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Book Note

Nest, Michael with Francois Grignon and Emizet F. Kisangani. 2006. *The Democratic Republic of Congo. Economic Dimensions of War and Peace*. International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 165 pp. ISBN 1-58826-232-2 (pb). Price: \$15.95.

Reviewed by Bjørn Møller [2 May 2007]

This is yet another contribution to the “greed or grievance” debate, applied to a single country, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), host to what has aptly been called “Africa’s Great War,” ca. 1998-2002. Not only did internal actors such as warlords and guerrillas behave as predators, but various neighboring states intervened militarily and helped exploit the DRC’s rich mineral and other resources. Three U.N. reports (S/2001/357; S/2001/1072; S/2002/1146) have been published documenting this, at least partly, predatory behavior, and all three are reviewed in the book. The book might have mentioned that the International Court of Justice in The Hague passed judgment, on 19 December 2005 (www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/116/10455.pdf), on one of the alleged predators – Uganda – in a case filed against it by the DRC in 1999. The court upheld the charge of predation (along with other charges).

The book documents the wide array of economic agendas by the various actors, ranging from the openly interventionist (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi) to those supporting the government in Kinshasa (most prominently Angola and Zimbabwe), as well as others that were involved only briefly and/or on a minor scale. While all of them exploited the Congolese resource base, they have not been predatory to the same extent, and the proceeds of the exploitation have not ended up in the same kinds of pockets. All also had agendas in addition to the economic one. Rwanda, for instance, had the most compelling security agenda of all, with perpetrators of its 1994 war hiding in the DRC and launching occasional raids back into Rwanda. But Rwanda’s business ventures in the DRC were also among the most lucrative ones, and the proceeds appear to have ended up in the state treasury. In contrast, Zimbabwe had no security reasons to intervene in the DRC and came out of the intervention relatively empty-handed, with whatever proceeds there were apparently landing in the private bank accounts of the military elite.

While highlighting the economic agendas, the authors emphasize that these did not cause the war. The arrow of causality points in the opposite direction: of the war creating strong economic agendas that, in turn, presented serious obstacles to reaching a peace agreement and implementing it successfully, to which problem the last two chapters in the book are devoted.

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