



VMUN 2026

United Nations Security Council

BACKGROUND GUIDE



## Vancouver Model United Nations

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Dear Delegates,

My name is Alan Li, and it is my distinct pleasure to serve as the Director of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) at VMUN 2026 alongside your Chair Nikki Zheng. It is with great pride and pleasure that I welcome you to this iteration of the UNSC.

Just like all of you, I first stepped into this room not too long ago at my first conference, VMUN 2024. Looking back, my 3 years in MUN have taught me more than I could have ever imagined. I began from the small island of Barbados, shivering as a first-time delegate, and only mustered up enough courage to make one single 30-second speech. However, experiencing the thrill of intense debates, exhilarating discussions, and many sleepless nights, I've learned to treasure those moments of accomplishment and enjoyment. Throughout my journey in Model UN, I've cultivated my speaking skills, developed an unwavering passion for debating, and made friendships that I still hold dear to my heart. Although most conferences inevitably end after two nights, it is those memories of singing in your room with friends at night and moments of tension in your committee rooms that remain unforgettable. I hope that each and every one of you, regardless of the result, cherishes every moment you will experience at VMUN 2026, building memories that will follow you for a lifetime.

Over the past few months, your dais has worked tirelessly to plan an unforgettable experience for you all. At the upcoming iteration of VMUN, the United Nations Security Council will be tasked with discussing two topics: *The Ongoing Conflict in Eastern DRC* and *Addressing the Militarization of Disputed territories*—both of vital importance to the UNSC.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [unsc@vmun.com](mailto:unsc@vmun.com). Until then, I wish you all the best of luck in your preparations, and I look forward to meeting you all!

Sincerely,

Alan Li  
UNSC Director

# Position Paper Policy

## What is a Position Paper?

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of your positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At Vancouver Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for each of the committee's topics. Each position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate.

For UNSC, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

## Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

## Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by **January 12, 2026, at 23:59 PT**. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as your last name, your first name and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email. Both your position papers should be combined into a single PDF or Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted.

Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award. The email address for this committee is [unsc@vmun.com](mailto:unsc@vmun.com).

<b>Ongoing Conflict in Eastern DRC .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Overview .....	3
Timeline .....	4
Historical Analysis .....	7
Past UN/International Involvement.....	11
The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).....	11
The United Nations Sanctions Regime (2003 - present).....	12
Operation Artemis .....	12
Diplomatic Agreements.....	13
Current Situation .....	13
Humanitarian crisis.....	14
Resource Conflicts.....	15
Regional Diplomacy.....	16
Regional Actor: Rwanda.....	16
Regional Actor: Uganda .....	17
Possible Solutions and Controversies .....	17
Military Intervention .....	17
Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs (DDR) .....	18
Diplomatic Solutions .....	19
Sanctions and Accountability .....	19
Humanitarian Support .....	20
Bloc Positions .....	21
The Western Bloc .....	21
The Eastern Bloc.....	21
The African Bloc.....	22
The Latin American Bloc .....	22
Discussion Questions .....	23
Additional Resources.....	23
Bibliography .....	24
<b>Addressing the Militarization of Disputed Territories.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Overview .....	30

Timeline .....	31
Historical Analysis .....	34
Case Study: The South China Sea .....	36
Past UN/International Involvement.....	37
The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).....	37
Kosovo Force (KFOR).....	38
The Minsk Agreements in Eastern Ukraine.....	39
Current Situation .....	39
Humanitarian Crisis .....	40
Displacement Crisis.....	40
Diplomatic gridlock.....	41
Escalation and Arms Races.....	41
Proxy Conflicts.....	42
Case Study: Kashmir.....	43
Possible Solutions and Controversies .....	43
Demilitarization and buffer zones.....	43
Diplomacy and negotiations .....	44
Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) .....	45
Bloc Positions .....	46
The Western Bloc .....	46
The Eastern Bloc .....	46
The African Bloc .....	46
The Latin American Bloc.....	47
Discussion Questions .....	47
Additional Resources.....	48
Bibliography .....	49

# Ongoing Conflict in Eastern DRC

## Overview

With deep-seated roots in its colonial past, the Democratic Republic of the Congo now faces a threat larger than ever. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is the second-largest African nation, containing vast rainforests and savannahs, located in central Africa.<sup>1</sup> With its strategic location, this makes the country a focal point for trade and resource development. The DRC's eastern provinces, notably North and South Kivu, sit on the Great Lakes region—a region bordering Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan.<sup>2</sup> Plagued by ethnic tensions, especially between Tutsi and Hutus, armed militants, political struggles, and proxy fighting, this area has been an epicentre for conflict.<sup>3</sup> In recent times, a new wave of conflict has been led by the March 23rd movement and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda.<sup>4</sup> The March 23rd movement (M23) is led by the Tutsis, who claimed they needed to take up arms to defend their rights as a minority group, while the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) is a group of Hutu militias who fled into the DRC.<sup>5</sup>

The core of this conflict can be attributed to Congo's extensive colonial history. Since Belgium's colonization of the Congo in 1885 under King Leopold II, the nation has been exploited for its natural resources.<sup>6</sup> Millions of Congolese children, women, and men were forced into hard labour to harvest rubber instead of building meaningful infrastructure.<sup>7</sup> When Belgium suddenly withdrew from Congo in 1960, the nation was not equipped to deal with independence, causing many ethnic groups to be left vulnerable and ignored as no meaningful government was set in place. When the Rwandan Genocide happened in 1994, the area suffered from continuous fighting by armed groups funded by foreign actors and tons of regional disputes.<sup>8</sup>

As of June 2025, over 21.2 million people are in dire need of humanitarian aid.<sup>9</sup> With over 7 million people displaced and 3.8 million alone people in the Eastern DRC—specifically around North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri alone—it is safe to say that the need for humanitarian aid is immediate.<sup>10</sup> It is also imperative to recognize that the DRC struggles as one of the world's most significant hunger crises, with over 26 million people lacking access to safe and nutritious food. Specifically, more than 60 percent of the population in Eastern Congo lacks access to necessary food.<sup>11</sup> Women and children have been facing the blunt forefront of the warfare; the Eastern

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<sup>1</sup> Countryaah, "Where is the Democratic Republic of Congo located," Countryaah, December 10, 2020, <https://www.countryaah.com/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-location/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Damian Zane, "What's the fighting in DR Congo all about?," *BBC News*, May 2, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cgly1yrd9j3o>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Steven, "A short history of Colonialism in Congo," libcom, August 3, 2025, <https://libcom.org/article/short-history-colonialism-congo-1885-1997>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> OCHA, "West and Central Africa, Democratic Republic of the Congo," *OCHA*, June 27, 2025, <https://www.unocha.org/democratic-republic-congo>.

<sup>10</sup> Marium Ali, "Mapping the human toll of the conflict in DR Congo," *Aljazeera*, March 24, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/24/mapping-the-human-toll-of-the-conflict-in-dr-congo#:~:text=The%20DRC%20is%20home%20to,displaced%20people%20around%20the%20world>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

DRC is named the “rape capital of the world” after amounting to over 40,000 cases of gender-based violence in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Broadly speaking, this conflict can be attributed to a crisis of unsolved underdevelopment and insecurity. An important factor lies in the national army, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), being under-equipped, under-trained, and marred by corruption.<sup>13</sup> As such, a weak local government and military have made it challenging to resolve infrastructural issues. It is this environment that breeds corrupted militias, where a lack of punishment for war crimes remains a pressing issue. There have been far too many cases of abuse and exploitation, including but not limited to: mass killings, sexual violence, recruitment of children, etc., by many actors who remain unpunished to this day.

Recently, the crisis in Eastern DRC faced escalation as a dormant militant group calling itself the “March 23rd Movement” (M23) scaled up combat operations.<sup>14</sup> In early 2022, M23, which was widely reported to be Rwandan-backed, invaded and seized major towns in the North Kivu province.<sup>15</sup> The government’s attempt to push for a ceasefire tragically failed in 2023, while fighting escalated in 2024. M23’s January 2025 offensive ultimately led to the capture of Goma, a key provincial capital in the DRC and home to over 2 million Congolese civilians.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that this was the first time since 2012 that rebels have taken major cities; as such, this ultimately resulted in emergency sessions by the UNSC.<sup>17</sup>

Although the United Nations has remained highly active in peacekeeping operations since 1999, the situation in the DRC remains dire. MONUSCO, the UN-led peacekeeping mission in the DRC, has shown mixed results, resulting in an increase in local protests and led to the deaths of twelve civilians and three peacekeepers at one point.<sup>18</sup> The UN firmly opposes the attacks perpetrated by the rebels and demands that the M23 movement withdraw from the occupied areas immediately.<sup>19</sup> Delegates must now balance between Congolese sovereignty and adequate aid provision.

## Timeline

**June 30, 1960** — Belgium-ruled Congo gains independence; Patrice Lumumba becomes the first Prime Minister. Succession of the resource-rich Katanga province soon sparks the Congo Crisis of 1960-1965.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Zane, “What’s the fighting in DR Congo all about?”

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Shola Lowal, “A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo,” *Aljazeera*, February 21, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Fabrice Robinet, “Why have UN peacekeepers been in DR Congo for 65 years?” *Global perspective Human Stories*, February 4, 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1159766>.

<sup>20</sup> Adam Hochschild, “Belgium-Congo,” *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 20, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Belgian-Congo>.

**January 17, 1961** — After an internal power struggle, Patrice Lumumba is arrested and executed.<sup>21</sup>

**January 21, 1963** — The independent Katanga dissolves and begins reintegrating with help from the UN's ONUC mission.<sup>22</sup>

**November 24, 1965** — Ex-Colonel Mobutu Sese Seko stages a coup and ends the First Republic of Congo. Supported by Western powers, an authoritarian regime is established that lasts for the next three decades, which leaves the economy in ruins, especially the eastern regions.<sup>23</sup>

**April 1994** — 500,000 to over 800,000 lives are lost in the genocide against the Tutsi. After the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which the Tutsi led, gained power, over 1 million Hutu refugees were forced to flee to eastern Zaire.<sup>24</sup>

**October 24, 1996** — Rwanda and Uganda eliminate the existing Hutu Militias and forcibly remove Mobutu, backing the Congolese rebel group AFDL led by Laurent Kabila.<sup>25</sup> In May 1997, Mobutu was successfully removed from power and placed into exile, with Laurent Kabila declared the new president of Zaire. Under Kabila, the nation was renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**August 2, 1998** — Kabila cuts off his Rwandan and Ugandan backers and tells them to leave the nation. In response, Rwanda and Uganda attempt to overthrow President Kabila by supporting more rebel groups, such as the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) in the east, and the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) in the North.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and other nations intervene in support of Kabila's government, creating a battleground for the nine African countries.<sup>27</sup>

**July 10, 1999** — The Democratic Republic of the Congo, alongside Rwanda, Uganda, and other states, successfully signs a mutual ceasefire alongside the existing rebel groups. This agreement allows the UNSC to deploy neutral observers, specifically MONUC, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Said Husaini, "Why they killed Patrice Lumumba," Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt, January 24, 2020, <https://www.cadtm.org/Why-They-Killed-Patrice-Lumumba>.

<sup>22</sup> "UN Mission in Congo: 2 Sept 1960 - 30 June 1964" The Loyal Edmonton Regiment Military Museum, November 18, 2025, <https://www.lemuseum.org/1946-to-present/1957-1964/un-mission-in-the-congo-2-sept-1960-30-june-1964>.

<sup>23</sup> Council on Foreign Affairs, "Eastern Congo: A Legacy of Intervention," Council on Foreign Affairs, June 28, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/eastern-congo-legacy-intervention>.

<sup>24</sup> The Encyclopædia Britannica, "Rwandan Genocide of 1994," The Encyclopædia Britannica, June 16, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Rwanda-genocide-of-1994>.

<sup>25</sup> Center for Preventative Action, "Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo," Council on Foreign Affairs, June 9, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo?ftag=MSF0951a18>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> United Nations, "Ceasefire Agreement (Lusaka Agreement)," United Nations, June 28, 2025, <https://peacemaker.un.org/en/node/9615>.



**January 16, 2001** — Kabila is shot by a bodyguard, causing his imminent death. Joseph Kabila assumes the presidency, leading to a more peaceful approach that prompts peace negotiations to gain momentum.<sup>29</sup>

**July 18, 2003** — A transitional government is established with Joseph Kabila as president and four vice-presidents from various rebel and opposition groups. Local conflicts persisted in the east, specifically in Ituri and Kivu. The total death toll of the conflict was estimated to be around 5.4 million, with the primary cause of death being either hunger or disease.<sup>30</sup>

**October 25, 2008** — Nkunda's CNDP launches an attack that routs Congolese forces and approaches the provincial capital Goma. By January of 2009, Rwanda and DRC shockingly reached a compromise: Rwandan forces are allowed to enter DRC to hunt Hutu FDLR fighters together, in turn, Nkunda is arrested in Rwanda. On March 23rd, 2009, the DRC signed a final peace agreement with the rebels, integrating them into the national army and granting them amnesty.<sup>31</sup>

**June 30, 2010** — The UNSC renames MONUC as the "UN Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC," or more popularly known as MONUSCO,<sup>32</sup> shifting the focus to stabilizing the region post-conflict. MONUSCO's mandate focuses on protecting civilians and supporting the government, rather than engaging in immediate fighting.<sup>33</sup>

**April 4, 2012** — A group of soldiers forms the "March 23rd Movement", also known as the M23. This new rebel group quickly gains power in North Kivu, backed by Rwanda. In November 2012, M23 successfully captured Goma following the collapse of the Congolese army.

**Late October 2013** — The DRC government launches a full-scale counteroffensive, militarily defeating the M23.<sup>34</sup> By November 2013, M23 turned over its final strongholds. On December 12, 2013, the DRC government and the M23 signed a peace deal that ended the rebellion, with remaining M23 fighters fleeing to Rwanda or Uganda.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Congo Research Group, "Who killed Laurent Kabila?" Congo Research Group, June 28, 2025, <https://www.congoresearchgroup.org/en/2010/02/06/who-killed-laurent-kabila/>.

<sup>30</sup> Angela Thompsell, "The Second Congo War," ThoughtCo, January 26, 2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/second-congo-war-43698>.

<sup>31</sup> Jeffery Gettleman, "Many Flee as Congo Rebels Approach Eastern City," *New York Times*, October 28, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/30/world/africa/30congo.html>.

<sup>32</sup> MONUSCO, "The History of MONUSCO," MONUSCO, June 28, 2025, <https://monusco.unmissions.org/historique>.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, "Protecting Civilians and Consolidating Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," UNMONUSCO, May 28, 2025, <https://unmonusco.org/www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/index.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Reuters, "M23 declares end of DRC rebellion," *Mail & Guardian*, November 5, 2013, <https://mg.co.za/article/2013-11-05-m23-ends-its-rebellion-in-drc/>.

**October 30, 2019** — Tshisekedi's government reconciles with Rwanda and Uganda, but peace falls apart as fighting in the East intensifies again.<sup>36</sup>

**November 2021** — The M23 steps out of the shadows and takes an offensive position.<sup>37</sup> They attacked some FARDC positions in North Kivu, claiming that the DRC government had not successfully integrated them as agreed.<sup>38</sup>

**June 2022** — M23 captures Bunagana, cutting off trade routes.<sup>39</sup> Rwanda denies involvement and accuses DRC of shelling Rwandan land. DRC-Rwandan relations are at an all-time low.<sup>40</sup>

**January 27, 2025** — M23 breaks a ceasefire and launches an attack on Goma in late January, successfully claiming the territory on the 27th.<sup>41</sup> The UNSC calls for M23's withdrawal, prompting M23 to declare a "humanitarian ceasefire" that was broken soon after when M23 seized Bukavu in February of 2025.<sup>42</sup>

**April 2025** — As battles are reaching stalemates, where M23 hold cities but faces external pressures, the need for diplomacy is raised. The USA and Qatar step in as facilitators to hold talks in Washington, DC, resulting in a provisional peace agreement between the DRC and Rwanda on June 19, 2025.<sup>43</sup>

## Historical Analysis

The instability of the Eastern DRC began with colonization in 1885. Once controlled by imperial Belgium, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was ruled with exploitation and control. Over 10 million Congolese people died, with tens of millions more victims of the empire.<sup>44</sup>

Due to rumours of widespread murders, tortures, and other corrupt power abuses in the rubber plantations, the international community, as well as the Belgian civilians, both condemned the actions of the empire, causing Patrice Lumumba's radical pro-independence movement to oust the Belgian Empire, leaving a power vacuum that set the stage for many future conflicts. In the aftermath, Patrice Lumumba would assume leadership as the

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<sup>36</sup> EAC, "the Democratic Republic of the Congo joins EAC as its 7th Member," East African Community Press Release, March 29, 2022, <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/2402-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-joins-eac-as-its-7th-member>.

<sup>37</sup> Thompson Reuters, "Congo ceasefire appears to crumble as rebels reportedly capture another eastern town," *CBC*, February 5, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/congo-ceasefire-m23-nyabibwe-1.7451523>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Justin Katumwa, "Residents and Officials say rebels have seized 2 key towns in eastern congo," *AP News*, January 6, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/congo-rebels-m23-rwanda-015d9b587c9e5a5c5f1f4a3415e5a47d>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ali Marium, "Mapping the human toll of the conflict in DR Congo," *Aljazeera*, March 24, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/24/mapping-the-human-toll-of-the-conflict-in-dr-congo#:~:text=The%20DRC%20is%20home%20to,displaced%20people%20around%20the%20world>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> "DR Congo and Rwanda to sign peace agreement on June 27," *Aljazeera*, June 19, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/6/19/dr-congo-and-rwanda-sign-draft-peace-agreement#:~:text=Angola%20stepped%20down%20in%20March,peace%20in%20the%20eastern%20DRC>.

<sup>44</sup> Anele Uzonna, "The Rubber Genocide: How the quest for wealth by Belgian King Leopold II led to mass murder in Congo," *Africana*, January 7, 2023, <https://talkafricana.com/king-leopold-rubber-genocide-in-congo/>.

first Prime Minister of the DRC and begin disseminating nationalist ideologies that alarmed Cold War powers, including the United States and the Soviet Union. Around the same time, the resource-rich province of Katanga seceded from the DRC under Moïse Tshombe with backing from Belgium and other powers.<sup>45</sup> Due to Lumumba's appeal to the Soviet Union, the DRC became a target for Western and international intervention, leading to Lumumba's overthrow in a coup in September 1960, led by Colonel Mobutu with the support of the CIA and Belgium.<sup>46</sup> Lumumba was soon assassinated in January of 1961 by Katangan forces; in doing so, a national figure who united the nation was destroyed, and a precedent for future power vacuums and power struggles was created.<sup>47</sup> These events set the stage for Mobutu's decades-long dictatorship as the Congolese population wanted a "strong and determined leader" like himself.<sup>48</sup>

Mobutu, who rose to power under the promise of strong leadership, renamed the country Zaire and established a regime that lasted over 30 years.<sup>49</sup> The nation was soon transformed into a personalist kleptocracy that allowed Mobutu to amass over USD 5 billion worth of wealth, while little to no infrastructure was developed.<sup>50</sup> During the Cold War, Western nations—specifically the United States and France—offered wealth to Mobutu in exchange for an anti-communist stance as well as natural resource access for Western countries, despite Mobutu already having a horrible human rights record.<sup>51</sup> Under Mobutu's governance, the DRC maintained a limited presence in the far east. The lack of military presence in the east paved the way for militias and armed groups to gain power. At the same time, corruption was increasingly widespread in the army, leading to Mobutu's military to rule the nation through fear.<sup>52</sup> The combination of both the state's weak governance and the increased corruption in the military was what led to more instability and violence in the East. Mobutu was a leader who ignored ethics, revoking citizenship from many Rwandan communities who migrated during colonial times and created local conflicts over identity and land in the east, later escalating to larger-scale violence.<sup>53</sup> In the early 1990s, Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was completely economically devastated, resulting in extreme inflation within the nation and riots due to the failure to pay soldiers. Over this period, Mobutu's credibility was slowly eroding.<sup>54</sup> During this period, the West gradually lost its tolerance for Mobutu as the Cold War drew to a close. This prompted internal pro-democracy protests that ultimately led to his removal from office.<sup>55</sup>

The instability in the Eastern DRC was escalated during the end of the 1994 Rwandan genocide when Paul Kagame's Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front led 2 million Rwandan refugees, many of whom were former

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<sup>45</sup> Dayhist, "The Congo Crisis: A Pivotal Moment in African History," Dayhist, June 29, 2025, <https://dayhist.com/events/the-secession-of-katanga-congo-crisis>.

<sup>46</sup> Andree Blouin, "How the West Destroyed Congo's Hopes for Independence," Portside, February 16, 2025, <https://portside.org/2025-02-16/how-west-destroyed-congos-hopes-independence>.

<sup>47</sup> Tracy Grant, "How did Patrice Lumumba die?" The Encyclopædia Britannica, June 13, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/story/how-did-patrice-lumumba-die>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ntsomo Payanzo, "Mobutu's Regime," The Encyclopædia Britannica, June 27, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Democratic-Republic-of-the-Congo/Mobutus-regime>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Louis, "The Cold War Begins," *Louis*, June 30, 2025, <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/westernciv2/chapter/10-1-the-cold-war-begins/>.

<sup>52</sup> Emizet Kisangani, "Congo: Corruption, Disintegration, and State Failure," Oxford Academic, October 2, 2000, <https://academic.oup.com/book/32516/chapter-abstract/270203909?>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Department of State, "The Congo, Decolonization, and the Cold War, 1960-1965," Office of the Historian, June 30, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/congo-decolonization>.

military generals, into Eastern DRC.<sup>56</sup> When these former members of the Rwandan Armed Forces, who mainly were Hutu, flooded into refugee camps in the east, they retaliated against the Tutsi communities, creating armed tension in the region.<sup>57</sup> The severely underdeveloped Congolese military was unable to resolve fighting between militias in the east, losing control over the Eastern territories. Rwanda, in response to this aggression, began secretly arming the Congolese Tutsi in the Kivus.

The rising tensions between Rwanda and Congo eventually brewed into the first significant conflict—the First Congo War (1996-1997). A group calling itself the “Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo” (AFDL), led by Laurent-Desire Kabila, launched an attempted uprising to overthrow Mobutu. This uprising by a rebel group was actively funded by Rwanda, which provided numerous troops and support.<sup>58</sup> Other nations geographically nearby, such as Uganda and Burundi, joined to support this rebellion. Finally, on May 17th, 1997, the AFDL successfully ousted Mobutu.<sup>59</sup> Although the First Congo War ended an authoritarian regime, it paved the way for future conflict to be imminent as power vacuums were created once again.

Relations between President Kabila and his supporters, specifically Rwanda and Uganda, soon began to deteriorate. Kabila responded by cutting off Rwanda’s military advisors, claiming that they had too much power.<sup>60</sup> Due to this newfound information, Rwanda began to sponsor another rebel group called the “Rally for Congolese Democracy” (RCD), which in August of 1998 launched an attack from Eastern DRC. At the same time, Uganda backed its rebel group called the “Movement for the Liberation of the Congo”, the “MLC”, which joined the war to acquire influence and resources in the DRC.<sup>61</sup> This conflict was soon referred to as the “African World War”,<sup>62</sup> drawing support from over nine different nations, including but not limited to Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, which intervened in support of Kabila.<sup>63</sup> This conflict proliferated the ethnic militias, forcing the DRC government to arm Hutu groups to fight Rwanda’s RCD, deepening ethnic tensions and also creating a vast humanitarian crisis in which over 5.4 million Congolese died from hunger and disease.<sup>64</sup>

In light of the conflict, a series of peace deals gradually halted the bloodshed. These deals include the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999, the Pretoria Agreement of 2002, the Luanda Agreement of 2002, and the Global All-inclusive agreement signed in Sun City in 2003.<sup>65</sup> These agreements evolved into the transitional government, which included both the Congolese government and the rebel groups. Meanwhile, the UN peacekeeping operation MONUC, later renamed MONUSCO, began deploying troops in the DRC to monitor the

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<sup>56</sup> Shola Lowal, “A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo,” *Aljazeera*, February 21, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo>.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> James Stejskal, “The Kitona Operation: Rwanda’s gamble to capture Kinshasa and the misreading of an ally,” *Thefreelibrary*, September 2, 1998, <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+Kitona+operation%3a+Rwanda%27s+gamble+to+capture+Kinshasa+and+the...-a0323503438>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Madison Moulton, “Africa’s world war: The Congo War,” *The History Guild*, August 3, 2025, <https://historyguild.org/africas-world-war-the-congo-war/>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> United Nations, “Inter-Congolese Negotiations: The Final Act,” United Nations Press Release, April 2, 2003, <https://peacemaker.un.org/en/node/9166>.

implementation of these treaties.<sup>66</sup> Although the Second Congo War ended in 2003, major disputes were not resolved, such as those relating to integration and ethnic conflicts.

Following the Second Congo War, the Kivu regions experienced numerous low-level conflicts, which set the stage for the March 23rd movement's eventual rise to prominence. One major perpetrator was the "National Congress for the Defence of the People" (CNDP), led by Laurent Nkunda. Rwanda was accused of supporting the CNDP, as the CNDP had a level of firepower and resources that greatly outmatched its rivals.<sup>67</sup> In 2009, the DRC government reached a peace agreement with the CNDP, known as the March 23, 2009, accord.<sup>68</sup> This treaty outlined the integration of CNDP fighters; however, over time, countless CNDP soldiers felt that these words were empty as equal pay wasn't implemented in the army.<sup>69</sup>

In 2012, M23 rebels, who were mainly supported by Rwanda, captured the provincial capital of Goma. Rwanda has long shown its interest in maintaining political and economic influence in East Congo, especially when Rwanda sees the FDLR, which worked with the Congolese army, as a security threat to its nation.<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, Congolese gold accounted for 47 percent of Rwanda's gold exports, making the Kivu region economically valuable to Rwanda.<sup>71</sup> This city lies on the border between Eastern DRC and Rwanda, home to over 500,000 displaced people.<sup>72</sup> This security failure humiliated the MONUSCO mission, which was unable to counter the M23 and other rebel groups effectively. Due to this failure, MONUSCO's military mandate was expanded to carry out offensive attacks against the M23, allowing them to defeat the M23 by November 2013 militarily.<sup>73</sup>

Between 2014 and 2020, the Kivu region remained unstable but without significant uprisings on the scale of M23's last offensive. The Congolese army, with the support of the United Nations, fought against the Rwandan Hutu Militia and destroyed the FDLR leadership. In the aftermath, regional tensions de-escalated significantly. Notably, the first "peaceful election" was held in the DRC in 2019.<sup>74</sup> This was the first transfer of power that didn't result in violence, contrasting with previous clashes.<sup>75</sup>

However, in 2021, the M23 leaders in exile argued that the DRC government had once again failed to implement its promises, resulting in small-scale skirmishes in North Kivu.<sup>76</sup> The M23 launched its first major offensive,

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Congo News Agency, "UN Accuses Rwanda's Paul Kagame of Supporting Warlord Laurent Nkunda," CongoPlanet, December 12, 2008, <https://www.congoplanet.com/article.jsp?id=45261345>.

<sup>68</sup> DRC Government and CNDP, "Peace Agreement," peacemaker.un, March 23, 2009, <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/cd090323peace20agreement20between20the20government20and20the20cndp.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Martina Schwikowski, "Why Rwanda supports M23 rebels in DR Congo's conflict," *DW news*, February 22, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/en/why-rwanda-supports-m23-rebels-in-dr-congos-conflict/a-68332741>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> The Associated Press, "UN describes 'mass panic' in Goma as Rwanda-backed rebels claim control of key Congo city," *CBC*, January 26, 2025, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/rebels-congo-goma-1.7442162>.

<sup>73</sup> Kazim Abdul, "UNSC extends MONUSCO mandate by 12 months," *Military Africa*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.military.africa/2025/01/unsc-extends-monusco-mandate-by-12-months/>.

<sup>74</sup> Ben Barugahare, "Rwanda's FDLR rebels call for Dialogue, reject 'Neutralization' Plans," *The Rwandan*, March 28, 2025, <https://www.therwandan.com/rwandas-fdlr-rebels-call-for-dialogue-reject-neutralization-plans/>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Amy McKenna, "March 23rd Movement," *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 18, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/March-23-Movement>.

taking control of areas in North Kivu in May 2022. By June of that year, M23 captured the border town of Bunagana, raising concerns over M23's return.<sup>77</sup> The DRC and UN accused Rwanda of backing M23 with resources, whilst Kigali continued to deny these allegations.<sup>78</sup> Despite attempts at negotiation, M23 continued its offensive, advancing through Congolese territory in 2022.<sup>79</sup> By the end of 2022, it is worth noting that the M23 controlled many towns in North Kivu.<sup>80</sup>

## Past UN/International Involvement

### **The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)**

Established by the United Nations Security Council in resolutions 1279 (1999) and 1291 (2000) to monitor the peace process of the Second Congo War, this mission was first called the "United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, or MONUC."<sup>81</sup> Although the primary objective of this mission was to monitor peace, most of its focus was on the subsequent conflicts in Ituri, Kivu, and Dongo.<sup>82</sup> As the Second Congo War continued, the UNSC expanded the mandate of MONUC under Chapter VIII and authorized the use of force to protect civilians.<sup>83</sup> Before the 2002 peace deal, MONUC mostly oversaw ceasefires and was allowed to intervene in minimal cases to support civilians. After the 2002 peace deal, MONUC became one of the UN's most significant peacekeeping operations as its mandate now allowed it to facilitate and oversee the disarmament of foreign fighters, through which thousands of Rwandan FDLR and Ugandan fighters voluntarily left the DRC.<sup>84</sup> However, there were widespread criticisms against the misconduct of MONUC peacekeepers in the DRC, specifically when sexual abuse and exploitation scandals came to light in the 2000s, and MONUC's incompetence in preventing rebel groups from invading and slaughter. Inefficient and poorly organized peacekeeping efforts meant that sometimes civilians were massacred less than a mile away from United Nations peacekeeping forces, as was the case during the Kiwanja massacre.<sup>85</sup> Due to this, when DRC's transitional period ended in 2010, the United Nations Security Council rebranded MONUC to MONUSCO, which succeeded MONUC through the "United Nations Stabilization Mission in DRC," created by Resolution 1925.<sup>86</sup> MONUSCO's mission initially incorporated MONUC's failed responsibilities, including disarming rebel militias and supporting the Congolese government in reclaiming control of the East. A key achievement of this new mission was the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), established under UNSC Resolution 2098.<sup>87</sup> Its sole purpose was offensive reclamation of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Julian Pecquet, "Rwanda-DRC: Final UN report accuses Kigali of supporting M23 rebels," *The Africa Report*, June 21, 2023, <https://www.theafricareport.com/313229/rwanda-drc-final-un-report-accuses-kigali-of-supporting-m23-rebels/>.

<sup>79</sup> Reuters, "UN says M23 rebels killed at least 131 in Congo reprisal killings," *Reuters*, December 8, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-says-m23-rebels-killed-least-131-congo-reprisal-killings-2022-12-08/#>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> MONUSCO, "End of Transport operation from Goma to Kinshasa," United Nations Press Release, May 15, 2025, <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en>.

<sup>82</sup> United Nations, "Protecting civilians and consolidating peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo," MONUSCO Fact Sheet, July 2010, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/monusco>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Jaden Jorgensen, "MONUSCO's 2022 mandate: Streamlined but missing key protection language," Center for Civilians in Conflict, August 3, 2025, <https://civiliansinconflict.org/blog/monuscos-2022-mandate-streamlined-but-missing-key-protection-language/>.

<sup>85</sup> "Killings in Kiwanja; the UN's Inability to Protect Civilians," Human Rights Watch, December 11, 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/12/11/killings-kiwanja/uns-inability-protect-civilians>.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Winston Favor, "Force intervention brigade," *Small Wars Journal*, October 20, 2023, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/2023/10/20/monuscos-force-intervention-brigade-blueprint-success-or-recipe-failure/>.

territories, allowing UN troops from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to conduct operations against the M23 and other rebel groups actively, achieving some success against M23 in 2013.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, MONUSCO's limited impact caused it to be widely criticized. One critical flaw was the concentration of peacekeepers in certain areas, leaving vulnerable communities unprotected. This was shown in the Beni Massacre in 2014 to 2016. Even though there were many UN bases in the area, the distance from rebel activities meant that the ADF were still able to kill countless civilians.<sup>89</sup> A gradual decrease in violence over the next few years meant that by 2021, MONUSCO was able to start withdrawing from established regions, such as the Kasai and Tanganyika territories, through a "transition plan" with the DRC government.<sup>90</sup> However, the resurgence of the M23 in 2022 has abruptly halted these plans. Due to the impact of the M23 offensive, the mandate of MONUSCO was extended for another year. As of 2025, MONUSCO remains actively deployed in North and South Kivu, focusing on protecting civilians.<sup>91</sup>

### **The United Nations Sanctions Regime (2003 - present)**

In response to the conflict emerging in 2003, the UNSC placed a large-scale arms embargo on non-governmental groups fighting in the eastern warzone through resolution 1533.<sup>92</sup> The UNSC established its 1533 Sanctions Committee in 2004 with the primary objective of monitoring compliance with the sanctions imposed. These annual compliance reports have played a huge role in identifying perpetrators of these agreements. For instance, Rwanda and Uganda were criticized and under scrutiny for providing support to non-governmental groups that fought in Eastern Congo even before 2024.<sup>93</sup> Identifying these perpetrators is an important step to enabling the international community to pressure said nation, as evidenced by Rwanda's public statements and signing of a peace deal in the USA.<sup>94</sup> Sanctions have also forced Uganda and Rwanda to back off and utilize peace talks and diplomatic resolutions for fear of being further officially isolated diplomatically and economically. The sanctions imposed have primarily targeted high-ranking officials of non-governmental groups, affecting them through targeted sanctions that impose travel bans and asset freezes.<sup>95</sup> To counter the growing violence brought about by these groups, in 2022, the UNSC removed the notification requirement for the DRC during arms purchases to ease its ability to acquire firearms to fight against rebels.<sup>96</sup>

### **Operation Artemis**

Operation Artemis, also known as the "European Union Force Democratic Republic of the Congo", was an EU-led military mission to the DRC during the 2003 Ituri conflict.<sup>97</sup> Ituri is a region in the Northeastern DRC and

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>91</sup> Ken Matthyson, "M23 crisis flares again in North Kivu context dynamics and risks," Ipis Research, November 16, 2023, <https://ipisresearch.be/weekly-briefing/m23-crisis-flares-again-in-north-kivu-context-dynamics-and-risks/>.

<sup>92</sup> "UN arms embargo on DRC," *Sipri*, November 11, 2024,

[https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un\\_arms\\_embargoes/drc/drc\\_default](https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/drc/drc_default).

<sup>93</sup> United Nations Digital Library, "Report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its 2024 regular session," *Digital Library*, February 9, 2024, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4044756>.

<sup>94</sup> Amnesty international, "DRC peace deal with Rwanda fails to address serious crimes committed in Eastern DRC," *Amnesty International*, July 1, 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/07/drc-peace-deal-with-rwanda-fails-to-address-serious-crimes-committed-in-eastern-drc/>.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Jonathan Steele, "UN sends troops to stop Congo massacres," *The Guardian*, May 31, 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/may/31/congo.jonathansteele>.

was a stronghold for two ethnic rivals—the Hema and the Lendu—fighting for control over gold mines.<sup>98</sup> This conflict showed the limits of MONUC in solving ethnic violence in one of the most dangerous regions. Serving as the first military operation led by the EU, this was an example of cooperation between the European Union and the United Nations. The failure of the UN led to Operation Artemis’ implementation in an attempt to put an end to armed ethnic violence, and the deployment of EU troops was able to decrease the scale of the conflict, marking a successful and essential step.<sup>99</sup> Launched on June 12th and deployed within approximately three weeks, Operation Artemis successfully stabilized the conflict in Bunia, the capital city of Ituri, thereby establishing a UN and global presence in the DRC.<sup>100</sup> On September 1, 2003, the security of the region was formally handed over to MONUC, marking the conclusion of Operation Artemis in Bunia.<sup>101</sup>

## Diplomatic Agreements

The Luanda and Lusaka agreements were essential points of negotiation that set the path for potential unity whilst putting an end to existing conflicts. The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in 1999 was an attempt to end the Second Congo War through a possible ceasefire. SADC nations and members of the UN agreed to halt all military operations within 24 hours of signing this agreement.<sup>102</sup> Representatives from the SADC, UN, and various rebel groups, such as the Rally for Congolese Democracy, met in Lusaka and agreed to an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal of foreign forces, and deployment of MONUC. This was achieved through the support of the heads of state of Angola, the DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, with the Zambian President Chiluba playing the most significant role in the signing of this agreement.<sup>103</sup> In 2002, The Luanda Agreement was signed between Uganda and the DRC, establishing a ceasefire that normalized relations between the two.<sup>104</sup> While the previous relationship between Uganda and the DRC was a deteriorating one, the Luanda Agreement served as a bilateral agreement that modified the terms of the Lusaka Agreement to achieve a compromise between the two nations.<sup>105</sup> The Luanda Agreement aimed to ensure that Ugandan forces withdrew from Eastern DRC and fix instability issues that persisted through the Lusaka Agreement.

## Current Situation

In 2022, M23 launched a major offensive into the DRC, overrunning areas in North Kivu and capturing border towns, including Bunagana.<sup>106</sup> M23’s capture of these key border towns can officially be classified as an invasion on DRC soil.<sup>107</sup> Recently, DRC and UN investigators have accused Rwanda of backing the M23 with resources. Kigali has consistently denied these claims. After this, M23’s activities gradually lessened until early 2025, when

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<sup>98</sup> EBSCO, “Ituri’s conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo,” *EBSCO*, August 5, 2025, <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/ethnic-and-cultural-studies/ituri-conflict-democratic-republic-congo>.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Uppsala University, “DR Congo,” *UNCP Conflict Encyclopedia*, September 23, 2013, [https://web.archive.org/web/20150626140257/http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=38&regionSelect=2-Southern\\_Africa](https://web.archive.org/web/20150626140257/http://www.ucdp.uu.se/gpdatabase/gpcountry.php?id=38&regionSelect=2-Southern_Africa).

<sup>102</sup> OCHA, “DR Congo: Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement,” *Relief Web*, July 10, 1999, <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/dr-congo-lusaka-ceasefire-agreement?OpenDocument=>.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> United Nations, “Luanda Agreement,” *United Nations*, June 30, 2025, [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/CD%20UG\\_020906\\_Luanda%20Agreement.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/CD%20UG_020906_Luanda%20Agreement.pdf).

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Joseph Kay, “M23 Rebels seize key DRC town, Congolese military blames Rwanda,” *Aljazeera*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/13/m23-rebels-seize-key-congolese-town-drc-blames-rwanda>.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.



they initiated another significant escalation. The planned DRC-Rwanda meeting in Luanda was cancelled due to political differences over the M23. Whilst the Congo believed that the M23 was a terrorist insurgency which needed to be immediately removed from the region, Rwanda claimed that the M23 was a political group defending the Tutsi peoples. M23 soon launched a new all-out offensive that would claim many vital resource-rich cities in the eastern DRC.<sup>108</sup> The first sign of aggression began in January of 2025, when M23 advanced across North Kivu, crossed into South Kivu for the first time, and captured the town of Minova, a city directly connected to Goma and thereby putting Goma in danger.<sup>109</sup> A month later, the M23 captured the Capital of South Kivu—Bukavu—with little to no resistance. Now, the two largest cities in Kivu were in rebel hands.<sup>110</sup>

M23's sudden aggression in early 2025 signals to the international community that the conflict in the DRC is no longer a small battle but a full-scale regional conflict. The government of the DRC has formally ceased diplomatic engagement with Rwanda, while Uganda's stance has become increasingly vague.<sup>111</sup>

### Humanitarian crisis

Eastern DRC sits at the forefront of one of the most pressing humanitarian crises worldwide.<sup>112</sup> The decades of conflict have generated numerous issues, ranging from a displacement crisis to an infrastructural crisis. Over 7 million people throughout the DRC are facing displacement, with more than 50 percent of these displaced individuals residing in the eastern part of the country.<sup>113</sup> Specifically, North and South Kivu currently host over 3.8 million displaced people alone, with the recent resurgence of the M23 adding to this toll and increasing the count by approximately 780,000.<sup>114</sup> The displacement crisis has and only will further escalate since the last offensive by the M23, in turn creating a larger refugee crisis.<sup>115</sup>

Civilians who are living in the DRC are also in fear for their lives as these rebel groups regularly target them. As the M23 moved further into DRC, investigations led by the UN joint Human Rights office said that the M23 had executed at least 171 civilians in the settlements of Kishishe and Bambo, in eastern North Kivu Province.<sup>116</sup> Among the victims, children and women bear the brunt of the consequences, where the escalation of the M23 led to a 700 percent increase in reports of accounted sexual violence between February and March of 2025 alone.<sup>117</sup> Children living in the warzone are often sexually assaulted or kidnapped, and are forcibly recruited into armed groups. The DRC has one of the world's most significant educational crises, with the existing conflict already

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<sup>108</sup> David Lewis, "A tinderbox conflict in Congo is ready to explode," *Reuters*, March 5, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/graphics/CONGO-SECURITY/MAPS/movaykzaava/>.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Andy Home, "After Ukraine deal, US turns its critical minerals gaze to Africa," *Reuters*, May 6, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/commodities/after-ukraine-deal-us-turns-its-critical-minerals-gaze-africa-andy-home-2025-05-06/#:~:text=The%20M23%20rebels%20seized%20control,of%20the%20Bisie%20tin%20mine.>

<sup>111</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "The DRC conflict Enters a Dangerous New Phase," *Africa Center*, February 26, 2025, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/drc-conflict-new-phase/#:~:text=Ugandan%20forces%2C%20meanwhile%2C%20have%20also,seized%20Goma%20back%20in%202012.>

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> VOA, "DRC M23 Massacre Toll Now Over 171," *VOA*, February 7, 2023, <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/drc-m23-massacre-toll-now-over-171/6951315.html>.

<sup>117</sup> Sanni Yakuba, "Reports of sexual violence in Eastern DRC surge by almost 700% in March as armed conflict intensifies," *ActionAid*, May 16, 2025, <https://actionaid.org/news/2025/reports-sexual-violence-eastern-drc-surge-almost-700-march-armed-conflict-intensifies>.

destroying many schools and forcing children to reside in camps.<sup>118</sup> In the aftermath of the 2025 M23 advance, millions of unexploded ordnance (UXO) were left in the fields.<sup>119</sup> Subsequently, humanitarian aid and rebuilding efforts were unsuccessful as the risk of encountering these weapons hindered aid delivery.<sup>120</sup>

As pressing as the humanitarian issue in the DRC is, the ability for international actors to provide aid is significantly strained by the DRC's poor and underdeveloped infrastructure. Over 25.6 million people reside in food insecurity, with 2.7 million of those individuals are in severe hunger.<sup>121</sup> This crisis has been exacerbated by the DRC's ineffective governance, leading to increased price inflation and a failure to combat disease outbreaks within the region effectively. The majority of those who need aid reside in underfunded and overcrowded camps; this issue was highlighted during the fall of Goma when humanitarian assistance was severely disrupted due to the inability of NGOs to access the capital.<sup>122</sup> Since then, the situation in the warzone has only worsened due to the UN and other NGO's inability to deliver aid.<sup>123</sup> The healthcare system is nearing collapse, with several hospitals and health centres either destroyed or suffering from acute shortages of medical personnel.<sup>124</sup> Refugee and displacement sites suffer from the breakdown of water, sanitation, and other hygienic systems, breeding an environment that favours disease transmission, creating a health crisis.

## Resource Conflicts

Eastern DRC's vast wealth of Gold, Tin, and other minerals has placed it at the centre of resource conflicts.<sup>125</sup> The acquisition of mines greatly empowers armed groups because this money is used to purchase more arms and strengthen the economic stability of these groups.<sup>126</sup> M23's resurgence has been closely tied to the acquisition of natural resources. For example, the \$800,000 USD a month made by the M23 through the Rubaya Coltan mine in North Kivu has allowed the M23 to gain a sustainable source of income.<sup>127</sup> Because the M23 can generate revenue, they no longer have to rely on Rwanda, granting them more money to purchase arms and pay armed fighters, allowing them to control more territories in the East.<sup>128</sup> The M23 gains more political power as a result because the DRC can no longer exclude them in peace talks due to their vast control of Eastern territory. Recently, the DRC signed a \$1.9 billion deal with the UAE in 2023 to formalize artisanal farming, hoping to dilute the smuggling crisis. In 2025, the United States pushed for a peace deal that included economic packages to address the existing situation.<sup>129</sup> The increment of international presence has increased the likelihood of proxy and prolonged conflicts because nations and armed groups that have a vested interest in the DRC's mines are likely to attempt to topple the power grid in their favour, further increasing instability.

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Memesita, "unexploded ordnance a deadly legacy in eastern drc," *Memesita*, July 8, 2025, <https://www.memesita.com/unexploded-ordnance-a-deadly-legacy-in-eastern-drc/>.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Olivier Mukuku, "Goma's unfolding crisis: the humanitarian catastrophe and its devastating public health consequences in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo," *BMJ*, August 3, 2025, <https://gh.bmj.com/content/10/8/e019719>.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Sonia Rolley, "UN says Congo rebels generating 300000 monthly in seized mining area," *Reuters*, September 30, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/un-says-congo-rebels-generating-300000-monthly-seized-mining-area-2024-09-30/>.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Rédaction Africanews, "DRC: UAE signs \$1.9 billion deal with state-owned mining company," *Africanews*, August 18, 2024, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/07/18/drc-uae-signs-19-billion-deal-with-state-owned-mining-company/>.

## Regional Diplomacy

Certain nations geographically near the violence in the Eastern DRC have initiated multiple diplomatic efforts to mend the entrenched differences between the DRC and the rebels. Among these efforts has been the deployment of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF). The East African Community is made up of eight partner states, including but not limited to: the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, etc.<sup>130</sup> Their goal in Eastern Congo is to maintain stability in the region, create a neutral zone in North and South Kivu, and negotiate a potential ceasefire between the two sides.<sup>131</sup> Recently, leaders of the African Union and the United Nations have attempted to initiate negotiations between DRC leaders and rebel group representatives; however, these attempts have failed as the DRC has not been willing to concede to the demands of rebel groups.<sup>132</sup> In January 2023, the M23 began decreasing its fighting as it received more regional pressure. However, the success of this “phase” is still in question, as many contested territories remain under M23's control.<sup>133</sup> Although negotiations are still ongoing, disagreements persist among many regional groups regarding the implementation of solutions.

## Regional Actor: Rwanda

Having supported rebel groups that pose a threat to the DRC, Rwanda is a key player in the conflict in Eastern Congo. Led by President Paul Kagame, the Rwandan government aims to extinguish the FDLR, a Hutu militant group in the Congo.<sup>134</sup> Rwanda has constantly used security justifications to fund proxy battles within the Eastern DRC. Throughout the 2000s, Rwanda has been accused of supporting Nkunda's CNDP. In recent years, Rwanda was also under suspicion of supporting the M23.<sup>135</sup> An estimated 7,000-12,000 troops have been fighting on Congolese soil in support of the M23 in recent years.

Additionally, Rwanda also supplies the M23 with advanced weaponry and other monetary resources.<sup>136</sup> In response to these allegations, Rwanda has constantly accused the DRC of promoting anti-Rwandan sentiments, causing a diplomatic cutoff in late 2022 as Rwanda's ambassadors were expelled from Congo.<sup>137</sup> The international community has consistently condemned Rwanda's actions, asking Rwanda to pull back its support of the M23. Recently, the International community has shifted from condemnation to legally binding actions such as sanctions and arms embargoes. The United Nations has placed an arms embargo on non-state actors in the DRC until July 2025, and the US has put its sanctions on Rwanda.<sup>138</sup> Rwanda has not joined the East African Community Regional Force specifically because of its conflict with the DRC; instead, it has only participated in diplomatic efforts to protect its sovereign interests.<sup>139</sup> For example, the Luanda process was a mixture of diplomatic meetings in 2022 that aimed at diffusing escalation between the DRC and Rwanda.<sup>140</sup> Although the

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<sup>130</sup> EAC, “Overview of the EAC,” *East African Community*, August 5, 2025, <https://www.eac.int/overview-of-eac>.

<sup>131</sup> Sharon Mwendu, “EAC, SADC agree on roadmap for peace in eastern DRC,” *The Star*, March 25, 2025, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/realtime/2025-03-25-eac-sadc-agree-on-roadmap-for-peace-in-eastern-drc>.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> United Nations, “As Regional Tensions Rise, M23 Advances Further in DRC,” *United Nations Press Release*, February 19, 2025, <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16000.doc.htm>.

<sup>134</sup> ACSS, “Rwanda and the DRC at risk of war as new M23 rebellion emerges,” *Relief Web*, June 29, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/rwanda-and-drc-risk-war-new-m23-rebellion-emerges-explainer>.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Sipri, “UN arms embargoes DRC,” *Sipri*, August 5, 2025, [https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un\\_arms\\_embargoes/drc/drc\\_default](https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/drc/drc_default).

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Philippe Asanzi, “The revived Luanda Process—inching towards peace in east DRC?,” *Institute for Security studies*, August 6, 2025, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/the-revived-luanda-process-inching-towards-peace-in-east-drc>.

process prevented a war, the implementation was weak. The M23 didn't fully withdraw from occupied regions, and other nations such as Rwanda and Uganda also reverted to pursuing their own goals.

## Regional Actor: Uganda

A long-time perpetrator of conflict in the Eastern DRC, Uganda has constantly intervened militarily to push its interests. During the Cold War, Uganda allied itself with Rwanda.<sup>141</sup> The primary objective of Uganda's intervention in the DRC stems from its need to counter Ugandan rebel groups that operate there, but eventually led to both Rwanda and Uganda working together to invade eastern DRC. These actions committed by Uganda caused the International Criminal Court to order it to pay \$300 million USD in compensation to the DRC.<sup>142</sup> Since the ICJ recognized Uganda's actions, the relationship between Uganda and the DRC has continued to grow. Most notably, when President Tshisekedi was elected in 2019, he favoured forming bilateral security and economic agreements with Uganda. For example, Uganda has given \$66 million USD to a construction company that helped rebuild infrastructure and roads in the DRC in October 2021.<sup>143</sup> The DRC has publicly participated in the Nairobi peace process, deploying troops under the EACRF, which has made Uganda slightly more diplomatically open to potential negotiations with the DRC.<sup>144</sup> This showed that Uganda is now in a stage where it is willing to collaborate and work with the DRC, as shown in its bilateral security agreements. However, Uganda has been under scrutiny for potentially supporting the M23 financially, with many Ugandan officials having been caught making sympathetic statements about the M23.<sup>145</sup> Although publicly Uganda denies any involvement, Uganda has not attempted to prevent the presence of M23 and the Rwanda Defence Forces on its territory.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, the U.N. group of experts confirmed that Uganda was actively supporting M23 by allowing sanctioned leader Sultani Makenga to travel in Uganda. Uganda responded to accusations by blaming the crimes that occurred on "militant groups that weren't connected with the nation."<sup>147</sup> Uganda has deployed thousands of troops to DRC's Ituri province to work alongside DRC forces earlier this year.<sup>148</sup> This collaboration is aimed at fighting against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), showing Uganda's collaborative attitude that still continues to warm up to the DRC.

## Possible Solutions and Controversies

### Military Intervention

In the past, we have already seen military intervention used to maintain peace in the Eastern Region of the DRC, notably through MONUSCO. Although on paper MONUSCO appears to be a detailed and well-developed

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<sup>141</sup> Linnete Bahati, "Allied Democratic Forces: The Ugandan rebels working with IS in DR Congo," *BBC*, June 13, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57246001>.

<sup>142</sup> "Congo and Uganda: Will new roads serve as war compensation," *DW*, August 6, 2025, <https://www.dw.com/en/congo-and-uganda-will-new-roads-serve-as-war-compensation/a-66694276#:~:text=To%20ensure%20that%20Uganda%20didn%27t,million%20for%20the%20plundered%20resources.>

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> EAC, "Overview of the EAC-led Nairobi Process," *EAC*, June 30, 2025, <https://www.eac.int/nairobi-process-about/overview>.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Sonia Rolley, "Uganda provided support to M23 rebels in Congo, UN report says," *Reuters*, July 8, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-provided-support-m23-rebels-congo-un-report-says-2024-07-08/#:~:text=,the%20Security%20Council%20in%20June.>

<sup>147</sup> Jenipher Camino Gonzalez, "Uganda deploys troops to DR Congo to repel militias," *DW*, February 18, 2025, <https://www.dw.com/en/uganda-deploys-troops-to-dr-congo-to-repel-militias/a-71665459>.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

solution, many controversies have arisen in practice with the mission seeing mixed results.<sup>149</sup> Prior to the cities' fall in January of 2025, MONUSCO was most helpful in urban areas around the Goma-Bukavu cities, where civilian density is the highest. MONUSCO's headquarters were in Goma until M23 rebels forced peacekeepers out in January this year.<sup>150</sup> For MONUSCO to be successful, the mission must possess a robust set of instructions that ensure its efficiency. MONUSCO also requires significant technology and military resources to achieve success, primarily through the utilization of Intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition assets.<sup>151</sup> In the past, the combination of both resources and instructions has led to the expulsion of the M23 from Goma in 2013. Its success since then has been under scrutiny. MONUSCO's success in preventing rural regions from being vulnerable to armed groups has been limited, allowing the ADF to create more instability in the east. M23's resurgence in 2021 truly exposed MONUSCO's inability to prevent conflict as M23 was able to advance largely unimpeded. These failures caused much backlash from the public. In recent years, MONUSCO's inability to prevent M23 from advancing into Congo has created tons of large-scale protests for MONUSCO's removal.<sup>152</sup> With the declining legitimacy of MONUSCO, regionally-led military initiatives should be considered. The East African Community has attempted to intervene unsuccessfully in the past.<sup>153</sup> This was due to the EAC's mandate limiting them to peacekeeping only, disallowing them from meaningfully engaging with the M23. Additionally, there were concerns over vested interests because Uganda and Rwanda have their own incentives to get rid of rebel groups and take control of the mines, making the organization lose trust.<sup>154</sup> In the future, delegates should consider balancing between peacekeeping and actual intervention, as although directly engaging with the M23 might pose some risks, without taking risks, it is challenging to eradicate rebels.<sup>155</sup>

### **Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programs (DDR)**

Many past conflicts between the rebel organizations and the Congolese government stem from Congo's inability to re-integrate all rebel soldiers fairly in society or in pay.<sup>156</sup> DDR programs should enable rebel fighters to surrender their arms and transition into jobs within the Congo, ensuring their successful integration into society. For DDR to be successful, the financing stream must remain stable. In the past, DDR has been widely ineffective due to a lack of funding, specifically in DDR programmes 1 and 2, where USD 85 million was insufficient for the 12,205 ex-combatants who required this program.<sup>157</sup> Additionally, in the past, these programs failed due to corruption scandals involving members of the DDR program, which plagued the success of DDR operations 1 to 3.<sup>158</sup> To combat this, oversight must be stricter, as well as reforming the security sector to prevent the exploitation

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<sup>149</sup> Maria Fernanda Affonso, "Evaluating the Effectiveness of MONUSCO," *Stockholm University*, March 2024, <https://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1864171/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

<sup>150</sup> "Tensions in Goma: MONUSCO staff abandon Goma base in search of Safety as M23 Rebels edge closer," *DRC News*, January 26, 2025, <https://drcnewstoday.com/tensions-in-goma-monusco-staff-abandon-goma-base-in-search-of-safety-as-m23-rebels-edge-closer/>.

<sup>151</sup> MONUSCO, "End of Transport operation from Goma to Kinshasa," *United Nations Press Release*, May 15, 2025, <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en>.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Stephanie Lizzo, "Mandates and Mixed success: The EAC's enigmatic pursuit of peace in the Eastern DRC," *Wilson Centre*, August 6, 2025, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/mandates-and-mixed-success-eacrf-s-enigmatic-pursuit-peace-eastern-drc?>

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Sonia Rolley, "Congo army desertion trials spotlight a force in tatters," *Reuters*, March 3, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/congo-army-desertion-trials-spotlight-force-tatters-2025-03-03/>.

<sup>157</sup> MONUSCO, "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration," *Accord*, February 16, 2017, <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/disarmament-demobilisation-reintegration-democratic-republic-congo/>.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

and abuse of ex-combatants. Although there is a possibility of success, without parallel justice M23's accusations of ignorance and exploitation will likely return.

## Diplomatic Solutions

Diplomacy, in the past, has yielded mixed results, as the DRC and Rwanda have disagreed on the future of the M23, highlighting the need for further development of the current system to enable the nations at stake to reach a compromise.<sup>159</sup> The Nairobi process was aimed at building confidence between the Congolese government and other rebel groups, and the creation of a temporary military that defended the DRC.<sup>160</sup> The Nairobi process ultimately failed due to the DRC's stubbornness in not making concessions to rebel groups.<sup>161</sup> Understanding these past mistakes, diplomacy must be successful if delegates are to create explicit guarantees. It is essential to first create a multi-phased inclusion of M23 into the DRC to satisfy both parties. Additionally, it is necessary to implement further monitoring mechanisms to ensure that promises are followed through, which is a significant cause of past conflicts. If successful, multinational tensions can be significantly decreased by directly mediating between the two most prominent actors in this conflict.<sup>162</sup> A year ago, attempts at diplomacy were undermined by Kinshasa, the DRC's capital, which has labelled M23 as terrorists and thereby sidelining them in negotiations, making compromises difficult. Recently, the "Democratic Republic of the Congo-Rwanda peace agreement" or the "Washington Accord" has been signed to facilitate more peace talks between Rwanda and the DRC.<sup>163</sup> Kinshasa has taken a softer stance by asking Rwanda to withdraw troops over time, which allowed for meaningful dialogue to take place between the DRC and Rwanda.<sup>164</sup> This is only the starting point for political dialogue as many other issues still need to be resolved. Nevertheless, DRC's compromise signals that Rwanda can cooperate, further emphasizing the importance of having a third-party overseer. It is also essential to recognize that even if diplomacy goes through, internal policies of the DRC could end up excluding the ex-combatants, causing many combatants to defect back to Rwanda.

## Sanctions and Accountability

Sanctions are a way for governments to put pressure on foreign governments through avenues such as restricting or prohibiting trade, freezing financial transactions between two nations, etc.<sup>165</sup> These sanctions would primarily target the mineral and finance sectors, given that those are Rwanda and Uganda's biggest avenues of income. If used harmoniously, these sanctions would make it much harder for the M23 and other sponsors to acquire funds and arms because they'd lose access to the global banking system. However, to make this mission a success, there must be hegemony between the world's biggest exporters to prevent the M23 from just finding an alternative.<sup>166</sup> The EAC, SADC, and other parties involved must be able to collectively sanction these groups to prevent them from turning to alternatives. The United Nations Sanctions Committee has played a crucial role in identifying actors perpetrating violence in the DRC, such as Rwanda.<sup>167</sup> A solution to preventing further escalation in Eastern

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<sup>159</sup> Christophe Chatelot, "Rwanda and DRC: Three years of diplomatic failures," *Le Monde*, January 28, 2025, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2025/01/28/rwanda-and-the-drc-three-years-of-diplomatic-failures\\_6737508\\_124.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/le-monde-africa/article/2025/01/28/rwanda-and-the-drc-three-years-of-diplomatic-failures_6737508_124.html).

<sup>160</sup> EAC, "Overview of the EAC-led Nairobi Process," *EAC*, August 6, 2025, <https://www.eac.int/nairobi-process-about/overview>.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Jihan Abdalla, "DRC and Rwanda sign 'Washington Accord' Peace Deal," *The National News*, June 27, 2025, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/us/2025/06/27/congo-and-rwanda-to-sign-peace-deal-in-washington/>.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ania Bessonov, "What are sanctions," *CBC*, December 22, 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/ask-faq-sanctions-1.6693984>.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> "UN arms embargo on DRC," *Sipri*, November 11, 2024,

DRC is to expand the powers of the committee by placing targeted sanctions on backers of the M23 rebel group and other Rwandan state officials who arm rebels.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, it is essential to expand the committee's powers, such as allowing it to hire forensic analysts who can better track the smuggling routes of the M23, to better monitor the actions of rebel groups and other stakeholders with a direct connection to these groups. If the committee were to be expanded, money trails, illicit purchases, or tip-offs could be used to track funders of rebel groups and hold these actors accountable. On the other hand, sanctions have led to the M23 pulling out of some discussions, citing that they are "undermining" the dialogue because they view this as a hostile political action.<sup>169</sup> This problem could be addressed by implementing targeted sanctions that don't directly place a strain on a national economy, but rather on the individual or group causing harm.<sup>170</sup> Sanctions could be ineffective in cases where rebel groups don't have direct stakes in the banks of the nations imposing the sanctions. In these cases, the UNSC should work with countries that have direct ties with these rebel groups, as oftentimes these groups have alternative backers who still provide them with funding.

## Humanitarian Support

With over 7 million people in a displacement crisis and over 26 million people with limited food access, the humanitarian situation in the DRC has reached new heights.<sup>171</sup> The primary concern regards the supply and feasibility of delivering support; with many key supply bases under M23 control, notably those in Goma and Bukavu, NGOs and other actors who deliver supplies find it extremely difficult to provide aid to active war zones.<sup>172</sup> The lack of a neutral zone also hinders supply delivery, as the central zone of conflict is too dangerous to go into. To combat this crisis, it is essential to leverage negotiations to create safe passages in areas of high population density, allotting for medical evacuations and the delivery of crucial aid.<sup>173</sup> However, these neutral zones could easily be exploited by rebel groups that might not adhere to the rules. The Luanda agreements serve as an example of how having neutral actors monitor compromised neutral zones can lead to temporary ceasefires. If the demands of the M23 or rebel groups can be compromised, then it's more likely that a long-term safe zone can be created. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure makes it difficult for supplies to be delivered to rural areas—areas particularly vulnerable to rebel attacks as well.<sup>174</sup> The DRC has recently received a generous \$66 million USD donation from a Ugandan-owned road-building company, showing how international support can be used to develop infrastructure at a quick pace.

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[https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un\\_arms\\_embargoes/drc/drc\\_default](https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/drc/drc_default).

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Mark, "M23 Peace Talks," *AP News*, March 17, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/congo-m23-peace-talks-angola-2967653ea21b6e532ba6e72834a681d6>.

<sup>170</sup> Paddy Hirsch, "Why sanctions don't work—but could if done right," *NPR*, April 11, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/2023/04/11/1169072190/why-sanctions-dont-work-but-could-if-done-right>.

<sup>171</sup> Ali Marium, "Mapping the human toll of the conflict in DR Congo," *Aljazeera*, March 24, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/3/24/mapping-the-human-toll-of-the-conflict-in-dr-congo#:~:text=The%20DRC%20is%20home%20to,displaced%20people%20around%20the%20world>.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

## Bloc Positions

### The Western Bloc

This bloc consists of the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Greece and Latvia. These are nations that actively support MONUSCO and other peacekeeping missions while favouring an immediate response against the actions of rebel groups. Given the geopolitical importance of the DRC, Western nations believe that they can better stabilize the region if MONUSCO's mandate were further expanded. Many countries in this bloc have already voiced their condemnation of Rwanda's support of the M23 rebel group, urging Rwanda to cut off its support of this rebel group immediately.<sup>175</sup> The United States' foreign ambassador, Thomas-Greenfield, has publicly claimed that "Rwanda must withdraw its 4,000 troops from the DRC and cease its support for the M23."<sup>176</sup> The US has also said that "MONUSCO must be able to implement its mandate."<sup>177</sup> France and the UK have voiced support for improving accountability mechanisms to prevent further war crimes and human rights violations.<sup>178</sup> These are nations that support the use of sanctions to weaken rebel groups.<sup>179</sup> Although they favour direct action, they also support negotiations, striking a balance between aggression and peacemaking, shown in their participation in the Luanda and Nairobi agreements.<sup>180</sup> However, many Western nations have historically shown an attraction towards mineral and natural resources in the DRC. The US, for example, has recently signed a deal in June of 2025 that granted them access to the DRC's minerals.<sup>181</sup> These nations have an interest in both acquiring more natural resources and preventing eastern nations from acquiring them, granting them more political leverage in the African region.<sup>182</sup> The DRC has historically produced over 70 percent of the world's cobalt among other resources.<sup>183</sup> Being one of the world's greatest natural resource hotspots, the US understood the geopolitical importance of controlling the mineral resources in this region. In 2025, the US signed a "Critical Minerals for Security and Peace Deal" to weaken the tensions in the DRC specifically caused by resource exploitation through US facilitated extraction and trade of resources.<sup>184</sup>

### The Eastern Bloc

This Bloc consists of Russia, China, Bahrain, and Pakistan—nations that are usually non-interventionist and pro-sovereignty. Nations in the Eastern Bloc, especially Russia and China, openly support the DRC's national sovereignty and respect the DRC's voice.<sup>185</sup> Although they are currently in support of MONUSCO's mandate, they advocate for a more laid-back approach and seek to reduce MONUSCO's influence in the region. Members

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> "MONUSCO has an important role to play in DRC," *VOA*, August 6, 2025, <https://editorials.voa.gov/a/monusco-has-important-role-to-play-in-drc/7899045.html>.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> United Nations, "Briefing Security Council On Worsening Situation in Democratic Republic of Congo, Senior Official Says Actions Endangering Civilians, UN 'Will Not Be Tolerated,'" *United Nations*, January 26, 2025, <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc15981.doc.htm#:~:text=On%20that%2C%20Denmark%E2%80%99s%20representative%20observed%3A%C2%A0,%E2%80%9D>.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Mvemba Phezo, "Critical minerals, fragile peace, The DRC Rwanda deal and the cost of ignoring root causes," *CSIS*, June 27, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/critical-minerals-fragile-peace-drc-rwanda-deal-and-cost-ignoring-root-causes?>.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Christian Neema, "Can the DRC Leverage US - China Competition over critical minerals for peace?," *Carnegie Endowment for international peace*, March 19, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/03/can-the-drc-leverage-us-china-competition-over-critical-minerals?lang=en>.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.



of the Eastern Bloc oppose Western callouts of Rwanda.<sup>186</sup> China and Russia have already shown vested interest in gaining access to Congo's resources, even though they emphasize the importance of development and sovereignty in the nation.<sup>187</sup> This bloc prefers regional diplomacy over direct military action. They have openly supported negotiations between Rwanda and the DRC, and wished for MONUSCO to focus on training rather than attacking.<sup>188</sup>

## The African Bloc

Consisting of the DRC, Liberia, and Somalia, this bloc constitutes nations geographically close to the conflict area that support the DRC's sovereignty and urge the UN to take a stricter approach to the rebels.<sup>189</sup> The DRC, currently supported by the African Union, SADC, and UN, has requested a counterinsurgency operation against the M23 and other rebel groups.<sup>190</sup> Nations in this bloc have condemned Rwanda and its support for the M23 while emphasizing the need for international cooperation against actors that are in support of rebel groups.<sup>191</sup> Both Somalia and Liberia have sponsored UNSC Resolution 2773, which "demanded" that Rwanda withdraw troops and return to peace talks and other diplomatic solutions.<sup>192</sup> The DRC has publicly condemned the actions of the M23 and Rwanda, attempting to resolve the situation through both diplomatic and military means. The DRC had attempted to negotiate with the M23 in Angola before the peace talk was called off.<sup>193</sup> The president of the DRC is already engaging in a military response against "the terrorists and their sponsors."<sup>194</sup>

## The Latin American Bloc

This Bloc consists of Panama and Colombia—nations that don't have a direct stake in the conflict and prefer non-direct solutions in similar disputes.<sup>195</sup> Both Panama and Colombia have shown more support for UN-led action in their own regions as conflict becomes uncontainable.<sup>196</sup> Given similar support for regional UN missions, they probably only support the usage of MONUSCO as a force of management rather than a force of aggression.<sup>197</sup> These nations are also active contributors to humanitarian initiatives and focus on providing support to civilians in the war zone by offering essential resources to refugees, women, and children in a neutral manner.<sup>198</sup> Although unwilling to directly partake in the conflict, Panama and Colombia are both funders of the UNHCR, which

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Michelle Nichols, "United Nations extends Congo peacekeeping mission," *Reuters*, December 20, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/united-nations-extends-congo-peacekeeping-mission-2024-12-20/#:~:text=,which%20was%20seen%20by%20Reuters>.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> "Security Council Press Release on the situation in Eastern Congo," *United Nations Press Release*, August 6, 2025, <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16004.doc.htm>.

<sup>193</sup> Rédaction Africanews, "DRC president warns of vigorous military response to M23 Rebel Advance," *Africanews*, August 6, 2025, <https://www.africanews.com/2025/01/30/drc-president-warns-of-vigorous-military-response-to-m23-rebel-advance/>.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Kai Michael, "Growing Participation in peace operations and conflict resolution in Latin America," Oxford Publications, August 6, 2025, [https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1714?d=%2F10.1093%2Facrefore%2F9780190228637.001.0001%2F9780190228637-e-1714&p=emailAiXteGWrXJwYs&utm\\_s](https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1714?d=%2F10.1093%2Facrefore%2F9780190228637.001.0001%2F9780190228637-e-1714&p=emailAiXteGWrXJwYs&utm_s).

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

operates in refugee camps in the DRC.<sup>199</sup> The human rights sponsorships these Latin American nations provide indicate that they are likely to take an indirect approach that focuses on humanitarian and developmental aspects of the conflict.

## Discussion Questions

1. How could the UNSC hold veiled supporters of rebel groups accountable without cutting off peace talks?
2. To what extent could the international community meaningfully intervene in the current DRC conflict without violating the sovereignty of the DRC?
3. How might regional organizations such as the EAC and the AU work with the UN to ensure a balance between African and international action?
4. Consider the UNSC expanding the mandate of MONUSCO; what implications and changes could be brought about?
5. How might regional organizations like the SADC, EAC, or the AU play a larger role in shaping the settlement?
6. How can the UNSC successfully reintegrate rebel militants without undermining the justice for victims?
7. What could the Security Council do to deliver aid to civilians residing in war zones?
8. To what extent does infrastructure and economic development shape a resolution to the conflict in Eastern DRC?

## Additional Resources

A guide to the decades-long conflict in DR Congo.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/21/a-guide-to-the-decades-long-conflict-in-dr-congo/>.

Conflict in the DRC: What you need to know about the Crisis.

<https://www.rescue.org/article/conflict-drc-what-you-need-know-about-crisis>.

Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo:

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# Addressing the Militarization of Disputed Territories

## Overview

The 21st century is marked by an era of escalation and tension, where failed institutions inadvertently contribute to disputes that can escalate into military conflict. Armed conflict is perhaps the most crucial geopolitical crisis we face today—a phenomenon that creates mass disruption, humanitarian crises, and catastrophic loss. Territory, specifically, seems to be the primary cause of the increase of inter-state violence, evidenced by conflicts in Kashmir, the South China Sea, the Sahara, and many others.<sup>200</sup>

Militarization refers to the buildup of armed forces, escalation, and arms races, specifically in high-tension regions.<sup>201</sup> Crucially, disputed territories refer to disagreements between states regarding which nation exercises its sovereignty over a specific territory, thus including conflicts that may have arisen due to these heightened tensions such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict.<sup>202</sup> The escalation of tension between many countries has seen a steep increase recently; global military expenditure rose to USD 2,714 billion in 2024, increasing by a historically high 9.4 percent, reflecting the pre-emptive actions many nations take in response to the heightened tensions.<sup>203</sup> The increment in militarization has caused the global death toll to reach its highest since WWII, amounting to over 160,000 deaths.<sup>204</sup>

A notable drawback of the militarization of disputed territories is its ability to increase the likelihood of armed conflicts.<sup>205</sup> As nations direct a large chunk of their defence towards a particular region, it increases the possibility of confrontations—accidental or not—that could lead to a full-scale war.<sup>206</sup> China's risky military ventures in the Taiwan Strait have prompted the island nation to increase its defence spending by 10 percent alone in 2024.<sup>207</sup> It is largely because of this rising tension that nations are likely to enter arms races, as they seek to take preemptive action.<sup>208</sup> In Asia, as China's defence spending has increased over the last 3 decades, its neighbours have also taken

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<sup>200</sup> “The Territorial Roots of Interstate Conflicts,” The Sais Review of International Affairs, October 13, 2025, <https://saisreview.sais.jhu.edu/the-territorial-roots-of-interstate-conflict/>.

<sup>201</sup> Aljazeera, “Timeline: 75 years of partition and India-Pakistan tension,” *Aljazeera*, August 12, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/8/12/timeline-75-years-of-partition-and-india-pakistan-tensions>.

<sup>202</sup> Curtis, “Public International Law: Territorial Disputes,” Curtis, July 25, 2025, <https://www.curtis.com/glossary/public-international-law/territorial-dispute>.

<sup>203</sup> Sipri, “Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2024,” Sipri, July 25, 2025, [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2504\\_fs\\_milex\\_2024.pdf?](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2025-04/2504_fs_milex_2024.pdf?).

<sup>204</sup> Kaya Burgess, “More conflict in 2024 than any year since the Second World War,” *The Times*, June 11, 2025, <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/defence/article/2024-most-conflicts-second-world-war-tcnb75m63?&region=global>.

<sup>205</sup> Edoardo Grillo, “Learning the hard way: Conflicts, sanctions and military aid,” *Journal of Public Economics*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0047272725000088>.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Howard Shen, “Taiwan’s Biggest Limitation in Defence Isn’t Spending, It’s Late Deliveries from the U.S. Defence companies,” *War on the Rocks*, March 28, 2025. <https://warontherocks.com/2025/03/taiwans-biggest-limitation-in-defense-isnt-spending-its-late-deliveries-from-u-s-defense-companies/>.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

measures to protect themselves, such as Taiwan and the Philippines expanding US base access in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>209</sup>

In essence, increased militarization, although condemned, often undermines international stability. Many perpetrators frame their actions as “self-defence” or “sovereignty” to justify seizing land from other nations.<sup>210</sup> China has continuously pushed the narrative that “they [protect] historical claims in the South China Sea”, even among accusations by the UNCLOS in 2016.<sup>211</sup> Militarization can be traced back to several factors. Namely, tensions between global superpowers often lead to states taking up arms while economic and political incentives of competing nations cause tensions to spiral.<sup>212</sup>

Several attempts to resolve this issue have been implemented in the past. ASEAN’s attempt to negotiate a “Code of Conduct” in 2000, the Minsk Agreements in 2014-2015, and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) were all widely unsuccessful in preventing long-term conflict.<sup>213</sup> Nations with negotiation leverage, such as the P5 nations, are unlikely to concede in negotiations due to personal incentives, making it evident that current negotiation strategies must be altered to achieve real change.<sup>214</sup>

## Timeline

**August 14, 1947** — The Partition of India occurs and leads to the Kashmir Conflict.<sup>215</sup> British India’s Partition leads to the creation of India and Pakistan, and marks the beginning of territorial disputes, specifically between Jammu and Kashmir.

**December 1, 1947** — The Republic of China drafts the 11-dash line. Under the Kuomintang, China stakes its claims over the South China Sea with an eleven-dash map. This map covers the majority of the South China Sea, including the Paracel and Spratly Islands.<sup>216</sup>

**August 15, 1948** — The Republic of Korea is founded. This marks the formal division of Korea between North and South following the end of the Second World War. Soon after, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

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<sup>209</sup> The Guardian, “Asia’s arms race: potential flashpoints from Taiwan to the South China Sea,” *The Guardian*, April 3, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/mar/30/asia-pacific-flashpoints-fuelling-regional-arms-race-taiwan-north-korea-south-china-sea-pacific-islands>.

<sup>210</sup> United Nations, “The Situation in the Middle East,” United Nations, September 20, 2023, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/78/378>.

<sup>211</sup> Reuters, “China says Philippines has provoked trouble in the South China Sea with US backing,” *Reuters*, December 14, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-says-philippines-has-provoked-trouble-south-china-sea-with-us-backing-2024-12-13/>.

<sup>212</sup> Ken Moskowitz, “A seasoned diplomat considers this question in light of his own experience,” *The Foreign Service Journal*, July 25, 2025. <https://afsa.org/did-nato-expansion-really-cause-putins-invasion>.

<sup>213</sup> Niniek Karmini, “ASEAN vows to conclude pact with China on disputed territory,” *AP news*, February 5, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/politics-indonesia-government-association-of-southeast-asian-nations-min-aung-hlaing-china-07ff4443471fae04c2d093608d4eeb70>.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ryan Perkins. “1947 Partition of India & Pakistan,” Stanford Exhibits, July 25, 2025, <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/1947-partition/about/1947-partition-of-india-pakistan>.

<sup>216</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, “China’s Maritime Disputes,” Council on Foreign Relations, July 25, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/chinas-maritime-disputes>.

(DPRK) is founded. The DPRK later invades South Korea to reunify but fails. A stalemate that emerged from the Korean War leads North and South Korea to negotiate the “Korean Demilitarized Zone” (DMZ), which has divided the two nations to this day.<sup>217</sup>

**April 4, 1949** — The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is founded to deter Soviet aggression in European territory. This alliance serves as one of the first examples of alliance-driven militarization of disputed territories, specifically between Russia and Europe.<sup>218</sup>

**September 3, 1954** — The First Taiwan Strait Crisis occurs. Armed conflict between the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) results in tensions over strategic islands in the Taiwan Strait. This caused the US to strengthen and heighten its military presence in Taiwan and the South China Sea, risking future conflict with China.<sup>219</sup>

**July 26, 1956** — Egypt’s attempt to nationalize a vital strip of land known as the Suez Canal, which was owned by a joint British-French enterprise, leads to armed conflict.<sup>220</sup> Egypt’s acquisition of this land occurred during a period of increasing political tensions between Egypt, Britain, and France and required the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to de-escalate the conflict.

**October 20, 1962** — China’s People’s Liberation Army attacked Indian forces across the Himalayan border, causing the Sino-India War. This attack occurred in a region that was disputed between China and India. On November 21st, 1962, both nations reached a ceasefire. Although conflict slowed down, the China-India border is still highly militarized to this day.<sup>221</sup>

**February 6, 1964** — Violence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots leads to the Cyprus Crisis and causes the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to be deployed. The tension of this crisis will carry over to Cyprus’s later partition.<sup>222</sup>

**December 3, 1971** — The Indo-Pakistan War begins. India and Pakistan later reach a settlement with the signing of the Simla Agreement in 1972 to convert the 1949 Kashmir ceasefire line into the Line of Control (LoC).<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Kelly Ng, “N Korean constitution now calls South a hostile state,” *BBC*, October 17, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1wnxlxxwq2o>.

<sup>218</sup> The Associated Press, “Timeline of NATO expansion since 1949,” *AP News*, May 10, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-business-world-war-ii-sweden-finland-240d97572cc783b2c7ff6e7122dd72d2>.

<sup>219</sup> Office of The Historian, “The Taiwan Straits Crises: 1954-55 and 1958,” Office of The Historian, July 25, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/taiwan-strait-crises>.

<sup>220</sup> Office of The Historian, “The Suez Crisis, 1956,” Office of The Historian, July 25, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/suezattackoccurredHimalayan>.

<sup>221</sup> Research at The Open University, “1962’s Sino-Indian border war lasted four weeks—internment of India’s Chinese community lasted years,” Research at The Open University, July 25, 2025, <https://research.open.ac.uk/news/1962s-sino-indian-border-war-lasting-four-weeks-internment-indias-chinese-community-lasting>.

<sup>222</sup> Andrew Theophanous, “The Cyprus Problem, The EU and the UN,” *CIRSD*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.cirsd.org/en/horizons/horizons-spring-2023---issue-no23/the-cyprus-problem-the-eu-and-the-un>.

<sup>223</sup> Andrew Pereira, “1971 India-Pakistan War,” *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, June 2, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/1971-India-Pakistan-War>.

**March 29, 1987** — The Aegean dispute turns into a crisis as Greece and Turkey risk war whilst arguing over Aegean oil drilling rights. Although both nations' navies are mobilized, U.S. diplomacy averts the crisis.<sup>224</sup>

**March 1, 1991** — As Yugoslavia breaks up, ethnic conflicts over disputed territories significantly escalate and cause significant civilian harm. This crisis quickly prompts the United Nations (UN) to intervene, deploying forces to enforce peace in Bosnia.<sup>225</sup>

**February 1991** — Due to the Soviet Union's disintegration, a full-scale war erupts between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War. To resolve this conflict, Russia leads a ceasefire negotiation that results in a deal signed in May 1994.<sup>226</sup>

**September 11, 2001** — Al-Qaeda leads a terrorist attack on the U.S. Soil. In the aftermath of the 9/11 crisis, the U.S. invades Iraq and Afghanistan, introducing a Western presence in Central Asia and the Middle East. Subsequently, Iran, Russia, and China become warier of the West's increased influence, leading to future proxy wars in the region.<sup>227</sup>

**July 2012** — For the first time in history, ASEAN was at a deadlock due to disagreements over the South China Sea. Whilst Cambodia sided with China, other nations condemned Cambodia's actions. This disagreement made it extremely difficult to resolve the standoff between China and the Philippines in the shoal west of Luzon, ultimately causing ASEAN to fail to create a joint plan to mediate the tension between the Philippines and China.<sup>228</sup> This failure to cohesively create a solution exposed the internal divides within ASEAN and China's growing influence on members in the bloc.

**February 27, 2014** — During the political revolution in Ukraine, pro-Russia militias and unmarked Russian soldiers take over Crimea, stage a coup, and occupy the Crimean Parliament. Russia holds a referendum on March 16th that results in Crimea's annexation.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Charles Wallace, "Greece, Turkey Ease Tensions in Aegean Dispute," *Los Angeles Times*, March 29, 1987, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1987-03-29-mn-1224-story.html>.

<sup>225</sup> Stephen Engelberg, "Belgrade Sends Troops to Croatia Town," *The New York Times*, March 3, 1991, <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/03/03/world/belgrade-sends-troops-to-croatia-town.html?ref=croatia>.

<sup>226</sup> BBC, "Nagorno-Karabakh Profile," *BBC*, January 30, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-18270325>.

<sup>227</sup> Office of The Historian, "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. Response, 1978-1980," Office of The Historian, July 25, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan>.

<sup>228</sup> Michael Green, "Counter-Coercion Series: Scarborough Shoal Standoff," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, May 22, 2017, <https://amti.csis.org/counter-co-scarborough-standoff/>.

<sup>229</sup> Adrij Makuch, "The Crisis in Crimea and eastern Ukraine," *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-crisis-in-Crimea-and-eastern-Ukraine>.

**February 24, 2022** — Moscow launches a full-scale invasion of eastern Ukraine in early 2022 under the justification of “resolving the mistake of the Soviet era,” attempting to claim eastern territories that held Russian-supported nationalists.<sup>230</sup>

**August 2, 2022** — The United States commits a bold move by publicly allowing House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to visit Taiwan against Beijing’s wishes. In the aftermath of the visit, China heightens its “drills” near Taiwan, often conducting ballistic missile tests over Taiwan and usually flying planes over the Taiwan Strait.<sup>231</sup>

**December 3, 2024** — The authoritarian Venezuelan government attempts to annex a region disputed between Guyana and Venezuela called Essequibo following a national referendum.<sup>232</sup> Venezuela then draws arbitrary borders around the disputed regions, claiming control of the land, causing Guyana to lash back. The Venezuelan government then builds up its military in a runway near Essequibo, causing Guyana to ask the ICJ to mediate the crisis. Guyana also builds up connections with the Organization of American States and other regional blocs in retaliation.

**July 24, 2025** — Heavy fighting breaks out on the border between Thailand and Cambodia. This fighting followed disputes over ownership of ancient temples and their surrounding land.<sup>233</sup> Three days later, the fighting expanded to the nearest 12 border sites, displacing almost 300,000 citizens. They soon reached a ceasefire on July 28, with negotiations ongoing.<sup>234</sup>

## Historical Analysis

Throughout history, conflict has never seemed to waver as states repeatedly make claims to certain borders and lands, often using military prowess as a primary means of asserting their claims.

During the imperialist era, colonial expansion led to numerous border conflicts due to the arbitrary establishment of boundaries by new claimants.<sup>235</sup> These imperialist nations conquered new territories from existing claimants and drew lines of their own from the comfort of their capitals. The 19th-century “Scramble for Africa” paved the way for today’s border disputes in many regions of the continent, primarily due to “preclusive occupation” of territory used by many imperialist powers.<sup>236</sup> Due to these unilateral actions, many imperialist nations disputed

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<sup>230</sup> BBC News, “Ukraine in maps: Tracking the war with Russia,” *BBC News*, June 25, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0l0k4389g2o>.

<sup>231</sup> Matt Murphy, “Taiwan: Pelosi leaves Taipei to sound of Chinese fury,” *BBC News*, August 3, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62405680>.

<sup>232</sup> Ryan C. Berg and Hernandez-Roy, Christopher, “The Entirely Manufactured and Dangerous Crisis over the Essequibo,” CSIS, December 8, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/entirely-manufactured-and-dangerous-crisis-over-essequibo>.

<sup>233</sup> Ethan Teekah, “Thailand-Cambodia Conflict,” *Britannica*, October 15, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Thailand-Cambodia-Conflict>.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Paul Hensel, “The Colonial Legacy and Border Stability: Uti Possidetis and Territorial Claims in the Americas,” *Research Gate*, July 25, 2025, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/253878664\\_The\\_Colonial\\_Legacy\\_and\\_Border\\_Stability\\_Uti\\_Possidetis\\_and\\_Territorial\\_Claims\\_in\\_the\\_Americas#pf34](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/253878664_The_Colonial_Legacy_and_Border_Stability_Uti_Possidetis_and_Territorial_Claims_in_the_Americas#pf34).

<sup>236</sup> Charles Nowell, “The new imperialism,” *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-colonialism/The-new-imperialism-c-1875-1914>.

territories. For example, sovereignty over uninhabited Clipperton, to which both France and Mexico attempted to govern.<sup>237</sup> In light of these conflicts, the United Nations decided that “borders of newly independent states should conform to colonial boundaries”.<sup>238</sup> This, however, didn’t resolve border disputes, as successionists still sought power.<sup>239</sup> Recognizing this, the United Nations again established the right to self-determination in the context of decolonization, as well as other ideals that opposed the successionist claim of “territorial integrity”.<sup>240</sup> It can be said that the arbitrary boundaries established during the Imperialist era can be blamed for future disputes as nations begin to decolonize.

As the colonial era drew to a close, the early 20th century was marked by the First World War from 1914 to 1918, after which attempts were made to demilitarize disputed regions.<sup>241</sup> The Treaty of Versailles served as one of the earliest attempts to demilitarize and declared that Germany’s Rhineland would become a demilitarized zone.<sup>242</sup> However, these treaties failed to uphold peace throughout the 1930s and 40s: in 1936, Nazi Germany reoccupied the then demilitarized Rhineland through force and without any resistance, thus setting a precedent for other nations to aggress on their territorial claims.<sup>243</sup> Wars erupted across much of Eurasia and parts of Africa, peaked by the Second World War, and led to death and destruction on an unprecedented scale.

Following the Second World War, the Cold War emerged in place from the late 1940s to the 1990s and was the closest our world came to full-scale escalation.<sup>244</sup> Disputed territories leftover from conflicts and colonialization quickly became battlefields for the superpower blocs, with fortifications being built and proxy wars funded.<sup>245</sup> In Europe, the Iron Curtain divided the East from the West, with the Berlin Wall serving as the boundary between the two superpower blocs.<sup>246</sup> In Asia, as South and North Korea broke apart and joined counteracting forces, the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) might’ve been the densest militarized zone in the world, as thousands of mines and troops were placed on both sides of the border.<sup>247</sup> Similarly, at the same time, Kashmir, which India and Pakistan have disputed since the 1947 partition, has recently become one of the most militarized zones in the world.<sup>248</sup> This region was backed by global superpowers, with the United States supporting Pakistan and the Soviet Union backing India. Both nations deployed hundreds of thousands of soldiers into this dispute, with a total of over 900,000 soldiers still there today, 750,000 stationed on the Indian side and over 150,000 on the Pakistan side.<sup>249</sup> The conflict in Kashmir further rose as terrorist attacks broke out in early 2025. A terrorist attack led by

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<sup>237</sup> Robert Aldrich, “Disputed Territories, Colonial Conflicts,” *Cambridge University Press*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/abs/last-colonies/disputed-territories-colonial-conflicts/C757BC143C7CCB9B47B7422FC499E3AD>.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> “Hitler reoccupies the Rhineland, violating the Treaty of Versailles,” *This Day in History*, February 9, 2010, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/march-7/hitler-reoccupies-the-rhineland>.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Raphael Rashid, “Beyond barbed wire: South Korea invites public to hike Pakistan infrastructure eradication further DMZ,” *Al Jazeera*, May 3, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/3/beyond-barbed-wire-south-korea-invites-public-to-hike-dmz#>.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> “Considered one of the most militarized regions of the world, Kashmir is disputed by India and Pakistan,” *Brasil Defato*, April 30, 2025, <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2025/04/30/considered-one-of-the-most-militarized-regions-of-the-world-kashmir-is-disputed-by-india-and-pakistan/#>.

<sup>249</sup> Thomas Latshan, “India and Pakistan in Kashmir Conflict,” *DW News*, October 15, 2025, <https://www.dw.com/en/india-and-pakistan-in-kashmir-conflict-heavily-armed-rivals/a-72490542>.

the resistance front, a prominent terrorist group in Kashmir, caused both India and Pakistan to initiate a terrorist eradicating operation. However, India attacked Pakistani infrastructure, naming it “terrorist infrastructure,” causing Pakistan to retaliate publicly, further increasing the existing tensions. For many other regions, ranging from the Middle East, such as the Israeli-Arab conflicts over Palestine, to Africa, where Morocco and Algeria battled for control in the Western Sahara, new battles continued to form based on disputes over artificially drafted borders.<sup>250</sup>

The end of the Cold War didn’t deter conflicts—it created more. The breakup of many multinational states, such as the USSR and Yugoslavia, unleashed a multitude of territorial disputes.<sup>251</sup> Many former Soviet regions have become battlefields. Nagorno-Karabakh has been the site of border disputes since the 1990s, and Georgia’s regions that broke away, such as Abkhazia and South Ossetia, have all experienced militarization.<sup>252</sup> In Europe, although the cold war tensions between the east and west eased for a while, old tensions reemerge as NATO and Russia continue to remain in dispute. Russia’s Kaliningrad, an exclave, alongside many other eastern nations have become heavily armed because the Baltic states have joined NATO forces.<sup>253</sup>

As the 20th century came to a close, many longstanding conflicts gave rise to the entrenched militarization we see today.<sup>254</sup> In Palestine, the West Bank, which is under Israeli control, has become heavily militarized and monitored with checkpoints and security barriers placed throughout.<sup>255</sup> In Western Sahara, Morocco’s seizure of territory in 1975 had a 2,700 km sand berm cutting through the region, causing them to militarize the seized region and inadvertently creating the longest minefield in the world.<sup>256</sup> By the 21st century, every area in the globe had at least one disputed territory, reflecting the idea that sovereignty is intertwined with military might.<sup>257</sup> From the DMZ to the Western Sahara, states have consistently utilized their military capabilities to assert power in disputed regions.

### Case Study: The South China Sea

Having been disputed since the colonial era, China’s claim over the South China Sea has sparked massive controversy in today’s geopolitical climate. China’s so-called “nine-dash line” has been present since the 1940s, during a period when many nations in the Indo-Pacific, such as the Philippines, Japan, and Vietnam, also extended their claims to the Spratly and Paracel islands.<sup>258</sup> Soon, the South China Sea witnessed numerous low-

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<sup>250</sup> Office of The Historian, “The Arab-Israeli War of 1948,” Office of The Historian, July 25, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/arab-israeli-war>.

<sup>251</sup> Office of The Historian, “The Breakup of Yugoslavia, 1990-1992,” Office of The Historian, July 25, 2025, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/breakup-yugoslavia>.

<sup>252</sup> Paul Poast, “This land is no longer your land: A Primer on Territorial Disputes,” *War On The Rocks*, December 3, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/12/this-land-is-no-longer-your-land-a-primer-on-territorial-disputes/#>.

<sup>253</sup> Steve Wills, “Kaliningrad: Impregnable Fortress or Russian Alamo,” *CNA*, May 15, 2023, <https://www.cna.org/our-media/indepth/2023/05/kaliningrad-impregnable-fortress-or-russian-alamo>.

<sup>254</sup> Ruth Mclean, “Build a wall across the Sahara? That’s crazy—but someone still did it,” *The Guardian*, September 22, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/22/western-sahara-wall-morocco-trump#>.

<sup>255</sup> Paul Poast, “This land is no longer your land: A Primer on Territorial Disputes,” *War On The Rocks*, December 3, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/12/this-land-is-no-longer-your-land-a-primer-on-territorial-disputes/#>.

<sup>256</sup> Aaron Netsky, “Moroccan Western Sahara Wall,” *Atlas Obscura*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/moroccan-wall-of-western-sahara>.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> Alec Caruana, “Maritime Affairs Program (MAP) Handbill Spotlight,” *ICAS*, July 25, 2023, <https://chinaus-icas.org/research/map-spotlight-nine-dash-line/>.

level encounters between China and other ASEAN nations, including coast guard clashes and some fishing disputes.<sup>259</sup> However, in the 1970s and 1980s, China began intensifying its aggression in the South China Sea by claiming entire islands, for example specifically claiming the Paracels in 1974 and the Johnson South Reef in 1988.<sup>260</sup> In the mid-2010s, China started building artificial islands and placing outposts that included airstrips, radar, and missiles on these islands.<sup>261</sup> This was seen as increased aggression as China's neighbours were worried by China's sudden militarization of these islands.<sup>262</sup> During this time, ASEAN has regularly conducted meetings and DOC talks, attempting to mediate the situation in the South China Sea.<sup>263</sup> However, the lack of actual action allowed for China's unilateral approach to this issue to remain in place. China's economic rise to the global stage has created a one-sided region, where nations such as Vietnam and the Philippines—both with much weaker militaries—fear taking military action, allowing for China to claim sovereignty continuously.<sup>264</sup> China's dominance allowed Chinese coastguards to initiate more aggressive actions against foreign fishermen and civilian vessels through its artificial formation of civilian boat-free zones by firing water cannons.

## Past UN/International Involvement

### The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)

Established in 1991, MINURSO was created by the Secretary-General based on a ceasefire in the Western Sahara.<sup>265</sup> The Western Sahara, a region on the north-west coast of Africa, was colonized and ruled by Spain up until 1976.<sup>266</sup> This territory was claimed and disputed by both Morocco and the indigenous Sahrawi people, who were represented by the Polisario Front, a movement that wanted to seek independence for the entire region.<sup>267</sup> The withdrawal of Spain resulted in a massive war between Morocco, which had “reintegrated the territory,” and the Polisario Front, which Algeria backed.<sup>268</sup> In 1985, the United Nations Secretary-General introduced the “settlement proposals” alongside the OAU, which were accepted on August 30, 1988.<sup>269</sup> On April 29th, 1991, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in light of a ceasefire, supporting the Secretary-General's reports.<sup>270</sup> The Secretary-General's reports outlined a plan to provide a transitional period in Western Sahara, governed by the UN and supported by MINURSO.<sup>271</sup> The ultimate goal of this mission was to establish a referendum, giving the people themselves the right to self-determination, deciding who they want to be governed by.<sup>272</sup> Although MINURSO had some initial success, the mission never took off because the United Nations had no enforcement power, only retaining a weak

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. “China's Maritime Disputes.” Council on Foreign Relations. July 25, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/chinas-maritime-disputes>.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid.

<sup>265</sup> United Nations Press Release, “United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara,” United Nations Press Release, July 25, 2025, <https://minurso.unmissions.org/background>.

<sup>266</sup> BBC News, “Western Sahara Profile,” *BBC News*, October 28, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14115273>.

<sup>267</sup> Houda Chograni, “The Polisario Front, Morocco, and the Western Sahara Conflict,” *Arab Center*, June 22, 2021, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/the-polisario-front-morocco-and-the-western-sahara-conflict/>.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Sarah Zaaimi, “Why it's time to terminate the UN's dysfunctional mission in Western Sahara,” Atlantic Council, April 9, 2025, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/why-its-time-to-terminate-the-uns-dysfunctional-mission-in-western-sahara/>.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> “Western Sahara, MINURSO,” Better World Campaign, July 25, 2025 <https://betterworldcampaign.org/mission/western-sahara-minurso>.



peacekeeping force, causing the mission to remain quite limited and disputed. Even then, MINURSO has successfully sustained a buffer zone, providing a safe passage for resupplying and humanitarian aid while creating a 1,700-mile-long earthen wall that divides the conflicting nations.<sup>273</sup> However, despite its humanitarian success, it failed to uphold the core goal of the mission—a referendum. Since then, MINURSO has primarily been in charge of monitoring and reporting on the region, giving it very limited political and military influence in the region. In April 2018, the United States declared that the mission had been unable to achieve its purpose, forcing both parties to return to the negotiating table.<sup>274</sup> Its failures have been mainly attributed to voter eligibility.<sup>275</sup> While the Polisario Front argues that all Sahrawi people retain the right to vote, including refugees who have fled the nation, Morocco contends that the voters should only be limited to those part of the population before the conflict.<sup>276</sup> Additionally, as geopolitical tensions rise, with the United States and some European superpowers supporting Morocco, many other nations argue for Sahrawi independence, making it impossible to reach a consensus.<sup>277</sup> To avoid failing the mission once again, MINURSO could be given a larger mandate, or the international community could exert more pressure on either party to concede, thereby speeding up the existing deadlock.<sup>278</sup>

### Kosovo Force (KFOR)

In 1999, following the end of the Kosovo War, NATO led a peacekeeping and support mission in the region.<sup>279</sup> KFOR was initially established when NATO's campaign against Milosevic's regime, aimed at putting a stop to the violence in Kosovo, was over.<sup>280</sup> Initially, KFOR was composed of 50,000 men and women from member nations, quickly reducing to only 39,000 in 2002 and 26,000 in 2003.<sup>281</sup> The decrease in presence can be mainly credited to the improving situation following 2003. Rather than focusing on military intervention, KFOR evolved into a capacity-building program.<sup>282</sup> The mission aimed to advocate for international civil presence in the region and plead for international aid.<sup>283</sup> The goal of KFOR was to deter hostile and violent actions, enforce safety and order, and demilitarize the region.<sup>284</sup> In 2013, NATO supported the EU's diplomatic efforts with Kosovo, where KFOR played an integral role in securing and mediating this agreement.<sup>285</sup> This operation was based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and the military deal between NATO and Yugoslavia, presently known to be constructed by Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro, and Slovenia.<sup>286</sup> This deal lifted the NATO bombing campaign and limited military presence in Yugoslavia if it withdrew all its troops and created a safe zone.<sup>287</sup> Now

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<sup>273</sup> Security Council Report, "Western Sahara," Security Council Report, October 2, 2024,

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-10/western-sahara-13.php>.

<sup>274</sup> Jacques Roussellier, "Upsetting the Status Quo on Western Sahara," Sada, January 4, 2019,

<https://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2019/01/upsetting-the-status-quo-on-western-sahara?lang=en>.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Joseph Huddleston, "The Rules-Based Order and the High Stakes of Western Sahara," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, July 6, 2024, <https://gja.georgetown.edu/2024/07/06/the-rules-based-order-and-the-high-stakes-of-western-sahara/>.

<sup>279</sup> "NATO's role in Kosovo," NATO, April 25, 2025, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_48818.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_48818.htm).

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> NATO, "NATO's role in Kosovo," NATO, July 25, 2025, <https://jfcnaples.nato.int/kfor/about-us/welcome-to-kfor/natos-role-in-kosovo>.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> "Military technical Agreement," *UN Missions*, October 15, 2025,

[https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old\\_dnn/Kumanovo%20Military%20Technical%20Agreement%20\(NATO\)%20June%201999.pdf](https://unmik.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/old_dnn/Kumanovo%20Military%20Technical%20Agreement%20(NATO)%20June%201999.pdf).

consisting of over 4,500 troops provided by the 32 Allied and partnered countries of NATO, it continues to provide both humanitarian and military support.<sup>288</sup> This strong presence by the international community successfully ended the conflict and deterred both sides from attempting to remilitarize.<sup>289</sup>

### The Minsk Agreements in Eastern Ukraine

Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the continued conflict in the Donbas region from 2014 to the present, two internationally-negotiated accords aimed to demilitarize this conflict-stricken region.<sup>290</sup> The Eastern region of Ukraine at this time was experiencing significant tension between governmental forces and pro-Russian Donbas separatists.<sup>291</sup> Tensions soon escalated to a full-blown war, with both sides accusing the other of violating signed treaties. In response, the Minsk agreements were created, aimed at establishing a ceasefire, providing humanitarian assistance, fostering economic growth, and resolving geopolitical disputes.<sup>292</sup> The Minsk agreements were reached initially, as they managed to halt hostilities between the parties temporarily. Still, they ultimately failed to resolve the political deadlock fully, as both nations continued to dispute control over these territories.<sup>293</sup> Ultimately, this agreement failed due to the conflicting interests of both parties, where Russia seemed to view the agreement as a mediator, therefore non-binding, while Ukraine saw it as a means to defend its eastern territories.<sup>294</sup> Nevertheless, the Minsk Agreements still served as a symbol of progress at the time for international diplomacy as it proved that the international community could come together by bringing together Germany, France, Russia, Ukraine, and many other nations.<sup>295</sup>

### Current Situation

As innovations have allowed for increased connectivity across the global stage, so too have the effects of sustained warfare been felt. As of June 2024, over 122.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced due to warfare and conflict, which often arose from contested territorial disputes.<sup>296</sup> In 2025 alone, there were an additional 6.7million people displaced throughout the world.<sup>297</sup> With over 150 existing territorial disputes, the 21st century has seen a resurgence of contested territories worldwide frequently exploited by global superpowers, which prolongs conflicts and harms more civilians.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Andrew Michta, "NATO after the Kosovo Campaign and the KFOR peacekeeping operations: What has changed," Wilson Center, July 7, 2011, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/218-nato-after-the-kosovo-campaign-and-the-kfor-peacekeeping-operations-what-has-changed>.

<sup>290</sup> Marie Dumoulin, "Ukraine, Russia, and the Minsk agreements: A post-mortem," European Council on Foreign Relations, February 19, 2024, <https://ecfr.eu/article/ukraine-russia-and-the-minsk-agreements-a-post-mortem/>.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Mykhailo Soldatenko, "In the shadow of the Minsk Agreements: Lessons for a potential Ukraine-Russia Armistice," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 10, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/02/ukraine-russia-ceasefire-security-agreement?lang=en>.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> "Ukraine-Russia crisis: What is the Minsk Agreement," *Al Jazeera*, February 9, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/9/what-is-the-minsk-agreement-and-why-is-it-relevant-now>.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> UNHCR, "Mid-Year Trends," The UN Refugee Agency, October 9, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/mid-year-trends>.

<sup>297</sup> "Global displacement forecast 2025," Global Displacement Forecast, October 15, 2025, [https://drc.ngo/media/ux2ln1xp/250120\\_global\\_displacement\\_forecast\\_report\\_2025\\_final.pdf](https://drc.ngo/media/ux2ln1xp/250120_global_displacement_forecast_report_2025_final.pdf).

<sup>298</sup> Columbia Law, "Professor Monica Hakimi on Territorial Conflict and International Law," Columbia Law School, July 25, 2025, <https://www.law.columbia.edu/news/archive/professor-monica-hakimi-territorial-conflict-and-international-law#>.

## Humanitarian Crisis

Over 36,000 civilians died in 2024 due to the existing conflicts; this has demonstrated that wars today are becoming more and more prevalent, whilst civilians are still the ones facing the brunt of the impact.<sup>299</sup> These battlegrounds are often underregulated as previous governments are kicked out and condemned, leading to countless cases of rape, torture, and murder.<sup>300</sup> Additionally, another critical issue is the difficulty of aid work in these dangerous warzones, with over 300 aid workers being killed in 2024, with 200 dead in Gaza alone.<sup>301</sup> These consequences are most present in cases where regions are being densely militarized, obstructing humanitarian efforts. With over 180 million people worldwide requiring humanitarian aid, it is estimated that around 188 million people are in crisis due to living in active war zones.<sup>302</sup> Even with these high numbers, funding is dire, with only 35 percent of the needed funds being provided as of October 17, 2024.<sup>303</sup> The truth is that the majority of the globe's most pressing humanitarian emergencies are occurring in militarized and contested territories such as Gaza and Yemen.<sup>304</sup> Additionally, in Nagorno-Karabakh, a blockade was imposed by Azerbaijani forces, cutting off humanitarian access to the disputed territories for months, contributing to a bigger crisis as groups were deliberately attempting to obstruct humanitarian aid.<sup>305</sup> Meanwhile, in Western Sahara, around 173,000 Sahrawi people have been displaced since the beginning of the conflict, and for countless years, these refugees have fled to isolated camps in the Algerian desert that receive little support from the international community.<sup>306</sup>

## Displacement Crisis

In war-stricken zones, houses and infrastructure are destroyed as a result of warfare, causing a significant number of civilians to be internally displaced.<sup>307</sup> During April 2025, the number of displaced individuals reached 122.1 million, a 2.1 million increase from the previous year.<sup>308</sup> The number of internally displaced persons (IDP), furthermore, rose by more than 9 percent to over 73.5 million at the end of 2024.<sup>309</sup> Crucially, these are 73.5 million people who are still stuck within conflict zones, displaced by constant fire and bombings. More than one-third of the world's displaced people, additionally, come from just four nations: Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.<sup>310</sup> These are refugees who predominantly fled to neighbouring countries. Flooding refugee acceptance systems of nearby nations such as Turkey, they make it very difficult for these nations to adequately provide enough food and water. As a result, these nations have often placed these refugees in large, crowded camps that risk a disease outbreak.<sup>311</sup> The cause of this crisis can be attributed to the prolonged warfare and instability in

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<sup>299</sup> Merve Aydoğan, "UN says more than 36,000 civilians killed in conflicts in 2024, true toll likely far higher," *AA*, May 22, 2025, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/un-says-more-than-36-000-civilians-killed-in-conflicts-in-2024-true-toll-likely-far-higher/3576799#>.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> UNOCHA, "Global Humanitarian Overview 2025," *UNOCHA*, December 4, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/events/global-humanitarian-overview-2025>.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, "The Sahrawis: 50 years as refugees," *ECHO*, May 9, 2025, [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/sahrawis-50-years-refugees\\_en#](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/news-stories/stories/sahrawis-50-years-refugees_en#).

<sup>307</sup> Geneva AP, "UN refugee agency says more than 122 million people forcibly displaced worldwide," *AP News*, June 12, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/unhcr-refugees-sudan-ukraine-syria-displaced-ac5a0784474d6ce340a5ba605ee3edce>.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> HIAS Staff, "UNHCR: Global Forced Displacement Surges past 122 million," *HIAS*, June 18, 2025, <https://hias.org/news/unhcr-global-forced-displacement-surges-past-123-million/>.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

nations like Syria and Afghanistan, placing heavy pressure on humanitarian mechanisms that are underfunded, making it difficult for civilians to receive adequate care.<sup>312</sup>

## Diplomatic gridlock

With more and more wars raging on in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and other global regions, the failure of the UN negotiation system is clearer than ever.<sup>313</sup> Whilst conflict prevention might be a priority, 2024 was a year of diplomatic setbacks, marked by failed negotiations in Sudan, a continued blockade in Myanmar and Palestine, and incomplete negotiations in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>314</sup> These negotiation processes failed for several reasons. In a number of cases, nations that geopolitically oppose each other disagree on fundamental sovereignty questions making diplomatic solutions very slow; other times, members of the P5 veto proposed solutions and temporarily shut down avenues of resolution.<sup>315</sup>

Specifically, an important factor in many of these negotiations is the element of trust. The matter of trust, however, is often complicated by past breaches of good faith which are compounded over time. For instance, Russo-Ukrainian tensions have been mired with repeatedly broken treaties and agreements in the past decade alone; as a result, the UNSC was only able to reach an agreement concerning the Russia-Ukraine war once, in S/RES/2774.<sup>316</sup> Today, the mistrust only furthers as the war drags on. Deals have been attempted but bore little fruit. Trump's 2025 peace proposal for Ukraine and Russia ended in under an hour, without any solutions being agreed upon.<sup>317</sup> Ironically, even this solution was only implemented in its third year.

## Escalation and Arms Races

With the global military expenditure reaching USD 2.72 trillion in 2024, all regions around the world have increased their military spending.<sup>318</sup> Governments today divert funds from other essential services to national security in fears of aggression from nearby countries as territorial disputes escalate at an unprecedented rate, thereby compromising economic development and social services.<sup>319</sup> This militarization extends to disputed territories and exposes those disputing nations to greater risks of warfare; in turn, these nations preemptively prepare for the worst, attempting to gain the upper hand by increasing their military capabilities.<sup>320</sup> When a nation militarizes a disputed territory, it is easily perceived as an act of aggression by the other party, prompting them to ramp up their security as well.<sup>321</sup> For example, in the 2011 Thailand-Cambodia clash over the Preah Vihear

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> "A total of 52 peace processes and negotiations occurred globally in 2024," *UAB*, June 10, 2025, <https://www.uab.cat/web/newsroom/news-detail/a-total-of-52-peace-processes-and-negotiations-occurred-globally-in-2024-1345830290613.html?detid=1345955782686>.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Javaria Khalid, "Challenges to Peace Diplomacy and Multilateralism in a Fragmented Global Order," *The Diplomatic Insight*, April 25, 2025, <https://thediplomaticinsight.com/challenges-to-peace-diplomacy-in-a-fragmented-world/>.

<sup>317</sup> Diana Nerozzi, "Third round of Ukraine-Russia Peace talks end in less than an hour with no cease-fire after Trump threatens Putin with sanctions," *New York Post*, July 23, 2025, <https://nypost.com/2025/07/23/us-news/ukraine-russia-peace-talks-end-in-less-than-a-hour-with-no-cease-fire/>.

<sup>318</sup> Reuters, "World military spending hits \$2.7 trillion in record 2024 surge," *Reuters*, April 27, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/world-military-spending-hits-27-trillion-record-2024-surge-2025-04-27/>.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Amin Ahmed, "India adding to its nuclear stockpile: report," *Dawn*, June 17, 2025, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1917556.Nagorno-Karabakh>

Temple, the increasing amounts of troop deployments on the border by both sides escalated the conflict. More importantly, however, the Royal Thai Army's grip over national policy meant that existing violence was amplified due to stubborn decisions to escalate, a reflection of how internal politics can influence the violence in disputed areas.<sup>322</sup>

Another outcome of escalation is the arms races that take place as both parties seek to procure more advanced weaponry to gain an advantage over the other. Weapon systems from heavy weapons to armoured vehicles and the proliferation of light weapons have been on the rise.<sup>323</sup> In particular, the increasing purchase of medium-altitude long endurance (MALE) drones in hotspots such as Nagorno-Karabakh, Sudan, and the Congo are recent examples of these arms race developments. Meanwhile, in the South China Sea, Japan, South Korea, and other ASEAN nations are rapidly increasing their defence budgets to counter the growing military presence of the Eastern Bloc, including China and North Korea, which are both strengthening their nuclear capabilities.<sup>324</sup> According to SIPRI, the nine existing nuclear powers are not only upgrading their stockpiles but also quickly developing new nuclear weapons, eroding the current international arms control agreements.<sup>325</sup>

## Proxy Conflicts

Disputed territories are increasingly becoming militarized by foreign powers due to their geographical significance to global superpowers. Oftentimes, these regions are hotbeds for civil wars due to their geographical locations and features, whether it be natural resources, key trade routes, or their ability to shift power dynamics in volatile regions such as parts of Africa and the Middle East.<sup>326</sup> Over the past decades, the Syrian civil war shifted from a low-level internal conflict to a full-blown proxy war, with Bashar al Assad's Syrian government being supported by Russia and Iran and the rebels being supported by the United States and Western nations.<sup>327</sup> Proxy wars, due to their considerable funding, often prolong a conflict by significant periods and commonly escalate into more brutal conflicts that spill across borders.<sup>328</sup> The risky incentives of sponsors frequently lead to more lethal tactics being used.<sup>329</sup> The continued reliance on risky proxy warfare has created a feedback loop that encourages more secretive and corrupt action, with little transparency.<sup>330</sup> In other situations, proxy wars are not so clear cut. The Nagorno-Karabakh war has had typical characteristics of support by larger powers for warring parties but the interests of said powers were not solely focused on inflicting strategic defeat or territorial conquest. For one, both sides were supported by Western and Eastern powers, where Turkey and Israel backed Azerbaijan while Russia backed Armenia. However, Russian interests lay in mediating and de-escalating conflict as opposed to escalation. In the 2023 Nagorno Karabakh conflict, the war was halted in a matter of hours, not days.<sup>331</sup> It is also therefore important to note that if sponsor nations have positive incentives, proxy wars can actually face a

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<sup>322</sup> "Cambodia Thailand border clashes cause urgent private meeting," United Nations Security Council Report, October 16, 2025, <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2025/07/cambodia-thailand-border-clashes-urgent-private-meeting.php?>.

<sup>323</sup> Sipri, "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2024."

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Stephen Watts, "Proxy Warfare in Strategic Competition," RAND, July 25, 2025,

[https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA300/RRA307-2/RAND\\_RRA307-2.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA300/RRA307-2/RAND_RRA307-2.pdf).

<sup>327</sup> Global Conflict Tracker, "Conflict in Syria." Global Conflict Tracker, May 14, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-syria>.

<sup>328</sup> "Rethinking Proxy Warfare," New America, July 25, 2025, <https://www.newamerica.org/future-security/reports/twenty-first-century-proxy-warfare-confronting-strategic-innovation-multipolar-world/rethinking-proxy-warfare/>.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Stephen Watts, "Proxy Warfare in Strategic Competition."

decrease in violence. With major sponsor nations being encouraged to de-escalate the conflict, they can withdraw funding from proxy nations, halting the conflict in a matter of days.

### Case Study: Kashmir

One of the most common examples of a long-lasting and escalated territorial dispute is the Kashmir region, with negotiations having minimal impacts while an arms race has been occurring for decades.<sup>332</sup> Kashmir is a region in the northwestern Indian subcontinent that has long been disputed between India and Pakistan.<sup>333</sup> During the British withdrawal from South Asia in 1947, the partition, agreed upon by both India and Pakistan, granted Kashmir the choice of whether to join Pakistan or India, or remain independent.<sup>334</sup> However, the delay in a decision due to a Muslim revolution, resulted in the signing of an “Instrument of Accession” to the Indian Union in 1947.<sup>335</sup> This was a sign for both India and Pakistan to intervene, causing localized warfare that was later stopped in January 1949.<sup>336</sup> In May 2025, India launched missile strikes into Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>337</sup> These strikes occurred after a terrorist attack in Pahalgam, a town in India-administered Kashmir, killed more than two dozen people and caused both countries to adopt military measures in response to this situation. The recent conflict was the first time both India and Pakistan have engaged in drone warfare, signalling the rise of technological strife in the region.<sup>338</sup> The intensity of this conflict also depicts the rapidly escalating tensions between two nuclear-armed countries over both the Kashmir region and the Line of Control to this day, risking further violence.<sup>339</sup>

## Possible Solutions and Controversies

### Demilitarization and buffer zones

As seen previously, one of the primary reasons wars escalate is the buildup of military forces by opposing sides. To prevent further conflict, formal demilitarization must be established through negotiations and treaties. One solution is the creation of a “demilitarized zone”—referring to an area where military presence and infrastructure are restricted.<sup>340</sup> These zones can be regulated by international peacekeepers, creating a buffer zone in active conflict zones and preventing military mishaps.<sup>341</sup> By avoiding accidental battles, both nations in a demilitarized zone could gradually establish the trust needed to perhaps pave the way for further negotiations.<sup>342</sup> Historically, in both the Korean dispute and the Finland-Sweden territorial disputes, the creation of a demilitarized zone was

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<sup>332</sup> Yumeka Kawahara, “The Plight of Kashmiri Pandits,” PRAXIS, June 18, 2023, <https://sites.tufts.edu/praxis/2023/06/18/the-plight-of-kashmiri-pandits/>.

<sup>333</sup> “Kashmir,” *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, July 23, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kashmir-region-Indian-subcontinent>.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.

<sup>337</sup> Diya Ashtakala, “What led to the recent crisis between India and Pakistan,” CSIS, May 20, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-led-recent-crisis-between-india-and-pakistan>.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Rongxing Guo, “Cross-border conflict prevention and resource management,” Science Direct, July 25, 2025, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/demilitarization>.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Kurt Rexius, “What is demilitarization and why is it important,” P&T Metals, February 20, 2025, <https://www.ptmetals.com/blog/what-is-demilitarization/>.

quite successful in maintaining reduced tensions.<sup>343</sup> The ability of both parties to reach an agreement in the Åland Islands dispute between Finland and Sweden demonstrates how non-violent conclusions can be achieved. Egypt and Israel were also able to produce similar effects through the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979, which returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt on the condition that it remains demilitarized, thereby de-escalating the conflict.<sup>344</sup>

Despite various examples of success, in the majority of disputes, demilitarization fails to work in part from the lack of trust and conflict of interests.<sup>345</sup> For one, both parties often fear that if they withdraw first, they become vulnerable to enemy attacks.<sup>346</sup> India and Pakistan have long tried to negotiate to demilitarize the Siachen Glacier in Kashmir, but both parties stop short of withdrawing forces due to such fears.<sup>347</sup> Additionally, there are domestic pressures that deter the central government from demilitarizing—something often seen as relinquishing claims of national sovereignty.<sup>348</sup> For many politicians and leaders who withdraw from these disputed territories, it is often seen as a loss of face; assassinations and coups have followed in a number of countries, especially those less developed. Furthermore, financial interests can also help prolong conflicts due to the nature of their businesses. Companies arming militaries, private security contractors, and many other businesses have it in their interest to ensure conflict prolongs so they remain contracted. To overcome these obstacles, nations should look to fostering trust with each other, ensuring that they feel safe withdrawing forces. This could be achieved through the use of third-party organizations, such as the EU or the AU, as mediators. These organizations would mediate the negotiation process and also provide peacekeeping efforts to ensure follow-through.<sup>349</sup>

## Diplomacy and negotiations

Territorial disputes are notoriously difficult to solve through pure negotiations, as leaders of nations are unwilling to concede territory. Rather, a “no lose” solution must be proposed, one that provides a net positive for both negotiating parties.<sup>350</sup> Despite its immense difficulty, reaching a long-term solution that prevents further escalation must start with the establishment of negotiations and mediation. There are several ways to negotiate. Nations can negotiate directly, although this rarely occurs due to the demand for a high margin of trust.<sup>351</sup> Nations can negotiate through third-party mediators, which is often the most preferable option, as they have a trusted third party to ensure that agreements are followed.<sup>352</sup> In the Egypt-Israel dispute, Egypt agreed to return the Sinai in 1979 following treaty negotiations, demonstrating that in some instances, negotiations can still be possible and successful.<sup>353</sup> However, these efforts are often hindered by a lack of fundamental discussions on justice and

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<sup>343</sup> Shahnawaz Gull, “Application of autonomy to Intrastate conflicts—A comparative view of Kashmir and Åland Islands,” European Academic Research, July 25, 2025, <https://www.euacademic.org/UploadArticle/5105.pdf>.

<sup>344</sup> Andrew Glass, “Egypt, Israel finish peace treaty, March 26, 1979,” *Politico*, March 26, 2014, <https://www.politico.com/story/2014/03/this-day-in-politics-egypt-israel-march-26-1979-105014>.

<sup>345</sup> Martin Sherman, “Demilitarization: Policy pertinent parameters,” Israel’s Defence & Security Forum, September 29, 2024, <https://idsf.org.il/en/opinion-en/demilitarization-policy-parameters/>.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

<sup>347</sup> Ayaz Gul, “Pakistan Army Chief Calls for Demilitarization of World Highest Battleground,” *VOA News*, April 17, 2012, <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistans-army-chief-calls-for-demilitarization-of-world-highest-battleground-147974215/180479.html>.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> “Approaches to Solving Territorial Conflicts,” The Carter Center, July 25, 2025, [https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace\\_publications/conflict\\_resolution/solving\\_territorial\\_conflicts.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/conflict_resolution/solving_territorial_conflicts.pdf).

<sup>351</sup> Krista Weigand, “Conflict Management of Territorial Disputes,” *Oxford University Press*, May 24, 2017, <https://oxfordre.com/politics/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-554>.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

accountability, as many agreements are subsequently broken.<sup>354</sup> In the Russia-Ukraine war, the furthest these talks have progressed between the two nations to date is a limited agreement on prisoner exchanges, proving that existing frameworks of negotiation are failing.<sup>355</sup> Right now, negotiations are only treated as a utilitarian exchange, where helpful policies are being suggested, but no accountability for the actual trauma of the war. Leaders are unlikely to accept deals that are often seen as merely ceding territory or ones that don't provide them with the justice they demand, making it essential that we find a more approachable third-party negotiator.<sup>356</sup> Additionally, in other conflicts, these political deadlocks can be attributed to the adamant, non-compromising stances of various countries as they have national identities tied to these regions; simply giving them up will create a lot of backlash for political leaders, as it is seen as "giving up" land.<sup>357</sup> More powerful nations also have less incentive to negotiate due to their strategic upper hand, often imposing more selfish deals that are seen as unreasonable by other parties.<sup>358</sup> To overcome this challenge, the UN can impose sanctions to increase pressure on parties that are unwilling to negotiate or engage with more neutral third-party mediators whom both parties trust.<sup>359</sup>

### Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

Confidence-building measures are planned procedures that prevent hostilities while reducing tensions and escalation by building mutual trust.<sup>360</sup> Nations' defence is often centred around deterring other countries from attacking them and preparing for the worst possible outcome, leading to arms races and often escalation when they feel threatened.<sup>361</sup> CBMs are aimed at clarifying the misconceptions of motives between two or more states in battle.<sup>362</sup> Although CBMs require a lot of time due to the slow nature of reaching consensus, over time, more negotiations and relationships can be established. Nations can establish trust by sharing more information about their military positions, innovations, and movements.<sup>363</sup> China and India have drafted protocols together that de-escalate tensions, particularly through banning firearms in the Line of Actual Control.<sup>364</sup> However, CBMs are mainly criticized for their heavy reliance on trust, especially in an environment such as Sub-Saharan Africa where shared beliefs or common interests do not reconcile conflict zones.<sup>365</sup> The WTO argues that CBMs are merely "just rhetoric" that is only relevant to the Cold War, and not helpful in building trust in developing countries today.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> Vashchuk Shank, "Why Ukraine Peace talks are failing," *Al Jazeera*, June 12, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2025/6/12/why-ukraine-peace-talks-are-failing>.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Manjari Miller, "The Latest Attack in Kashmir Escalates India-Pakistan Tensions," Council on Foreign Relations, April 25, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/latest-attack-kashmir-escalates-india-pakistan-tensions>.

<sup>360</sup> United Nations, "Military Confidence-Building Measures," *United Nations*, July 25, 2025, <https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/military-cbms/>.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Harman Shophie, "Confidence-Building measure," *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/confidence-building/leaders-responsible-for-perpetrating-crimes-measure>.

<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> "The role of confidence building measures (CMBs) operations, urging signatory nations to follow international orders to arrest perpetrating leaders, which are meant to be adhered to in preventing escalation and strengthening cooperation for international peace in cyberspace," CyberPeace Institute, December 5, 2022, <https://cyberpeaceinstitute.org/news/the-role-of-confidence-building-measures-cbms/>.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.



## Bloc Positions

### The Western Bloc

The Western Bloc consists of France, the United Kingdom, the USA, Denmark, Greece, and Latvia. Nations in this bloc oppose the militarization of disputed warzones and actively advocate for international law to be followed.<sup>367</sup> The countries in this bloc, especially the US and Latvia, oppose eastern nations' militarization of territories, most notably, Russia's occupation of Ukraine.<sup>368</sup> These countries call for "freedom of navigation". They often support UN mediation and peacekeeping operations, calling upon signatory nations to follow international orders that arrest perpetrating leaders that create international orders to arrest perpetrating leaders to be followed, often supporting UN mediation and peacekeeping operations. Many nations in this bloc also support the ICJ intervening on a legal basis.<sup>369</sup> France has been a key player in international peacekeeping missions, particularly in the Western Sahara, where it has actively supported and backed the Moroccan government.<sup>370</sup> The United States has actively rallied against Chinese forces in the South China Sea, setting up bases in the Philippines, Japan, and South Korea.<sup>371</sup>

### The Eastern Bloc

The Eastern Bloc consists of China, Pakistan, Bahrain, and Russia. Nations in the Eastern Bloc have traditionally presented themselves as non-biased defenders of international law, claiming that the Western nations have distorted the orders to benefit themselves. They use sovereignty, autonomy, and security as justifications for their actions. These countries support solutions that do not violate their strategic interests. Countries like China and Russia actively oppose Western intervention in states and Western-led orders as they are deemed "oppressive."<sup>372</sup> China has used "defence" and its history to lay claim to areas of the South China Sea.<sup>373</sup> Russia has also used sovereignty and protecting the citizens as justification when annexing Crimea. Pakistan also claims sovereignty in Kashmir and calls for the UN to condemn India's militarization of the region. These nations have often leveraged their own powers to push aside international limitations. A primary example of this would be China and Russia's usage of Vetoes in the UNSC.

### The African Bloc

The African Bloc consists of Liberia, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The African Bloc is perhaps the most supportive of UN intervention, particularly in demilitarization and humanitarian aid efforts. These are countries that have experienced warfare and instability in the past, making them especially in favour of trying to minimize civilian harm and end the prolongation of warfare. For one, the DRC has been extremely involved with UN missions, hosting MONUSCO while attempting to drive out foreign militants.<sup>374</sup> These nations advocate for greater African sovereignty, granting autonomy and decision-making power to the nations

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<sup>367</sup> "Significance of the Western Bloc," *Wisdom Library*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.wisdomlib.org/concept/western-bloc>.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> Rebecca Kulik, "Eastern Bloc," *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, July 25, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Eastern-bloc>.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> OCHA, "MONUSCO welcomes the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Government of DRC and the AFC/M23 as a major step toward peace," *Relief Web*, July 24, 2025, <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/monusco-welcomes-signing-declaration-principles-between-government-drc-and-afcm23-major-step-toward-peace>.

themselves rather than to international interventionists.<sup>375</sup> Countries like Somalia have already experienced internal territorial disputes, particularly in the sea. Somalia has disputed with Kenya over control of areas in the Indian sea with plentiful oil resources, and have relied on UN peacekeeping forces to resolve such conflicts.<sup>376</sup> Liberia has also benefited from ECOWAS and numerous other UN peacekeeping missions. ECOWAS has intervened and mediated Liberia's civil wars during the 90s by creating political and economic stability.<sup>377</sup> As a result of this assistance, the nations above continue to be very supportive of peacekeeping initiatives.<sup>378</sup> However, there are limits to this support; for one, Latin American nations fear excessive control over their region by developed nations. Distrust and non-compliance stem from histories of debt trapping and neo-colonization by more developed countries utilizing military, economic, and political prowess. Because of this fear of being overcontrolled, the Latin American bloc supports less interventionist support from these nations.

## The Latin American Bloc

The Latin American Bloc consists of Colombia and Panama. The Latin American Bloc advocates for a peaceful resolution rather than an interventionist one. This includes economic and infrastructural development in affected regions, active peace talks between the parties, and other diplomatic solutions.<sup>379</sup> They support the usage of international law as a framework to condemn illegal claims of territory. Colombia has had a working history with the ICJ, having successfully settled its border dispute with Nicaragua through the court, and subsequently implementing more humanitarian programs, such as reintegration.<sup>380</sup> Panama, a nation that is prone to significant questions of sovereignty, particularly due to disputes over access to the Panama Canal, also strongly condemns and opposes militarization, instead supporting UN-mediated solutions.<sup>381</sup>

## Discussion Questions

1. To what extent can international law and other enforcement mechanisms adequately enforce rules and demilitarization against perpetrators?
2. What role do specific regional organizations play in preventing the militarization of disputed territories?
3. What should the balance be between enforcing demilitarization even when a state claims a territory to be their sovereign land?
4. Why do nations slowly move away from negotiations and more towards militarized action?
5. In what ways could non-violent solutions or pressures be applied to states actively militarizing disputed territories?
6. How can the Security Council ensure that agreements are followed over time and are not violated by signatory nations?

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

<sup>377</sup> Simeon Wiakanty, "Ecowas went beyond trade to peacekeeping," *Liberian Observer*, October 16, 2025, [https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/ecowas-went-beyond-trade-to-peacekeeping/article\\_ca137c8a-00da-43b6-8f47-a0b43d2770ba.html](https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/ecowas-went-beyond-trade-to-peacekeeping/article_ca137c8a-00da-43b6-8f47-a0b43d2770ba.html).

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Anna Johnson, "Territory disputes in Colombia and their international reach," Utah State University, May 8, 2023, [https://artsci.usu.edu/social-sciences/political-science/international-studies/aggies-go/news/uwa\\_colombia\\_territory](https://artsci.usu.edu/social-sciences/political-science/international-studies/aggies-go/news/uwa_colombia_territory).

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

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75 years of partition and India-Pakistan tensions:

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