

The Rwanda-Congo Conflict and Trump's Plan to Resolve It

(Translated)

[Al-Rayah Newspaper - Issue 579 - 24/12/2025](#)

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The Great Lakes region of Africa is experiencing one of the world's most complex conflicts, with tensions between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo resurfacing whenever old ethnic, political, and economic crises accumulate. This conflict historically dates back to the 1994 genocide, the rise of armed militias, and the competition among regional powers for vast mineral resources. Amidst escalating violence in 2025, the United States intervened with an initiative described as potentially changing the course of the crisis.

Let us take a quick look at the roots of the conflict and the intertwining of interests, including American interests, between the possibilities of peace or renewed conflict.

The turning point was the Rwandan genocide in 1994, when hundreds of thousands of Hutu fled to eastern Congo. This massive displacement ignited significant tensions between the displaced and their adversaries, such as the Rwandan rebel forces in Congo, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (French: Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)). The most important causes of this massacre were:

- The colonialist legacy: Belgium colonized Rwanda since 1916, and the colonialist power sowed ethnic division, considering the Tutsi a superior race, and granting them weapons, power, and education, while marginalizing the Hutu.

- Political and social discrimination against the Hutu, and then the Tutsi: In 1962, upon Rwanda's "independence," power shifted to the Hutu, leading to violent clashes against the Tutsi, causing thousands to flee to Uganda, Burundi, and Congo. In the late 1980s, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed, and in 1990, it launched an attack on the Hutu government. The ruling regime exploited this attack to generate an atmosphere of ethnic hostility. On April 6, 1994, the plane carrying President Habyarimana was shot down, and the RPF in particular, and Tutsi extremists in general, were blamed without evidence.

With the state weakened and the international order failing to intervene, and refusing to label what was happening as genocide until it was too late, the Tutsis and moderate Hutus were left to their fate, at the hands of a killing machine that resulted in the deaths of approximately 800,000 people in 100 days.

The massacre ended with the advance of the Rwandan Patriotic Front forces (RPF), their entry into the capital, the fall of the government that had orchestrated the genocide, and the escape of thousands of perpetrators, including politicians. At this point, the United Nations intervened, as usual, to capitalize on the situation rather than to end the massacres.

The state-building phase began from 1994 to 2000 under the control of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) led by Paul Kagame. A national unity government was formed, and hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees, both Hutu and Tutsi, returned from Uganda, Burundi, and Tanzania. Those involved in the genocide were prosecuted, and the armed Hutu militias were dismantled, with most of their members fleeing to Congo, formerly Zaire. This led to Rwanda's involvement in the First Congolese War in 1996 and the Second Congolese War in 1998. In 2000, Paul Kagame officially became the president of Rwanda.

From 2010 to 2022, Rwanda's influence expanded into eastern Congo, and its relationship with armed groups in Congo became very significant. Rwanda was consistently accused of providing unlimited support to these groups, such as the March 23 Movement (M23), an armed group that competes with Hutu militias in Congo. This intervention was primarily aimed at preventing the return of Hutu militias, and also because eastern Congo is very rich in gold, coltan, tin, and other essential materials for the electronics industry.

During this period, Rwanda became one of the most economically rising countries in Africa, while maintaining an authoritarian regime. The constitution was amended to allow Kagame to remain in power until 2034, and he engaged in the assassination of his political opponents.

At the beginning of 2022, armed groups, particularly the M23, seized control of important mining areas such as the Rubaya region, giving the movement a steady income from mining taxes. They subsequently seized control of major cities in eastern Congo, including Goma and Bukavu. This led to international condemnation, with accusations that Rwanda was funding the M23 with weapons and soldiers, accusations that Rwanda officially denied. This is where Trump's initiative of June 27, 2025, comes in. Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo signed a peace agreement under US auspices, known as the Washington Agreements. Trump invited the leaders of both countries to Washington to solidify the agreement and give it historical significance. The terms of this agreement stipulated the withdrawal of Rwandan forces from eastern Congo within 90 days, the establishment of a framework for economic integration between the two countries, the creation of a joint security mechanism to coordinate security matters, control weapons, and disband the unofficial M23 and FDLR militias, and the entry of private international, specifically American, and investments into the Congolese mining sector. This last point was Trump's primary objective in this rapprochement: to gain control of the mining sector as a means of reducing US dependence on China for strategic minerals.

According to Trump's statements, on 4 December, and his description of the agreement as historic, it ends one of the world's longest-running conflicts. He said, "It is an amazing day: great day for Africa, great day for the world and for these two countries. Today, we're succeeding where so many others have failed." He also said, "For more than 30 years, one of the worst conflicts on Earth has been raging in eastern Congo."

Will this agreement last and bring about peace? Or is it the beginning of a renewed escalation of the conflict?

It could be an opportunity for peace, supported by the fact that the US has a vested interest in achieving peace, to secure its control over the minerals, and also because the people are weary of the consequences of this war.

However, several factors threaten to reignite the conflict, including:

- The March 23 Movement (M23) movement remains active in eastern Congo, and is accused of receiving support from Rwanda.

- The real motives are not peace itself, but they are, instead, natural resources and Rare Earth Elements, and opening the door exclusively to American companies.

- Disbanding the militias is an easy condition on paper, but very difficult in reality.

- To this day, we still hear about clashes and attacks in eastern Congo.

- Some local communities in Congo believe that peace has been imposed on them from the outside, and that the problem has not been resolved at its roots. The underlying ethnic tensions remain, and they are neither heard nor seen until ethnic crises erupt.

The rise of Rwanda as a small regional power is significant; today, it plays a pivotal role in Central Africa, similar to the role of Jewish entity in separating the continents. It possesses a well-organized army and is heavily involved in Mozambique, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, enjoying strong American support. Rwanda is being positioned to play a role far exceeding its geographical and demographic size. Through Rwanda, the US will maintain its geo-economic security and facilitate the entry of major American corporations. This American presence will be legitimized through international agreements. The US will ensure that the Congo remains a weak giant, perpetually dependent on its support, allowing for the exploitation of its resources and preventing China, or any other power, from accessing Congo's vast mineral wealth and other resources. Stability will be determined by the success of the American equation: controlled peace + American investment + Rwandan influence = stability.

The peace agreement that has been reached may endure, but it is by no means guaranteed. The conflict between the two countries is not merely a fleeting border dispute, but, instead, the culmination of decades of ethnic tensions, regional interventions, and a struggle for control over resources that are now considered among the most valuable, even a national asset: Rare Earth Elements. True success depends on the ability of the parties to translate political commitments into tangible realities on the ground. This is where the dilemma lies, because the solution did not address the root causes of the conflict, but, instead, served immediate interests.

This leaves the question: Will Rwanda and the Congo be able to transform this American-brokered peace into a sustainable path, or will the agreements remain mere words on paper, a temporary truce in a potentially long-lasting war?