

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

HISTORY:

It was called Kongo before it was given the name DR Congo. The Kingdom of Kongo controlled much of western and central Africa including what is now the western portion of the DR Congo between the 14th and the early 19th centuries. At its peak it had many as 500,000 people, and its capital was known as Mbanza-Kongo (south of Matadi, in modern-day Angola). In the late 15th century, Portuguese sailors arrived in the Kingdom of Kongo, and this led to a period of great prosperity and consolidation, with the king's power being founded on Portuguese trade. King Afonso I (1506–1543) had raids carried out on neighboring districts in response to Portuguese requests for slaves. After his death, the kingdom underwent a deep crisis.

The Atlantic slave trade occurred from approximately 1500 to 1850, with the entire west coast of Africa targeted, but the region around the mouth of the Congo suffered the most intensive enslavement. Over a strip of coastline about 400 kilometres (250 mi) long, about 4 million people were enslaved and sent across the Atlantic to sugar plantations in Brazil, the US and the Caribbean. From 1780 onwards, there was a higher demand for slaves in the US which led to more people being enslaved. By 1780, more than 15,000 people were shipped annually from the Loango Coast, north of the Congo.

In 1870, explorer Henry Morton Stanley arrived in and explored what is now the DR Congo. Belgian colonization of DR Congo began in 1885 when King Leopold II founded and ruled the Congo Free State. However, de facto control of such a huge area took decades to achieve. Many outposts were built to extend the power of the state over such a vast territory. In 1885, the Force Publique was set up, a colonial army with white officers and black soldiers. In 1886, Leopold made Camille Jansen the first Belgian governor-general of Congo. Over the late 19th century, various Christian (including Catholic and Protestant) missionaries arrived intending to convert the local population. A railway between Matadi and Stanley Pool was built in the 1890s. Reports of widespread murder, torture, and other abuses in the rubber plantations led to international and Belgian outrage and the Belgian government transferred control of the region from Leopold II and established the Belgian Congo in 1908.

After an uprising by the Congolese people, Belgium surrendered and this led to the independence of the Congo in 1960. However, the Congo remained unstable because regional leaders had more power than the central government, with Katanga attempting to gain independence with Belgian support. Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba tried to restore order with the aid of the Soviet Union as part of the Cold War, causing the United States to support a coup led by Colonel Joseph Mobutu in 1965. Mobutu quickly seized complete power of the Congo and renamed the country Zaire. He sought to Africanize the country, changing his own name to Mobutu Sese Seko, and demanded that African citizens change their Western names to traditional African names. Mobutu sought to repress any opposition to his rule, which he successfully did throughout the 1980s. However, with his regime weakened in the 1990s, Mobutu was forced to agree to a power-sharing government with the opposition party. Mobutu remained the head of state and promised elections within the next two years that never took place.

During the First Congo War, Rwanda invaded Zaire, in which Mobutu lost his power during this process. In 1997, Laurent-Désiré Kabila took power and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Afterward, the Second Congo War broke out, resulting in a regional war in which many different African nations took part and in which millions of people were killed or displaced. Kabila was assassinated by his bodyguard in 2001, and his son, Joseph, succeeded him and was later elected president by the Congolese government in 2006. Joseph Kabila quickly sought peace. Foreign soldiers remained in the Congo for a few years and a power-sharing government between Joseph Kabila and the opposition party was set up. Joseph Kabila later resumed complete control over the Congo and was re-elected in a disputed election in 2011. In 2018, Félix Tshisekedi was elected President; in the first peaceful transfer of power since independence.

DEFENCE:

The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, The history of the Congolese army date back to the colonial period. The Berlin conference gave birth to the Congo Free State (CIS) which like any country adopted an instrument of defense and security. The police force, which is mixed between an army, a police station and police⁴. At that time, the defense of territorial integrity was guaranteed by the police which was relayed by the Congolese National Army in the mission of protecting people and property, Congo's armed forces consist of an army, a republican guard, a navy (including infantry and marines), and an air force, with the army the largest branch. Individuals are eligible for military service between the ages of 18 and 45.

CULTURE:

The culture of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is extremely diverse, reflecting the great diversity and different customs which exist in the country. Congolese culture combines the influence of tradition to the region, but also combines influences from abroad which arrived during the era of colonization and has continued to have a strong influence, without destroying the individuality of many tribal' customs.

It was named after the enormous Congo River and the large ethnic group living at its mouth, the Kongo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo first had its borders drawn at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. During this conference, Africa was arbitrarily divided in ways that benefitted the European colonial powers, with no regard for existing tribal systems and linguistic groups. In some instances, these new borders separated families, while other people without previous contact suddenly became part of one nation. Many of Congo's leaders have favored certain ethnic groups and areas over others, exacerbating differences between ethnic groups. The future of the Congo depends upon average citizens transcending the political rhetoric of hatred and uniting within an African-style democracy.

POLITICAL RESOURCES:

The Popular Movement of the Revolution (Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution; MPR) was the sole legal political party from 1970 until 1990. It was presided over by then president Mobutu and had branches at every administrative level throughout the country. The MPR splintered into factions after Mobutu was overthrown in 1997.

Women have held various posts within the government, including ministerial positions and seats in the national and provincial assemblies. On the whole, however, discrimination against women and ethnic minorities remains an ongoing problem.

The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the basic law governing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Constitution has been changed and/or replaced several times since its independence in 1960.

The lack of accountability and professionalism in the security sector is at the heart of many of Congo's troubles. The 140,000-strong Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) is poorly equipped and trained, and its members often go for months without pay. To make up for the shortfall they habitually engage in predatory activities, a problem underscored by the June 2018 Final Report of the United Nations Group of Experts on the DRC, which found that criminal networks in the army continue to benefit from money laundering and mineral smuggling.

NATURAL RESOURCES:

The Mining industry of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a significant factor in the world's production of cobalt, copper, diamond, tantalum, tin, and gold. It is the Democratic Republic of the Congo's largest source of export income. In 2009, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had an estimated \$24 trillion in untapped mineral deposits, including the world's largest reserves of coltan and significant quantities of the world's cobalt, The United States Geological Survey estimates that the DRC has 1 million tons of lithium resources.

The economy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has declined drastically since the mid-1980s despite being home to vast potential in natural resources and mineral wealth.

ECONOMY:

The official currency of the Democratic Republic of Congo is the Congolese Franc (CDF). The symbol for the Franc is FC. The Franc is subdivided into 100 centimes. There were two editions of the Franc; the second edition is the new Congolese Franc.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has a vast amount of mineral and other natural resources. The estimated value of the untapped raw material is +/- 24 trillion USD.

Agriculture accounts for 57% of the GDP. Products of the agriculture industry are rubber, tea, cotton, sugar, palm oil, and coffee, The Congo relies on the mining industry,

The main industries are consumer products, mining, cement, and commercial ship repair,

Export products are crude oil, wood products, coffee, copper, gold, diamonds, and cobalt,

Import products are transportation equipment, mining and other machinery, and food, There is a lot of economy activity in the informal sectors that is not included in the GDP, The first and second wars that took place in the 1960s negatively impacted the economy, The government is establishing economic zones to help get the industrial sector started.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo forms part of the Congo River Basin, which covers an area of almost 1,000,000 square kilometres (390,000 sq mi).

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