

# Role of Non State Actors (Political Movements, Militias, Civil Society) in Shaping Regional Security in Africa

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## Abstract

This article unravels the role of non-state actors in regional security in the great lakes region of Africa. The analysis identifies what motivates non-state actors into action particularly, the desire to access scarce resources, the geopolitical environment; and their legitimate right to participate in governance to transform society. Using case studies, the paper cites concrete examples from political movements, militias, and civil society to understand why non-state actors can shape regional security positively or negatively. The paper concludes that what is important is to identify those non-state actors that have interest in peace and stability for networking and collaboration while at the same time engage positively or respond appropriately to those non-state actors that have negative attitude towards peace and security. This is possible through practising democratic governance and developing military and other security capabilities to deal with negative actors

**Index terms**— non-state actors, regional security, peace, governance.

## 1 Introduction

his article analyses the critical role non state actors' play in shaping regional security particularly the Great Lakes Region (GLR) of Africa. The Great lakes region of Africa is composed of East and Central African countries of Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. These states share the waters of three significant lakes: Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Kivu. There are other states which are closely related and participate in the security and defence activities within this region to the extent that some people regard them as part of it. These include South Sudan, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Angola.

Since the 1960s, realist theory of International Relations which focused on interactions between states has come under pressure as the number, size and power of non-state actors have increased tremendously. In the contemporary world, some Multinational Corporations (MNCs) own assets whose total value is more than GNP of some states. Their financial power continues to influence the Global Political Economy (interrelationship between public and private power in the allocation of scarce resources). Indeed, Globalisation has opened the way for non-state actors to operate across state boundaries and occupy an important place on the world stage.

## 2 II. Motivations for Non-State Actors

The increasing activities of non-state actors are not without motivations. Three explanations will suffice for this article. First, Harold D. Lasswell (1936) while defining politics posed classic questions: who gets what, when and how? The issue of distribution and access to scarce resources is central in understanding motivations of some actors in society. Similarly, the issue of power i.e. who has it, how it is exercised, for what purposes and in whose interest is central in determining the outcomes of a phenomena.

It is therefore natural that resource scarcity in society is related to conflict and security scenarios. This nexus allows us to understand why non-state actors have been found to be deeply involved in the regional conflicts both positively and negatively. Anstey (1991:4), defines conflict as 'encompassing two aspects, one,

## 2 II. MOTIVATIONS FOR NON-STATE ACTORS

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its causes and second, its expression. Thus, conflict exists in a relationship when parties believe that their aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously or perceives a divergence in their values, needs or interests and purposefully employ their power in an effort to defeat, neutralise or eliminate each other to protect or further their interests in the interaction'. When this understanding is applied to the context of non-state actors: Professor of Development Studies and a Senior Research Fellow at Centre for Budget and Economic Governance located in a public policy research Think Tank known as Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment, Kampala, Uganda. e-mails: emushemeza@yahoo.com, elijah.mushemeza@acode-u.org For instance, innovations in cross-border transport, computer networks and telecommunications enable non-state actors to influence ideas, values and political persuasions of many people and this has implications for peace and security in the world. Nonstate actors take various forms: economic, social, ecological, technical, religious, scientific, ethnic etc.

In short, contemporary world interactions must be viewed as multidimensional and characterized by multiple, complex interactions rather than happening between states alone. Examples of non-state actors include but not limited to: powerful individuals, private investors, Multinational Corporations MNCs & Transnational Corporations (TNCs), International Non-governmental Organizations, Religious movements, social movements, civil society organizations, terrorists and criminal organizations, militias, liberation movements etc.

actors which have been involved in conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, conflict then means dispossession, violence, denial of the right to citizenship and participation in national life, injustice, insecurity and deprivation. Understandably, no person or group of persons would like to be permanently deprived or rendered stateless and insecure.

Consequently, unresolved conflicts breed further conflicts and insecurity. Non-state actors have been either on the side of victims or part of perpetrators of the violence and insecurity.

One other important concept in understanding the philosophy of who gets what, when and how is 'power'. Power is a key motivator of some non-state actors in the region. Power can assume various forms (involving physical means), persuasion (use of power is clear and known), manipulation (agent conceals the use of power), exchange (use of incentives)- (Grigsby, 2009:42). In all forms the capacity of one actor to change the behaviour of another (Dahl 1963) is a common denominator. Power is also exercised in the capacity of actors to set agendas (Bachrach and Baratz 1970) and to structure rules in various areas of international economic relations so as to privilege some actors and to disadvantage others (Strange 1988). Non-state actors also utilize the power they may possess to shape regional security. This brings us to the next concept security in our discussion. In this context, security is understood 'as an all-encompassing condition in which individuals live in freedom, peace and safety; participate fully in the process of governance; enjoy the protection of fundamental rights; have access to resources and the basic necessities of life; and inhabit an environment which is not detrimental to their health and wellbeing' (Mushemeza 2007).

Basically, conflicts in the Great Lakes Region are centred on the struggle for democratic ideals. At the national levels various groups -political/ military want to maintain power, regain it or capture it. Such groups believe that they have better capacities to establish and practice democratic ideas -including the control of the production process and distribution of scarce resources. Yet, other groups have a history of genocidal ideology, and indeed have participated in crimes against humanity and other activities of destruction. This has been made worse by external factors. Globalization has enabled proliferation of weapons from the manufacturers to the war lords and the governments in the region. The uncontrolled movement of weapons from earlier wars of liberation, proxy wars fought during the cold war period have contributed to the militarization of the communities in the region a situation that demands urgent attention if meaningful security, peace and sustainable development are to be realized.

The Great Lakes Region is also characterised by weak states economically and some states are geopolitically disadvantaged in the international system. The states are undergoing a comprehensive crisis of ideology i.e. appreciating where people are coming from, where they are, where they are going and why they should take a particular direction of security architecture and development.

It appears the main preoccupation of the security sector is with maintaining the regime in power, rather than with meeting objective security needs of the state and the people. As a result sections of the population, which are excluded and/or marginalized, resort to violent means of participation resulting in intrastate wars. Therefore security sector reform/ transformation as a much needed new architecture should focus on conflict prevention mechanisms as actors seek to place security institutions under democratic governance to ensure accountability, transparency and broad participation. A security sector which is responsible and responsive to the needs of the population is less likely to threaten them, and more likely to provide their security needs.

The Great Lakes Region therefore requires a Security Sector Reform/Transformation (SSR/T) in general in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable development. Security sector reform here refers 'to those institutions entrusted with the protection of the state and its citizens (such as the military, paramilitary forces, and intelligence services, civil authorities mandated to manage and control these agencies, parliament, and civil society organizations) and justice and law enforcement institutions (such as judiciary, justice ministry, police, and penal services, human rights commissions and ombudsmen, customary and traditional justice systems)'- (Adedeji 2007: 30). There are also arguments that 'given the prevalence of the private and other non statutory actors in an increasing number of states, forces such as guerrilla and liberation armies, non state Para-military organizations as well as private military and security companies have to be considered either as part of the The

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second explanation is the nature of the state and geo-political environment. But why does the environment in the Great Lakes Region attract conflicts and the involvement of non-state actors? The state in the GLR has been a contested terrain resulting into lack of legitimacy in the recent past and thus relying on coercive instruments especially on the military to impose stability and 'loyalty'. Furthermore, experiences in Governance in Africa show that political corruption, lack of respect for rule of law and human rights violations are the lead causes of conflicts.

de facto security sector or at least as important actors in shaping security sector governance' (Addeji 2007:6).

In the absence of a meaningful security sector reform and transformation, the states are continuously facing the challenge from social movements, political parties in opposition to open the political space and democratise the society in general. Similarly, the demand for democratisation and failure by the states to protect their citizens is pushing some groups to resort to violence in order to redeem themselves.

Non-state actors in our region (the Great Lakes Region of Africa) have emerged, grown, developed expertise and some have acquired lethal weapons to build power as a means to achieve their objectives particularly economic resources and influence.

The third explanation on motivation is the legitimate right to participate in governance and change society through peaceful means. Some civil society organisations have distinguished themselves in fighting for what is right, good, desirable, and proper in governance of society (these are normative concepts /statements common in international relations analysis). These normative principles have motivated and guided civil society organisations to collaborate with other actors to shape regional security.

### 3 III.

Selected Non-State Actors and Regional Security a) Political movements

In the past Africa had liberation movements that challenged the authority of existing states for change. Liberation movements were guided by known ideologies and political objectives that focused on the transformation of society. In the current situation, political movements formed by rebels/political fall outs seem to be focusing on capturing state power as a means to access economic resources. Some are even comfortable staying in jungles as long as they control extractive resources -minerals, timber or raw food. Where political movements have emerged and ready to engage the existing state authority and other regional organisations and actors there is hope for a meaningful dialogue and settlement. Subsequently, Bishop Jean Marie Runiga Lugerero and General Sultan Makanga took the leadership. International human rights say M23 fighters have been responsible for widespread war crimes, including summary executions, rapes, and the forced recruitment of children.

In March 2013, the Security Council approved the creation of its ever 'offensive' combat force to neutralize and disarm M23 and other Congolese rebels and foreign -armed groups in DRC. In August, the head of UN Peacekeeping mission ordered peacekeepers to take 'necessary action' to protect civilians and prevent armed groups from advancing in the North Kivu Province in response to the renewed fighting ([www.aljazeera.com/news/Africa/2013](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/Africa/2013)).

The new UN approach was necessitated by the shortcomings of the huge mission (over 18,000 troops in DRC) that was not able to neutralize armed groups. Many Congolese had derided them as 'tourists' for many years and in 2012 were unable to stop M23 from seizing the regional capital Goma before they pulled out under international pressure.

In their articulated grievances, the M23 argued that the DRC had not lived up to its promises in the 2009 deal. They were being mistreated, after being integrated in the army, not paid enough, -the military lacked vital resources with soldiers going hungry-and provocative statements by President Kabila that their 'leader' Bosco Ntaganda would be put on trial at the ICC ([www.bbc.com/news](http://www.bbc.com/news) 2013).

Humanitarian Cost of the Conflict -As of November 2012, there were 2.4 million IDPs and 460,000 refugees in neighboring countries. The UN reported human violations committed by both sides of the conflict including sexual violence and looting. The M23 had reportedly recruited children into armed conflict. Human Rights Watch reported at the time that M23 committed widespread war crimes, including summary execution of child soldiers attempting to escape ([www.endgenocide.org](http://www.endgenocide.org)).

Regional and international response: The violence in DRC attracted the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGR) to intervene as part of its broader objective of maintaining peace and security in the GLR. On 8 September 2012, Regional Heads of State met in Kampala to call on the cessation of hostilities, the creation of the Joint Verification Mechanism, and establish a neutral international force to patrol the DRC Rwanda border. This was followed by peace negotiations in Kampala. ???. This provided MONUSCO with an unprecedented UN peacekeeping mandate for offensive operations to neutralize armed groups in DRC. While the mandate was both innovative and controversial -for political, operational, and legal reasons-the Intervention Brigade has been seen by many as a success and a future model ([www.responsibilitytoprotect.org](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org)). It is widely believed that that the Intervention brigade in DRC is better equipped than either local rebel groups or the Congolese military, with tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery and night vision goggles. Comprised of three infantry battalions, one artillery unit and one Special Forces and Reconnaissance Company, and is authorized to shoot first-unlike any peacekeeping mission before. The intervention brigade of 3,069 troops was deployed into eastern DRC in July 2013, and rebel forces around Goma were given a 48-hour ultimatum to disarm by August 1, 2013. In November 2013, the M23 rebel movement ended its insurgency after more than a year and half of fighting. This had been

achieved by the military superiority of the Brigade against the rebel movement. Therefore a combination of approaches peace negotiations and battle successes-enabled the end of the hostilities.

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The mandate of the intervention Brigade was renewed in Resolution 2147 in March 2014 without any significant modifications. The Brigade has since turned its focus toward other armed groups/militias in eastern DRC, including Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Ugandan rebel group -the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

It is clear from the above narrative that political movements through their activities shape the nature of regional security whether negatively or positively.

## 5 c) Civil society

The definition and understanding of Civil Society is complex. But for this article, let us take it as that sphere of social life that exists outside the state and market. Formation and facilitation of militias has become a common feature in the Great Lakes Region of Africa. Some are formed clandestinely by political leaders in government to serve their interests while others emerge to challenge legitimate authority. The militias in Somalia, DRC, South Sudan and elsewhere in the region are part of the complex insecurity that has forced thousands of people to leave their ancestral lands.

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In November 2012 during a high level policy dialogue organised by Rwanda Governance Board in Kigali, this author argued that M23 and militias in Eastern DRC would not engage in a meaningful dialogue without a beating/stick. I strongly supported the intervention of a UN special force (African composition). Indeed, the response of a UN intervention Brigade enabled a peace deal to be finalized. This is the way to go with armed and stubborn militias who keep the communities under siege and yet pretend to be negotiating peace.

There are several militias operating in the GLR of Africa. The most notorious ones are the FDLR, Mai Mai Sheka and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) which have bases in DRC, Burundi, and Central African Republic. These militias have continued to shape the status of regional security given their violent activities and high level actors involved to neutralize them.

Case Study: Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)-Is made up of Rwandan Hutu extremists who entered DRC following the 1994 Rwanda genocide. This militia group is known for repeatedly attacks on civilians on eastern DRC. It has been involved in recruitment of child soldiers and making incursions on Rwanda territory.

According to Human Rights Watch, between April 2012 and May 2013, FDLR murdered 314 civilians in various attacks. Similar incidents of crimes against humanity have been reported by Oxfam, civil society organisations and the government of Rwanda.

Regional and international: response There have been various responses to these humanitarian challenges by the Human Rights Council (HRC), United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UN Security Council, ICC, SADAC, and ICGLR to neutralize the militias.

On 24 February 2013 a UN SC -brokered peace agreement between ICGLR Heads of State was signed by Angola, Burundi, the CAR, Congo Brazzaville, the DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia. Formally, called the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DRC and the region, the agreement emphasized issues of sexual violence and displacement, among other human rights abuses, and noted that progress begins with the cessation of violence. The agreement recognized the distinct yet interdependent roles of actors from DRC within the region and within the international community ([www.responsibilitytoprotect.org](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org)).

Within the above framework the UN intervention Brigade gave the January 2 nd 2015 deadline to demobilize and disarm. On 29 January 2015, the army of DRC supported by MONUSCO and Intervention Brigade officially declared the start of operations and launched a military campaign against FDLR. In spite of the challenges the UN intervention Brigade is highly motivated having defeated M23. We are yet to see the desired results from this operation. Nevertheless, the activities of FDLR and other militias as non-state actors have undoubtedly shaped regional and international security architecture. Similarly for simplicity, I use two generic terms -civil society actors and civic associations where two organisational forms are prominent in the literature; NGOs and Social movements.

An NGO is an organisation with a formal structure formed by private individuals for the purpose of engaging in non-profit making activities. Most civil society organizations in the Great Lakes Region are registered as NGOs. On the other hand a Social Movement is a collection of individuals and groups united on the basis of shared interests and identities in the collective pursuit of common political goals. Social movements develop in an attempt to effect social change. NGOs actors have been instrumental in shaping the goals and activities of social movements particularly mass actions, and non violent protests on specific interest -environmental issues, rights protection etc.

Civil society actors can be differentiated according to their area of expertise, focus or interest, size and resources, geography and level of organisation, aims, tactics and strategies. I believe that civil society actors

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with their expertise and interest in peace and security can play a positive role in shaping regional security. Two illustrations will drive my point home on how CSOs have contributed to shaping regional security.

Civil society actors have been engaged in projects that make efforts to hold governments in the Great Lakes Region accountable particularly on commitments made for protecting displaced persons in their country by proposing realistic policy solutions to conflict and displacement. For example the Great Lakes Civil Society Project (GCP) in which the Danish Refugee Council partners with CSOs in DRC, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic and South Sudan has made impact in documenting and analyzing specific displacement and conflict issues and translating these analyses into practical advocacy goals at the local, national and regional levels ([drc.dk.org/relief-work/thegreat-lakes-civil-society-project](http://drc.dk.org/relief-work/thegreat-lakes-civil-society-project)).

The project outcomes draws on existing legal and political frameworks for the protection of refugees and IDPs, such as the Great Lakes Pact on Security, Stability and Development, and the African Union Kampala Convention, as well as national -level IDP policies and legislative tools.

Similarly, under the auspices of the Regional Network on Peace and Security (RENOPS), CSOs have been making positive advocacy undertakings to shape regional security. On 15 December 2014, RENOPS members across the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region converged in Nairobi to commemorate the deaths of innocent people during the recent civil war in South Sudan. In their commemoration, civil society actors called their governments to: 'Step up pressure on South Sudan leaders to immediately end the war. Fully support peaceful and negotiated settlement and denounce any military efforts to resolve conflicts. Take all necessary measures within their capacity to ensure that no more arms are supplied to South Sudan warring parties as more arms will fuel the conflict' ([ssansa.org](http://ssansa.org)).

The above statement by civil society actors was a clarion call to governments in the regions to acknowledge their peoples outcry and call for serious peace negotiations instead of stalling tactics while searching for military victory. In broad terms therefore, civil society actors through their associations/NGOs, and social movements, have been visible through their actions and activities in shaping regional security.

IV.

## 7 Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that people in our region have more opportunities to interact and influence things beyond national borders. Environmentalists, peace activists, human rights watch dogs, women and youth groupings, militias, political movements and even criminals now operate regionally. Access to international media (Aljazeera, CNN, BBC etc.), the Internet, air travel, means that states are no longer able to control the political allegiances and interests of their citizens.

Non-state actors provide avenues for citizens to interact globally/regionally. This means non-state actors can shape regional security positively or negatively. What is needed therefore, is to identify those non-state actors that have interest in peace and stability for networking and collaboration while at the same time engage positively or respond appropriately to those non-state actors that have negative attitude (through their actions) towards peace and security. This is possible through practicing democratic governance and developing military and other security capabilities to deal with negative actors. At international level, the UN model of peace keeping should enhance the experiment of Intervention Brigade given the results we have seen when dealing with M23. Non-state actors that are not interested in peace and stability should be seriously engaged through both 'carrot and stick' approaches.<sup>1</sup>

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Figure 1:

Global Journal of Human Social Science

*[Note: s -Year]*

Figure 2: 2016

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Role of Non State Actors (Political Movements, Militias, Civil Society) in  
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Case study: The March 23 Movement (M23) -On 23 march 2009, the  
National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), a former rebel  
group led by Laurent Nkunda, signed a peace agreement with the Congolese

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government to integrate in the Armed Forces of the  
Democratic Republic of Congo FARDC. Three years  
later, former CNDP forces, complaining about the non-  
implementation of agreements to integrate political-  
military undertakings of CNDP into the FARDC and  
arguing that the government had thus only feigned its  
efforts at inclusivity, formed a new group called M23.  
The rebellion began in April 2012 when they  
mutinied.

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Figure 3:





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