

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ARREST OF JEAN PIERRE BEMBA BY THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the legal and political ramifications of the arrest in Belgium of Jean-Pierre Bemba in mid-2008. Whilst Bemba—an erstwhile rebel against the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)'s government of Joseph Kabila—is facing charges stemming from the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR), he could as yet be indicted for crimes committed during the DRC conflict in the late 1990s. To a very large extent, Bemba and his Mouvement de Liberation du Congo (CLM) were a creation of neighbouring Uganda. If the on-going investigation by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the situation in the DRC recommends Bemba's indictment, the Ugandan political and military elite who trained, armed and supplied him and the CLM could also be indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed when Uganda occupied large swathes of DRC territory between 1998 and 2003. This argument is given credence by the fact that in 2005 Uganda was found responsible by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for the violation of international human rights and international humanitarian law in the Ituri region of the DRC.