we kind of discarded the fact of the economics, the minerals, but I haven't really actually been convinced whether you really emphasize the real root cause of the problem, because those people who do the rapes on a regular basis, it's not like it's a single event, so what is really the trigger behind that violence? I don't think that I understood the answer to that –

**Stearns:** Behind the sexual violence?

**Grzybowska:** Yes.

**Stearns:** Behind all of the violence?

**Grzybowska:** All of the violence, more to the sexual violence. Thank you.

**Hoge:** Okay, Jason, I hate to do this to you, but we're out of time, so answer those four as quickly as you can!

**Stearns:**

Okay. So Vanessa, it seems like you're pushing me again on the question that Ugo asked, which is how do we reform institutions? The only case I think that you can really point to in terms of countries that have really carried out deep institutional reform, unfortunately, is colonialism, and I certainly don't think that we should go down that path. I struggle to find good examples for cases where you have donors come in and then undergo deep-rooted reform of institutions. I think we have to be much... it has to be led at the local level, incentives have to be right for those institutions, for the local leaders to want to do that.

In the case of the Congo, for example, like I pointed out, one of the reasons I think that Kabila does not want to create a strong security force and strong army is not because it's a technical problem, but because he sees this as a threat to his own existence. Like under Mobutu, he would prefer to have a fragmented army and fragmented security forces and a strong loyal inner core. If that's the case, then no matter how much money you throw at it, it's not... the problem's not going to be solved. The question then becomes, how do you change that perspective from Kabila's point of view? I don't have a solution, to be quite frank with you. I'm not sure anybody has a solution.

I do think that if you engage, and you say, you come to the table and say we recognize security sector reform is probably the most important challenge facing the Congolese state, in terms of solving violence, if you look at the problems in the Eastern Congo, then that means that you come to the table with a lot more resources. We're training a couple of battalions of an army that's 160,000 strong. It's a joke. I talk to people in the Defense Department, and they tell me it's a joke. You come to the table with a lot of resources, and you say these are the terms we will engage under, and those terms have to include things that would allow for, that would sow the seeds for strong institutional reform, and I'm not completely pessimistic, because you know, the whole transition in the Congo was built like that. They put the peace deal signed in South Africa in 2002, sowed the seeds for institutions that none of the signatories really wanted. They didn't really want to have free and fair... some of the parties didn't want free and fair elections. A lot of the parties did not want to have irksome institutions like parliaments and courts.

But they're set up now, and they have to deal with it, and they've taken up a momentum of their own, and I think it's a good example for the Lutundula Report that came out during the transition, looking at revising all the contracts that had been written during the constitution, during the war. These are things that nobody really wants, but they were created, and they were forced to stick with them, so if you can create a similar dynamic within the security sector, but it has to be strong diplomatic and political engagement, and it has to be a clear agreement, and then you have to put the resources in there. I don't see any of that happening, to be honest with you, but I think that may be a way of doing it. If I were in charge, that's something I would think about, but I don't have a silver bullet, and that's very, I mean, I think this question that you and Ugo have asked is *the* question. On whether giving respect, whether we'll, if I understand correctly, Lansana, is that your name?

**Koroma:**

Yes.

**Stearns:**

Yeah, there you are. The question is, if we don't give respect to Africans that we give to other Western countries, will we ever be able to get out of this problem, if I understand that correctly.

**Koroma:** My question is, the same way we treat issues that we are happy to go there, the United Nations, it all depends if we do the same thing to Africa, do you think the problem Africa is getting will get it?

**Stearns:** Look, I think that... I mean, a lot of this book urges us, pushes us in that direction, saying that the Congolese are just like, why is it, I point out, why do we send upwards of almost 100,000 peacekeepers to Kosovo, which is, what, is it a 20<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> or 40<sup>th</sup> the size of the Congo, and the Congo, it's peanuts we invest in the Congo. There's, look, there's no doubt that there is underlying racism in the international community. I mean, that's part of the problem, compounded with this fact that we think these things are too complex, and it's too difficult to deal with, etc, etc, etc. So there's no doubt about that. Will that solve the problem? I don't know, but I think it's a first step, dealing with these people on their own terms, dealing with the Congolese on their own terms. So I'm sure that's not a satisfactory answer, but we're short on time. In terms of triggering the persistence--Anthony, is that correct? Can I get you just to say, so the first one is the triggering persistence, the second one, between resource driven and what kind of profit?

**Ngororano:** You made a distinction. Outside of your speech, you told us about the influence of the West, and alluded to the fact that the West was projecting its political, strategic worldview as a non-Congolese component, so I ask how are the resources related ...

**Stearns:** Right, okay, well, so the first thing, first, it was a very good question. It's actually sort of an academic question and academic interest. Are the things that cause the conflict the same thing that cause them to persist? I think no, in many cases in the Congo. I think that I've seen, for example, armed groups, just to take an example, arise out of a certain social and political context triggered by something.

For example, it's... there's no doubt that the Rwandan genocide played a huge role in the creation of the problem of this conflict, but once within, particularly the structure of the Congolese state and the institution or lack of institutional capacity of the Congolese state. Once you take the genie out of the bottle, it was very... it's very difficult to, all of the different actors that a conflict brings into existence, from mercenaries to arms traders to businessmen to profiteers, they are used to operating within that context, and going on 15 years now. How can you persuade those people to work through a different type of institutional arrangement that no longer relies on conflict?

Just to give you one example, I know I'm way over time here, but I will abuse my privileges. The CNDP, for a long... Congolese rebel group... one of the key problems-- people don't really talk about is the fact that they're very closely linked with business elites in Goma, and business elites, to a certain extent, in Kigali as well. And the problem here is that everybody who is anybody in Goma who emerged in the period between 1996 and 2003, whether you're a gas station, whether you run a mining company, whether you have a boutique, I mean, anybody who's anybody emerged under the patronage of rebel groups linked to Rwanda. The AFDR and the RCD. Anybody who's anybody.

Now of course, those people are going to say, if they lose that patronage, that their assets are also at stake as well. Now their assets could be their own personal security, their assets could be business interests, their assets could be political power, and how do you guarantee... it's a little, we call in political science, commitment problem. How do you guarantee the interests of these



people without having a functional state with the rule of law, and the way the CNDP has guaranteed it to a certain extent is by having an armed group and saying that, okay, we're not going to demobilize these people, because we know if we demobilize them, then our businesses are gone. We have, no you can't give us any guarantee, Kabila. You're just going to tear it up tomorrow and throw it away. So this is obviously a longer conversation, but I think it's a very good question, and I think people should ... it's astounding to what degree people, us, peacekeeping operations, a group of experts, etc, get involved in situations and don't really understand what the interests of the actors involved are.

I was amazed when I was the chair of the group of experts in the Congo, and we were docking--it was 2008--we were docking in this port by Kabila to the FTLR, but also by Rwanda to the CNDP. I would go to Kigame, and then with the ambassador with the United States and the Ambassador with the United Kingdom, and I said, I would like to brief you, Mr. Ambassador, on the fact that Rwanda is giving a certain amount of support to the CNDP. They said, no, it's not true. It's absolutely not true. In fact, it's no in their interest to do that. Why would it be true? And they refused to accept that. They refuse, even when you had docking, all the evidence in the world. Not that they were puppets of Rwanda, but Rwanda was providing a certain amount of support. If you can't understand who, what the different constituencies are that are fueling conflicts, then forget about trying to engage in a conflict. It's kind of like trying to fix a car without an understanding what the problem with the car is. Anyway, so that's obviously a long conversation.

In terms of the second problem, resource driven vs... I mean, I think the, again, a longer conversation, I think that, I wasn't trying to say the Congolese conflict, the strings are being pulled by global superpowers. I think actually the opposite is the case. I think the global superpowers, to a large extent, have stayed outside of the Congolese conflict, and it is more their complicity, indirect, so for example, the fact that they had thrown, all reaction to the conflict in the region in general has been to throw a lot of money at it and not to engage politically. So we, as I said, the buckets of all the countries involved in the conflict, or at least Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda were funded through over 50%, and in the case of Rwanda, to a certain extent, at some point, 80% by international aid. But never did that come with commensurate kind of political engagement in the conflict as well, to understand who the actors were, what's driving it, etc, etc.

So I think that the bigger problem was not one of direct complicity, but indirect, that kind of indirect complicity by--and I know I didn't quite answer your question--but I could go on, focus on the cause. We're not convinced by the fact that the root cause of non-sexual violence, and the root cause of sexual violence, is the violence in general in the nation of Congo is a complex piece. I mean, it's not, it's not one thing that fuels it. It's... it has deep, historical roots, and goes back to many things. Even a particular act of sexual violence, as I was pointing out before, could be punishing the population, it could be intimidating the population, it could be a product of chauvinism and sexism within the opportunistic kind of way, it could be socialization... there's different reason for acts of sexual violence. There's different reasons for violence in general. You need to disentangle these different reasons.

I think that we've--as Anthony was pointing out--you create a mechanism and a dynamic where violence becomes a part of the language of these various different groups. In some cases, it's used very instrumentally as insurgency and counterinsurgency, intimidating your opponents, make a message, stake a claim. In other cases, it's not that logical. Not saying it's irrational, it's just not within the

same instrumental logic as it is elsewhere. So I think we really need to go back and understand all of these different causes, and then we'll find certainly, if it's the case, for example, that it's not being used instrumentally, but it's something that is more as a part of a socialization of new recruits, then you're going to have a different approach to how you "solve" this problem of sexual violence. I think that we don't need to go too far.

I think for all of these things, all of these different causes, the first step has to be understanding how to create incentives for soldiers not to carry out violence, and that has to come through greater accountability, and that's how you achieve greater accountability, whether it's through the justice system or other things, that's a key problem, but I think it's... if my book says anything, the violence is, different causes for different acts of violence. I'm happy to talk to you about this afterwards, because I know that Warren's breathing down my neck here.

**Hoge:**

Jason, time to sign the books. Thank you very much.