Complex conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Good governance a prerequisite of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) peacebuilding

Mary McCartin*

Abstract

Since the 1950s, theories of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) have developed alongside the increasing power of globalised business. International stakeholders, from the United Nations to everyday consumers, have identified business ethics as a way to mitigate the destructive commercial practices that exacerbate conflict in the developing world. Ethical business initiatives have peacebuilding potential; however, the discussion should cede that poor governance constrains this private sector ability. Information communication technology (ICT) companies have perpetuated conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and its surrounding areas by purchasing minerals that finance armed groups. Ultimately, predominant lobbies who claim that CSR policies and ethical boycotts will cut rebel funding and therefore bring an end to the turmoil in the Great Lakes region of Africa are overlooking the conflict's complex roots. The success of CSR peacebuilding in the DRC is predicated on good governance and cross-sector collaboration.

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*   Mary McCartin has an M.Phil. in International Peace Studies from Trinity College, Dublin. She continues her research in logistics and supply chain transparency while emphasising cross-sector cooperation.

Mary McCartin

Introduction

A business has no conscience, but it does have distinguishable characteristics as all groups inevitably develop unique cultures and traditions (Fort 2007:15). No matter what a corporation's objective may be, its operations will *never* be neutral (Corporate Engagement Project 2003). When the media reports on the involvement of multinational corporations (MNCs) in developing economies, the emphasis is frequently placed on destructive operations. The perception that these businesses exploit the landscape while abusing communities in the interest of cheap labour and/or natural resources stimulated theories of business ethics. The logical supposition was that the multinationals spreading destructive externalities could have a converse ability to mitigate their damages and make positive contributions within their areas of operation. Models of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and new global business standards became the vehicle by which corporations would deliver these results. Peacebuilding elements that might be conveyed by multinational enterprise – such as economic security, social inclusion, and individual empowerment – are at the core of these ethical models. By analysing CSR possibilities these practices may be applied to areas where environmental and human security issues are intimately linked to business. This relationship is evident in natural resource conflicts where MNCs are to blame both directly and indirectly for ravaging landscapes at the expense of indigenous populations. Atrocities in the Great Lakes region of Africa and particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) can be traced to economic demand for resources and thereby illustrate CSR's peacebuilding potential in globalised business. Yet, viewing CSR as a panacea oversimplifies the complex roots of the conflict, which is also entrenched in economics, political instability, and ethnic violence – ultimately suggesting that good governance must precede private sector initiatives if it is to foster long-term peace.

Formulating the CSR solution

The rise of international corporations facilitated the development of private sector powers that rivalled those of the political sector. In the latter half of the 20th century, CSR models grew alongside the expanding power of globalised

corporations and subsequent questions over such corporations' legitimacy (Berlie 2010:11). There is no single agreed upon definition, 'but generally CSR is understood to include actions of companies that address social and environmental concerns beyond what is required by law' (Runhaar and Lafferty 2008:1). In the plainest sense, CSR is a practice where businesses hold themselves accountable for actions that affect people, their communities, and their environment. CSR as a business construct began in the 1950s and quickly became a mechanism for legitimising and sustaining the globalised influence of business. Traditionally, it has been easier to find criticism of social business policies than support. One explanation for this is that research regarding the relationship between corporations and security has primarily focused on the negative impacts (Deitelhoff and Wolf 2010:6). As an under-researched topic in both the fields of business and international peacebuilding, CSR is presently 'in the stage where we are trying to understand it and to find programmes/ models of implementing this new way of thinking in existing organizations' (Debeljak and Krkač 2008:244). It is a solution in its most nascent stages; yet, numerous groups, from nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) like Raise Hope for Congo to the United Nations in their 'Business call to Action' (BCtA), have adopted this concept as a cornerstone of their conflict resolution strategies. The BCtA was launched in 2008 with the hope that the private sector would strengthen the UN's development mission and help it to meet its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

If an MNC can move beyond step one, adopting the belief that businesses have ethical responsibilities outside of the law, it must then analyse numerous layers of potential responsibility in order to decide the scope CSR will have within its business plan. The creation of these policies does not take place in a single boardroom meeting. When businesses first confronted the challenge of devising new ethical initiatives, questions arose surrounding the delegation of CSR innovation. Corporations were reluctant to adopt this burden of responsibility and were therefore somewhat relieved in 1984 when ethical responsibility expanded to individuals thanks to R. Edward Freeman's 'Stakeholder Theory'. Stakeholders exist at numerous levels of the organisation and include all those who can influence or be affected by the organisation's purpose (Visser

2011:113). These include owners, investors, employees, customers, suppliers, citizens around the business' operations, as well as government and civil society (Crowther 2008:47–63). Consumers have a claim in the corporation that they exercise in their purchasing decisions. Stakeholder Theory expands responsibility beyond the shareholders who conventionally exercised total control over corporate decisions. The theory may provide a way for everyone to get involved and strengthen the initiative or it may become a way for influential shareholders to leave responsibility in the hands of consumers and avoid implementing CSR policies if they perceive there is no consumer demand for them.

When this theory is applied to conflict zones, the effectiveness of CSR initiatives as a peacebuilding tool is best determined by dividing the stakeholders into two distinct categories: the voluntary and the involuntary. The voluntary stakeholders are those who choose to deal with an organisation while the involuntary stakeholders do not and cannot withdraw from the relationship (Crowther 2008). The consideration given to these involuntary stakeholders demonstrates the moral roots of the theory as many of these individuals are relatively powerless compared to the MNC. In the case of the DRC the involuntary stakeholders are civilians in communities ravaged by armed groups or displaced by mining operations. They have the least influence over Information Communication Technology (ICT) shareholder decisions, but they are the most affected by ICT supply chains.

In a best-case scenario, CSR's potential is maximised when companies perceive that these initiatives will contribute to their profit and image. In this way we can imagine CSR as something more akin to 'Corporate Social Strategy' because 'firms will do a far better job at creating economic value and social value if they include social action programs in the strategic decision-making process' (Husted and Allen 2011:113). Therefore, to be effective these practices must be part of the business model, nested within its core objectives. 'Like all corporate activities, social action may or may not be profitable' (Berlie 2010:3), but this removes the notion that it is intrinsically unprofitable. The success of CSR business strategy is positioned upon the potential for simultaneous shareholder and stakeholder gains. For example, when legendary automaker Henry Ford began paying workers a new $5 a day wage, he said it was a matter of fairness;

however, shareholder James Couzens said it was a part of the company's strategy to attract the best workers (Husted and Allen 2011:3).

The sooner these objectives are devised the better for the business in question. The companies who embrace CSR opportunities at the start of the trend gain first-mover advantage (FMA), which is an economic concept that suggests a firm is more likely to capitalise on its investment if it can achieve a stake in the market's available resources that its competitors cannot match (Husted and Allen 2011:113). CSR's resurgence in the 1990s has triggered a domino effect among the corporations trying to achieve leadership positions and a unique CSR niche within tomorrow's markets. It is a contest that reflects the growing perception that social responsibility is an inevitable part of future economic systems (Berlie 2010:22).

But how adaptable are current ethical strategies in conflict resolution and in stabilising developing regions? The peacebuilding potential of business in post-conflict societies may be underutilised but it remains theoretically plausible. The developmental contributions of a responsible business model get to the definition of peacebuilding, which intends not merely to rebuild post-conflict, but to prevent the re-emergence of violence (Atack 2005:141). This ability of businesses to aid in peacemaking is enhanced by the way businesses 'tend to approach issues in a rational, realistic, pragmatic, and professional manner. They deal with conflicts on a day-to-day basis. They are experienced in negotiations and they know *how and when to compromise*' (Gerson 2001:112). They are uniquely suited as realists with the skillset of mediators. The success of this business intervention in conflict can be seen in the case of South Africa where businesses contributed to peacebuilding in an effort to prevent civil war. One company in particular, Consolidated Goldfields, demonstrated its interest in facilitating peaceful dialogue by organising and funding meetings between the conflicting parties in the apartheid-sessions that helped end apartheid (Gerson 2001:108).

Economic insecurity is a common root of conflict because it makes 'citizens vulnerable to politics based on exclusion' (Shiva 2008:40). Addressing political and economic exclusion through the strength of business rationalises CSR's

greatest peacebuilding potential. A business ethics approach to peacebuilding is a departure from traditional perspectives on aid and development and an alternative to these practices, which are increasingly called into question after decades of slow progress and in an era of global financial uncertainty. International financial institutions (IFIs) are criticised for fostering economic dependency and sustaining corrupt governments instead of accelerating nations towards positive peace and economic self-sufficiency (Moyo 2009). It appears that 'breaking the cycle of poverty and war may exceed the capability of both the United Nations and the World Bank, operating separately or in tandem. Conflict settlement requires the injection of optimism and hope born of employment and economic opportunity' (Gerson 2001:103). At minimum businesses certainly provide jobs and opportunity, but in conflict they may even be called upon to take up public tasks such as infrastructure and healthcare, which states cannot deliver while in conflict (Deitelhoff and Wolf 2010:13).

Multinational bodies are also recognising the relevance of new peacebuilding tactics and hope that private sector solutions can be applied to a variety of conflict scenarios; however, there is no universal CSR model and private sector initiative does not mean that corporations can replace other traditional peacebuilding tactics in every situation. While CSR is lauded as a promising solution for classic conflict issues, the reality is far from simple – as we can see when it is applied to the ongoing conflict in the DRC. While there are valuable contributions to be considered, the CSR model is still constrained by the supremacy of the state and poor governance can thwart even the most promising initiative.

The DRC mineral conflict and the Great War of Africa

The DRC is rich in minerals, particularly gold and the three Ts: tin, tantalum, and tungsten. Coltan, or columbite-tantalite, is the raw ore from which tantalum is processed. It was discovered within the DRC in 1910 and is perhaps the most infamous conflict mineral today. All of these resources are used in electronics such as cell phones, portable music players, game consoles, and computers, but tantalum in particular has allowed for the development of more powerful and more compact electronics due to its unique conductive abilities. The desire to maintain economic participation and political power through access to these

resources has caused various armed groups to sustain their operations through the sale of these resources, which give the natural elements the name conflict minerals. For decades, the DRC has been victim to the same paradox of plenty that plagues many resource-laden nations.

The decades of violence in the DRC extend throughout the Great Lakes region. The insecurity is built upon fighting, not only for natural resources, but also on account of ethnic and political tensions, economic greed and mismanagement. By 1996, under the DRC's authoritarian President Mobutu Sésé Seko, these vast challenges sparked a war that is sometimes referred to as Africa's First World War. In its early phase, Laurent-Désiré Kabila and the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL) overthrew the government with the assistance of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda. Mobutu went into exile with an embezzled personal fortune, estimated to have been over $4 billion (USD) (Klare 2001:209). This money deprived the Congolese people of the basic services and infrastructure their government should have provided, and it demonstrated an excessive privatisation of the DRC's resources that caused severe economic instability.

Ethnic tensions continued to escalate with cross border migration, exacerbated by the Rwandan Genocide, which still tangles the countries in border violence. The ethnic animosities and territorial disputes triggered a second conflict in 1998 so intimately linked to the first that some consider it one contiguous war. In this second phase of the war, Kabila enlisted military assistance from Angola and Zimbabwe, who were also interested in rewards in the form of claims to mineral wealth (Klare 2001:209–210).

On several occasions the Rwandan government has been directly involved in perpetuating the conflict. For example, in 2001 Rwandan armies imported 1 500 prisoners from Rwanda to South Kivu to mine coltan in exchange for reduced jail sentences (Nest 2011:41). Of course, it is against international law for an occupying force to seize and export resources (Nest 2011:90). Despite the illegality, it is estimated that during the war the Rwandan army, aided by the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), stole 1 000 to 1 500 tons of coltan from a mining warehouse, thereby establishing armed theft as the preferred

method of accessing these resources (Nest 2011:85). The RCD, other rebel forces such as M23 (the March 23 Movement) and FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), and the DRC army all use combatants as miners – and profit from the sale of licenses to anyone operating within their controlled area. These armies then use roadblocks and intimidation to tax coltan as it moves across their territories. This strict control over market access is taken a step further as the armies ultimately infiltrate international trade. This is accomplished directly and through partnerships with individual traders (Nest 2011:86–89). These partnerships between militias and globalised ICT companies correlate with the industry's demand for minerals. As technology products have proliferated, the number of companies willing to undertake the risks of extraction has increased as these businesses have 'both the means and incentive to procure resources from remote and undeveloped areas – even if this means dealing with warlords and/or transporting valuable commodities through areas of conflict' (Klare 2001:195). This is the point of intervention where CSR calls upon the ICT industry to analyse supply chains, smelters, and partnerships to ensure that they are not financing violence.

The DRC war officially ended in 2002, although the ongoing battles make that difficult to comprehend. The combination of conflict, subsequent malnutrition, and rampant disease has resulted in tremendous loss of life. During the war it was estimated that 45 000 Congolese died every month, approximately 5.4 million people in total (Bavier 2008). Throughout the conflict, the region endured some of the worst atrocities in the world. Approximately 30 000 child soldiers were conscripted into the Mai Mai to fight for control of the coltan regions (Carmody 2011). There is also widespread sexual violence to the extent that the UN's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, labelled the DRC as the 'rape capital of the world' (UN News Centre 2010). In the twelve-month period from 2006 to 2007 approximately 1 152 women were raped every day (Stony Brook University Medicine 2011). Rape as a military tactic continues today on both sides of the conflict. In December 2012 the UN began reporting that both M23 and the Congolese Army had committed rape, with numerous cases reported while forces were retreating from occupied towns (Al Jazeera 2012d). In response to conflict escalation, the UN deployed

20 000 peacekeepers into the eastern region in July 2012 and used helicopters to fire upon the rebels (Al Jazeera 2012a). At the time this article was written, this remained the UN's largest global peacekeeping operation.

The private sector in the DRC Conflict

If the current DRC conflict was viewed in isolation from its history, its cumulative trauma, and its cyclical violence, it might seem reasonable to expect the private sector to bear the bulk of responsibility for funding militias and to therefore elicit greater accountability from ICT companies. This is particularly true of those with household names such as Apple, Nokia, and Samsung, the assumption being that larger companies have more power and money to engage with the situation (Deitelhoff and Wolf 2010:207). Advocacy groups such as Raise Hope for Congo and GreenPeace, as well as the Securities and Exchange Commission's (SEC) conflict mineral legislation, propose that rebel activities will decline and eventually cease if you cut them off from their financial flows. The primary solution for achieving this objective is an extremely complicated supply chain investigation and the creation of a certification scheme akin to the Kimberley Process, which was devised to combat the trade of 'blood diamonds'.

Several specific steps have been taken to implement these CSR initiatives within the ICT industry. The Global e-Sustainability Initiative (GeSI) was founded in 2001 and issued a report: *Coltan mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo: How Tantalum-using industries can commit to the reconstruction of the DRC*, which led to the founding of the GeSI Supply Chain Working Group and later in North America the Electronics Industry Code of Conduct (EICC). The two groups then partnered together for the Electronics-Tool for Accountable Supply Chains (E-TASC). This was a critical step in streamlining CSR policies within the ICT industry since most of these companies do not cross-reference each other and only a few explicitly mention the conflict in DRC (Wallbott 2010:94).

The GeSI's report detailed the benefits that would accrue across the ICT industry from DRC miners to end-users. By applying CSR to the mineral supply chain the technology companies would gain support by responding to customer concerns, demonstrate commitment to the UN's call for accountability, and minimise

risks through collective action. The manufacturers would remove the stigma surrounding these minerals and aid in stabilising the market. Mineral traders would reduce their risk of 'boom and bust' cycles while receiving the market price of the goods. Miner exploitation would decrease; instead the individuals could enjoy economic participation and stable livelihoods. The government could collect taxes, gain international respect, and avoid the total loss that would accompany boycotts (Hayes and Burge 2003).

Oversight of the conflict mineral business is gaining international governments' attention. On July 21, 2010 US President Barack Obama signed the 'Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (H.R 4173)' into law. Section 1502 of this legislation requires companies to disclose whether their products contain conflict minerals from the DRC and to report on their supply chains through private sector audits. This is little more than corporate shaming since it relies largely on consumer conscience with no government penalty for companies that choose to take no action. Without mechanisms for enforcement, the bureaucratic response to conflict mineral trade is suspiciously akin to appeasement, but it also works within the realm of CSR because it requires corporate ethics beyond what is dictated by law. Although it appears that peace lobbies received their desired legislation, it is important to understand that purchases made from the DRC army would be considered conflict free even though this army is also responsible for rape and murder (Nest 2011:122–125). Although the Securities and Exchanges Commission (SEC) voted to adopt the regulations of section 1502 on 22 August 2012, its implementation has been met with resistance. What is more, although this victory was once the primary goal of many of the DRC's advocacy groups, many of them have now begun to shift their focus from mineral extraction and supply chains in order to instead emphasise the need for peacekeeping forces, grassroots emphasis, and mediators that can address the larger conflict issues. It illustrates the realisation that CSR can be effective, but must be supported by government.

Debating CSR's role in the ICT industry and its impact on the DRC and surrounding areas has sparked reaction from governments and various advocacy groups, but it is the individual ICT companies that will ultimately drive CSR peacebuilding. Hewlett-Packard (HP), which produces computers, printers,

cameras, and smartphones, has been named an 'industry leader' in ICT CSR implementation in the DRC according to a ranking established by the NGO Raise Hope for Congo. HP made a proactive commitment to source conflict free minerals and has presented its initiatives with transparency. Specific action undertaken includes: implementing the EICC-GeSI template; investigating its supply chains including over 800 suppliers; publishing these suppliers; visiting smelters; and planning to audit suppliers as they continue to develop CSR policies (Raise Hope for Congo 2012). HP is also a member of the 'Solutions for Hope Project', which was launched by Motorola Solutions Inc. in 2011. This group is open to miners, smelters, and manufacturers who are committed to sourcing conflict-free tantalum from the DRC by closing its industry supply chains with the help of its members' cooperation. HP sought a first-mover advantage by developing its CSR policy, participating in knowledge sharing groups, and in collaborating with NGOs. Now, it serves as a model within the ICT industry.

While some MNCs have demonstrated the potential of CSR peacebuilding in the DRC, overall support for mineral transparency has been precarious and is progressing slowly. Despite the DRC government's attempts at exacting sovereignty over mining regions, it has not yet secured its mines or mended the cracks in its governance relating to mineral financial flows and administration. Many of the ICT companies participating in CSR initiatives are end users, not miners; therefore, it falls upon the DRC government to oversee domestic mining. According to subsoil rights within DRC law, the mineral deposits belong to the state and if a company wants to extract the minerals they must buy that right from the state (Nest 2011:39). A Congolese mandate issued in September and passed into national law in February 2012 requires all mining and mineral trading companies to follow OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) standards and only purchase clean, traceable minerals. This was the first step in the DRC reasserting control over its resources. To test the effectiveness of this law, two Chinese-owned companies, TTT Mining (exported as CMM) and Huaying Trading Company, were suspended by the Congolese government for violating this law in May of 2012 (Lee 2012).

The DRC government lost its monopoly on violence within its borders decades ago and the eastern region has been vulnerable to foreign influence

and a proliferation of violent factions ever since. Re-establishing sovereignty and exacting it legally against foreign corporations and neighbouring vulture markets are essential if the DRC is to create stability and the space in which CSR policies can meet their maximum peacebuilding potential. It seems that government security continues to trump any private sector initiative and that these ICT corporations cannot singlehandedly implement stability in the Great Lakes region.

Challenges to peace

The private sector solution may be too simplistic for the DRC conflict for several reasons, the most obvious of which is that this regional violence cannot be generalised as pure resource conflict. Frequently, the roots of such a struggle are attributed to resource wealth but the acquisition of this wealth reveals much more damning roots. Edward Azar, the academic behind the Theory of Protracted Social Conflict, notes that the tendency to divide conflict issues into subcategories such as politics, economics, and psychology ultimately produces inadequate solutions and can draw a conflict out. Instead, he suggests that each subcategory should be considered as elements of an inclusive web of issues, which may be addressed from various points but should not be disentangled (Ramsbotham and Miall 2011:100). Therefore, overemphasising private sector solutions and the subcategory of conflict minerals poses the risk of overshadowing the other key issues of the conflict. Outside of the contest for natural resources there are three primary challenges to peace: poor governance, ethnic tension, and geography, which can all be viewed as subcategories within the larger web of conflict.

Civil unrest in the DRC can be traced to a host of state problems. In many cases this turmoil is linked to the fact that resource wealth 'is closely associated with poor governance, clientelism, and the absence of a social contract between ruler and ruled' (Gilpin and Downie 2009:2). Professor Willy Vangu, a member of the DRC opposition party, recently supported the implementation of new policy tools and an end to international aid. In June of 2012 he spoke before the UK parliament at a conference entitled 'Secret Mining in the Congo' in order to endorse a policy of 'keep your aid but stop the raid.' His message highlighted

conspiracy between the Congolese government and the exportation of resources way below cost from the Congo to foreign shell corporations.[1] He noted that such practices are in violation of the IMF's loan agreement covenants, such as publishing all mining contracts, offering all public sales through public tender, and establishing an independent anti-corruption body (Vangu 2012). The IMF agreed with Professor Vangu and cut approximately $240 million from loans to the DRC because it failed to publish its mining contracts (Al Jazeera 2012c). Vangu's belief that ethical business is more important than aid is reflected in his claim that the DRC 'stands to lose more than $5.5bn (£3.6bn) of natural assets and future revenue through secret sales' (Goodley 2012:30). The DRC government has blatantly absorbed and misallocated funds time and again, demonstrating that poor governance and clientelism are root causes of instability. In September of 2012, $15 million allocated towards the Congolese military mysteriously disappeared (Al Jazeera 2012c). The tendency to leave development in the hands of NGOs and to facilitate these objectives with multilateral aid has not proved sufficient in combating the exploitation of DRC resources or in breaking the cycle of poverty and subsequent conflict that plagues the nation. All mining practices and financial flows must be brought to light if there is any possibility of ending the cycle of exploitation. Filtering business practices through the DRC government is obviously not the solution for bettering the lives within the DRC's communities, but this is the present goal of many ICT companies since this would allow them to claim they are sourcing conflict-free minerals.

In addition to these political roots, the conflict has ethnic dimensions. The multiple groups that have developed across the region take advantage of 'ethnic networks [believing that they] may provide security for their members in the absence of a capable state' (Nest 2011:50). For example, M23 is frequently described as being ethnically Tutsi. These ethnic associations have entrenched racial and cultural animosities, and while scholars can argue over whether these groups are driven by greed or grievance, the fact remains that cyclical violence has created generations with their own unique grievances. Overall, the war is

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1   Shell corporations facilitate business transactions but do not have their own significant assets or operations. These companies can be associated with fraud as they are frequently utilised in tax avoidance.

not due to greed *or* grievance; rather, it is greed *and* grievance (Mac Ginty and Williams 2009:32). The greed of neighbouring countries intensified the conflict within the mineral rich regions of the DRC and gave rise to groups such as the Mai Mai who developed a grievance that 'their' resources were being plundered; in response they performed atrocities that were themselves grievance inspiring. The generations of ethnic animosity now stretch back beyond a time when many people can remember why the conflict began; instead they remember only a personal history of what group wounded them. This conflict evolution engrains the cyclical occurrence of violence. Once the government establishes sovereignty over the mines, the mining corporations will be called upon to employ CSR policies when considering who will work there and how the wealth will filter through the communities. If an ethnic group feels excluded from economic participation, then the conflict's roots have not been addressed.

A third catalyst of the conflict is geographic. In a regional sense the DRC is hindered by a continental trade problem that limits the development of domestic markets. Inadequate infrastructure results in the exportation of goods from Africa without the intra-continental trade that is seen in other parts of the world (The Economist 2013). As the second largest country in Africa, the DRC's infrastructure is wanting and the power vacuum in the eastern region of the DRC has allowed rebels to gain footholds on these communities while seeking alliances with eastern neighbours such as Rwanda. The deprivation of these human needs on account of geography and the ethnic diversity therein frequently compounds protracted conflicts in Africa and can be attributed in part to the continent's colonial legacy (Ramsbotham and Miall 2011:101). The DRC capital, Kinshasa, is located in the far western part of the country, separating it from the east by dense forests and few access routes. This has exposed the area to foreign settlement and has contributed to the creation of disfranchised minorities without access to state support. Settlement by different ethnic groups from Uganda and Rwanda, especially following the Rwandan Genocide, has increased the diversity of those who consider themselves to be Congolese, entitled to Congolese land, and desirous of access to Congolese politics. If MNCs could develop businesses within the DRC they could aid in infrastructure creation, but they would be undertaking tremendous risk in establishing facilities in a conflict area. The risk is doubled when you consider how the state does not

enforce property rights. Whether or not a corporation undertakes such risks becomes a matter of CSR strategy. The successful creation of facilities would benefit the involuntary stakeholders in the region and corporate profit as the MNC establishes direct access to resources.

Failure of the private sector panacea

Private sector peacebuilding cannot address the roots of state deficiencies in the long-term as excessive involvement in state affairs could further weaken government and cause new conflicts by challenging state power. To gauge the meddlesome potential of a social initiative, the MNC must ask whether its actions in a conflict zone make a democratic commentary (Bais and Huijser 2005:22–23). Parallel to this concern, as we have already seen, is the potential for MNC investments to sustain repressive regimes; it is all too clear that favouring the DRC government mines over the rebel mines does not actually mitigate the mismanagement of funds or the occurrence of war crimes. Companies could become ensnared in host state scandal while doing something as simple as maintaining their facilities, especially if these facilities are targeted by the conflicting parties (Deitelhoff et al. 2010:210).

At the present moment, CSR is likely to fail as a peacebuilding tool in the DRC because of numerous governance prerequisites that are missing from the post-conflict equation. The DRC has not created an environment where the social strategy of business would be enough to change the course of its cyclical violence because of pervasive corruption, collusion, and perceived ethnic tensions. Emphasising improvements in economic development are appropriate because the DRC is combating tremendous post-war economic challenges including Dutch Disease,[2] offshore accounts, and vulture funds.[3] Economic exclusion

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2   Dutch Disease refers to the economic relationship between natural resource exploitation and other parts of the economy such as agriculture and manufacturing. As the natural resources are overemphasised, other sectors of the economy tend to decline.

3   Vulture funds are investments in debts where default is considered inevitable. A UK court recently ruled against FG Hemisphere's vulture fund collection from the DRC, but critics remain sceptical of whether this debt forgiveness will benefit the Congolese people. Either way it demonstrates an international acceptance of the need to maintain wealth in the DRC that can be used for infrastructure and other social developments. See Joyce 2012.

and the denial of basic needs because of this corruption are at the heart of protracted conflicts (Ramsbotham and Miall 2011:101). Today, these hurdles are compounded by the fact that the violence is worsening across the DRC's eastern region.

Collaborating to move forward

The emphasis on the ICT industry and the analysis of conflict mineral supply chains seem like a logical point of conflict intervention until we scrutinise the history and governance of the DRC. Groups such as Raise Hope for Congo target prominent corporations such as Apple to raise awareness and force consumers to consider their culpability as stakeholders. One of Raise Hope for Congo's programmes, the 'Conflict-Free Campus Initiative', urges college students to persuade their schools to commit to purchasing electronics that contain no conflict minerals. Purchasing these electronics may have contributed to the armed resource struggle, but products such as the iPhone, which was first produced in 2007, cannot account for initiating this ongoing Central African War that began in 1996. Just as Edward Azar warned, overlooking the roots of the DRC violence, including poor governance, ethnic tension, and geographic alliances, will perpetuate the conflict. Overemphasising corporate social responsibility isolates one aspect of conflict from a web of issues. However, CSR should not be totally disregarded; it is apparent that the best hope for stabilising the region and moving towards a lasting peace will be achieved in cross-sector collaboration.

The corporations that have been most successful in adopting CSR strategies have sought out these cross-sector associations. In the past two decades businesses, NGOs, and governments have been operating within a new 'collaboration zone' (Wales et al. 2010:45). This triple-helix allows experts to share knowledge across these three sectors. The interconnectedness of these approaches 'reminds the academic and political debates that sustainable peace building is essentially an exercise in state building, in which the private sector can – and is willing to – complement efforts but in which states remain the principal actors' (Deitelhoff et al. 2010:224). Companies benefit from NGO resources such as credibility, cognitive capacities, connections, and capacity of confrontation (Berlie 2010:24).

Likewise, the NGOs gain access to company resources of cash, cognitive capabilities, connections, and capacity to change (Berlie 2010:38). When the NGO Raise Hope for Congo provided a CSR checklist for ICT companies, it was facilitating this collaboration. Expertise needs to be made more accessible across sectors and because people are the vessels of this specialised knowledge this collaboration and '[c]orporate responsibility will be advanced if more people switched between sectors during their careers' (Wales et al. 2010:145).

Countries and multilateral institutions are getting to the root causes of the conflict by working towards common goals, such as ending collusion between armed groups and neighbouring states. Many countries have withdrawn aid from Rwanda as a penalty for perpetrating violence in the eastern DRC and destabilising the DRC government's ability to focus on development. The UN's condemnation of Rwanda's financial support of armed groups persuaded Germany to suspend $26 million in aid to Rwanda, while the Netherlands suspended $6.1 million, Scandinavian countries suspended $38.9 million, and the US suspended $200 000 in military aid (Al Jazeera 2012b). If these measures can reduce the occurrence of armed violence in the DRC by forces loyal to Rwanda, there may be hope of preventing escalation.

In recent years there have been promising improvements in the collaboration between the private sector and NGOs. As multilateral organisations such as the UN continue to address the conflict in the Great Lakes region, the potential for peacebuilding is increased. All that remains is for the DRC to provide the good governance that will allow business to meet its full developmental potential. In 2009, the World Bank's Doing Business Project ranked the DRC at the bottom of the countries surveyed because the average business is subject to thirty-two separate taxes each year, which jeopardises their profitability (Gilpin and Downie 2009). If the private sector would become accountable, it would need to be more directly engaged in the DRC, but this is simply impractical since the state's current tax regime makes the country an undesirable place to invest. The ongoing conflict and misallocation of funds must be addressed by the state if MNCs are to have any hope of supplying the individual economic security, infrastructure, and market access that are essential to long-term peacebuilding.

Conclusion

The Democratic Republic of Congo was ranked last of all the 186 countries in the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) for 2012, which means that the United Nations considers the DRC to have one of the lowest living standards on earth. It is enduring a conflict that can at times appear insurmountable. But cross-sector collaboration and private sector peacebuilding are viable options. No matter how promising these initiatives appear, poor governance must first be addressed from within the state. The regional conflict has continually worsened despite interventions by multilateral peacekeeping forces, IFIs, NGOs, and MNCs, indicating that states remain the primary guarantors of security.

When the DRC is accountable and transparent, it can foster the partnerships it needs to address subcategories of conflict. Section 8 of UN Security Council Resolution 2053 established the UN's peacekeeping mission in the DRC while acknowledging these limitations. It supports the conclusion that the DRC must address its governance as the Congolese government 'bears the primary responsibility regarding the reform of its security sector' (The United Nations 2012). Fostering guilt among ICT stakeholders will not achieve peace in the Great Lakes region of Africa if their CSR policies are not supported by good governance. Mineral financial flows are a piece of the DRC's conflict web, but private sector solutions offer no panacea for the armed violence. State stability and grassroots solutions for civilian grievances must be the focus of the DRC's peacemaking operations. When the governance preconditions are met, the private sector can facilitate in the creation of economic security that will introduce businessmen to the posts where soldiers once stood.

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