

# Journal of Conflict Management (JCM)

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Republic of Congo**

Francis Eliya Lomami



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Francis Eliya Lomami  
Salve Regina University, Newburyport, RI, United States

**Article History**

*Received 5<sup>th</sup> October 2024*

*Received in Revised Form 12<sup>th</sup> November 2024*

*Accepted 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024*



How to cite in APA format:

Lomami, F. (2024). Grounded Immoral and Irrational Features of Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Journal of Conflict Management*, 4(4), 37–63.  
<https://doi.org/10.47604/jcm.3120>

**Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study aims to construct a moral and rational understanding of the Congolese armed conflict by anatomically decomposing its war violations and stupors. The intensification of armed violence in DR Congo between 1993 and 2003 gave the country an awful notoriety for the systematic crimes against humanity committed. The Congolese armed conflict perfectly manifested war's immorality and irrationality through numerous and recurrent violent incidents. This study's approach goes beyond their typical legal and political descriptions, which explicatively attenuate the wrongfulness and harmfulness of these incidents. From moral and rational lenses, it seeks to feature, understand, and explain violent actions against non-liable civilians in the conflict, their contexts, and perpetrators. This novel approach resorts to moral and rational cognitive assumptions to clarify emerging features and provides a different perspective on the Congolese armed conflict.

**Methodology:** The study used the grounded theory methodology to comprehend the complexity of the Congolese armed conflict's moral and rational considerations directly from the data on violent incidents registered from 1993 to 2003. The study utilized different international, regional, and local reports, mainly the UN Mapping Report on human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1993 to 2003, as its secondary data source. The study applied memoing, coding, and constant comparison to retrieving properties from the reported incidents and their contexts from which it identified, formulated, and developed conceptual subcategories and categories. The study used content and cross-analysis to interpret and discuss the conceptualized data categories, definitions, and background, ensuring a thorough and rigorous research process. The study resorted to armed conflict and cognitive theories to validate findings and enrich the discussion.

**Findings:** This study is comprehensive research that conveyed a consistent and objective picture of the Congolese armed conflict's immoral and irrational features. Using substantially moral inquiry based on unduly harmfulness to others and rational inquiry centered on favoring common ends, the study found that violent incidents bore four types of harmful actions: subjective, objective, proactive, and extreme, committed by political and military agents from different belligerents. The conflict experienced three harm-prone contexts that cultivated and amplified these harmful actions and conditioned harming agents affiliated with two main categories of belligerents, aspirational and non-aspirational, according to political ends. The political aspirations with moral grounds did not prevent harming agents from committing various harmful actions.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice, and Policy:** The study articulated a new explanatory approach to African armed conflict studies by exploring human rights and international law violations as manifestations of war's immorality and irrationality. While many studies substantially explain violent conflict incidents in legal, social, and political terms, this approach emphasizes their comprehension as wrongfulness and harmfulness related to moral and rational cognition linked to contextual conditions. The reflection offered practitioners, politicians, and militaries a blueprint of conceptual dispensation that morally and rationally featured armed conflict's violent actions, contexts, and perpetrators.

**Keywords:** *Armed conflict, African Armed Conflict, DR Congo, War, Morality, Rationality, Moral Inquiry, Just War Theory, Moral and Rational Cognition, Harmful Actions.*

**JEL Codes:** *F51, D75, N47, N40, D60, D60, E70, N40, K49, N40.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Republic of Congo's armed violence cycle originated from the protracted ethnic hostilities and disputes in the Great Lakes region, accentuated around 1993. Its first warring configuration surfaced in 1996 with the first emerging rebel group, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (AFDL), prompted and supported by Rwandan, Burundian, and Ugandan regimes. However, from 1998 to 2003, the country experienced a second war, which was more complex and destructive, with multiple dimensions, tentacles, and players reaching far beyond its local boundaries and networks. Rubin (2006) posited that "the episodes of violence derive from inter-related processes at the local, national, regional, and global levels connected by a variety of networks []." Significant studies have examined Congolese wars' occurrence, development, and scope from different viewpoints. A combination of multiple situations and events played a crucial role in the warring mayhem (Banda, 2012), making the Congolese armed conflict multidimensional in the spatial and sectoral spread and multiscale in institutional and vertical articulations.

The conflict dynamics of the Great Lakes region, the Rwandan genocide, neighboring direct implications, African interveners, and international networks complexified the understanding of the conflict's features. Labeled "Great African War" (Van and Garrett, 2014), the conflict evidenced an exponential rise of belligerents and crimes against civilians. The systems, natures, and scopes of human rights violations demonstrated an unprecedented harmful development for a modern armed conflict. The violence disarray served everyone, including local, regional, and international interests (Lemarchande, 2014) through systematic wrongdoing and harming. The crimes committed during wars, their causes, and their circumstances translated into complex war morality violation patterns that put them in the category of new wars (Münkler, 2005; Kaldor, 2013). This study aims to rethink the description of these patterns and construct them into comprehensive grids of immoral and irrational features for a novel understanding.

### Problem Statement

Congolese armed conflict demonstrated uncommon characteristics of wars in modern times. According to Mary Kaldor (2013), they illustrated the traits of "new wars" in terms of their features, especially civilian targeting and casualties. The number of violent incidents and consequences that touched civilians called for moral questioning of the conflict. War negatively impacted individuals, properties, and communities in a country with high social, political, and economic challenges. As Alli (2006) puts it, people turned their attention "from creative production to creative destruction" (p.8).

This violent cycle resulted in the greatest humanitarian crisis of the early 21st century, with war-related deaths estimated to be more than 5 million between 1998 and 2007, millions of forced displaced people, raped women and girls, and abused children (Omeje & Hepner Redeker, 2013). This deadliest armed violence event since World War II (Van & Garrett, 2014) created Congo's awful notoriety for its systematic crimes against humanity. This violence resulted from an instinctive reaction to some grievances and a form of rational response to circumstances and opportunities (Taydas et al., 2011). The conflict perfectly manifested war's immorality and irrationality because of the moral and rational impairment of political and military agents as they transpired through different violent incidents. What are the immoral and irrational actions of violent attacks against peaceful civilians embodied, and what made them repeated and spread out during the conflict? Who were the perpetrators of this spree of violent

actions? Still, many prefer to view and explain the violent incidents of the conflict in legal, social, and political terms, which seem to attenuate the degree of their wrongfulness and harmfulness linked to contextual and psychological inputs.

A moral and rational investigation into these violent incidents is a needed functional approach to this question. It requires a look into moral and rational cognition as a relevant explanation factor. Moral cognition understood as the set of cognitive processes underlying morality standards that guide culturally accepted behavior (Moll et al., 2005), was a pivotal mechanism in the Congolese violent cycle. Similarly, rational cognition involves thoughtful processes through reasonable inferences drawn from available information and intelligence abilities. Cognitive attributes accompany the functioning of moral judgments, moral dilemmas, and moral reasoning (Anderson et al., 1999). War actors can rely on their social and moral prisms and beliefs in the expected outcomes. These cognitive processes are focal points in this study because they played an essential role in forming the immoral and irrational features of wars in Congo.

With this cognitivist perspective, this study is intended to understand and explain morally and rationally the characteristics of the Congolese wars from 1993 to 2003 through their violent incidents, contexts, and perpetrators. This moral and rational approach is inductive as it explores and emphasizes the harm caused to victims through behaviors and decisions during wartime to devise a moral and rational understanding of the wars in DR Congo and other African countries.

### **Methodological Approach and Conceptual Fixations**

This study attempted to comprehend the complexity of the Congolese armed conflict's moral and rational features from the data on violent incidents registered before and during wars from 1993 to 2003. The study used grounded theory methodological processes to investigate existing data about violent incidents, their contexts, and their perpetrators. These processes permitted the study to identify, formulate, and develop conceptual categories from war rhetoric, behaviors, decisions, attitudes, and social, political, and economic factors as immoral and irrational features of the Congolese armed conflict.

The study focused extensively on the UN Mapping Report on Human Rights violations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1993 to 2003 as its prime secondary data source. This latter report touched on essential details of human rights and international humanitarian law violations committed during the conflict. It covered over 600 violent incidents and their contexts. The report compiled data from a hefty array of sources, direct and indirect, documentary, and non-documentary. Its account is chronologically and orderly rendered, offering multiple possibilities for assessing and understanding the nature and form of moral and rational questions raised by the multiple violent incidents. This report was complemented by additional sources, including international, regional, and local non-governmental reports, to ensure a triangulated analysis.

Therefore, the study used content analysis and cross-analysis through phases of the conflict to interpret and discuss the data. The study analyzed the data through categories, their profiles, and their characteristics. It supported this conceptualization with excerpts from the document review to capture the dominant highlights conveyed under the categorization. However, for the grounded theory's requirements, the study approached the data with a minimalist normative sense of morality based on right and wrong, care and harm lenses as independent from specific



values directly linked to beliefs or cultural systems. For this sake, immorality means the transgression of a moral standard with negative consequences on the rightfulness or welfare of others (Blair, 1995). In this respect, what is immoral is what can harm others, intend to do so, or unduly induce harm to others physically, psychologically, and emotionally. The harm is, therefore, the infliction of damage to others or the disturbance of the well-being of non-labile civilians. On the other hand, what is irrational is what is faultily conceived in making war acts that affect the good of others or human communities.

Because the data collected could not speak for themselves and did not know the moral and rational dialog language, this study engaged it in this conversation (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). For that reason, the study applied a sifting strategy to many nonstandard and erratic data generated (Martin and Turner, 1986). Subsequently, the study thoroughly examined, dissected, and constantly compared the properties of reported incidents and their contexts. Concretely, the study treated two sorts of data: those linked to the reported incidents and those related to their contexts. The in-depth document review allowed the study to identify and assess these properties, their commonalities, and differences to uncover meaningful content components and label them in the search for insightful connections and patterns. On the one hand, the study considered the reported violent incidents as direct manifestations of various immoral actions that occurred, in most cases, following social, political, and economic immoral and irrational contexts. On the other hand, the study explored these contextual immoral and irrational attributes.

These grounded theory processes facilitated the dynamics of thought formulation by seeking more specific categories and connections. Integrating properties into categories resulted in various constructs, enabling a grounded interpretation and discussion of the patterns. Hence, the study conveyed a consistent picture of conflict's immoral and irrational features. This study preferred to use the qualifiers harmful, harm-prone, and harming with connotations that emphasize some nuances. The adjective "harmful" before action, behavior, or decision is intended to signify wrongdoing that caused harm to others, from killing to abusing victims; the qualifier "harm-prone" preceding the word context means having the inclination to induce harmful actions; the gerund "harming" followed by the term agent to represent the entity that physically committed a harmful action. As Barry Turner (1981) suggested, the study viewed category profile and definition as vital to guide the formulation of intuitive thoughts.

The study found that harmful actions, harm-prone contexts, and harming agents embody the features of the Congolese wars. Violent incidents carry four categories of harmful actions: subjective, objective, proactive, and extreme. They were induced by three harm-prone contexts: mind-based, power-based, and interest-based. The harming agents were affiliated with five types of belligerents: direct, indirect, full, side, and casual, who formed two categories: aspirational and non-aspirational. Political and military agents from aspirational and non-aspirational belligerents committed the four types of harmful actions cultivated and amplified by the harm-prone contexts, resulting in the harmful development of the conflict. Under the sections below, the paper addresses the types of harmful action in the first section, the types of harm-prone contexts in the second section, and the harming agents in the third section. The study integrated existing theoretical assumptions about armed conflict and cognitive functions to support the interpretation of the moral and rational implications of the identified categories.

### Harmful Actions

Harmful actions are immoral behaviors posed by armed agents affiliated with different belligerents against non-liaible individuals, causing them to suffer their effects. These actions can also be termed hard-harming because they cause death and severe damage to civilians, communities, and livelihoods. During wartime, violent incidents against non-liaible individuals with acute harm to their victims are morally wrong and considered war crimes and violations (McMahan, 2013). The Jus in Bello, part of just war theory, is congruent with these crimes and offenses as they are forms of breach of its three main principles of discrimination, necessity, and proportionality (Brooks, 2012). The law of war and the law against humanity make most harmful actions war crimes and thus punishable. The Statute of the International Criminal Court defines war crimes as, among other things, “serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict” and “serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in an armed conflict not of an international character” (ICC Statute, Article 8, cited in Vol. II, Ch. 44, § 3). Nonetheless, national and international moral and legal frameworks did not deter harmful actions from being repeatedly and predominantly committed during the Congolese wars.

The study divided the data properties of violent incidents into fifteen subcategories and four categories of harmful actions formulated as subjective harming, objective harming, proactive harming, and extreme harming. The study used the term harming instead of harm to emphasize the strong sense of intentionality characterizing these actions. Table 1 presents the extracted properties from violent incidents investigated, the codes attributed to subcategories, their characteristics, and the categories they formed.

**Table 1: Harmful Actions (HA)**

Subcategories	Code	Characteristics	Categories-Code
Ethnic Violence	HA <sub>1</sub>	Violent actions based on ethnic profiling (killing, injuring, beating).	Subjective Harming (SH)
Casual Violence	HA <sub>2</sub>	Actions of using violence at random without any assessment (killing, injuring, beating).	
Punitive Brutality	HA <sub>3</sub>	Violent actions are based on suspicion of conspiracy with the enemy (killing, injuring, beating).	
Women Rape	HA <sub>4</sub>	Actions of sexually assaulting or abusing women and girls	Objective Harming (OH)
Child Abuse	HA <sub>5</sub>	Actions of using minors for military and non-military purposes	
Forced Service	HA <sub>6</sub>	Actions of kidnapping and/or forcing individuals to work for a belligerent include forced recruitment, forced labor, and forced burying victims.	
Inhuman Treatment	HA <sub>7</sub>	Actions of putting victims in awful conditions to suffer or feel pain, such as physical torture, detention conditions, repressive displacement, food deprivation	
Property Spoiling	HA <sub>8</sub>	Actions of attacking, destroying, and looting civilian properties	
Heavy Weapons Abuse	HA <sub>9</sub>	Actions of using heavy weapons indiscriminately in inhabited areas.	
Hors de combat Aggression	HA <sub>10</sub>	Actions of harming combatants who dropped their arms, captured or disabled	Proactive Harming (PH)
Leader Targeting	HA <sub>11</sub>	Actions of harming a village, tribal, or religious chief	
Wrongful Execution	HA <sub>12</sub>	Actions of executing someone in extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary manners or making them disappear.	Extreme Harming (EH)
Violence to Vulnerable	HA <sub>13</sub>	Violent actions against vulnerable people	
Body Mutilation	HA <sub>14</sub>	Actions of cutting human organs with edged weapons.	
Live Murder	HA <sub>15</sub>	Action of killing victims alive through burning, burying, dumping in a river, or other ways.	

Source: Developed for this Research

## Subjective Harming

Subjective Harming is an intentional causation of harm due to hostile resentment or a desire for self-fulfillment. Harmful actions manifested through ethnic violence, casual violence, and punitive brutality directly related to perpetrators' perspectives and emotions toward their victims. Ethnic violence, based on perpetrators-victim's identity differences, was engaged with actions motivated by hatred against an identified group or between ethnic groups. Ethnic violence featured the most harmful actions noted in the conflict, ignoring the ethical rule of care that guides the civilians' protection during wartime. Various armed units committed harsh immoral actions against numerous peaceful civilians based on ethnic perspectives, which reduced other human beings to their ethnic identities (Sen, 2006).

In the Eastern part of the DR Congo, ethnic violence started to become more noticeable in 1993, way before the first war in 1996. Armed elements systematically harmed numerous civilians based on their ethnicity. Local armed units directly linked to tribal groups began targeting each other's community members based on mutual accusations. Hunde and Nyanga, against Hutu-Banyarwanda, and Bembe against Tutsi-Banyarwanda, often harmed each other through their tribal militias. Moreover, Hutu against Tutsi from Rwanda and Burundi savagely harmed each other in Congo. In Tebero and Njango villages, for example, Hutu armed elements associated with ex-FAR/Interahamwe elements killed approximately 760 individuals of Nande origin in October 1996. Also, the invading armed forces from Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, dominantly Tutsis, helped by their local allies, made indistinctly Hutu living in the Congo their prey in a systematic way. Ethnic violence intensified in the second war, from August 1998 onwards, with prominent community-based support across ethnic lines. For example, Tutsi Banyamulenge were associated with AFDL activated by Rwandan and Ugandan regimes, Hutu Banyarwanda with Rwandan Hutu rebellion (ALiR), and the Hunde, Nyanga, and Tembo with the Mayi-Mayi groups. Their civilian communities perished respectively in the hands of each other. In many cases, ethnic-based armed units sorted some people out of a civilian population through their ethnic traits before harming them. The respective ethnic militias' harming against Lendu and Hema individuals illustrated its extension in the Ituri region.

Casual violence, however, affected people randomly without any assessment of the situation and made civilian victims despite their identity characteristics such as ethnicity and religion. Unlike ethnic violence, casual violence was ethnically indiscriminate, served as an act of terror or deterrence, and demonstrated the loss of rational control and the impairment of rational judgment essentially. The definition that can fit this depiction is the harming of civilians who are reasonably not direct violence targets but happen to be in a targeted area. In January 2000, elements of the Rwandan Hutu rebellion killed around 100 civilians in the village of Luke because the village was deemed friendly to RCD-Goma<sup>1</sup> and Rwandan forces. Casual violence in the Congolese conflict could occur in public places after violent fighting between two forces in conditions of uncertainty. For example, mixt elements of the RDC-Goma and Rwandan forces stormed two marketplaces in 1999. They killed numerous civilians, especially females, 45 in the Masisi region and 50 in a village 40 kilometers north of Uvira. In both cases, this casual violence followed armed confrontations against the Mayi-Mayi combatants in the area.

Slightly different from casual violence, punitive brutality happened as an intended punishment

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<sup>1</sup> RCD-Goma: Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie-based in Goma.

to people from an area, a group, or a community suspected of having any connection with an enemy group or armed event against them. Punitive brutality could be discriminatory, usually against male civilians or defined civilians. Even though it could occur in locations inhabited dominantly by a tribe and mainly affected its members, the harming here is not primarily ethnically motivated. It forcefully happened when a member or some members of a group, no matter its tribal, political, religious, or other affiliation, was deemed or suspected of having a connection with an opposing armed group that caused damage to the harming agent.

Punitive brutality reached a significant scale as military agents from various belligerents reprovved groups or communities. This illogical behavior also resulted from uncertainty and ignorance with increased anger of armed agents. For example, on March 10, 1997, Congolese army units and foreign mercenaries led a punitive campaign against the village of Bayanguna, killing many civilians for having denounced their cold killing of 16 civilians days before. AFDL and Rwandan forces massacred for several days in July 1997, between 500 and 800 people in the villages of Kazumba, Talama, Mukungu, and Kabanga, on the border between the provinces of Katanga and South Kivu, identified as bases of the small-scale “Jeshi la Jua” or “Sun army” militia in retaliation for a supposed Jeshi la Jua’s attack that only had one casualty on their side. Another example happened between December 1998 and January 1999, when RCD-Goma, Rwandan, and Burundian forces killed more than 800 people in several villages of the Fizi region. They had accused the civilian population of collaborating with the Mayi-Mayi, who had killed their commanders on December 29, 1998, in Makobola. On November 1, 2000, Ugandan soldiers killed between seven and eleven people during an attack on the population of Butembo as a punishment for the Vurondo Mayi-Mayi ambush that killed four of their comrades.

Data showed that ethnic violence, casual violence, and punitive brutality produced blind massacres or mass killings, as in many conflicts that lost the sense of rational and moral judgment. Wartime has several stories of subjective harming, even by well-trained, disciplined, and educated armies. One of the famous examples of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the My Lai massacre committed by American soldiers in March 1968, involving the mass murder of unarmed civilians during the Vietnam War. Between 300 to 500 civilians were casually and brutally harmed. The massacres of more than 800 civilians between December 30, 1998, and January 2, 1999, by AFDL combatants and the Rwandan and Burundian soldiers in the villages of Makobola II, Bangwe, Katuta, Mikunga, and Kashekezi in the Fizi region was a combination of casual violence and punitive brutality. Being a member of a targeted ethnic group, living in a particular area, or being accused of collaborating with the enemy could make random people targets of subjective harming. In a particularly significant number, innocent civilians became victims of these harmful actions.

### **Objective Harming**

Objective Harming infers that harm is caused with specific goals in mind. It contrasts with subjective harming in that it does not dominantly rely on personal perceptions or circumstantial emotions toward others. The central attribute of this category of harmful actions is the consideration of the direct ends that need to be achieved. Women rape, child abuse, inhuman treatment, forced service, heavy weapons abuse, and property spoiling embody this category of harmful actions.



Women rape as a forced sexual act against female civilians was of frequent and extensive occurrence, primarily because it was the uncontrolled sexual innuendo of rapists. The data showed that it occurred during military operations, occupation, and retreat. In August 1998, RCD and Rwandan soldiers raped an unknown number of civilians during two Musako operations intended to search for arms caches in Bukavu. Women rape was a side immoral behavior in most reviewed incidents since the beginning of the conflict. Armed agents from different belligerent groups regularly raped or gang-raped women, even minors. Surprisingly, even regular friendly armed forces involved in securing an area notably committed rape, such as the Congolese armed forces. In a case that occurred in December 1996, they raped and gang-raped an uncounted number of women in many territories in Ituri. Another example is the Angolan soldiers who, straight after joining the fight and arriving in Moanda, raped several Congolese women and girls. Nevertheless, the gravity threshold of the phenomenon changed over time and demonstrated that it became a purported weapon of war to cause significant collectively resonated harm.

Undeniably, rape is a recurrent phenomenon of armed conflicts worldwide and has long been considered a reward of war (Askin, 1997). It is also regarded as a well-deserved punishment for a civilian community of a terrible enemy. Even when modern legal assertions started treating it as a war crime, mass war rape has still occurred in modern armed conflicts, even in societies supposedly high-educated. Many examples illustrated it, such as the Japanese mass rape of Chinese women, the brutal mass rape of Soviet soldiers against German women, and the mass rape of the colonial troops of the French Expeditionary Corps (FEC) against Italian women during World War II. However, the enormous number and forms of conflict-related rapes in the Congolese conflict, with their tremendous consequences at a time of humanistic development, were resolutely troublesome. Soldiers purportedly and savagely raped women from communities deemed related to the enemy group. However, supposedly friendly soldiers raped non-labile women. The eastern part of the Congo was named “the rape capital of the world,” as it experienced hundreds of thousands of women rapes, all within the armed conflict period, to the point that medical experts called it an epidemic (Brown, 2012). Their large-scale magnitude, unusuality, and brutality tragically raised the question of its societal and cultural bases and influences through cognitive mechanisms.

The child abuse aspect of objective harming involves using persons of minor age for armed groups' ends. Congolese wartime evidenced children as young as less than ten as combatants and non-combatants' supporting hands. If they did not serve as cannon fodder or were forced to be perpetrators of terror, they served as cooks, cleaners, porters, spies, or sex slaves. Most suffered indescribable violence, including murder, rape, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, and were deprived of all rights. During the first war, the AFDL rebellion openly committed this moral wrongdoing, making the enrollment of child soldiers an acceptable behavior. Recruited in mass, they were proudly named Kadogo, deployed on the frontlines, harmed, and forced to harm. From 1996 to 1998, many minors deceptively and forcedly joined different armed groups. For example, the Kasindian (later Vurondo) Mayi-Mayi recruited a lot in the Lubero territory. Banyamulenge and Rwandan soldiers used child soldiers from the beginning of the second war in 1998 and even forced a group of them to fire on the Congolese hors de combat officers and soldiers.

Armed groups have employed underage soldiers throughout war history and culture (Wessels, 1997) mainly because they are easily influenceable and manipulable (Beber & Blattman, 2013).

Napoleon conscripted many young French teenagers for his armies in 1813 and 1814. Thousands of underage soldiers participated during the First and Second World Wars. Illustratively, Great Britain had more than twenty thousand underage soldiers in WWI, and Soviet Children fought in WWII (Kucherenko, 2011). Since the 1960s, several treaties have successfully reduced the recruitment and use of children in war worldwide (Child Soldiers International, 2017). However, the phenomenon has continued throughout the 20th and early 21st century, and around a quarter of armed forces worldwide, particularly those of third-world nations, still train underage individuals for war (Child Soldiers International, 2018). Recently, the phenomenon has been increasingly noted, and the Congolese example has played a role in this increase (United Nations Secretary-General, 2017).

In the Congolese conflict, the frequency and the openness of child abuse in war made it look morally permissive. Most armed groups noticeably used child soldiers in their frontline duties and war crimes (Rakisits, 2008). Despite international outrage about the Kadogo phenomenon in the first war, when the second war broke out, the RCD rebellion did not bother to forcefully and systematically recruit hundreds of children, even those already demobilized by UNICEF. In 2000, the Ugandan armed groups of ADF-NALU recruited children on a large scale in the Beni region and kidnapped other minors to use as sex slaves for several years. Between 2001 and 2003, UPC (Union des Patriotes Congolais) openly sent thousands of Hema children to military training camps in the Mandro, Katoto, and Bule with cruel conditions. Rwanda and Uganda hosted the military training of many child soldiers. Hundreds of children underwent military training at a UPDF camp in Kyankwanzi in 2000. In 2002, the RCD-Goma rebellion still had visibly a thousand minors in its ranks despite repeated international recommendations.

Inhuman treatment and forced service of civilians are also facets of objective harming. Like in many armed conflicts, belligerents used physical torture, degrading detention conditions, and food deprivation. These awful conditions made the victims suffer and feel pain with the aim of responding to the armed agents' quest. Most armed groups forced numerous civilians to work for their gain, including transporting materials, looting, and carrying looted objects for long walks. The example of the MLC combatants with Ugandan soldiers between 2001 and 2003 is well-known. They used different types of torture, especially holding civilians in muddy holes in the town of Buta, to obtain whatever they were looking for. This inhuman treatment set conditions likely to cause death through disease and exhaustion.

Another form of objective harming is heavy weapons abuse. It consists of the uncritical use of bombardments against enemy forces in a zone where civilians were still in their houses. It aims to destroy the enemy rapidly without caring for civilian fate. Heavy weapons use in the middle of civilian residences resulted in several civilian deaths and wounds in multiple examples. During the struggle for the control of Bukavu, AFDL combatants with Rwandan soldiers did not hesitate to attack the city with heavy weapons in October 1996, killing over 450 civilians. At the end of August 1998, the Zimbabwean forces did the same in some municipalities in Kinshasa, killing around 50 civilians and injuring many. In their 'the 6-Day war' in Kisangani, the Rwandan and Ugandan armies fought each other from 5 to 10 June 2000 with heavy weapons in dense civilian inhabited areas. Between 244 and 760 civilians lost their lives, over a thousand people were wounded, and many thousands of people left their houses. In February 1999, Congolese and Chadian forces against MLC and Ugandan forces shelled each other in the town of Lisala, harming several civilians. In some cases, the military authorities deliberately exposed civilians to heavy bombardments as they ordered them to remain in their

homes so that enemy soldiers could not hide in abandoned houses. Congolese forces fired hundreds of shells in November 2002 in the town of Ankoro. Over a hundred civilians perished as they were required to stay in their houses.

The last component of objective harming is property spoiling, which involves seizing, stealing, looting, and destroying civilians' properties and community buildings. It affects civilian houses, possessions, businesses, and livestock. Many incidents showcased property spoiling, especially looting, usually after attacking, occupying, or retreating from a lost position. Different armed units looted valuable goods frequently and systematically in noteworthy cases and sometimes used scorched earth against non-combatants. Retreating Congolese soldiers championed looting. For example, between December 1996 and March 1997, they looted multiple buildings, even cult sanctuaries, education places, aid efforts storages, and private and public firms' facilities across Orientale Province. Chadian soldiers did the same in May 1999 during their withdrawal from Congolese territory, pillaging large amounts of civilian properties and several tons of coffee in the town of Zongo. In June 2000, the combatants of the Rwandan combatants of ALiR pillaged the town center of Kabare and the surrounding areas. They stole numerous civilians' goods and livestock and ransacked the hospital in Mukongola, the Catholic church of Saint Joseph, the secondary school in Canya, and other buildings. In the same month, Mayi-Mayi and Burundian combatants of CNDD (Centre National pour la Défense de la Démocratie) looted health centers and people's belongings in the Fizi region.

Objective harming is a part of war immorality in many armed conflicts throughout societies and cultures because armed groups want to ensure they have the means to win or benefit from the war. Its occurrence in the Congolese wars demonstrated civilian victimhood insensitivity in a time of so many legal tools and campaigns against these harmful actions. Women rape, child abuse, inhuman treatment, forced service, heavy weapons abuse, and property spoiling repeatedly occurred as means of war in Congolese armed conflict and caused much harm to individuals, families, and communities. Armed groups who commit objective harming have the time to assess the harm they cause or can cause to victims, but the purported goals impair their moral rationality. Innocent civilians, victims of these harmful actions, are, therefore, intended war casualties.

### **Proactive Harming**

Proactive harming considers actions in which armed agents decidedly cause harm to individuals considered an active or potential enemy threat. It includes the cases of hors de combat aggression, wrongful execution, and leader targeting. Proactive harmful actions occur in violent incidents during which hors de combat soldiers and community leaders are victims of execution, mutilation, torture, and other cruel treatments. However, wrongful execution, that is, extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary execution, stands as a separate set of actions of proactive harming because it concerns ordinary civilians accused of collaborating with the enemy.

Hors de Combat aggression counts all actions against enemy combatants when incapacitated to fight. The combatants here are not liable to violent attacks because they are unarmed, sick, wounded, detained, and not threatening. It appears that eliminating incapacitated enemy combatants was a rule of thumb during the Congolese armed conflict. Even the sick and wounded combatants experienced no care and suffered express harm. Many armed units executed enemy combatants straightforwardly. For example, on August 3, 1998, rebel Banyamulenge combatants and Rwandan soldiers disarmed and killed at least 38 officers and

around 100 soldiers of the Congolese army at Kavumu airport in Bukavu. Similarly, the security forces still loyal to the Congolese Government killed, on August 5, 1998, an unknown number of unarmed young Tutsi recruits and Rwandan militaries at the military base in Kamina. They were considered natural accomplices of the Tutsi-dominated rebellion that had just started and massacred the unarmed Congolese military. In May 2002, Lendu militiamen killed numerous enemy soldiers who could no longer fight in the Bahema-Nord community.

Community leader targeting comprises targeted violent or deadly actions toward any authorities of a village, a tribe, a religious group, or a social-political group considered enemies. Armed units treat them as accomplices and threats on ethnic, political, or military grounds. During the Congolese conflict, many were eliminated as a subsequent action of an attack against a community to prevent their leadership and resistance against an armed group. For example, on August 6, 1998, the RCD combatants killed the chief of the Kiringye area in the village of Lwiburule because he did not inform them of the presence of Mayi-Mayi in the area. Accompanied by Rwandan soldiers, they also killed in September 1999 a traditional chief in Dimbelenge, Kasai region, which was accused of storing weapons. Between 1998 and 2002, they arbitrarily arrested and tortured several traditional leaders, administrative officials, political opponents, and members of civil society in Bukavu and Uvira under the accusation of supporting enemy armed groups. Many disappeared in detention without a trace.

The last form of proactive harming is the wrongful execution of simple civilians accused of treason or collaboration with the enemy. The Congolese armed conflict is full of examples where civilians were executed based on simple allegations and without any equitable judgment. For instance, on May 4, 1997, Congolese soldiers, with their allied combatants, summarily executed an unknown number of civilians considered traitors in Kenge. At the beginning of the second war in August 1998, numerous Tutsi civilians arrested disappeared allegedly after being summarily executed. Angolan soldiers summarily executed an unknown number of civilians, especially in Boma, soon after they joined the fight in August 1998. The pattern continued all through the conflict. Between July and September 2000, Congolese soldiers executed tens of civilians in the village of Dongo, considered close to the MLC rebellion.

Data showed proactive harming was a frequent occurrence in Congolese conflict. The ease with which armed units harmed suspected individuals revealed a moral permissiveness in considering the enemy's fate. Many victims of this harming were killed in the same fashion that those of subjective harming with execution, mutilation, torture, and other cruel treatments. From some military's perspective, proactive harming is a rational temptation as it might be viewed as a reasonable war strategy that helps effectively eliminate threats and reduce or prevent the enemy's supposed capabilities. Still, its impact is damaging as it affects the cognition of the enemy or the grieved group who vows to take revenge. The harm caused, therefore, contributes to the destructive development of the conflict.

### **Extreme Harming**

The Extreme Harming category represents actions that cause harm in atrocious ways or with horrendous means. The conditions and systems of harming characterize this group of harmful actions. The position of the victims, the harming weapons, and the harming system represent an extreme wrongdoing from today's humanistic perspective. Violence toward the vulnerable, body mutilation and live murder are attributes of this form of harming. These harmful actions happened in a significant number of violent incidents and uncovered the magnitude of



immorality that the Congolese conflict reached.

Violence Toward the Vulnerable consists of harming people in helpless conditions, such as children, elders, sick people, disabled people, starving people, or any others already affected by pitiful situations. Killing vulnerable civilians, some of whom were victims of previous war-related violent circumstances, is carelessly inhuman behavior. Data showed armed units often harmed the vulnerable, who could be left alive by a sense of compassion due to their conditions. They even killed sick civilians and soldiers being treated at local hospitals. They also committed killings that included children and the elderly in many incidents. The UN Mapping report noted that: "...people targeted primarily by AFDL/APR/FAB forces and executed in their hundreds, often with edged weapons. The majority of the victims were children, women, elderly people, and the sick, who posed no threat to the attacking forces" (UN, 2009, p.279). For example, on October 6, 1996, Tutsi armed elements killed 37 people undergoing treatment in a hospital in Lamera. At the end of the same month in Rutshuru territory, AFDL combatants, accompanied by Rwandan soldiers, massacred over 800 people, many children included.

Body mutilation with edged weaponry is another manifestation of extreme harming. Armed agents used edged weapons such as machetes, hatchets, pitchforks, axes, sickles, sling blades, and scythes in non-combat situations. As in all human societies, the use of edged weapons in Africa has a history and a cultural connection between war and peace, life and death, and offense and defense (Sprague et al., 2013). In the context of the Congolese conflict, however, armed units used edge weapons not for combat but for harming civilians, particularly by mutilating victims' bodies. They could butcher body parts and even impale victims. They deliberately and extensively utilized various edged weapons to kill or maim by mutilation. Some violent incidents portrayed the killing of more than hundreds of victims with edged weapons. Some victims could be disemboweled, decapitated, or emasculated, and their mutilated organs could be presented proudly to the public. For example, in the Rutshuru massacre perpetrated by AFDL armed elements and Rwandan soldiers on October 30, 1996, approximately 350 civilians were found dead with blows of hammers to their heads. Hema militias massacred between 200 and 250 civilians from the Lendu, Ngiti, Nande, and Bira ethnic groups by mutilation on January 19, 2001, mostly with machetes, spears, or studded batons. Some victims were decapitated, and their heads were carried through the town as trophies.

Last is live murder, which mainly comprises burning and burying victims alive as punishment. This antiquity-like killing involves making the victim feel his slow death. The most-used form in the conflict was burning in a house; even regular armed forces did it. In numerous violent incidents, armed units torched houses after locking victims inside, sometimes entire families with their children in front of survivors. Around August 1997, the newly formed Congolese army from AFDL and the Rwandan soldiers assembled several hundred civilians in a building in Mushangwe village and torched the building. In another incident that occurred in November 1999, they buried 15 women alive in the town center of Mwenga after torturing and raping them and introducing sticks to their private parts. In January 1999, Congolese army forces burned alive some of their victims in the village of Mase. The number of burning and burying victims alive, sometimes based on simple accusations, during the Congolese conflict is surprisingly shocking, exhibiting a sense of mercilessness and inhumanity, as no moral force could constrain this live violence.

All these extreme harmful actions demonstrate the complete uncontrollability of moral

judgment, as seen in many armed conflicts across history and cultures. The American army forces' largest massacre in Vietnam on March 16, 1968, primarily harmed women, children, and elderly men, with cases of body mutilation. However, the Congolese armed conflict evidenced a significant number of violent incidents with extreme harming, which uncovered the magnitude of war immorality it reached. Their occurrence is the reason some depicted the Congolese wars as barbarian and atavistic.

Conclusively, the study's four categories of harmful actions are not absolute but cross-connected. Violent incidents in the Congolese armed conflict displayed harmful actions from these different motives and natures. For example, a horrendous killing could be a part of ethnic violence mixing extreme and subjective harming categories. One could kill for ethnic reasons vulnerable individuals by mutilating body organs. These harming categories simultaneously and separately operate in reasoning without affecting thoughtful coherence. Nonetheless, this categorization is helpful as a conceptual tool to seize different aspects of the scope of immorality and irrationality in the Congolese conflict.

One can conclude that moral transgressions in the Congolese armed conflict did not activate enough of what cognitivism views as the violence inhibition mechanism (VIM), a sense of aversion (Blair, 1994). With repeated harmful actions, the victims' distress cues could have activated a strong VIM and generated a moral response of withdrawal. The continuation of the violence demonstrates that the absence of its aversion has undoubtedly contributed to the development of harmful actions. However, cognitive deficit is not per se a determinant of people's behaviors; contextual agency is (Blair, 1994). Then, one needs to consider environmental factors in understanding harmful actions. The study investigated the contextual agency of moral transgressions and their relationship with the alteration of harming agents' empathy. In many violent incidents, the context was dynamically prone to harmfulness as it stimulated, influenced, shaped, and even scaled harmful actions.

### **Harm-Prone Contexts**

The harm-prone contexts represent the environmental contingencies with the inclination to induce harmful actions or other immoral and irrational behaviors by armed agents. These contexts embody circumstances, characters, attitudes, or behaviors from contextual social, political, or economic situations that stimulate wrong thinking and wrongdoing. The study investigated the contexts in which violent incidents were committed to retrieve common properties. These properties, treated as immoral and irrational layers, constitute what is viewed as soft harming because they produce conditions for harmful action occurrence and development. Considering their nature, the study grouped these properties into three categories (mind-based context, power-based context, and interest-based context) from nine subcategories of toxic characters, attitudes, and actions, as aligned in Table 2. The conceptual categories denote the emerging levels of abstraction representing the data.

**Table 2: Harm-Prone Contexts (HC)**

Subcategories	Code	Characteristics	Categories-Code
Ethnic Animosity	HC <sub>1</sub>	Attitudes influenced by perceived ethnic-tribal identity	Mind-based Context (MC)
Security Mistrust	HC <sub>2</sub>	Attitudes of security worries and suspicions or discrediting existing security mechanisms	
Mystical Delusion	HC <sub>3</sub>	Actions motivated by traditional beliefs or spiritual convictions	
Retaliatory Impetus	HC <sub>4</sub>	Attitudes motivated by irreflexive and excessive sense of revenge	
Opportunistic Association	HC <sub>5</sub>	Attitudes aroused by the aim of taking advantage of political or military forces	Power-based Context (PC)
Leadership Rivalry	HC <sub>6</sub>	Attitudes or actions of longing for power over other members	
Power Malpractice	HC <sub>7</sub>	Attitudes or actions that involve abusing hierarchical position or power for gaining unjust self-benefices or achieving evil ends.	
Foreign Connivance	HC <sub>8</sub>	Attitudes of consenting to the wrongdoing committed by entities from other countries	Interest-based Harming (IH)
Wealth Greed	HC <sub>9</sub>	Attitudes related to a search for quick access to and control of economic and financial resources.	

*Source: Developed for this Research*

### **Mind-Based Context**

The mind-based context implies moral agents' social, cultural, and security perceptions and emotions expressed negatively. It featured ethnic animosity, security mistrust, mystical delusion, and retaliatory impetus. They produce a perception of latent enmity that displays itself in action. Ethnic animosity is associated with attitudes and acts based on dislike or fear of others because of their tribe or ethnicity. Security mistrust is the presence of suspicions and lack of confidence due to the precarious security situation. Mystical delusion is a perception motivated by beliefs, rituals, or practices rooted in local spiritual traditions. For its part, retaliatory impetus concerns attitudes driven by suspicions and feelings of anger directed to a group, an area, or a community where an unfortunate circumstance happened against a belligerent group, such as the killing of soldiers by a hidden armed group.

The salient factor in the mind-based context is ethnic animosity, which results from harsh cohabitation between ethnic communities. Most literature on ethnicity and civil wars points out that multiethnicity, depending on its characteristics, is a risk factor for armed disputes (Elbadawi, 1999; Ellingsen, 2000; and Reynal-Querol, 2002). Ethnic animosity is a product of mental state due to specific social conditions between communities living closely. In Congo, as in many parts of Africa, ethnic dispute generally exists in remote locations where cohabiting tribes make territorial and power claims. Concerning the armed conflict, many factors, such as discriminatory and exclusionary rhetoric and acts at local and national levels, contributed to ethnic animosity. For instance, some violent incidents between 1993 and 1996 demonstrated how the ethnic-based social and political stigmatization discourse against the Luba tribe in some provinces triggered harmful behaviors against them. However, from a larger view, this

ethnic animosity was coupled with political rivalry. Many Luba-origin individuals opposed President Mobutu and its political allies, such as Prime Minister Nguz, and supported the opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi, a Luba himself. This case of ethnic animosity had a limited effect on the present armed conflict but showed the relationship between context and harmful actions.

Conversely, ethnic animosity against people of Rwandan origin reached a substantial scale in the conflict's first, second, and third periods because of the denial of some fundamental rights about citizenship, traditional land ownership, and the question of loyalty to the Congolese nation. The latter became a national issue when an essential number of Tutsis living in the Congo left the country to join the Rwandan Tutsi rebellion against the regime of Habyarimana or returned to Rwanda after its victory. On April 28, 1995, the Congolese parliament officially rejected all claims of the Rwandan-origin people, especially Tutsis, for Congolese citizenship and recommended their repatriation to Rwanda. At the local level, the authorities of the Uvira territory, in a memorandum released on October 19, 1995, stated that the Banyamulenge ethnic group was unrecognized in Congo. Sporadic ethnic attacks also heightened ethnic animosity at local levels. For example, the Bembe people declared “total war” against the Banyamulenge community after armed agents identified as Banyamulenge killed one of their traditional chiefs in the Fizi territory, along with two members of his family, on 12 September 1996 (UN Mapping, 2009, p. 134). In the same month, armed individuals from the Bembe tribe committed rapes and killings of Tutsis. These stances instigated harmful behaviors against Tutsis, such as arbitrary arrest, property spoiling, beating, and killing.

The revival of the ethnic animosity, therefore, created protracted ethnic tensions and confrontations between tribes considered autochthones and Rwanda-origin communities. This escalation had a significant national and regional impact when the Hutu-Tutsi conflict surged in Rwanda and Burundi and extended to Congo through a massive refugee crisis. For example, Tusti combatants of the Rwandan army and AFDL publicly treated the Hutus as an evil race capable of atrocities. The outlook of ethnic animosity is substantially formed based on the Hutu-Tutsi binary, in which local communities are divided depending on their alliances. The pattern ultimately aligned with the classical conflict frame of US vs. THEM through ethnic identities and characterizations in their distinguishing dimension. With accrued disputes, some local identities and characterizations became “negatively framed, critically judging another and distinguishing that person from a normative value” (Wondolleck et al., 2003). Later in the conflict, this pattern would manifest in the case between Hema, Lendu, and their allies in the Ituri region, as Lendu perceived Hema as spoilers of their traditional rights. This ethnic animosity diffusion and spillover effects narrowed moral and rational judgment and fueled subjective harming during the conflict.

The second factor is security mistrust. Because of many abuses from armed units, even the regular Congolese army, people lost faith in local and national security mechanisms. Security mistrust inferred a lack of trust between different societal actors, significantly contributing to many armed confrontations and violations. For example, from July 1996 onwards, Banyamulenge, Rwandan Tutsis residing in Congo who went to fight in Rwanda, and regular Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers started infiltrating the eastern provinces of Congo. It was alleged that local Tutsis helped them to commit crimes that targeted local communities. For example, they were accused of killing between 28 and 36 civilians, mostly Hutu Banyarwanda, on the night of 5 to 6 June 1996 in Bunagana. The suspicious climate increased against the



Banyamulenge community and induced the local communities to create self-defense militias and official authorities to get involved. Local militias and regular Congolese soldiers operated together in some cases to harm civilian Banyamulenge and Rwandan Tutsis. In September 1996, Congolese soldiers helped Bembe militiamen in their harmful actions against Tutsis, including women and minors.

The perception of potential threats and hostile intentions led to many violent actions and reactions. On 6 October 1996, Banyamulenge/Tutsi armed units reportedly killed over thirty people at Lemera in the Uvira territory, including civilians and soldiers who were being treated at the local hospital. Four days after this incident, Congolese soldiers went on a rampage, killing several hundred Banyamulenge, including women and children, in the town of Bukavu. In a classical pattern of the security dilemma, this mistrust continued and intensified throughout the conflict as belligerents mainly interpreted the actions of the one side as aggressive, leading to defensive measures perceived by the other side as threatening.

The third factor, mystical delusion, is of limited but still-consequential influence. It caused armed agents to submit to abject superstitions and beliefs to protect themselves or obtain some extra power. This search for supernatural protection or force also required them to harm others. For example, some combatants believed that using the body parts of their victims or having sexual relations with virgins, children, pregnant or breast-feeding women, or even Pygmies could cure illnesses or make them invincible. Mayi-Mayi combatants commonly created charms and amulets from their victims' body parts to claim superpowers. In a well-known case, combatants from MLC<sup>2</sup> were accused of practicing cannibalism on Pygmies and fabricating amulets from their smoked or cured sex organs.

The fourth factor is the retaliatory impetus, a classical conflict retributive intuition. It pushed different armed units to take adverse action in response to an experienced damaging attack. It exploited the causal connection between the damage's source and a civilian community charged for supposedly participating in an enemy's actions. Ambushes that killed armed group members resulted in massacres of the area's inhabitants. For example, the new Congolese armed forces (ANC) and Rwandan soldiers stationed in Congo after the AFDL victory raped, ransacked, and killed, on February 20, 1998, an unknown number of civilians accused of collaborating with the Vurondo Mayi-Mayi, who had attacked them earlier on. Another example is the shooting and burning of several tens of civilians, from house to house, in the Uvira region on May 14, 2000, by Congolese armed forces following the death of their commander in a military ambush attributed to combatants of FDD.<sup>3</sup> The damage registered determined the scale and the system of harmful actions. A retaliatory reaction could kill hundreds of civilians and destroy their villages and livestock.

Decisively, the mind-based context established a mental and affective setting with emotional deficits that motivated uncontrolled harmful actions. The hatred of others, the fear of others, the belief about others, and the rage toward others conditioned behaviors and ostensibly suggested harmful actions during the conflict. These contextual drivers render one's view, belief, or judgment faulty and mental conditions twisted. The stimulus of these representations responds to the assumptions of the Theory of Mind (ToM), which describes the capacity to

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<sup>2</sup> MLC: Mouvement de Liberation du Congo

<sup>3</sup> FDD: Front pour la Défense de la Démocratie (armed wing of the Burundian Hutu movement CNDD: Centre National pour la Défense de la Démocratie).

attribute mental states and affective status to others and oneself and to predict one's own and other's behavior (Brune and Brune-Cohrs, 2005). The moral judgment negatively evaluates the target (Royzman and Rozin, 2006). The emotional attitudes relied significantly on negative cognition, and war effects became a more common disposition toward the hated, feared, and accused others (Halperin et al., 2012). Different groups involved in the violence came to see each other as morally deficient and deserving of their harm.

As in many conflicts, the conditions of mind-based context drove different armed agents to commit harmful actions. They, consequently, became less sensitive to moral imperatives and could kill, rape, mutilate, loot, and destroy according to their simple mind direction. Non-labile civilians paid a high price for the uncontrolled harmful development. In many attacks against civilians, the departing point was ethnic animosity, security mistrust, mystical delusion, and retaliatory impetus. This mind-based context had particularly causal relationships with extreme harming. However, these factors often overlap to play a triggering role in producing and shaping most of the harmful actions in the conflict.

### **Power-Based Context**

The Power-based context refers to factors produced by the desire for political influence or dominance. It is constituted of attitudes or actions resulting from the search for political strength or power increase, disregarding ethical principles and holistic thinking. Opportunistic association, leadership rivalry, and power malpractice are its principal manifestations. Opportunistic alliance involves behaviors or decisions of political actors that demonstrate a lack of firm political convictions or values, such as ideals, honesty, and loyalty. Political actors could use unprincipled actions to support or increase self-political influence. Leadership rivalry, notwithstanding, includes attitudes, behaviors, and decisions that condition the dispute of organizational and managing levers and means of power. Power malpractice entails behaviors and decisions over power use and the desire to create political conditions and events for self-benefit. These layers are seasonal manipulations with seasonal effects.

The first layer of power-based context is the opportunistic association of the Congolese political elites. This characteristic developed as a political malleability alongside the country's failed democratization. The ideological ambiguity of many politicians caused them to change positions depending on circumstantial opportunities. Therefore, many were positioned on belligerent sides unscrupulously or un-ideally, allowing them to participate in whatever political dynamics they were interested in. For example, the involvement of many politicians at the beginning of the RCD rebellion showed this opportunistic association as the group attracted politicians from different sides of the Congolese political spectrum. The group formed a mosaic of political baroudeurs who were not welcomed by LD. Kabila's regime. Former Mobutu apparatchiks, such as Lunda Bululu and Ntambwe Mwamba, cohabitated with former nationalists such as Emile Ilunga and Ernest Wamba Dia Wamba, and other Congolese Diaspora members, such as Arthur Zahidi Ngoma and Thomas Luhaka. They ran into that rebellion that started as a reaction to Kabila's repatriation of Rwandan and Ugandan troupes from Congo. This validates Weinstein's assumption of opportunistic rebellion instead of activist rebellion based on true ideals (Weinstein, 2017). Many would eventually leave and join other armed groups on the eve of power-sharing negotiations. Other rebel groups that were formed later experienced the same phenomenon as many of their political leaders moved back and forth, molding for the power share. For example, Roger Lumbala, who created the RCD-National, was successively a former UDPS member, an LD Kabila supporter, an official of

RCD-Goma, and an RCD-Kisangani(ML) associate. Consistent values and views on issues did not primarily drive them. The political profit dynamics dragged some political elites into armed groups, reinforcing the conflict outlook.

Second is the leadership rivalry within political and military groups. In contrast to the opportunistic association, leadership rivalry manifested in the organization and the functioning of political corporations from the state power to the military and political organization power. Leaders disputed political control on all sides of the belligerence during the conflict. Some used their leadership position to grab unfair advantages and decisions, engendering infighting and splits. Many groups fragmented and became enemies. For example, around the end of 1999 and 2000, two chiefs of Vurondo Mayi-Mayi, Lolwako Poko Poko and Mudohu, got into a severe rivalry that resulted in violent confrontations between their men. The leadership battle in the RCD ended with the creation of two different rebellion groups, RCD-Goma and RCD-ML(Kisangani), that fought against each other alongside Rwandan and Ugandan troupes on the opposing sides. Later, the conflict between the President of the RCD-ML, Wamba dia Wamba, and his two principal lieutenants, Mbusa Nyamwisi and John Tibasima, broke out in public and led to serious infighting between the two camps. Leadership rivalry, especially that moved with ethnic lines, created harm-prone conditions against civilians.

The third layer of this power-based context is power malpractice, which could make anyone with some power abuse it. The abuse of power by some political and military agents created harmful situations, such as arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture. By the same token, politicians created violent situations against civilians to justify their positions in the power-sharing process. The misuse of power, therefore, drove harmful actions. The power malpractice settled in the endless scramble for power (Accord, 2009), which became the bed of misconduct, mismanagement, harassment, corruption, injustice, and other political mischiefs. The power malpractice negatively impacted the political and military interactions during the conflict.

The power-based context instigated disregard for ethical principles for political gains. Opportunistic association, leadership rivalry, and power malpractice sourced immoral and irrational behaviors and decisions that forged the conflict's harmful development. This perspective is different from viewing political causes through the lenses of political systems and institutions (Reynal-Querol, 2002) or grievances (Steward, 2008). It is a leader-centered approach to political morality, whether favored by institutional settings or idiosyncratic tendencies, concerning moral judgment-making about political action and agents (Thompson, 2019). It is about the methods of public officials and non-official political actors during an armed conflict. The Congolese armed conflict between 1998-2003 was substantially associated with an uncharacteristic rummage for power. However, it is essential to associate this power propensity with interest-based contextual elements.

### **Interest-Based Context**

The Interest-based context includes factors that work toward increasing self-benefits through foreign connivance and wealth greed. These factors make agents act in a way that results in immediate gain as a reward for themselves or a small group. Foreign connivance incorporates conduct that implies participation or collaboration with foreign elements in conflict. It is also a factor that helps outside parties get the most profit out of the conflict. Wealth greed translates to the conduct intended to control sources or means of riches, such as natural resources or strategic economic locations. This context promotes the idea of having a foreign ally and

having control of resources to gain exterior support, natural resources, and war finances.

Foreign connivance has been a critical layer of the Congolese conflict from the beginning. With the involvement of several African nations, the Congolese armed conflict was considerably a foreign-activated and foreign-oriented crisis. Initially, Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi actively deployed their national forces, supported the creation of rebellions in Congo, and provided weapons to multiple armed groups based on their interests. Through this foreign connivance, armed groups are externally assisted with military aid, funding, weapons, and training, which essentially allows them to engage in more fighting and more civilian harm. It can further change significantly the dynamics of a conflict for the worse. With the complexity of the Congolese conflict, one might not view the initial interest in foreign involvement as exclusively materialistic. However, as the conflict deepened and stalled, interests became more materialistic, focusing on natural resources.

The second layer is wealth greed, which is closely related to foreign connivance in a materialistic sense. It marks a change in attitude towards natural resources. Belligerents start fighting over the control of mining territories and act harmfully against civilians to make them submissive, displaced, or work inhumanely in exploiting natural resources. The materialistic interests justified several armed confrontations within the same groups, such as the fights in November 1999 between the Mayi-Mayi groups around Beni-Butembo to control the agro-pastoral and mining resources. Consecutively, the country's natural resources became a backdrop to the perpetration of wrongdoing against the civilian population. This situation aligns well with the Conflict Trap framework that makes natural resource wealth an essential factor much more likely to turn a conflict violent as any armed group wants a source of finance (Collier et al., 2003).

Consequently, individual and group desire for material gain intensifies and contrasts with moral ideals as personal and particular goals conflict with social and political aims. Armed groups' leaders and associates sought to enrich themselves in the Congolese conflict by accruing their financial benefits (Accord, 2012). Resource-rich and dark business-like environments attracted low-commitment individuals and fueled fights with a propensity to commit harmful actions for short-term material benefits (Weinstein, 2017). These conditions permitted foreign individuals and corporations to enter the game and pursue high economic profits from the conflict, regardless of its adverse effects on civilians and communities. Enough Project (2009) report indicated the competitive involvement of multinational corporations from South Africa, France, Canada, the U.S., and Australia in illegally extracting and trading Congolese minerals.

The demand for some minerals from the DR Congo in the electronics market aggravated the greed and harm dynamics. From the beginning of the second war to January 2001, repeated intensive confrontations opposed the rebels of RCD and Rwandan soldiers against Mayi-Mayi armed units for controlling the town of Lulingu, which was considered rich in coltan mines. This armed competition harmed an unknown number of civilians between July and August 2000. Another example is the fight on 1 December 1999 between Lendu militias and Ugandan soldiers associated with the Hema militias over control of the mining town of Bambou in the Djugu region that caused all kinds of harmful actions, killing over 200 civilians, mutilation, and the town looting. With an intensive consumption of natural resources, outside powers supported shadow economies for the profit of local warlords who relied on the war economy (Münkler, 2005).



In the logic of greed supported by Collier and Hoeffler (2004), economic opportunities offered by wars blinded moral consciousness about harmful actions. The Un Mapping report concluded that “the abundance of natural resources in the DRC contributed directly to widespread violations and their perpetuation and that both domestic and foreign state-owned or private companies could bear some responsibility for these crimes having been committed” (UN, 2009, p.17). The mining regions, seen as strategic by the various groups, became not only the theater for some particularly violent fighting but also were picked as headquarters. This background of growing economic rivalry between foreign forces on the one hand and various local actors on the other hand seriously impacted the conflict’s continuation and devastation.

At the lower level, the interest-based context encouraged regular combatants to frequent looting for themselves. With the propensity of wealth greed, looting became a significant form of predatory accumulation in Congolese warfare (Ginty, 2004). Armed units constrained people and engaged themselves in repeated looting. Regardless of their quality, informal or formal, professional or not, trained or not, combatants looted to gain financial support. Nevertheless, looting was not just a way to sustain themselves because of low payment but a predatory mindset and system. Through looting, combatants committed other harmful actions. Greed theory makes war-related predation, through the fight for natural resources and looting, substantial contributors to civilian casualties (Azam, 2002).

With the interest-based context, all belligerents considered enlarging their military capability and economic strength through foreign connivance and wealth greed. This context favored attitudes and actions toward the direction of foreign allies to gain exterior support and fight for sources of economic support to secure war finances. The moral perspective here is more on self-interest and selfish attitudes and actions. The interest-based contextual layers validate the assumptions of the new war in its globalization dimension as a trigger of destructive and cumulative effects on Congolese wars (Münkler, 2005).

Concisely, the contexts surrounding violent incidents could be functionally mind-based, power-based, or interest-based, depending upon dominant factors. However, they mostly interplayed in many violent incidents and the escalation of the conflict. Contextual layers, mind-based, power-based, or interest-based, have two positionings. First, they precede military belligerence and prepare moral and rational cognition from a social cognitive perspective. Second, they emerge during military belligerence, forge, and exacerbate this cognition. Both positionings are causal to many harmful actions because faulty social, political, economic, and institutional conditions in which the conflict emerged, functioned, and developed are inductive of warring impulses. Therefore, these conditions affected Congolese war development, peacemaking, and political arrangements, with direct and indirect links with violent incidents. They challenged the morality and rationality of political and military agents, spreading and extending violence's destructiveness.

### **Harming Agents**

Harming agents are the entities that cause harm to non-liaible civilians through their moral and rational cognition of war actions, contexts, and effects. As individuals or groups, harming agents represent belligerent groups. A harming agent can be a sole combatant, a team, a squadron, a platoon, or a battalion and is formally or informally affiliated with belligerent groups. From this perspective, the study estimated that examining the belligerent groups’ social, political, and military traits would help morally and rationally understand them and

explain their relationship with harmful actions and harm-prone contexts throughout the conflict. Broadly, the dynamics of belligerents' warring participation condition the harming agents to act in a certain way.

To this end, the study outlined a typology of belligerents, their broad categories, and corresponding armed groups. The categorization is based on their nature, reasons, circumstances, and level of war participation. The study opted for five types of belligerents as subcategories that participated in different wars: *Direct, Indirect, Full, Side, and Casual*. Their characteristics are specified in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Harming Agents and Types of Belligerents (B)**

Type	Code	Characteristics	Group	Categories
Direct Belligerent	DB	A belligerent with direct involvement aimed at controlling the Congolese state power	AFDL, RCD-Goma, MLC, RCD-ML	Aspirational
Indirect belligerent	IB	A belligerent without the aim of controlling involved in carrying out the conflict	ALiR, FDLR, ex-FAR/Interahamwe, FDD/CNDD, ADF/NALU	
Full Belligerent	FB	A belligerent involved in both activating and carrying out the conflict	The Congolese, Rwandan, and the Ugandan governments.	Non-Aspirational
Side belligerent	SB	A belligerent is involved in supporting the conflict.	Burundi, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Tchad, and mercenary forces.	
Casual belligerent	CB	A belligerent emerged from a particular circumstance to participate in the conflict.	Mayi-Mayi groups, Mudundu-40, FAP, FAPC, FIPI, FNI, FNL, FPDC, FRPI	

*Source: Developed for this Research*

The first type of belligerent is a *Direct Belligerent*. A direct belligerent is a military-political force directly and openly involved in armed confrontations to control power in Congo. This type includes AFDL (Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo), RCD-Goma (Rassemblement Congolais Pour la Démocratie), MLC (Mouvement de Libération du Congo), and RCD-ML (Rassemblement Congolais Pour la Démocratie-Mouvement de Libération).

The second type, *Indirect Belligerent*, is a military-political force circuitously engaged in combat with the projection of power control in another country of the region, namely Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda. This type comprises belligerents, such as ALiR (Armée de Libération du Rwanda) or FDLR (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda), ex-FAR/Interahamwe, FDD (Front pour la Défense de la Démocratie-the armed wing of the Burundian Hutu movement CNDD), and NALU (National Army for the Liberation of Uganda) or ADF/NALU.

The third type, *Full Belligerent*, consists of forces that could simultaneously activate, materially support, and carry out military operations. This group includes the Congolese government, the Rwandan government, and the Ugandan government.

The fourth type, *Side Belligerent*, encompasses all forces involved in combat supporting full

Belligerents. This type contains all other African states or governments participating in the wars, such as Burundi, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Tchad, and mercenary forces.

The fifth type, *Casual Belligerent*, concerns all the small armed groups formed during the conflict for a circumstantial reason, tribal, political, or economic, such as FAP (Force d'Autodéfense Populaire-Mayi-Mayi groups), Mudundu-40 Mayi-Mayi group, FAPC (Forces armées populaires du Congo/active in Ituri), FNI (Front National Intégrationiste), FNL (Forces Nationales de Libération), FPDC (Forces populaires pour la démocratie au Congo), FRPI (Force de résistance patriotique en Ituri), and FIPI (Front pour l'Intégration et la Paix en Ituri).

These five types of belligerents form two distinct categories, *Aspirational* and *Non-Aspirational Belligerents*, depending on their perspective toward the political power in the Great Lakes region. The aspirational category comprises belligerents aiming to control or share political power in one of the countries of the narrow Great Lakes region. They ideally claimed to fight for political change and the betterment of their societies. Consequently, their belligerence was meant to be morally qualitative to justify their political aspirations. Direct and indirect belligerents belong to this category. In contrast, the non-aspirational category includes full, side, and casual belligerents that fought to maintain a situational status quo, whether political, social, or cultural. Full belligerents had political power and were acting to conserve or extend it with the support of side belligerents. Burundi is not considered full belligerent because of its limited involvement. However, the participation of casual belligerents in the conflict was not intended to access national political power but rather to defend sociological balances or benefit from armed conflict economic gains.

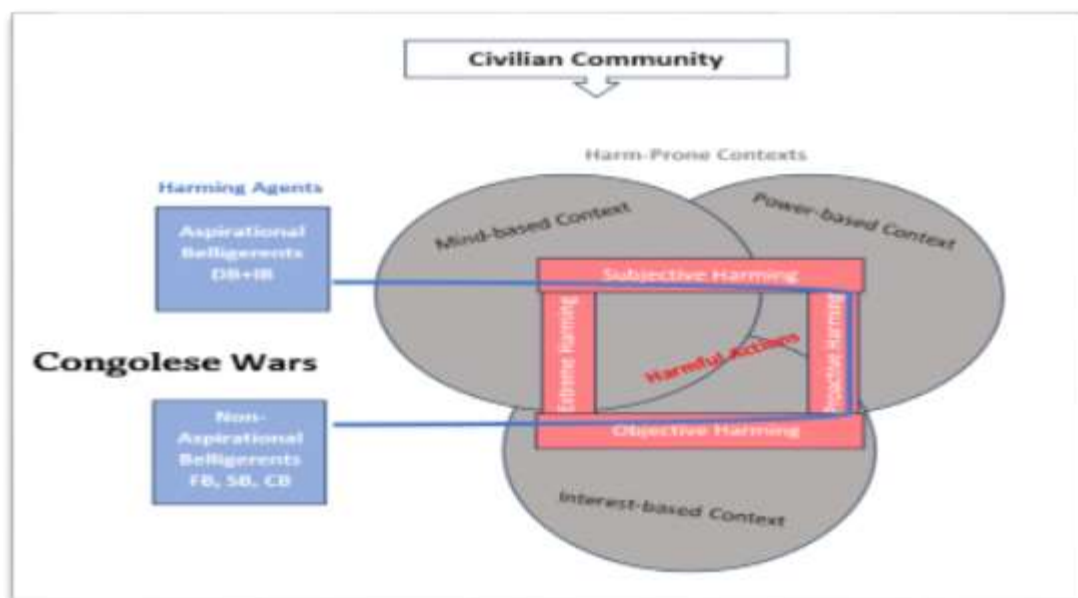
The dissected data indicated many patterns about belligerents and harming agents. First, harming agents in the Congolese wars did not always act with a single identity. Many violent incidents revealed that harming agents worked in alliance and partnership while committing harmful actions. At the beginning of the conflict, ex-FAR/Interahamwe units and Congolese forces operated together and committed harmful actions against Tutsis living in Congo. In contrast, Rwandan forces worked with AFDL and later RCD combatants to harm civilians. The coalition between Ugandan forces and Hema combatants harmed the Lendu population. During the conflict period, the Mayi-Mayi, Hutu armed units, Tutsi armed units, and other tribal militiamen coalesced in some violent incidents. Congolese forces worked with Chadian forces and Hutu combatants of ALiR to commit serious violations directed at civilians. This mixture of aspirational and non-aspirational forces blurred the impact of moral considerations related to political aspirations.

However, harm-prone contexts generally conditioned the moral and rational behaviors of harming agents, regardless of the political aspirations of the belligerents. Harming agents were intuitively motivated by different contextual factors, including ingroup defense, revenge due to harms inflicted on ingroup members, competition for resources, or political preeminence. One can understand that Congolese wars experienced excessive violence against civilians because harming agents were cognitively under the process of forming contrastive and exclusive perceptions. A belligerent's aspirational character was not a sufficient moral constraint to prevent harming agents from committing harmful actions. A different analytical venue will touch on the relationships between harmful actions, harm-prone contexts, and harming agents and explore patterns that can constitute theoretical statements.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Abundant literature has concluded that emblematic characteristics of the Congolese wars, such as systematic attacks against civilians, massive human displacement, looting and rampage, sexual violence, child soldiering, and the absence of regular conventional military confrontations, classed them as irregular and asymmetric wars. They illustrated a different type of warfare, alternatively called “future wars,” “new wars,” or “small wars” (Herta, 2015). To explain them morally and rationally, this study profiled and defined harmful actions, harm-prone contexts, and harming agents as their immoral and irrational features using data from 1993 to 2003 on violent incidents and their contexts reported in the 2009 UN Mapping report.

The study decompressed complex war violations and constructed them into comprehensive grids for a functional moral understanding. The display of these features in numerous violent incidents exemplified moral and rational deficiencies during the conflict. They undoubtedly manifested war’s immorality and irrationality. Still, many prefer only to view and explain the violent incidents of the conflict in legal, social, and political terms, which seem to attenuate their wrongfulness and harmfulness linked to societal moral and rational cognition. The approach used in this study pictured war crimes and violations more sensitively. Through grounded theory methodology’s iterative process, coding, and constantly comparing data properties, the study found that Congolese armed conflicts experienced four types of harmful actions, three types of harm-prone contexts, and harming agents from two broad categories of belligerents. The diagram below represents these features in the Congolese wars.



The harmful actions considered hard-harming manifested subjectively, objectively, proactively, and extremely whether the harm-prone context produced soft-harming through mind dispositions, political considerations, economic interests, or their combination. Political and military groups were full, direct, indirect, side, or casual belligerents. They all accommodated harming agents who perpetrated different categories of harmful actions. Their aspirational or non-aspirational character did not play much when responding to the contextual inputs and outputs.

The profile and categorization of Congolese wars in moral and rational terms articulate an approach to discussing war's violent incidents against non-liable civilians. It is considered a novel explanatory approach that African armed conflict studies can use to explore human rights and international law violations as manifestations of war's immorality and irrationality. Practitioners, politicians, and militaries can use these concepts to lay out morally and rationally armed conflict's violent actions, contexts, and belligerents.



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