

*COULD RESOLVING THE  
PROTRACTED FDLR  
INSURGENCY DE-  
ESCALATE THE  
DEADLIEST CONFLICTS IN  
THE EASTERN DR CONGO?*

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MONTREAL, CANADA*

*AUGUST 2024*



# *OUTLINE*

- Introduction/Backgrounds
- Methods & Data
- Findings
- Key Takeaways





# INTRODUCTION

A map of Central Africa focusing on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo). The DR Congo is highlighted in green. Surrounding countries are shown in light green: Cameroon to the northwest, Gabon to the west, the Central African Republic to the north, Sudan to the northeast, Uganda to the east, Rwanda to the southeast, and Burundi to the south. Angola is to the southwest. Major cities are marked with circles: Kinshasa (DR Congo), Luanda (Angola), and Kampala (Uganda). The word "INTRODUCTION" is overlaid in large, semi-transparent white letters across the center of the map.

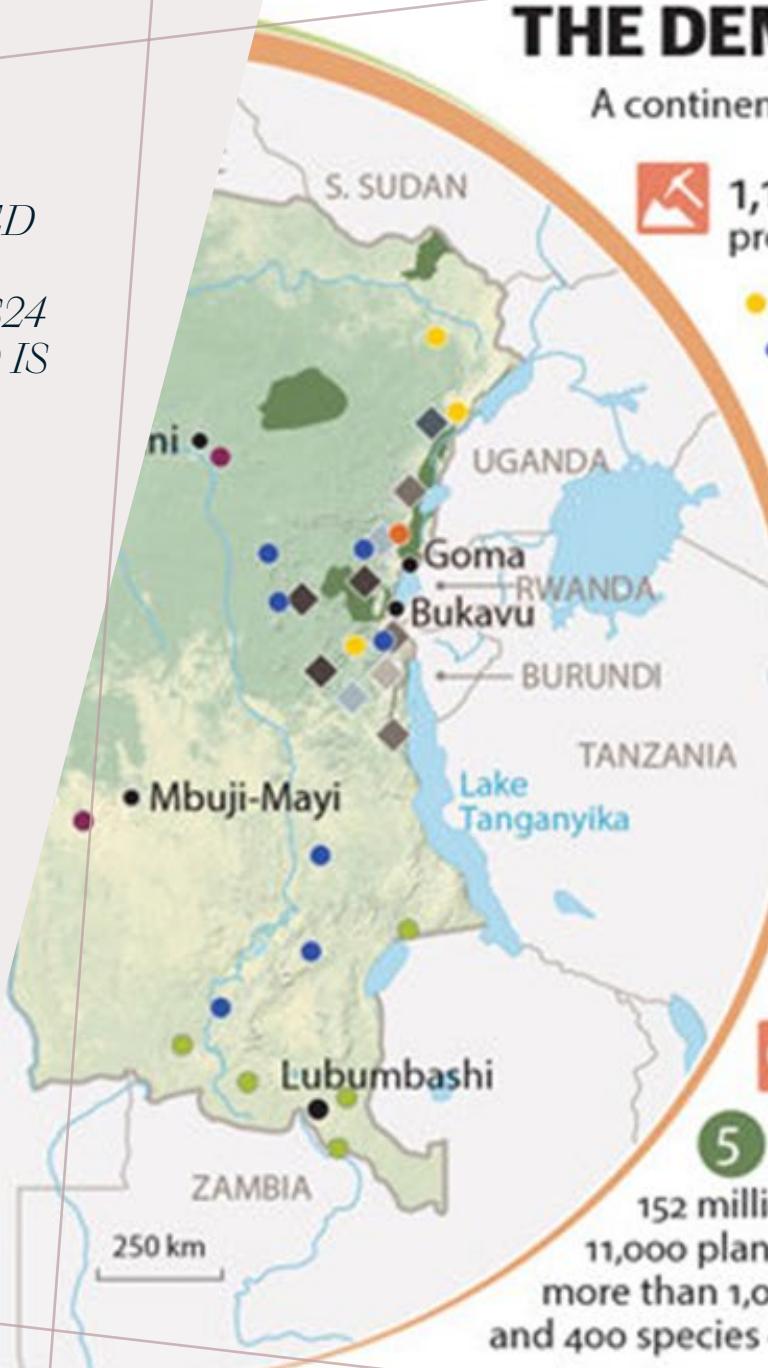
# THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

A continent-country abounding in natural riches and human crises

WITH ITS TOTAL UNTAPPED MINERAL WEALTH ESTIMATED TO INCLUDE \$24 TRILLION, THE DR CONGO IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S WEALTHIEST COUNTRIES (INTERNATIONAL TRADE ADMINISTRATION, 2021; UNITED NATIONS, 2011; COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, 2021).

THE COUNTRY IS ALSO ENDORED WITH EXCEPTIONAL NATURAL RESOURCES, HYDROPOWER POTENTIAL, SIGNIFICANT ARABLE LAND, IMMENSE BIODIVERSITY, AND THE WORLD'S SECOND-LARGEST RAINFOREST AFTER THE AMAZON RAINFOREST.

BUT STILL, THE COUNTRY IS HOME TO ONE OF THE LARGEST POPULATIONS OF THE POOR GLOBALLY WITH AN ESTIMATED 74.6% OF CONGOLESE PEOPLE LIVING ON LESS THAN \$2.15 A DAY (WORLD BANK, 2023).



1,100 minerals and precious metals, including

- Gold
- Diamonds
- Coltan
- Pewter
- Copper, cobalt

2.3 million km<sup>2</sup> of land

80 x the size of former colonial power Belgium

Huge hydraulic power potential

Congo River, 4,700 km  
Africa's 2<sup>nd</sup> longest river

Lake Tanganyika, 18,880 km<sup>2</sup>  
Africa's largest freshwater reserve. As big as Belgium

Exceptional biodiversity

5 natural World Heritage Sites

152 million hectares of forest  
11,000 plant species  
more than 1,000 bird species  
and 400 species of mammal

But the country endured 2 regional wars and the east is controlled by armed militia

- ◆ Raia Mutomboki (DRC)
- ◆ Mai-Mai (DRC)
- ◆ ADF (Ugandan)
- ◆ FDLR (Rwandan Hutu)
- ◆ FNL (Burundian)

Of its 71 million people, nearly 2 mln are internal refugees

88% live in abject poverty

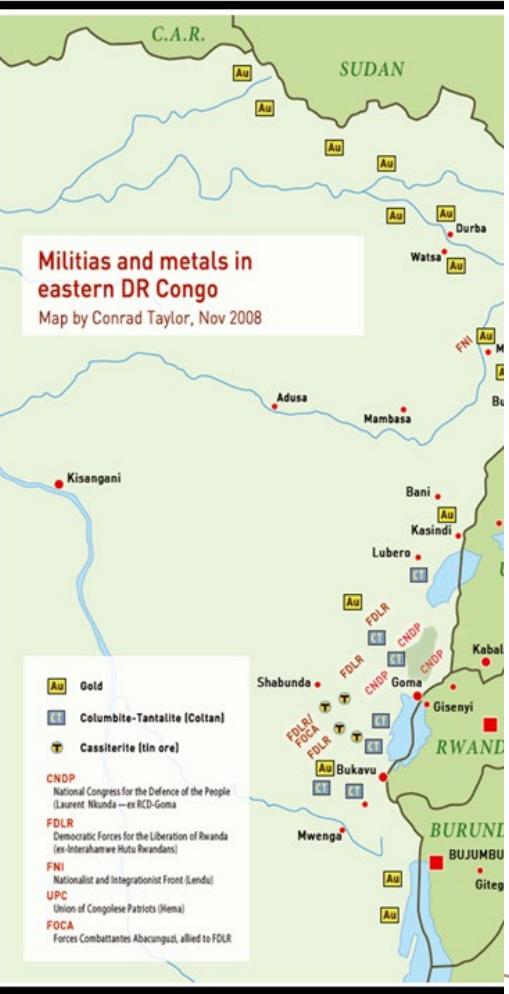
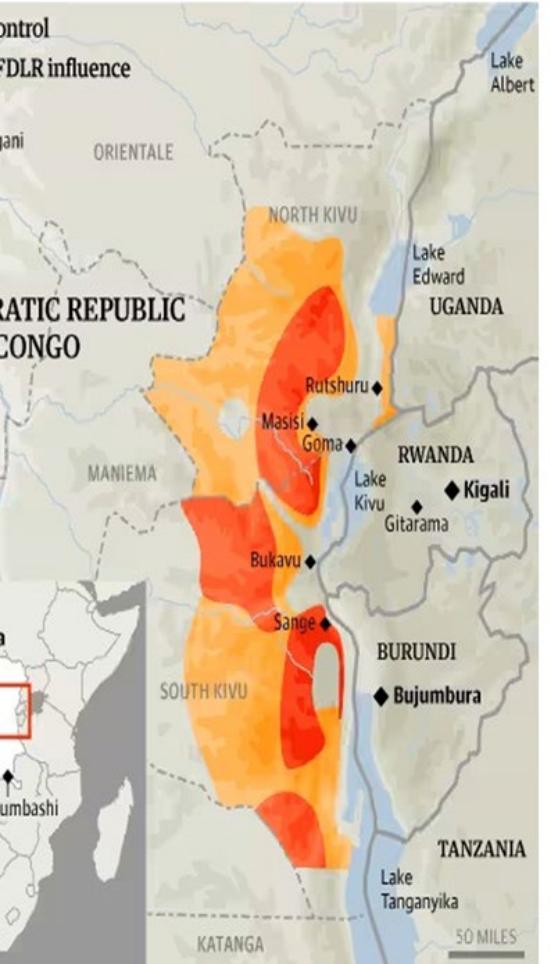
and fewer than 10% have access to electricity and drinking water

And its natural heritage is endangered, particularly its iconic Great Apes



Mountain gorillas

# WHY DID I FOCUS ON THE FDLR ARMED GROUP?



- The Rwandan government considers the FDLR's presence a threat to Rwandan security. For its survival and to protect Kigali's interests, Rwanda backs rebel armed groups in eastern DRC, including the M23.
- No regional stability unless the FDLR is neutralized (United Nations & Regional Actors).
- (Regional) Actors seem to discount the role of ethnicity and scramble for the eastern DRC's natural resources in the perpetuation of conflicts: all the armed groups besides being ethnic-based, are involved in illegal mining.

*Could resolving the protracted FDLR insurgency de-escalate the deadliest conflicts in the eastern DR Congo and stabilize the African Great Lakes Region?*

- ✓ What factors enable the FDLR insurgency in DR Congo?
- ✓ To what extent does the FDLR insurgency contribute to regional instability?
- ✓ How effective are the efforts to curtail the FDLR insurgency?



# *APPROACHES TO CONTAIN THE FDLR INSURGENCY IN DR CONGO*

In previous attempts to resolve the FDLR problem, the DR Congo joined regional and international partners in using sometimes peaceful, sometimes coercive approaches, among which:

- The Rome Declaration in March 2005
- The Nairobi Joint Communique of the Congolese and Rwandan governments in November 2007
- The Addis Ababa Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework in February 2013

Current efforts (2023-2024) include regional initiatives under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). They include among others:

- The Nairobi Peace Process: to mediate a resolution between the government of the DRC and various armed groups active in the eastern DRC.
- The Luanda Peace Process: to address the inter-state dimension of the crises in the Eastern DRC through dialogue between the DRC and Rwanda, including on issues related to FDLR.

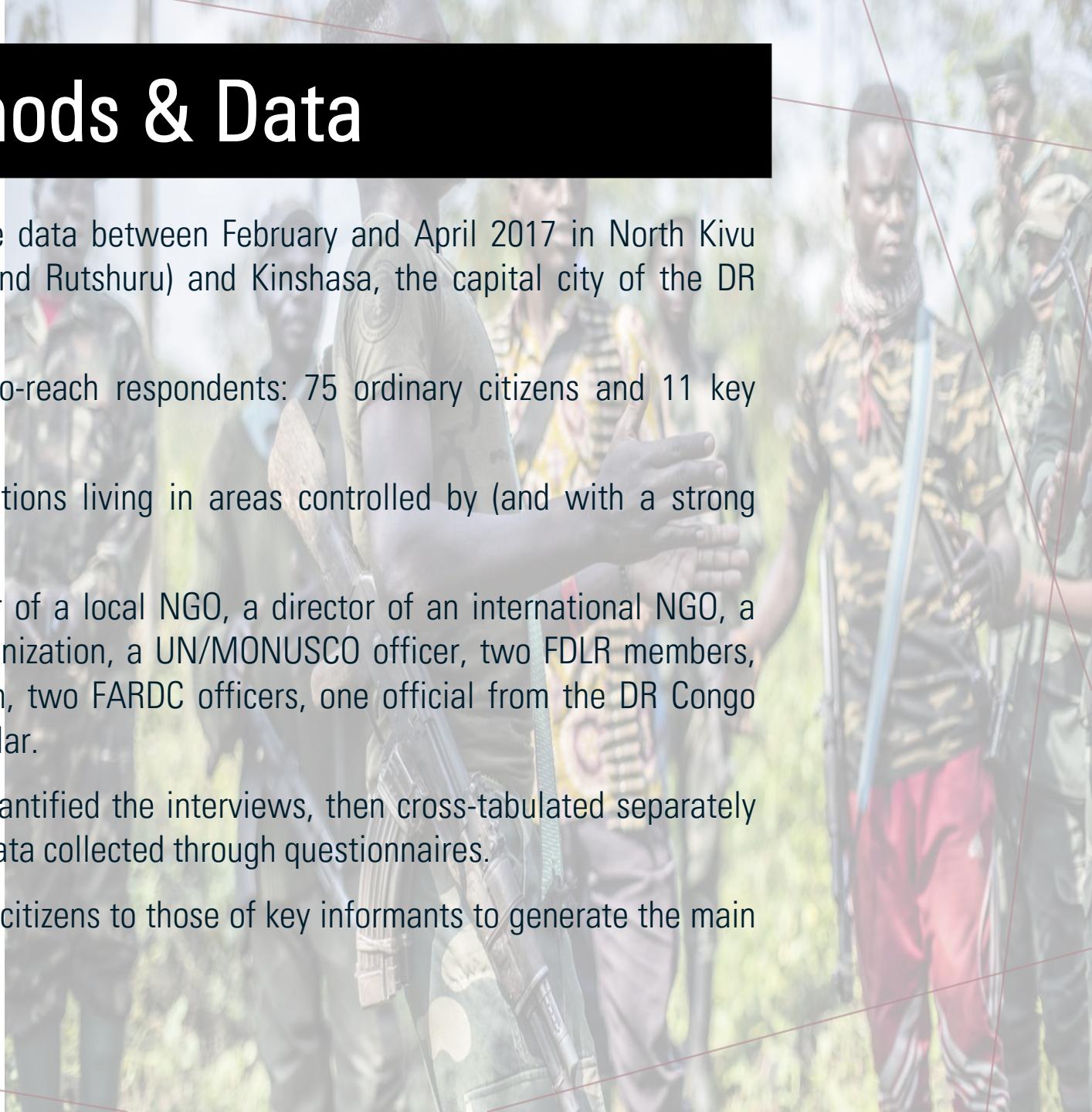
## *IMPACT OF PREVIOUS APPROACHES*

- No positive impact so far: the same causes produce the same results.
- Military operations worsened the security and humanitarian situations in the eastern DR Congo with massive displacements of local populations and increased armed groups-targeted attacks against civilians in retaliation.
- Increased Regional tensions with states swapping blame for supporting armed groups against each other.
- Proliferation of unsuccessful regional peace initiatives and agreements.
- Humanitarian truce and ceasefire not respected.



# Methods & Data

- I collected qualitative and quantitative data between February and April 2017 in North Kivu (Goma and the territories of Masisi and Rutshuru) and Kinshasa, the capital city of the DR Congo.
- I surveyed and interviewed 86 hard-to-reach respondents: 75 ordinary citizens and 11 key informants.
- The ordinary citizens are local populations living in areas controlled by (and with a strong influence of) FDLR.
- The key informants included a director of a local NGO, a director of an international NGO, a representative of the civil society organization, a UN/MONUSCO officer, two FDLR members, one member of an FDLR CNRD faction, two FARDC officers, one official from the DR Congo government, and one independent scholar.
- I used SPSS to compute the data: I quantified the interviews, then cross-tabulated separately the quantified interview data and the data collected through questionnaires.
- I compared the perceptions of ordinary citizens to those of key informants to generate the main results of this study.



# *FINDINGS*

&  
DISCUSSIONS

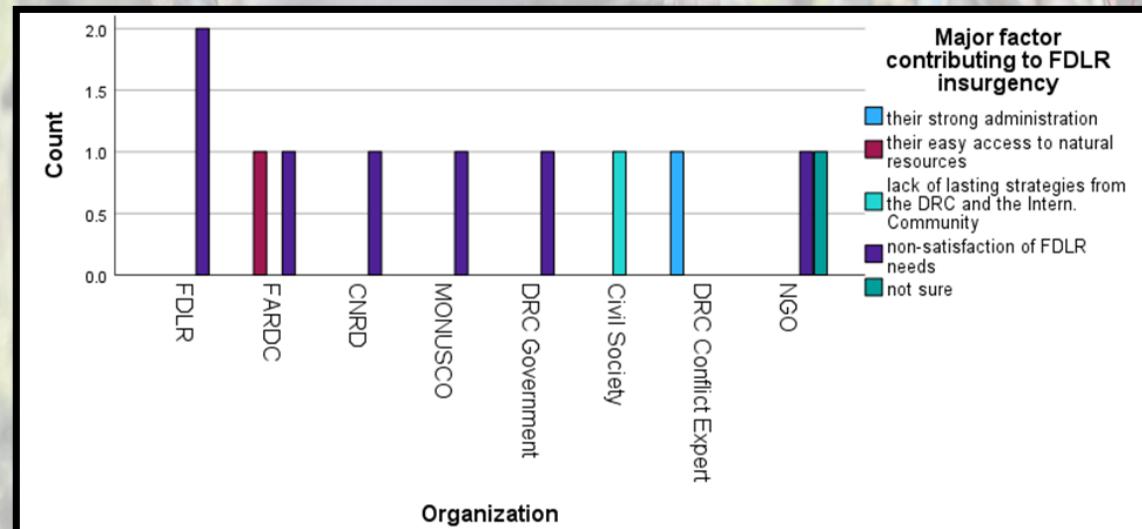


# WHAT FACTORS ENABLE THE FDLR INSURGENCY IN DR CONGO?

## ORDINARY CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS

| Variable          | Factors contributing to FDLR insurgency |   |   |                                |       | Total  |
|-------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------|-------|--------|
|                   | their easy access to natural resources  | their desire to remain established in DRC | lack of lasting strategies from the DRC and the Intern. Community | non-satisfaction of FDLR needs |       |        |
| Ordinary Citizens | Count                                   | 19  | 7   | 17                             | 32    | 75     |
|                   | % of Total                              | 25.3%                                     | 9.3%  | 22.7%                          | 42.7% | 100.0% |
| Total             | Count                                   | 19  | 7   | 17                             | 32    | 75     |
|                   | % of Total                              | 25.3%                                     | 9.3%  | 22.7%                          | 42.7% | 100.0% |

## Key Respondents' perspectives

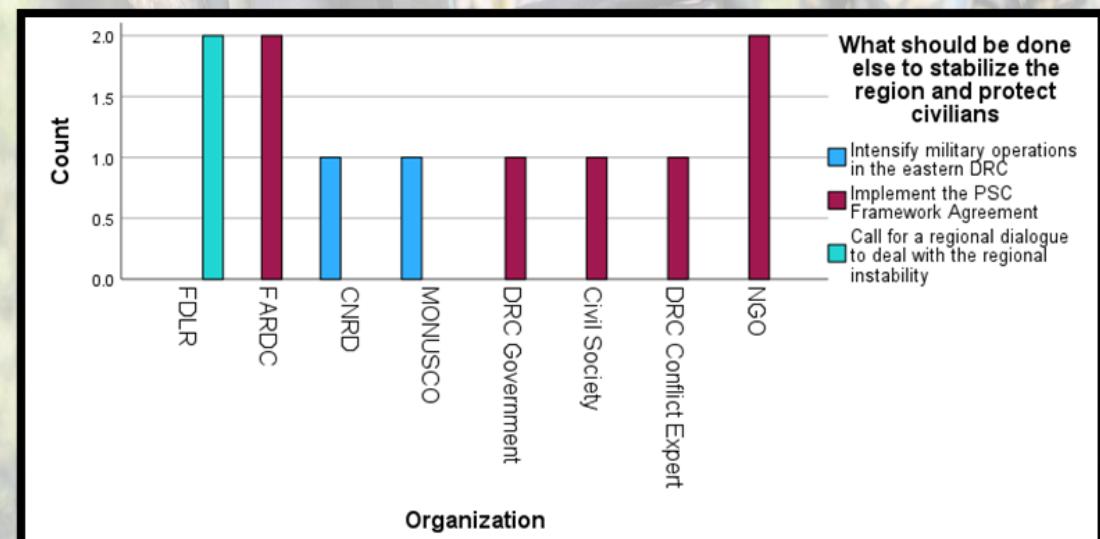


# TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE FDLR INSURGENCY CONTRIBUTE TO REGIONAL INSTABILITY?

## ORDINARY CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS

| Variable          | What should be done else to stabilize the region and protect civilians |                                       |  |  |       | Total  |
|-------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|-------|--------|
|                   | Intensify military operations in the eastern DRC                       | Implement the PSC Framework Agreement | Call for a regional dialogue to deal with the regional instability | Sensitize local communities broken by ethnic conflicts of the culture of peace |       |        |
| Ordinary Citizens | Count  | 7                                     | 21   | 20   | 27    | 75     |
|                   | % of Total   | 9.3%                                  | 28.0%  | 26.7%  | 36.0% | 100.0% |
| Total             | Count  | 7                                     | 21   | 20   | 27    | 75     |
|                   | % of Total   | 9.3%                                  | 28.0%  | 26.7%  | 36.0% | 100.0% |

## Key Respondents' perspectives

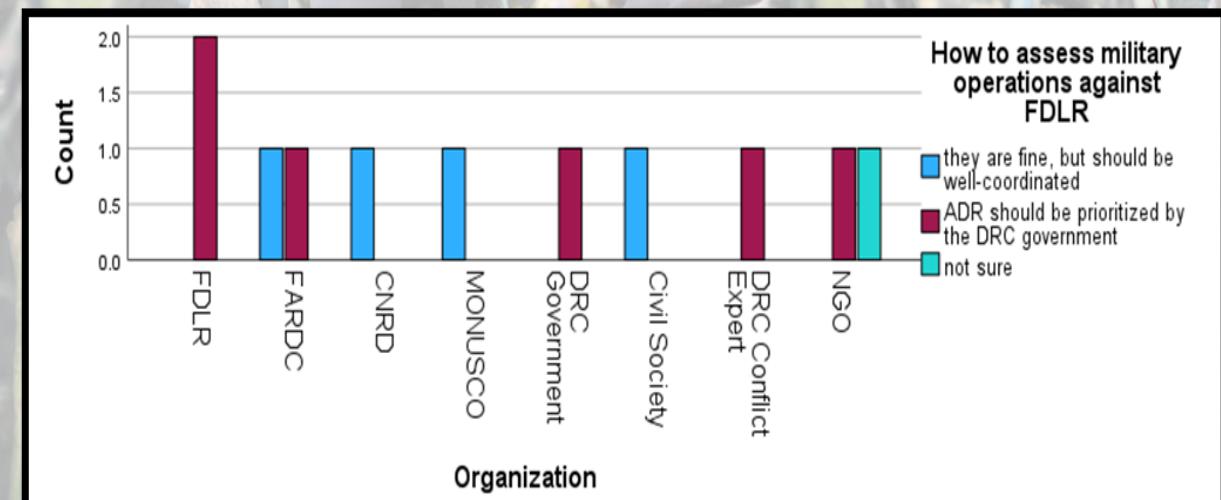


# HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE FDLR INSURGENCY?

## ORDINARY CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS

|                   |            | How to assess military operations against FDLR            |  |  |   |        |  |
|-------------------|------------|---|--|--|---|--------|--|
| Variable          |            | they decrease the number of FDLR and should be encouraged | they are fine but should be well-coordinated | local populations suffer from them, they should be discouraged | ADR should be prioritized by the DRC government | Total  |  |
| Ordinary Citizens | Count      | 4   | 15   | 12   | 44  | 75     |  |
|                   | % of Total | 5.3%  | 20.0%  | 16.0%  | 58.7%   | 100.0% |  |

## Key Respondents' perspectives

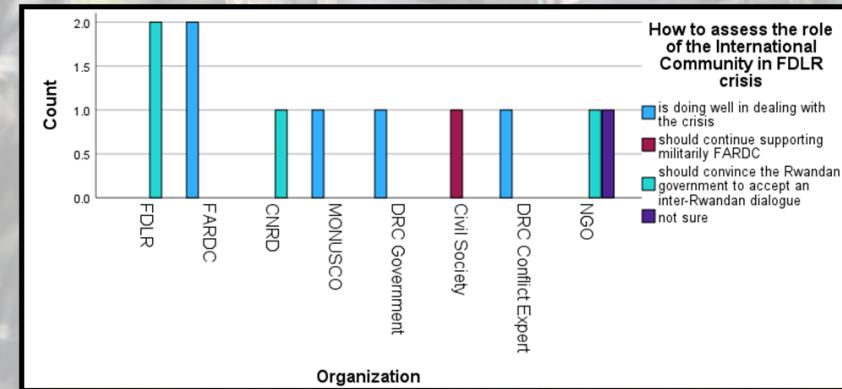


# HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE FDLR INSURGENCY?

## ORDINARY CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS

| Variable          | How to assess the role of the International Community in the FDLR crisis |  |   |  | Total           |
|-------------------|--|--|---|--|-----------------|
|                   | is not willing to solve the problem                                      | is doing well in dealing with the crisis | should continue supporting militarily FARDC | should convince the Rwandan government to accept an inter-Rwandan dialogue |                 |
| Ordinary Citizens | Count  | 12                                       | 4   | 13   | 46              |
|                   | % of Total   | 16.0%                                    | 5.3%  | 17.3%  | 61.3%<br>100.0% |
| Total             | Count  | 12                                       | 4   | 13   | 46              |
|                   | % of Total   | 16.0%                                    | 5.3%  | 17.3%  | 61.3%<br>100.0% |

## Key Respondents' perspectives



## *KEY TAKEAWAYS: NECESSITY FOR A MORE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH*

I suggested using Azar's (1990) protracted social conflict theory to grasp the historical (root) causes of conflicts in eastern DR Congo, including:

1. The communal content of the society.
2. People's basic human needs.
3. The role of government and states.
4. The international linkages.

In the case of the FDLR, the historical analysis shows that:

1. Various armed groups in Eastern DRC (including the FDLR) are deprived of the satisfaction of their basic needs based on their communal identity.
2. These groups always develop ad hoc survival mechanisms, including the use of violence.
3. Different stakeholders at local, national, and regional levels take advantage of the chaos created in eastern DR Congo, to exploit illegally the Congolese natural resources.

As such, stabilizing the eastern DR Congo and the region requires more than resolving the FDLR problem. Unless the historical causes of conflicts are addressed, the same causes will continue to produce the same results. Specifically, stabilization would require:

- Focusing on the historical and local conditions that create conflict in DR Congo and including local communities in the resolution process.
- Learning from the previously failed peace processes to foster a strong regional cooperation agenda.
- Building on the principles and commitments defined in the 2013 Addis Ababa Peace, Security, and Cooperation Agreement as the basis for a strong and genuine regional cooperation agenda.
- Reviewing the state of refugee and IDP camps as well as the state of Rwandan refugees in DR Congo.
- Partnering with various stakeholders willing to cooperate and find third countries for the resettlement of the FDLR not wanted for their direct involvement in the 1994 Rwandan genocide and those not guilty of war crimes.
- Finally, establishing a special international tribunal to prosecute actors of the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law 'classified as war crimes and crimes against humanity.'



# THANK YOU

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