



RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE | USALAMA PROJECT
UNDERSTANDING CONGOLESE ARMED GROUPS

PARECO

LAND, LOCAL STRONGMEN
AND THE ROOTS OF MILITIA
POLITICS IN NORTH KIVU

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the roots of militia politics
in North Kivu

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THE USALAMA PROJECT

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Map 1. The eastern DRC, showing area of detailed map on back inside cover

Contents

Preface: The Usalama Project	6
Summary	7
1. Introduction	9
2. The wars of the 1990s	11
The AFDL war	14
The creation of the ‘Mongol’	15
RCD and TPD: New forms of mobilization	17
Transition and the failures of the peace process	20
3. The birth of PARECO	23
Political backdrop: Elections and CNDP	23
The Pinga meeting and the creation of PARECO	26
The breakdown of <i>mixage</i> and the Goma conference	30
4. PARECO’s peak and decline	34
The M23 mutiny and the remnants of PARECO	37
A rebirth of PARECO? The M23, Nyatura, and PARECO- <i>Fort</i>	39
5. Conclusions and policy considerations	44
Engaging political elites	45
Engaging military leaders	48
Engaging the grassroots	50
Glossary of acronyms, words and phrases	53
Bibliography	55
Map 1. The eastern DRC, showing area of detailed map on back inside cover	3
Map 2. North Kivu, showing approximate areas influenced by PARECO, early 2008	4

Preface: The Usalama Project

The Rift Valley Institute's Usalama Project ('peace' or 'security' in Swahili) is a response to on-going violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The protracted suffering of the inhabitants of this region in the past two decades has resulted in the expenditure of billions of dollars on conflict resolution. Yet the Congolese armed groups at the heart of the conflict are still poorly understood by the international organisations that operate in the DRC—and even by the Kinshasa government itself. The Usalama Project examines the roots of violence, with the aim of providing a better understanding of all armed groups, including the national army, the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

The Usalama research programme is guided by a series of questions. What is the history of these armed groups? Who supports and controls them? What are the relations of particular groups to the state, to neighbouring states, to business interests and to the Congolese armed forces? Why have some groups been so difficult to demobilize, while others have disappeared? And are there patterns to be discerned in the ways that groups proliferate, negotiate with the state, and then vanish again?

The project takes a primarily qualitative approach. It analyses historical sources and the small amount of quantitative data available, and traces the origins of armed groups through interviews with politicians, businessmen, representatives of civil society, and members of armed groups. The Project involves extended fieldwork by both international and Congolese researchers. The outcomes include reports on specific armed groups and wider geographical areas of conflict, and a series of seminars and workshops in the DRC.

Many of the interviews for this report were conducted on condition of anonymity. Where confidentiality was requested, identifying information in the report is limited to a number with a location and a date, e.g. Usalama Project Interviewee #105, Goma, 28 August 2012. In the course of the research, accounts of significant and potentially disputed events were confirmed by multiple sources with first-hand knowledge of the events under discussion.

Summary

The crisis in the eastern DRC shows no sign of abating. While international attention has focused on the M23 rebellion, which was at the centre of the escalation of violence in late 2012, the current conflict involves several dozen other groups.

This report provides a detailed account of the armed groups emerging from the Hutu community in North Kivu. It takes as its focus the *Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais* (PARECO, Alliance of Resistant Congolese Patriots). The stabilization of the eastern DRC requires a deep understanding of the dynamics underlying each armed faction. In the case of the Hutu community, the groups that emerged in the 1960s and early 1990s were initially tied to localized struggles over land and citizenship. In recent years, however, politicians in Goma, Kinshasa, and Kigali have been increasingly adept at harnessing these grievances to further their personal interests. Rebellion has thus become an essential part of elite strategies to bolster their stature and protect their interests. While PARECO was integrated into the national army in 2009, the recent M23 rebellion threatens to give a new impetus to rural militias, including those with roots in the Hutu community, with devastating consequences for the civilian population.

Pending national reforms in the DRC could ease or escalate armed violence. The central government in Kinshasa has been reluctant to decentralize the state and hold local elections, as mandated by the constitution. Nor has it provided a vision for strengthening decrepit local administrations. This attitude has only reinforced the belief among regional elites that they need to maintain military leverage to protect their interests. Each of these reforms, however, if carried out precipitously, could also spark new conflicts.

A similar logic applies to land reform, which has recently elicited renewed interest among donor governments. While land disputes are not the main cause of violence today, it is difficult to envisage stability in the eastern highlands of North Kivu without comprehensive land reform.

The main challenge, once again, is the weak state, which has allowed customary chiefs to continue their administration of much of the land, producing a parallel system of land management that has contributed to communal tensions. Simply converting all customary titles into their legal equivalents, however, could further aggravate those tensions and allow landholding elites to increase their already vast properties at the expense of the peasantry.

Finally, the government in Kinshasa will have to decide how to deal with remaining armed groups. A strong national army and police force are still a long way off, so despite official pronouncements, Kinshasa will bear the responsibility of including at least some elements of demobilization and integration in any future approach to the crisis. The key will be to design programmes that avoid reinforcing the 'revolving door' logic of integration/rebellion on the part of armed groups that has predominated in recent years.

1. Introduction

PARECO is the most recent armed group to emerge out of the Hutu community. It was created by political elites and disaffected army officers during an escalation of conflict in the eastern DRC in 2006 and 2007. Behind their immediate reasons for resentment lay a long history of communal strife in the Kivus, much of which was linked to the immigration of up to 300,000 Rwandans to the provincial highlands during the colonial era (1908–1960). These tensions were only exacerbated under the 32-year rule (1965–1997) of President Mobutu, as citizenship and land policies initially favoured and then discriminated against Hutu and Tutsi in North Kivu, known collectively as Banyarwanda. Tensions peaked during the democratization period (1990–1997), as Mobutu tried to shore up his power by sowing ethnic discord: communities mobilized for elections and the Rwandan civil war spilled west into the Kivus.¹

Three factors prompted the emergence of PARECO, each of them symptomatic of challenges still faced by the DRC today. Firstly, the countrywide integration of the army in the wake of the 2003 peace deal produced many discontented commanders, who felt they had not received the positions and ranks they deserved. In addition, Laurent Nkunda’s mainly Tutsi *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP, National Congress for the Defence of the People) was growing in strength.² At the end of 2006, the CNDP entered into a short-lived integration exercise with the Congolese army that threatened other power brokers in the province. Finally, the 2006 national elections inevitably produced more losers than winners—and the former felt they needed to shore up their political base by backing armed factions.

1 For a comprehensive background to the history of political and ethnic conflict in the region, see Jason Stearns, *North Kivu: The Background to Conflict in North Kivu Province of Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2012).

2 For more details, see Jason Stearns, *From CNDP to M23: The Evolution of an Armed Movement in the Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2012).

PARECO began as a broad-based coalition of activists and fighters from various communities, including the Hunde, Hutu, Nande, Nyanga, and Tembo, but it was the Hutu community that provided the largest number of troops and military leaders. As a result, this report devotes most of its attention to the Hutu wing of PARECO, tracing its emergence back through a long history of mobilization in the Hutu community of North Kivu. Excavating this past and understanding the forces driving these various groups will help to understand PARECO, as well as its potential successors.

2. The wars of the 1990s

When asked to start from the beginning, many PARECO leaders interviewed for this report chose to speak of the ‘Masisi war’ of 1993—fully 14 years before the formal emergence of PARECO as such. This conflict marked the ascendancy of Hutu figures to leadership positions in rural areas. It saw the first incarnation of armed groups in the *Petit Nord* (‘Little North’)—the lower half of the province, encompassing the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, Nyiragongo, and Walikale—and provided the training ground for most of the communities’ future leaders and commanders. In contrast with today’s groups, however, the militias formed in the period were decentralized and firmly rooted in peasant communities.

The violence in Masisi arose at the point where national and local politics collided, with Kinshasa-based and Goma-based leaders seeking to take advantage of communal strife in an increasingly uncertain political climate. By 1993, a profound political crisis had engulfed Zaire, as the deeply impoverished and corrupt country began to open up to multiparty democracy.

At the same time, local politics had become increasingly fraught. Eager to divide the opposition and to highlight the dangers of democracy, President Mobutu promoted ethnic unrest on the state’s periphery, famously using the regal threat: ‘*Après moi, le déluge*’ (‘After me, the deluge’). In 1991, Mobutu reversed his policy of appointing only outsiders to provincial leadership positions and named mostly Nande, Hunde, and Nyanga to top positions in North Kivu. With elections on the horizon, tensions escalated between these leaders and Banyarwanda, the people of Rwandan origin who constitute a majority in the *Petit Nord*.

State weakness had meanwhile fuelled the emergence of so-called *mutuelles*, ethnic-based communal self-help groups, which filled the vacuum left by the state. The deepest divide in the province was between the Banyarwanda—including many descendants of people who had immigrated during the colonial period—and so-called ‘indigenous’

communities: the Hunde, Nyanga, Tembo, and Nande. The most important of these associations was the *Mutuelle agricole des Virunga* (MAGRIVI, Virunga Agricultural Collective), formed in 1980 in Kinshasa by Hutu leaders with the aim of promoting solidarity and development within their community. For their part, the Hunde community, whose customary chiefs ruled in much of Masisi, formed a similar organization, the Bushenge-Hunde. Both of these *mutuelles* armed their own self-defence groups, and tit-for-tat murders over land and political control proliferated.

The first incident of mass violence occurred in Ntoto, near the border between Walikale and Masisi territories, in March 1993, as communities mobilized for elections and provincial leaders called on peasants to defend themselves against what they said was an impending attack by Hutu. Violence spread rapidly to the ethnically mixed areas along the western slopes of the Masisi highlands. Ad hoc Hutu self-protection militias were formed, drawing on pre-existing community structures: given its immigrant history, the Hutu community was not organized around customary authorities, leaving school teachers, church leaders and local businessmen to provide the social fabric around which militias coalesced.³

The main Hutu militia initially called itself simply *les Combattants Hutu* ('the Hutu Fighters') or, even more simply, *Magrivi*—despite having no official ties to the MAGRIVI *mutuelle*. It emerged independently in three places in Masisi with, at first, little or no mutual coordination. In Mahanga, Zabuloni Munyantware, a policeman who had been dismissed from his job by Hunde authorities, organized local youth. Further to the north-east in Busihe, a former army officer, Janvier Mayanga wa Gishuba, gave young men rudimentary military training and armed them with machetes, bamboo poles, and spears. Later in the year, a Nyamaboko

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3 In Masisi, as opposed to Rutshuru, most of the Hutu population are descendants of immigrants who arrived during the colonial period. Customary authority is therefore largely in the hands of the indigenous Hunde, Tembo, and Nyanga populations.

landowner and MAGRIVI leader called Bigembe Turinkinko made his name by forming his own group. All three of these leaders would play lead roles in the PARECO insurgency 14 years later.

Following the Ntoto killings, fighting spread quickly across Masisi, causing thousands of deaths on all sides and eventually leaving many areas ethnically homogenous. Most Hunde officials and much of the peasantry fled to rural centres such as Sake, Kitchanga, Masisi town, and Nyabiondo, while Hutu fighters consolidated their control over much of the Masisi highlands.

The fighting lasted until the end of 1993. By that time, Mobutu had visited Goma in person and installed another provincial government, this one less ethnically partisan, backing it up with military force. In Masisi, a power-sharing deal was eventually put in place, with a Hunde at the helm but with three Hutu and three Tutsi named in influential positions. In many places, Hutu leaders were named as deputies to Hunde customary chiefs, while civil society delegations successfully brokered inter-community reconciliation meetings.

At this time, the Hutu and Tutsi communities of Masisi were still close, at least in rural areas, although the Tutsi, who are a small demographic minority, also often had good relations with Hunde. Both were labelled 'foreigners' and as such were excluded from elected positions, especially during the democratic transition of the early 1990s. A new regional element, however, quickly eroded these relationships: the escalation of the civil war in Rwanda. Both the ruling government in Kigali and, especially, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels recruited across the border: Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana's increasingly ethnically oriented regime from the Hutu community, and the RPF from among the Tutsi.

The final blow was dealt by the arrival of around a million refugees in the eastern DRC in July 1994, following the genocide in Rwanda. The Congolese Hutu *combattants* allied with soldiers of the ousted *Forces armées rwandaises* (FAR, Rwandan Armed Forces), now known simply as 'ex-FAR'. 'The refugees were our brothers, so we collaborated with them,' said one senior *combattant* commander; 'they gave us weapons

THE 1993–1996 COMPROMISE

The power-sharing administration in Masisi eventually included the following leaders:

Commissioner of Masisi: Masumbuko Kubuya (Hunde)

Deputy zone commissioner, Bibwe: Zacharie Bizumuremyi (Hutu)

Deputy zone commissioner, Ngungu: Alexi Ndahiroranye (Hutu)

Deputy zone commissioner, Nyamitaba: Felicien Miganda (Hutu);

Deputy zone commissioner, Masisi: Ruhana Mirindi (Tutsi)

Deputy zone commissioner, Kibabi Stanislas Kananura (Tutsi)

Economic advisor to Governor of North Kivu: Edouard Mwangachuchu (Tutsi)

and helped us in our struggle.⁴ Over the next two years, almost the entire Tutsi population of rural Masisi and Rutshuru fled, with many escaping to Rwanda.

The AFDL war

This regional dimension, injected into an already volatile setting, provoked all-out war and dominated developments in the region over the next decade. While Hutu militias endured, the community faced deep divisions over how to position itself vis-à-vis Rwanda.

In 1996, Rwanda, Uganda, Angola and several other countries cobbled together a coalition of Congolese forces to invade Zaire, break up these refugee camps, and eventually remove Mobutu from power. Congolese Tutsi, many of whom had joined the RPF between 1989–1994 to liberate Rwanda, featured prominently in this *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL, Alliance of Democratic Forces for the

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4 Usalama Project Interviewee #25, Rutshuru, 17 April 2012.

Liberation of Congo-Zaire). In October 1996, the AFDL took control of Goma, scattering Rwandan refugees into the surrounding hills.

Strategic imperatives mixed with personal revenge to fuel months of grisly massacres, perpetrated against both Rwandan and Congolese Hutu across the Kivus. AFDL and Rwandan soldiers killed many Hutu political, business, and community leaders, along with thousands of farmers and villagers. The violence had a deep but ambiguous effect on the Hutu community. It stoked deep resentment and a lasting hatred—but many leaders also realized that armed resistance would be difficult, given Rwanda’s military superiority.

In May 1997, the First Congo War ended with the AFDL’s arrival in Kinshasa. Laurent Kabila was declared the new president and Zaire became the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By September the same year, those involved in the continuing conflict in North Kivu were seeking a strategic shift. The Rwandan government began reaching out to co-opt Hutu leaders, some of whom responded positively, persuading thousands of *combattants* to join the AFDL. Among them was Robert Seninga, vice-president of the *combattants*. ‘Those months were very hard but we really didn’t have a choice,’ he remembered. ‘The Rwandans had far superior firepower and steady supplies; we were just a bush guerrilla force.’⁵ Hutu troops were sent to military integration camps in Goma and Kisangani, where they were subjected to harsh training and conditions. Allegations persist within the Hutu community that hundreds of men died in these camps.

The creation of the ‘Mongol’

The AFDL had a devastating impact on the Hutu community. Its leadership was decimated and remaining stalwarts were divided. By early 1998, those who resisted the call to join the AFDL radicalized their resistance, basing themselves in southern Masisi under the command of Bigembe Turinkinko and Hassan Mugabo. This group called itself

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5 Usalama Project interview with Robert Seninga, Goma, 16 May 2012.

'Mongol'—according to some, a derivation of the Kinyarwanda expression *kumongore* ('to choose a piece') and a reference to the militia's practice of taxing and looting in relative moderation.

To help them hold out against a Rwandan counterinsurgency drive, the Mongol group formed an alliance with the *Armée de libération du Rwanda* (ALiR, Rwandan Liberation Army), a new rebel faction created by ex-FAR commanders out of former militiamen and Rwandan refugees. ALiR and its successor, the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR, Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda) are routinely described, especially by the Rwandan government, as *génocidaires*, 'perpetrators of the genocide'. This label is contentious: while there is no doubt that these groups did include *génocidaires* in their upper echelons, have espoused ethnic hatred, and have harboured many civilians who helped orchestrate the genocide, a large percentage of ALiR/FDLR soldiers probably never participated in the genocide.

The situation changed dramatically in mid-1998, when President Kabila fell out with his Rwandan allies. This triggered another Rwandan-backed rebellion based in Goma, the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy), which by the end of the year had been able to conquer much of the Kivus.

This new rebellion intensified divisions within the Hutu community. Mistrusting Rwanda, some Hutu leaders fought against the RCD. In February 1999, Bigembe, the leader of the largest such group, received a satellite phone from Kinshasa, which enabled him to stay in contact with Kabila's military commanders. Also prompted by Kinshasa, in early 2000 these Mongol fighters established an alliance with fighters loyal to General Padiri Bulenda of the Tembo community, joining his broad coalition of *Mai-Mai*—a generic and colloquial term for community-based self-defence militias that sprang up across the eastern DRC. This triple alliance—ALiR, Mongol and Mai-Mai—made up Kinshasa's proxy forces against the RCD in the east of the country.

RCD and TPD: New forms of mobilization

Even with these splits, a majority of the former Hutu *combattants* ended up siding with Rwanda and the RCD. Rwanda needed good local allies for this new war. After the AFDL had broken up the refugee camps in the eastern DRC, Rwandan insurgents, using rear bases in the Kivutian hinterlands, had infiltrated back into their own country and attacked key installations. Confronted with a relentless insurgency in north-western Rwanda, Kigali was intent on driving a wedge between Congolese and Rwandan Hutu. According to one Rwandan security official: ‘We realized that as long as Congolese Hutu backed the FDLR, we would not be able to secure our border.’⁶

Over the coming years, and especially under the patronage of North Kivu Governor Eugène Serufuli, Rwanda and its RCD allies were able to cultivate allies within the Hutu community, promoting their leaders to the forefront of trade and politics in Goma, Rutshuru, and Masisi. While Hutu had been prominent under Mobutu, they never had as much local influence or power as they enjoyed during the 1998–2006 period.

At the same time, Hutu military commanders became increasingly linked to local elites and dissociated from their rural roots. In the early days of the RCD, following encouragement from Kigali, Hutu leaders were named to prominent positions in North Kivu—but this was still not sufficient to unite the whole Hutu community behind the movement. So, in late 1998, Rwandan and Congolese security officials began experimenting with new forms of mobilization. They crafted an alliance of Hutu and Tutsi leaders who would work to reconcile the two communities and help repatriate Rwandan refugees, tens of thousands of whom were still living in the forests of the Kivus. Popular slogans such as *bene mugab’umwe* (‘sons of the same father’) and *ubumwe* (‘unity’) exemplified this conciliatory approach.

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6 Author’s interview with security official, Rwanda, 27 December 2004.

TPD LEADERSHIP

There were 11 known co-founders of the organization, which benefitted from seed funding from the Rwandan government:

President: Alexis Makabuza, prominent Tutsi businessman in Goma

Vice-president: Eugène Serufuli, Hutu nurse and businessman

Bertain Kirivita, Hutu trader working for Rwandan intelligence

Albert Semana, Tutsi and political RCD cadre

Suisse Nzeyingoro, Rwandan intelligence officer

Faustin Rwahama, Rwandan intelligence agent

Colonel Francois Munyarugerero, Congolese Tutsi officer

Théo Mpambuka, Hutu RCD official

Felix Musanganya, Hutu

Patrick Gashema, Tutsi youth leader

Celestin Senkoko, Rwandan intelligence officer

As a result, a non-profit organization, *Tous pour la paix et le développement* (TPD, All for Peace and Development), was launched in October 1998. The TPD boosted elite interests, while also appealing to the grassroots. It helped repatriate Hutu refugees to Rwanda, carried out development projects, and became involved in the political and military management of the province. The TPD launch appears to have been less a policy initiative of the Rwandan government than a proposal made to Kigali—and thence to the RCD leadership—by mid-ranking Rwandan intelligence officers and Congolese politicians. But seed funding and organizational support from Kigali was essential.⁷ ‘You have to understand,’ one TPD leader said, ‘that

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7 Usalama Project Interviewee #103, Goma, 12 and 13 May 2012.

all major policies during this time, whether they were for the RCD or TPD, were coordinated by Rwanda.’⁸

While he was technically only the vice-president, the central figure in the TPD—and the wider Hutu community—was Eugène Serufuli, who was named as Governor of North Kivu in 2000. He accelerated a policy of appointing new administrative officials in rural areas, many of whom were Hutu and Tutsi, thereby diluting the power of customary chiefs. In the *groupement* (ethnically-based administrative division) of Bashali-Mokoto in Masisi, for example, 13 out of 15 *chefs de localité* (local customary chiefs) were effectively replaced by RCD nominees, often with Hutu named to replace Hunde chiefs. Where Hunde customary chiefs were not actually replaced, the RCD frequently appointed Hutu secretaries as their deputies—and when insecurity forced chiefs to leave their chiefdoms, these deputies were left as the *de facto* authorities.

At the same time, important changes were taking place in the political economy of North Kivu, which increasingly linked political elites, business leaders, and armed groups. Business ventures were launched and managed directly by the RCD or by Kigali, and their profits were used for war-related expenses. According to UN investigators, this was the case with companies owned by or linked to senior Rwandan government officials, among them Rwanda Metals, the Maniema Mining Company, Grands Lacs Metals, and Eagle Wings Resources.⁹ Other businesses were nominally private but were often owned by local entrepreneurs, who were in turn dependent on RCD and Rwandan security forces for protection. *Le système*, as it became known, reduced business costs, with traders facing fewer tax agencies and less political interference. ‘Life under the

8 Usalama Project Interviewee #119, Goma, 16 May 2012.

9 ‘Report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo’, presented to the UN Security Council by Kofi Annan on 12 April 2001; ‘Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo’, presented to the UN Security Council by Kofi Annan on 23 October 2003.

RCD was in many ways easier,' reminisced one businessman in 2012; 'there was one boss to pay off, not twenty.'¹⁰

Political and security imperatives had become enmeshed with the drive for profit, as Serufuli cemented his power at both the grassroots level and in business circles—a feat achieved by few leaders in the Kivus before him. The political manoeuvring behind the creation of PARECO in 2007 would echo this earlier era—and this kind of political strategy remains alive today.

Transition and the failures of the peace process

In 2002, most significant Congolese warring factions signed the Global and Comprehensive Agreement, which ended the Second Congo War and set out the framework for the integration of armed groups into a transitional government and national army. This peace process gravely threatened the RCD's political clout and economic interests in the east. The prospect of elections, scheduled to take place after two years of transitional government, was as unsettling to them as the planned sharing of administrative and military command posts. The central armed group that emerged to thwart the peace process, the CNDP, did so as a direct consequence of this profound ambivalence towards the democratic process.

In response to these threats, the Rwandan security services helped to bolster Serufuli's military power. Since the arrival of AFDL forces in 1996, the authorities in Goma had begun to set up Local Defence Forces (LDF), modelled on similar security forces in Rwanda and initially built largely from former Hutu *combattants* from Masisi. In early 2003, with transition approaching, Serufuli and his TPD accelerated recruitment into the LDF to consolidate their strength ahead of army integration. As one of the leaders of the LDF remembered:

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¹⁰ Usalama Project Interviewee #26, Goma, 17 May 2012.

It wasn't until the RCD went to Kinshasa that Serufuli became really strong. He got many LDF men out of the forest and they started working for him. ... In 2003, Serufuli gave \$60 to each person you brought to join up. We got thousands of soldiers. We also started distributing weapons from Serufuli's house here in Goma. We would take weapons from his house and give them to all *nyumba kumi* and *chefs de quartier* [different kinds of local chiefs] in the rural areas. ... We taught them how bad the FDLR was and how Hutu and Tutsi needed to be reconciled.¹¹

At the same time, the crucial link between armed groups and business was demonstrated by the same local elites, who worked to consolidate their economic control of the province by creating a series of private companies in the telecommunications, mining, agriculture, and insurance sectors. Congolese shareholders included some of the leading RCD members: Mode Makabuza, Bertain Kirivita, Serufuli, Boniface Balamage, Alexis Makabuza, and Celestin Vunabandi. The Rwandan government also invested capital in the Supercell mobile phone company and in the *Société Congolaise d'assurances et de assurances* (SCAR, Congolese Society of Insurance and Reinsurance).¹²

But the political transition eventually spelled the end of the Hutu-Tutsi alliance and led to the fragmentation of the RCD leadership, with some hedging their bets by flirting with Kinshasa. This was particularly true for Eugène Serufuli, who was being outflanked by a pro-Kinshasa Hutu elite on one side and by RCD hardliners, who resisted national integration, on the other. Throughout the RCD war, prominent Hutu, in particular from Rutshuru territory where the Hutu population has always been more hostile toward the RPF government in Kigali, had been allied to Kinshasa. These leading figures included Professor Nyabirungu Mwene Songa and Sekimonyo wa Magango. By late 2003, the hardliners

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 11 Usalama Project Interviewee #103, Goma, 16 April 2012.

12 Usalama Project Interviewee #103, Goma, 16 April 2012; #24, Goma, 20 May 2012; and #119, Goma, 22 May 2012.

had found a leader in the dissident General Laurent Nkunda, who began rallying discontented RCD officials around him.

In July 2006, Nkunda announced the creation of the CNDP. While Serufuli had initially worked with Nkunda—supplying cash and troops for the siege of Bukavu in June 2004 and paying for his house in Goma—relations between the two soured as mutual competition intensified. Serufuli forced Nkunda to flee to Rwanda in 2005. In retaliation, CNDP units prevented Serufuli and his allies from campaigning for the provincial legislative elections to be held in October 2006.¹³

By early 2006, Serufuli had made a clear choice, veering toward Kinshasa while strengthening his ties with local Hutu leaders and militia commanders. This shift would eventually bring Serufuli into partnership with pro-Kinshasa Hutu militias in Masisi and fatally damage relations between Kigali and the local Hutu leadership.

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13 Nkunda loyalists in the 83rd brigade prevented the RCD from campaigning in Tongo on 31 August and 5 October 2006. A local motorcycle taxi driver was allegedly killed by Nkunda's troops after being accused of working for Serufuli.

3. The birth of PARECO

Political backdrop: Elections and CNDP

PARECO should be seen not simply as an armed group but as the manifestation of a deliberate strategy on the part of military and political elites to reposition themselves in the face of new threats and military movements in North Kivu. While it featured many of the same leading personalities as the 1993 Masisi militias, they had long since been integrated into elite networks.

The group began through disparate initiatives. On the one hand, many Hutu commanders, especially those hailing from weak Mai-Mai groups, were resentful about the inferior positions they found themselves in after their integration into the new-look Congolese national army, the FARDC. The integration of armed groups created a large pool of malcontents—hardly surprising given that many militias had a bloated, self-appointed officer corps.

One key dissident was Colonel Hassan Mugabo, a poorly educated former *combattant* commander from Masisi who had been a prominent opponent of the RCD during the war. Mugabo belonged to the Mai-Mai commanded by General Padiri Bulenda and had been integrated into the army around the time of unification. Given the weak political leadership of the Hutu Mai-Mai faction, however, he had failed to obtain a command position during two separate integration exercises: when the time came to appoint commanders and political leaders from his group in the transitional government, Padiri sidelined many of his collaborators, especially those outside his Tembo ethnic group. ‘We didn’t have anybody in Kinshasa or Goma looking out for our interests,’ explained Felicien Miganda, at one point Mugabo’s spokesman, ‘so Mugabo and many of our other commanders were side-lined.’¹⁴

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14 Usalama Project interview with Felicien Miganda, Goma, 20 May 2012.

Frustrated, Mugabo retreated to Goma but kept in touch with his former colleagues and soldiers, many of whom had also been discouraged by the integration process. By early 2005, there were reports of raids carried out by his former soldiers in southern Masisi.¹⁵ The self-proclaimed local customary chief, Bigembe Turinkinko, who had been the political leader of the Hutu Mai-Mai insurgency in southern Masisi, also played a key role in this mobilization.¹⁶ But even combined, Mugabo and Bigembe lacked either the political clout or the access to resources required to muster a powerful force.

This is where several political heavyweights in Goma and Kinshasa stepped in, seeking to bolster their own influence in response to the CNDP. Among them was Dieudonné Bakungu Mithondeke, a strongman from the Hunde community who had been vice-governor of North Kivu between July 2003 and December 2005. According to participants, meetings between Mugabo, Bigembe, and Mithondeke began in July 2006.¹⁷ A firebrand known for his fierce anti-CNDP rhetoric, Mithondeke was in touch with several Mai-Mai commanders from his community who had been disappointed by army integration, including Colonel Akilimali Shemondo, Colonel Janvier Karairi Bwingo, and Colonel Ntasibanga. Hunde traditional chiefs, too, harassed and undermined by the CNDP in Masisi, participated in these meetings—among them Mwami Bahati Kaembe from Bashali-Kaembe (Mithondeke’s father-in-law) and Michel Bakungu from Nyabiondo (Mithondeke’s brother).

Another former Mai-Mai commander from the northern part of the province, Colonel Sikuli Lafontaine, arrived from Kinshasa, where he had been based since participating in the 2002 peace talks as a Mai-Mai representative. Lafontaine began contacting other commanders from his

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15 An internal MONUC report of 9 March 2005, for example, described fighting between Mugabo’s 6th Mai-Mai brigade and a former RCD unit based there.

16 Masisi is made up of two *chefferies*, Bahunde and Bashali, and two *secteurs*, Osso and Katoyi. The latter was created by the central government in the 1970s, which names the head of the *secteur*. Bigembe is therefore not a hereditary customary chief.

17 Usalama Project Interviewee #17 in Katoyi, 16 May 2012.

own Nande community, expanding his contacts to Mithondeke and the Hunde commanders in early 2007. While the Hutu wing of PARECO would eventually be its strongest faction, Lafontaine's political connections and comparatively good education led him to be chosen as overall leader of the coalition.

It was Serufuli's associates, however, who played perhaps the most important, albeit very discreet, role. In early 2006, he began using his influence over the Hutu commanders of the 81st and 83rd brigades—former LDF fighters from whose numbers Nkunda was recruiting most of his soldiers—to entice them to defect from the CNDP. In February 2006, the 83rd brigade commander, Major David Rugayi, led over 1,400 soldiers out of the CNDP and into army integration. Several months later, the 81st brigade commander, Colonel Smith Gihanga, also a Hutu, followed suit.

Presidential and legislative elections on 30 June 2006 hammered home the new political reality. The RCD, which had controlled up to a third of the country, was nearly destroyed as a political force. RCD presidential candidate Azarias Ruberwa won just 1.7 per cent of the vote, while his party could only claim 15 of 500 seats in parliament. 'Serufuli needed to prove he was still a leader,' one of his intelligence officers argued; 'he had been diminished at the ballot box and marginalized militarily.'¹⁸

Nor was Serufuli the only Hutu leader to jump at the chance to reinvent himself with a new rebellion. 'This is what these men do best,' said a former Serufuli associate; 'they have been fighting for the past 20 years and when they smell a new rebellion coming, they get on board. It's in their blood.'¹⁹

Most of these leaders had played prominent roles in previous Hutu insurrections. General Janvier Mayanga wa Gishuba, the highest-ranking Hutu officer in the national army, began meeting with Mithondeke in early 2007 and sent several of his bodyguards to Masisi to participate in mobilization. Bigembe Turinkinko also began mobilizing local youths in Katoyi

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18 Usalama Project Interviewee #22, Bukavu, 12 April 2012.

19 Usalama Project Interviewee #20, Goma, 19 May 2012.

sector, where many of Mugabo's troops were based. Colonel Zabuloni Munyantware, overall *Hutu combattant* commander in 1993 before joining the RCD, was an intelligence agent in southern Masisi in 2006. He later went on to organize the PARECO police force.²⁰ And Colonel Gwigwi Busogi, former *Hutu combattant* commander and colleague of Mugabo in General Padiri's Mai-Mai, played an important role in mobilizing Hutu youth in Kalehe territory in South Kivu, where PARECO became established several months after its appearance in Masisi.

These early, tentative steps to counterbalance Nkunda were accelerated in December 2006, when the first major fighting between the CNDP and the national army took place. In order to defuse the crisis, the Congolese government struck the first of several peace deals with the CNDP, resulting in *mixage*, the on-site integration of the CNDP into the national army. This agreement gave CNDP commanders prominent positions in the Congolese army, raising Nkunda's stature and influence. '*Mixage* was the trigger for the creation of PARECO,' one of its former leaders said; 'it showed us that the government in Kinshasa could not be trusted. We had to take matters into our own hands.'²¹

The Pinga meeting and the creation of PARECO

Each armed group has its own folklore. While much of the ground work that fostered the creation of PARECO took place in Goma and Kinshasa, its actual founding event took place in the remote jungle town of Pinga, in Walikale territory, on 14 March 2007. The meeting was the initiative of Colonel Lafontaine, who picked the location because it is halfway between Lubero territory, his stronghold, and south-western Masisi, where the other leaders were based. It is difficult to know exactly who took part in this meeting, as anyone who stakes a claim to PARECO leadership now insists that he was there.

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 20 Usalama Project Interviewee #17, Katoyi, 16 May 2012, and #25, Rutshuru, 17 April 2012; interview with General Mayanga, Kinshasa, 17 June 2012.

21 Usalama Project Interviewee #19, Goma, 25 July 2012.

So did PARECO have a core ideology? The coalition's initial declaration said it was formed to protest against *mixage*, the integration of CNDP troops into the army, claiming that the process was a means of furthering Tutsi regional domination. It called for General Nkunda to be arrested, for the repatriation of Congolese Tutsi refugees from Rwanda to end, and for a peaceful solution to be found for the FDLR. Interviews with former PARECO commanders and politicians reflect this attitude, sometimes in virulent terms, with some speaking about the threat of Rwanda trying to create a 'Hima Empire', inferring a superior racial identity, or a 'Republic of the Volcanoes' (a reference to the region's geography) led by Tutsi.

Differing *raison d'être* have been given by former PARECO leaders, some of whom espouse much less ethnically prejudiced motivations. This is especially the case for those who participated in the RCD. For them, PARECO was a form of communal self-defence against the expanding power of the CNDP. A former PARECO officer explained it in the following manner:

We initially joined the CNDP. Nkunda held meetings and told us he wanted Hutu and Tutsi to unite, that we were one community and all spoke the same language and that the government wasn't taking care of us. But then we noticed that their actions didn't match their words. They began to discriminate against us Hutu. They brought their cows into our fields. A Hutu peasant or soldier couldn't get the same access to CNDP commanders as a Tutsi. So we left and joined PARECO.²²

PARECO's political wing was less stable and went through numerous shuffles in the first year. Its initial spokesperson was Sophie Bwiza Bitegetsimana, daughter of a prominent Hutu leader from Masisi, who had met with Mithondeke and Mayanga in Kinshasa in 2006. As she

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 22 Usalama Project Interviewee #21, Lushebere, 11 May 2012.

PARECO'S EARLY COMMAND STRUCTURE

The group's loose cohesion can be seen in the different versions of internal structure put forward by its members. Indeed, four interviews with different PARECO leaders produced four different command structures for this period. According to one high-ranking staff officer (a Hunde, which might explain the unlikely predominance of Hunde officers), the following was the composition of the PARECO command shortly after its creation:

Coordinator and commander-in-chief: General Sikuli Lafontaine (Nande)

Deputy commander: Colonel Hassan Mugabo (Hutu)

Chief of staff: Colonel Ngulu Muhombo

T1 (IN CHARGE OF PERSONNEL): Colonel Papa Plus (Hunde);

Deputy T1: Lieutenant Colonel Blaise Nsekanabo (Hutu)

T2 (INTELLIGENCE): Colonel Safari (Nande);

Deputy T2: Colonel Eugène (Hunde)

T3 (OPERATIONS): Colonel Bruno (Hunde);

Deputy T3: Lieutenant Colonel Alphonse Ndayambaje (Hutu)

T4 (LOGISTICS): Colonel Eugène (Hunde);

Deputy T4: Lieutenant Colonel Zerwa (Hunde)

T5 (CIVILIAN RELATIONS): Colonel Manuel (Hunde);

Deputy T5: Lieutenant Colonel Masumbuko (Hunde)*

* Usalama Project Interviewee #15, Goma, 25 July 2012.

was imposed by Lafontaine's wing, however, she was rejected by Hutu commanders, who put forward Sendugu Museveni, a relatively unknown Hutu schoolteacher, as an alternative spokesperson.

Even in the military wing, divisions quickly emerged, crystallizing along ethnic lines—and the internal divisions were reflected geographically. PARECO headquarters was initially set up in southern Masisi but

after six months the group split the command, with Headquarters A in Kasiki (Lubero territory) and Headquarters B in Katoyi (Masisi). By the beginning of 2008, another headquarters had been set up at Kasopo (Masisi), to satisfy the demands of Hunde officers. Officers from the various ethnic groups were deployed to the different headquarters in an effort to maintain a unified command. The commanders opened several training camps including one in Bukumbirwa (Walikale territory) and another in Katoyi.²³

These divisions reflected competing political networks as well as ethnic differences. The experience of Hassan Mugabo shows how these tensions drove the group apart. When Mugabo failed to get an appointment in the army in 2006, he initially sought out his old comrades from the Mai-Mai, including officers like Janvier Bwingo and Akilimali Shemungu.

Former RCD leaders close to Governor Serufuli, however, also tried to co-opt Mugabo, to help stem the growing influence of the CNDP. Even before the creation of PARECO, officials such as Robert Seninga and Emmanuel Munyamariba were distributing weapons and contacting former Hutu soldiers in Masisi who had been demobilized during the transition.²⁴ They had a complicated relationship with Mugabo: they had been on different sides during the 1998–2003 war but had fought side-by-side in the 1993 Masisi wars.

In the end, the strong Hutu elites in Goma prevailed. ‘We put the past behind us,’ said local Hutu chief Bigembe, who had been a staunch opponent of Serufuli: ‘We fell back on the memory of the Hutu struggle of the 1990s, in which all of us—Seninga, Mayanga, Mugabo, and myself—had fought together.’²⁵ Fighters from the Hunde community confirm this sequence of events. One former PARECO colonel blamed ‘Hutu

23 MONUC internal evaluation of PARECO, April 2008.

24 These distributions were documented by the United Nations: S/2005/436 ‘Report of the Group of experts submitted pursuant to resolution 1596 (2005)’, 26 July 2005; an internal UN document from September 2006 also reports on renewed mobilization by Colonel Mugabo and Hutu leaders in Masisi.

25 Usalama Project Interviewee #17, Katoyi, 16 May 2012.

elites' who, he said, 'made this into an ethnic affair'.²⁶ According to a close former associate of Governor Serufuli, 'Mugabo was weak before the Hutu leaders in Goma, in particular Seninga, threw their weight behind him.' Seninga denies these allegations, although he acknowledges supporting the group morally, 'as did all Hutu leaders in the area.'²⁷

There was no shortage of recruits. A total of 102,000 soldiers had been demobilized between 2005 and 2008 as part of the peace process, given a demobilization fee and returned to their home villages to be reintegrated. By the end of the process, however, only around 60 per cent of these youths—colloquially called *les demobs*—received full integration packages, and even those who did often struggled to make a living.²⁸ A sample of 165 PARECO soldiers who were demobilized in 2008 shows that over a third of them had been soldiers in other groups before joining PARECO.²⁹

The breakdown of *mixage* and the Goma conference

In August 2007, the *mixage* process collapsed, owing to mistrust between CNDP and FARDC, and PARECO engaged for the first time in large-scale military operations. This period also marked the beginning of Congolese army support to PARECO, part of a strategy of tying down CNDP units by funnelling supplies to local militia.

The Hutu wing of PARECO became an essential part of the DRC government's military strategy. In parts of Masisi where the national army was particularly vulnerable, mainly due to problems of resupply, PARECO—often operating alongside FDLR units—provided much-needed back-up. A key example was the 81st brigade in Katale, otherwise known as *Battalion Requin*, 'the Shark Battalion'. When it was surrounded and attacked by CNDP soldiers on 29 August 2007, it appealed to PARECO for help. 'Mugabo saved the Congolese army from a serious

26 Usalama Project Interviewee #15, Goma, July 25, 2012.

27 Usalama Project interview with Robert Seninga, Goma, 15 April 2012.

28 Presentation by MONUSCO's demobilization division in Goma, August 2011.

29 Confidential internal United Nations documents.

defeat,' a senior PARECO leader remembered.³⁰ In terms of reciprocal military support, PARECO units in Katale received regular backing from Colonel Philemon Yav, while in Kalehe, the 14th brigade of Hutu Colonel David Rugayi also funnelled weapons and ammunition to PARECO.

This collaboration may have begun in an ad hoc manner but as the fighting escalated it soon became systemic. 'Kinshasa was aware of this collaboration and backed it,' remembered General Mayanga, who sent several of his officers to help build PARECO. When asked why the government would provide support to PARECO instead of its own army, Mayanga provided the same answer as many other PARECO leaders: 'Due to integration, Kinshasa couldn't trust many of its own commanders, some of whom were former RCD officers and hence close to the CNDP. We needed our own army.'³¹

Mutual resentment was deep and bitter. Nkunda was reputed to have two dogs, one called 'Seninga', the other 'Rugayi'. More seriously, since PARECO was rooted in local communities, the CNDP concluded that the local population in some areas must be complicit with their PARECO enemies, and began targeting civilians. CNDP soldiers retreating from their attack on Katale looted nearby farms and sought out the brother of Robert Seninga, the prominent Hutu leader. 'They killed him with a spear. That was a message they were sending to me,' Seninga remembered.³²

Almost as soon as the open conflict between CNDP and PARECO began, it was overtaken by news in September 2007 that a peace conference was being organized in Goma, involving armed groups, political parties, and civil society. Ironically, the Goma Conference spurred further mobilization, as armed groups and politicians scrambled to benefit from a potential power-sharing deal.

The summit serves as a cautionary tale for the challenges that will face any future peace talks. It opened on 9 January 2008, with 1,300 delegates

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30 Usalama Project Interviewee #17, Katoyi, 16 May 2012.

31 Usalama Project interview with General Mayanga, Kinshasa, 10 May 2012.

32 Usalama Project interview with Robert Seninga, Goma, 15 April 2012.

attending, and lasted until 25 January. The conference culminated in the signing of the *Actes d'engagement* ('deeds of commitment'), a set of agreements signed by most of the major armed groups in the Kivus, including PARECO. This deal included a ceasefire, the integration and demobilization of armed groups, and political and legal guarantees. According to a Congolese army commander, when asked about PARECO and the Goma Conference, 'our strategy was to dilute the CNDP in a sea of other armed groups allied to us'.³³

But the signatories seem never to have intended to implement the deal. 'Even during the Goma Conference, both Kinshasa and the CNDP were planning their offensives,' one of the diplomats involved in the talks said.³⁴ As international pressure mounted on Kinshasa to comply with the ceasefire, the presence of PARECO in strategic areas became a critical foil for the national army's fight against the CNDP, especially in Masisi and north-western Rutshuru.

Just as PARECO began to convert its military prowess into political stature, however, it once again succumbed to internal discord. The first crisis was triggered in February 2008 by the nomination of representatives to the commission charged with implementing the post-Goma peace plan, *Programme Amani* ('the Peace Programme'). The technical commissions provided generous salaries and per diems, with commissioners earning between \$2,000 and \$3,000 a month. The PARECO list was heavily skewed toward Sikuli Lafontaine's wing and was led by Lafontaine's own brother, Firmin Mathe. This list was rejected by Mugabo's Hutu wing, which promptly suspended its participation in the peace process for six weeks.³⁵

Around the same time, the Hunde wing of PARECO split off under the leadership of Colonel Janvier Karairi Bwingo. A former Mai-Mai, Bwingo did not feel bound by the *Actes d'engagements*, which had been signed only

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33 Usalama Project Interviewee #26, Bukavu, 2 December 2012.

34 Usalama Project interview with diplomat in Kinshasa, April 2008.

35 MONUC North Kivu weekly report, 4–10 May 2008.

by Hutu and Nande representatives. By May 2008, his splinter group had become known as the *Alliance patriotique pour un Congo libre et souverain* (APCLS, Patriotic Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo), although he continued to profess his support for PARECO.

Finally, as the *Amani* programme was being conducted on a provincial level, the split between PARECO in North and South Kivu was reinforced. In both provinces, there are large immigrant Hutu communities in the adjacent territories of Kalehe and Masisi, but political dynamics differ because of the distinct politics of the two provinces.³⁶ So, in the end, the peace process exacerbated and cemented the group's internal divisions.

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 36 The southern wing was led by Colonel Salatiel Rutambuka and Colonel Gwigwi Busogo.

4. PARECO's peak and decline

The Goma Conference did not produce a lasting peace process. The CNDP never believed that Kinshasa would be able to guarantee its political, economic, and security interests. For its part, the government never saw the CNDP as a trustworthy partner. By October 2008, a new wave of violence had displaced at least 250,000 people, as armed groups clashed throughout Kalehe, Masisi, and Rutshuru territories. The CNDP offensive culminated in their capture of the Rumangabo military camp on 6 October 2008. At the end of the same month, the rebels advanced on Goma, coming to within a few kilometres of taking control of the town on 26 October, a development that marked the zenith of hostilities.³⁷

In December 2008, Kinshasa and Kigali agreed that Rwanda would help integrate the CNDP into the national army; one important factor of which would be the arrest of its commander, Laurent Nkunda. The FARDC, for its part, would launch operations against the FDLR, who had been allies of convenience since 1998, and allow the Rwandan army to participate.

The governments of the DRC and Rwanda also reached out to PARECO, seen as the second largest rebel faction after the CNDP. The Rwandans invited Seninga and Bertin Kirivita to Kigali to hammer out a solution. Their role clearly highlights the importance of local Hutu elites as well as that of Kigali for armed groups: Seninga and Kirivita travelled with Mugabo on a Congolese presidential jet to Kinshasa to help negotiate the terms of his integration with President Kabila himself. 'They were not the founders of PARECO,' one of Serufuli's former associates said, 'but Kigali and Kinshasa both knew they needed to get the Hutu community on board, and Seninga and Kirivita are key players.'³⁸

37 United Nations Group of Experts Report, 12 December 2008, p. 17.

38 Usalama Project interviewee #20, Goma, 12 May 2012.

According to two PARECO leaders, Mugabo then proposed ranks for his officers, in consultation with his political leaders, and the presidential office rewarded him with a substantial sum of money. The deal was eventually formalized with the signing of the 23 March 2009 agreement in Goma, which provided the terms of the latest attempt at integrating armed groups into the national army. And, to a certain extent, it worked. A total of 3,298 PARECO soldiers were integrated into the FARDC—2,872 for North Kivu and 426 for South Kivu—and participated in Operations *Umoja Wetu* ('Our Unity') and *Kimia II* ('Peace II') against the FDLR.³⁹ In some brigades, such as the 241st and 242nd based in Kalehe (South Kivu), almost half of the soldiers were former PARECO fighters.

But even as those behind the peace deal and the integration process celebrated their success, discord was stirring. As before, many PARECO commanders resented the modest army ranks they were allocated. The highest level of the *Kimia II* structure consisted of coordination and operational zones—and no PARECO officers were to be found in any of these command posts, which were shared mostly between government and CNDP officers, despite a quota system that was supposed to guarantee PARECO representation in nearly all units at the level of either commander or deputy commander. PARECO officers did obtain command positions in two sectors and several brigades, but all too often found themselves serving under their former CNDP enemies.

For PARECO, riven by internal conflict and lacking a strong political leadership, integration proved fatal. Mugabo, never a charismatic leader, failed to maintain his officers' loyalty, at one point even leaving the army to work with a local demobilization initiative. The deployment of PARECO troops across hundreds of kilometres and into different units broke up their solidarity and removed vital support previously received from local Hutu community leaders. Prominent figures such as Seninga,

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 39 *Rapport de synthèse finale d'intégration accélérée et classique des groupes armés du Nord Kivu*, document on file with the Usalama Project. For South Kivu, email communication with Congolese army officer in Bukavu, July 2012.

Bigembe, and Mayanga, meanwhile, were divided among themselves and lacked the personal clout to keep the networks together.

Weakened and suffering from low morale, PARECO cadres were easy prey: commanders began to defect to the CNDP, which was more cohesive and more adept at political manoeuvring. An early indicator of this trend was the creation of a parallel police structure in Masisi in late 2009, under the dual command of Colonels Esaie Munyakazi (ex-CNDP) and Zabuloni Munyantware (ex-PARECO). Some local Hutu strongmen, such as Emmanuel Munyamariba in Lushebere, were also involved in the management of this force. According to a commander in this police, ‘when PARECO fell apart, we followed the strongest and richest bosses, who were in the CNDP. What were we supposed to do?’⁴⁰ According to a UN report, this parallel force—which remained operational until the M23 mutiny of March 2012—numbered over 1,000 soldiers and gathered up to \$140,000 a month in taxes, money that was given directly to the ex-CNDP chief of staff, General Bosco Ntaganda.⁴¹

Other PARECO officers followed. In September and October 2010, amid rumours that ex-CNDP units would soon be moved outside the Kivus, Ntaganda tried to mobilize ex-PARECO officers against redeployment. He held several meetings in Minova, on Lake Kivu, with former PARECO commanders, among them Colonels Edmond ‘Saddam’ Ringo, Kifaru Nyiragiye, and Ndayisaba Ngirabatware, and Lieutenant Colonels Jean Burimasu and Mwendangabo Nsabimana. The disavowed PARECO president Sendugu Museveni, who was frustrated with Hutu leaders meddling in PARECO affairs, also joined this dissident group. Ntaganda argued that they had been unfairly marginalized by a corrupt group of national army generals—but that he could offer real help.⁴² He promised

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40 Usalama Project Interviewee #27, Goma, 13 May 2012.

41 UN Group of Experts Report, 21 June 2012, p. 29; UN Group of Experts Report, 11 December 2011, p. 91; UN Group of Experts Report, 29 November 2010, p. 44.

42 Colonel Saddam became the 10th sector commander after another ex-PARECO commander, Colonel Gwigwi Busogi, was arrested, allegedly with General Ntaganda’s complicity. Colonel Kifaru was the commander of the 111th regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel

them gifts, paid for their weddings, and gave them money in an effort to weaken Mugabo's standing and gain Hutu support. According to a UN investigator, 'you had to work with Bosco [Ntaganda] in order to get a command position in 2011.'⁴³

PARECO commanders were too weak to resist these inducements but were still able to muster resistance. Mugabo and allied Hutu provoked a show of force during the regimentation process (the restructuring of Congolese army units that began in early 2011), threatening to defect. In response, the army gave Mugabo the command of the 5th operational sector, based in Lubero territory. As one Congolese army commander put it: 'Even in the face of Bosco's power plays—or perhaps precisely because of this—Kinshasa needed to placate Mugabo and his ex-PARECO commanders.'⁴⁴

The M23 mutiny and the remnants of PARECO

By the time ex-CNDP officers, backed by the Rwandan government, launched the M23 rebellion in April 2012, PARECO had become dislocated from its rural base and fractured by deep internal divisions. Neither its grassroots constituencies nor provincial strongmen could enforce cohesion; the group had no anchor and its former leaders acted largely in their own individual interests. This led some ex-PARECO to join the M23, but in a disorganized fashion, and most have since been captured or have left.

The initial goal of Ntaganda's mutiny was to consolidate CNDP control in the Kivus in the face of Kinshasa's attempts to dismantle the ex-CNDP network.⁴⁵ In preparation for the mutiny, he deployed many of his ex-PARECO allies to the far tip of South Kivu, from where the

Nsabimana of the 105th regiment, and Lieutenant-Colonel Bulimaso was the deputy commander of the 112th regiment.

43 Usalama Project Interviewee #28, email correspondence, 17 December 2012.

44 Usalama Project Interviewee #22, Bukavu, 27 August 2012.

45 See Stearns, *From CNDP to M23*.

mutiny was supposed to be launched. The first wave of the mutiny failed, however, as many rank-and-file troops quickly rejoined the national army. One by one, the mutineers were rounded up by the FARDC and arrested, including most of the ex-PARECO officers.

In conversations with a dozen former PARECO commanders, none seemed to think that many high-ranking Hutu commanders would join the M23. ‘Individuals like Saddam might go for their own personal interest, but as a whole we can’t go if our leaders don’t join as well,’ one ex-PARECO colonel argued.⁴⁶ This opinion was widely shared, with frequent allusions to the way the RCD mobilized their community in 1998 by appointing Hutu to senior political and security positions. This is the logic of armed group mobilization in the Kivus, at least among the Hutu: to command massive adhesion, you have to pass through the community’s leaders.

The established Hutu political elites initially seemed unlikely to throw their weight behind the M23. The mutiny initially invested little effort in mobilizing a political base, instead focusing on its military advance. It was only in May 2012 that Rwandan security officials began reaching out to elites in the eastern DRC, including members of the Hutu community, although they explicitly excluded some of the leaders they had supported previously, in particular Eugène Serufuli and his associates.⁴⁷ ‘They don’t trust people like Seninga, Kirivita, or Serufuli any more,’ one former Rwandan security official reported: ‘They are trying to cultivate a new group of Hutu leaders, but it is difficult to go around those heavyweights.’⁴⁸ Mobilization meetings held in the Rwandan cities of Kigali, Gisenyi, and Ruhengeri have attempted to draw in Hutu administration officials, civil society figures, and businessmen—but by early 2013 had achieved little success.

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46 Usalama Project Interviewee #26, Goma, 22 August 2012

47 Eugène Serufuli visited Goma in May 2012, stirring up rumours that he was interested in joining M23. According to him, he avoided meeting any M23 partisans during his transit through Kigali, but Rwandan army commanders said they met with him at length. Usalama Project Interviewee #28, email correspondence, 17 December 2012.

48 Usalama Project Interviewee #103, Goma, 13 May 2012.

By the end of 2012, however, the situation had begun to deteriorate. With Kinshasa intent on a military solution and no genuine political process to deal with the M23 or other armed groups on the horizon, the stage was set for a new escalation. The longer this state of uncertainty persists and the M23 consolidates its power, the more inclined local Hutu elites will be to renew their own armed mobilization, both to curry favour with Kinshasa, but also to maintain the option of allying themselves with the M23 if the rebels are successful. There were several overtures made in this direction by Rwanda security operatives, who were concerned by the lack of a solid political base for the M23.⁴⁹

A rebirth of PARECO? The M23, Nyatura, and PARECO-Fort

Such an alliance would be able to take advantage of a resurgence by Hutu militia in rural Masisi and Kalehe territories. Since the integration of PARECO into the national army in January 2009, a large number of splinter factions have emerged in the field—mostly small (numbering between 40 and 200 soldiers apiece). Despite the opportunism of some of these commanders, the groups are usually tightly linked to local issues, such as land conflict and disputes over local positions of authority. One scholar has documented 15 small splinter groups in South Kivu's Kalehe territory alone—not all of them Hutu—and UN internal reports indicate at least a dozen armed groups that involve PARECO deserters.⁵⁰ The two best-known examples are Nyatura from the Kinyarwanda *nyatura* ('hit hard') and PARECO-Fort ('strong'). They provide telling examples of the complex interrelation between land conflict, army defectors, and other historical grievances.

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49 Usalama Project Interviewee #105, telephone interview, 26 December 2012; Usalama Project Interviewee #20, telephone interview, 26 December 2012. On the M23's weak political base, see Stearns, *From CNDP to M23*.

50 Usalama Project Interviewee #23, Goma, 23 August 2012.

In August 2011, reports emerged of a group of several hundred armed youths mobilizing in the Kalehe high plateau, around the town of Lumbishi. Like many other, unrelated Hutu groups, they called themselves Nyatura. The timing was no coincidence: the Congolese army was going through the consolidation process known as ‘regimentation’, which rendered many commanders jobless. This was the case with the Nyatura leader, Lieutenant Colonel Matias Kalume Kage, an ex-PARECO commander who was born in Lumbishi. The former PARECO South Kivu president, Bizagwira Muhindi, managed its political wing. Kalume had been the operational commander for the 24th sector in Uvira until mid-2011, when regimentation began. ‘Kalume spent months in an army integration camp without receiving any new appointment, so he decided to defect and return to his village,’ one of his former PARECO comrades said.⁵¹

Several factors combined to make this area receptive to Kalume’s call to arms. First, discord within the Congolese army created fertile ground for new rebellions. Around the same time as Kalume defected, the ex-PARECO sector commander of Kalehe, Colonel Gwigwi Busogi, was arrested for mineral trafficking—and a contingent of soldiers loyal to him defected from the army and joined the Nyatura in the high plateau, where the deserters found a receptive local population. A long-standing conflict over land around Ngungu in southern Masisi had caused part of the Hutu population there to flee to the area around Lumbishi in South Kivu in early 2011, with some of them joining the Nyatura.

According to research by the local NGO *Action pour la paix et la concorde* (APC, Action for Peace and Concord), this conflict set the family of Shamamba Muhabura, a Hunde who had title to land in Kamatare since the 1970s, against local Hutu peasants. In 2011, the local representative of Shamamba’s widow, a Tutsi with close links to local military, employed soldiers to chase these peasants off the land. The peasants then launched several retaliatory attacks, killing several people.⁵²

51 Usalama Project Interviewee #7, Goma, 3 April 2012.

52 *Action pour la paix et la concorde*, ‘Flash Info sur les dynamiques autour de la formation

As with many other local conflicts, discord surrounding the customary leadership of the region proved to be another important catalyst. Much like Masisi, the high plateau of Kalehe had experienced a massive immigration of Hutu and Tutsi from Rwanda during the colonial period—and the majority of the population of the high plateau today are descendants of these immigrants. Numbi, a village in the high plateau that is considered to be its economic hub, was already witnessing a struggle over customary authority.

The *chef de groupement* (the second largest ethnic administrative entity) of Buzi, *Mwami* ('chief') Raymond Sangara, had named Elias Buhuzu, a Tutsi, as the local chief of Numbi. When his son and successor abdicated in 2003, the provincial authorities replaced him with a Hutu leader. However, under pressure from the Tutsi community and with the help of ex-CNDP officers, the new Tutsi chief Célestin Seburikandi was installed in July 2011. This precipitated opposition among locals, and when Seburikandi replaced the village chief in Lumbishi in August, the latter was assassinated two days later, allegedly by Nyatura members.

By mid-2012, the Nyatura numbered between several dozen and a few hundred fighters.⁵³ They were based mostly around Shanje and Chambombo, in northern Kalehe, and at times have collaborated with FDLR troops based nearby. Their demands included the release of Colonel Gwigwi from prison, the reinstatement of the former village chief of Numbi, and the rejection of any collaboration with Rwandan or ex-CNDP troops.⁵⁴ By the end of 2012, the FARDC, backed by UN

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 du groupe armé «NYATURA» dans les Hauts Plateaux entre le Territoire de Kalehe et de Masisi', 10 September 2011.

53 A UN report dated 24 December 2011 quotes an estimate by the deputy administrator of Kalehe territory of around 70 Nyatura soldiers, while an APC report from September 2011 suggests that several hundred soldiers had joined the movement. A Congolese army report from March 2012 reports that Nyatura numbers have dwindled from several hundred to just 16 due to pressure from the army; MONUSCO DDR/RR South Kivu report, 8 March 2012.

54 MONUSCO DDR/RR South Kivu Weekly Report, 30 October 2011, citing a local intelligence source and matching the accounts of ex-PARECO officers.

peacekeepers, had intensified operations against the Nyatura, driving them northwards into remote areas and provoking defections.

The second major splinter faction, PARECO-Fort, is based around Lukopfu in the central Masisi highlands. As with the Nyatura, this group crystallized around a group of ex-PARECO defectors who became involved in a land conflict involving ex-CNDP army units and Tutsi landowners. Confusingly, this group now also calls itself Nyatura.

Its leader is Lieutenant Colonel Marcel Habarugira Rangira, a former PARECO commander who was deployed to Walikale after integrating into the army. In October 2011, he deserted from his FARDC unit during the regimentation process: a deputy brigade commander, he was expecting to be promoted to battalion commander. To add insult to injury, Bosco Ntaganda gave the job instead to Lieutenant Colonel Pendo, brother of Colonel Saddam, the Ntaganda loyalist. After being arrested on two separate occasions and transferred to military detention, Habarugira escaped again in January 2011 and made his way to his home area, just south of Masisi town. He was joined by other deserters, including the deputy commander of PARECO-Fort, Captain Innocent 'Binebine' Mateso, another ex-PARECO commander from Lukopfu and who had deserted the army on several occasions since 2009.⁵⁵

The land conflict in Lukopfu dates back at least to 2007, when local, mostly Tutsi landowners claim that PARECO began raiding their cows and mobilizing peasants to mount an illegal occupation of their fields. By 2010, ex-CNDP soldiers deployed in the area had begun evicting these squatters, allegedly committing serious human rights abuses in the process.⁵⁶ PARECO-Fort has been able to mobilize locals against these

55 Confidential internal UN document on PARECO-Fort. Binebine had previously been used by ex-CNDP commanders to chase Hutu peasants of their land, but later switched sides and defended those same peasants.

56 United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, 'Rapport de mission JPT à Bihambwe, Lukopfu, Katale, Rubaya, Kibabi, Territoire de Masisi, 1-4 juin 2010'; United Nations Group of Experts Report, 7 June 2011, pp. 53-55; United Nations Group of Experts Report, 29 November 2011, p. 73.

landowners—and have committed abuses of their own, including a cattle raid on 8 February 2012, during which three Tutsi were killed.

This localized trouble then became caught up in an escalation of violence in southern Masisi, as two separate conflicts spilled over into these highlands. The Raia Mutomboki, a self-defence group emanating out of Shabunda territory in South Kivu, entered into Walikale and Masisi, converting already extant Mai-Mai militia with their fierce anti-FDLR ideology.⁵⁷ This caused the FDLR to move their headquarters away from the Masisi-Walikale border, where they had been based for over a decade, but several hundred FDLR soldiers remained behind in Nyatura units, having been swayed by local Hutu leaders. At the same time, the M23 rebellion prompted the Congolese army to move some of its troops out of Masisi, leaving a security vacuum at the precise moment when tensions were escalating between Hutu and other communities. In the ensuing violence, more than 75 villages were burned, with hundreds of people killed and thousands displaced.⁵⁸

In August 2012, the national army was forced to take action against these militias. Officials in Kinshasa were also worried that, left to their own devices, the Nyatura could be co-opted by the M23 and the earlier Hutu-Tutsi alliance could be rekindled. General Gabriel Amisi, commander of land forces, with the help of Seninga and Turinkinko, constituted a regiment under the command of Habarugira, thereby integrating the bulk of Nyatura soldiers in the Kibabi and Katoyi areas of southern Masisi, including some FDLR, into the Congolese army. Other Nyatura groups, however, in the northern part of Masisi, including those under the command of Munyammariba in Mianja and Bavakure in Mokoto, remain outside army control.

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57 See forthcoming Usalama Project report on Raia Mutomboki.

58 United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, 'Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office on human rights violations perpetrated by armed groups during attacks on villages in Ufamandu I and II, Nyamaboko I and II and Kibabi groupements, Masisi territory, North Kivu province,' November 2012.

5. Conclusions and policy considerations

Engaging with PARECO and its various spin-offs entails tackling the complex social dynamics that prompted its creation. While its forerunners, the militias born in the communal violence in Masisi of 1993, were anchored in local realities—poverty, scarcity of land, and social marginalization—subsequent waves of armed mobilization in the Hutu community have been more dislocated from this base and connected instead with military and political elites in Goma, Kigali, and Kinshasa. Increasingly, these armed groups are a means for disgruntled officers to reinvent themselves and for political elites to gain leverage.

This relationship between Hutu armed groups, politicians and, to a lesser extent, businessmen was consolidated under the leadership of North Kivu Governor Eugène Serufuli between 2000–4 and was on prominent display during the 2006–8 period, as armed groups proliferated in the run-up to peace talks and the latest round of army integration. These political networks are so strong that any sizeable Hutu armed group has to pass through them if it is to win political recognition and access to greater resources.

But PARECO's incessant squabbling also points to a fundamental internal weakness, as well as a fragmentation of the community. There was no one single driving force—individual or interest group—behind PARECO. In part, this was the legacy of divisions within the Hutu community, between leaders who had joined the RCD, those who had fought alongside the Mai-Mai, and the new Hutu military bourgeoisie. In addition, while some PARECO supporters wanted to use military force as leverage in political negotiations, they were also afraid of being punished for backing rebels. The TPD, for example, had been hit with UN sanctions for having supported Laurent Nkunda's 2004 march on Bukavu and distributing weapons to the local population in Masisi; while the sanctions listing may not have greatly affected their finances, it did tarnish the group's reputation. This one-foot-in, one-foot-out attitude—typical among Congolese political elites—further impaired PARECO's political coherence.

The government in Kinshasa and international donors need to return to the drawing board and formulate a comprehensive strategy for the violence in the Kivus, one tailored to address the three constituencies outlined above—political elites, grassroots communities, and military officers—each of which poses different challenges to the stabilization of the eastern Congo.

Engaging political elites

The rise of the M23 has begun to foment a counter-mobilization within the Hutu community, including many of the same individuals who were previously involved in PARECO. Elite Hutu networks, reaching from rural hilltops to the governor's office in Goma, are still able and willing to rally men to arms to defend their interests and power base. The weakness of the state and its inability to guarantee property rights and personal security has reinforced this logic of militia politics.

Unsurprisingly, the Hutu leaders who most embody the link between armed mobilization and politics are those who made their careers in rebellion. Robert Seninga, for example, was a local militia leader in the 1993 Masisi war who was eventually co-opted by the Rwandan government in 1998. A key figure in Governor Eugène Serufuli's inner circle, he has continued to use his influence—particularly in southern Masisi, his home base—to alternate between rallying troops and brokering peace. Another pertinent example is Emmanuel Munyamariba, also a local militia leader in 1993, who was one of many local administrators appointed by Serufuli. At this time this report was written, he maintained a militia in the area around Lushebere in central Masisi, which both protects and taxes the local community, and engaged in battles with Hunde factions as recently as October 2012.

The zenith of this kind of strongman politics may have been the period of Serufuli's governorship. In the run-up to the 2006 elections, he threw his lot in with Kabila and moved to Kinshasa, eventually becoming chairman of the board of the national electricity company. He has since launched his own political party, the *Union des congolais pour le progrès* (UCP, Union of the Congolese for Progress), that has ministers in both

national and provincial governments, and a strong representation in the provincial assembly.⁵⁹

But while democracy has given encouragement to the Hutu community, which forms the majority in the southern part of the province, it has also pitted it directly against the Nande, the largest community in North Kivu as a whole. Nande politicians feel that the governor's office, which Serufuli still aspires to regain, belongs to them. Along with the on-going M23 rebellion, this has underscored the imperative for the Hutu to maintain a military force. The logic, however, is no longer to be able to control territory by military means, especially since the UCP is an ally of the Kabila government, but to retain the ability to mobilize voters and soldiers as the occasion demands.

What does the future hold for this logic of armed violence? Some of the major challenges and opportunities can be identified in the DRC's 2006 constitution, key parts of which remain to be implemented. Decentralization and local elections, in particular, could provide both solutions and pitfalls for stability. According to the constitution, the provinces are supposed to manage 40 per cent of state revenues, while also taking over some administrative responsibilities from Kinshasa. The founding document further calls for local elections to be held in order to create a new layer of representative organs in towns, communes, *chefferies* (chiefdoms), and sectors. These last two differ in that a *chefferie* is a customary entity that is supposed to have a relatively ethnically homogenous population and where the chief's legitimacy comes from tradition. Sectors, where there is no predominant ethnic group and where the chiefs is named by the central government, are a legacy of Belgian colonial rule.

In itself, decentralization is far from a panacea. Ceding power to the provinces could further strain relations between local communities,

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 59 The president of the provincial assembly hails from the UCP, as do several other parliamentarians.

highlight subnational inequalities, and create new layers of corruption.⁶⁰ But it has been a core demand of local elites across the east, who do not trust Kinshasa. This mistrust is often evident: several Hutu leaders who backed PARECO have turned down positions in the national government, unwilling to be separated from their power base. ‘The way power works in Kinshasa, you are no one if you do not have a power base. Masisi is our base,’ explained one Hutu leader.⁶¹

Yet Kinshasa has been reluctant to relinquish any power at all, taking years to give up even 30 per cent of revenues and failing to build up local institutional capacity to take over key state functions. This uncompromising message was hammered home further by a constitutional revision in early 2011, in which President Kabila’s coalition curtailed the independence of the provinces, allowing the executive in Kinshasa to dissolve provincial assemblies and fire governors in the event of deadlock.

Similarly, the plan for the reconstruction of the war-torn east—the national strategy is called Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War-Affected Areas (STAREC) and is backed by an International Security and Stabilization Strategy (ISSS) on the part of donors—has foundered due to a lack of vision and political will. Between 2009–2011, the government contributed only \$20 million, less than 10 per cent of the total budget, and spent even less political capital. Newly-built courts were left unstaffed, police went unpaid, and new roads have not been adequately maintained. The conclusion of one evaluation was that the plan ‘focused much less on governance than on infrastructure’.⁶²

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60 An overview of these challenges can be found in Herbert Weiss and Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, ‘Decentralization and the DRC: An overview’ (New York: Center for International Cooperation, 2009); Kai Kaiser, ‘Decentralization in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Opportunities and Risks’ (International Studies Program Working paper, Georgia State University, 2008).

61 Usalama Project Interviewee #24, Goma, 15 August 2012.

62 Oxfam Lobby Briefing, ‘“For me, but without me, is against me” – Why efforts to stabilize the eastern Congo are not working’ (Oxford: Oxfam, 2011).

Fitting into the same pattern, important elections have also been postponed. Local elections scheduled for 2008 were never held and the current rescheduled date of February 2013 is not realistic. These elections have the potential to alter local politics radically, in turn affecting armed group dynamics. In rural *chefferies*, customary chiefs will now be accountable to a popularly elected council, while the authority and finances of the *chefferies* as a whole will be strengthened.⁶³ Forty per cent of the province's finances are supposed to be managed by the various decentralized institutions: communes, towns, and *chefferies*.

In Masisi and Rutshuru (but not in North Kivu as a whole), this could strengthen the power of the Hutu community, giving them elected representation in local government for the first time in decades. For that reason, however, these elections will likely make the customary elites—mostly Hunde and Tembo in Masisi, and Hutu and Nande in Rutshuru—nervous about their status. If managed correctly, the new *chefferie* council and its executive college could provide a forum for reconciliation and power sharing at the grassroots. As so often in the past, however, elections could also trigger violence.

In sum, President Kabila's government has not been willing or able to reinforce the capacity of the local state or to hold local elections. This apparent indifference or disregard to the rule of law and public welfare has reinforced the belief among elites that they need to maintain military leverage to protect their interests.

Engaging military leaders

Armed groups have become bargaining chips for individual military officers. For commanders who are not happy with their status or actual rank, rebellion remains a viable option, a way to negotiate a cash pay-off or better promotion. While these defectors are not always successful—and experience shows that only those with significant political backing

⁶³ The organic law 08/16 of 7 October 2008 says that 40 per cent of national taxes collected in the provinces should be given to towns, communes, and *chefferies*.

have succeeded with this strategy—they are rarely punished. Since the 2003 national unification process, there have been several other rounds of negotiations, the largest of which was the 23 March 2009 Agreement. The weak state, lacking strong sticks to reprimand dissidents, is left with an ‘all-carrots’ strategy.

It will be difficult to end this process without serious security sector reform, which the government has been reluctant to undertake. It is clear that a strong national army, which could dissuade new rebellions and provide fair treatment to its soldiers, is a long way off. Current efforts at reform supported by donors—such as training individual battalions and setting up mobile courts to prosecute offenders—are too short-term and piecemeal to have a lasting impact. For its part, the government, disappointed by donors’ demands and modest SSR budgets, has insisted that any reform be bilateral and unconditional.

The weakness of the FARDC has condemned the Kinshasa government to seemingly unending cycles of negotiations with rebels. Since 2009, the defence minister has repeatedly announced that there would no longer be any negotiations with armed groups, reflecting a concern that talks would encourage new mobilization. Still, army commanders have continued ad hoc integration exercises, giving money to the *Forces républicaines fédéralistes* (FRF, Republican Federalist Forces), the *Front de la résistance patriotique de l’Ituri* (FRPI, Front of the Patriotic Resistance of Ituri), the Nyatura militia, and others between 2011 and 2012. Predictably, these deals have often been short-lived. The humiliating defeat of the army in November 2012 at the hands of the M23—reportedly in collaboration with the Rwandan army—has further driven home the need for army reform.⁶⁴

On the demobilization front, the government has also rejected any new programmes, again fearing future re-mobilization. World Bank-led programmes expired in 2011 and soldiers can currently only benefit from

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 64 UN Security Council S/2012/348, ‘Report of the Group of Experts on the DRC, 21 June 2012.

ad hoc demobilization without a comprehensive reintegration package.

This erratic approach has only encouraged the use of militias as bargaining chips. Kinshasa, along with its donor partners, will have to formulate a comprehensive approach to the remaining armed groups in the Kivus. Given its feeble military apparatus, it is inevitable that short-term solutions will include new peace talks, along with some kind of reintegration and demobilization exercise. These need to be executed in a much more transparent way, by investing in local communities rather than rewarding rebel leaders, vetting of war criminals, and the deployment of officers outside of the Kivus.

The clear favouring of the CNDP in previous negotiations has also showed its clear limits. It was initially successful at appeasing the strongest military faction in the Kivus, but this tactic also provoked outrage among other communities and a counter-mobilization that contributed to the unravelling of the 2009 peace deal.

Engaging the grassroots

It is not a coincidence that disaffected military officers launch rebellions in areas plagued by local conflicts, most often over land. The Nyatura and PARECO-Fort examples cited above attest to this. And while these local dynamics are not the primary driver of conflict today, they are important contributing factors that need to be addressed.

Land tenure is, however, a Pandora's box. As many scholars have argued, the confused legal situation—in which the state legally owns all land but chiefs, often themselves embroiled in inheritance battles, are the de facto land administrators in much of the east—lies at the heart of many conflicts. In a place like Masisi, this has unnerved the Banyarwanda population, which does not, for the most part, control any *chefferies* yet forms the bulk of the population. The unequal distribution of land, with large ranches, plantations, and the Virunga National Park occupying a majority of the rural space, has sharpened the ethnic divide.

Donors appear to agree with Kinshasa that it would be preferable to have a government-regulated land market, in which farmers own legal titles. How to reach that point, however, is another question. Such a

market requires a functioning state, with land registries accessible by even poor peasants in remote areas. A sudden move toward a land market and the abolition of customary tenure would spark resistance from many quarters and could give a disproportionate advantage to rural elites who could manipulate the registries for their own profit. Conversely, the abrupt redistribution of land holdings to ease the pressure on the rural poor could trigger resistance from large landowners, some of whom have close ties to armed factions.

Clearly, then, land reform, while a complex and tangled issue, must form part of a global strategy. Key elements of such a strategy could include an audit of land titles in key territories, as well as a managed transition from customary to state regulation of land. This would require exploring group tenure for some communities, the formalization of customary practices, and an expansion of the current dispute-resolution committees set up in rural areas. At the same time, the government would need to make access to the state easier and less intimidating for the rural poor.

Armed groups cannot be dealt with on an individual basis. They react to each other, to the disorder provoked by state weakness, and to conflicts over land and local power. A multidimensional strategy is needed: one that can tackle all these various strata of dispute at the same time. Many armed groups have evolved over the past two decades, with the most important of them, including PARECO, enjoying much greater integration into elite networks and their leaders seeking out strongmen in Kinshasa, Goma, and Kigali, to benefit from their largesse and obtain lucrative integration or demobilization packages.

For many young men in the east, armed violence has become a way of life—just as it has become a means to power for their leaders. These dynamics will not be changed simply or quickly: even if most Hutu armed groups are today in abeyance, the strongman politics of the past have not disappeared.

Solutions can only be found through dialogue between all parties, including armed groups. Such dialogue will need to address the formidably complex issues of decentralization, local governance, land reform,

and military integration. And in all these areas the centrality of the past in informing current developments cannot be overstated. The region's militia leaders and politicians alike are steeped in the history of their communities—and what might look like ancient history to outsiders can stimulate passion, anger and prejudice.

Glossary of acronyms, words and phrases

<i>Actes d'engagement</i>	Deeds of commitment (signed by most armed groups in the Kivus)
AFDL	<i>Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaire</i> / Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire
ALiR	<i>Armée de libération du Rwanda</i> / Rwandan Liberation Army
APC	<i>Action pour la paix et la concorde</i> / Action for Peace and Concord
APCLS	<i>Alliance patriotique pour un Congo libre et souverain</i> / Patriotic Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo
Banyarwanda	A term often used for Congolese Hutu and Tutsi
<i>Battalion Requin</i>	Shark Battalion; 81 st brigade of the Congolese army
<i>bene mugab'umwe</i>	sons of the same father (Kinyarwanda)
<i>chefferie</i>	chiefdom; the largest customary structure of government
<i>chef de localité</i>	local customary chief
<i>chef de quartier</i>	local customary chief
CNDP	<i>Congrès national pour la défense du peuple</i> / National Congress for the Defence of the People
<i>Combattants Hutu</i>	Hutu Fighters
<i>les demobs</i>	demobilized fighters
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAR	<i>Forces armées rwandaises</i> / Rwandan Armed Forces
FARDC	<i>Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo</i> / Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
FDLR	<i>Forces démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda</i> / Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
FRF	<i>Forces républicaines fédéralistes</i> / Republican Federalist Forces
FRPI	<i>Front de la résistance patriotique de l'Ituri</i> / Ituri Patriotic Resistance Front
<i>groupement</i>	ethnically-based administrative division

ISSS	International Security and Stabilization Strategy
<i>Kimia II</i>	Peace II (Kiswahili)
<i>kumongore</i>	to choose a piece (Kinyarwanda)
LDF	Local Defence Forces
<i>Mai-Mai</i>	community-based self-defence militias; from <i>maji</i> , 'water' (Kiswahili)
<i>mixage</i>	integration of CNDP into the national army
MAGRIVI	<i>Mutuelle agricole des Virunga</i> / Virunga Agricultural Collective
Mongol	Hutu militia; derived from <i>kumongore</i> (q.v.)
<i>mutuelle</i>	Ethnic-based self-help group
<i>Mwami</i>	chief (Kinyarwanda)
Nyatura	Splinter group from PARECO; from <i>nyatura</i> , 'hit hard' (Kinyarwanda)
<i>nyumba kumi</i>	local chiefs (Kiswahili)
PARECO	<i>Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais</i> / Alliance of Resistant Congolese Patriots
PARECO-Fort	strong PARECO; splinter group from PARECO
<i>Petit Nord</i>	The lower part of North Kivu, comprising the territories of Nyiragongo, Masisi, Rutshuru, and Walikale
<i>Programme Amani</i>	Peace Programme (Kiswahili)
RCD	<i>Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie</i> / Congolese Rally for Democracy
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SCAR	<i>Société Congolaise d'assurances et de assurances</i> / Congolese Society of Insurance and Reinsurance
STAREC	Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for War-Affected Areas
TPD	<i>Tous pour la paix et le développement</i> / All for Peace and Development
<i>ubumwe</i>	unity (Kinyarwanda)
UCP	<i>Union des congolais pour le progrès</i> / Union of the Congolese for Progress
<i>Umoja Wetu</i>	Our Unity (Kiswahili)
<i>usalama</i>	peace, security (Kiswahili)

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THE USALAMA PROJECT INVESTIGATES THE EMERGENCE AND RESILIENCE OF ARMED GROUPS IN THE EASTERN DRC AND PROVIDES SOPHISTICATED ANALYSIS OF THE COMPLEX LAYERS OF INTERFERENCE BY EASTERN NEIGHBOURS. USALAMA PROJECT REPORTS ARE INDISPENSABLE READING FOR RIGHTS ADVOCATES AND HUMANITARIAN WORKERS DETERMINED TO CONFRONT THE ENDLESS KILLINGS IN EASTERN CONGO.

**—SULIMAN BALDO, AFRICA PROGRAMME DIRECTOR,
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE**



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