



RIFT VALLEY INSTITUTE | USALAMA PROJECT  
UNDERSTANDING CONGOLESE ARMED GROUPS

# THE NATIONAL ARMY AND ARMED GROUPS IN THE EASTERN CONGO

UNTANGLING THE GORDIAN  
KNOT OF INSECURITY

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The national army and armed  
groups in the eastern Congo  
Untangling the Gordian  
knot of insecurity

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#### THE USALAMA PROJECT

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The Rift Valley Institute ([www.riftvalley.net](http://www.riftvalley.net)) works in Eastern and Central Africa to bring local knowledge to bear on social, political, and economic development.

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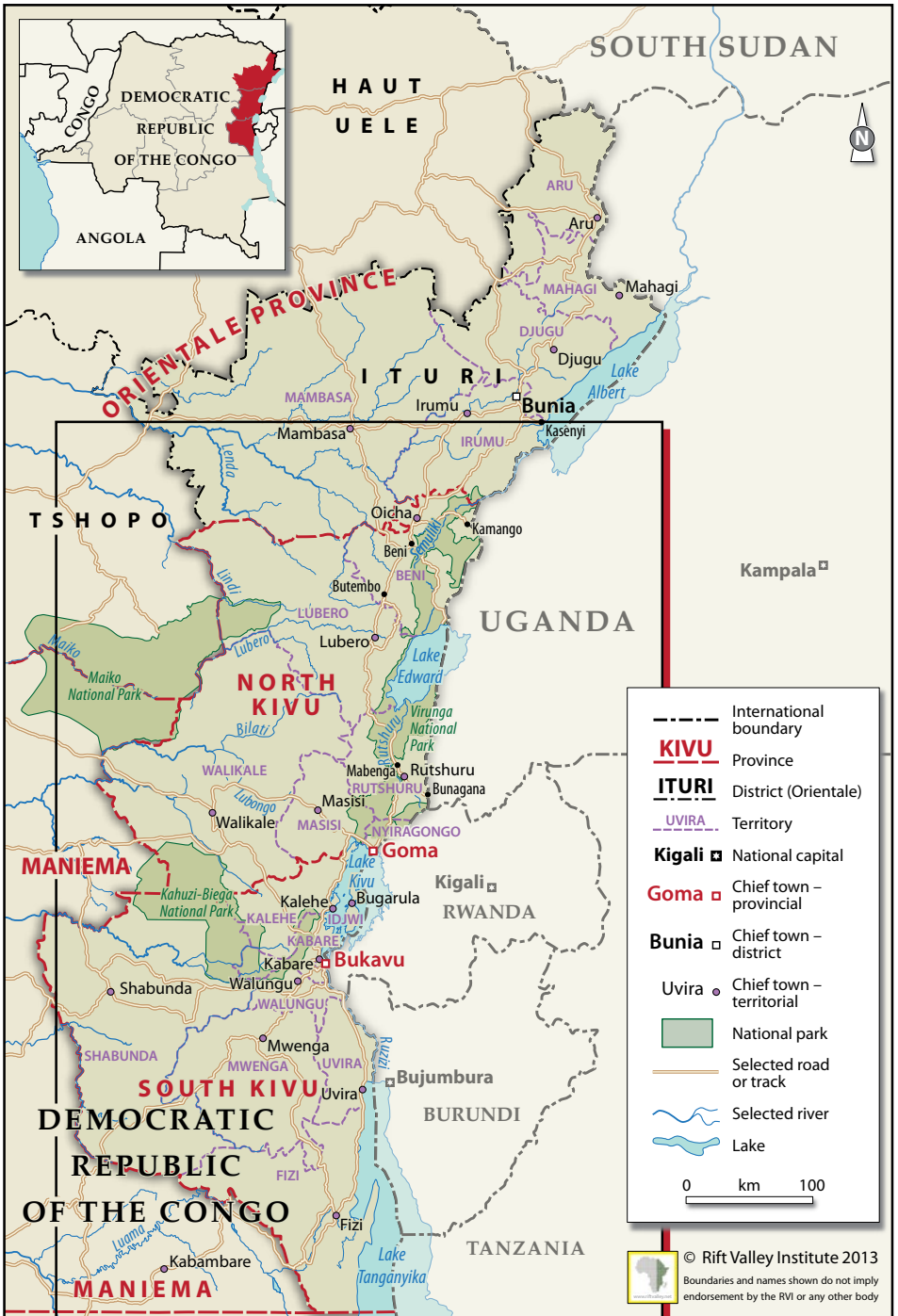
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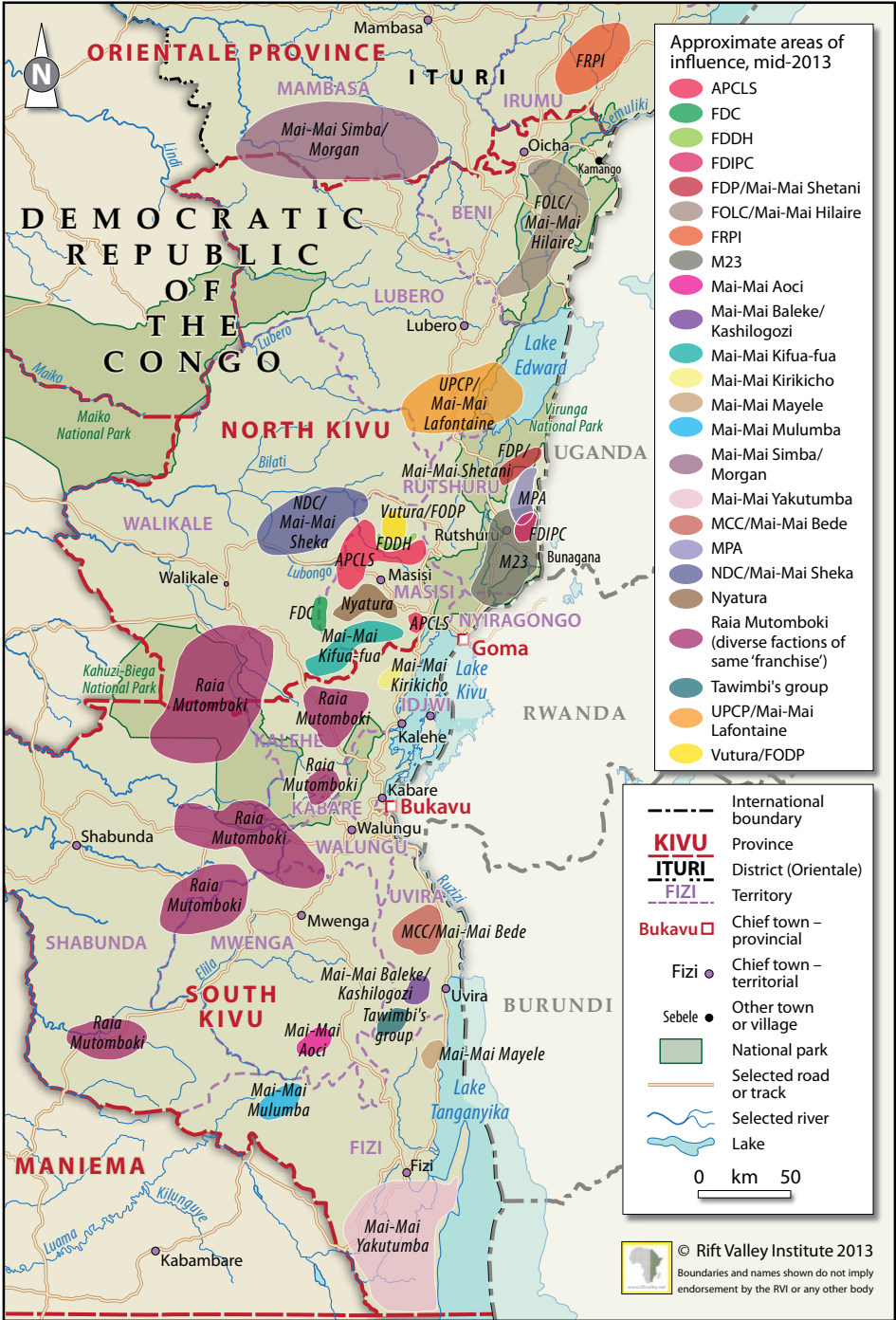
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Map 1. The eastern DRC, showing area of detailed map on the following page



Map 2. Approximate areas of influence of main armed groups active in the eastern DRC, mid-2013

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# RVI Usalama Project publications

## Reports

*From CNDP to M23: The Evolution of an Armed Movement in Eastern Congo*

*North Kivu: The Background to Conflict in North Kivu Province of Eastern Congo*

*PARECO: Land, Local Strongmen, and the Roots of Militia Politics in North Kivu*

*Ituri's UPC: The External Militarization of Local Politics in North-Eastern Congo*

*Ituri: Gold, Land, and Ethnicity in North-eastern Congo*

*Raia Mutomboki: The Flawed Peace Process in the DRC and the Birth of an Armed Franchise*

*FNI and FRPI: Local Resistance and Regional Alliances in North-eastern Congo*

*Banyamulenge: Insurgency and Exclusion in the Mountains of South Kivu*

*Mai-Mai Yakutumba: Resistance and Racketeering in Fizi, South Kivu*

*South Kivu: Identity, Territory, and Power in Eastern Congo*

All titles are also available in French.

## Briefings

'M23's Operational Commander: A Profile of Sultani Emmanuel Makenga'  
(December 2012)

'Strongman of the Eastern DRC: A Profile of General Bosco Ntaganda'  
(March 2013)

'The Perils of Peacekeeping without Politics: MONUC and MONUSCO  
in the DRC' (April 2013)

# 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 organizations that operate in the Congo—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 Congo.

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 and policy considerations

The eastern Congo has been a theatre of violent conflict for over two decades. The main source of violence is fighting among the Congolese army and an array of armed groups. Several dozen factions—ranging from disorganized village militias to professional rebel organizations—clash with each other and the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Over the past eighteen months, the Rift Valley Institute's Usalama Project has carried out investigations into seven of the most important armed groups, and the Congolese army, in order to understand what drives them and whether policy responses have been adequate. This report presents the conclusions of that research in three parts: an analysis of armed mobilization, focusing on the region of North and South Kivu; an examination of the FARDC; and a critical review of past and current efforts in the field of demobilization and army reform.

While the social underpinnings of each armed group vary considerably, since the beginning of the First Congo War (1996–7), armed actors have moved away from their roots in local communities to become more dependent on political and business elites in the region. However, even groups that form part of elite networks continue to be anchored in their local environment. While they may emerge as a result of competition over power between and among elites, they are at the same time informed by local conflicts and grievances.

In the DRC's current political order, violence is an effective strategy to obtain power and control resources. The resulting militarized nature of power politics is an outcome of the 2003–6 transition, which followed the end of the Second Congo War (1998–2003). The peace process was based on a power-sharing principle: former belligerents joined Congolese state structures and their armed wings were integrated into a new national army. The implied logic of this process—granting insurgents political power in order to quell their insurgencies—persists until today, creating incentives for elites to mobilize armed groups.

Troubled army policies constitute another source of armed mobilization. By repeatedly integrating armed groups into the FARDC, the government has not only provided incentives for further insurrection, it has effectively sanctioned impunity. In turn, abuses committed by the army have driven numerous groups to take up arms and legitimized rebels' claims of self-defence. Furthermore, the army is sometimes complicit in armed group mobilization, with officers providing support to armed groups or being involved in the arms trade.

Untangling this Gordian knot will require a comprehensive political and military strategy, aligning local, national, and international initiatives. This strategy will have to address both the incentives that drive elites to take up arms, and local conflicts over land and local governance that are liable to feature an ethnic dimension. An informed approach to such a complex problem thus needs to take a range of factors into account. Discussion with Congolese actors, both military and civilian, with local observers and with international specialists suggests that the following are the most important considerations.

### Abandoning technocratic approaches.

The donor approach to armed mobilization in the eastern DRC has been guided by a stabilization policy that is essentially a technocratic interpretation of violence as a law-and-order problem linked to weak state institutions. In order to tackle the political drivers of armed group activity this approach will have to be abandoned. A change in orientation will require closer coordination between donors, in particular for moving forward in politically sensitive areas such as army reform.

### Dealing with armed groups.

The Congolese government's policies vis-à-vis armed groups have been erratic, rarely using political and military instruments in a coordinated manner. The government and its international partners should prioritize the groups that pose the greater risk of widespread destabilization, especially the M23 and FDLR. This will require negotiations with the Rwandan government. Dealing with the M23 and FDLR first will

make the process of engaging with other insurgencies—many of which either derive a part of their strength from one of these factions, or have mobilized against them—more straightforward.

### Tackling violent competition among elites.

In order to tackle violent competition between rival elites, the Congolese government will have to impose effective sanctions on their support networks. This will include the politicians and army commanders who are often key figures in these networks. The government should also aim to undercut the resource bases of armed groups by improving the formalization and regulation of trade and the natural resources sector. This will require assistance from international partners. Looking across the DRC's eastern borders, there is an opportunity to transform violent competition involving elites in neighbouring countries into regional economic collaboration.

### Managing military integration.

The process of integration of armed groups (often led by army deserters) into the armed forces has become, paradoxically, an important incentive for armed mobilization. This integration policy should be progressively phased out and replaced by a demobilization programmes and systematic, targeted sanctions for rebel leaders. The FARDC should avoid creating homogenous units out of former rebels who have been integrated. They should be retrained and redeployed, while due attention should be given to merit in promotions.

### Reducing land conflicts.

Land reform is critical for the long-term stability of the eastern DRC. This will necessitate a reform of how land is governed, including legal reform and a process of local consultation. At the same time dispute resolution and arbitration mechanisms should also be strengthened and the scope of such mechanisms extended to the communal dimensions of land conflicts.

### Improving local governance.

Local elections, as stipulated by the constitution, could improve local governance and render customary chiefs more accountable. But for the electoral process to succeed communal tensions will need to be monitored before, during and after the elections, and local politicians who turn to ethnic mobilization will need to be subject to sanction. There is a role for international donors in funding a number of aspects of the electoral process: voter education, election monitoring by local civil society organization, and building the capacity of the newly elected local councillors.

### Strengthening accountability and reconciliation.

The issue of responsibility for past abuses remains to be addressed. The creation of mixed chambers for war crimes could be a start. The government should also foster reconciliation by sponsoring platforms for inter-community dialogue and civil society efforts in conflict mediation. And the authorities should ensure that hate speech and incitements to violence are prosecuted as crimes, under new legislation drafted for this purpose if necessary. Donors have a role to play: they should support local reconciliation efforts at the policy level and by funding.

### Reforming the FARDC from the top.

Reform of the army is critical to reducing violence in the eastern DRC. Previous efforts at army reform have failed to address the way that resources and power are distributed through patronage networks, as well as the impact of the manipulation of revenue generation on the army's basic security functions. Oversight mechanisms need to be established, including parliamentary audits with investigatory powers, a stronger military court system, and a more transparent General Inspectorate of the Army.

### Reforming the FARDC from the bottom.

While army reform should start at the top, to succeed it will have to lead to concrete improvements for lower-ranking soldiers: conditions of

service and the living conditions of soldiers and their families will need to be improved. The issue of relations between civilian and military should be addressed by institutional changes within the FARDC. These could include integrating civilian protection into operational planning, and the provision of support to local communities in their efforts to hold abusive army units to account. This will require substantial funds and comprehensive training programmes.

# 1. Introduction

The landscape of the eastern DRC is littered with dozens of foreign and Congolese armed groups of all shapes and sizes. The diversity within this multitude is remarkable: there are large-scale military movements with elaborate political structures; rebel groups without political wings; small-scale local defence and village militias; and factions that amount to little more than bandit gangs. Some of these groups have significant military capabilities and political influence, and represent a direct threat to the government in Kinshasa. Others are confined to small, remote areas and are more troubling to the civilian population than to the government.

Armed groups are often characterised as thugs who prey on innocent and helpless civilians. Some are less predatory than others, however, and some enjoy considerable support from the local communities from which they are recruited. Urban-based provincial and national politicians and businessmen have, in some cases, a stronger influence on armed groups than the military leaders in the field, providing and organizing crucial financial, political, and logistical support. It is simplistic to think of armed groups as purely military organizations standing apart from society: they are embedded in civilian social networks, and inputs from elites and communities are often essential for their survival.

Aside from civilian networks, another crucial factor to understanding the kaleidoscope of armed groups in the eastern DRC is the national army, the FARDC. Many of its officers maintain close ties to non-state armed groups for political or commercial reasons. This undermines the army's perceived neutrality, as do the on-going power struggles within the FARDC that often play out along ethnic lines. In a context of strong animosities between ethnically-identified groups, this lack of neutrality makes communities turn to armed groups for protection. This tendency is only reinforced by the army's abusive behaviour.

Explaining armed group mobilization in the eastern DRC requires looking beyond the rebellions to the political, socio-economic, and

military contexts out of which these groups emerge, and to the histories that gave rise to them. The eastern DRC was not transformed into a fragmented theatre of combat overnight. Many of the factors that feed militarization in the Kivus can be traced back decades. This caveat also applies to the FARDC, whose dysfunctions are similarly rooted in the past. An account of this history is the first step in an analysis of the drivers of armed mobilization.



## 2. The proliferation of armed groups in the eastern DRC

### Histories of armed groups in the Kivus

Most of the armed groups currently active in the eastern DRC are a direct product of the First (1996–7) and Second (1998–2003) Congo Wars and the subsequent transition period (2003–6) that led to the elections of 2006. However, many of the groups that formed during those wars have their roots in previous eras. Prior to 1996, three broad periods of armed mobilization can be distinguished: the colonial period, when exactions by foreign invaders prompted resistance; the Simba rebellions in the 1960s, following on the heels of a chaotic independence and decentralization process; and the turbulent early 1990s, when a botched democratization attempt led to ethnic mobilization and violence.

#### *The roots of today's armed groups (1885–1965)*

Armed mobilization in what is today the eastern DRC predates colonialism. The Arab-Swahili traders who controlled large parts of the east in the second half of the nineteenth century created quasi-professional militias in order to conduct slave raids, which prompted local resistance. The expansionist tendencies of Rwandan King Rwagubiri in the 1890s also provoked counter-mobilization, leading to the proliferation of militias linked to local communities. The late colonial period then saw forms of armed resistance that were local and millenarian in character, and usually directed against the colonial state and its predatory policies of taxation and forced labour. Examples of this are the 1931 Binji-Binji rebellion in South Kivu, the various Nyabingi revolts in Rutshuru (1910–30) and the 1944 *Kitawala* (Watchtower) uprising in Walikale, both *territoires* of North Kivu.

It was not until independence in 1960, however, that rebellion took place on a broad scale. The first years of the Congo's independent

existence saw the emergence of stark political competition, provoked by rival ideologies and struggles over decentralization. The main fault lines pitted those advocating a strong centralized state, clustered around Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, against federalists, represented by President Joseph Kasavubu. Over time, the unitarists became more outspokenly anti-imperialist, and federalists were perceived to be more leaning towards the Western powers.<sup>1</sup>

But this simple dichotomy conceals the fragmentation of politics after independence, with dozens of parties springing up in the newly-created political space, often with very local agendas and narrow ethnic constituencies. The Kivus were no exception: in the chaos that engulfed the provinces between 1960–5, ethnic affiliations overlapped with or trumped political and other fault lines, a characteristic of Congolese politics that still obtains today.<sup>2</sup>

These overlapping fault lines were evident within the main rebellion that broke out in the Kivus after independence. In Uvira *territoire* in South Kivu, the radical politician Musa Marandura launched protests against the central government and local customary chiefs, both of whom he saw as conservative and beholden to western imperialism. To rally support, Marandura, whose main constituency was the Fulero community, also started to agitate against the neighbouring Rundi community, claiming that, as immigrants from Burundi, they did not have a right to customary power. A similar dynamic was visible in the mountainous *Hauts Plateaux* overlooking Uvira, where rebels from the Bembe community fought against Banyamulenge militias allied to the government forces, who were perceived as immigrants from Rwanda. Thus national and local agendas started to overlap and became mutually reinforcing.

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1 Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

2 Koen Vlassenroot, *South Kivu: Identity, Territory and Power in the Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2013), pp. 22–9.

In North Kivu, local ethnic antagonisms overshadowed politics at the national and international level in the years following independence. The so-called Kanyarwanda War, which progressed in fits and starts between 1962–5, pitted Hutu and Tutsi who had come from Rwanda during and just after the colonial period against the Hunde, Tembo, and Nyanga populations. These immigrants, who had become the demographic majority in parts of Masisi and Rutshuru *territoires*, together with Kinyarwanda-speaking populations living in these areas since before colonialism, were denied access to customary power. Since elections would allow them to translate their demographic weight into actual political power, the introduction of democracy and the simultaneous redrawing of provincial boundaries led to an escalation of tensions. Attempts to disenfranchise this group provoked serious bouts of fighting before the 1965 elections, leaving bitter memories on all sides.<sup>3</sup>

The opening of political space and electoral competition fuelled violent mobilization during this period, a testament in part to manipulations by politicians, who provided the organization and funds to transform local grievances into violence. Under the influence of national and international revolutionaries such as Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, some of this violence took the shape of rebellion. While Marandura managed to initiate a cycle of local protests, for example, it was not until representatives of the revolutionary *Conseil national de libération* (CNL, National Liberation Council) took over control and started to organize the protesters militarily that this popular movement evolved into a rebellion.<sup>4</sup>

As intense as the upheaval of the post-independence era was, it was short-lived. After Joseph-Désiré Mobutu overthrew the elected government in 1965, he successfully suppressed insurrections in the Kivus, although pockets of resistance continued in South Kivu’s Fizi and North

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3 Stanislas Bucyalimwe Mararo, ‘Land, Power and Ethnic Conflict in Masisi (Congo-Kinshasa), 1940s–1994’, *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30 (1997), pp. 503–38.

4 Benoît Verhaegen, *Rébellions Au Congo. Tome 1* (Brussels/Leopoldville: CRISP, IRES, and INEP, 1966), pp. 292–5.

Kivu's Ruwenzori area, along the border with Uganda. However, Mobutu only managed to regain coercive supremacy with the help of foreign mercenaries and generous foreign military assistance to prop up the ramshackle *Armée nationale congolaise* (ANC, Congolese National Army), including American air support. Mobutu's establishment of one-party rule and the development of a strong presidential patronage network that dominated both the administration and crucial parts of the security apparatus, then quelled serious armed mobilization for almost three decades.

*Direct predecessors of contemporary armed groups (1990–6)*

Faced with dwindling resources and strong international pressure after the end of the Cold War, Mobutu announced a transition to multiparty democracy in April 1990. Behind the scenes, however, he sought to derail the fledgling democratization process by dividing and weakening the opposition. One tool he used was to stoke ethnic antagonisms. Ethnic divisions in this period were compounded by the prospect of elections, which pushed the contested issue of citizenship for descendants of Rwandan immigrants into the foreground.

The steady erosion of public service provision under Mobutu, along with the ban on political parties, had triggered the proliferation of community-based groups throughout the Kivus. In the 1990s, these *mutuelles* (collectives, or community self-help groups) became the basis for electoral mobilization and political parties. A number of these organizations, in particular the Hutu *Mutuelle des agriculteurs du Virunga* (MAGRIVI, Virunga Agricultural Collective), launched their own militias, evidence of the community-driven nature of such early mobilization.<sup>5</sup>

Other groups were formed during this time to challenge the existing political order. At the start of the 1990s, the Kasindiens, an armed group emerging from the Nande community in the Ruwenzori area, targeted

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5 Jean-Claude Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge. Violences Ethniques et Gestion de l'identitaire Au Kivu* (Brussels/Paris: Institut Africain-CEDAF/l'Harmattan, 1997), p. 64.

the authority of customary chiefs. This phenomenon spread to nearby Beni and Lubero, where the Ngilima militia, linked to local protection rackets, set out to challenge Mobutu's power. These groups influenced the formation of other rural militias, such as the Batiri (dominated by Hunde from Masisi) and the Katuku, operating first in southern Walikale among the Nyanga, then also among the Tembo in Bunyakiri.<sup>6</sup> Many of today's armed group commanders began their careers during this period, including General Padiri Bulenda, Bigembe Turinkino, Akilimali Shemongo, and Robert Seninga.<sup>7</sup>

These militias were used by local authorities and politicians in long-standing disputes over land and customary authority. These disputes were accentuated by broad socio-economic developments, including growing demographic and land pressure, increasing poverty, and the decline of the state's infrastructure and regulatory capacities. Inflammatory speeches and actions by provincial and national politicians added fuel to this fire. For example, the first wave of large-scale violence that took place in North Kivu in this era erupted two days after the Vice-Governor of North Kivu gave a rousingly divisive speech at Ntoto, in his native Walikale territory, in March 1993.<sup>8</sup>

After more than six months of violence, during which between 6,000–15,000 people were killed and thousands displaced, Mobutu ordered the presidential guard—one of the few parts of the security apparatus still under his full control—to put down the unrest. While conflicts continued

6 Koen Vlassenroot, 'Violence et constitution de milices dans L'est du Congo: le cas des Mai-mayi', in *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs, Annuaire 2001–2002*, (ed. Filip Reyntjens and Stefaan Marysse) (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2002), pp. 115–52.

7 Padiri became the leader of the largest Mai-Mai group in Bunyakiri and eventually led an umbrella group of Mai-Mai in South Kivu; Bigembe was the leader of a Hutu armed group in southern Masisi where he was the chief of Katoyi sector; Akilimali was a Nyanga Mai-Mai who joined Padiri and is today a colonel in the army; Robert Seninga was one of the most important Hutu commanders in 1993 and is today a provincial parliamentarian involved in militia politics.

8 Jason Stearns, *North Kivu: The Background to Conflict in North Kivu Province of Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2012), p. 26.

to smoulder afterwards, it was not until the Burundian and Rwandan civil wars spilled over into the Kivus that violence resurfaced on a large scale.

In 1993, tens of thousands of Burundian refugees arrived in South Kivu following the outbreak of a civil war sparked by the assassination of the democratically elected Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye. Then came the Rwandan genocide of 1994 prompting 30,000–40,000 Hutu militiamen and soldiers of the *Forces armées rwandaises* (FAR, Rwandan Armed Forces)—most of whom had been involved in the genocide—to cross from Rwanda, along with a million civilian refugees. With them came weapons, radicalism, and ethnic polarization. Regrouping in the refugee camps, these fighters started to launch cross-border attacks on Rwanda.<sup>9</sup> This security threat pushed the newly established government in Kigali, in coordination with Uganda, Angola, and other countries in the region, to mount a regional insurgent coalition to disband the garrison-refugee camps in the Kivus and to topple President Mobutu.

*The Congo Wars and the transformation of armed mobilization  
(1996–2003)*

The outbreak of the First Congo War in 1996, unleashed by the Rwandan-backed insurgency of the *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre* (AFDL, Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire), triggered armed mobilization across the east. While some groups mobilized against the invasion, others came to support the AFDL rebellion. Although these militias caused significant insecurity in rural areas and fed on-going communal tensions, they generally remained fragmented, weak, and parochial, unable to influence events beyond their local fiefs.

It was during the Second Congo War—which started after the souring of relations between the new President Laurent-Désiré Kabila and his Rwandan backers—that these militias began to flourish, with support

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9 Gérard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 24–9.

from Kinshasa and foreign armed groups. The *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy), backed by Rwanda and Uganda, rapidly occupied large parts of the east. With the war on the front lines at a stalemate, Kinshasa began to funnel funds and weapons to armed groups in RCD-held areas, appointing some Mai-Mai leaders as senior officers in the national army. It also forged alliances with the remnants of the ex-FAR soldiers and *Interahamwe* ('Those who attack together')—a Rwandan Hutu paramilitary organization that had arrived in the eastern DRC in 1994 and later known as the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR, Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda)—as well as with the Burundian *Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces de défense de la démocratie* (CNDD-FDD, National Council/Forces for the Defence of Democracy).<sup>10</sup>

Over time, the Congo Wars changed the nature of armed groups, as locally rooted rural militias became enmeshed in networks led by business and political elites. These militia networks drove and were driven by the development of a war economy, which thrived on illegal taxation, smuggling, and racketeering. While this economy allowed for the quick enrichment of some, millions of civilians depended on it for survival, leaving them little choice but to collaborate with armed groups.<sup>11</sup>

The rise of military strongmen, who became deeply involved in local administration, further eroded established structures of authority and social cohesion. While militias in the 1990s relied on support from customary chiefs and local communities, these ties weakened when military leaders developed autonomous bases of revenue and support through linkages to Kinshasa, foreign armed groups, and regional trade networks. At the same time, the large-scale recruitment of youngsters

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10 The CNDD-FDD was a Hutu-dominated politico-military movement led by Léonard Nyangoma. Soon after its foundation in 1994, its armed wing moved into the *territoires* of Uvira and Fizi in South Kivu.

11 Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy Raeymaekers, 'Introduction' in *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo* (eds. Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy Raeymaekers) (Ghent: Academia Press Scientific Publishers, 2004), pp. 13–38.



created a militarized generation that became increasingly detached from customary chiefs, village elders, and parents. The reduced dependence on, and accountability to, local authority led to deteriorating behaviour towards civilians, and physical abuse, forced labour, and illegal taxation started to proliferate.<sup>12</sup>

*Transition: The challenges of demilitarization and army integration*  
(2003–6)

In December 2002, the main belligerents of the Second Congo War signed the *Accord global et inclusif* (Global and Inclusive Agreement), a political and military power-sharing deal. The three-year long peace process starting in 2003 left an indelible mark on Congolese society. Much of this was positive: meaningful elections were held in 2006, for the first time in over 40 years; the country was reunited; and a new constitution enshrined the rights of citizens as never before. Positions in the transitional government, parliament, and other state institutions were divided between the various signatories, and their armed wings were integrated into a new national army, the FARDC.

But the peace process introduced two new dynamics that would foster armed mobilization. The integration of some of the former belligerents into the army created malcontents, who used new insurgencies as a form of bargaining. They were encouraged by the power-sharing logic of the transition, which condoned the use of violence to access political power.<sup>13</sup> The second dynamic was ostensibly benign: political competition in the context of democracy. However, in a strongly militarized environment characterized by ethnic antagonisms, some politicians turned to armed and ethnic mobilization as a shortcut to maintaining influence. Elections also produced losers, some of whom then resorted to violence.

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12 Koen Vlassenroot and Frank van Acker, 'War as Exit from Exclusion? The Formation of Mayi-Mayi Militias in Eastern Congo', *Afrika Focus* 17 (2001), pp. 51–77.

13 Denis Tull and Andreas Mehler, 'The Hidden Costs of Power-sharing: Reproducing Insurgent Violence in Africa', *African Affairs* 104 (2005), pp. 375–98.

These dynamics were most clearly manifested in the trajectory of the deeply unpopular RCD. The group went from controlling almost a third of the country to holding just 15 seats in the 500-strong National Assembly after the 2006 elections. This marginalization was felt particularly strongly by the Tutsi community, which had become highly influential thanks to the RCD.

The main insurgency of this period arose partly in reaction to this loss of power. Led by dissident General Laurent Nkunda, a number of ex-RCD Tutsi officers refused army integration, along with three brigades loyal to them. In light of on-going activity by the FDLR and Mai-Mai groups, they feared for the security of the Tutsi community—but they also had the backing of officials in Goma and Kigali, who wanted to protect their own economic and political interests in the Kivus. Defecting from the army in 2003, Nkunda formed the *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP, National Congress for the Defence of the People) in 2006: it would grow to be one of the most powerful armed groups in the country, in part due to Rwandan backing.<sup>14</sup>

For their part, Mai-Mai groups faced different challenges during the transition, which would similarly prompt many to take up arms again. The government and armed forces were run largely through patronage networks: to obtain promotion and access to informal sources of revenue, connections to influential military or political leaders were essential. The various Mai-Mai commanders who balked at integration—including Dunia Lwendama, Delphin Mbaenda, and Kapopo Alunda—often lacked these elite connections. Many had only enjoyed rudimentary military education; some lacked basic literacy, further reducing their chances for promotion. Some were also hesitant to leave their constituencies in the face of security concerns created by former adversaries who refused

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14 Jason Stearns, *From CNDP to M23: The Evolution of an Armed Movement in Eastern Congo* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2012).

to dismantle their armed groups.<sup>15</sup> The few Mai-Mai commanders who did obtain positions of importance, like General Padiri Bulenda, used nominations to reward members of their own ethnic community or family, side-lining many of their former fellow commanders. Of the Mai-Mai delegates to the peace talks in South Africa, the two representing the largest groups—Anselme Enerunga, of Padiri’s movement, and Kosco Swedy, representing the Dunia group—were eventually repudiated by their commanders in the field.

The marginalization of Mai-Mai networks coincided with their increasing fragmentation, rendering them vulnerable to manipulation by the government in Kinshasa, which sought to control these groups by co-opting some of their leaders. In total, Mai-Mai groups from across the eastern Congo were given 13 out of 620 seats in the transitional parliament, four out of 63 ministerial positions, and one of the 11 provincial governorates. But the way in which positions were doled out bred discontent. One Mai-Mai officer described it as follows: ‘Our delegates got to Kinshasa and then began selling the positions we had a claim to. People who had nothing to do with the Mai-Mai could buy one of the military or political positions that belonged to us. It was our own internal weakness that allowed them to do this.’<sup>16</sup> Thus Kisula Ngoy, who had only marginal links to Mai-Mai, became Governor of Katanga, while Mushi Bonane, a lawyer based in Kinshasa, claimed a Mai-Mai parliamentary seat.

As a result of these various developments, dozens of dissident Mai-Mai commanders returned to the bush between 2007–9. Due to on-going insecurity, in part caused by foreign armed groups such as the FDLR, and continuing local conflicts, they could easily attract recruits and mobilize support. The absence of a strong, impartial army further bolstered the belief that communal self-defence was justified and necessary.

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 15 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Judith Verweijen, *Between Integration and Disintegration: The Erratic Trajectory of the Congolese Army* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2013).

16 Usalama Project Interviewee #814, via telephone, June 2013.

*Fragmentation and the revolving door of military integration (2006–12)*

The 2006 elections brought an end to the transition but failed to end violence in the eastern DRC. Dozens of new armed groups were formed, backed by officers and politicians who had failed to obtain the votes and positions they had hoped for. The government did little to counteract this. For those who chose the route of continued dissidence, there were few consequences: army deserters were rarely punished and sustained military pressure on armed groups was rare. With the army still under construction and lacking both cohesion and capacity, the government in Kinshasa saw few alternatives to a strategy of co-option, especially of groups who did not pose a direct threat to its power.<sup>17</sup>

Laurent Nkunda's CNDP was at the centre of this new round of mobilization. Beginning in 2006, the FARDC launched repeated offensives against this group—an escalation that triggered a cascade of counter-mobilizations by other groups including the *Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais* (PARECO, Alliance of Resistant Congolese Patriots). There were two reasons for this development. First, the FARDC, unsure of its own officers' competence and loyalty, often backed ethnic militias with weapons and money. Secondly, the fighting spread insecurity in the countryside, triggering mobilization (often among demobilized soldiers) in the name of communal self-defence.<sup>18</sup>

Much of this mobilization, as well as the cynical manipulation of armed groups, happened in the run-up to the Goma Conference of January 2008, which aimed to bring an end to the escalation. Perversely, however, the conference led to a further proliferation of armed groups. According to one senior Congolese intelligence officer, 'The government's logic during the Goma Conference was to create new groups in order to dilute the

17 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Judith Verweijen, 'The Volatility of a Half-cooked Bouillabaisse: Rebel-military Integration and Conflict Dynamics in Eastern DRC', *African Affairs* 112/449 (2013), pp. 563–82.

18 Jason Stearns, *PARECO: Land, Local Strongmen and the Roots of Militia Politics in North Kivu* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2013).

CNDP's power.<sup>19</sup> Other politicians or rebel leaders did not wait to be asked by Kinshasa: hoping to benefit from anticipated integration into the army or lucrative demobilization packages, they either created new groups, revived dormant ones, or stepped up recruitment. For example, a local politician from Mwenga created the Mai-Mai Shikito around this time. According to a senior leader of the group, weapons were distributed to dozens of young fighters, who were led by FARDC defectors.<sup>20</sup> Other such groups that were re-created or bolstered for the occasion include the Mai-Mai Mahoro, Mudundu 40, the Mai-Mai Ruwenzori, and the *Union des jeunes patriotes sacrifiés* (UJPS, Union of Young Sacrificed Patriots). Once again, an accord aimed at the co-option of groups by integrating them into the state apparatus created incentives for armed mobilization, both among those anticipating gains and those disappointed with the results.<sup>21</sup>

The ceasefire initiated by the Goma peace process rapidly unravelled, paving the way for renewed escalation. After several humiliating defeats, President Kabila decided in late 2008 to negotiate directly with the Rwandan government, which was under increased donor scrutiny over its support for the CNDP. In January 2009, the parameters of a peace deal became known: the CNDP's leader Laurent Nkunda was arrested by the Rwandan army, which then deployed troops to the Kivus to hunt down the FDLR in joint operations with the FARDC. Two months later, on 23 March, an agreement was signed which stipulated that the CNDP should be transformed into a political party and its troops integrated into the Congolese army. Refusing to be redeployed across the country, many CNDP officers stayed in the Kivus, where they formed an influential network taking lead positions in another round of operations against the FDLR.

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 19 Usalama Project Interviewee #811, Bukavu, June 2013.

20 Usalama Project Interviewee #837, Bukavu, 26 April 2013.

21 Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy Raeymaekers, 'Kivu's Intractable Security Conundrum', *African Affairs* 108/432 (2009), pp. 475-84.

This arrangement solved one problem while creating another. The deal with the CNDP provoked widespread resentment. The main complaint related to the favourable terms of integration provided to the CNDP, which maintained parallel chains of command, intelligence, and logistics within the army. Former CNDP officers also dominated the newly created operational command structures for the Kivus, and brigades controlled by the ex-CNDP were deployed to the most resource-rich sites, allowing them to extend their military and economic influence well beyond their traditional stronghold in Masisi. This confirmed the conviction held by many FARDC officers and armed group leaders that Tutsi and Hutu were given preferential treatment in the army.<sup>22</sup>

While the operations against the FDLR and other armed groups launched between 2009 and 2011—dubbed successively *Umoja Wetu* ('Our Unity'), *Kimia* ('Silence') II, and *Amani Leo* ('Peace Today')—managed to weaken the FDLR, they were extremely detrimental to civilians, displacing over a million people and causing widespread insecurity. Moreover, together with resentment about the ex-CNDP's new-found dominance, these offensives bolstered some other armed groups, including Sikuli Lafontaine's PARECO faction and Janvier Karairi Bwingo's *Alliance patriotique pour un Congo libre et souverain* (APCLS, Patriotic Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo) in North Kivu, and the Mai-Mai Yakutumba in South Kivu.<sup>23</sup>

An army restructuring process, launched in 2011 and intended to dismantle some of the influence gained by the CNDP within the military hierarchy, provoked further mobilization. The temporary withdrawal of troops from the field to reorganize them from brigades into regiments created a security vacuum rapidly filled by armed groups, such as the

22 UN Security Council, S/2010/596, 'Final Report of the Group of Experts on the DRC', 29 November 2010, pp. 42–6; UN Security Council, S/2011/738, 'Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo', 2 December 2011, pp. 89–90.

23 International Crisis Group (ICG), 'Congo: No Stability in Kivu Despite a Rapprochement with Rwanda', Nairobi/Brussels, 16 November 2010, pp. 11–12.

Raia Mutomboki.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, discontent about the distribution of positions in the newly formed units provoked numerous desertions, with many deserters launching new armed groups.<sup>25</sup>

The 2011 general elections intensified this dynamic, as politicians fell back on armed groups to obtain electoral support and, when unsuccessful at the polls, to maintain influence. In Fizi, parliamentary candidates like Jemsi Mulengwa supported the Mai Mai Yakutumba,<sup>26</sup> while the *mwami* (customary chief) of the Fulero in Uvira, who also ran for parliament, mobilized his personal self-defence militia, the *Forces d'autodéfense locales légitimes* (FALL, Local Legitimate Self-defence Forces) for his campaign.<sup>27</sup>

### *The M23: A turning point? (2012–present)*

The integration deal signed on 23 March 2009 unravelled as the result of a standoff between Kinshasa and the ex-CNDP leadership in early 2012, leading to yet another phase of mobilization. While the FARDC had been trying to redeploy the ex-CNDP leadership away from the Kivus since 2009, the 2011 electoral fiasco led President Kabila to intensify these efforts. Partly driven by international pressure, he also tried to arrest General Bosco Ntaganda, who was wanted by the International Criminal Court. However, in a pre-emptive move, parts of the ex-CNDP mutinied in April 2012. This dissent morphed into a new rebellion, the M23, which effectively split the ex-CNDP network. Roughly half of the ex-CNDP

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 24 Jason Stearns et al., *Raia Mutomboki: The Flawed Peace Process in the DRC and the Birth of an Armed Franchise* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2013).

25 UN Security Council, S/2012/843, 'Final Report of the Group of Experts on the DRC', 15 November 2012, p. 33.

26 Stearns et al., *Mai-Mai Yakutumba*, pp. 41–42.

27 Centre Indépendant des Recherches et d'Etudes Stratégiques au Kivu (CIRESKI), 'Étude analytique sur la milice «FAL»', December 2012 (unpublished report, on file with the Usalama Project).



officers did not join the M23, resisting pressure by Rwandan authorities who became increasingly involved in managing the rebellion.<sup>28</sup>

The M23 crisis reverberated through the region, triggering the formation or the strengthening of several opposing groups in its area of deployment in Rutshuru, including the FDLR-Soki, the Mai-Mai Shetani, the *Mouvement populaire d'autodéfense* (MPA, Popular Self-defence Movement), and the *Forces pour la défense des intérêts du peuple congolais* (FDIPC, Forces for the Defence of the Interests of the Congolese People). Increased mobilization also resulted from efforts by the M23 and its allies in Rwanda to forge alliances or create new groups throughout the east such as the *Alliance pour la libération de l'est du Congo* (ALEC, Alliance for the Liberation of East Congo) in Uvira and the *Force oecuménique pour la libération du Congo* (FOLC, Ecumenical Force for the Liberation of Congo) led by FARDC deserter Hilaire Kombi in the Beni area in northern North Kivu. It also tried to orchestrate coalitions of armed groups in Ituri—efforts that largely failed.

Aside from army deserters like Kombi, marginalized politicians often played a crucial role in these mobilization efforts. In the north of North Kivu, Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi, an MP and former foreign minister, organized significant political support for and donated arms to Kombi's group.<sup>29</sup> In South Kivu, failed parliamentary candidate Gustave Bagayamukwe spearheaded the creation of a new M23 satellite called *Union des forces révolutionnaires du Congo* (UFRC, Union of Revolutionary Forces of Congo) at the end of 2012.<sup>30</sup> Most of these groups, however, were very small, and the M23 did not achieve a broader destabilization of the region.

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28 UN Security Council, S/2012/348/Add.1, 'Addendum to the Interim report of the Group of Experts on the DRC', 27 June 2012, pp. 11–12.

29 UN Security Council, S/2012/843, pp. 19–27.

30 UN Security Council, S/2013/433, 'Midterm report of the UN Group of Experts on the DRC', 19 July 2013, pp. 13–15.

While Kinshasa established operational alliances with some armed groups, it tried to dismantle others.<sup>31</sup> Using financial inducements and generous promises of ranks and positions, it offered deals to the Mai-Mai groups under Yakutumba, Mayele, Nyakiliba, and Kifuafua; several Nyatura groups; Cobra Matata's *Force de résistance patriotique en Ituri* (FRPI, Ituri Patriotic Resistance Force); and a plethora of militias in Uvira.<sup>32</sup> But by the end of 2013, only the integration of a part of the Nyatura combatants appeared successful, and clashes with numerous of the other integration candidates multiplied, especially in Fizi, Uvira, and the district of Ituri.

In August 2013, a large-scale FARDC offensive against the M23—backed by the newly established United Nations Force Intervention Brigade (FIB)—achieved a number of military successes. But even if these succeed in dismantling the M23, the many other armed groups in the east are likely to continue to stir violence, especially as long as the drivers of armed mobilization are not addressed.

### Explaining the persistence of armed groups

To understand why the eastern DRC continues to experience the proliferation of armed groups, three sets of factors should be considered. The first is the heightened competition between political and military elite networks at the regional, national, and provincial level, compounded by a weak political centre in Kinshasa. Second, there are factors within the eastern DRC that promote the militarization of political and economic competition. Third are local conflicts and grievances related to land, local authority, and insecurity. There are additional factors, including the abundance of weaponry, widespread poverty, and the difficult topography of the eastern DRC. But many other countries—and large parts of the western DRC—share such problems without experiencing similar levels

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31 UN Security Council, S/2012/843, pp. 29 and 33.

32 UN Security Council, S/2012/843, pp. 32–4.

of armed conflict. These factors help explain why armed groups are easy to form and why they survive, but not their high incidence in the east.

*A weak centre and competing elites*

The transition, which culminated in the 2006 national elections, unified the country at the price of sparking new conflicts. The Global and Inclusive Agreement of 2002 had drawn belligerents into a power-sharing government but also marginalized some of the most powerful armed groups, and fragmented others. Especially in the east, factions tried to maintain the spheres of political and economic influence they had built up during the wars, resisting Kinshasa's efforts to reassert its authority. The ensuing power struggle between the political centre and elites in the east is the latest manifestation of a trend that has characterized the Congolese state since its creation.

President Mobutu largely managed to overcome resistance against the influence of the centre through a combination of coercion and co-option—and one of the keys to his success was the establishment of a strong and relatively inclusive patronage network that controlled access to vital economic assets.<sup>33</sup> Joseph Kabila, by contrast, has failed to construct a similar patronage network to consolidate his control over the east. The Congo Wars reinforced the regional orientation of the east's economy, thus rendering local elites less dependent on economic connections to and patronage from Kinshasa. In North Kivu, flourishing cross-border networks were created that encompassed Congolese, Rwandan, and Ugandan traders, administrators, and military elites. During the 2003–6 transition, these networks largely co-opted newly appointed political and administrative authorities, thereby maintaining their autonomy from Kinshasa.<sup>34</sup>

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33 Denis Tull, *The Reconfiguration of Political Order in Africa: A Case Study of North Kivu (DR Congo)* (Hamburg: Institut für Afrika-Kunde, 2005), pp. 64–93.

34 Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy Raeymaekers, 'New Political Order in the DR Congo? The Transformation of Regulation', *Afrika Focus* 21 (2008), pp. 39–52.

Such cross-border networks have also facilitated on-going armed mobilization. For example, during the wars, Burundian rebels of both the CNDD-FDD and the *Forces nationales de libération* (FNL, National Liberation Forces) collaborated extensively with Mai-Mai groups in Fizi and Uvira. Parts of these networks, which extend into Tanzania, have stayed intact, contributing to the refusal of certain Mai-Mai groups to integrate into the Congolese army. Diasporas and refugee camps in neighbouring countries have contributed to the fostering of such regional links, facilitating recruitment and smuggling.<sup>35</sup>

The most important backlash to the transition came from one such regional network, which links Congolese Tutsi elites in Goma to their counterparts in the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government in Kigali. Kigali became an important logistical and financial hub for the CNDP rebels, who could also recruit directly among Congolese refugees on Rwandan soil. Although Kigali never entirely controlled the rebels, it did provide crucial support, including direct military assistance by the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF).<sup>36</sup> These regional links have undermined the orientation of these provincial elites towards distant Kinshasa, which continues to be seen with distrust, not least because of the anti-Tutsi rhetoric prevalent within parts of the government.<sup>37</sup>

The political centre that emerged in Kinshasa after the Second Congo War is weak. While controlling key parts of the state apparatus, Kabila's patronage network has failed to fully co-opt political, military and business elites in the east, thus fostering on-going power competition. Regional connections have intensified these power struggles, drawing in elites and diaspora populations from neighbouring countries, while reinforcing the eastward orientation of the economy in the Kivus.

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35 UN Security Council, *S/2009/603*, 'Final report of the Group of Experts on the DRC', 23 November 2009, pp. 11–2 and 20–2.

36 UN Security Council, *S/2008/773*, 'Final report of the Group of Experts on the DRC', 12 December 2008, pp. 6–18.

37 For an analysis of the Rwandan government's interests in the eastern DRC, see Jason Stearns, *From CNDP to M23*, pp. 54–8.

*The militarization of political and economic competition*

A second key factor in the proliferation of armed groups is the violent character of the competition between regional, national and provincial elites. The militarization of politics was essentially triggered by the power-sharing logic of the Global and Inclusive Agreement of 2002, integrating former belligerents into state and army—including many groups that lacked their own political structure or even a coherent political programme. Kinshasa's strategy—co-opting leaders from such groups in order to benefit from their quotas in the transitional government and influence their constituencies—only encouraged further fragmentation. Leaders who enjoyed Kinshasa's favour did not hesitate to sideline core members of their own networks—and by the end of the transition process, it was precisely these marginalized figures that led the new wave of armed group formation.

The government's approach to dealing with these dissidents was counterproductive. Once again, they offered them military integration on favourable terms, including impunity for past crimes, permission to stay in their areas of origin, promises of high ranks and positions, considerable sums of cash, and (only occasionally) the accreditation of political parties. At the same time, those withdrawing from army integration generally faced few sanctions: punishments for desertions have been rare, many groups have never been confronted with significant military pressure, and deserters have always been welcomed back into the fold, creating a revolving door of army integration and defection.<sup>38</sup>

But it is not only dissatisfied army officers that have been involved in armed mobilization: in many cases politicians have been key supporters of armed groups. Perversely, one of the reasons for this has been the new democratic logic of power. It is often easier to gain popular approval by

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38 Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, 'Volatility', p. 571–3. The CNDP is but the most well-known of such examples: many commanders have followed similar trajectories, including Albert Kahasha, Delphin Mbaenda, Mahoro Kitay Ngombarufu, and Patient Akilimali. Others, such as Amuri Yakutumba and Cobra Matata deserted and have engaged in repeated negotiations and integration efforts ever since with no success.

being an *homme fort* (local strongman) and exploiting ethnic divisions than by effecting real policy change. A strongman can dole out cash, manage football teams, and fund development projects through his or her own private means. Backing armed groups has thus become an additional avenue for rallying popularity. ‘Almost every single armed group here has backing by politicians in Kinshasa or Bukavu,’ a Congolese intelligence officer in South Kivu reported; ‘it creates employment and makes it seem like you are backing the community.’<sup>39</sup> A local customary chief in North Kivu had a less cynical view: ‘Why did Bakungu Mithondeke [a former vice-governor of North Kivu] help create PARECO? Because they protect the community. It makes the Hunde love him.’<sup>40</sup>

With the backing of an armed group, an individual politician also acquires influence in Kinshasa: in the words of one former armed group member in North Kivu, it makes him an ‘*homme incontournable* [an indispensable person]’.<sup>41</sup> ‘Why do you think Serufuli is still seen as someone important in Kinshasa?’<sup>42</sup> He is the number one strongman in the Hutu community, and that means he can influence Hutu militias and commanders,’ a former Rwandan intelligence officer stated.<sup>43</sup> But the relations between armed groups and politicians work both ways: while politicians can gain in stature and influence through connections with armed groups, armed groups actively seek out politicians to represent them in negotiations with the government.

Armed groups can also directly influence electoral politics. This occurred in 2011, for example, in Masisi and Walikale, where both the APCLS and the Mai-Mai Sheka/Nduma Defence of Congo (NDC) tried to

39 Usalama Project Interviewee #818, Baraka, March 2013.

40 Usalama Project Interviewee #819, Goma, 29 March 2013.

41 Usalama Project Interviewee #820, Goma, April 2013.

42 Eugène Serufuli, governor of North Kivu from 2000–7; see Stearns, *From CNDP to M23*, pp. 21 and 47.

43 Usalama Project Interviewee #815, Goma, April 2013.

influence voter registration.<sup>44</sup> Both these groups epitomize the militarization of politics in the eastern DRC and the impunity that enables it: the APCLS has been able to register as a political party, and Sheka Ntabo Ntaberi ran for parliamentary elections in 2011—despite being widely known as the leader of an armed group and having been implicated in mass atrocities.<sup>45</sup>

Sheka is the prime example of another trend that has fostered armed group proliferation: the militarization of economic competition. A former mining pit manager in Walikale, Sheka is believed to have started his career as a rebel leader in 2009 mainly to protect his and others' mining interests. These include the investments of the deputy commander of the 8th Military Region, Colonel Etienne Bindu, who was instrumental in the creation of the group.<sup>46</sup> While for other armed groups such economic considerations have played a smaller role, safeguarding economic interests clearly forms part of the attraction of armed mobilization in the eastern DRC.

Opportunities for profiteering extend far beyond minerals: militias have exploited and traded charcoal, hardwoods, cannabis, fish, and wild animals.<sup>47</sup> In addition, almost all armed groups depend heavily on illegal taxation, usually obtained at road-blocks and markets, and through food collections in villages.<sup>48</sup> Some groups—like the FDLR and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan armed group largely operating in the Ruwenzori borderlands—also cultivate food crops on a large scale, trade consumer items, and have extensive investments in urban areas,

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44 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, pp. 64–7.

45 Azzad Essa, 'Wanted Congo rebel holds campaign rally', Al Jazeera, 25 November 2011.

46 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, pp. 59–62.

47 Ann Laudati, 'Beyond Minerals: Broadening Economies of Violence in Eastern DRC', *Review of African Political Economy* 40 (2013), pp. 32–50.

48 Steven van Damme, 'Commodities of War: Communities Speak Out on the True Cost of Conflict in Eastern DRC', Oxfam, 20 November 2012.



owning shops, motor-cycles, and pharmacies.<sup>49</sup> These activities require collaborators within the state and business sectors, evidence of armed groups' broader social underpinnings.

*Local roots of armed groups: Land, local authority, and identity*

As much as armed mobilization is spurred by elites, it is always also driven by local dynamics.<sup>50</sup> While the level of popular support varies from group to group, many have sympathizers and collaborators. One reason for this is that the alternatives are often worse: an unreliable and abusive government army, or, in some cases, predatory foreign armed groups. More importantly, some communities with meagre political representation feel that armed groups are their sole means of expressing grievances and making their voices heard. These grievances are often related to land conflicts or disputes over customary power, including conflicts over succession and the boundaries of administrative entities. Because the issues of territory, identity, and customary power all overlap, these conflicts have often been fought out between ethnic communities—although disputes between clans or families have also led to tensions.<sup>51</sup>

Population pressure, the diminishing availability and fertility of arable land, and problematic land governance have all contributed to conflict. The Land Law of 1973 gave the state ownership of all land and abolished customary tenure, leaving the status of communally owned land to be regulated by a future presidential decree. However, the latter was never promulgated, creating legal uncertainties. This fostered a system of governance in which customary chiefs, whose authority is linked to ethnic identity, control access to much of the land in rural areas. However, many chiefs have managed the land they control in an opportunistic manner

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49 For the ADF, see UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 30. Fieldwork conducted for this report in Rutshuru in January 2012 revealed similar investments in businesses and shops by the FDLR in the town of Kiwanja.

50 Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 364–87.

51 Vlassenroot, *South Kivu*, pp. 30–3.

and with little regard for small-scale farmers, undermining both their legitimacy and social cohesion.<sup>52</sup>

Customary rule has also stirred conflicts in other ways. Some chieftaincies have been contested since the colonial era. For instance, the Fulero in Uvira strongly reject the chieftom of the Ruzizi Plain, headed by a Rundi. Other groups, like the Banyamulenge, complain that the Belgian colonial authorities never granted them a paramount chief. In yet other cases, succession, the return of chiefs who had fled during the wars, or power struggles between customary chiefs and state-appointed administrators have been sources of tension. Grievances related to such conflicts, or stemming from insecurity, have created fertile ground for armed groups. Still, there is little evidence that such grievances on their own translate into sustained organized violence. Even where self-defence militias have sprung up spontaneously, it is has been mostly through organizational and financial contributions by politicians and military leaders that such militias have been able to transform into larger-scale and more influential groups.

This is not to reject any connection between local conflicts, violence, and armed group mobilization, but simply to note that this relation is complex. Armed groups draw on local conflicts for popular mobilization, because those conflicts provide narratives around which they can rally the population, attract recruits, and justify taxation. In many cases, these narratives centre on communal self-defence and what is known as autochthony: the idea that a community was the first to inhabit a certain place, so entitling them to land and the exercise of customary power. For instance, while the APCLS cite the expropriation of land as one of their main grievances, Banyamulenge armed groups have consistently

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52 Frank van Acker, 'Where Did All the Land Go? Enclosure and Social Struggle in Kivu (D.R. Congo)', *Review of African Political Economy* 32 (2005), pp. 79–98.

demanded an administrative entity of their own, as justified by the arrival of their community in South Kivu before the colonial era.<sup>53</sup>

In many cases, local conflicts and grievances are not merely drawn upon but actively manipulated by elites, to legitimize their actions and maintain a power base. Amuri Yakutumba, the Bembe leader of a Mai-Mai group in Fizi, claimed for years that he was in the bush because of the insurgency by the *Forces républicaines fédéralistes* (FRF, Republican Federalist Forces)—a rebellion by Banyamulenge, who the Bembe perceive as intruders. But when the FRF integrated into the FARDC in January 2011, Yakutumba still refused to demobilize.

Additionally, it is often the presence of armed groups that leads local conflicts to turn violent, rather than these conflicts leading to the formation of armed groups. For instance, it is doubtful whether the customary conflict around the *chefferie* (chiefdom) of the Ruzizi Plain would have escalated to such an extent, were it not for the presence of the Mai-Mai group of Bede Rusagara, a family member of one of the local authorities who is a key figure in the conflict. Yet the creation of Bede's group had little to do with the conflict around the *chefferie*. His defection from the army in 2011 had been facilitated by officers in the FARDC, and his initial contacts were primarily with Burundian armed groups and then the M23.<sup>54</sup> It was only later that he became heavily involved in the local power conflict.

To conclude, there is a complex relationship between armed groups and local conflicts and grievances in the eastern DRC. The latter interact with elite competition in the context of a political order that provides incentives to use violence and thus promote the proliferation of militias. Difficult army integration processes and the functioning of the Congolese army have only contributed to this.

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53 Jason Stearns et al., *Banyamulenge: Insurgency and Exclusion in the Mountains of South Kivu* (London: Rift Valley Institute, 2013).

54 UN Security Council, S/2012/843, pp. 21–3.

### 3. The Congolese army

The stated objective of the Congolese army is to eradicate the various armed groups active in the eastern DRC. Instead, it has often directly contributed to their proliferation. The FARDC is compromised in several respects: by mismanagement on the part of the political leadership of the DRC, by the politics of military integration, by weak control and accountability, and by poor conditions of service for rank-and-file soldiers.

#### The Congolese army: Past and present

In order to understand how the FARDC works it is necessary to examine the ways in which the Congolese government has been torn between competing security imperatives since independence. Emerging from colonial rule with a fragmented and weak administration, the ruling elite needed the military to suppress rebellions—as it does today. At the same time, its leaders were often more afraid of their own military than of rebellions, which could be put down with the help of their foreign allies.

#### *Mobutu's military management*

President Mobutu himself seized power in 1965 through a military-backed coup. Once in office, still weak, and faced with a fractious political elite, he feared that by creating a strong and independent army he might create the conditions for his own removal. Bolstered by the international community, which sent troops and mercenaries to his aid in the 1960s and 1970s, Mobutu cultivated a style of military management that persists until today: a series of divide-and-rule techniques geared towards keeping the army weak, fractured, loyal, and preoccupied with affairs outside politics.<sup>55</sup> These techniques were to a large extent administered by Mobutu himself, and an important share of military resources

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<sup>55</sup> Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 248–75.

were managed by the president's *maison militaire* (Military House), an advisory council attached to the presidency, which kept close control over key decision-making areas and functions, such as intelligence and procurement.

Mobutu also played a key role in human resources management, personally appointing officers to important positions. The main criteria for appointment were loyalty and patronage, not competence. As one former Mobutu officer put it: 'He kept the army weak and fragmented, with a strong core of ethnic loyalists to protect him from threats.'<sup>56</sup> Two failed (and perhaps imaginary) coups in 1975 and 1978 reinforced Mobutu's belief that a strong army was more of a potential threat than an asset. Consequently, he purged or demoted many officers from the Kasais and the Kivus, while promoting his fellow Bangala from Equateur Province. Promotion implied not only higher ranks or positions: there were significant informal pay-offs as well. To maintain loyalty, Mobutu fostered or tolerated military entrepreneurship, hoping that business interests would distract his commanders' attention from political affairs. Thus individual generals built up commercial empires, becoming more businessmen than army leaders.<sup>57</sup>

Despite this lack of meritocracy, not all military staff were poorly trained. In the earlier Mobutu period, the army attracted bright and ambitious recruits, and officers were sent to military academies in countries such as Belgium, Morocco, Greece, China, France, the United Kingdom, Israel, and the United States. The Congo also had its own academies and elite training centres—especially the *École de formation des officiers* (EFO, Officers Training School) in Kananga and the *Centre d'entraînement commando* (Centre for Special Forces Training) in Kotakoli—where other African countries sent their officers for training. Few

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56 Usalama Project Interviewee #822, Kinshasa, 23 May 2013.

57 Michael Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 59–60.

well-educated officers obtained influential positions, however, although they provided core competence in the more technical services.

Internal divisions were also fostered by the creation of competing and parallel security services. There were at least half a dozen civilian, military, and paramilitary intelligence agencies, including the *Centre national de documentation* (CND, National Documentation Centre), the military *Service d'action et de renseignements militaires* (SARM, Service for Action and Military Intelligence) and various agencies within the navy, presidency, police, and immigration service. A similar confusing proliferation could be found in the police sector. In 1972, Mobutu dissolved the police force, leaving only the *Gendarmerie nationale*. Twelve years later, he created a *Garde civile* to function as a national police force, but its mandate was never clearly demarcated from the *Gendarmerie*, creating immediate competition.<sup>58</sup> To make matters worse, the *Forces armées zaïroises* (FAZ, Zairian Armed Forces) also carried out policing tasks, following a tradition established in the colonial era by which the armed forces fulfilled both domestic and external security functions.<sup>59</sup>

Within the army, competition between agencies and units was no less acute: several elite brigades operated almost autonomously from the army high command, especially the Korean-trained Kamanyola Brigade. Mobutu also had a large presidential guard, the *Division spéciale présidentielle* (DSP, Special Presidential Division), which was well paid and controlled by members of Mobutu's own ethnic group. The preferential treatment of these elite units contrasted sharply with the rest of the army, whose soldiers were poorly paid, equipped, and clothed, and often left to fend for themselves in rural areas, where they started to prey on civilians.

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58 Roger C. Glickson and Joshua Sinai, 'National Security', in *Zaire: A Country Study (Area Handbook Series)* (eds. Sandra Meditz and Tim Merrill) (Washington DC: Library of Congress Federal Research Division, 1994), pp. 278 and 317–18.

59 Bryant P. Shaw, 'Force Publique, Force Unique: The Military in the Belgian Congo, 1914–1939' (Madison: University of Wisconsin PhD thesis, 1984).

International donors were complicit in this fragmentation of the military. As they vied for influence in the context of Cold War rivalry, assistance was provided on a purely bilateral basis. Belgium, whose officers had headed the colonial army, and the United States, to which Zaire was a key Cold War ally, were among the most important donors. The US donated USD 174.9 million in training and equipment between 1960–91, and the Belgian army provided military instructors and equipment, as well as regular places for Congolese officers at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels. But other countries gave generous assistance as well. At one point, 400 North Korean instructors were in the country, and France, Israel, South Africa, and Egypt were also involved in providing various forms of financial, technical and educational support.<sup>60</sup>

In the wake of a humiliating military performance during two invasions of Shaba (today's Katanga province) by remnants of the former secessionist Katangan army in the second half of the 1970s the president allowed foreigners to take leadership roles in army units. A French colonel briefly commanded the French-trained 31st Airborne Brigade, Belgian officers trained and then remained as advisors within the 21st Infantry Brigade, and Israeli advisors were attached to the DSP. Foreign experts were also crucial for the repair and maintenance of equipment, including ground maintenance services for the air force.<sup>61</sup> Despite this extensive foreign assistance, however, the army remained a weak fighting force—but as long as Mobutu could count on foreign military intervention in the face of severe threats to his regime, such as the Shaba wars, he could afford to have a poorly performing army.

### *Factionalism under the Kabilas*

Acknowledging Mobutu's legacy is vital to any understanding of developments in army reform since Joseph Kabila became president in 2001. He

60 Glickson and Sinai, 'National Security', pp. 308–12.

61 Thomas Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 209.

too arrived in power facing an army riven by internal competition, while having to fight numerous rebellions. The AFDL insurgency that had brought his father to the presidency, and in which he himself had risen to become the commander of land forces, had relied on foreign troops—primarily from Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola—to topple Mobutu. When Laurent-Désiré Kabila fell out with his Rwandan and Ugandan allies, the *Forces armées congolaises* (FAC, Congolese Armed Forces) lost its most potent allies.

Consequently, Kabila was forced to rely on a mismatch of former FAZ officers, newcomers who had started their military career during the AFDL and *maquisards* (rebel fighters) who had fought with him in his bush war against Mobutu from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. The latter included figures such as Sylvestre Lwetcha, Shabani Sikatenda, and Yermos Lokole from Fizi. These officers and their troops, which included thousands of ill-trained *kadogo* (youngsters) recruited for the AFDL insurgency, suffered from inexperience, disorganization, and a lack of trust among themselves.<sup>62</sup> This forced Kabila to fall back on his inner circle of loyalists, themselves often poorly trained, including former *maquisards* from Fizi, and Katangans such as Célestin Kifwa, Edy Kapend, and Mufu Kiyana. Had it not been for outside support from rebellions and governments in the region, Kabila's factionalized force would have most likely been defeated—while the intervention of Angolan and Zimbabwean troops was essential for halting the rebels' advance towards Kinshasa, Kabila also integrated Rwandan Hutu into FAC units.

Joseph Kabila's rise to power at such an early age—he was only 29—and in the wake of his father's assassination by his own bodyguards, heightened the new president's sense of vulnerability. The political elite was fragmented and consumed by intrigues, and he had few people he could rely on. Unlike his father, however, he swiftly realized that he would not be able to win the war through military force. As one of his former

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62 ICG, 'How Kabila Lost His Way: The Performance of Laurent Désiré Kabila's Government', 21 May 1999, pp. 16–20.



advisors argued: ‘Joseph Kabila does not rule through brute strength. You can’t in this country: our state is too weak. He rules through cunning, by co-opting his enemies, and by keeping everybody weak.’<sup>63</sup>

Due to this approach, there was little serious front-line fighting after 2001; while negotiating with his enemies in Addis Ababa and eventually in South Africa’s Sun City, Kabila applied military pressure on them largely through networks of militia proxies. Like his father, he funnelled money and ammunition to local Mai-Mai groups, as well as Rwandan and Burundian rebels.

*The FARDC: A product of tenuous power-sharing*

The FARDC was created in 2003 by a merger of the belligerents of the Second Congo War. At its creation, the army leadership put forward a vastly inflated troop figure of 350,000, a number that would be drastically reduced when biometric identification of troops was introduced. Today, it hovers between 120,000–130,000.<sup>64</sup> Positions in the FARDC were allocated based on the political logic of the power-sharing deal—with commanders receiving appointments based on their connections, not their competence or performance.

The position of *Chef d’état-major général* (Chief of the General Staff) went to the government faction (FAC), as did the air force leadership and three of the 11 regional commands. The RCD was able to name the minister of defence, the commander of the land forces and two region commanders, while the *Mouvement de libération du Congo* (MLC, Movement for the Liberation of the Congo), which was led by Jean-Pierre Bemba and had controlled parts of the north and north-east, won the command

63 Usalama Project Interviewee #823, Kinshasa, June 2009.

64 Roger Kibasomba, ‘Post War Defence Integration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’, Institute for Security Studies, 1 December 2005; Usalama Project Interviewee #824, Kinshasa, June 2013.

of the navy and two regional commands.<sup>65</sup> In order to add checks and balances, many high-ranking commanders were given two deputies from different factions. However, rather than fostering trust, this exacerbated the politicization of the FARDC and its associated networks.

This arrangement also reinforced Kabila's tendency to manage the security services, where his former enemies now held important positions, through informal networks. He tried to circumvent the hierarchy by passing through his private military cabinet, the *maison militaire*, and the *Conseiller spécial en matière de sécurité* (Special Security Advisor).

Kabila and senior military officers also routinely by-passed the official chain of command by giving direct orders to commanders in the field. Some units, such as the elite *Brigade Requin* (Shark Brigade), were commanded almost directly by the presidency, and many officers complained that they would receive different orders from their direct commanders and from the presidency.<sup>66</sup> Finally, despite a lack of legal provisions, Kabila retained under his personal control a 10,000–15,000 strong presidential guard—the *Groupe spécial de sécurité présidentielle* (GSSP, Special Presidential Security Group), renamed in 2006 the *Garde républicaine* (GR).<sup>67</sup>

These pockets of influence may not have given Kabila anything like full control but they did allow him to maintain dominance both within the army and within the country at large. While the east is swamped with rebel groups, few of these pose a direct threat to his regime. The similarities with Mobutu are clear: Joseph Kabila has continued the tradition of control via informal networks and divide-and-rule strategies, playing

65 Beginning in 1999, the RCD split into various factions, including the RCD-Kisangani/*Mouvement de libération* (RCD-K/ML, RCD-Kisangani/Liberation Movement) and *RCD-National* (RCD-N, RCD-National). Here we refer to the original RCD, still based in Goma.

66 Usalama Project Interviewees #825, Goma, 1 December 2012, #826, Kinshasa, 2 June 2013, and #827, Kinshasa 4 April 2012.

67 Amnesty International, 'Democratic Republic of Congo: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Reform of the Army', 25 January 2007, pp. 59–60.

off competing networks against one another. In such a fragmented political and military context, however, these strategies are not always successful. There are three important reasons for this: as seen above, military leaders are strongly embedded in relatively independent political and economic networks, especially in the east. Secondly, the sheer multitude of factions—with dozens of armed groups being absorbed into the FARDC—has created an even more fractured environment. Finally, the logic of military power sharing itself has complicated the management of the army, since those who have felt they were denied their due rewards have withdrawn or deserted.<sup>68</sup>

Fragmentation in the Congolese body politic is, of course, not limited to the army: it is the predominant feature both of the Congolese state apparatus and the political order at large. The president has not managed to create formal or informal structures that are sufficiently strong to overcome it. Kabila expressed his own frustration with this situation in an interview with the *New York Times* in 2009: ‘You don’t need a thousand people to transform a country. No, you need 3, 4, 10, 15 people with the necessary convictions, determined and resolute. Do I have those 15 people? Probably 5, 6, 7, not yet 15.’<sup>69</sup> This state of affairs has probably been accentuated by the president’s own style of leadership: centralizing decision making but sometimes taking months to make a decision.

## Functionality and dysfunctionality in the FARDC

The Congolese army as it exists today has important characteristics that help explain why it is unable to cope with armed mobilization in the eastern DRC. What follows is an in-depth analysis of these characteristics, designed to set the background before discussing potential reform policies.

68 Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, ‘Volatility’, pp. 577–80.

69 Jeffrey Gettleman, ‘An Interview with Kabila’, *The New York Times*, 3 April 2009.

### *Patronage networks*

The FARDC should be seen as a collection of competing and overlapping patronage networks, which are both subservient to and conflict with the formal hierarchy. Within patron-client relations, loyalty, support, and the provision of certain services are exchanged for access to resources and protection. As one officer explained ‘In this army, you need to have an “umbrella,” someone who can look after you, secure promotions and lucrative deployments. Nothing works on merit alone.’<sup>70</sup>

Subordinates are obliged to pay regular amounts to superiors, often referred to as *rapportage* (‘bringing in’)—or, as many Congolese soldiers put it, ‘feeding the horse so the horse feeds you’.<sup>71</sup> *Rapportage* works as an instrument of control: those failing to submit sufficient revenues are sent to so-called ‘drier zones’, with fewer opportunities to make money. The relationship between commander and subordinate is not one of unrestrained predation, but entails a kind of reciprocity. Just as subordinates are expected to deliver to their superiors, so they too are supposed to provide something in return: protection, advice, mitigation of punishments, promotion, leave, and training.

Officers and troops have other loyalties, too, as they can simultaneously be part of different patronage networks. These may be based on geography, ethnicity, education, or prior membership of an armed group or military unit. Thus some former FAZ officers assist each other, due to their common experiences under Mobutu—often contrasting their own professional training with that of the poorly trained post-1996 recruits. Since 2003, all commanders of the armed forces have been ex-FAZ

70 Usalama Project interviewee #828, Kinshasa, 2 June 2013.

71 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Ola Olsson, ‘Feeding the Horse: Unofficial Economic Activities within the Police Force in the DR Congo’, *African Security* 4/4 (2011), pp. 223–41.

officers.<sup>72</sup> The head of the powerful presidential *maison militaire*, Major General Célestin Mbala, is also ex-FAZ, as are over half of the 11 regional military commanders. Those on the outside often lament the influence of the ex-FAZ. One such officer said: ‘We spilled our blood to overthrow Mobutu and his system, only to place the same people with the same culture of corruption and impunity at the head of the military.’<sup>73</sup> At the same time, a common perception among ex-FAZ officers from the west is that the army is taken over by Swahili speakers from the east, particularly Katangans and Kivutians, and that they themselves are being marginalized.

A similar network, which has now begun to fray, regroups RCD officers from the east who were integrated into the army in 2003. By 2011, more than half of the command positions in North and South Kivu were held by officers from this group.<sup>74</sup> Some of the most prominent of these maintained their positions thanks to General Gabriel Amisi, former RCD officer and commander of the land forces between 2006–12. The view of one senior officer is representative of many colleagues: ‘He was given that position as part of the transition’s power-sharing deal, and was able to maintain it both by sharing money with the country’s leaders, and by promising to prevent ex-RCD officers from defecting. But instead, he often helped ex-RCD mutineers.’<sup>75</sup>

The example of the RCD shows that personal loyalties to former comrades, and the networks between political and military elites that were developed during the Congo Wars, have continued to shape military

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72 With the beginning of the transition in July 2003, Admiral Baudoin Liwanga became the Chief of Staff of the Congolese armed forces, the highest military position. He was succeeded by Major General Philemon Kisempia in 2004, who in turn handed over to Lieutenant General Dieudonné Kayembe in 2007. Lieutenant General Didier Etumba has been Chief of Staff since 2008.

73 Usalama Project Interviewee #830, Bukavu, 15 June 2013.

74 Internal FARDC document on file with the Usalama Project; see also UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 82.

75 Usalama Project interviewee #826, Kinshasa, 3 June 2013.

dynamics. This does not imply that war-era networks have remained entirely intact within the military: many, like the ex-MLC, have been diluted and absorbed, while others have been split, such as several ex-Mai Mai factions, parts of which were co-opted by the president, while others have deserted.

Divided loyalties have strongly affected combat performance, as evidenced by the FARDC's mixed record against the M23. There are indications that the disastrous campaign against the rebels in November 2012 could be attributed to deliberately counter-productive orders. Many officers complained that they were ordered by the high command *not* to pursue the M23, just as they gained the upper hand during the defence of Kibumba, 30 km north of Goma. One FARDC officer said: 'Suddenly we received the order to stop. It didn't make sense; it just gave them the chance to regroup and pull together a force that went on to take Goma.'<sup>76</sup> The foreign-trained commando battalions were also 'sabotaged', according to one of their trainers: the 391st Battalion was deployed in the Virunga National Park without reconnaissance, got lost, and was ambushed by enemy forces.<sup>77</sup> The 322nd Battalion was sent to Pinga to fight against the Mai-Mai Sheka, which is closely linked Colonel Etienne Bindu.<sup>78</sup> The battalion was also forbidden to engage in active pursuit of the enemy and was subsequently ambushed.

Appointments based on connections rather than merit have further diminished the FARDC's fighting capabilities. Subordinates lose respect for incompetent commanders, leading to insubordination and the refusal to obey orders. In addition, the disorganization created by parallel chains of command and the embezzlement of military funds and equipment have time and again undermined operational effectiveness. Troops often

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 76 Johnny Hogg and Ed Stoddard, 'Insight: Congo army debacle at Goma raises specter of betrayal', Reuters, 10 December 2012.

77 Usalama Project Interviewee #824, Kinshasa, 1 June 2013.

78 Usalama Project Interviewee #824, Kinshasa, 1 June 2013; see also UN Security Council, S/2011/768, p. 61.

find themselves on the front line without food, ammunition, medical supplies, or adequate communications equipment. This was reflected in the recent military operations against the M23 before the fall of Goma in November 2012, when troops quickly ran out of supplies.

### *Revenue generation*

Patronage networks in the FARDC reinforce the orientation of the army towards revenue-generation rather than defence. Positions at various levels are to a large extent obtained and kept through access to income-generating activities. As a consequence, officers spend much of their time on a variety of business schemes.

The military's economic activities come in a variety of forms, and include the protection and taxation of the trade in minerals or other natural resources, such as hardwoods, charcoal, cannabis, wild animals or fish, and the sales of arms and ammunition.<sup>79</sup> Illegal taxation also occurs at roadblocks along main transport routes, and at markets, border posts, harbours, and airports.

Officers also generate income through less violent activities, such as real estate, import-export trade, the hotel and restaurant business, the transport sector, and agriculture, including livestock rearing.<sup>80</sup> The scale of these commercial activities varies substantially. While some high-ranking officers run business empires, their subordinates engage in smaller-scale activities, such as owning a motorcycle for commercial transport or running *kiosques* (small shops). Furthermore, the activities of foot soldiers and their families mirror those of the wider Congolese survival economy, engaging for example in the production of palm oil or growing vegetables. Depending on how these economic activities are managed, and the degree of coercion they involve, they may be more or less detrimental to civilian security and livelihoods.

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79 UN Security Council, S/2010/596, pp. 47–76.

80 UN Security Council, S/2012/843, p. 36; UN Security Council, S/2011/738, pp. 116, 120–1, 129–30, and 149–51.

This pursuit of profit does not always lead to unrestrained violence against civilians. Indeed, certain kinds of economic activities, such as shop keeping and petty trade, require collaboration with civilians: profits are greater in a climate of relative stability and security. Furthermore, the military needs civilians as buyers and sellers, but also for obtaining investment capital, licenses, and plots, arranging transport, and to influence administrative procedures and decisions. Since formal frameworks are weak, trust is a crucial asset for doing business in the DRC. Consequently, depending on the nature of the economic activities, unrestrained predation can be detrimental to business interests.<sup>81</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that some civilians are complicit in violent forms of revenue generation. Politicians, businesspeople, and authorities at various levels profit from connections with armed groups and may use networks within the army to further their interests. It is, for instance, commonplace for businesspeople to use connections in the military to obtain reductions at customs, arrange for the protection of the transport of their goods, or intimidate economic competitors. The militarization of the economy, which feeds into armed group formation, is driven by armed and non-armed actors alike.<sup>82</sup>

### *The politics of military integration*

In addition to creating incentives for insurgent violence, successive integration initiatives have further diminished an already weak army, in particular by undermining cohesion, both within and between units. This goes a long way to explaining the erratic functionality of the FARDC, as the bonds between soldiers and their peers, and between troops and their officers, are crucial for commitment, motivation, the enforcement of

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81 Judith Verweijen, 'The Ambiguity of Militarization: The Complex Interaction Between the Congolese Armed Forces and Civilians in the Kivu Provinces, Eastern DR Congo' (Utrecht: Utrecht University PhD thesis, forthcoming).

82 Judith Verweijen, 'Military Business and the Business of the Military in the Kivus,' *Review of African Political Economy* 40 (2013), pp. 67–82.



norms, and performance in combat.<sup>83</sup> Integration has often been carried out without proper retraining and without due attention to the composition of new units. The accelerated integration of the CNDP, PARECO, and a number of other armed groups in 2009 has been especially problematic in this respect. Some of the newly created brigades were dominated by a majority of up to 75 per cent from a single former armed group—leading to separate chains of command within the military, the undermining of central command, and a weaker government grip on the army in the Kivus.

The 2009 integration also accentuated existing ethnic tensions within the army.<sup>84</sup> So-called ‘autochthonous’ troops, including ex-Mai-Mai and what are ironically named ‘ex-government’ troops (ex-FAZ and ex-FAC), believe that Kinyarwanda-speaking groups, in particular Tutsi, are systematically favoured in the distribution of ranks and positions. For instance, in September 2011, in the midst of an army reorganization process, officers in Bukavu drew up a ‘Memorandum of FARDC military officers who are victims of discrimination’. In the document, they denounced an alleged Rwandophone takeover of the FARDC, stating that the distribution of command positions in the new army structures followed ‘discriminatory and tribal-ethnic criteria’.<sup>85</sup>

For their part, Tutsi troops fear that they would be subject to persecution and discrimination if they were to be deployed out of the Kivus. A former FARDC officer of Tutsi origin stated: ‘We are never safe in the army. Today they [FARDC soldiers] are your colleagues, but when something happens tomorrow, we are the first to get killed. We have seen this in 1998 in Kamina, in Kalemie, in Uvira, everywhere ... and it can always happen again.’<sup>86</sup> While some argue that this fear is exagger-

83 Guy L. Siebold, ‘The Essence of Military Group Cohesion’, *Armed Forces & Society* 33 (2007), pp. 286–95.

84 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, pp. 89–90;

85 UN Security Council, S/2011/738, pp. 89 and 262.

86 Cited in Verweijen, ‘Ambiguity of Militarization’

ated, pointing to the several high-profile Tutsi officers who serve in the western DRC without difficulties, these feelings are nonetheless strong and contribute to mistrust.<sup>87</sup>

The politics of military integration has also provoked resentment among troops by fostering the distribution of ranks and positions to less educated integrated officers. Former FAZ as well as FAC soldiers consider themselves to be better trained than many of the newly integrated troops. As one ex-FAZ put it:

The superiors have destroyed the work by integrating all these people. I tell you, they know nothing, nothing about work as a soldier. They don't have training. But they still have their ranks, false ranks and you have to salute them. ... I have served in the army for 20 years and I have training but I am still just a lieutenant! And I have to obey these losers who know nothing!<sup>88</sup>

Such animosity towards commanders undermines the latter's control over their subordinates.

### *Control and accountability*

Both the workings of patronage and the low levels of trust in and respect for commanders seriously undermine control and accountability in the Congolese army. As elsewhere, commanders with a weak and contested position tend to be less inclined to punish troops, as this can easily

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87 These include General Obed Rwibasira (Commander of the 5th Military Region, Kasai-Occidental), General Mustapha Mukiza (commander of the military base at Kitona in Bas-Congo) and General Malik Kijege (Inspector-General, previously charged with logistics at the General Staff of the FARDC in Kinshasa).

88 Maria Eriksson Baaz, 'The Price for Peace? Military Integration and Continued Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)', Swedish National Defence College, February 2011, p. 14.

provoke a mutiny.<sup>89</sup> Commanders may also experience difficulties in disciplining troops that are protected by powerful patrons. After the 2009 integration of the CNDP, non-CNDP commanders with a large proportion of CNDP troops in their units had limited room to manoeuvre. As one brigade commander explained: ‘When I want to discipline them [ex-CNDP troops], I first need to contact their old commanders. I cannot do anything without their approval, otherwise I will run into trouble.’<sup>90</sup>

Control over troops is further hampered by limited transport and communication facilities, especially in the vast rural areas, which are barely accessible by road and often lack cellular phone coverage. Only brigade or regimental commanders have satellite phones, and two-way radios, whose reach is anyway limited, are not always distributed below company level. This means that squad and platoon commanders can only communicate with their superiors by sending messengers on foot over great distances, leading to critical delays. But problems of supervision and control also occur in urban zones, where the lack of barracks forces troops to disperse in civilian neighbourhoods.

The ability of FARDC commanders to hold their troops to account is thus limited by a range of contextual factors. This undermines simplistic characterisations of commanders as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’, or ‘agents of change’ versus ‘spoilers’, which are sometimes heard among donors. The behaviour of a commander can differ profoundly depending on where he is deployed, his position in patronage networks, and the composition of his unit.

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89 David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1975); Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?: Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2013).

90 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Judith Verweijen, ‘La ‘mère des armées’ n’est pas encore morte: Des pratiques de justice (in)formelle dans les Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo’, *Politique africaine* 1/129 (2013), p. 57.

*Working and living conditions*

As with other state officials in the DRC, the living and working conditions of FARDC rank-and-file and their families are deplorable. While improvements have been made in both the regularity of payments and the salary level, the present official income of around USD 70 a month for ordinary troops is far from enough to maintain even a small family. As access to social services and basic necessities is weak or non-existent, salaries have to cover a range of other expenses, such as housing and household items, medical bills, food, schooling for children, and transport during rotations or when going on leave. FARDC soldiers have no right to paid leave and obtaining permission for leave is generally very difficult, especially for units permanently deployed in combat operations. It is not uncommon—particularly in operational zones—to meet soldiers who have not seen their families for over 10 years, especially when the latter are in the western part of the country. Clearly, this creates high levels of psychological stress.

The lack of leave and the poor wages are among the main reasons for army wives to follow their husbands around, ending up living in improvised shelters in military camps, often with small children. In addition to the poor living conditions, this is highly insecure, as it renders military families vulnerable to attacks by armed groups. Furthermore, in operational zones where troops are rapidly rotated, the poorest among the army wives frequently have to travel on foot over vast distances to follow their husbands. Rotations are also an important source of poverty. As one wife of a soldier explained, ‘If you don’t have a ticket for the rotation, you sell your kitchen pots. If you are hungry, you sell off the rest. You end up with nothing.’<sup>91</sup> Moreover, rotations make it difficult for military spouses to sustain agricultural activities or ensure a continuous education for their children.

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91 Steven van Damme and Judith Verweijen, ‘In Search of an Army. How the FARDC Can Improve Civilians’ Safety’, Oxfam (unpublished), p. 26.

While service conditions are difficult for all soldiers, they are particularly tough for *personnel militaire féminin* (PMF, Female Military Personnel), especially in operational zones. The number of women serving in the Congolese army is low and has decreased since they first entered in the beginning of the 1960s to the current rate of around two per cent. While there are a number of reasons for this—including discrimination in training and the allocation of ranks and positions, and gender norms according to which military work is seen as unsuitable for women—the poor living situations and the lack of child care also play a role.<sup>92</sup> Women soldiers have to choose between bringing young children on deployment or leaving them at home to be cared for by family members, implying (as for their male colleagues) rarely seeing them. In many cases, they choose to bring their children along, which puts the latter in danger and hinders their own military duties, thus holding them back in their careers. A positive step in terms of gender equality efforts was the promotion of the first three women to the rank of general in July 2013. However, whether this will translate into increased influence is another matter: in the FARDC, high rank is no guarantee of actual power.

Aside from insufficient material compensation, rewards such as status and recognition for success are also lacking in the FARDC. These are important since they contribute to pride in the profession and foster good relations with civilians. As one soldier put it: ‘Why should I fight and risk my life? I get nothing. No money. And not even honour. The civilians despise us.’<sup>93</sup> The feeling of being looked down on by civilians is widespread among ordinary troops, who often report being called names such as losers, beggars, and *faux têtes* (someone who does not pay for

92 Maira Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, ‘Fearless Fighters and Submissive Wives: Negotiating Identity among Women Soldiers in the Congo (DRC)’, *Armed Forces and Society*, 22 February 2013.

93 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, ‘The Complexity of Violence: A critical analysis of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)’, Sida/Nordic Africa Institute, 2010, p. 27.

him/herself).<sup>94</sup> This indicates that the image of the military in civilian eyes is not only influenced by the abuses perpetrated by the army but also by low social status. An officer put it this way: ‘The civilians don’t respect us, because we don’t have anything. We have to beg from them, so they see us as losers. They call us bad names ... So sometimes you just have to show them.’<sup>95</sup> While one cannot assume that there is a direct correlation between feelings of being disrespected and violence, these sentiments are certainly not conducive to good relations with civilians.

Such poor conditions of service are rarely shared by senior commanders, especially those with powerful networks. There is a conspicuous wealth gap between ordinary troops, condemned to the hardships of poverty, and their privileged commanders, adding to a strong feeling of injustice in the ranks. As one soldier expressed it: ‘So tell me, how can we be disciplined? They all cheat us. Our superiors cheat us. ... They send their children to Europe but our children die.’<sup>96</sup> While any effective army reform has to start from the top, it will need to translate into concrete improvements for troops on the ground. This is not only crucial for improving combat performance, but also for fostering discipline, which are both preconditions for transforming the FARDC into a military that reduces, rather than fosters, violent conflict in the eastern DRC.

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 94 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, ‘Making Sense of Violence: Voices of Soldiers in the Congo (DRC)’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 46/1 (2008), pp. 57–86.

95 Eriksson Baaz and Stern, *Complexity of Violence*, p. 28.

96 Eriksson Baaz and Stern, ‘Making Sense of Violence’.

## 4. The absence of a comprehensive strategy for tackling insecurity

The previous chapters on the complex context of armed mobilization, ranging from the violent competition between elites to the malfunctioning of the FARDC, suggest that the current approach to peace building and stabilization needs to be rethought. The Congolese government, as well as its international partners, have only partially addressed the root causes of the eastern DRC's instability. This chapter sketches recent initiatives aimed at reducing armed group activity, and reforming the army, arguing that both require a comprehensive political strategy.

### The UN and international donors: Shunning political engagement

The way policy in the DRC is made and implemented is as complex as armed mobilization itself. Competing power networks in Kinshasa hamper the decision-making processes of the government, as does the state's weak grip over its army and administration. International donors are no less divided than the Congolese government. By channelling money to various state and non-state actors at different levels without an overarching strategy, donor interventions have tended to reproduce rather than diminish fragmentation.

Divisions between donors have deepened since the transition. President Kabila, strengthened by his new democratic mandate, tried to reduce foreign influence in internal policy. This coincided with waning interest from donors after the 2006 elections, in which they had invested enormous resources. These elections reinforced the DRC's perceived post-conflict status, which had a real impact on UN and donor engagement.<sup>97</sup> This was

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97 Séverine Autesserre, 'Hobbes and the Congo: Frames, Local Violence, and International Intervention', *International Organization* 63 (2009), pp. 249–80.

reflected, among other areas, in armed groups being consistently labelled as 'residual' or as *réfractaires au brassage* (refusing army integration), misrepresenting the magnitude of the challenge posed by persistent armed mobilization. Deprived of a consistent policy for dealing with this challenge, the UN peacekeeping mission backed the often ill-disciplined FARDC in its erratic counterinsurgency efforts.

This approach, guided by a technocratic interpretation of violence as a law-and-order problem linked to weak state institutions, was exemplified in the transformation of the UN peacekeeping mission into a stabilization mission in 2010. This change underestimated the degree to which armed groups are linked to competition between elites, as well as the importance of local tensions. The new stance, a confluence of Kinshasa's desire for greater independence and donors' technocratic focus, did not provide the tools to deal with the political factors driving armed group formation.

The previous International Security and Stabilisation Support Strategy (ISSS), a donor programme designed to support the Congolese government's *Programme de stabilisation et de reconstruction des zones sortant des conflits armés* (STAREC, Stabilization and Reconstruction Programme for War-affected Areas), is an illustration of this apolitical approach. The ISSSS was designed to back up the March 2009 peace deal between the Congolese government and armed groups with the aim of reinforcing the presence of the state, especially its justice, security, and administrative agencies. But the programme underestimated the instability of some of the targeted areas and did little to address the dynamics underlying local governance, focusing on the construction of infrastructure instead. So roads, police stations and court buildings were built without provision as to how these were going to be staffed, managed, or secured by the national institutions of which they formed a part, and without paying much attention to political and military developments in the targeted zones.<sup>98</sup>

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98 Samuel Dixon, 'For me, but without me, is against me': Why Efforts to Stabilise the Democratic Republic of Congo Are Not Working', Oxfam Lobby Briefing, 4 July 2012.



Militarily, the UN peacekeeping mission has adopted a reactive approach to armed groups, only supporting offensive operations by the FARDC and responding to emergencies. Except for a brief experiment between 2005–7 by the eastern division of the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo* (MONUC, United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), as the UN mission was called up to 2010, a more robust stance towards armed groups, aiming at forced disarmament, has been rare.<sup>99</sup> Instead, the UN tacitly accepted or actively endorsed the policies of the Kinshasa government, including strategies of military integration that were based on opaque deals and controversial military decisions. The terms of the January 2009 deal between the governments in Kinshasa and Kigali, for example, were decided by negotiators behind closed doors: the UN mission was side-lined both in the negotiations and in the subsequent joint military operations against the FDLR.<sup>100</sup>

The recent deployment of the FIB within the *Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation de la République démocratique du Congo* (MONUSCO, United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) is a renewed attempt at robust peacekeeping. The FIB could potentially restore MONUSCO's credibility, which was heavily dented by the fall of Goma in November 2012, and could help rescue the FARDC from the vicious cycle of endless negotiations with armed groups. However, in addition to concerns about civilian protection and humanitarian access, there are questions concerning the scope and longer-term impact of the FIB's deployment.

The new initiative is not formally linked to any wider political strategy for dealing with armed groups; there are no clear follow-up measures, nor is there a new demobilization plan, nor any new provision for security

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99 Victoria Holt and Tobias Berkman, 'The Impossible Mandate? Military Preparedness, the Responsibility to Protect and Modern Peace Operations', Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington DC, 2006, pp. 155–78.

100 ICG, 'Congo: No Stability', pp. 4–5.

sector reform.<sup>101</sup> There is a lack of connection with the various political processes in the country that are critical to the success of the FIB: political developments in Kinshasa, the peace-talks between M23 and the Kinshasa government (led by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Kampala), and the process set in motion by the UN-brokered Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (the Framework Agreement) signed by 11 African nations on 24 February 2013. This fragmentation is indicative of the lack of an overarching vision among donors and the political engagement needed to develop and implement it.

### Erratic government policies and impunity

The Congolese government's policies vis-à-vis armed groups have been erratic, rarely using political and military instruments in a coordinated manner. Kinshasa's main tactic has been to integrate them into the military. But integration is often based on negotiations with individual armed groups, and has rarely been part of a wider political process aiming to address the roots of violent elite competition or local conflicts. Hence it has usually failed to bind integrated factions either into the state apparatus or into the presidential patronage network, and those who drop out have not hesitated to remobilize.

Sustained military pressure to weaken armed groups has been infrequent and counterproductive. Some groups have built up far-reaching political and economic control over their local fiefdoms, and are reluctant to relinquish this power. In such cases, a decision on whether to lay down arms boils down to a calculation of whether the potential pay-off outweighs the status quo.

Political and judicial pressure on armed groups and supporting elite networks has been minimal. Prosecutions or other sanctions for

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101 General-Major (Ret.) Patrick Cammaert and Fiona Blyth, 'The UN Intervention Brigade in the Democratic Republic of the Congo', International Peace Institute, New York/ Vienna, July 2013.

deserters, and for political and military elites supporting armed groups are uncommon. While political leaders have occasionally been arrested on the grounds of collaborating with insurgent networks, arrests have been highly selective, only targeting those suspected of being linked to networks that are seen as a direct threat to the government, such as the M23. Trials have rarely followed; and when these have taken place they have been publicized only in cases when the accused party was perceived as a direct threat to the government.<sup>102</sup>

The same impunity applies to FARDC officers involved in the arms trade or in support to armed groups. The UN Group of Experts has extensively documented such support, but the Congolese authorities have rarely acted on this information by initiating their own investigations. Only when deemed politically expedient, as was the case with General Gabriel Amisi, have such allegations prompted action.<sup>103</sup>

In sum, political and military elites in the eastern DRC have supported armed groups almost entirely with impunity, even when such support has been an open secret.

## Overcoming local conflicts and grievances

As outlined in this and previous Usalama Project reports, local conflict dynamics and grievances—including tensions related to land, local authority and identity—are an important factor in the formation of armed groups. While these issues have often been termed as ‘local’, since they play out at the community level, they usually also have important

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102 This was the case with the insurgent group related to retired General Benoît-Faustin Munene, against which a mass trial took place in Bas Congo at the start of 2011; Radio France International, ‘Général à la retraite, Faustin Munene condamné à perpétuité’, 25 March 2011.

103 One of the reasons cited for Amisi’s removal in November 2011 was his involvement in arms trade to armed groups; UN Security Council, S/2011/738, p. 62; also Johnny Hogg, ‘DR Congo General Sold Arms to Rebel Groups: U.N. Report’, Reuters, 21 November 2012.

national dimensions, being shaped by national legislation and regulatory frameworks.

### *Land ownership and legislation*

Land conflicts are driven by various factors, including a multiplicity of overlapping and conflicting regulatory frameworks, weak arbitration mechanisms, conflicting land use, and competition over land between established, (putative) immigrant and displaced populations. It has been widely recognized that current land legislation is inadequate, and the Congolese government has announced a revision of the 1973 land law as part of a wider process of participatory land reform. While the outcomes of this slowly moving process are still uncertain, Kinshasa appears to have a preference for abolishing the customary tenure that prevails in many rural areas, thereby eradicating the role of customary chiefs in land governance. This role has often been difficult, with chiefs selling off communally owned land with little regard for existing tenure.<sup>104</sup> Yet it is far from certain that the introduction of a formalized land market, in which farmers own individual or communal legal titles, would significantly reduce conflicts and improve tenure security for small-scale farmers.

### *Local governance reform*

The eastern DRC is mired in a crisis of local governance. One of the roots of this crisis is the institution of customary authority. While it is a cornerstone of existing governance arrangements, especially in areas where government authorities are absent or have little power and legitimacy, customary chiefs are often at the centre of local conflicts.<sup>105</sup> Their position may be disputed by family members, their community's right to

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 104 Frank van Acker, 'La «pembénisation» du Haut-Kivu: Opportunisme et Droits Fonciers Revisités,' in *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 1998–1999* (eds. Stefaan Marysse and Filip Reyntjens) (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1999), pp. 201–36.

105 Koen Vlassenroot and Hans Romkema, *Local Governance & Leadership in Eastern DRC* (The Hague: Oxfam Novib, 2007).

rule may be contested by another, or they may be involved in competition with government-appointed authorities.

The current decentralization process, which was intended to address this issue, is proceeding erratically, as essential parts of the required legal and institutional framework have not yet been implemented. There are also procedural ambiguities, which involve institutional and legal uncertainties and overlaps. Local elections scheduled for 2008 have still not been held and it is uncertain when they will take place.<sup>106</sup>

Local elections are designed to lead to the creation of new representative councils, which can hold local chiefs to account. This presents both opportunities and challenges for finding a way out of the current crisis of local governance. Among the dangers is the possibility that elections would ignite inter-community tensions, with politicians turning to ethnic rhetoric to rally support, and as local elites are threatened in areas where groups other than those linked to the chief form the majority. The newly elected councils could also promote division, pitting those linked to the patronage network of customary chiefs against others.

On the other hand, increased collaboration between representatives of different communities within locally elected councils could foster social cohesion, while such councils could function as platforms in which communal disputes are addressed and regulated. Additionally, they have the potential to control and counterbalance the power of customary chiefs.

### *Accountability and reconciliation*

Many local conflicts over land and local governance occur between different ethnic communities. Ethnically based violence since the 1990s has deepened mutual mistrust. With politicians and armed groups capitalizing on these animosities, reconciliation and social cohesion are

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106 Pierre Englebert, 'Incertitude, autonomie et parasitisme: les entités territoriales décentralisées et l'état en République Démocratique du Congo', *Politique Africaine* 125 (2010), pp. 169–88.

crucial to reducing armed mobilization. One of the issues to be addressed is accountability for past abuses.

To date, the Congolese government has done little to pursue reconciliation and transitional justice. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission demanded by the Global and Inclusive Agreement failed to have an impact during its brief 2004–6 tenure, and the government has only recently begun to consider implementing recommendations made by the UN Mapping Report published in 2010.<sup>107</sup> This report documents the most serious human rights violations that took place in Congolese territory between March 1993 and June 2003. It outlines a number of possible policy responses including the creation of a special mixed chamber, made up of international and national personnel, organized within the Congolese civilian judicial system. This is a welcome proposal that has been endorsed by international human rights organizations and for which legislation is currently pending.<sup>108</sup> The prosecution of individual perpetrators, however, will not help inter-community reconciliation without a more comprehensive longer-term, and local process.

### Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)

Poor demobilization in itself did not trigger any of the major post-2003 cycles of violence, but it facilitated recruitment. In places such as Bunyakiri and Fizi, a large number of current rebel fighters have been through demobilization programmes, only to be re-recruited by rebel groups. Many found no alternative livelihood. Their former leaders pressured

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 107 UNOHCHR, 'Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1993–2003. Report of the Mapping Exercise Documenting the Most Serious Violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Committed Within the Territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Between March 1993 and June 2003', August 2010.

108 Human Rights Watch (HRW), 'Tackling Impunity in Congo: Meaningful Follow-up to the UN Mapping Report: A Mixed Chamber and Other Accountability Measures, 1 October 2010; HRW, 'Comments on the second version of the Draft Legislation to Establish Specialized Chambers within the Congolese Judicial System for the Prosecution of Grave International Crimes', February 2011.

them to re-join, or they were prompted to do so by continuing insecurity in their home areas.

Demobilization was proposed as one of the cornerstones of the peace process in the DRC, aimed at returning 150,000 combatants to civilian life.<sup>109</sup> Starting in 2004 in Ituri, various national structures were set up for the purposes of demobilization, with the *Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion* (CONADER, National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion Commission) becoming the main vehicle. Eventually, CONADER demobilized 132,367 combatants—including 30,219 children—by the time it was closed in 2008.

Other programmes followed, including those linked to the 2008 Goma peace process and STAREC, but they were beset with controversy and technical obstacles. The reintegration stage was especially difficult: it targeted individual combatants and in the communities to which they returned the perception tended to be that those who took up arms were rewarded financially and given vocational training. This complicated reconciliation efforts.<sup>110</sup>

While most of the 100,000 adults who went through the programme received a USD 360 allowance (USD 60 for transport home, then USD 25 disbursed monthly for a year), only around half initially benefitted from projects that could provide them new livelihoods such as education, training, animal husbandry, or microcredit facilities.<sup>111</sup> In part, this was because the authorities had not budgeted well: most of the money was spent on transporting combatants—USD 20 million, a tenth of the entire budget. Another part of the problem was embezzlement and the mismanagement of funds. In December 2006, just over a year after the

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109 World Bank, 'Technical Annex for a Proposed Grant of \$100 Million to the Democratic Republic of the Congo for an Emergency Demobilization and Reintegration Project,' 3 May 2004, p. 11.

110 Hans Rouw and Rens Willems, 'Connecting Community Security and DDR: Experiences from Eastern DRC', Peace, Security and Development Network, 2010.

111 Multicountry Demobilization and Reintegration Program, Fact Sheet, March 2009.

demobilization programme began, the World Bank suspended funding pending an audit until 2008.

Reintegration programmes were rarely effective in creating long-term livelihoods for demobilized soldiers. In some places in the Kivus, for example, bicycles and sewing machines were distributed, but no business training was provided. Some recipients sold the equipment.<sup>112</sup> In Bunyakiri, several ex-combatants reported that they had purchased motorcycles and a generator-powered cassava mill, but they had fallen out with each other over the management of the equipment and the projects had fallen apart.<sup>113</sup> In Kamituga in Mwenga territory, the local CONADER contractor distributed seeds that were inappropriate to the local soil, in Masisi mechanics were trained but given no seed-money to start a business.<sup>114</sup>

Reinsertion packages are, in any case, no guarantee of demobilization. DDR programmes have a limited influence on the life trajectory of former combatants, oriented as they are towards short-term material benefits rather than the long term. Many demobilized combatants remain linked to former armed group networks, whose command and control structures often remain partly intact.<sup>115</sup>

In this respect, the on-going violence in the eastern DRC has undermined DDR efforts. As a UN official commented: ‘You cannot do demobilization while people are fighting. You send fighters home while their villages are under attack—you can imagine what will happen.’<sup>116</sup> Similarly, a senior Congolese army officer commented: ‘If you demobilise one group without dealing with neighbouring groups, it will never work.’<sup>117</sup>

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112 Usalama Project Interviewees #819, Goma, 29 March 2013, and #840, Mwenga, 3 May 2013.

113 Usalama Project Interviewee #829, Bunyakiri, 9 April 2013

114 Usalama Project Interviewee #838, Kamituga, 1 May 2013.

115 Joanne Richards, ‘Demobilization in the DRC. Armed Groups and the Role of Organizational Control, Armed Actors’, Small Arms Survey, Geneva, April 2013.

116 Usalama Project interviewee #810, Goma, 7 March 2013.

117 Usalama Project Interviewee #811, Bukavu, 12 June 2013.



So the government's piecemeal approach to armed groups—demobilizing some while continuing to fight others—has formed a major obstacle to the success of DDR programmes. This erratic policy vis-à-vis armed groups has also importantly hampered efforts at army reform.

## Army Reform

There are many factors slowing down reform of the defence sector in the DRC. One of these is the almost incessant military activity in the east. A senior security official commented: 'You can't do army reform while you fight, and especially when you hand all these command positions over to former militiamen.'<sup>118</sup> Another official put it this way: 'After all this integration, we have all sorts of people in the army now. Most of them with no sense of what it means to be a soldier. We are trying to create a national army in this mess. And we are in the midst of continuing war. Defence reform while we're at war—what can you expect?'<sup>119</sup>

Reforms have also been undercut by repeated waves of armed group integration, which have undermined cohesion and combat performance. Furthermore, integration has led to the constant reorganization of units, which has contributed to the undoing of earlier reform efforts. While certainly an incomplete process, several of the brigades established by the *brassage* experience of 2004–8 were reasonably well integrated, as loyalties to previous armed groups were gradually weakened. By contrast, subsequent integration efforts, particularly the 2009 endeavour, largely undermined this fragile cohesion, accentuating old divisions and reinforcing parallel chains of command.

The army reform process has also been hampered by abortive reform plans that are revised or scrapped whenever a new army commander or minister of defence arrives. In July 2007, the government briefed donors

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118 Usalama Project interviewee #812, Kinshasa, 21 June 2013.

119 Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, 'Willing reform? An analysis of defence reform initiatives in the DRC', in *Globalization and Development: Rethinking Interventions and Governance* (ed. Arne Bigsten) (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 204.

on its plans to restructure the army and form a rapid response force to replace MONUC within two years. The ambitious plan also aimed at creating a 'developmental army' involved in food production and infrastructure rehabilitation. In February 2008, this was formalized under the *Plan directeur global de la réforme de l'armée* (Global Directive for Army Reform), which laid out three phases of reforms between 2008–20. These stipulated first the creation of brigades to deal with internal security problems—the so-called *forces de couverture* (covering forces)—then rapid reaction forces, and finally the principal defence forces, encompassing the artillery and mechanized units necessary to fend off attacks from neighbouring countries.

Lack of funds forced the government to backpedal on this ambitious plan. After the minister of defence and the head of the armed forces were changed in late 2008, a *Plan révisé de la réforme de l'armée* (Revised Army Reform Plan) was released, retaining the basic elements of the previous proposal, but filling in details and reducing the cost. This plan aimed at a self-financing army reform, and brought down the costs to USD 686 million between 2009–25. Furthermore, it put an emphasis on development of the individual soldier: improving conditions and welfare, making recruitment more demanding, and retraining a corps of 145,000 personnel.

In early 2013, a new army reform plan began making the rounds in Kinshasa. This was known as the Moya Plan, after General Jean-Pierre Moya, who helped to draft it. The new plan, which was backed by the new Minister of Defence Ntambo Luba, keeps many of the features of previous proposals, but is also influenced by the recent escalation of conflict in the Kivus. Thus it includes a 15-month 'Sub-Plan for Training During War'. The theoretical detail is impressive, but implementation will require substantial donor resources.

*Fragmented donor coordination*

A host of donors are engaged in defence reform efforts in the DRC. These include the European Union,<sup>120</sup> MONUSCO, the United States, China, Belgium, France, Angola, and South Africa. Each has been engaged mainly in bilateral programmes, though there has been some attempt at coordination. The government in Kinshasa itself prefers to maintain these bilateral ties, an approach justified by an appeal to national security interests. Donors differ in their response to this: China and African states tend to support the Congolese position, emphasizing the sovereignty issue, while western donors, suspecting a lack of political will to engage in real reform, fear that Kinshasa is pitting donor against donor to profit from external engagement as much as possible.

The same western donors that champion coordination have often themselves been engaged in fierce competition, vying for visibility and competing for influence. This has contributed to a questioning of their motives by some Congolese, who already tend to attribute donor interest in defence reform (as in other areas of intervention) to a desire for a share of the DRC's natural resources. As one senior army officer argued: 'All minerals that are found elsewhere can be found here. The Congo is systematically used by all countries. All people who come here, the majority do not come to help, but to exploit'.<sup>121</sup>

Such beliefs, shaped by a long history of colonial and postcolonial occupation and interference, are genuinely held. And Congolese have good reason to ask why, if donors truly want coordination, they do not coordinate themselves. As one army officer concluded: 'All these countries, do they agree? Do they really want coordination? If so, they should first harmonize their own interests'.<sup>122</sup>

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120 EU funds are channeled through the *Mission de conseil et d'assistance de l'Union Européenne en matière de réforme du secteur de la sécurité en République démocratique du Congo* (EUSEC, EU Advisory and Assistance Mission for Security Sector Reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo), whose mandate is due to end in September 2014.

121 Eriksson Baaz and Stern, 'Willing reform?', p. 204.

122 Eriksson Baaz and Stern 'Willing reform?', p. 206.

Perhaps more harmful than policy fragmentation among donors has been the apolitical stance they have taken towards the integration of armed groups into the army. While donors' ability to influence Congolese government policy on integration is limited, they have made few efforts to influence the process adopting either a wait-and-see attitude or championing integration, as was the case with the 23 March 2009 deal.<sup>123</sup> Yet the disastrous impact of this integration exercise and the subsequent military operations and its deleterious effect on army reform is clear.

Finally, donors' financial commitments to army reform have rarely matched their rhetoric. Defence reform receives comparatively little international aid. Between 2006–10, just over 1 per cent (USD 84.79 million) of total aid—excluding debt relief and bilateral military assistance—was spent directly on the security sector as a whole.<sup>124</sup> Moreover, while most bilateral interventions take the form of training, only approximately six per cent of FARDC troops have received specialized training by or under the supervision of foreign military personnel since 2007.<sup>125</sup>

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123 Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, *Between Integration and Disintegration*, p. 30–2.

124 ASADHO et al., 'The Democratic Republic of Congo: Taking a Stand on Security Sector Reform', 16 April 2012, p. 3.

125 van Damme and Verweijen, 'In Search of an Army', p. 10.

## 5. Policy considerations

The challenges of ridding the eastern DRC of armed mobilization are formidable; the roots of mobilization are many; the national and international policy environments are less than hospitable. Discussions with Congolese, military and civilian, at local and governmental level, and with international specialists suggests that a new and better-informed overall strategy is needed if there is to be any chance of success. This strategy should aim to harmonize political and military approaches; it should link short-term negotiations with parties to the conflict to longer-term institutional reforms, including reform of the armed forces of the DRC. The following considerations are offered as the basis for such a strategy.

### Tackling armed mobilization

One of the key causes of armed mobilization is the militarization of political and economic competition between regional, national and provincial elites. An effective strategy for dealing with armed groups should therefore address the incentives that drive elites to turn to violence. And it should take issue with the climate of impunity surrounding support to armed groups.

#### *Dealing with armed groups*

The multitude of armed groups active in the eastern Congo, and the limited means available to deal with them, means that they cannot be tackled all at once, but have, of necessity, to be dealt with in order of importance. Many Mai-Mai groups have little influence outside their own communities of origin, and therefore have little capacity to promote broader destabilization. By contrast, other groups have a pronounced regional dimension, either receiving support from neighbouring countries, as in the case of the M23, or rebelling against them such as the FDLR, ADF and FNL. These groups act as conflict-multipliers, making alliances with other armed groups, or provoking mobilization of such groups in self-defence.

The M23 and its predecessor, the CNDP, are at the heart of the escalation of conflict in the Kivus since 2004. To strike a deal to dismantle the M23, the Congolese government will have to look beyond negotiations with the rebels to direct talks with the Rwandan government. The 23 March 2009 peace deal between the Congolese government and the CNDP left chains of command intact and gave blanket amnesties to human rights offenders. This effectively subverted the agreement. To avoid a repetition of this, donors will need to increase pressure on Rwanda.

Donor pressure is also needed to find solutions to other rebellions, in particular the foreign-led groups, many of which have become strongly embedded in their local environment in the DRC, making it necessary to have a corresponding multi-level response.<sup>126</sup> Strategies by the Congolese government, its neighbours and international partners should be coordinated with and complemented by the actions of the local communities in whose midst these rebel groups reside. This also applies to potential operations by the newly deployed UN intervention brigade, the FIB. It needs both to take account of local dynamics and be connected to a wider strategy involving the Ugandan, Rwandan and Burundian governments.

### *Tackling violent elite competition*

To tackle the involvement of Congolese elites in militia activity, the Congolese government will need to impose sanctions on the support networks of rebel organizations, including politicians and army commanders who are often key figures in these networks. There is an opportunity also for the government to work with its international partners to undercut the resource bases of armed groups by improving the formalization and regulation of trade and the natural resources sector. The involvement of elites in neighbouring countries with armed groups in the DRC is also

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126 Hans Romkema, 'Opportunities and Constraints for the Disarmament and Repatriation of Foreign Armed Groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Cases of the FDLR, FNL and ADF/NALU', MDRP, June 2007.

an area where informed involvement on the part of international donors could help: by transforming these violent relationships into regional economic collaboration.

Putting sanctions on support networks requires uncovering them first. This is no easy task. They are often part of wider regional and global networks of organized crime engaged in racketeering and smuggling of arms and other commodities. Apart from the work of the UN Group of Experts, there is little systematic effort to document and monitor armed groups and their support networks. This is another area where donor involvement could improve public information by increasing material and diplomatic support to researchers, journalists and UN and non-government organizations that are involved in investigating and analysing armed group activity.

### *Managing military integration*

The continued integration of armed groups, often led by army deserters, into the armed forces has, paradoxically, become an important incentive for armed mobilization by other groups. All observers agree that this harmful policy needs to be progressively abandoned, with armed groups demobilized and returned to civilian life. And while military integration continues, it has to be drastically reformed. It will avoid that armed group leaders drop out if the integration processes are made more transparent, with clear timelines and cut-off dates, stricter disarmament conditions, and credible control mechanisms. This necessitates neutral control and verification functions in the zones formerly controlled by integrating armed groups. UN military observers could play a useful role here.

An army that is in conflict with itself is unlikely to have a positive impact on conflict dynamics in the eastern DRC. Therefore future military integration processes will also need to address the issue of retraining and redeployment of troops, the unbalanced composition of units, and the distribution of ranks and positions without regard for merit. This is particularly important for avoiding fuelling identity-based tensions within the military. Even without further integration, these tensions have to be mitigated, as they not only undermine cohesion, but

also tend to have spin-off effects in the civilian environment where the military is deployed.

Finally, impunity remains a crucial issue in managing armed group integration and in reforming the FARDC. Previous integration processes have included neither prosecution nor vetting. This has been especially problematic for rebels with senior ranks, who have set an example of impunity to those lower down the chain. Future integration efforts cannot avoid the question of responsibility for past abuses.<sup>127</sup>

## Addressing local conflicts and grievances

Local conflicts and grievances alone do not generate mobilization on the part of armed groups, but they are a key ingredient. The local dimension is of key importance in fostering stability in the longer term.

### *Reducing land conflicts*

The reform of land governance is crucial to the longer-term stabilization of the eastern DRC, but wrongly or hastily implemented reforms could have counter-productive effects. A strategy that combines government and local involvement is called for. The introduction of any new legislation should be complemented with wider governance and administrative reforms to ensure that inhabitants of remote areas have equal access to land titles and arbitration mechanisms. Such comprehensive reforms will be a long-term process. In the shorter term efforts should focus on reinforcing dispute-resolution and arbitration mechanisms, extending the scope of such mechanisms to the communal dimensions of land conflicts.<sup>128</sup>

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127 For more detailed recommendations on future army integration processes, see Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, 'Between Integration and Disintegration', p. 22–9

128 Koen Vlassenroot, *Land Issues and Conflict in Eastern DRC* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2013).



*Improving local governance*

Local elections are stipulated by the constitution and the government should honour this commitment while moving to mitigate its risks. It should monitor communal tensions, before, during and after the elections, and rein in local politicians who turn to ethnic mobilization. International donors, for their part, should invest in voter education and election monitoring by local civil society organizations. At the same time, they should fund projects that are aimed at the reinforcement of the capacities of the newly elected local councillors. One entry point for this are the ‘platforms for democratic dialogue’ that the revised ISSSS plans to introduce. These aim to enhance the capacity of local communities to shape reforms and hold their leaders accountable. However, for this new approach to be successful, it is essential to ensure that such platforms have real decision-making power and sustainability.

*Strengthening accountability and reconciliation*

Defusing animosities between communities will be difficult without addressing accountability for past abuses. It is therefore crucial that the Congolese government follows up on the UN Mapping Report. The agreed mechanism for this is a mixed legal chamber of international and Congolese personnel that would try the gravest human rights violations. The Congolese government should also step up its efforts in the domain of reconciliation, offering protection to local civil society activists engaged in conflict mediation. Hate speech and incitement to violence should be prosecuted as crimes, by drafting new legislation if necessary. Here, the Framework Agreement, which commits the Congolese government to ‘further the agenda of reconciliation, tolerance and democratization’, is a good start.<sup>129</sup>

One of the measures currently under consideration by the government is the strengthening of the *barza communautaire*, a community-based

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 129 ‘Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region’, 24 February 2013, p. 1.

forum uniting representatives from different communities. However, in the past *barzas* have become bogged down in internal conflicts while their delegates have often been short on legitimacy.<sup>130</sup> There is a need to go beyond the *barza* model or transform it to ensure that such platforms are representative and cohesive.

Another initiative that could further reconciliation is the provision for democratic dialogues within the ISSSS. The activities emerging from these dialogues should build upon and link to existing reconciliation and mediation initiatives such as the *Cadres de concertation inter-communautaire* (CCI, Platforms for Inter-community Dialogue) in South Kivu's Fizi and Uvira, or the participatory initiatives launched in Kalehe by the local NGO *Action pour la paix et la concorde* (APC, Action for Peace and Harmony). These democratic dialogues should also act as a body to shape socio-economic projects that are conflict-sensitive and geared towards the fostering of social and economic interdependencies between divided communities, such as commonly used and managed infrastructure and facilities. Such projects could also be used for facilitating the social reintegration of former combatants.

## Revamping demobilization and reintegration

Poor demobilization and reintegration of former combatants have created a large pool of potential recruits that armed groups can easily draw upon. Longer-term DDR programmes need to be developed that facilitate combatants' return to civilian life. Future DDR efforts should pay more attention to the wider social dynamics of reintegration, including the role of former armed group networks and the communities in which combatants are to be reintegrated. To harmonize efforts, potential new DDR programmes could be linked to the ISSSS as the democratic dialogue element in the ISSSS would allow communities to have an input into

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 130 Phil Clark, 'Ethnicity, Leadership and Conflict Mediation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: The Case of the Barza Inter-Communautaire,' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 2 (2008), pp. 1–17.

the design and implementation of reintegration activities, reducing tensions with former combatants. This would only work in the areas where ISSSS is implemented, though. Other structures would have to be sought elsewhere.

## Reforming the army

Army reform has been slow but not non-existent. The achievements and the flaws in this area both need to be recognised in order to advance the process.

### *Reinforcing military justice and fighting impunity*

The progress made in battling impunity should not be overlooked. Between 2008–12, mobile courts in South Kivu were able to carry out 900 rape trials, with 60 per cent of the accused convicted.<sup>131</sup> However, the quality of these trials was poor. Research on sexual violence cases found that only half the convictions in the sample analysed had sufficient evidentiary backing, leading to the conclusion that ‘suspects are likely to be convicted, regardless of the evidence presented to sustain the case’.<sup>132</sup> This reflects the dysfunctionality of the Congolese justice system, which is characterized by violations of due process, with convictions too often reflecting the marginalized position of the convict, rather than his or her guilt.

The experience of the internationally backed mobile gender court project in South Kivu points to the need for an approach that is focused less on rapid, high-profile, and numerous convictions, instead entailing greater investment in improving investigative capacity, guaranteeing minimum fair trial standards, and raising the standards of evidence. Moreover, courts should avoid focusing exclusively on sexual violence,

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 131 Michael Maya, ‘Mobile Courts in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Complementarity in Action?’ American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, 26 June 2012.

132 Nynke Douma and Dorothea Hilhorst, ‘Fonds de commerce? Sexual Violence Assistance in the Democratic Republic of Congo’, Université de Wageningen, Occasional paper n° 2, 2012.

since that has fed into a commercialization of rape: people in the eastern DRC have started to resort to allegations of rape as an income earning strategy for extortion or to settle personal scores.<sup>133</sup>

In general, reinforcing accountability will require a shift from the narrow setting of the court system to other areas. These include parliamentary oversight and audits of the army, a more powerful Inspector-General of the Army with the ability to scrutinize procurement contracts and expenditures, and a unit within the military prosecutor's office specifically for financial crimes involving army officers.

### *Shifting from punishment to prevention*

Currently, efforts to establish accountability focus on punishment and the number of convictions. The focus needs to shift to prevention. Those who have been subject to violence, or who have been forced or encouraged to inflict violence upon others, are more prone, to perpetrate new violent acts. Many FARDC personnel joined the army at a young age, frequently after having been a member of an armed group at an even younger age. They have thus been exposed to a violent environment for large parts of their lives. This area of trauma among FARDC soldiers needs to be addressed.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is widely recognized as a problem within donor countries' own armed forces—and consequently addressed through comprehensive policies—but it has received little attention in the DRC. Initiatives so far are largely taken by army chaplains in a limited and scattered manner. Future donor efforts in the DRC should take the issue of PTSD seriously.

### *Strengthening relations between civilians and the military*

Improvements in civil-military relations and the integration of civilian protection into military operations have been limited. Since 2011, the FARDC has had a Permanent Directive on Civil Military Operations

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133 Douma and Hilhorst, 'Fonds de commerce?', p. 12.

(CMO) and the Doctrine on Civil-Military Cooperation was finalized in 2013. A number of FARDC staff have received CMO training, among others provided by the United States. However, the CMO project has faced challenges: only a limited number of CMO officers have been deployed and they tend to be marginalized by the military hierarchy and lack resources. Future reform efforts should support these initiatives in line with the new doctrine, providing CMO personnel with training and resources. Furthermore, CMO officers should be included in operational planning at headquarters level.

It is important to recognize that apart from top-down CMO initiatives, many individual army commanders and units in the field take measures to improve relations with the local population. There are many examples of army commanders engaged in efforts to ensure the safety of civilians and control their troops by imposing curfews and Military Police patrols or banning armed troops from circulating in town. Communities have developed strategies to cope with a persistent army presence, including the active participation of community leaders in local security committees that bring together civilian and military authorities.

These good practices receive little attention in policy circles. This is a missed opportunity, since they can be replicated elsewhere and may provide guidance for policy initiatives. Supporting grassroots efforts to improve civil-military relations provides an opportunity to create positive change, particularly given the slow progress of top-down defence reform processes. Such efforts could be extended to support for local communities' attempts to hold commanding officers to account, for the organization of training courses for local civilian authorities on how to deal with military presence and for joint civil-military activities such as joint prayers and football matches.<sup>134</sup>

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 134 van Damme and Verweijen, 'In Search of an Army', p. 16–36.

### *Improving salaries and social conditions*

One of the main achievements of the army reform projects backed by EUSEC has been the separating of the chain of payments from the chain of command. The issuing of biometric ID cards has also reduced the embezzlement of salaries. According to one estimate, the biometric process has significantly increased the base salary of Congolese soldiers by reducing the number of ghost soldiers on the official payroll by over 220,000 since 2003.<sup>135</sup> While loopholes continue to exist, the system is an important step towards greater transparency. The payment of salaries through bank accounts, a plan that has already been partly implemented, will further contribute to this, even if payment will likely remain problematic for soldiers deployed in remote areas.

While the improvement of the regularity of pay is an important advance, current salaries remain too low for soldiers not to have to engage in private business on the side in order to support their families. Although such activities are clearly undesirable, a zero-tolerance policy does not seem realistic as long as salary levels remain so low. For this reason it might be helpful for the Congolese government to identify and regulate economic activity for army personnel, as long as it does not undermine local livelihoods or security, or foster conflict in the community. One option could be the establishment of agricultural projects around military bases, particularly, for the families of soldiers. This has yielded positive results in a number of instances.<sup>136</sup>

Salaries and other income are a key element in army welfare. Rights to health care, leave, pensions, and transportation on long-distance rotations are also important. And attention should be directed to improving the living and safety conditions of the families of soldiers. A new law under the Statute of Army Personnel (*Loi 13/005 du 15 janvier 2013 portant statut*

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135 In 2004, the base salary for a rank-and-file soldier was around USD 10, while today it has risen to around USD 70. For the listing of mid-2012, see Marc Mawete, 'Liste de paye des militaires FARDC au front', *Démocratie Chrétienne*, 16 June 2012.

136 Désiré Bigega, 'Nord Kivu: les militaires se nourrissent dans leurs propres champs', *Syfia Grands Lacs*, 6 April 2012.

*du militaire des FARDC*), promulgated in January 2013, heralds important improvements in this respect, though it excludes the rank-and-file from several of the rights that it awards to officers. For it to enter into force a further elaboration and adoption of decrees is necessary. And the reallocation of a substantial amount of funding will be required in order for it to be implemented.

*Investing in training and education*

Significant progress has been made in terms of training and education: the *École du génie militaire* (Military Engineer Academy) was reopened in October 2008, followed by the *École de formation des officiers* (EFO, Officers Academy) in Kananga in October 2011, and the *École d'administration des FARDC* (FARDC Administrative Academy) in September 2012. Meanwhile, the *École de formation des sous-officiers* (Non-Commissioned Officers Academy) was opened in Kitona in June 2011. In addition, in the course of 2010–11, five special forces battalions were trained by Belgian, American and South African officers in Kindu, Kisangani, and Mura. But only a small percentage of the troops currently deployed on the front lines in the east has so far benefited from these initiatives. There has also been a tendency to focus on senior levels, neglecting lower-level commanders in companies, platoons, and squads, and trained units have frequently been broken up. The inclusion of front-line troops in future training schemes, the establishment of a continuous training scheme and the preservation of the composition of trained units would all be desirable developments.<sup>137</sup>

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 137 Anthony King, 'The word of command: communication and cohesion in the military', *Armed Forces & Society* 32/4 (2006): 493–512.

## Glossary of acronyms, words, and phrases

<i>Accord global et inclusif</i>	Global and Inclusive Agreement; peace agreement signed in December 2002 in Pretoria, officially concluding the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (signed in Zambia in 1999) and ending the Second Congo War (q.v.)
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
ALEC	<i>Alliance pour la libération de l'est du Congo</i> / Alliance for the Liberation of East Congo
<i>Amani Leo</i>	Peace Today (Swahili); Congolese military offensive backed by MONUSCO against the FDLR from January 2010 to April 2012; followed the <i>Kimia II</i> operations (q.v.)
ANC	<i>Armée congolaise nationale</i> / Congolese National Army
AFDL	<i>Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre</i> / Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire
APCLS	<i>Alliance patriotique pour un Congo libre et souverain</i> / Patriotic Alliance for a Free and Sovereign Congo
Banyamulenge	people from Mulenge in the <i>territoire</i> of Uvira, South Kivu (plural)
<i>brassage</i>	integration of militias into Congolese army; lit., 'brewing' (Fr.)
<i>chefferie</i>	chiefdom, the highest level of customary administration; at level above <i>groupement</i> and below <i>territoire</i> (q.v.); <i>chefferies</i> are also included in the broader term <i>collectivités</i>
CMO	Civil Military Operations
CNDD-FDD	<i>Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces de défense de la démocratie</i> / National Council / Forces for the Defence of Democracy
CNDP	<i>Congrès national pour la défense du peuple</i> / National Congress for the Defence of the People
CNL	<i>Conseil national de libération</i> / National Liberation Council



<i>Collectivité</i>	administrative entity at level between <i>groupement</i> and <i>territoire</i> (q.v.); a <i>collectivité</i> can be a <i>secteur</i> or a <i>chefferie</i>
CONADER	<i>Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion</i> / National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion Commission
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAC	<i>Forces armées congolaises</i> / Congolese Armed Forces
FALL	<i>Forces d'autodéfense locales et légitimes</i> / Local Legitimate Self-defence Forces
FARDC	<i>Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> / Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAZ	<i>Forces armées zaïroises</i> / Zairian Armed Forces
FDIPC	<i>Forces pour la défense des intérêts du peuple congolais</i> / Forces for the Defence of the Interests of the Congolese People
FDLR	<i>Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda</i> / Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda
FIB	United Nations Force Intervention Brigade
First Congo War	War on Congolese soil, pitting the Zairian government under President Mobutu against the AFDL (q.v.), an armed group backed by an alliance between Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and Angola. The war ended in April 1997 with the toppling of President Mobutu.
FNL	<i>Forces nationales de libération</i> / National Liberation Forces
FOLC	<i>Force oecuménique pour la libération du Congo</i> / Ecumenical Force for the Liberation of Congo
Framework Agreement	Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region; agreement signed by 11 African states and four multinational bodies (UN, AU, EU, and SADC) on 24 February 2013, to provide a

	framework for peace and development in the eastern DRC
FRF	<i>Forces républicaines fédéralistes</i> / Republican Federalist Forces
FRPI	<i>Force de résistance patriotique en Ituri</i> / Ituri Patriotic Resistance Force
<i>groupement</i>	administrative entity at level between <i>village</i> and <i>collectivité</i> (q.v.)
<i>Interahamwe</i>	Those who attack together (Kinyarwanda); a Rwandan Hutu paramilitary organization who played a central role in the Rwandan genocide
<i>Kimia II</i>	Silence (Swahili); Congolese army offensive backed by MONUC (q.v.) against the FDLR (q.v.) in 2009; followed the <i>Umoja Wetu</i> operations (q.v.)
M23	<i>Mouvement du 23 mars</i> / March 23 Movement
MAGRIVI	<i>Mutuelle des agriculteurs du Virunga</i> / Virunga Agricultural Collective
<i>Mai-Mai</i>	community-based self-defence militias; from <i>maji</i> , ‘water’ (Kiswahili)
<i>maquisards</i>	rebel fighters
MPA	<i>Mouvement populaire d'autodéfense</i> / Popular Self-defence Movement
<i>mutuelle</i>	ethnically-based urban associations/self-defence groups
<i>mwami</i>	king (Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Nande, Shi and several other Bantu languages)
NDC	Nduma Defence of Congo
PARECO	<i>Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais</i> / Alliance of Resistant Congolese Patriots
PMF	<i>Personnel militaire féminin</i> / Female Military Personnel
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RCD	<i>Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie</i> / Congolese Rally for Democracy
RDF	Rwandan Defence Force
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front

Second Congo War	War on Congolese soil, pitting the government in Kinshasa against Rwanda and Uganda and their respective allies. Between 1998 and 2003, the conflict drew in nine African countries and multiple proxy armed groups; it has also been referred to as the Great African War.
<i>secteur</i>	sector; administrative entity at level between <i>groupement</i> and <i>territoire</i> (q.v.); <i>secteurs</i> may also be referred to by the broader term <i>collectivités</i>
<i>Simba</i> rebellion	lion (Swahili); 1964–7 rebellion against the newly-independent Congolese government
<i>territoire</i>	administrative entity at level between <i>collectivité</i> and district
UFRC	<i>Union des forces révolutionnaires du Congo</i> / Union of Revolutionary Forces of Congo
UJPS	<i>Union des jeunes patriotes sacrifiés</i> / Union of Young Sacrificed Patriots
<i>Umoja Wetu</i>	Our Unity (Swahili); joint Rwandan-Congolese offensive against the FDLR (q.v.), January-February 2009

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