

Determinants of the Root Causes and Success Factors for the East African Community Regional Force Intervention in Managing Intractable Intrastate Conflicts in the DRC

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has had one of the most intractable conflicts. Several attempts, ranging from global, continental, and regional levels, have been made to address these conflicts with little success. The deployment of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) in 2022, a period characterized by the emergence and intensification of the March 23 Movement (M23) — a rebel group that seeks to advance the interests of the Congolese Tutsi ethnic group within the DRC military and political system — was envisaged to change the fortunes regarding the conflicts in the DRC. This was because it would be the first localized attempt at intervention. However, since the intervention of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) in the DRC, there seems to have been little progress regarding the management of intractable conflicts. This paper sought to investigate the determinants of the success of the EACRF intervention in the management of the DRC's intractable intra-state conflict. The study is underpinned by the interpretivism research philosophy, and the paper was anchored on Conflict Transformation Theory to sustain the study variables. The researcher adopted two research designs — descriptive survey and historical longitudinal research designs — to ensure valid research results. The target population was 297, from which a sample of 177 was derived, including EACRF ground personnel, military attachés, members of the local community, leaders of rebel groups, and refugees, who were sampled using census, simple random, snowballing, and purposive sampling techniques. The study findings established that EACRF's success was inhibited by a number of factors: 91 (60.66%) respondents acknowledged that institutional weaknesses in East African Community (EAC) states contribute to prolonged conflicts in the DRC. Additionally, 43 (28.66%) respondents stated that regional security competition, namely power rivalry, affects the management of the DRC conflict. Furthermore, 8 (5.33%) respondents cited the informal economy, and 8 (5.33%) respondents mentioned trans-border social networks as additional factors contributing to the complexity of internal conflict in the DRC. The paper concludes that the EACRF has had limited success due to several factors, thereby inhibiting its management of intractable intra-state conflicts in the DRC. The paper recommended that the EAC strategically focus on region-centric intervention in New Warfare in eastern DRC, especially in the Republics of Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, given that rebel groups originating from these nations frequently operate in the Eastern Region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Strengthening good governance in these states, including the DRC, is necessary to quell ethnic unrest that fuels internal and regional conflicts within the EAC.

Keywords: Conflict, DRC, Dynamics, East African Community Regional Force, Intractable, Intervention, Intra-State

I. INTRODUCTION

Africa's territorial configuration has undergone significant transformations since the conclusion of the Cold War, contributing to a broader global reorganization (Chaturvedi et al., 2007). At the outset, violent conflict in Africa during the 1990s was described as "new wars," distinguished by factors such as an increased prevalence of intra-state conflicts centered on ethnic identities and civilian casualties, in contrast to the proxy conflicts of the Cold War. Violent conflicts increased during the 2000s, primarily due to unconstitutional government changes, including coups d'état, contested presidential third-term debates, and electoral violence (African Union Chairperson, 2014). As a result, there has been a dramatic increase in violent conflict in the last ten years. This is largely due to the rise of radical insurgencies like Ansar Dine, MUJAO, Boko Haram, Ansar Bait Al-Maqdis, Islamic State Provinces (Sinai, Libya, and Tunisia), al-Shabaab, the Lord's Resistance, and numerous others.

According to the African Union, these acts of violence are referred to as "violent extremism and terrorism" (African Union Commission [AUC] Chairperson, 2014). There are several characteristics that define trans-regional conflict zones in Africa. These include terrorist attacks on African interests, attacks on Western and other foreign interests, the use of African territories as safe havens, Africa as a breeding ground for terrorists and a source of

funding and recruitment, and Africa as a transit point for terrorists and donors involved in other illegal activities. Research like this sheds light on a plethora of causes for continental internal turmoil; as a result, any solution needs to pinpoint the exact nature of the conflict, which is why this study is focused on that area.

The heads of state of the East African Community (EAC) member states issued a call for an urgent cessation of hostilities in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and decided to proceed with the joint force. General Robert Kibochi, the chair of the EAC's military staff and chief of defense forces of Kenya, delivered a preliminary concept of operations during the meeting. This document outlined the objectives and standards of engagement of the joint force, as well as the resources that would be provided to its commander (Nelleke, 2022). The proposed battle plan specifies that between 6,500 and 12,000 soldiers are to be assembled in eastern DRC with the mission of "containment, eradication, and defeat of negative forces." The combat force, under the leadership of a Kenyan commander and with its headquarters in Goma, the capital and commercial center of North Kivu, would be tasked with conducting operations in four provinces of Congo: Haut-Uélé, Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu. Its mandate would be renewable every six months and subject to a strategic review conducted by the involved parties every two months. Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, and South Sudan have all agreed to contribute military personnel to support the Congolese forces in combat (Bischoff et al., 2016).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The eastern region of the DRC is a fluid conflict zone that has experienced protracted conflict since its independence in 1960 (Marks, 2011; Shepherd, 2018; Elibol, 2009). This fluidity has influenced the failure of subsequent interventions, which have largely followed the conventional script of conflict management animated by coercive intervention strategies. According to the Centre for Preventive Action (2024), six million deaths have been recorded since 1996. The severity of the conflict has resulted in almost 400,000 people being displaced to internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in the first two months of 2024 (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2024). The conflict involves numerous internal and external actors, whose convergence has only fueled further conflict in the region (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2017). The conflict exhibits the basic attributes of New Warfare, which have taken root in the post-Cold War era. The New Warfare in the region has, for all practical purposes, exceeded the intervention capacities of state, multilateral, and unilateral security actors.

United Nations intervention missions since the 1960s, as well as the 1990s unilateral state interventions in the post-Mobutu dispensation, have, for all practical purposes, been incapable of curbing the intermittent conflicts. Any lull in the fighting is merely a prelude to future escalation. Since 1998, however, the eastern region of the DRC has attracted dedicated regional military interventions by SADC countries, focused on a mixture of coercive engagement as well as mediation (Jerome, 2016). This has, to a certain extent, involved the Coalition of the Willing (CoW) within the regional body and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). It is apparent that the security problem of the region is such a complex web that requires a new approach, moving beyond the erstwhile conventional coercive strategies and arrangements. This is justified by the changing nature of warfare in terms of tools, alliances, and methods. The East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) has been one of the latest entrants in this theatre of war.

This study analyzes the dynamics of the emerging region-centric intervention in New Warfare in eastern DRC, with a specific focus on the EACRF. Though a regionally sanctioned intervention mechanism, the EACRF also comprises partner states that exhibit vested interest traits in terms of cultural affinity, informal resource exploitation propensities, and the pursuit of resident non-state combatants. In this context, this study assesses the root causes, types, and extent of DRC's intractable intra-state conflicts, the role of the EACRF in managing these conflicts, and the contribution of conflicting interests among the EAC partner states to the management of New Warfare in eastern DRC. This paper seeks to investigate the determinants of root causes and the success of the EAC Regional Force's intervention in managing intractable intra-state conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

1.2 Research Objective

This study sought to assess the root causes, types and extent of DRCs intractable intra-state conflict

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Conflict Transformation Theory

The theory goes beyond conflict management and identifies the root causes of the conflict, where the interests and needs of different stakeholders are understood. In this approach, underlying issues are resolved so that the conflict

does not recur in the future. In reference to UN peacemaking, Lederach (1995) highlights this process. Nevertheless, the theory disregards the significance of power or statecraft in conflict transformation. In many respects, the element of power is crucial when the political will to resolve conflict exists. The theory of power addresses this weakness. In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), state power is critical in fostering cooperation and mobilizing the resources necessary to resolve the conflict.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Root Causes of Intra-State Conflict

Multiple factors contribute to the enduring intrastate conflicts, one of which is the weakness-induced incapacity of certain states to counter regional, religious, and ethnic insurgencies. According to Elibol (2009), the persistence of traditional approaches in the face of modern state structures, the artificial nature of some states, and the prominence of ethnicity all contribute to the challenges associated with employing conventional methods as effective instruments for resolving conflicts.

Regarding ethnic conflicts and weak states, regional organizations are constrained and unable to effectively manage conflicts. Africa has been plagued by these issues (Ngendahimana, 2023). Ethnic conflicts and weak states pose substantial challenges for regional conflict management due to the significant negative externalities associated with such disputes. Historically, the resolution of internal conflicts was predominantly the responsibility of the state and not subject to regional organizations. This exemplified a rigid perspective on sovereignty. Based on sovereignty concerns, numerous African Union members have opposed any military intervention in Darfur, Sudan (Ngendahimana, 2023).

Territorial disputes—often involving states contending for control over land that is contiguous to both parties geographically—present an additional threat to regional security and stability. Controversial matters of particular peril are those pertaining to territories esteemed for their intangible attributes as opposed to tangible qualities. Specifically, territorial disputes concerning resource or defense issues present fewer difficulties in reaching compromise positions than those concerning religious, ethnic, or historical claims to a territory (Elibol, 2009).

Trans-regional conflicts that have arisen on the African continent due to repeated interventions, such as those observed in the extended Horn of Africa and the Sahelo-Saharan area, serve as indicators of dynamism. This determination is shaped by limitations in available space and pragmatic factors, alongside the conviction that these occurrences will effectively demonstrate the full spectrum of space-related activities undertaken by the AU/REC (Jerome, 2016).

2.2.2 Types of Intractable Intra-State Conflict

The dynamics of internal conflicts are characterized by various factors, including the exploitation and commercialization of natural resources by insurgent factions, the pursuit of war-related profits by entities such as arms traders, organized criminal networks, and corporate mercenary enterprises, and the adoption of economic strategies by civilian populations, such as engaging in cross-border trade involving a diverse range of commodities. However, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms underlying the transborder conflict economy is often a complex and challenging endeavor (Lemarchand, 2009).

According to Kisangani (2012), the arms trade illustrates this complexity: the downfall of a nation (as seen in Albania) can lead to the sale of weapons in the region, while the establishment of greater stability can result in both an increase in arms (as war profiteers take advantage of weapon buy-back schemes) and a decrease in arms (as seen in Sierra Leone), which exacerbates conflict in neighboring countries. Similarly, the relationship between politics and economics is not always clear-cut, as strong political connections can bolster emerging economic networks, while significant economic advantages might reinforce fragile political coalitions. The unknown aspects of transborder war economies encompass several social elements, such as jobs that require legal travel and commerce with war-affected nations, familial links that extend across national borders, and the role of diasporas in financing conflicts.

This narrative also incorporates the economic sustenance of civilians through the extraction and trafficking of natural resources, such as coltan, as well as the armed forces of regional states like Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Rwanda, which appear to be driven by commercial interests. The effective mitigation of the adverse effects of transborder war economies has proven to be a significant challenge due to a lack of comprehensive understanding, unintended consequences arising from state-centric sanctions regimes, inadequate supervision of the private sector across international boundaries, and conflicts of interest among intervening states and organizations (Kisangani, 2012).

2.2.3 Extent of DRCs Intractable Intra-State Conflict

Mwinyi et al. (2022) focus on the extent of intractable intra-state conflict. The study's findings indicate that, despite the initial objective being to assess the extent of intractable intra-state conflict, the African Mission in Burundi

(AMIB) made a substantial contribution to enhancing the security of the post-conflict transition in Burundi, thereby achieving a notable level of success. The authors elucidate that the accomplishments of AMIB can be attributed, to some extent, to its establishment and maintenance of communication channels among local stakeholders, as well as its effective collaboration with external entities such as the European Union and the United Nations.

Ngendahimana (2023) contends that the intervention in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was based, among other things, on the 1995 Cape Town meeting of the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee, wherein SADC nations ratified a resolution urging collective action against military coups and other unconstitutional attempts to overthrow governments. The Inter-State Defence and Security Committee convened in Harare on August 18, 1998, in response to a request for assistance from President Laurent Kabila's administration. SADC and SADC Allied Armed Forces successfully responded to this request.

The history of the DRC since gaining independence has been characterized by wars and conflicts that exhibit fundamental similarities with the economy and society. The persistent nature of these disputes suggests that the underlying issues have not been sufficiently resolved. The Mobutu dictatorship's efforts to suppress dissent and promote political restructuring were ultimately unsuccessful (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). The deterioration of the economic and political system created a conducive environment for the rise of rebellions that eventually led to the overthrow of the administration in 1997. Internal disputes inevitably give rise to a plethora of interconnected issues initiated by the concerned parties. When partner states pursue opposing objectives, weak states may struggle to efficiently resolve such conflicts. The varied interests of the East African Community (EAC) partner nations in the internal conflict of the DRC present challenges for the overall intervention effort.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

In order to attain and ensure the valid research results, the study adopted two research designs- descriptive survey and historical longitudinal research designs. These two were triangulated to achieve valid research results. Historical research design was used to collect, verify as well as synthesize past evidence with regards to intervention in the Management of DRC's Intractable Intra-State Conflict. Specifically, the historical longitudinal research design was adopted for this study. The design was used to gather primary data from EACRF personnel, local authorities, and affected populations. It also used documentary evidence, official records as well as reports among other historical sources of data to interrogate the research problem. This design was particular used in the second specific objective of the study.

3.2 Philosophical Grounding

The philosophy employed in this investigation was interpretivism. The origins of this approach can be traced back to the Chicago School of thought, which was established in the early 20th century and was spearheaded by Max Weber, Erving Goffman, Martin Bulner, and others (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). It primarily entails a comprehensive analysis of the research elements, thereby introducing human interests into the investigation. Social perceptions, including language, shared meanings, and consciousness, are hypothesized to be the foundation of any potential path to realities. Furthermore, the study employs qualitative approaches to gather data in order to encompass a broader spectrum of perspectives regarding the subject matter (Chowdhury, 2014). By employing this methodology, the researcher was able to decipher the perspectives of individuals in order to determine the intricacies of the East African Regional Forces' intervention in the DRC's intra-state conflict management. Through the utilization of various data acquisition methods, the researcher was capable of conducting a comprehensive analysis of the research subject. This contributed to the accomplishment of the study's objectives.

3.3 Target Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The target population 297 from which a sample of 177 respondents was derived from among: EACRF ground personnel, military attachés, members of the local community, leaders of rebel groups and refugees who were sampled using census, simple random, snowballing and purposive sampling techniques.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Primary data were collected using an interview guide and questionnaire. Secondary data were obtained from a review of published materials on the DRC Conflict.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

The questionnaires underwent a preliminary coding and editing process prior to the initiation of any analysis. Qualitative and quantitative data were utilized in order to maintain objectivity. Analyses of quantitative data were conducted utilizing descriptive statistics, including percentages and frequencies. Version 28 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to conduct the analysis. The findings were visually represented through the use of tables, pie charts, photographs, and graphs. Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis, which involved an examination of aspects of the information gathered through open-ended queries, interviews, and observation. Baulcomb (2003) asserts that content analysis achieves valid and replicable inferences regarding the context of data through the use of a set of categorizations. The information was presented in various graphical and pie chart formats, tables, narratives, and verbatim.

Table 1

Sample Size Determination Techniques

| Category | Sample Frame | Sampling Technique | Sample Size |
|--|--------------|---|-------------|
| EACRF Director of Coordinating Mechanism (KII) | 1 | Purposive | 1 |
| EACRF, Chiefs of Defense Committee (KII) | 7 | Purposive (Best and Khan (2001) 30 – 50%) | 4 |
| EACRF ground personnel (Questionnaire survey) | 235 | Krejcie & Morgan Table 1979 Confidence level of 95% and margin of error 5%. | 152 |
| Local population in Goma (Community based organizations) (FGD) | 10 | Purposive (Best and Khan (2001) 30 – 50%) | 4 |
| Local authority in Goma (Chiefs and their assistants) (KII) | 13 | Purposive (Best and Khan (2001) 30 – 50%) | 6 |
| IDPs (Goma camp) (FGD) | 8 | Purposive (Best and Khan (2001) 30 – 50%) | 2 |
| Congolese refugees groups in Nyamagabe in Rwanda, Kyangwali in Uganda , NBI in Kenya (FGD) | 13 | Purposive (Best and Khan (2001) 30 – 50%) | 4 |
| Military Attaché, High Commission in EAC member Countries (KII) | 7 | Purposive (Best and Khan (2001) 30 – 50%) | 3 |
| Heads of Rebel/militia groups (KII) | 3 | Purposive (Best and Khan (2001) 30 – 50%) | 1 |
| Total | 297 | | 177 |

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Root Causes, Types and Extent of DRC Intractable Intra-State Conflict

4.1.1 Regional Root Causes in DRC Intrastate Conflict

The DRC has encountered a series of conflicts since the 1960s, which have significantly impacted its challenging process of transitioning from colonization to indigenous governance. According to Kisangani (2012), the conflicts that arose during the initial stages of independence were primarily attributed to internal debates within the political elite on various aspects of the state's structure, particularly the decision between federalism and a centralized state.

The era was characterized by intense hostilities based on regional and ethnic divisions. The instability inside the nascent nation was further intensified due to the colonial powers' reluctance to relinquish control over the milk cow, as well as the geopolitical motivations of Western powers who strategically utilized the DRC as a strategic base to counteract the spread of communism across Africa (Kisangani, 2012).

Hence, the conflicts in the DRC have consistently been influenced by both internal and external factors. The current disputes in the country are largely a revival of earlier wars. This observation suggests that the underlying structural factors contributing to the conflicts have not been sufficiently resolved. Hence, even ostensible instances of tranquillity, such as during the Mobutu government in certain regions of the 1970s and 1980s, were not attained via effective peace-making, but rather through the suppression of widespread dissatisfaction.

The researcher sought input from the EAC Director of Coordinating Mechanism and the EACRF logistical, operational, and strategy teams in order to ascertain the nature and extent to which regional factors contribute to the

DRC conflict, as well as the causes and types of interstate conflicts in the region. The sample size consisted of 152 participants. Failure to return two questionnaires was seen. Figure 1 summarizes the results.

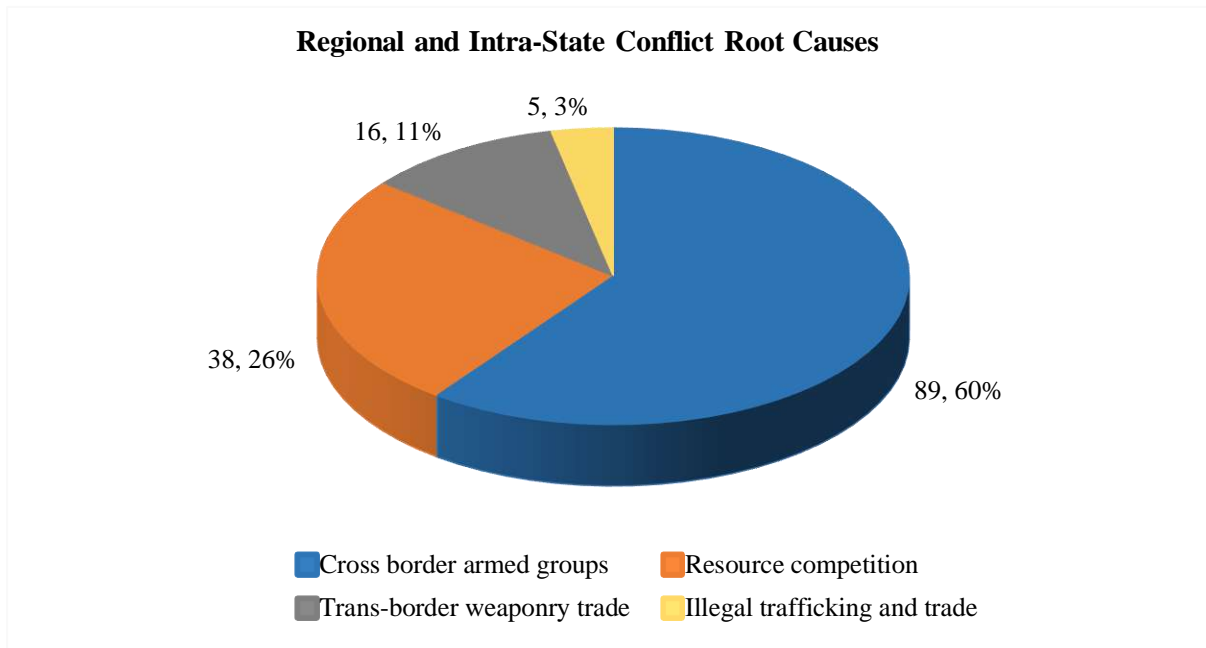


Figure 1
Regional and Intra-State Conflict Root Causes

According to Figure 1, 89(59.33%) respondents believe that there are root causes, such as cross border armed groups, contributing to the war. Additionally, 38(25.33%) respondents indicate that resource competition is a root cause that has hampered the management of the conflict in the DRC. Another contributing factor is the trans-border weaponry trade, accounting for 16(10.33% of the causes, while illegal trafficking and trade account for 5(3.33%). These are discussed in subsequent sections.

4.1.2 State Governance Weakness, State Exclusion and Marginalization as Root Causes, Types in relations in DRC Internal Conflict.

The centralized Congo has been weak since the mid-1970s, which has made the country prone to political instability. The recent conflicts in North-Kivu and South-Kivu cannot be seen as isolated events. They should be understood within their historical context (Kisangani, 2012; Lemarchand, 2009; Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). In the specific case of the conflicts in Eastern Congo, one important factor is the set of nationality laws that have explicitly aimed at not only excluding people of Rwandan descent from the political process, but also denying them the right to a permanent homeland (Kisangani, 2012). The issue of Congolese nationality originates from the decree of 27 December 1892 signed by King Leopold II according to which “an individual acquires the Congolese nationality by birth on the territory of the state of Congolese parents, by naturalization, by presumption of the law, and by option”; and “is Congolese, a child born on the Congolese soil of the state of legally unknown parents or without known nationality” (RDC, 2004). In brief, King Leopold II gave more weight to the doctrine of *jus soli*, place of birth, than that of *jus sanguinis*, blood doctrine or ancestry. The annexation of the Congo Free State to Belgium in 1908 did not change this law.

The researcher further interrogated inter-state weakness and DRC internal governance issues with regard to management of intrastate conflicts. To find out EACRF the nature of dynamics in management of DRC civil war, the researcher asked EAC Director of Coordinating Mechanism Olsson (2015) conducted a dissertation that examined the reasons for regional action, specifically focusing on self-interest and altruism. The researcher observed that the intervention decisions of ECOWAS and SADC in Mali and DRC, respectively, were significantly impacted by the realist postulation. The intervention in the DRC by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) was primarily driven by the national interests of the participating countries.

The economic and geo-strategic indicators provide compelling evidence, indicating that political leaders were primarily focused on demonstrating their influence as key participants in both the local community and the global

arena. The action by both blocs was prompted by the probable spillover impact resulting from the entangled ethnic connections, porous borders, and economic interdependence.

The study conducted by Victor (2013) investigated the dynamics of foreign involvement and enduring conflicts in North Kivu province, with a specific emphasis on regional actors. His investigation uncovered that the participation of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, the surrounding nations of the DRC, in the conflict is primarily motivated by their own strategic objectives, which are detrimental to the stability of the DRC. Burundi has exhibited a security interest in the DRC. Bujumbura, a government predominantly composed of Tutsis, perceived a threat from Hutu militia organizations such as Forces fir the Defense of Democracy (FDD) and National Liberation Forces (NLF). These groups have been used the DRC as a strategic base to undermine the stability of Burundi. The support of rebel groups in the DRC has been attributed by several authors to economic factors. Similar to Rwanda and Uganda, Bujumbura has faced recurrent accusations of abusing the natural riches in the DRC. In regions under the jurisdiction of the Hutu rebels, a significant proportion of consumer items are exported from the country and thereafter sold at elevated prices.

The researcher conducted a more in-depth examination of inter-state weaknesses and internal governance concerns inside the DRC in relation to the management of intrastate conflicts. In order to understand the dynamics of managing the civil war in the DRC, the researcher requested the EAC Director of Coordinating Mechanism and Military attaches, as well as the EACRF ground team to identify the internal weaknesses of partner states, scenarios of state exclusion, and ethnicity as the underlying causes of the DRC conflict. The sample size consisted of 152 participants. Failure to return two questionnaires was seen. Figure 2 presents a summary of the data.

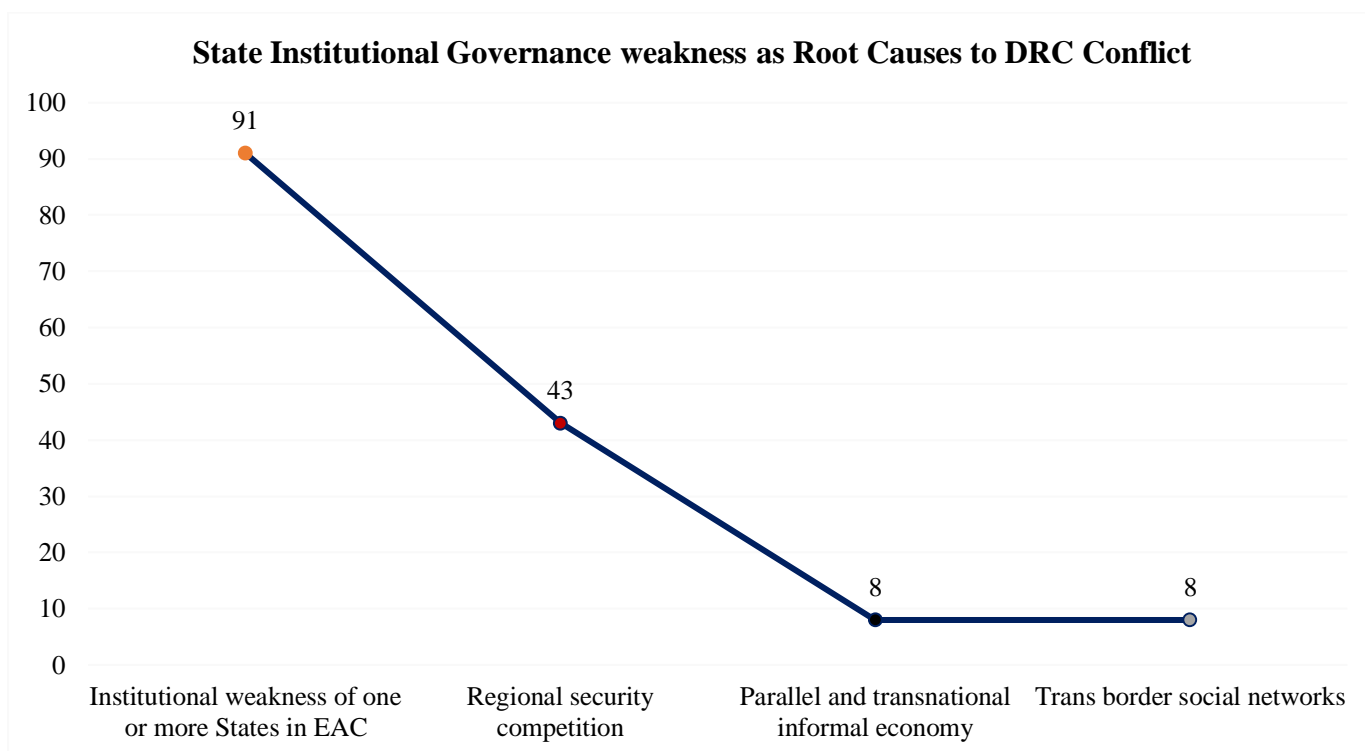


Figure 2
Regional Root Causes and Internal Conflict in DRC

It is clear from this conversation that the situation in the DRC is intricate due to the participation of transnational militia groups that receive backing from EAC states. The lack of effective coordination among Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and the DRC in addressing these armed groups has resulted in this situation. Moreover, the acquisition of natural resources in the DRC exacerbates and intensifies the conflict. EACRF is currently facing a challenging intervention environment in managing the violence in the DRC.

Respondents 91(60.66%) acknowledged that institutional weaknesses in EAC states contribute to prolonged conflicts in DRC. Additionally, 43(28.66%) respondents stated that regional security competition, namely power rivalry, affects the management of DRC conflict. According to 8(5.33%), the informal economy and 8(5.33%) trans-border social networks are additional factors that contribute to the complexity of internal conflict in the DRC.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, the April 2012 M-23 rebellion, a violent insurrection within the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC), precipitated violent confrontations in

North Kivu. Former National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) members who had merged with the FARDC organized the rebellion. Another insurgent organization founded in 2006 by Laurent Nkunda was the CNDP. It had the support of Uganda and Rwanda. During an interview, a military officer expressed the following view:

Le M-23 a été vaincu en avril 2013 et ceux qui n'ont été ni capturés ni tués ont été divisés en deux et ont fui vers le Rwanda et l'Ouganda. Plus tard, ils sont retournés dans l'est de la République Démocratique du Congo (RDC) et se sont réintégrés dans le conflit environ deux ans avant les élections de 2018. Leur retour a ajouté à la tension entre le Rwanda et l'Ouganda parce que le Rwanda pensait que l'Ouganda utilisait les anciens mutins du M-23 qui rencontrent régulièrement des responsables militaires ougandais et opèrent librement à Kampala (Entretien avec un membre du comité du chef de la défense, 12th October, 2023 in Goma, DRC, Burundi Cohort)

In April 2013, M-23 was vanquished, and those who were not apprehended or murdered were divided into two factions and sought refuge in Rwanda and Uganda. Subsequently, they reentered the eastern DRC and reengaged in the conflict approximately two years prior to the 2018 election. Rwanda perceived Uganda's utilization of the ex-M-23 mutineers, who frequently interact with Ugandan military leaders and operate autonomously in Kampala, as a contributing factor to the escalating animosity between Rwanda and Uganda. (Interview held with a chief of defense committee member, 12th October, 2023 in Goma, DRC, Burundi Cohort).

The expression encapsulates the geographical backdrop of the competition and the potential for proxy warfare in the DRC. The political repercussions of the DRC elections and the division within the party are internal factors that have resulted in the emergence of factions

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study's findings in discussion above indicate that the DRC conflict is multifaceted due to the participation of transnational militia groups that enjoy backing from EAC member states. This has resulted from the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda failing to coordinate their efforts to combat these militia groups. Due to the fact that some states in the DRC provide support to militant groups, the deployment of EAC regional forces in the country is regarded as an attempt to undermine conflict management initiatives. Coordination difficulties once more directly impede the EACRF's mission to disarm M23 and other armed groups in Eastern Congo and restore peace to the DRC, despite the organization's immense interests.

The paper concludes that management of the intractable conflict in eastern DRC is contingent on synchronizing the internal DRC political dynamics with the regional interests especially of her immediate neighbours. The populist call for the exclusion of the interests of her neighbours provides a temporal solution that disregards the complexity of the conflict web. In the context of regionalism EACRF is the most suitable intervention mechanism and guarantee for sustainable peace in eastern DRC. This is further demonstrated in the findings and conclusions immanent in the specific research questions and objective.

5.2 Recommendations

As per the conclusion, the paper recommended that the EAC strategically focus on region-centric intervention in New Warfare in eastern DRC especially in the Republics of Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, given that rebel groups that originate from these nations frequent the Eastern Region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is necessary to strengthen good governance in the aforementioned states, including the DRC, in order to quell ethnic unrest that fuels internal and regional conflicts in the EAC

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