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Contention. Museveni, Mbazizi and Besigye weighed in on the incident which resulted in Uganda being slapped with a \$10 billion bill as reparation to the DRC for plundering its natural resources.

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KAMPALA. The merits and demerits about Uganda's invasion of Congo at most 18 years ago, took centre stage as the eight presidential candidates debated in the second and last debate of the February 18 presidential election.

The debate was organised by the Elders Forum, the Inter-religious Council of Uganda and sponsored by UNDP.

The Head of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Makerere University, Dr. Shaba Kasali, editor and host of the flagship *Struggle Talk Africa* programme.

Kabazuzi, a consultant, questioned the candidates on foreign policy, peace and security both within Uganda and the region, regional integration, inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations.

The incumbent president, Yoweri Museveni (National Resistance Movement), Amama Mbatia (Independent) and Dr. Kiiza Besigye (Forum for Democratic Change), who were serving in the same government at the inception of the conflict, weighed in on the incident, which is seen as the catalyst for the \$10 billion bill as reparation to the Democratic Republic of Congo for plundering DRC's natural resources as well as human rights violations.

Dr. Besigye was the first to open the can of worms about the matter, when

DRC plunder, ICC pullout dominate

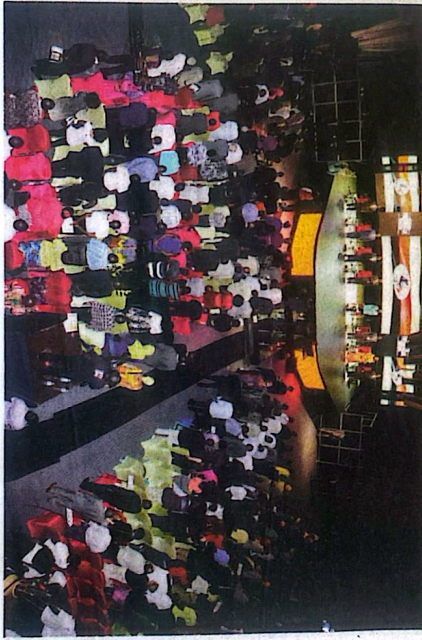
In response to a question about Uganda's invasions of other countries, said the country had been dragged to the war without political consensus.

"It was not entirely to sort out the problems that were affecting us or beneficial to the situation in Uganda. As you may know, indeed the International Court of Justice to pay something up to \$10b. Deploying must be to support the political process; insecurity in these areas is a matter of mismanagement of politics; you can only go to support a political process which is positive. We have not been prudent in the deployment of our troops."

The incumbent, then interjected, dismissing Dr. Besigye's allegations as false. "We intervened in Congo to defend ourselves, Congo had been harbouring enemies of Uganda for a very long time under Mobutu. We couldn't accept that. We defeated AFD. However, peace and Dr. Besigye can go to the hell and we can go to the hell."

In response, Dr. Besigye emphasised that whatever national interests exist, the laws of the country must be respected. "It doesn't matter how often you are about people acting against the interests of Uganda, the laws of the country must be respected."

that question by going back to the round table, this is why I am calling for a unity government because the leading parties that we respected cannot respect each other's blocking them than I saw a



The audience and the candidates sing the national and East African anthems at the presidential debate at the Kampala Serena Hotel.

If it ends up lumping Ugandans of Mobutu, who was part of the team, it is not a good thing. It is a highly indebted country this quite obviously is not excusable.

Mr. Museveni also made a veiled accusation against government officials who defended Uganda at The Hague for failing to win the case. But Mr.

Court of Justice was not based on the legitimacy of the presence of Ugandan troops in Congo. It was based on the evidence presented by Congo. It was not a fair trial. It was a trial by the Ugandan troops."

There was consensus about Uganda's withdrawal from the International Criminal Court (ICC) from the two candidates asked to comment on the matter. "Uganda should have pulled out of ICC yesterday. The Western world has used the ICC yesterday," said Dr. Abbed Bwankira, a prominent lawyer and member of the People's Development Party.

A proponent turned critic of ICC, President Museveni suggested the establishment of an African Criminal Court to deal with cases from Africa. "We are against impunity and that is why we supported the ICC but it is not serious. There are so many people who could be tried if they were serious. The way to go is to have our own African Criminal Court, so that we deal with impunity but on our own terms," he said.

SOME OF THE MUSEVENI QUOTES

61 I am here to talk about Uganda, not about the ICC. I am here to lead it, it is this not the ICC. I am here to lead it, it is this not the ICC.

ABED BWANKIRA

62 We need to address the museum of the ICC. We need to address the museum of the ICC.

KEY BESIGYE QUOTES

63 In February of 1981, I was in the United States. I was in the United States.

second presidential debate

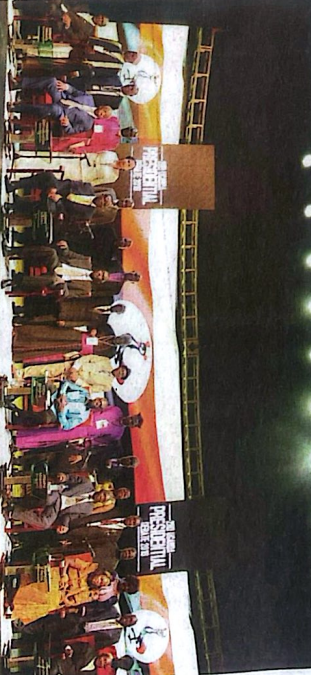


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AMAMA QUOTES

64 We have many times in the past fought for the security of our country. But like I think I am not a civil rights activist. But like I think I am not a civil rights activist. But like I think I am not a civil rights activist.



Presidential candidates pose with religious leaders and elders council members at the debate on Saturday. PHOTOS BY MICHAEL KAMUKAMA/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

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