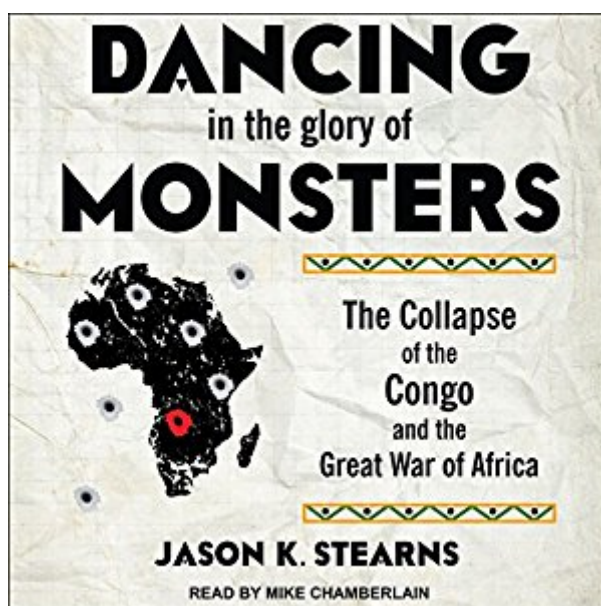


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Dancing In The Glory Of Monsters: The Collapse Of The Congo And The Great War Of Africa



Synopsis

At the heart of Africa is Congo, a country the size of Western Europe, bordering nine other nations, that since 1996 has been wracked by a brutal and unstaunchable war in which millions have died. And yet, despite its epic proportions, it has received little sustained media attention. In this deeply reported book, Jason K. Stearns vividly tells the story of this misunderstood conflict through the experiences of those who engineered and perpetrated it. He depicts village pastors who survived massacres, the child soldier assassin of President Kabila, a female Hutu activist who relives the hunting and methodical extermination of fellow refugees, and key architects of the war that became as great a disaster as - and was a direct consequence of - the genocide in neighboring Rwanda. Through their stories, he tries to understand why such mass violence made sense, and why stability has been so elusive. Through their voices, and an astonishing wealth of knowledge and research, Stearns chronicles the political, social, and moral decay of the Congolese State.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A really useful background book to understanding the complexities of the terrible ongoing strife in the DRC. Very well researched and written in a very easy-to-read style, it offers personal accounts of the war from all sides. Disappointing that the sexual violence, an issue DRC has become infamous for, warranted only a few lines, with a dire lack of interviews of women and survivors. Also, books that give historical and socio-political backgrounds should not always bow to the pressure to come up with recommendations. That part of the book came across as a hurried simplistic section which could have been left out without compromising the rest of the book. An important read

nonetheless for anyone trying to unravel the complexities of the Great Lakes region and the role of African countries and the international players in this ongoing tragedy.

An important insight into the complexities of this vast African country at war with itself. It is more than just about the brutality and exploitation of former colonial masters, the book brings home the horrific violence that the various tribal groupings continue to exercise on each other. This book helps one appreciate the humanitarian work being done by a handful of dedicated people and the well-nigh impossible task facing international peacekeepers in a huge complex country with few roads, a broken railway system and endemic disease.

The testimonies applauding this book, including that of Michela Wrong who wrote "In the foot steps of Mr Kurtz", masterpiece on the Congo, are fully warranted. It is the most up to date, thoroughly researched book on the Congo, in all its complexities with a readable narrative. As one who has spent some time in this region and a few months within this specific country, I can vouch for his overall themes. The most enlightening of which is parallel with 15th Century Europe and its Thirty years wars and the mentality of the multiplicity of fighting groups and ethnicities in which the dominant theme, was that of human beings having abandoned their humanity. Tragically it seems that we we of Western descent, have learnt little from our past and deeply interwoven with indigenous aberrant behaviour of the most hideous kind, is that of outside nations, including France, Belgium and the USA in particular, either turning blind eyes to the carnage, or using it to their own commercial or geo political advantage. But the main offenders now (2013) are without doubt the Congo's immediate neighbours with Rwanda taking the trophy for the most odious, followed by Zimbabwe, Uganda and Angola in this order. Rwanda's revenge for the Hutu genocide against its Tutsi when the RPF (Rwanda Patriotic Front) rebelled against the Hutu and took power, led by Kagame then introduced what became in effect a Tutsi led counter genocide through the Congo, where many Hutu had fled across the border. Add into this mix, sheer audacity and banditry is mineral exploitation by political leaders and their top military, Zimbabwe being the worst offender and the poor Congo civilians don't stand a chance, right up unto this day. It's all gruesome stuff, but essential reading if somehow the international community, as well as the locals, are to be extricated from this squalid and sordid mess. The author Jack Stearn concludes with some workable and sensible suggestions, though I fear prejudice, ignorance and greed will likely continue to prevail. For those who care and want to be informed, this book's a must.

This is a difficult book to read. It tells a tale of venality that overpowers one. But it must be read. Even if one reads the Guardian, Telegraph and Al Jazeera the Congo Wars will not be familiar. Stearns estimates that 5 million people were killed during the two wars, most of them civilians. And this on top of the Rwandan butchery of a million citizens. The horrible thing is that even the racial animus that characterized the Rwandan genocide is missing in the Congo. It is simple venal politics in which all participants are solely motivated by personal gain. The wealth of the nation, both mineral and human, is squandered to enrich the political leaders. Given the UNICEF demographic projections released this week, we had better start paying attention to Africa. Given that the continent wide turbulence is currently coming largely from the Congo, this book should be on everyone's reading list.

I didn't know what I was getting into when I purchased book. It is complex but engaging. But it held me to the end. If you care about Africa, here's a great book that gives you an idea of what happened.

If you have any interest at all in trying to get your head around the reason why DR Congo is the way it is, you must read this book. Stearns does an excellent job of trying to unravel the intricate and complicated situation (dare I say mess?) that exists in Eastern Congo (and affects the rest of the country). My husband is from DR Congo and this book really helped me understand the modern-day issues in his homeland (starting in the early 1990s). For a longer historical approach (i.e., colonial times) to the present-day issues in DR Congo check out "King Leopold's Ghost" by Adam Hochschild. It's another great read. And the two books combined really help you attempt to understand the situation (I don't think you can ever fully understand it.).

excellent re. the Congo Wars & the history of causes, the wars, etc. Helps explain the confusing array of acronymic warlord groups (extremely confusing topic - this book was very helpful). Very readable. Fundamental to the canon of Congo lit.

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