



INTERNATIONAL SECURITY


МЕЖДУНАРОДНАЯ БЕЗОПАСНОСТЬ

DOI: 10.22363/2313-0660-2024-24-4-606-615

EDN: MСYIRR

Research article / Научная статья

Peacekeeping Strategies and the Role of Rwanda in the Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Abstract. The relevance of the research topic stems from the need to examine the role and place of Rwanda in the internal political conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to further improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts in resource and ethnic conflicts. The article aims to identify Rwanda's role in the ongoing conflict in the DRC and to evaluate the extent to which its actions have impeded the effectiveness of peacekeeping efforts in the country. The study examines the strategies used by Rwanda in the DRC, including support for armed rebel groups, illegal mining of natural resources, and their impact on the dynamics of the conflict. The authors conclude by emphasizing the need for international intervention and cooperation to address the complex conflict dynamics in the DRC, as well as to help boost peacekeeping efforts of the various parties. Despite the implementation of numerous peacekeeping initiatives since the Second Congolese War to improve relations between the DRC and Rwanda, tensions continue to rise. The principal findings of the study are that Rwanda is involved in the DRC's continued conflict and exploiting the latter's internal political instability to plunder Congolese resources, as well as acting as a conduit for the smuggling of the DRC resources destined for Asian, Middle Eastern and Western countries. In conclusion, the authors posit that the conflict should be resolved through diplomatic methods involving the great powers and the African Union (AU). The paper employs a comprehensive approach to the processes and phenomena under consideration and uses the principle of critical evaluation of information. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is offensive realism, which takes into account the desire of states to solve their national security issues first and foremost, even at the expense of their partnership relations with other international actors.

Key words: peacekeeping, Rwandophones, Interahamwe, March 23 Movement, M23, irredentism

Conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution. The authors made an equal contribution to the design, research and preparation of the final article's text.

Acknowledgements. The research was funded by the Russian Science Foundation grant No. 23-28-01195, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-28-01195/>.

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For citation: Bokeriya, S. A., Mahapa, M., & Kiamba, A. (2024). Peacekeeping strategies and the role of Rwanda in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 24(4), 606–615. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2024-24-4-606-615>

Стратегии миротворчества и роль Руанды в конфликте в Демократической Республике Конго

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Аннотация. Актуальность темы исследования обусловлена необходимостью изучения роли и места Руанды во внутривнутриполитическом конфликте в Демократической Республике Конго (ДРК) с целью дальнейшего повышения эффективности миротворческих усилий в условиях ресурсных и этнических конфликтов. Выявлена роль Руанды в конфликте в ДРК и влияние политики, проводимой руандийским правительством, на миротворческие усилия по урегулированию этого конфликта. Рассматриваются стратегии, используемые Руандой в ДРК, включая поддержку вооруженных повстанческих групп и нелегальную добычу природных ископаемых, и воздействие этих стратегий на динамику конфликта. Подчеркивается необходимость международного вмешательства и сотрудничества для решения сложной динамики конфликта в ДРК, а также содействия активизации миротворческих усилий различных сторон. Несмотря на многочисленные миротворческие инициативы со времен Второй конголезской войны, направленные на улучшение отношений между ДРК и Руандой, напряженность продолжает нарастать. Основные выводы исследования заключаются в том, что Руанда участвует в продолжении конфликта в ДРК, используя внутривнутриполитическую нестабильность в последней для разграбления конголезских ресурсов, а также выступая в качестве канала контрабанды ресурсов ДРК, предназначенных для стран Азии, Ближнего Востока и Запада. Авторы приходят к выводу, что конфликт следует урегулировать дипломатическими методами с участием ведущих международных акторов и с привлечением Африканского союза (АС). В работе применяется комплексный подход к рассматриваемым процессам и явлениям, используется принцип критической оценки информации. Теоретико-методологической базой исследования послужил наступательный реализм, учитывающий стремление государств в первую очередь решать вопросы своей национальной безопасности, в том числе и во вред своим партнерским отношениям с другими международными акторами.

Ключевые слова: миротворчество, руандофоны, интерахамве, Движение 23 марта, М23, ирредентизм

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов. Авторы внесли равнозначный вклад в разработку дизайна, проведение исследования и подготовку текста статьи.

Благодарности. Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда № 23-28-01195, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-28-01195/>.

Для цитирования: Бокерия С. А., Махапа М., Киамба А. Стратегии миротворчества и роль Руанды в конфликте в Демократической Республике Конго // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2024. Т. 24, № 4. С. 606–615. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-0660-2024-24-4-606-615>

Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a country ravaged by long-standing conflict (Vinokurov, 2003; Tochigin, 2021; Kostelyanets & Denisova, 2023). The country has been characterized by significant population displacement, extreme violence and unparalleled resource looting. The unending conflict has been

a debate for a long time, with scholars coming up with many theories as to why the conflict has become chronic (Cassimon, Engelen & Reyntjens, 2013; Sidorova, 2013, 2014; Mathys, 2017; Müller-Crepon, Hunziker & Cederman, 2021). One of the factors contributing to the perpetuation of the conflict is the involvement of Rwanda.

Some researchers argue that Rwanda played a significant role in perpetuating the conflict (Ntanyoma & Hintjens, 2022; Denisova & Kostelyanets, 2023). Rwanda is said to be motivated by security interests, such as efforts to bring stability to the Great Lakes region, to protect its economic interests or to reclaim part of the eastern part of the DRC, which it asserts was part of Rwanda, etc.

Rwanda has been involved in the conflict in the DRC in a number of ways, particularly in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. In the 1990s, Rwanda, along with Uganda, was supported by Congolese rebel groups in the then Zaire¹ to combat the presence of Hutu militias, such as the Interahamwe, who were responsible for the 1994 genocide and had sought refuge in Zaire (Wako et al., 2015). After the wars of the 1990s, Rwanda withdrew its troops from Congo in 2002. Nevertheless, according to a number of researchers (Saltnes, 2017), Rwanda has continued to project its military, political, and economic interests across the border, using armed groups as proxies, with March 23 Movement (M23, *Mouvement du 23 mars*) being one of them.

The United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and various regional economic communities have all tried at different timelines to help bring about peace in that country through a series of peace operations. The first such operation was launched in 1960–1964 (UN Operation in the Congo) in response to the threat of civil war in the Congo (Bokeriya & Khudaykulova, 2023, p. 439). Despite these efforts, the conflict in the DRC intensified.

In this regard, the aim of the study is to identify the role of Rwanda in the context of attempts to resolve the conflict in the eastern provinces of the DRC. The theoretical foundation of the study is offensive realism, in which states seek to survive in an anarchic environment of international relations by constantly increasing their capacity and power. This theoretical framework enables an understanding of the rationale behind Rwanda's

intervention in the internal affairs of the DRC, driven by concerns about security threats emanating from the country's territory.

The paper will cover the historical context of the conflict, contentious issues which help in explaining how peacekeeping efforts are hampered by issues such as ethnicity, irredentism, economic interests and security problems, which together contribute to Rwanda's involvement in the DRC's internal affairs.

Historical Context of the Conflict

Before the 1994 Rwanda genocide, violent conflicts in Eastern DRC remained limited mainly to local level. Mathys (2017) posits that it was only with the arrival of Rwandan Hutu refugees in the Congo that local conflicts took on regional dimensions. Reyntjens (2009) notes that the Hutus/Interahamwe refugees in Zaire, with the connivance of Sese Seko Mobutu's regime, started orchestrating cross-border raids on Rwanda; suffice to say these raids gave an impetus for the invasion of Zaire.

It is important to note that Congolese Tutsis and Hutus are often considered 'outsiders' from Rwanda despite their longstanding residence in the DRC. The migration of many Rwandophones took place in numerous waves over several hundred years, many arriving more recently after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (Ntanyoma & Hintjens, 2022). Although occupying positions of power in government and business, Rwandophones experienced prejudice and discrimination in the then Zaire, especially concerning citizenship and land rights. As a result, the discourses of violence in the Congo, from 1996 have become deeply ethicized (Ceuppens & Geschiere, 2005).

In 1996, Rwandan troops invaded the then Zaire and attacked alleged Hutu camps where the Interahamwe militia and politicians responsible for the planning and execution of the genocide were housed. Similarly, in 1997, the Rwandan government helped Laurent-Désiré Kabila to consolidate several Congolese groups opposed to Mobutu into one fighting organization, called the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (*Alliance des Forces Démocratiques*

¹ Zaire — the official name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from October 27, 1971, to May 17, 1997.

pour la Libération du Congo, AFDL). The AFDL, with the help of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), overthrew Mobutu in May 1997 and this period was known as the First Congo War 1996–1997.²

L.-D. Kabila became the new head of state. Under him, the DRC joined the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Pottier, 2002). However, relations between Kabila and the Tutsi soon deteriorated. First, the rebels claimed that he had faltered on his promise to hand the province of Kivu to the Congolese Tutsi (Banyamulenge). Second, in 1998, Kabila started purging all Banyarwanda from his government and ordered high-ranking Rwandan officers who had been seconded to the Congolese army to return to their country. All this provoked an anti-government rebellion on August 2, 1998, led by Tutsi officers. Subsequently, with the support of Rwanda and Uganda, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (*Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie*, RCD) was created, which became the main anti-government force in the DRC. The Congolese government, in turn, asked for help from SADC, and military contingents from Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia were sent into the country. Thus began the Second Congo War, better known as the “Great African War” (Prunier, 2009). The main hostilities ended with the signing of the Lusaka Peace Accord on July 10, 1999.

The conflict flared up again between 2006 and 2012, when the integration process of the Rwandan-speaking militias, not all of whom wanted to return to Rwanda, became more acute. Many of them decided to stay in North Kivu province and, with Rwandan support, formed the National Congress for the Defense of the People (*Congrès national pour la défense des peuples*, CNDP) under the leadership of former RCD commander L. Nkunda. One of the declared objectives of the CNDP was to protect the local Tutsi from the activities of Hutu rebel structures, such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (*Forces Démocratiques de Libération*

du Rwanda, FDLR). In January 2009, the DRC and Rwanda reached an agreement that included the integration of CNDP fighters into the Armed Forces of the DRC (*Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*, FARDC), but Kinshasa’s attempt to weaken the CNDP fighters led to the collapse of the agreement and the group’s division by 2012 (Mathys, 2017). Some CNDP members, led by General Bosco Ntaganda, eventually, formed the M23.

The M23 quickly took over territory in North Kivu province, including the provincial capital city of Goma, which borders Rwanda. M23 violence continued around Goma in the following months, especially in the Rutshuru and Nyiragongo territories. Between 2012 and 2013, the M23 was involved in over 20% of all political violence in the DRC recorded by Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), making it the most active non-state armed group in the country during this period.³ Eventually, a strong offensive by the FARDC and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in November 2013 forced the M23 forces to retreat.

Following the defeat of the M23, political violence involving M23 militants declined, with only a few cases reported in the following years. However, the M23 re-emerged as a prominent conflict actor in late 2021. Amidst the myriad conflicts across the DRC, the M23 became the second most active non-state armed group in 2022, behind the Allied Democratic Forces (*Forces démocratiques alliées*, ADF), and the most active non-state armed group in North Kivu province.⁴

The UN investigations, foreign governments, and human rights groups have

³ Rwanda-Backed M23 Rebels Advance Towards Goma in Eastern DR Congo // ACLED Brief. March 4, 2024. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/acled-brief-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels-advance-toward-goma-eastern-dr-congo> (accessed: 21.07.2024).

⁴ Actor Profile: The March 23 Movement (M23) // ACLED. March 23, 2023. URL: <https://acleddata.com/2023/03/23/actor-profile-m23-drc/> (accessed: 10.06.2024).

² Curtis M. Raison d’État Unleashed: Understanding Rwanda’s Foreign Policy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo // *Strategic Insights*. 2005. Vol. 4, no. 7. P. 1–15.

linked the previous offensives (Stearns, 2012) and the re-emergence of the M23 in 2021 to support provided by Rwanda. Consequently, the M23 band is seen in Congo as proxies for Rwandan incursion — and as a cover for the extraction of minerals and other resources found in the DRC (Reyntjens, 2009).

Ethnicity and Conflict in Eastern DRC

Ethnic conflicts have always posed a major challenge to peacekeeping efforts due to the intensity of hatred between and among the feuding parties. Ntanyoma & Hintjens (2022) posit that in the current the conflict in Eastern DRC, civilians have been the targets of ‘expressive’ and ‘asymmetric’ violence, which is hinged on ascribed ethnic, racial or tribal identities considering that there are over 250 fractious ethnic groups. The term ‘expressive’, according to Kalyvas (2006), implies a discursive, symbolic, ritualistic and generally instrumental character of violence, the aim of which is to inflict grave pain and also destroy the symbols of the adversary focusing on identity and sectarianism. Ntanyoma & Hintjens (2022) posit that the conflict in the DRC has been marked by violence inspired by ‘race’ narratives where identity politics around ‘race’ is used to legitimize ‘expressive’ violence against ‘Hamitic’ or Tutsi minorities. Using such a narrative has prompted Rwanda’s involvement in the DRC. It has alleged that it is pursuing the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide and also protecting Tutsis living in the DRC from government victimization.

It is worth noting that life in pre-colonial Africa was characterized by population movements caused by various reasons, some of which included famine, wars, or looking for pastures or fertile agricultural land, among other reasons. This was also the case for the Banyarwanda, some of whom migrated to the eastern part of the Congo. The Kivu region of the Eastern Congo has been home for centuries to dozens of groups. Some of these speak Kinyarwanda (the language spoken in Rwanda) and hence are referred to as ‘Rwandophones.’ Lemarchand asserts that the existence of a group

across the current border, also speaking Kinyarwanda, is one of the reasons why this group is often labeled as a foreign ethnic group by other Congolese.⁵ In order to emphasize their endemism and to emphasize the difference with ‘Rwanda,’ Congolese Kinyarwanda-speaking communities use toponyms to refer to their community, such as Banyabwisha, Banyamasisi, Banyamulenge, to show that they are Congolese.⁶

The movement of the Banyarwanda had never been a problem before 1959 (Ntanyoma & Hintjens, 2022). In 1959, a revolution began in Rwanda, which belonged to Belgium. The majority of the population, represented by the Hutu, rebelled against the Tutsi, who, at the instigation of the Belgians, had full political and socio-economic power. This launched the process of the outflow of Tutsi to the territory of Zaire. After the events of 1994, when P. Kagame came to power in Rwanda, the situation changed and the Hutu migrated *en masse* to the DRC, which led to the involvement of Rwanda in the Congolese wars under the pretext of their persecution.⁷ Since the end of the Second Congo War, Rwanda has continued to be accused of intervening in the DRC in support of the Rwandophones, who it claims are being victimized by the Congolese, thus giving the conflict an ethnic dimension.

To further buttress that the notion of ethnicity is playing a huge role in the DRC conflict, is the issue of conflicts between Tutsis backed Rebels the M23 and the KiSwahili speaking *Wazalendo* meaning ‘Patriots’ as well as the Hutu-dominated FDLR militias.

Irredentism and Security

The concept of irredentism, as noted by Chazan (1991), advocates for the recovery of

⁵ Lemarchand R. Exclusion, Marginalization, and Political Mobilization: The Road to Hell in the Great Lakes // Centre of African Studies University of Copenhagen Occasional Paper. March 2000. URL: https://teol.ku.dk/cas/publications/publications/occ_papers/lemarchand20012.pdf (accessed: 10.06.2024).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

territories that are culturally or historically linked to one's nation. The concept of irredentism is supported by Mathys (2017), who observes that the notion of "a Greater Rwanda" is akin to advocating for the secession of eastern parts of the DRC to Rwanda. This assumption is based on the fact that the incoming European colonizers imposed artificial borders on the Rwandans, which divided the once united homogeneous Banyarwanda group. However, this approach leads to the fact that, firstly, the various cultural groups speaking Kinyarwanda are considered as a homogeneous group, without taking into account their differences, and secondly, the consolidation of the right to any territory based on the historical experience of control over it (Ntanyoma & Hintjens, 2022).

This is an idea which is often advanced through daily speech in Rwanda and is actively propagated in the Rwandan state-sponsored media. Newbury (1997) notes that one of the most telling examples was the speech of Pasteur Bizimungu (then President) on October 3, 1996, at the height of the Banyamulenge rebellion in Zaire. He said that the borders of the pre-colonial Rwandan kingdom had been redrawn by the colonial powers. Although he did not state it explicitly, the claim that without the imposition of colonial rule, large parts of the Eastern Congo would have been Rwandan anyway seems to have been a way to legitimize the initial stages of Rwanda's involvement in the Congo war. Newbury (1997) further highlights that Bizimungu, drawing on the work of Rwandan historian Alexis Kagame, supported his claims with maps of pre-colonial Rwanda showing that the borders of Rwanda's pre-colonial kingdom extended well into the Eastern DRC, as far as Lake Edward.

To support the irredentism agenda, it has constantly been alleged that Rwanda continued to support the M23 in 2012 and 2013 along with previous backing of the former iteration of the M23, the CNDP rebels.⁸ Thanks to this support,

⁸ Rwanda-Backed M23 Rebels Advance Towards Goma in Eastern DR Congo // ACLED Brief, March 4, 2024. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic->

M23 has become a well-armed and trained group, as confirmed by the UN Panel of Experts report published in December 2023.⁹ Over the years, the M23 has established alternative administrative control in the areas it has captured. The rebels now control the strategic Bunagana border crossing with Uganda, collecting taxes and setting up armed roadblocks to generate revenue to fund their operations.

In addition to the idea of restoring historical Rwanda, Kigali also uses the security theme to explain its activities in the DRC. The main threat is the presence of armed groups in the eastern part of the DRC, such as the FDLR. Interestingly, Rwandan President P. Kagame, in an exclusive interview with *Jeune Afrique* on March 25, 2024, acknowledged that Rwandan troops are in the DRC for security reasons.¹⁰ From his observation, it is clear that Rwanda's involvement in the DRC is motivated by the need to secure the country's borders, as well as to protect ethnic Tutsis who are being victimized by the Congolese.

It can therefore be argued that the concept of irredentism is the main driving force behind Rwanda's involvement in the DRC conflict.

Economic Interests

The DRC is rich in natural resources, including minerals such as coltan (columbite-tantalites), tin, cobalt, diamonds, and gold, among many others. The conflict in the DRC has, thus, provided an opportunity for Rwanda to gain control over resource-rich areas in the Eastern DRC. Interestingly, that in 2021, Rwanda was the world's largest producer of

[congo/acled-brief-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels-advance-toward-goma-eastern-dr-congo](https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/acled-brief-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels-advance-toward-goma-eastern-dr-congo) (accessed: 21.07.2024).

⁹ Midterm Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo // UN Documents, December 30, 2023. URL: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/acled-brief-rwanda-backed-m23-rebels-advance-toward-goma-eastern-dr-congo> (accessed: 21.07.2024).

¹⁰ Paul Kagame: «Tshisekedi est capable de tout, sauf de mesurer les conséquences de ce qu'il dit» // *Jeune Afrique*, 25 mars 2024. URL: <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/1548551/politique/paul-kagame-tshisekedi-est-capable-de-tout-sauf-de-mesurer-les-consequences-de-ce-quil-dit/> (accessed: 21.07.2024).

coltan and the second-largest exporter of gold (Dusengemungu, Zhou & Liu, 2023). To confirm or refute this praise, it was important to compare the availability of mineral deposits in the country and their production.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of coltan mining areas in the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi (Great Lakes region). The map clearly shows that the DRC has the bulk of coltan deposits. This leads the authors to question how a country with so few mines can surpass a country with so many. The only logical conclusion and educated guess is that the minerals are being smuggled out of the DRC, either by illegal traders or armed militia groups.

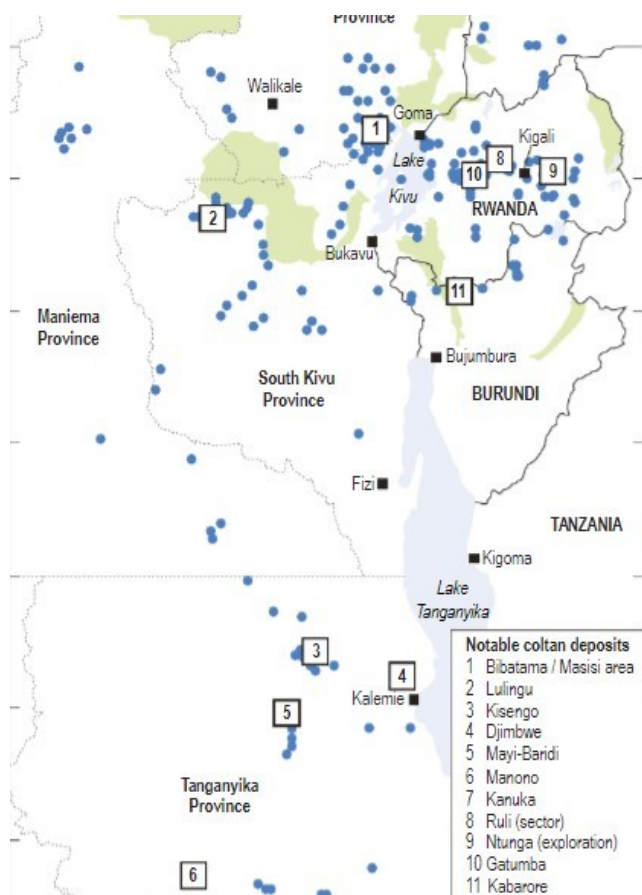


Figure 1. Location of registered coltan and coltan-cassiterite mines in the Great Lakes region

Source: (Schütte & Näher, 2020).

In 2023, the Rwanda Mines, Petroleum, and Gas Board (RMB) published data on mineral production and the number of registered mineral processing companies, as shown in Table 1.

However, it is interesting to note that when the number of processing companies is compared to the number of mining companies highlighted in Table 1, the numbers do not add up the million-dollar question one would ask is, “Where is the ore being processed in all those registered mineral processing companies highlighted in Table 1 coming from?” The assumption is that the huge volumes of ore could be coming from the DRC, and this assumption is supported by the numerous UN Security Council reports from 2001 and 2002.¹¹

Table 1
Rwanda’s Mineral Export Earnings in 2023

Mineral	Number of registered companies	Production, in kg	Total revenue, in USD
Cassiterite	41	1 144 440	18 813 001
Coltan	44	587 015	27 814 838
Wolfram	38	635 435	8 488 659
Gold	17	4 696	302 692 884
Gemstones and other precious minerals	66	4 267 237	4 559 461

Source: Rwanda’s Mineral Export Earnings Surge in 2023 // Rwanda Mines, Petroleum and Gas Board. February 15, 2024. URL: <https://www.rmb.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=92836&token=ad4c57d124c59df2bb683f73b7f0658a3dbd263d> (accessed: 27.07.2024); Mining Sector // Rwanda Development Board. 2024. URL: <https://rdb.rw/export/export/products-directory/mining-sector/> (accessed: 27.07.2024).

Relatedly, figures for revenue earned from mineral exports obtained from the renminbi indicate an increase in mineral exports from 2017 to 2023 (Table 2).

¹¹ See: Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo S/2001/357. Adopted by UN Security Council on April 12, 2001 // UN Documents. URL: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n01/323/54/pdf/n0132354.pdf> (accessed: 16.08.2024); Final Report of the Panel of Experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo S/2002/1146. Adopted by UN Security Council on October 16, 2002 // UN Documents. URL: <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF999B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/DRC%20S%202002%201146.pdf> (accessed: 16.08.2024).

The figures highlighted in Tables 1 and 2 reflect a trend of increasing revenues and tonnage of minerals exported by Rwanda. Dusengemungu and co-authors (Dusengemungu, Zhou & Liu, 2023) note that minerals have now become an important source of Rwanda's revenue which has brought about positive economic change in that country. To refute that minerals exported by Rwanda are looted from the DRC (Findley & Marineau, 2015), the government claims that all mineral exports from Rwanda are traceable through a tagging system currently accepted by the minerals' downstream buyers.¹² From the other side, on 22 March 2024, whilst addressing journalists, President Kagame confessed that Rwanda is a transit hub for smuggled Congolese minerals and blamed the international community, citing countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Belgium, and Israel, among many others, for complicating the illegal trade. He said: "Most of it [DRC minerals] goes through here, it does not stay here. It goes to Dubai, goes to Brussels..."¹³

Table 2

Rwanda's Mineral Export Revenues in 2017–2023

Year of Export	Revenue Generated, in million USD
2017	373.4
2018	346.6
2019	412.6
2020	733
2021	516.2
2022	772.5
2023	1000.1

Source: Rwanda's Mineral Export Revenues Soar, Fueled by Research and Innovation // IGIHE. November 29, 2023. URL: <https://en.igihe.com/news/article/rwanda-s-mineral-export-revenues-soar-fueled-by-research-and-innovation> (accessed: 27.07.2024); Rwanda's Mineral Export Earnings Surge in 2023 // Rwanda Mines, Petroleum and Gas Board. February 15, 2024. URL: <https://www.rmb.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=92836&token=a4c57d124c59df2bb683f73b7f0658a3dbd263d> (accessed: 27.07.2024).

¹² Rwanda. A Lithium-Tantalum-Tin-Tungsten Destination: The 3T's // Aterian PLC. 2024. URL: <https://aterianplc.com/projects/rwanda/> (accessed: 16.08.2024).

¹³ President Kagame Admits to Allowing Congo's Wealth to Be Stolen by the West Through Rwanda // African Online Publishing. March 22, 2024. URL: <https://african-online-publishing.com/2024/03/28/president-kagame-admits-to-allowing-congos-wealth-to-be-stolen-by-the-west-through-rwanda/> (accessed: 11.08.2024).

gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=92836&token=a4c57d124c59df2bb683f73b7f0658a3dbd263d (accessed: 27.07.2024).

Given the above observations, the case of Rwanda's increasing mineral exports may have been the result of rejuvenated M23 offensive operations in North Kivu. According to Findley and Marineau (2015), plunderable resources provide several incentives for third parties to intervene in a civil war due to their value and relative ease of access.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rwanda's involvement, both direct and indirect, played a significant role in determining the course of the conflict. Its intervention, often attributed to a desire to protect its national security and stabilize the region, raised concerns about sovereignty and the potential for heightened regional tensions, but it also played a crucial role in containing the expansion of armed groups and mitigating the human cost of the conflict.

Despite these efforts, broader international peacekeeping initiatives, including MONUSCO, have faced difficulties in achieving lasting peace due to issues such as the confrontation between different ethnic groups involving armed groups. Rwanda's involvement highlights the difficult balance required in peacekeeping operations, where regional actors, international organizations and local ethnic groups must work together to address the root causes of violence while ensuring sustainable peace through dialogue.

However, Rwanda is the biggest contributor to the prolongation of conflict in the DRC, given factors such as ethnic concerns, economic interests, security interests, irredentism, and more. Its agenda, examined in this article, includes all of these problems.

According to the authors of the article, the international community should stop turning a blind eye to African problems and stop using the continent's small states as its proxies to gain access to African resources. Africans, in turn, should unite to develop and extract minerals (coltan, etc.) so that they can use the revenues to develop their economies.

Other African countries should follow the principle of ‘African solutions to African problems.’ African leaders should use a combination of different approaches to solve the crisis in the DRC. It is advisable to hold a big African meeting under the leadership of the AU Panel of the Wise, chaired by the former South African President Thabo Mbeki. This team should include respected traditional leaders from the DRC, the SADC countries, the Economic Community of Central African States, the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the East African Community. The

purpose of this big meeting will be to bring together the regional economic communities in the DRC to curb the plundering and smuggling of African resources in general and DRC resources in particular across their borders by reviewing and synchronizing cross-border migration. Diplomatic efforts by African leaders to address this issue should be realized in terms of ensuring that the DRC accepts the Tutsis in Eastern Congo as its citizens. At the same time, Rwanda should fully forgive the Hutus who participated in the 1994 genocide.

Received / Поступила в редакцию: 13.04.2024

Revised / Доработана после рецензирования: 25.08.2024

Accepted / Принята к публикации: 15.10.2024

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