

Research Article

Pandemic–Conflict–Climate Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa and the DRC

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Abstract

The contemporary security environment of the Sub-Saharan Africa challenges the analytical boundaries of the traditional International Relations by demonstrating the growing interconnectedness of military conflicts with pandemics, ecological disruptions, displacement, resource competition, and institutional vulnerability. This article conceptualises this overlapping pressure through a Pandemic–Conflict–Climate Nexus, arguing how these ostensibly distinct threats cannot be adequately captured by state-centric and militarised approaches for explaining region's contemporary security dynamics. Drawing on regional and country level analysis of Sub-Saharan Africa and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and integrating insights from recent scholarly works and empirical development, this article develops a multidimensional framework that brings together human security, environmental security, regional security complex theory and post-colonial approaches. The DRC represents a particularly revealing case because its protracted eastern conflicts intersect with transboundary insecurity, forced displacement, public health emergencies, climate vulnerabilities, and competition over globally strategic mineral resources. Recent developments, including the 2025 United States-facilitated peace agreement between DRC and Rwanda alongside the Doha Declaration of Principles involving the DRC government and the Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC)/ March 23 Movement (M23) demonstrate the increasingly multilayered nature of international involvement in the conflict. Concurrently, the DRC's centrality to global cobalt production and copper supply chains has leveraged its strategic importance amid competition over critical minerals and energy-transition supply chain. The article argues that these intersecting vulnerabilities are neither domestic nor reducible to conventional conflict dynamics; rather, it generates from historical legacies, regional security processes, transnational vulnerabilities and global political-economic structure. The article consequently calls for a reconceptualization of African security beyond crisis management towards preventive diplomacy, cooperative sovereignty, climate-resilient development, health-security governance, responsible resource stewardship, and locally embedded peace building. The DRC from this perspective is not just a case of fragility, rather it is a critical geopolitical arena in which the boundaries between human security, resource sovereignty, regional order and global governance are being renegotiated.

Keywords

Sub-Saharan Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Human Security, Environmental Security, Conflict, Pandemics, Regional Security

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1. Introduction

The conventional architecture of the International Relations has historically privileged the states as the principal referent of security, with territorial sovereignty, military power and survival. Yet the transformation of international system post-cold war has progressively included along with military domain, the scope of infectious diseases, environmental degradation, climate change, food and water insecurity, food migration, economic instability and threats to human welfare. The COVID-19 provided the contemporary illustration of this conceptual shift: a biological threat rather than an armed adversary, disrupted state capacities, international mobilities, global markets and diplomatic relations on an unprecedented scale. Climate change simultaneously illustrates how ecological processes can reproduce political and socioeconomic vulnerabilities across borders.

Sub-Saharan Africa offers a particular compelling context to examine this transformation. The region's security environment is surrounded by mutually reinforcing conditions of armed conflict, institutional fragility, recurrent health emergencies, climate stress, demographic pressures, resource dependence and socio-economic inequality. Armed violence interacts with institutional fragility; health emergencies intersect with displacement; climate pressures effects already vulnerable livelihoods; and resource dependence connects domestic political economies to wider global markets. This article similarly demonstrates the interconnected character of pandemic, climate change and social stability, with, the DRC case study.

The institutionalisation of the geopolitics of the DRC further raises questions on its autonomy and multiple and overlapping diplomacy. The Washington Peace agreement [1] signed between DRC and Rwanda on 27th June 2025 under United States (US) and the Doha Declaration of Principles on 19th July 2025 between DRC and AFC/M23 by Qatari facilitation highlights how interconnected and African Regional Institutions, United Nations [2] and neighbouring countries are within the conflict-resolution mechanism of Sub-Saharan Africa.

The DRC is especially significant from a critical International Relations perspective because its geopolitical importance is closely connected to the political economy of its natural resources. Its extensive deposits of copper, cobalt and other minerals vital to renewable and crucial mineral industry coexist with a protracted conflict and persistent socioeconomic insecurity. The IEA identifies the DRC as a major Cobalt producer while highlighting the risks generated by the geographical concentration within critical-mineral markets. Congolese efforts to regulate cobalt exports during 2025-2026 consequently demonstrated an attempt to convert resource endowments into economic and geopolitical leverage. This contradiction raises a central question: How do conflict, pandemic, climate-vulnerability, and critical resource competition intersect within the security landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa, and

what does DRC case reveal about the changing political economy of international security?

The Article argues that the Sub-Saharan African cannot be understood simply as the outcome of violent conflict or institutional weakness but through the integration of historical legacies, regional rivalries, global resource dependencies, ecological vulnerabilities, and transnational governance structure.

The central argument remains that the security challenges of Sub-Saharan Africa constitute an interconnected nexus rather than a collection of separate crises.

2. Literature Review

The contemporary security environment of the Sub-Saharan Africa has incorporated health, environmental change, migration, resource insecurity, human vulnerability alongside traditional sovereignty, military and conflict studies. This expansion has generated overlapping literature including, human-security, climate-security, health-security, resource conflict studies, regional security complex theory, critical or postcolonial approaches. Yet these researches have been done in isolation with each other, this article bring these strands into dialogue and identifies the conceptual space for examining their convergence through a Pandemic-Conflict-Climate Nexus.

2.1. From Traditional Security to Human Security

Traditional realists conceptualise the security through the survival of sovereign state within an anarchic international system, with military force, territorial integration and strategic competition as the central focus. This conceptual shift exemplifies Sub-Saharan Africa where most consequential forms of insecurity cannot be contained by military strength alone. The human-centric approach shifts the referent object of security from state towards individual and community. This conceptual shift exemplifies Sub-Saharan Africa where most consequential forms of insecurity cannot be contained by military strength alone. Security encompasses not only physical protection but also freedom from hunger, disease, displacement, poverty, environmental degradation, and other conditions vital for dignified human life.

Saraiva and Monteiro's (2023) [3] literature on climate change and human security in vulnerable African cities identifies four interconnected crises: Food security and agricultural systems; water security; humanitarian crisis of conflict and climate migration and adaptation and mitigation strategies.

She contends that in Sub-Saharan Africa, climatic exposure frequently intersects with poverty, institutional weakness and existing political insecurity. This analysis proposes ecological importance in human security thereby strengthening conceptual connection between environmental change and human

vulnerability. The article directs attention towards the pathways through which environmental stress effects livelihoods, state capabilities, mobility and social stability. However, to address the problem of securitisation of human-security approach, this article conceptualises human security only as a component of interconnected security nexus.

2.2. Climate Change, Environmental Insecurity and Conflict

Barnett and Adger (2007) [4] examine the relationship between climate change, environmental stress and violent outbreak and conceptualised the climate change as “Threat multiplier”. They emphasis human security through its effect on the access to natural resource, livelihood and state capacity. The consequence of climate change does not automatically produce violence, rather its security consequences depend upon political, economic and institutional conditions.

Moving away from deterministic climate-conflict explanation, Link and Schilling (2019) [5] argues that climate change should be understood through environmental pressure and pre-existing social and political conditions involving land-use, existing conflict dynamics.

Similarly, Froese and Schilling (2019) [6] imply that climate change land use pressure and conflict as an interconnected nexus. Their approach demonstrates environmental insecurity operationalising through indirect pathways rather than a straightforward climate to conflict causal relationship.

Ehiane and Moyo (2022) [7] used human security theory to examine the Chad Lake region and demonstrated that environmental-resource pressure can become politically consequential when combined with weak institutional framework and unstable socioeconomic conditions.

This article iterates that in Sub-Saharan Africa and DRC, climate change should be treated as a multiplier and amplifier of insecurity rather than as a deterministic cause of conflict.

2.3. Health Security and International Relations

For most of the 20th century, Health was the domain of public health, development and humanitarian policy rather than that of International Relations. The COVID-19 Pandemic changed this paradigm by demonstrating how infectious diseases can disrupt state capacity, international mobility, global supply chains, economies and diplomatic relations.

Pattanshetty et al. (2024) [8], demonstrated that pandemics have become subjects of analysis concerning state behaviour, multilateralism, global governance and international cooperation.

Thus, health security extends beyond preventive measures to encompass international cooperation, health diplomacy, vaccine distribution, supply-chain resilience, border management, humanitarian assistance and the political capacity of state to maintain essential services. It can aggregate into sim-

ultaneous domestic governance crisis and international security problems. In conflict-affected African regions, mainly Sub-Saharans and DRC, armed violence can restrict humanitarian access, damage healthcare infrastructure, displace populations and undermine disease surveillance, which consequently places more pressure on already fragile institutions and displaced communities. WHO’s February 2025 assessment shows escalating violence, death, trauma and displacement while damaging critical health infrastructure and overwhelming hospitals and morgues [9]. The current trajectory further strengthens this concept as of 2026, Ebola outbreak was reported in sixth province in DRC owing to conflict, population movement, weak infrastructure, misinformation and disruptions to healthcare which complicated surveillance and containment. This development illustrates that health insecurity cannot always be separated from conflict and displacement because each can reinforce the vulnerability produced by the others.

2.4. Conflict, Natural Resources and the Political Economies of the DRC

The relationship between natural resource, political economy and armed conflict in the DRC occupies a central point within contemporary international political economy. It being a simultaneous conflict affected area and resource rich area with reserves of Cobalt and Copper creates a critical link between resource security and human security that remains insufficiently incorporated in the conventional conflict literature. The global energy transition has placed DRC in a strategic position as reported by the IEA’s *Global Critical Mineral Outlook 2025* report, which established DRC as a key player responsible for recent growth in mining output, particularly Cobalt, while warning that the geographic concentration remains extremely high [10].

The traditional resource-conflict literature examines the “Resource Curse”, whereby the abundant resource creates incentives for political elites, armed groups and external actors to compete over rents, taxation and territorial control. In case of DRC the Resource curse serves insufficient explanations. The relationship between minerals and violence is mediated by state institutions, informal economies, transnational networks, armed-group structures, and international regulatory regimes.

Wakenge et al. (2021) [11], after reviewing mining reforms and governance in Eastern DRC, concluded that mineral traceability and formalisation produced mixed outcomes persistent with militarisation of mining sites, weak territorial control, limited transparency, taxation problem, inadequate state accountability and the exclusion of women from the parts of the mining economy. Importantly, they contended that mining reforms did not exclusively resolve the underlying problems and challenges the approach that treats resolutions as technical solution to conflict. As resource governance is embedded within

wider structures of political authority and socioeconomical relations, conflict minerals should be analysed not only as a commodity that finance armed groups but as a part of broader political economy of sovereignty, governance and external dependence.

2.5. Regional Security and the Great Lakes

Buzan and Waeber's [12] (2003) framework on the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), emphasises that security threats are often geographically dependent where both state and non-state actors become dependent through the rivalries, alliances, interventions and threat perceptions. The Great Lake region consists of Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and the DRC provides a strong empirical example of this theory. The DRC's insecurity is historically been interconnected to the military movement, armed group networks, cross-border military operations and political alliances undergoing in the great lake region. Thus, conflict within the DRC cannot be adequately understood through domestic political variables. Similarly, Ouma (2023) [13], also concludes that the DRC conflict cannot be isolated from the broader security dynamics of the Great Lakes.

The DRC conflict has seen various external mediators like the United Nations (UN), US, Qatar etc., and as per the regional security perspective, peacebuilding cannot be reduced to domestic institutionalism.

However, RSCT, cannot fully capture the health and environmental dimension of insecurity. This limitation creates an important conceptual opening for the present study.

2.6. Critical and Postcolonial Perspectives on African Security

The critical and postcolonial advocates place the historical colonialism, external intervention, unequal economic relations, resource extraction and the global political economy at the centre of insecurity in Africa. They complicate the resource curse theory and give example of DRC's resource economy and its historical external extraction. They shift the attention from presumed deficiency rich states towards the international structure within which resources are extracted, traded and consumed. They ask the question: who controls resource; who benefits from their extractions; and how global demand shape's domestic political structure.

This perspective is essential in context of energy transition as it reproduce patterns in which resource-rich societies bear significant social and environmental costs while value chain is accumulated somewhere else. It also highlights the consequences of the external multiplayer peacebuilding in Africa, which raises questions on the African Agency, local ownership, and distribution of authority within international conflict-management process.

Accordingly, they recognise DRC as an actor situated within and responding to a broader international political

economy of security and resources.

3. Research Gap

The first gap is conceptual. Climate-conflict, health-security and resource-conflict research examines separately causal relationships. Less attention has been given how these dimensions often interact simultaneously within a single regional security environment.

The second gap is the relationship between domestic conflict and global geopolitics. Existing researches abstractly examines armed groups, minerals and regional conflicts, but the article converges conflict diplomacy with critical mineral competition.

The third gap is the transformation of African Agency. Much research portrays Sub-Saharan Africa primarily through vulnerability, fragility and external intervention, yet recent development demonstrates a more complex diplomatic environment involving African Union, United States, United Nations, Qatar and Africa states themselves.

The fourth gap is the post COVID transformation of security. Health emergencies are increasingly recognised as international-security issues, but their interactions with conflict and environmental insecurity remains insufficiently integrated into conventional regional security analysis.

This article addresses these gaps through a Pandemic-Conflict-Climate Nexus framework, with the DRC serving as a critical case.

4. Pandemic-Conflict-Climate Nexus

The existing literature have demonstrated the important theoretical and empirical research on each component of the proposed nexus. Human security explaining expansion of security referent beyond states; climate security identifying states as an amplifier of existing vulnerabilities; health security demonstrating the importance of pandemic to international politics, resource-conflict scholars explaining political economy of the mineral wealth and regional security approach demonstrating the transnational character of insecurity in the Great Lake.

Nevertheless, the principles are fragmented and abstracted from other domains, examining their respective domains in isolation. What remains comparatively underdeveloped is an integrated framework explaining how these forms of insecurity interact and reinforce one another within the same geographical and political space.

This article addresses the gap by putting forward the concept of Pandemic-Conflict-Climate Nexus while incorporating resource geopolitics as a fourth interconnected dimension. It conceptualises insecurity as recursive and mutually constitutive rather than linear.

It conceptualises that climate vulnerability triggers a cascading chain of socio-economic-political and geopolitical consequences. Climate-related hazards like such as drought,

floods, heat-waves and water scarcity can undermine livelihood by affecting agriculture, livestock, fisheries and other resource dependent economies, thereby generating livelihood insecurity and encouraging displacement and migration [14]. Large scale migration can place additional pressure on already fragile and weak institutions of health systems, increasing vulnerability to infectious diseases, malnutrition, quarantines and other climate sensitive health risks like malaria (145 spike, 147 to 171 million people at risk) [15], dengue, diarrhoeal, cholera outbreaks (Between January 2023 and March 2024, in 18 African nations 836,000 cases were reported), 34% decline in agricultural productivity since 1961 [16], 95,000 additional child mortality due to undernutrition reported by WHO [17], triple droughts in Sub-Saharan Africa since 2010. Mpox is particularly significant as its epidemiological dynamics demonstrates interactions with conflict, mobility and regional connectivity. WHO reported more than 12,000 suspected cases of mpox and 22 deaths between January and May 2025, representing more than half of reported mpox cases in Africa during that period [18].

Africa's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and WHO subsequently updated their continental mpox strategy to explicitly identify transmission and conflict in eastern DRC.

Consequently, political instability and heightened conflict arise as public institutions weakens to fulfil the humanitarian and socio-economic demands. At the same time climate induced disruptions to water, food, energy and land governance can intensify competition over scarce resources, undermining existing system of resource management. This pressure expands beyond domestic politics, as states competes over trans-boundary rivers, agricultural resources, critical minerals, migration corridors, and strategic territories. Climate vulnerabilities therefore operate as a multiplier of existing vulnerabilities.

This relation can also operate in opposition direction whereby armed force can destroy critical health infrastructures, force populations into environmentally vulnerable areas, disrupt agricultural productions, and intensify dependence on informal resource economies. This interaction is particularly evident in the Eastern DRC. In Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, ethnic tensions, armed groups, regional political dynamics and resource competition is evident.

Resource economy can both finance armed actors and strengthens political rivalries, while climate stress can burden land and livelihood. Health emergencies can then compound these vulnerabilities by weakening already overstretched institutions.

The DRC is therefore, analytically valuable as it allows these processes to be examined within one interconnected security environment rather than separate policy problem. The Article contributes in the convergence of the changes of the security itself.

The study proposes three propositions:

- 1) Contemporary security in Sub-Saharan Africa is increasingly multidimensional. Military security is connected

with human, environmental, health and economic security.

- 2) The relationship among these threats is interactive rather than linear. Climate-change and conflicts do not automatically generate pandemic, rather each can intensify pre-existing vulnerabilities under conditions of weak institutional capacity.
- 3) Resource geopolitics increasingly connects local insecurity to global strategic competition. The DRC's position in Cobalt and Copper supply chains demonstrates how local conflict and human insecurity can become connected to global economy of energy transition.

5. Methodology

The article employs a qualitative, interpretive and case-study methodology, based on four categories of evidences:

- 1) Documentary evidence: Chapters on Sub-Saharan and the DRC identifying pandemics, conflicts, and climate change as interconnected challenges and regional and international responses.
- 2) Academic Literature: Peer reviewed research on human security, climate-conflict relationship, health security, resource conflict, regional security complex and peace-building.
- 3) Current-affairs and institutional data: Evidences from UN, WHO, WB, IEA etc,
- 4) Process-oriented analysis: Recent developments in DRC to trace how domestic conflict becomes linked with regional diplomacy, global resource competition and institutional.

6. Discussion

The article demonstrates that the present security environment of the Sub-Saharan Africa particularly DRC cannot be explained through the traditional realistic state-centric or militarised approach. Insecurity produced there is highly interconnected in different factors and relations of institutes, environmental hazards, politicisation, resource curse, health issues, social backwardness, economic crisis, political instability and geopolitical pressure. The DRC exemplifies these complexities clearly as conflict, displacement, health emergencies, climate vulnerabilities and resource competition operates simultaneously and reinforce each other. The case study therefore, supports the central argument of Pandemic-Conflict-Climate Nexus: i.e., contemporary insecurity should be understood as multidimensional and mutually constitutive process rather than a separate entity.

- 1) The first major finding is the integral character of the security threat, whereby reciprocal cause and effects unfolds. Climate stress does not automatically generate violence or disease outbreak, rather, it amplifies existing

ones. Climate pressure affects land produce which directly turns into a competition over scarce resources accelerating displacement, extractions, health and administrative. The paper further analyses the cascading relationship between climate vulnerability, disease frequency, administrative turbulence and human security. This suggests that climate vulnerability cannot be alone an environmental concern, rather it should be upgraded into global politics and in fragile, conflict related areas human security, health security, peacebuilding and environmental sustainability should be simultaneously processed for a stable polity.

- 2) The second finding is the DRC represents a Regional Security Complex in which domestic political, social, economic, humanitarian and environmental problems become cross-border insecurity and requires international diplomacy. The conflict in eastern DRC cannot be studied in absence of the dynamics unfolding around the great lake region. The over involvement of external actors and institutes in the peace-making of DRC and Sub-Saharan has resulted in overlapping diplomatic mediations.
- 3) The third finding is that the case of Sub-Saharan Africa and DRC should move beyond conventional “resource curse” framework and instead critical mineral governance should be understood through interactions of sovereignty, state capacity, armed-group economies, global demand, environmental consequences and international political economy. the growing geopolitical importance of critical minerals. The DRC’s critical minerals of Cobalt and Copper create both opportunities owing to their concentrated reserves and vulnerabilities owing to their dependencies on market, infrastructure, finance, foreign investment and international supply chain.
- 4) The fourth finding reveals that although external actors remain influential, the DRC’s peace and security environment the African Agency as passive recipient of external interventions. The over- involvement of African Union, Qatar, UUN, US, neighbouring states and African diplomatic initiatives indicates towards an increasingly complex form of African agency. Post colonial scholars’ critic this approach and advocates for an African institute capable of coordinating diplomacy, security, health and climate policies themselves.

The DRC therefore, represents why security policy should move from reactive towards preventive and integrated governance. The core implication is that environmental security, human security, health security and resource security must be incorporated into a common and an analytical policy framework. The broader reconceptualization of African Security highlights the simultaneous presence of vulnerability and opportunities as a critical actor in global supply chain, a regional security actor, an important site of environmental governance and arena of competing diplomacy.

The findings of this study find that the policy intervention to insecurity should move from fragmented sectoral interventions towards an integrated governance capable of addressing interactions between conflict, climate change, health emergencies and resource competition.

- 1) Establish an integrated Pandemic-Conflict-Climate-Early Warning Mechanism

The African Union, national governments, UN, World Meteorological Organisation WHO, African CDC should institutionalised interoperable early warning system to allow governments to identify compound crises before they escalate into humanitarian and political crisis. This will shift regional security governance from reactive to proactive.

- 2) Strengthen African Union (AU), East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Developmental Community (SADC) coordination

The overlapping and multiple security initiatives surrounding the DRC demonstrates the need for a unified mechanism for information sharing, mediation coordination, and division of responsibilities among African institutions. International partners should complement rather than compete with African- led diplomatic processes. Such coordination would strengthen African agency while reducing institutional duplication.

- 3) Peacebuilding should be integrated with climate adaptation and livelihood resilience

These programmes should prioritise communities exposed to displacement, food insecurity, water stress and livelihood loss. Investments should be made in climate-resilient agriculture, water infrastructure, local food systems, and disaster preparedness that reduces socioeconomic pressure of displacement and competition over resources. Climate finance should not be treated as an exclusive environmental-developmental intervention rather it should be directed towards fragile and conflict-affected communities.

- 4) African health sovereignty should become an integral component of security policy

Infectious disease outbreak in DRC demonstrates weak healthcare infrastructure, population mobility and misinformation can undermine contamination. African CDC and WHO should strengthen regional mechanism, local diagnostic capacity, disease surveillance, emergency healthcare infrastructure, vaccine access, health-worker capacity and cross-border cooperation to reduce dependencies on emergency external assistance.

- 5) Critical mineral diplomacy should be connected to resource sovereignty and domestic development

The Cobalt and Copper resources of the DRC should be transformed from source of extractive dependence into instrument of economic transformation. International agreements should be initiated to prioritise technology transfer, local processing, infrastructure development, skills formation, environmental safeguards and employment generation. Such an approach would allow DRC to capture greater value from Global energy transition supply chains while strengthening its

bargaining position within the international political economy.

6) Resource governance should be linked directly to peace-building

Mineral traceability and formalisation should incorporate transparency, territorial governance, community participation, labour rights, environmental protection, and mechanism for equitable distribution of resource revenue. Particular attention should be given to communities and groups historically excluded from formal mining economy.

7) International peacebuilding should institutionalise local ownership

External mediation can create diplomatic openings, but sustainable peace requires legitimacy among affected communities and domestic institutions. International actors should support them rather than substitute them. Peacebuilding programmes should include local authorities, civil society, women, youth, displaced populations, and community organisations in decision-making and implementation.

Finally, security policy should adopt a multidimensional human-security framework. Military response should be complemented by policies addressing livelihood, health, climate resilience, displacement and resource governance. The central objective should be to break the reinforcing cycle in which climate vulnerability generates conflict. An integrated approach would therefore, connect peacebuilding with development, health security, regional cooperation climate adaption, conflict prevention and resource governance with sovereignty.

7. Conclusion

The Article, argues that contemporary security environment of Sub-Saharan Africa is undergoing a significant conceptual transformation. It has created a multi-dimensional security environment in which threats reinforce one another across regional, domestic and global levels. The DRC illustrates this example in its eastern flank region. Consequently, the insecurity creates other issues of displacement, humanitarian crisis, human insecurity, disease outbreaks, environmental crisis. Recurrent disease emergencies reveal the intersection between health and security, its environmental vulnerabilities. The resource concentration of Cobalt and Copper places its domestic political and economic dynamics within wider geopolitics of Critical Minerals and Global Energy transition.

The central contribution of this article is the conceptualisation of Pandemic-Conflict-Climate Nexus embedded within a wider political economy of resources and regional security. These vulnerabilities arising from the nexus cannot be understood in isolation, rather, it constitutes a recursive process in which climate vulnerability highlights the institutional and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The nexus further demonstrates a cyclic mechanism where both climate insecurity and human insecurity reinforces each other. Health emergencies can weaken institutional capacity; institutional stress can increase conflict vulnerability and disrupt resource governance; competition over strategic resources can intensify regional and

global geopolitical pressures. This cycle will make conventional crisis-by-crisis policy responses increasingly inadequate.

The analysis, challenges Sub-Saharan Africa and DRC as a region of fragility and dependency, highlighting instead its growing agency through diplomacy, regional cooperation and resource bargaining. Instead, the DRC illustrates the duality of vulnerability and strategic importance. Across Sub-Saharan and DRC region, climate stress, displacement, health crisis and resource competition increasingly intersects requiring cooperative sovereignty and multidimensional human security, enabling African states to transform interconnected vulnerabilities into opportunities for resilient and greater geopolitical agency.

Abbreviations

AP	Associated Press
CGE	Computable General Equilibrium
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CFR	Case-Fatality Rate
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCW	Healthcare Worker
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
INRB	National Institute for Biomedical Research
INSP	National Institute of Public Health
MERS	Middle East Respiratory Syndrome
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
RDT	Rapid Diagnostic Test
RCCE	Risk Communication and Community Engagement
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SARS-CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO AFRO	World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
One Health	One Health Approach/Framework
CCHF	Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
EBOV	Ebola Virus
BDBV	Bundibugyo Virus
Congo Basin	Central African Ecological and Geographical Region

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Waseem Qureshi: Investigation, Resources, Validation, Writing – review & editing

Azeeta Seher Qureshi: Data curation, Investigation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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