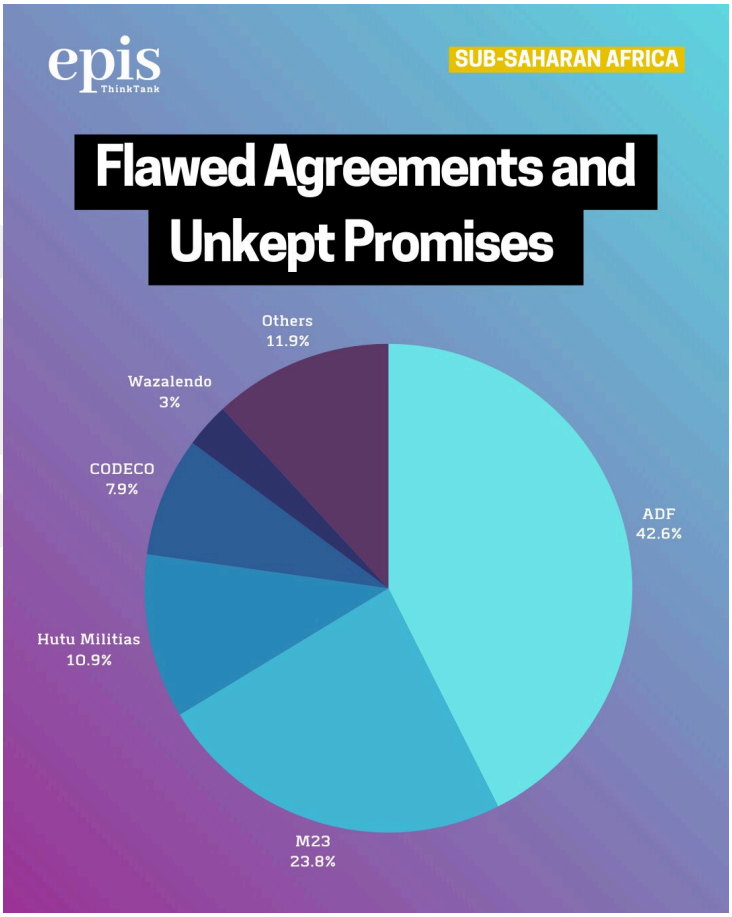
Flawed Agreements and Unkept Promises

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Main point: Ceasefire does not change the situation on the ground, that is actually controlled by powerful non-state militias; innocent people are still killed or actively displaced or exploited

One of the most prevalent humanitarian crises of this decade is happening in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) right now. More than 7 million people are internally displaced, killed and exploited because of the ongoing violence in the region. While the DRC and Rwanda might have initially agreed on a ceasefire compromise, from which they have later withdrawn, the authors of this article believe that it is not the aggression of

state armies that fuels this humanitarian crisis, but the aggression of non-state militias, which are not part of the ceasefire agreement.

In July 2024, Rwanda and the DRC agreed to momentarily halt aggressions against each other and to implement ad-hoc verification mechanisms. They were to ensure that Rwanda would withdraw its troops from the DRC and that the DRC would stop supporting the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Given the absence of Rwandan experts in the verification mechanism, this ceasefire was bound to fail. And it did, less than five months after.

Thus, has the ceasefire made any difference on the ground? At least 427 people were killed by armed groups in the DRC (Actualité). The main culprits: non-state militias.

The violence mostly happened in the North Kivu province, on the eastern border of the DRC, in the cities of Kirumba, Kaseghe, and Katwa.

What are these non-state militias, and who do they fight for?

A self-styled independent armed group, Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). M23 fights to protect Congolese Tutsis rights and lands against the Congolese government. Although Rwanda denies supporting M23, satellite imagery proves otherwise (De Groof et al., 2023).

Originally a peaceful agricultural cooperative, the Coopérative pour le Développement du Congo evolved into an armed rebel force. The movement was reorganised multiple times under different leaders. Over time, it became looser and less coherent. Today, it is among others referred to as a political-military sect.

Wazalendo

The Wazalendo phenomenon gathers multiple local militias that rally around the flag of patriotism. They fight for support of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) and recognition by the DRC government. Many Wazalendo movements have taken advantage of the DRC's fight against the M23 to conduct criminal activities, such as illicit mining (De Groof et al., 2023).

The ADF operates on the border between the North Kivu province and Uganda and repeatedly attacks Uganda over vague claims of discrimination against the Ugandan Islamic community (Titeca & Vlassenroot, 2012). Its exact fighting motives are difficult to gauge, but the pattern of attacks cements it as an anti-Ugandan rebel group.

Congolese Hutu militias (Mai-Mai, Nyatura, & FDLR)

These militias are primarily composed of Rwandan Hutus, including some responsible for the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. They fled to the DRC to escape prosecution for the genocide in Rwanda. Their goal is to resist Rwandan authority and protect Hutu minority in the DRC, which involves violence and exploitation of Congolese citizens.