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Editorial Note

This issue of *AYIKA* brings together a rich and timely collection of scholarship that underscores a central truth: in Africa, environmental questions are deeply political, and political realities are increasingly shaped by environmental change. The contributions in this volume reflect the growing complexity of this relationship, engaging themes that span governance, technology, security, sustainability, and identity across diverse African contexts and beyond.

A defining feature of this issue is its strong engagement with the role of digitalisation in advancing sustainability. From the systematic review on how digitalisation enables decarbonisation, to analyses of agri-tech adoption in Nigeria and South Africa, the volume highlights the transformative potential of technology in addressing environmental challenges. These contributions move beyond optimism, carefully examining the mechanisms and constraints that shape technological uptake. They remind us that digital solutions are not neutral; their effectiveness depends on policy frameworks, institutional capacity, and socio-economic conditions.

Equally prominent is the question of governance, particularly in relation to service delivery and institutional performance. The examination of water service failures in Gauteng Province offers a sobering account of how governance lapses can translate into environmental and public health crises. Similarly, the discussions on public service reform and parliamentary oversight reveal the persistent challenges of accountability and administrative effectiveness across the continent. Together, these studies point to a critical insight: sustainable environmental outcomes are contingent on capable, transparent, and responsive institutions.

The issue also engages deeply with questions of political order, security, and regional cooperation. Analyses of Zimbabwe's political history, hybrid regimes in Central Africa, and border conflicts involving Nigeria reveal how political instability and governance structures shape environmental management and development trajectories. The exploration of indivisible security within the SADC region further highlights the interconnectedness of peace, cooperation, and sustainable development. These contributions reinforce the idea that environmental sustainability cannot be pursued in isolation from broader political and security dynamics.

Another important strand in this volume is the emphasis on economic strategies and livelihoods, particularly in rural contexts. Articles on organic agribusiness, marketing strategies aligned with climate action, and the challenges faced by women in agribusiness illuminate the everyday realities of sustainability. They foreground the experiences of local actors, especially women entrepreneurs, whose resilience and innovation are often overlooked. By examining the socio-economic factors shaping revenue growth and participation, these studies contribute to a more inclusive understanding of development.

The volume also makes a significant intellectual contribution by foregrounding indigenous knowledge systems and alternative epistemologies. The exploration of

Ubuntu as a framework for regional governance offers a human-centred perspective that challenges dominant policy paradigms. Similarly, the critique of epistemic violence in transboundary conservation highlights the marginalisation of local knowledge and agency. These interventions are particularly important in rethinking whose knowledge counts in environmental governance and how more equitable frameworks can be developed. Urban spaces and cultural expressions are not left out of this conversation. Contributions on city branding in Harare and the intersection of art, space, and identity in Durban demonstrate how environmental and political dynamics are experienced and expressed in urban contexts. These studies expand the scope of environmental politics by incorporating cultural and spatial dimensions, offering fresh insights into how cities in the Global South are responding to climate change.

Notably, this issue also extends its analytical reach beyond Africa, with a study on urban climate initiatives in Brazil and a comparative examination of socio-economic vulnerability in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific Islands. These contributions enrich the volume by situating African experiences within a broader global context, encouraging cross-regional learning and dialogue.

Finally, the inclusion of research on language and education, such as the study on tense substitution errors among Tshivenda-speaking students, serves as a reminder of the interconnectedness of knowledge production, communication, and development. It highlights the importance of education in shaping the capacity to engage with complex environmental and political issues.

Taken together, the articles in this issue reflect a vibrant and interdisciplinary field of inquiry. They challenge simplistic narratives and instead offer nuanced analyses that recognise the interconnected nature of environment and politics in Africa. As the continent continues to navigate the pressures of climate change, population growth, and political transformation, the insights presented here are both timely and necessary. This volume invites scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to think more critically and act more collaboratively. It is our hope that the conversations sparked within these pages will contribute to more just, sustainable, and context-sensitive approaches to environmental governance in Africa and beyond.

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INDIVISIBLE SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE SADC REGION: ASSESSING STABILITY AND COOPERATION AMONG THE DRC, RWANDA, AND UGANDA

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between indivisible security and sustainable development in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), with a particular emphasis on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Uganda. The aim of this study is to determine how security cooperation and regional stability affect sustainable development efforts. Given the ongoing hostilities, cross-border tensions, and geopolitical rivalries between these countries, establishing a common security framework remains difficult. The research is based on regional security complex theory (RSCT) and the human security paradigm, which emphasize the interdependence of national and regional security, as well as the consequences for economic growth and development. The study addresses the following essential research questions: (1) How do security dynamics in the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda affect regional stability? (2) What procedures exist in SADC to enhance indivisible security? (3) What role does security cooperation play in promoting long-term regional development? The findings indicate that, while bilateral and international security initiatives exist, historical grievances, resource competition, and political mistrust impede complete collaboration. Nonetheless, initiatives such as combined military operations and commercial agreements have demonstrated the capacity to reduce hostilities. The study adopts a qualitative technique, combining case studies, and policy analysis to provide a thorough evaluation. The study advances scholarship by linking security and development studies, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to peace and economic stability. Recommendations include increasing regional diplomatic involvement, promoting inclusive economic projects, and expanding SADC's role in conflict resolution. Addressing security holistically is critical to promoting long-term peace and sustainable development in the region.

Keywords: governance, security, resource competition, M23, Democratic Republic of the Congo, cross-border conflict, geopolitical rivalries,

Introduction

The ongoing instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's

(DRC) eastern provinces is changing the dynamics of regional security in Southern Africa and the Great Lakes.

One of the most significant regional security complexes on the African continent is the triangular security interaction that exists between the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. Mutual mistrust and strategic rivalry have become ingrained due to the proliferation of armed groups, cross-border insurgencies, competition for mineral resources, and frequent diplomatic crises. The March 23 Movement's (M23) comeback since 2021 has brought attention to the inadequacies of multinational security initiatives and once again shown how flimsy regional stabilization attempts are.

The conflict's continuance is a reflection of deeply ingrained regional interdependencies, despite the fact that it is frequently presented as a local governance crisis in the DRC. In eastern Congo, security challenges rarely stay inside country boundaries; instead, they have an impact on neighbouring states, affecting diplomatic ties, military deployments, and proxy alliances. The fact that regional organizations, especially the Southern African Development Community (SADC), are getting involved through programs like the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC) shows how much the conflict has evolved from a domestic problem to a regional security issue.

There are still gaps in our knowledge of how regional security interdependence affects human security outcomes, despite a wealth of research on the Congolese conflict. A large portion of the literature is devoted to either state-level geopolitical rivalries or the dynamics of armed groups. Examining how institutional responses, security regionalism, and regional power

competition generate ordinary human insecurity which manifests as displacement, livelihood devastation, and ongoing vulnerability has received less attention.

The DRC-Rwanda-Uganda triangle is examined in this article using the Human Security Paradigm and Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) to close that gap. It contends that the Great Lakes conflict serves as an example of a type of militarized security interdependence wherein state-centric threat perceptions undermine human security while reinforcing regional instability. The study adds to discussions on regionalism, conflict resolution, and development in Southern Africa by placing the conflict within the larger SADC security framework.

Questions for Research

What aspects of regional security interdependence are best shown by the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda security triangle?

What effects does the militarized regional rivalry for human security have in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo?

How far has regional instability been addressed or replicated by SADC's security architecture?

The study's contribution

Three contributions are made by this article:

- i. *It examines the Great Lakes dispute using a single analytical framework that combines RSCT and Human Security.*

- ii. *It assesses how SADC has changed as a regional security player.*
- iii. *In order to evaluate regional security governance, it develops a document-based qualitative analysis that synthesizes academic literature, policy papers, and institutional records.*

Research Methodology

The qualitative research design used in this study is based on secondary data synthesis and document analysis. There were no primary interviews. Peer-reviewed scholarly literature, policy documents, regional organization reports, United Nations paperwork, and credible research institutions that concentrate on conflict dynamics in the Great Lakes region are all consulted in this analysis.

Three factors led to the selection of document analysis:

Because the dispute is regional in scope, multi-level institutional sources are required.

Primary fieldwork in war areas is restricted by access issues and security concerns.

Instead of producing fresh field-based empirical data, the study seeks to synthesize existing knowledge within a conceptually integrated framework (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

The following are the main types of sources:

scholarly research on the dynamics of conflict in the eastern DRC; SADC and

African Union security framework policy publications; reports from the United Nations Group of Experts; Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and M23 conflict monitoring reports.

Documentation on regional economic and mineral governance:

The data were subjected to thematic analysis (Joffe, 2011). The focus of thematic coding was: Interdependence of security; dynamics of proxies; Regionalism within institutions; Results for human security; and participation of external power

Using the RSCT and Human Security frameworks, patterns were found in various publications.

Theoretical Aspects

No human subjects were used in this study because it only used secondary sources and publicly accessible information (Stewart & Kamins, 1993).

As a result, interviews did not need official ethical clearance. Care has been taken to authentically represent institutional perspectives and scholarly interpretations, and all sources are appropriately cited.

Statement of Reflexivity

Based on Southern African scholarship, the author addresses the issue from a regional security and development viewpoint. By including a range of scholarly viewpoints and critically assessing institutional performance, the study aims to maintain analytical balance while acknowledging the normative commitment to regional stability and cooperative security.

Literature Review

Conflict Dynamics in Eastern DRC and the Regionalisation of Violence

Research on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) conflict has continuously emphasized how regionalized it is. The Congo wars were conceptualized as "Africa's World War" in early assessments by Williams (2013), emphasizing the involvement of numerous neighbouring states and transnational military networks. This conceptualization highlighted the interrelated security trajectories of the Great Lakes area and contested state-centric interpretations.

Expanding on this viewpoint, Zigashane (2025) shows how elite rivalry, shifting alliances between Kinshasa, Kigali, and Kampala, and regional political economies are all intricately linked to violent mobilization in eastern Congo. According to Stearns, cycles of rebellion are rarely exclusively domestic in nature; rather, they are the result of strategic decisions made by regional entities vying for control of security buffers, frontiers, and mineral resources. Koen Vlassenroot (2013) supports these conclusions by highlighting the division of power and the continuation of hybrid governance systems in eastern Congo, where state and non-state actors coexist in erratic and frequently exploitative arrangements.

More recent research by Brett, Ginty, Sagherian-Dickey & Voyvodic (2024) looks at the micro-politics of armed mobilization rather than state collapse narratives. They show how conflict dynamics are maintained by the intersection of militarized economies, cross-border patronage networks, and local grievances. Importantly, this

research emphasizes that the DRC–Rwanda–Uganda triangle exhibits multiple interactions between local armed actors, national elites, and regional security institutions and cannot be understood via a single lens of interstate rivalry.

When taken as a whole, this body of research shows that the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is not a single site of violence but rather a node in a larger regional security complex that is marked by strategic competition, cross-border insurgencies, and perceptions of mutual danger.

The Resurgence of M23 and Regional Proxy Dynamics

The March 23 Movement's (M23) 2021 comeback has rekindled discussions on regional meddling and proxy warfare. Allegations of outside assistance and heightened diplomatic tensions between Kinshasa and Kigali have accompanied M23's comeback since its first defeat in 2013 as a result of combined pressure from the Congolese army and regional troops (Mubangizi, 2025).

The M23 crisis, according to academics, exemplifies persistent trends of securitized regional competition. According to Krcmaric (2014), the group's comeback is a reflection of unanswered issues related to minority protection, refugee return, and regional power projection. In a similar vein, Nzobakenga (2024) argues that cross-border networks that conflate interstate rivalry with domestic rebellion are responsible for M23's organizational resilience.

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which have historical origins in Uganda and changing ties to transnational jihadist groups, have expanded in

tandem with M23's operations, making regional security calculations even more difficult. Bilateral and multilateral military actions have been sparked by the ADF's operations in North Kivu and Ituri, strengthening trends of cross-border intervention and cooperative competitive security arrangements.

According to Frazier & Stewart-Ingersoll (2010), the best way to understand the dynamics of current conflicts is as examples of proxy entanglement within a larger regional security framework.

External Actors and Geopolitical Competition

The growing participation of international entities in the Great Lakes region is another point of emphasis for recent research. The geopolitical environment has changed as a result of China's strategic and economic involvement, security alliances with the US, and EU-backed governance and development projects (Novotná, 2021).

Discussions concerning resource governance and outside interference have become more heated as a result of China's investments in the DRC's mining and infrastructure sectors. In the meantime, counterterrorism and stabilization efforts have been given top priority in Western security cooperation frameworks. However, academics warn that foreign involvement frequently serves to further state-centric security goals at the expense of more profound structural changes that address human insecurity and governance shortcomings (Onor, 2025).

Because local conflicts are embedded within larger geopolitical struggle, this global dimension further complicates regional dynamics.

SADC and Regional Security Architecture

Under the direction of the Organ on Politics, Defense, and Security Cooperation, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has gradually increased its position as a security actor (Joseph, 2016). A renewed commitment to stabilization in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is shown in the deployment of the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC).

There are differing opinions among academics regarding SADC's security architecture. Mokoena (2020) contends that quick and forceful involvement is frequently hampered by SADC's consensus-based decision-making process. In a similar vein, Maluleke (2024) highlights political differences, resource limitations, and institutional flaws among member states. According to more recent analysis by Maluleke (2024), SADC's involvement in the DRC is a test of its ability to function in complicated conflict contexts as well as an assertion of regional sovereignty.

The ways in which SADC's actions affect regional power dynamics and human security results, however, have not yet been thoroughly examined. Instead of addressing the actual effects of regional militarization, a large portion of the literature concentrates on institutional design.

Theoretical Approaches: RSCT and Human Security

According to Cruden (2011) Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), threats are more likely to transit short distances, which is why security dynamics are clustered regionally. States that are part of a security complex start to rely on one another for

strategic planning and threat assessments. In the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda triangle, where insecurity in one state leads to reciprocal reactions in others, this approach is especially pertinent.

The Human Security Paradigm, which emphasizes freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity, parallels RSCT in that it moves the analytical focus from state survival to individual well-being (Martin & Owen, 2014). According to Aboagye (2012), regime stability and territorial integrity are frequently given precedence over human security issues in African regional security initiatives.

Few studies specifically incorporate RSCT and human security while analysing the Great Lakes conflict, despite their importance. The literature now in publication frequently favours either humanitarian viewpoints or geopolitical analysis without methodically bridging the gap between the two.

Identified Gaps in the Literature

Four significant holes still exist in the literature covered above, despite the fact that it offers a great deal of insight into conflict dynamics.

First, in the context of the Great Lakes, there is a lack of theoretical integration between RSCT and human security. Few studies investigate how regional security interdependence structurally shapes human insecurity; most either analyze interstate rivalry or look at humanitarian effects.

Second, the way that SADC's changing security initiatives intersect with current regional competition patterns has not received enough attention. The institutional literature on SADC

frequently ignores the dynamics of violence at the micro level in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Third, new events have surpassed previous analyses, such as the rearrangement of regional alliances and the revival of M23 after 2021. Thus, updated theoretical application is required.

Fourth, a thorough document-based synthesis that unifies policy frameworks, institutional reports, and scholarly literature under a single analytical framework is still required.

In order to fill these gaps, this study integrates human security and RSCT to assess the DRC-Rwanda-Uganda triangle within the larger SADC security framework. The paper aims to connect state-centric and people-centered approaches to regional security analysis by placing regional rivalry inside its human repercussions.

Findings

The results of a thematic analysis of scholarly literature, UN reports, regional policy documents, and institutional publications are presented in this section. The research concerns of human security implications, regional security interdependence, and the function of regional institutions are all directly addressed by the five interconnected themes that organize the findings.

Militarised Security Interdependence in the DRC– Rwanda–Uganda Triangle

The first significant discovery is that Rwanda's and Uganda's security policies are inherently linked to insecurity in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Reports from the United

Nations Group of Experts (2022–2024) detail several cross-border military actions, proxy conflicts, and claims of outside assistance to non-state armed organizations (Okello, 2025). These trends show a system that views dangers as international rather than limited to national borders.

According to document analysis, each state uses a security narrative focused on preemptive defense to justify its engagement in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Rwanda has regularly used threats from hostile armed groups operating close to its borders as justification for security measures. Uganda has used counterterrorism justifications, especially when discussing the actions of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). The DRC government, meanwhile, has described international intervention as a violation of sovereignty and as bolstering the resilience of armed groups.

Together, these narratives create a cycle of militarized dependency in which neighbouring governments perceive acts made by one state to improve its security as destabilizing, leading to retaliatory actions. The March 23 Movement's (M23) comeback since 2021 serves as an example of how deeply ingrained regional rivalries and security issues are.

Proxy Dynamics and Hybrid Armed Governance

The persistence of proxy dynamics and hybrid forms of military rule in eastern Congo is a second important discovery. Armed organizations function inside intricate webs of regional alliances, informal economic systems, and local patronage, according to academic research and UN records (Tavares, 2009).

Groups like the ADF and M23 operate in fluid configurations that include shifting alliances, commercial partnerships, and political bargaining, rather than just as insurgent actors against the Congolese state. According to document analysis, these actors are strengthened not only by their military prowess but also by their incorporation into international economic networks, especially in regions rich in minerals.

The lines separating interstate rivalry and domestic insurrection are blurred by this hybridity. Whether directly or indirectly, armed individuals frequently turn into tools in larger regional strategic struggles. Therefore, even when official diplomatic relations between states seem stable, conflict patterns are replicated.

Institutional Regionalism: Promise and Constraint

The Southern African Development Community's (SADC) changing involvement in resolving unrest in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is the subject of the third theme. The SADC's institutional commitment to regional stabilization and collective security is reflected in its policy texts and communiqués. A readiness to take on regional responsibilities for peacekeeping is demonstrated by the deployment of the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC).

Document analysis, however, identifies structural limitations. First, quick intervention is frequently slowed down by SADC's consensus-based decision-making process. Second, a cohesive strategic direction is complicated by member states' different national interests. Third, overlapping mandates result from coordination issues between

rival East African Community deployments and SADC operations.

Additionally, reports indicate that regional interventions continue to be primarily military in nature, with little incorporation of mechanisms for community-level reconciliation, economic restoration, or governance reform. This suggests a disconnect between more general human security requirements and institutional security goals.

Human Security Consequences: Fear, Want, and Dignity

The conflict's implications for human security are the subject of the fourth key finding. In North Kivu and Ituri provinces, significant rates of internal displacement, sexual violence, livelihood disruption, and food insecurity are regularly documented in humanitarian reports. Civilian populations endure recurrent cycles of fear and economic precariousness while regional players frame involvement in terms of strategy or defense.

According to document analysis, militarized interventions frequently result in temporary territorial changes without addressing the underlying causes of insecurity, such as land disputes, poor governance, and economic marginalization. The frequent displacement brought on by M23 offensives since 2021 serves as an example of how human vulnerability results from regional rivalry.

Long-term instability also erodes respect for and confidence in government institutions. State forces, foreign troops, regional missions, and non-state armed organizations are among the multiple authorities that communities in disputed frontiers must contend with, resulting in fragmented

governance situations. Long-term development possibilities are undermined and uncertainty is sustained by this fragmentation.

External Geopolitical Influences and Strategic Competition

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External Geopolitical Influences and Strategic Competition

The last subject highlights how global actors are increasingly influencing the dynamics of regional security. Security issues pertaining to resource governance are intertwined with China's investments and strategic involvement in the DRC's mining and infrastructure sectors. The internationalization of the conflict environment is further facilitated by development initiatives backed by the European Union and security alliances with the United States.

According to document analysis, state-centric security strategies are frequently strengthened by external engagement. For instance, counterterrorism programs aimed at the ADF prioritize military coordination above substantive solutions to governance and economic issues. Therefore, international intervention occasionally stabilizes regimes without necessarily changing the underlying causes of instability.

Synthesis of Findings in Relation to Research Questions

Regional Security Interdependence: A structurally interconnected security environment is confirmed by the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda triangle's ingrained patterns of reciprocal threat perception, cross-border action, and proxy entanglement.

Implications for Human Security: The freedom from fear and want is undermined by militarized regional competition, which intensifies economic marginalization, displacement, and government fragmentation.

SADC's Role: Although SAMIDRC is an example of SADC's institutional commitment, its transformative power for long-term stability is limited by structural limitations and militarized tactics.

Discussion

This section engages critically with previous research on the Great Lakes region while interpreting the results using the Human Security Paradigm and Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). The goal is to evaluate the findings' theoretical ramifications and policy impact rather than just restating them.

The DRC–Rwanda–Uganda Triangle as a Regional Security Complex

The results provide compelling evidence that the Great Lakes region can benefit from the use of Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). According to RSCT, which was created by Buzan and Waever (2003), security interdependence is highest amongst governments that are physically close to one another since threats can cross borders more readily. Such a setup is exemplified by the documented cycles of cross-border intervention, proxy alignment, and reciprocal threat perception among Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The March 23 Movement's (M23) comeback since 2021 is a prime example of how insecurity in eastern Congo cannot be viewed as a strictly local problem. Rather, it causes regional repercussions that mirror deeply ingrained patterns of security interdependence, including as army deployments, diplomatic crises, and alliance recalibrations. In this way, the triangle formed by the DRC, Rwanda,

and Uganda is a sub-complex of the larger security environment in Southern Africa.

But the results also point to a refinement of RSCT. State-level interactions and balance-of-power dynamics are the main topics of traditional RSCT. Non-state armed entities like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) are important components of the security complex in the Great Lakes region. They serve as tools in interstate competition as well as security threats. This hybridization calls into question conceptions of regional security complexes that are solely state-centric and highlights the necessity of placing armed non-state actors at the center of RSCT applications in African contexts.

Security Dilemmas and the Persistence of Militarised Regionalism

The results point to a recurring problem with regional security. Neighboring governments view defensive activities taken by one state, like cross-border counterinsurgency operations, as offensive or destabilizing. This dynamic restricts efforts to foster trust and supports militarized solutions.

The data here supports the claims made by Stearns (2022) and Verweijen (2023) that, even when presented as stabilization, regional rivalry frequently reproduces instability. An effort to institutionalize collective security is shown in the Southern African Development Community's deployment of the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC). However, the results show that regional operations are still highly militarized and not well integrated with governance changes.

This highlights a paradox: while regionalism is promoted as a remedy for instability, conflict dynamics are also maintained by regional rivalries. The presence of competitive geopolitical maneuvering and cooperative institutional frameworks implies that the security architecture of Southern Africa functions in a conflict between state strategic goals and collective security aspirations.

Human Security under Conditions of Regional Rivalry

The Human Security Paradigm focuses on the effects of this rivalry on civilian populations, while RSCT analyzes interstate interdependence. The results show that in eastern Congo, militarized security competition worsens economic marginalization, relocation, and governance fragmentation.

Despite numerous regional initiatives, human security defined as freedom from fear, freedom from want, and dignity (UNDP, 1994) remains seriously compromised. Although military deployments may momentarily change territorial control, they do not consistently address underlying causes of instability such institutional weakness, mineral exploitation networks, and land conflicts.

Narratives that link regional military intervention to stabilization are complicated by this observation. In reality, local people experience ongoing insecurity as a result of recurring cycles of intervention and insurgency. RSCT does not, then, naturally take into consideration the lived experiences of impacted communities, even while it does capture patterns of interstate behavior. The distinction between regime security and societal security is

shown when human security is incorporated into regional analysis.

SADC's Institutional Capacity and Structural Constraints

According to the findings, SADC's involvement reflects both advancements and constraints. SAMIDRC's deployment shows that institutions are prepared to take on regional responsibilities. However, operational coherence is limited by structural constraints, such as divergent member-state interests, resource limitations, and consensus decision-making.

Current participation indicates institutional maturity in contrast to previous criticisms about SADC's inaction. However, a limited understanding of security is revealed by the prominence of military tools. Military operations run the risk of creating short-term containment rather than long-term peace in the absence of accompanying economic governance changes, cross-border mineral traceability procedures, and community-level reconciliation efforts.

This is consistent with more general criticisms about African regional organizations, which frequently have normative frameworks that are too complex for them to apply. One of the distinguishing characteristics of regional security governance continues to be the disparity between institutional ambition and operational delivery.

External Actors and the Internationalisation of the Security Complex

The regional security complex is made even more complex by the increasing involvement of international players such as the US, China, and the EU.

Their involvement places the DRC crisis in the context of international strategic competition, especially when it comes to mineral supply routes and counterterrorism objectives.

Although RSCT acknowledges the impact of outside forces, it views regional complexes as largely independent. The results show that regional dynamics and external economic and security interests are intricately entwined in the Great Lakes region. This implies that the DRC-Rwanda-Uganda triangle functions as a permeable complex that is influenced by both local and international forces rather than functioning as an isolated one.

Theoretical Implications

Three theoretical implications result from the discussion:

Extended Use of RSCT: RSCT is still very useful, but it needs to be modified to include informal economic networks and non-state armed actors as components of African regional security complexes.

Connecting State and Human Security: By incorporating human security into RSCT analysis, state-centric security measures' normative constraints become apparent. Human well-being cannot be equated with regional stability.

Institutional Regionalism Under Restraint: The experience of SADC shows that competitive geopolitics can coexist with institutional regionalism. Regional organizations can lessen underlying power imbalances and strategic mistrust, but they can't completely overcome them.

Implications for Policy and Practice

According to the results and theoretical research, long-term stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo necessitates:

Beyond localized reactions that are solely militarized.

Putting in place cross-border verification systems to lessen mistrust between parties.

Strengthening foundations for mineral transparency and economic governance.

Incorporating human security standards into regional security directives.

Cycles of militarized interdependence are likely to continue if regional security plans do not incorporate socioeconomic inclusion and governance reform.

Conclusion

The obstacles to academic mobility at historically disadvantaged universities (HDUs) were investigated in this study, with a focus on the ways in which administrative procedures influence conference attendance. The results, which are based on document analysis of financing guidelines, mobility frameworks, and institutional regulations, show that administrative systems actively shape access, opportunity, and exclusion rather than being neutral bureaucratic tools.

According to the report, academics at HDUs are disproportionately disadvantaged by lengthy approval processes, disjointed communication channels, complicated reimbursement processes, and unclear financing requirements. By limiting membership in international scholarly networks, limiting knowledge exchange, and

strengthening structural marginalization, these procedural restrictions perpetuate institutional inequality. In this way, academic paths are subtly but significantly shaped by administrative procedures, which serve as unseen stratification mechanisms.

The study advances the field's understanding of academic mobility and institutional inequality by highlighting administration as a crucial but little-considered factor that influences scholarly participation. It makes the case that mobility disparities are ingrained in regular governance structures rather than being just financial or infrastructure-related. HDUs run the risk of being excluded from international academic circles in the absence of systematic transformation, which would maintain institutional and epistemic inequities.

Policy recommendations

Reforming Institutional Administration

HDUs should simplify the processes for approving conference funding by: defining precise deadlines for the evaluation and comments of applications; lowering the need for unnecessary documentation. enhancing transparency through the digitization of tracking and submission procedures. Delays that frequently result in missed conference deadlines would be decreased by streamlined administrative processes.

Specialized Units for Academic Mobility

Specialized mobility assistance offices should be established at universities with the following duties: helping with documentation and conference applications; supplying financial advice

prior to trip; coordinating the procedures for compliance and travel logistics. Bureaucratic fragmentation can be greatly reduced with centralized support.

Clear and Fair Funding Structures

Institutions must establish funding standards that are easily accessible to the public and specify: requirements for eligibility; metrics for evaluation; processes for appeals. Frameworks that are transparent improve equity and lessen the impression of arbitrariness.

Increasing Administrative Staff Capacity

Frequent training initiatives ought to be put in place to: Boost processing efficiency for grants and travel; and raise awareness of the effects that administrative delays have on academic output. Sync institutional research methodologies with administrative procedures.

Policy Intervention at the National Level

The Department of Higher Education and Training and other national higher education organizations ought to: Create uniform criteria for subsidizing academic mobility among universities; Give HDUs tailored mobility grants that are particularly designated for them; Keep an eye on equity results and compliance throughout the industry. Such national supervision would encourage systemic inclusion and lessen institutional inequities.

Continental and Regional Cooperation

The Southern African Development Community and other regional organizations could help: strategies for cross-border mobility; platforms for shared conference funding; cooperative research networks that lessen reliance on universities in the North. Continental cooperation would lessen structural isolation and improve scholarly interchange between the South and the South.

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