

# The Congo Wars

(This version of events is very simplified, and the actual ordeal is very complex)

If any of you actually paid attention to the pamphlet you were given, and read it **properly**, you would've noticed that the Crisis committee were talking about DRC-M23. You're probably asking, "What is that?" (unless you are in the Crisis committee), and to sum it up; it's a Tutsi rebel group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and it's also known as the March 23<sup>rd</sup> movement.

But if you want to understand the present, we need to learn the past. So let's take a look at the Congo Wars, and how they impact today

## The Rwandan Genocide

In 1962, Belgium gave independence to their colonies in the Congo, and split it up into 3 parts. There was the main colony of Zaire that gained independence, and then they gave independence to their 2 UN mandates of Rwanda and Burundi. But in Rwanda and Burundi, there was a very big power dynamic between the 2 major ethnic groups: the Hutu (who were in power) and the Tutsi (who were persecuted by the Hutu).

After decades of a cycle of violence, where the Tutsi were forced to flee the country before attacking from neighbouring countries with the Rwandan Patriotic Front. So in 1994, the Hutu Power (that was in charge of Burundi and Rwanda) began a genocide against the Tutsi population in both states, and a civil war broke out leading to 650,000 Tutsi deaths and 35% of the Twa population (a tribe that made up 1% of the Rwandan population) being massacred.

Despite this, however, the Rwandan Civil War ended in an RPF victory, as thousands of Hutu genocidaires escaped into Zaire. However, the RPF, believing the Hutu would return and restart the genocide, deemed the Hutu genocidaires a threat and invaded Zaire to get rid of them.

## First Congo War

By the time the Rwandans began the invasion of Zaire in 1996, the Hutu genocidaires were already launching a genocide against the local Tutsi populations in the area, so when the Rwandans arrived, a massive rebellion was launched by the locals against the Hutu and to liberate the Congo called the AFDL led by a general called Kabila. By March 1997, the AFDL and RPF, now supported by Uganda and Angola, arrived at Kinshasa demanding the surrender of the Zairian leader Mobutu, who had supported

the Hutus. When Mobutu fled, Kinshasa fell and Kabila took power of the new state, declaring the DRC and ending the conflict.

## **Second Congo War**

This peace, however, was quite short-lived. After the war, Kabila asked all foreign soldiers to leave and sent all Rwandan military officers out of Kinshasa. This worried the Tutsi population in Goma, who were worried about Congolese domination under Kabila, and in August 1998 they rebelled with support from Uganda and Rwanda.

These rebels organised their armies into the RCD, and it looked like there would be a repeat of the Second Congo War as RCD and Rwandan-Ugandan armies closed in on Kinshasa. However, with support from an international coalition including Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Chad and Sudan, the RCD armies were repelled, and a ceasefire was agreed preceding the deployment of UN peacekeepers.

Meanwhile, tensions between Rwanda and their allies worsened, as Ugandan and Rwandan soldiers clashed while the RCD leader was overthrown with someone pro-Rwandan. The situation became even worse when Uganda signed peace with the DRC, and a UN investigation revealed Rwanda was hoarding natural resources for themselves. All of this occurred whilst many RCD members defected as many Tutsi in the Congo were tired of control under Rwanda, and the DRC just got even more support from the international community.

## **So, what does this have to do with M23?**

In 2003, peace was finally achieved in a conference in South Africa, but the Congo was still in chaos. The CNDP emerged as a new Rwandan-supported group clashing with the Congolese government through the power vacuum left behind by the Congo Wars, and even once peace was made in 2012, a group of their soldiers defected to form the March 23<sup>rd</sup> movement that subsequently rebelled when rumours were alleged that Joseph Kabila (the son of Kabila) had cheated during the elections.

Even when they were defeated in November 2013, they were able to resurge in Goma in 2017, leading to the chaos in Goma that we still see today and is being discussed in HabsMUN.