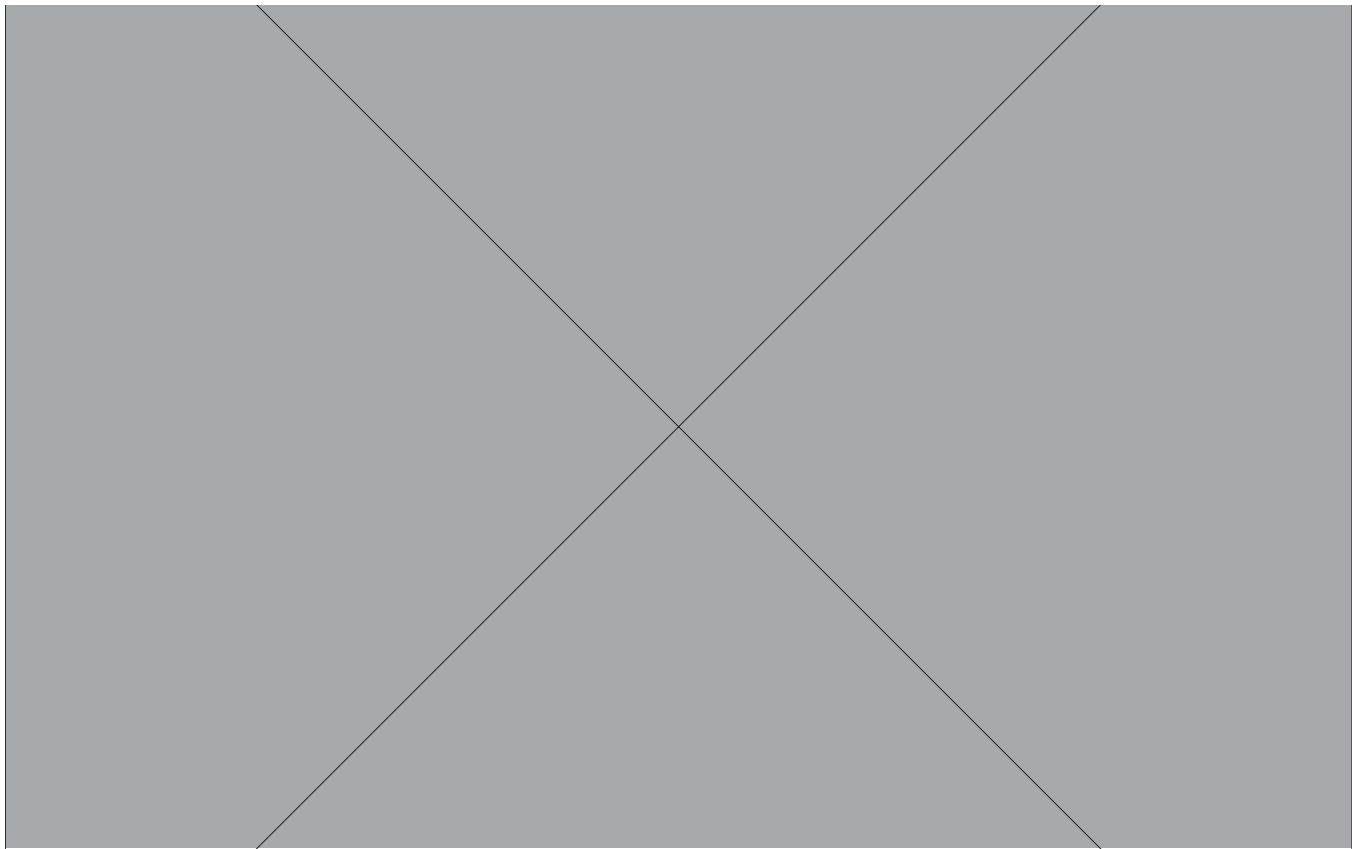


Help Congo Now



By Jeffrey D. Sachs and Robert I. Rotberg

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The United States, France, Belgium, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank helped create the disaster of Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire. Today the West has a moral duty to help rebuild Congo, as the country is now called, even if the new leader isn't making the task easy.

So far, Laurent Kabila has shown little interest in sharing power with the opposition. It seems likely that he will rely more on direct military support from Uganda, Rwanda and Angola to consolidate his rule than on the allegiance of his countrymen.

Yet, all uncertainty about Mr. Kabila aside, this is the moment when well-directed Western efforts can have their greatest effect in nudging the new Government toward observing basic hu-

man rights, stabilizing the economy and restarting rudimentary public services.

Our good will should be demonstrated first; we can hope that Mr. Kabila's can follow. How do we insure that we aren't creating another Mr. Mobutu? All aid should be provided step by step, conditional on the gradual development of economic order, political freedom and the rule of law.

First, the United States should abandon its calls for early elections. These will

have to wait. The experience of neighboring Uganda is instructive. Since President Yoweri Museveni came to power in 1986, Uganda has recovered from the most harrowing depths of violence and economic collapse to become one of Africa's fastest-growing countries, while improving its human rights record.

Restoring basic public order -- demilitarizing, inoculating against infectious disease, resettling refugees, rebuilding roads and power plants -- is a surer underpinning of peace and future political reconciliation than holding elections in the midst of chaos. This gradual approach has also worked for Mozambique, which was locked in civil war until 1992 and held free elections two years later.

The West must also work with the new Government to recover the Mobutu clan's stolen loot. Mr. Mobutu pocketed much of the \$10 billion in loans he received over the years, yet Western governments, needing a cold-war ally, looked the other way. Now the West can seize and sell his real estate holdings in Europe and Africa, while European countries must step up efforts to freeze his bank accounts. Any money recovered should go to the Government of Congo.

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