



Roles, Objectives, and Structural Framework of the East African Community Regional Force's Intervention in Managing the Democratic Republic of Congo's Intractable Intra-State Conflict

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ABSTRACT

The protracted new generation warfare in the Eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the intervention by the EAC Regional Force are indicative of the need for comprehensive security strategy and the vitality of regional efforts. Intra-state conflicts in eastern DRC have been protracted since its independence in 1960. The conflicts have varied from political, ethnic to resource use-based. They have rendered the Eastern part of the country ungovernable and contributed to a huge influx of refugees into neighbouring countries as well as millions of internally displaced persons. This paper sought to investigate the Roles, Objectives, and Structural Framework of the East African Community Regional Force's Intervention in Managing of DRCs intractable intra-state conflict. The paper is anchored on interpretivism research philosophy and buttressed by neo functionalism theory to explain the interplay of its variables. The study adopted two research designs- descriptive survey and historical longitudinal research designs. The target population was 297 from which a sample of 177 was derived. Sampling techniques included census, simple random, snowballing and purposive sampling. Primary data were collected using an interview guide and questionnaire. 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 analysed through content analysis, which involved an examination of aspects of the information gathered through open-ended queries, interviews, and observation. Findings of this paper indicated that East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) major role is military coordination of 85(56.66%) of the respondents, rapid deployment of troops is 40(25.66%) while capacity to respond in Crisis is 25(16.66%). However, military coordination challenges occur as a result of intervening state interests in the DRC conflict, therefore, deployment of these troops in DRC is seen as a ploy to undermine conflict management efforts. The paper concludes that EACRF's efforts to restore peace and security in the DRC have been hampered by inadequate personnel deployment structures. This could potentially result in their overall responsibility being limited to peacekeeping due to the presence of structural capacity deficits. The EAC peacekeeping force is a multifaceted organization that, in a sense, works in tandem with various militia and military entities present in the region. The paper recommends expended role and structure for East African Community Regional Force. Besides the military and political wing, there is need to include local police and civilian's role to effectively and comprehensively manage the conflict. This means the one-year period of deployment was inadequate to realize peace in DRC.

Keywords: Conflict, DRC, Dynamics, EACRF, Intractable, Intervention, Intra-state, Management

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the Cold War ended, the ability of international and regional organizations to control conflicts has hinged on their access to economic, diplomatic, and military resources, as well as their determination to use these tools strategically. This triad of resources, determination, and strategy continues to be an essential element with regard to the organization as a whole (Shepherd, 2018). The inadequate progress and engagement of numerous regional and international organizations (IO) in conflict regulation can be attributed to a dearth of determination and strategic planning, as opposed to a mere scarcity of resources (Parker, 2024). Furthermore, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) serves as a potential example of how the effective management of conflicts requires a synergy of resources, determination, and strategy. Although the outcome of Afghanistan remained uncertain, NATO has unequivocally achieved success in six of the seven operations it has conducted since the end of the Cold War: Libya, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, and two anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and off the Horn of Africa (Parker, 2024). The significance of internal consensus and leadership in facilitating the efficient allocation of resources is further exemplified by the achievements of NATO (Moe & Geis, 2020). They directed their attention towards the aspect of

mutual interest in conjunction with the potential for effective interventionism by forces within the region. An important omission of the present research, however, is the examination of competing interests and the profound impact this has on the conflict.

African continent has been undergoing perpetual socio-spatial transformations ever since the era of colonialism. In addition to the ramifications of migration, climate change, and the global pursuit of natural materials, violent conflict continues to be a significant catalyst for these transformations (Hentz, 2014). Examining the domain of African peace and security with a spatial perspective not only engages with the principles of traditional political science, but also contributes to the discourse surrounding the emergence of 'new regionalism' in the 1990s. This discourse has contributed to the progress of the discipline by challenging fundamental tenets of the "old regionalism," specifically the (neo-)functionalist perspective on European integration. It argued that since the end of the Cold War, new, frequently expansive forms of regionalism have emerged in the Global South (Hettne, 1999). Concurrently, an emerging field of research known as "comparative regionalism" is spearheading a third iteration of studies on regionalism (Söderbaum, 2016a).

There have been attempts to get the African nations together and create a regional platform for them to talk things out for decades. In 1963, the principal goal of the Organization for African Union (OAU) was to promote unity and collaboration among African states for the benefit of the African people. Ngendahimana (2023) made reference to the idea of peaceful conflict resolution. Following its 2002 dissolution, the African Union (AU) took over; its goals were largely unchanged from its predecessor, but its commitment to peaceful conflict resolution remained unchanged. The AU's charter and organization are more precisely defined than the OAU's, according to Jerome (2016), when it comes to a regional approach to dispute resolution.

The eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is a fluid conflict zone that has experienced protracted conflict since its independence in 1960 (Marks 2011, Shepherd 2018, Parker 2024). The fluidity has influenced the failure of subsequent interventions that 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 seen almost 400,000 people in internally displacement camps in the first two months of 2024 (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA] (2024). The conflict has involved numerous internal and external actors whose convergence has only but fueled further conflict in the region (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2017). The conflict manifests the basic attributes of New Warfare that 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 the state, multilateral as well as unilateral security actors.

The paper analyses the dynamics of the emerging region-centric intervention in New Warfare in eastern DRC with a specific focus on EACRF. Though a regionally sanctioned intervention mechanism, (Manana at al. 2024) The EACRF also comprises partner states that portray vested interest traits in terms of cultural affinity, informal resource exploitation propensities, and pursuit for resident non-state combatants. In this context, the paper examines the capabilities and mechanisms of the EACRF in the intervention in the DRC. It further analyses the EACRF structure and composition, the physical and relational capabilities, and the contribution of conflict of interest among the EAC partner states in the management of New Warfare in eastern DRC.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The DRC conflict manifests the basic attributes of New Warfare that 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 the state, multilateral as well as unilateral security actors (Africa Centre for Strategic Studies, 2017). There has been UN intervention missions since the 1960s and the 1990s unilateral state interventions in the post-Mobutu dispensation have to all practical purposes been incapable of reigning in the intermittent conflicts. Any lull in the fighting is just a prelude to future escalation in the conflict. Since 1998, however, the eastern region of the DRC has attracted dedicated regional military intervention by Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries focused on a mixture of coercive engagement as well as mediation (International Crisis Group, 2020). 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 problematic of the region is such a complex web that requires a new approach from the erstwhile conventional coercive strategies and arrangements. This is justified by the changing nature of warfare in terms of tools, alliances and methods. The Eastern African Community Regional (EACRF) has been one of the latest entrants in this theatre of war.

According to Stefan & Oya (2012) examples of circumstances where intervenism caused changes include the conflicts conducted in southeast Turkey between the Turkish Army and Kurdish forces in northern Iraq. In addition, Turkey has a dominant position in the conflict in neighboring Syria. Iran's sustained engagement in the armed conflict in Syria and its significant role in shaping the dynamics of the armed conflict in Iraq can be attributed to its influence

over multiple Shia militias. A significant role was held by the United Arab Emirates and Riyadh in the international coalition involved in the armed conflict in Yemen. Riyadh has consistently upheld its position of leadership.

Moe & Geis (2020) asserted that the potential effectiveness of the NATO operation in Afghanistan relies on many crucial factors: the availability of financial resources, the degree of political resolve demonstrated by the Allies, and the existence of the requisite tools to facilitate cooperative military efforts. However, the issue of coordination both within and beyond the alliance is regarded as troublesome. However, the main challenge regarding the Alliance's efforts in Afghanistan revolves upon the intricacy of developing a clearly defined strategy for ISAF. According to Moe and Geis (2020), the NATO operation is perceived as a supplementary endeavor to a comprehensive nation-building initiative led by the United Nations.

This study analyses the dynamics of the emerging region-centric intervention in New Warfare in eastern DRC with a specific focus on EACRF. Though a regionally sanctioned intervention mechanism, the EACRF also comprises partner states that portray vested interest traits in terms of cultural affinity, informal resource exploitation propensities, and pursuit for resident non-state combatants. Manana et.al (2024) In this context, this paper examines the capabilities and mechanisms of the EACRF in the intervention in the DRC. It further analyses the EACRF structure and composition, the physical and relational capabilities, and the contribution of conflict of interest among the EAC partner states in the management of New Warfare in eastern DRC.

1.2 Research Objective

This paper sought to examine the role, objectives and structure of EACRF intervention in management of DRCs intractable intra-state conflict

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

For the purpose of this study, the paper triangulated Neo-Functionalism theory to bring the study in to perspective in respect of the role, objectives and structural framework of EACRF intervention in management of DRCs intractable intra-state conflict

2.1.1 Neo-Functionalism Theory

Prominent proponents of neo-functionalist theory consist of Ernest B. Haas and Joseph S. Nye. According to Haas (1964) the entirety of politics entails allegiances, anticipations, and political engagements with a novel centre whose institutions request or exercise authority over an extant national state. The theory posits that the concept of integration in one domain may serve as a catalyst for integration in another, thereby instigating a domino effect by virtue of its practicality in specific domains. Explanation of this is sufficiently provided by the spill-over effect. Furthermore, this theory is noteworthy for its ability to influence the elite to embrace the concept, which will result in them assuming a pivotal role in disseminating the idea to the general populace and, more significantly, in fostering an expansion of integration. Through the gradual implementation of policies that reorient allegiance to a new centre, neo-functionalism facilitates the formation of supranational regional organizations; furthermore, the feedback loop between the newly formed centre and society will be strengthened, whereas the one between the state and society will be weakened. This theory is pertinent because it acknowledges the significance of supranational structures in addressing intrastate conflicts such as the one in the DRC. According to this hypothesis, the EACRF is a regional force capable of establishing peace in the DRC under specific conditions.

2.2 Empirical Review

Stefan & Oya, (2012) examined the manner in which regional organizations handle intrastate conflict in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, complications arise concerning the definitions, significance, and application of the term "conflict" in relation to its prevention, management, and resolution. The instruments and policies utilized for conflict regulation, that is, the approaches taken to address conflicts, vary considerably between regions and International Organizations thus presents a further challenge

According to Brown, (2012) the EAC has collaborated with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and African Union (AU), all of which operate early warning systems of different types and levels, to develop its own Early Warning System (EWM), which is regarded as a critical cornerstone in the prevention of conflicts and crises. Additionally, the EAC established the Nyerere Centre for Peace Research in Tanzania with the purpose of furnishing the EAC with well-informed policy alternatives, training, and research in the domain of peace and security. Its primary objective is to advance peace and security as fundamental prerequisites for regional integration and development (Brown, 2012)

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 Democratic Republic of Congo'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 Research Philosophy

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.

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 Rwanada, 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

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 analysed 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.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Roles, Structures and Objectives of EACRF

A total of 152 questionnaires were sent to the EACRF ground personnel. The return rate for the questionnaires was 150. This constituted a response rate of 98.5%. According to Saleh and Bista (2017), it is deemed suitable to conduct data analysis with a response rate exceeding 75%.

The major role of ECRAF as shown in Table 2 responded as follows; military coordination 85 (56.66%), 40 (26.66%) Rapid deployment of troops, Capacity to respond in Crisis 25 (16.66%).

Table 2
EACRF Roles and Objectives

EACRF Roles	Frequency	Percent
Military coordination	85	56.66.
Capacity to respond in crisis	25	16.66
Rapid deployment of troops	40	26.66
Total	150	100

4.1.1 Military Coordination

Coordinating EAC military operations and airlifting personnel to associate states afflicted by conflict, such as the DRC, is the primary responsibility, as shown in Table 2. Nevertheless, the coordination function is hindered by the presence of established intervention parties in the DRC Congo Conflict, as illustrated in Figure 1.

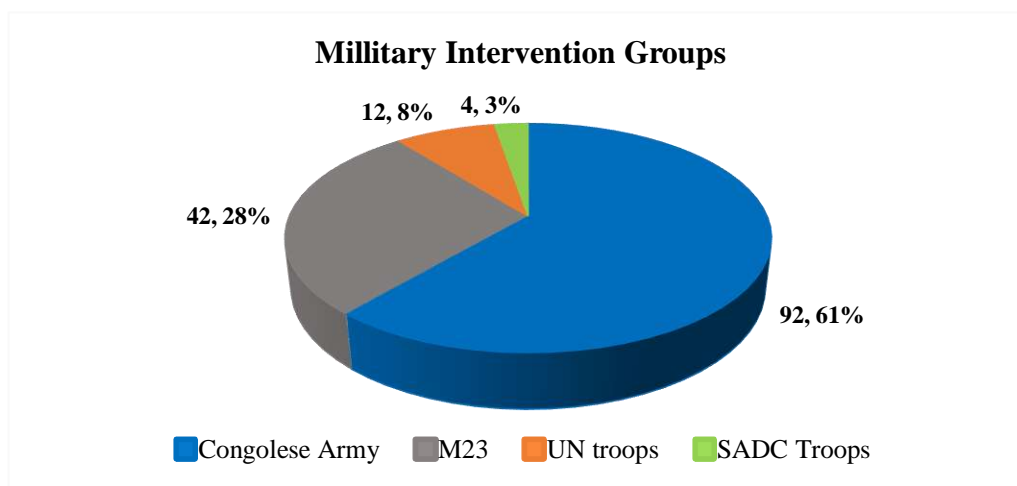


Figure 1
EACRF Partners

Study findings revealed that 92 (61.33%) of respondents thought that the Congolese army is the most powerful participant in the conflict, with 42 (28%) agreeing that the rebel outfit M23 is a prominent player. UN troops also plays a role with 12 (8%) agreeing to it. Although 4(2.66%) stated that DRC is a SADC partner state, its participation is not readily apparent.

According to Table 2 the primary responsibility is to organize the EAC military and transport them to partner states that are prone to conflicts, such as the DRC. This coordination function is, nevertheless, confounded by the existence of intervention groups in the DRC Congo. The results corroborate those of Ngendahimana (2023), who classified the Congolese government and army as internal protagonists in the Congolese conflict in his analysis. He noted that the colonial system, post-independence political unrest, and Mobutu dictatorship are the origins of the DRC's problems. The history of the DRC is marked by a catalogue of oppression, and the government of the DRC has never failed to adequately represent or protect its people. In contrast, it has frequently functioned as a catalyst for individual affluence and unrestricted authority. Notwithstanding the Congolese army's prominent involvement in the Congolese conflict, the government fails to provide assurances regarding the safety and security of its populace. According to Ngendahimana (2023), the eastern Congo will continue to be a battleground with innocent civilians paying a terrible price as long as the Congolese government is unable to govern the country, provide basic services, or adequately safeguard its people. This is because various armed groups in the region benefit from the illegal trade of natural resources and intricate regional alliances.

In addition to the EAC regional peacekeeping force, various military organizations are engaged in the conflict albeit with distinct functions. The primary objective of the Congolese Army is to eradicate the M23 militia in order to re-establish dominion over the Eastern Congo region. The purpose of the United Nations forces is humanitarian and peacekeeping. In such a scenario, the EACRF joint force's units would primarily consist of reinforcements for soldiers that have been deployed to the DRC within the past few months; each contributor would be assigned a unique mission. In North Kivu and Ituri, for instance, Ugandan soldiers who are members of the EACRF joint force are tasked with assisting their compatriots in combat against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan rebel coalition whose largest faction has sworn allegiance to the Islamic State.

This indicates that Uganda is actively seeking a dissident group and may not place a high priority on the restoration of peace in the DRC. The potential for divergent interests among numerous military factions in Congo restricts the ability to effectively address the internal conflict. The function of rebel groups and militias that traverse EAC borders is a related point, as posited by a member of the chief of defense committee:

The Kinsasha government and the EAC Partner states have experienced an increase in mistrust following the intervention of the East Africa Regional Community Force (EARCF) in the DRC conflict. This mistrust stems from the Kinsasha government's allegation that certain Partner states are engaging in coordination with M23 and FDLR rebel groups. As a result, the mandate of this regional organization in its efforts to combat Congolese armed groups has been jeopardized. (Interview held with a member of chiefs of defense committee, Kenya, 7th September, 2023 in Nairobi).

Another respondent reinforced the peculiarity of several actors in the DRC conflict by asserting the following;

The DRC war is a longstanding issue in Africa. Indeed, this struggle may be traced back to the merciless governance of the Belgians. During the initial Congolese war, we observed the involvement of foreign entities, including major powers at the time, as well as other actors such as the United Nations. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these answers, I believe their primary intentions were to exploit the undiscovered resources of the Congo. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, the African continent found itself in a state of isolation. During this period, we observed the increasing influence of regional organizations as they actively participated in reshaping and realigning the regional security framework. The Second and subsequent Congolese conflicts have garnered heightened attention from regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Association (SADC) and, more recently, the East African Community (EAC) partner states, facilitated by the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF). These organizations, in my view, prioritize their own strategic interests, particularly economic interests, rather than focusing on stabilizing the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). (Interview with military attaché, 7th, August, 2023).

This dialogue exposes a profound mistrust in the peacekeeping mission, as the host state is equivocal regarding joint military operations, particularly those originating from the EAC region. This result supports the contentions made by Bischoff et al. (2016) that the role of joint force coordination is diminished by a significant number of participants. Kenyan troops, for instance, pursue additional insurgents in North Kivu, where the nation already has personnel stationed with the United Nations force (although the two contingents will have separate objectives). Conversely, operations by Tanzanian and Burundian forces in South Kivu effectively formalize the Burundian army's presence in the region, where it has been engaged in combat with the RED-Tabara militia. A small South Sudanese contingent is tasked with combating the remnants of the Lord Resistance's Army in Haut-Uélé. However, the results of these studies contradict the claim made by Bischoff, Aning, and Acharya (2016) that partner states coordinate effectively. To begin with, the partner states deployed their forces every two months as a result of resource constraints. Furthermore, the results suggest that EACRF forces are stationed in Congo for reasons unrelated to the restoration of peace in the country.

The area gathered between 6,500 and 12,000 soldiers for the deployment, which was authorized to "contain, defeat, and eradicate negative forces" in the eastern DRC for a period of six months, renewable, and subject to a

bimonthly strategic review by the involved parties. Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, and South Sudan all contributed personnel to engage in combat alongside Congolese forces (Bischoff, Aning, & Acharya 2016).

Nonetheless, the paper uncovered numerical military voids, which undermines the very purpose of the Joint Area of Operation, which is to cover a vast region with numerous long-range patrols. Nevertheless, the command structure, extending from the Force Headquarters to the contingents, is effective and efficient. An EAC coordination military officer expressed regret in an interview that the participation of numerous military organizations has resulted in power asymmetry among certain member states, consequently diminishing the effectiveness of the force. The presence of numerous military opposition groups in Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda hinders EACRF efforts in the DRC. He provided the following explanation:

The primary objectives of our force's deployment in the war-ravaged region are to prevent the conflict from escalating further and to establish a lasting peace. In accordance with the security mechanisms that have granted legitimacy to this operation, every partner state is duty-bound to provide military personnel in support of our endeavor. As a result, they have responded to this appeal. Nonetheless, the ongoing Congolese conflict has been marked by the participation of numerous militia factions, some of which have established ties with the partner states. The ongoing existence of these militia groups has significantly hindered our ability to carry out this laudable operation efficiently, as the balance of power in terms of capabilities remains elusive. (Interview, EAC Military coordinating officer, 7th August, 2023).

The various strategies employed by distinct divisions appear to be operating against the regional force's objectives. It is unclear whether this is the result of ineffective coordination or a strategy. FARDC and the Ugandan Peoples Defence Force (UPDF) are conducting a joint offensive operation in the northern regions (North-Kivu and Ituri) to trace the ADF-NALU rebel group. Boundary-strong, the Burundian army is currently stationed in the south-western region of the province of North Kivu, where it is impeding the M23's progress. It appears that Kenya has adopted a more diplomatic stance. Angola is poised to deploy a military contingent to the area subsequent to the ceasefire it mediated between the Congolese army and the M23 insurgents failing to materialize. The manner in which MONUSCO operations can be practically applied to other forces is still unknown.

It is evident from this discourse that the very structures of the EACRF betray its immediate duties and objectives in relation to joint missions, as divergent state interests of some EAC states have negative repercussions on the EACRF mission. It is possible to classify the efforts of Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda to combat militia groups operating within their borders as a conflict of interest. Limited coordination and the presence of numerous military factions further jeopardize the EACRF's goal of restoring peace in the DRC. Additionally, duty multiplication, as a portion of their forces are integrated into the United Nations peace mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is apparent that the primary focus of the EACRF's mandate has been peacekeeping rather than peace enforcement.

4.1.2 Role of EACRF Affiliated Structures in DRC Intrastate Conflict

The researcher aimed to comprehend the function of EACRF affiliate structures and the manner in which they contribute to the EACRF's objectives in the DRC conflict. The researcher requested that the EAC Director of Coordinating Mechanism and Military Attaches, as well as the EACRF logistical, operational, and strategy teams, ascertain the functions performed by EACRF affiliate structures in the administration of intrastate conflict in the DRC. The total count of participants was 150. The return of two questionnaires was absent. The results are summarized in Figure.2

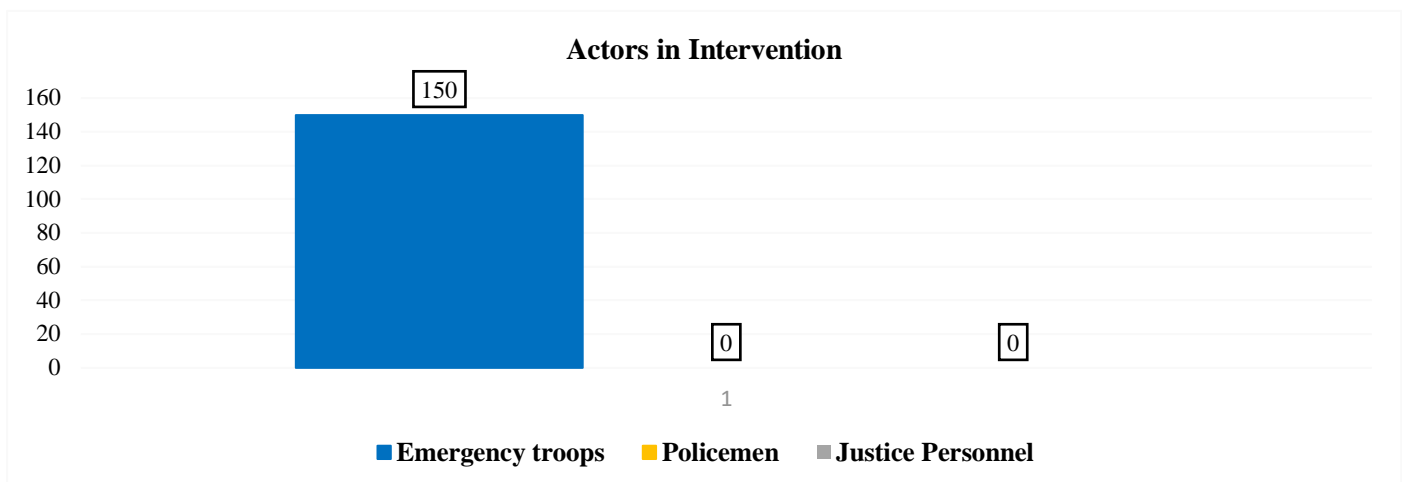


Figure 2
EACRF Intervention Personnel

One hundred and fifty respondents (100%) supported the deployment of emergency personnel in the war-torn DRC. Police and justice personnel were not accepted by any of the respondents as part of the EACRF conflict management process. During times of crisis, emergency forces are mobilized; nevertheless, the implementation of the EAC regional peacekeeping force has been sluggish.

Due to the inherent characteristics of its structure, the EACRF has been constrained to its primary responsibilities of peacekeeping and conflict prevention in the DRC's internal affairs. It was disclosed that regional forces have accomplished little in recent months with regard to peace building and enforcement. During a recent interview, a member of the chiefs of defence committee addressed:

Our mandate, as prescribed by the political faction of the region, is limited in scope and is founded upon specific objectives. In this regard, EACRF activities are limited to member state collaboration and joint exercises. Therefore, in order to restore peace, the treaty requires joint forces to collaborate with local law enforcement and civilians. It fails to account for the critical role that justice personnel play in the peacebuilding process. (Interview held with a chief of defense committee member, 14th October, 2023 in Goma, DRC, Uganda Cohort).

The statement alludes to a more comprehensive intervention framework that extends beyond the mere deployment of emergency troops. This is consistent with Article 13.1.1 of the Protocol of Africa Standby Force, which stipulates that the ASF shall be comprised of multidisciplinary contingents on standby in their respective countries of origin, consisting of civilian, police, and military personnel, prepared for immediate deployment. Hence, EACRF constitutes a multifaceted entity comprising elements from the military, security, and civilian sectors. This indicates that certain portions of the EAC chatter on the EACRF structure are deactivated or mute. A military officer in charge of EAC coordination argued in an interview:

Among the many factors that have contributed to the politicization of ethnicities and the ongoing exploitation of resources is the Congolese conflict. This provides a strong correlation between the DRC's resources and its development. Conflict in the eastern DRC is intricate and at times time-consuming, necessitating the participation of all parties involved. For the disarmament of armed groups, the political process must continue to advance at an accelerated rate. Additionally, it is imperative that the intervening actors exhibit a genuine commitment to bringing an end to the conflict, rather than engaging in further illicit activities that I am unable to divulge but which are circulating in local and international media outlets on account of their sensitive nature. (Interview held with a EAC coordination military officer 4th November, 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya).

This statement provides further support for the inclusion of civilians and law enforcement in the EACRF intervention structure. The joint force intervention may not produce significant results if certain crucial elements are omitted, as evidenced by the following findings. However, the defunct EACRF utilized this framework to delineate the responsibilities of each segment. In 2011, the EACRF Standby Roster acknowledged the registration of 176 civilian personnel, in addition to the training of 635 police officers. At the defunct EACRF 2012 Exercise Njiwa, which focused on capacity building for institutions upholding the rule of law, more than a hundred police and civilian participants participated. In addition to the force's multidimensional nature, EACRF acknowledges and endeavours to partially execute UNSC resolution 1325 concerning gender mainstreaming. 209 out of 635 trained police officers were female in 2011.

EACRF has accomplished a remarkable feat in terms of training its personnel both collectively and individually, both within EACRF structures and in member nations. The culmination of these training programs has been the successful EACRF in order to standardize doctrine and training in accordance with the United Nations' requirement for doctrine and training for multidimensional forces, COM collaborates with regional training institutions such as the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC). However, in the case of the EACRF, this standardization also accounts for African realities. In order to ensure the effectiveness of collaborative peace support operations, three regional centres of excellence for peacekeeping training in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda provide forces contributing from member countries with common joint pre-deployment training.

EAC has collaborated with ECOWAS, IGAD, and AU, all of which operate early warning systems of varying varieties and levels, to develop its own Early Warning System (EWM), which is regarded as a cornerstone of crisis and conflict prevention. Furthermore, the EAC established the Nyerere Centre for Peace Research in Tanzania with the purpose of furnishing the EAC with well-informed policy alternatives, training, and research in the domain of peace and security. Its primary objective is to advance peace and security as fundamental prerequisites for regional integration and development. It is estimated that over a hundred-armed organizations are active in the eastern region of the DRC. Notwithstanding the existence of over 16,000 peacekeepers from the United Nations, these factions persist in instilling fear among populations and exerting authority over porously governed regions. Moreover, a considerable number of these armed factions maintain affiliations with firmly established terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabab, thereby enabling them to function from a firmly established base equipped with ample resources (International Crisis Group, 2020).

Further exacerbating the problem of extensive violence inflicted by armed factions in the eastern DRC is the propensity of the Great Lakes region nations, notably Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda, to actively facilitate and support armed groups in the DRC with the intention of instigating proxy conflicts against one another. Concurrently, President Félix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is contemplating inviting these nations into the country to combat factions that they oppose. If invited into the DRC, these three nations, whose animosity is intensifying, might increase their support for allied militias while focusing on adversaries. A new proxy conflict has the potential to destabilize the DRC even further and even spark a regional security crisis.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study's findings in discussion above 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. The paper further concludes, EACRF's efforts to restore peace and security in the DRC have been hampered by inadequate personnel deployment structures. This could potentially result in their overall responsibility being limited to peacekeeping due to the presence of structural capacity deficits.

5.2 Recommendations

From the conclusion above the paper proposes an expanded role and set of objectives for the EACRF, in accordance the objective. These objective include increasing investments in conflict prevention and transformation as means to establish enduring peace and security in the DRC conflict. Additionally, joint structured troop deployment is required

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