

Committee: DISEC 2

Topic: The question of the Democratic Republic of Congo

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Summary

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has suffered decades of political instability, which has led to armed conflict in the eastern part of the country. The armed conflict has displaced more than 4.5 million people as of 2018. A UN count in 2022 deemed there to be at least 122 rebel groups in the eastern part of the DRC. There are a vast amount of factors and events that led to the formation of these rebel groups. The DRC has poured a lot of blame on Rwanda, who were found to have supported the M23 rebel group in 2013. Recent reports have also indicated that Uganda have similarly supported the groups. Although the UN has helped through the MONUSCO mission, this is set to end by the end of this year, despite the conflict still being far from over. With weak ties with neighbouring countries and the peacekeepers withdrawing, the conflict is unstable and needs a sustainable solution.

Definition of Key Terms

DRC: Shortening of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Kivu conflict: An umbrella term covering many armed conflicts in north and south Kivu, since the early 2000s.

M23 movement (M23): A military rebel group, that has been operating in North Kivu since 2012. They began as a protest due to the government failing to properly implement a signed treaty. M23 take their name from March 23, the date the treaty was signed.

ADF: An islamist rebel group that operates in both the DRC and Uganda. It has operated in North Kivu since the 1990s and occupies the biggest area in the DRC out of any rebel group.

FARDC: Federal armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are the DRC's national military force, and the main force that has been fighting the rebel groups on behalf of the DRC.

Mai-Mai: Militia groups usually created and supported by DRC, to defend from other military groups and rebels. Some are also formed to benefit from the conflict, through looting or banditry.

Background Information

M23: The DRC has had decades of political instability. After gaining independence in 1960, the country immediately saw a series of civil wars and conflicts, in what's known as the Congo crisis. The country then saw two separate wars, the first and second Congo wars.

Following this, president Joseph Kaliba took over. During his rule, human rights conditions in the country were poor. In march of 2009, the government signed a peace treaty with a group that was part of the Kivu Conflict. In 2012, the M23 rebel group was formed, as a protest to the government's failure to properly implement the treaty. The country saw active conflict between 2012 and 2017, when a peace agreement was formed. Then, in 2022, there was a resurgence of M23 soldiers.

ADF: The "Allied Democratic Forces" is an Islamist rebel group that originated in Uganda, but eventually spread to the DRC. They currently occupy an area North East within the DRC.

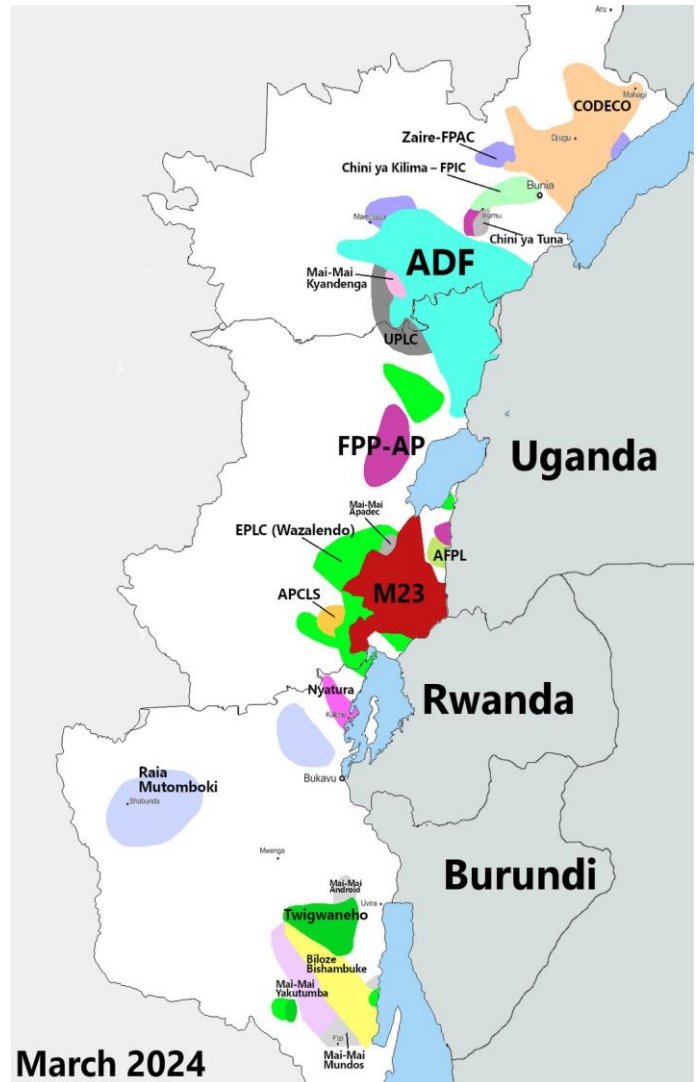
Despite the M23 and ADF being the most significant rebel groups, this barely scratches the surface. To date, there are over a 100 rebel groups still occupying areas of the DRC (see map).

Throughout the entire conflict, human rights violations have been a persisting issue, by all sides of the conflict. MONUSCO has expressed its concern at the amount of child recruitments, in a report that found over a thousand confirmed cases of child recruitments between 2012 and 2013. The UN further stated that the many girl recruits are subject to sexual assault. Sexual assault has also been a prevalent issue in general. UNHCR asserted a total of 7,075 in 2012 alone, most of which are committed by armed men.

The DRC produces about 70% of the global production of cobalt, which has been a key part of the conflict. Many of the occupied areas are rich in minerals, and the DRC has accused Rwanda of helping the rebel groups to profit from the seized areas.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Uganda: Uganda has worked with the DRC to fight several of the rebel groups. However, recent reports by UN expert have suggested that Uganda have helped support the M23 group. Uganda has since denied these claims.



Rwanda: Rwanda was found to be supporting the M23 group in 2013. Since then, they have continuously denied their involvement, however the United Nations and Human Rights Watch have found consistent evidence that Rwanda is providing logistical support, as well as directly providing weapons and soldiers to the group. A UN report from 2023 stated that Rwanda's aim in the DRC is to "reinforce M23 by providing troops and materiel and to use them to secure control over mine sites, gain political influence in the DRC and decimate FDLR".

Timeline of Events

Date	Description
23/3/2009	The DRC signs a treaty with National Congress of Defense of the People, turning it into a political party and integrating many soldiers into the Congolese army.
4/4/2012	The M23 rebel group is formed, due to poor conditions in the army, and the government not properly implementing the 23 March 2009 peace deal.
28/3/2013	The UN security council implemented resolution 2098, to create a "intervention brigade"
20/11/2012	Late 2012 offense: M23 Rebels attacked Goma. Following this, many Congolese soldiers and policemen defected, and joined M23.
12/12/2013	In late 2013, the DRC and M23 made peace declaration
2017-present	The M23 group fled to Rwanda, and resumed attacks on the DRC, occupying an area in the east of the country
April 2024	MONUSCO withdraws from South Kivu entirely. It also announced it would limit its mission in North Kivu and Ituri from May. This was done at the request of the DRC.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

MONUSCO: A UN peacekeeping mission that has been trying to restore peace to the DRC since 1999.

They have operated in the DRC, helping regain territories and mainly protect civilian lives. The Congolese government has criticized MONUSCO on occasions for not intervening when civilians were in danger. The DRC has also claimed MONUSCO is taking too long to help the situation, which is leading to protests and criticism, that's led to the current start of the withdrawal from the country.

UN Security Council Resolution 2348: Resolution from 2017 that outlined the goals and mission of MONUSCO, more focused on the ongoing conflict rather than the original aims (see below). This was needed to officially outline the current necessity of MONUSCO, which had shifted from regaining stability from the Second Congo War, and more to fighting the rebel groups that destabilize the territory.

United Nations Force Intervention Brigade: A military formation created by the UN in the DRC specifically to target and neutralize M23 soldiers. This was introduced when it was made clear that MONUSCO had not taken sufficient steps to end the ongoing violence. These concerns were addressed at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, where the concept of the intervention brigade was theorized. However, the countries involved did not have the capability to carry out the concept themselves, which is why it was instead adopted by the UN and integrated under the MONUSCO mission.

Withdrawal of MONUSCO from south Kivu: MONUSCO ceased all operations in south Kivu in April 2024, marking the beginning of the complete withdrawal of MONUSCO from the country. MONUSCO will also limit its mandate in North Kivu and Ituri, outlined in resolution 2717.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

MONUSCO: MONUSCO is a peacekeeping mission in the DRC. It was originally deployed to monitor peace after the second Congo war, though has primarily had a shift in focus to monitor ongoing instability, such as the Kivu conflict. The UN soldiers have helped the DRC forces in fighting rebellious groups, such as when helping the DRC regain control of Goma during the 2012 offense. However, Monusco has also faced backlash from civilians and politicians in recent years. MONUSCO is currently in the process of entirely withdrawing from the country, having already withdrawn from the South Kivu area. The president of the DRC is pushing for the complete withdrawal of MONUSCO by the end of 2024.

International Collaboration: The DRC has previously collaborated with Uganda in order to fight certain rebel groups. However, the DRC has expressed its unwillingness to collaborate with the Rwandan government on several occasions, and with the withdrawal of MONUSCO, future possibilities of collaboration look unrealistic.

Possible Solutions

Remove rebel funding: Due to the reports stating that groups are receiving funding from nearby countries such as Rwanda and Uganda, cutting ties with such support could prove to be useful. In 2012, this was done with Rwanda through pressure from the international community.

Helping human right issues: Due to the vast amounts of human rights issues, investigating and avoiding these in the future would help the general conditions. The DRC has ratified the Rome statute, which has already led to individuals getting arrested for war crimes such as child recruitments.

Support from other countries: Currently, the DRC does not want MONUSCO soldiers in its area and wants them to withdraw completely. This will have a negative impact on the conflict, and could escalate the situation, as peacekeeping soldiers have been pivotal at times, such as when regaining control of Goma in 2012. If the concerns

the DRC have with UN peacekeepers could be addressed, or if countries could send support directly instead of through the UN, this could help the DRC fight off the rebel groups.

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