International Interventionism,
Democracy, and Peace-building
in the Great Lakes of Africa: 
A Regional Perspective to 
the Challenges¹

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ABSTRACT
Since the end of Cold War era, the conflict in the Great 
Lakes Region of Africa has exploded. The causes of this explo-
sion can be located in the structure and the dynamics of the 
world capitalist economy, the nature of Africa’s international 
relations, the demographics of the region, and the vicious 
forms of power struggles in the Democratic Republic of the 
Congo (DRC), Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda. With approx-
imately 4 millions Congolese deaths, the impact of the explo-
sion and its manifestations have tragically resembled those of 
dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by 
the United States.

This article examines the nature the geopolitics and that 
of political leadership’s motivation that led to the tragedy in 
the region. It is argued that the instrumental actors involved

¹ Many arguments and information in this article were drawn from the author’s arti-
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were motivated mainly by capitalistic greed, war of the influence, and lumpen-intellectual opportunism in the DRC. External predators have envied the Eastern region of DRC for a long time. Having some elections and peace in terms of the states signing some military and political agreements alone – which may limit some degrees of suspicion among them – is not likely to lead to a long-term solution in the region. Only a social state, its progressive institutions, and African social democracy based on pan-African vision can advance real peace in the region.

Introduction: Objectives, the Arguments, and Issues

Dani Nabudere’s view expressed above provides an historical perspective toward the understanding of the specificities of the actors involved and their mission. It also helps contextualize the arguments made in this article. This article is structured around five sections. The introduction, defines the objectives and the issues related to the topic. It also identifies the main arguments advanced and the intellectual perspectives that inform them. The second section discusses the physical, social, and political morphology of the Great Lakes Region. It is followed by the third section that focuses on the actors, their objectives, and the nature of their alliances. The fourth section addresses the issues of the search for peace, democracy, and social progress as framed in the Lusaka and Pretoria Peace Accords. This is followed by the conclusion, which examines the possibility of a regional solution to the crisis in the Great Lakes Region.

The critical examination of the nature of the international interventionism and the complexity of its processes within the logic and imperatives of Cold War and Post-Cold War politics constitutes the central concern of this article. Further, I intend to explore how peace and democracy could be created and sustained, and also used as progressive agencies of social change. The elements which characterize this interventionism as a new dominant paradigm in international relations include: unilateralism advanced by the United States as the guiding principle of its foreign policy; the rise of political neo-realism with some aspects of truncated nationalism in many countries involved, and the global dimensions of economic and political reforms. An attempt to actualize and advance the above elements using different means as part of policy discourse by various political actors, has led to major contradictions and conflict, which cannot be controlled by any single actor alone.

The crisis in the Great Lakes Region of Africa did not start on August 2, 1998 with the military coup d’état in Kinshasa and the invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by the official Ugandan and