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## **Between Integration and Disintegration: The Erratic Trajectory of the Congolese Army<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Summary and Recommendations**

In 2002, the belligerents to the Second Congo War (1998-2002) signed a peace agreement that called for the merging of their fighting forces into a new national army, the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC). However, this process did not manage to end rebel activity in the east. While some factions refused integration, others deserted and reconstituted themselves as armed groups. The primary response of the DRC government to these re-created rebel groups was to continue to try to integrate them into the army. Yet, rather than providing a solution, this policy has ushered in a vicious cycle of army integration and disintegration that has become a major factor in sustaining the ongoing violence in the east. Due to the close interconnections between the army, civilian populations and armed groups, army integration is not merely a military issue, but goes to the heart of the dynamics of conflict in the DRC.

This paper analyzes the history, underlying mechanisms and effects of never-ending military integration. Furthermore, in order to provide more insight into the mechanisms and consequences of military integration, the paper discusses the general nature and workings of the Congolese army, including the causes of its weak combat performance. By firmly situating the FARDC within the Congolese state apparatus, it raises the question of how far an army can be reformed in the absence of wider reforms of the state in which it is mandated to serve.

In light of the damaging effects of DRC's past approaches to army integration, there is an urgent need to contemplate viable alternatives for dealing with armed groups. We suggest that these could include **better designed and longer-term DDR programs, political and administrative integration of armed group representatives and local peace initiatives** allowing representatives of civilian groups and communities to draw up viable plans for how to address armed groups active in their region.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper draws upon findings from two separate field-based research projects conducted by the authors. The research of Judith Verweijen is based on 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork on the FARDC and armed groups in the Kivus between 2010 and 2012, focusing on everyday civilian-military interaction. The research by Maria Eriksson Baaz, conducted with Maria Stern, is based on in-depth interviews with over 260 FARDC staff in various parts of the country between 2006 and 2012, covering a range of aspects related to military identities and civil-military relations.

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However, given that yet another major wave of military integration is imminent, it is imperative to engage in efforts to mitigate the potential detrimental effects this would entail. To that end, the paper identifies three main, and intertwined, challenges. Many of the issues raised present deep dilemmas and we do not pretend to have any silver bullets in store. Furthermore, rather than providing a wish list based on unrealistic demands, we have tried to remain within the realm of the “somewhat possible.” With these precautions in mind, we suggest the following:

**There is a need to minimize incentive structures that reward violence, resulting from a skewed cost/benefit balance and the sanctioning of impunity, including:**

- Addressing accountability. While prosecution of offenders and the initiation of vetting mechanisms should certainly be pushed for, experiences from previous integration processes, which have included neither, point to the need to think harder about alternative (and temporary) ways of addressing accountability. Such alternatives could involve including a truth-telling dimension into integration procedures, as well as removing commanders suspected of having committed abuses at least from day-to-day command;
- A conflict-sensitive design to pay-offs for integrating groups, including by prioritizing non-material over material pay-offs and identifying and regulating less violent forms of revenue-generation opportunities;
- Designing more detailed integration agreements with clear timelines and credible control and sanctions mechanisms, including stricter conditions on integrating troops in terms of handing over arms and ensuring that all fighters are integrated, or otherwise properly demobilized.

**It is imperative that enkindling effects on intra-and intercommunity conflicts are mitigated.** This would include efforts to:

- Address political grievances each time an armed group is integrated, in order to ensure that there is also some integration-dividend for grassroots populations;
- Ensure that there are credible provisions to maintain security in areas evacuated by integrating armed groups;
- Redeploy troops to ensure a balanced geographical distribution, after fostering a basic level of trust. The idea of localized or territorial security provision is an untenable solution, as it is bound to fuel more conflicts, given that most communities in the east live intermingled.

**Any integration efforts should avoid further destabilizing and disabling effects on the FARDC, in terms of unit cohesion, morale and performance, by:**

- Imposing a training period of at least three months on newly integrated troops, which should be part of a more long-term engagement, involving continuous training, refresher courses and collective drills, and a strong focus on lower-level unit commanders;

- Ensuring a balance in the composition and command of new units, with newly integrated troops not exceeding 25% in every unit and every commander being assisted by two deputies from different backgrounds;
- Ensuring basic respect for meritocracy in the distribution of ranks and positions, by instituting tests and allowing the General Staff in Kinshasa to play a greater role in appointments in the east;
- Engaging in serious efforts to address and mitigate identity-based tensions within the FARDC and their zones of deployment, by attending to this issue in training curricula, moral talks by army chaplains and sensitization efforts, for example through participatory theatre and radio emissions.

Donor approaches to military integration have to a large extent been characterized by an ostrich policy, with little efforts to monitor and influence the unfolding processes. This reflects a more general approach to army reform, which is marked by shunning political issues, while at the same time accusing the Congolese side of “a lack of political will.” This rather simplistic narrative, however, fails to take a number of crucial issues into consideration, including the relative scarcity of allocated resources, Kinshasa’s limited political space for enforcing policies, the fact that “willingness for reform” does exist in substantial layers of the Congolese army (although it is unevenly distributed and fluctuating) and finally, the external climate where images of donor interests are deeply shaped by a long and troubling history of foreign intervention.

While we do not believe in foreign-driven “social engineering,” and whereas efforts at army reform should take the overall nature of the Congolese state into consideration, we do believe that a more pro-active engagement in the domain of military integration can potentially contribute to mitigating its negative effects and open up more viable ways for dealing with armed groups. Given that army integration is a crucial factor in the on-going violence and conflict dynamics in the east, this should not be viewed merely as a secondary issue—but should be at the heart of donor engagement in the DRC.

## Introduction

Soon after the Congo obtained independence on 30 June 1960, its armed forces, from 8 July known as the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC), fell apart into uncontrolled bands of mutineers. The ANC's freshly promoted officer corps, which had replaced the Belgian leadership almost overnight, could not muster enough respect from their subordinates to contain the disorder.<sup>3</sup> This rendered the disintegrating army susceptible to instrumentalization by competing political leaders and local strongmen. Thus, the crumbling army sped up the country's political fragmentation, leading to the secession of two of its provinces, Katanga and South Kasai. Both established their own armed forces, while the ANC split into two competing factions.

In 1963, this turmoil came to an end with the unification of both the country and the armed forces. Although the UN peacekeeping mission to the Congo, the *Opération des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC) had advised earlier to disband the ANC and build a new army from scratch, it was decided to embark upon the arduous path of merging all armed factions into a single army. A number of rebellions that broke out the following year further complicated this task. Despite these difficulties, including divided loyalties and permanent power competition, the ANC eventually became a reasonably cohesive, albeit militarily weak, body. This allowed for a restoration-though temporary- of the basic sense of Congolese "national identity" that had characterized its colonial predecessor force. Only a faction of the re-integrated Katangan Gendarmes, constituting separate units within the ANC, eventually dropped out of the integration process and partly established themselves in Angola.<sup>4</sup> This particular integration failure was connected to antagonism towards Kinshasa, a marked separate ethno-regional identity and close links to cross-border socio-economic networks. However, it was an exception in an otherwise largely successful integration project.

Almost 40 years after the unification of the ANC – in 1971 rebaptized *Forces Armées Zairoises* (FAZ) by Mobutu – the Congo once again embarked upon the challenging path of army integration. This time the task was to merge the belligerents of the Second Congo War (1998-2002) into a new national army, the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC). While the contexts in which the ANC and the FARDC were formed are different in several aspects, some of the core ingredients of the ANC epoch have also characterized the strenuous development of the FARDC. Similarly to the ANC, the quest for control and cohesion in the FARDC has taken place amidst divided loyalties and power competition, involving groups with different ethno-regional and strong cross-border orientations. Moreover, integration has been managed in a situation of continuous insurgency and military operations.

Yet, the management and outcomes of military integration in these different historical episodes diverge. For instance, the FARDC never received the comparatively large domestic and foreign resources that were invested in the ANC. Furthermore, the overall political climate, both national and international, diverges considerably. In contrast to the strong centralizing trend that was instigated by the iron fist of Mobutu, Joseph Kabila is

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<sup>3</sup> L-F. Vanderstraeten, *De la Force Publique à l'Armée Nationale Congolaise: histoire d'une mutinerie* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> C. Young and T. Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985): 250-252.

working in an increasingly fragmented political environment that is subject to strong centrifugal tendencies. This has seriously hampered military integration and the development of a cohesive and effective army. Ten years after its birth, the FARDC still appears to hover between integration and disintegration. How can this erratic track be understood?

In this paper, we situate the trajectory of the FARDC in a broader political and sociological context. This allows us to reflect upon a number of questions that are at the core of the eastern DRC security predicament. What are the main causes of the FARDC's limited military performance and peculiar mode of operation? How did military integration unfold in the post-settlement era: how was it shaped by and how has it shaped its political-economic context? What were its modalities, and its effects on conflict dynamics in the east? Furthermore, given the botched record of military integration, are there alternatives for dealing with armed groups, or different ways to handle military integration? Finally, what role have international donors played in military integration processes up to now and what role could they play, especially in light of existing levels of "political will" within the Congolese government and the armed forces?

The paper will proceed as follows. In the first part, we present some core features of the functioning of the FARDC, by situating it within the state apparatus of the DRC. The second part analyzes the dynamics of the military integration trajectory of the FARDC. This is followed by a discussion of possible alternatives to and different modalities of military integration. The fourth and final part addresses the issue of the scope for and characteristics of donor interventions in the context of political space and "political will" for army reform.

## I. UNDERSTANDING THE WORKINGS OF THE FARDC

Any effort to comprehend the FARDC must be based on an understanding of the functioning of the Congolese state. Although the FARDC certainly has dynamics of its own, it is also an integral part of the machinery of the state, and starkly reflects the latter's core characteristics. Weak capacities for policy implementation, the appropriation of public resources for private use, the drive for constant revenue-generation, often through extortion and with coercion, frequent rotations of office, permanent internal power competition, weak connections between the center in Kinshasa and lower levels in the provinces, and finally, poor service conditions of staff, in particular low salaries. None of these features are unique to the FARDC, or its predecessor forces, which to a large extent functioned in similar ways. By contrast, these characteristics have, for a long time, characterized most parts of the Congolese state apparatus, including the administration and the security services.<sup>5</sup> This raises questions regarding the relation between army reform and state reform more generally: Is it reasonable to assume that one part of the state apparatus can operate in a radically different (better) way than the other parts, specifically when expected to still be

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<sup>5</sup> D. Gould, *Bureaucratic Corruption and Underdevelopment in the Third World: The Case of Zaire*, (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980); T. Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle. Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); M. Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

subordinate and accountable to those parts? While we do not intend to answer this question here, we simply raise it with the intention of stimulating further reflection on this issue.<sup>6</sup>

In the following, we will analyze the functioning of the FARDC in more detail, by highlighting two of its key features, which mirror the workings of the state as a whole. These are first, the influence of Big Man networks and second, the central importance of revenue-generation. Subsequently, we will reflect upon how these features shape the FARDC's performance as a combat actor.

## **The FARDC as part of the Congolese State Apparatus**

### *The Influence of Big Man Networks*

The FARDC can be conceptualized as a collection of different power networks that overlap, intersect, or conflict with the formal hierarchy. Hence, power projection does not simply follow the formal hierarchy and command chains. Many of these networks, which have varying degrees of internal cohesion and strength, are formed around Big Men<sup>7</sup> or patrons, who are tied to webs of clients through relations of reciprocity. This implies that loyalty, support, and the provision of certain services are exchanged for access to revenue-generation opportunities, (private) protection, and favors. Consequently, officers double as Big Men and do not only have the responsibility for their own troops, but also for a wider clientele both within and outside of the military. Furthermore, every soldier, aside from his or her<sup>8</sup> present unit affiliation, is tied to several other networks, for instance based on ethnic or geographical origins, past army unit affiliation or former armed group membership.

On the one hand, this embedding into multiple networks extends the leverage and protection of FARDC staff. It allows them to appeal to various sources for obtaining forms of social mobility and favors, for example, promotion, lucrative tasks, better functions, or exemption from prosecution by military justice.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, this jumble of power networks severely complicates military functioning. It makes everything negotiable and creates unpredictability and arbitrariness. Furthermore, through favoritism and the disregard of merit, it blocks access to good positions and revenue-generation opportunities for those “not having the right connections.” One of the main sources of unpredictability are

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<sup>6</sup> R. Egnell and P. Haldén, "Laudable, a historical and overambitious: Security Sector Reform meets state formation theory", *Conflict, Security & Development*, 9, no.1 (2009): 27–54.

<sup>7</sup> On the notion of Big Man networks, see M. Utas, "Introduction: Bigmanity and network governance in African conflicts", in M. Utas, ed., *African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big Men and Networks* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2012), 1–31. Similar to Utas, “Big Manity” is conceptualized herein as a universal, socio-structural phenomenon that is manifested in contexts where formal governance structures are relatively weak. Hence, it should by no means be understood as related to “African particularisms” or “tradition.”

<sup>8</sup> The amount of women serving in the FARDC is at present less than 2%. For a further discussion of female military staff in the FARDC see M. Eriksson Baaz and M. Stern, "Whores, men, and other misfits: Undoing 'feminization' in the Armed Forces in the DRC", *African Affairs* 110, no. 441 (August 2011): 563–585.

<sup>9</sup> M. Eriksson Baaz and J. Verweijen, forthcoming, "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*, March 2013.

permanent power struggles between various Big Man networks. Some of these are closer to the Presidential power circle in Kinshasa than others, and mobilize these connections in order to strengthen their position. These power struggles translate into frequent rotations of office, in particular constant reappointments and redeployments of officers. Another manifestation of this competition is the frequent restructuring of the military organization, like the 2011 effort to turn brigades into regiments in the Kivus. To a certain extent, these fluctuations in appointments, deployments and structures can be understood as attempts by Kinshasa to prevent a single power network from becoming hegemonic and too autonomous from the center.<sup>10</sup>

### *A Focus on Revenue-Generation*

It is a common observation that FARDC staff, regardless their rank, spend a considerable amount of time on a variety of more and less illicit revenue-generating schemes. These income-generation activities also guide military deployments and activities more widely.<sup>11</sup> Rather than being purely the product of “greed” or the inherent traits of FARDC staff, we propose that this orientation must to a large extent be understood from the perspective of the workings of Big Man networks. The latter largely revolve around the granting or withholding of access to revenue-generating opportunities as a means of power projection. Another major factor contributing to the focus on revenue-generation are the limited (especially in relation to Big Men needs) official resources allocated to the military. In combination with mismanagement, this leads to very poor service conditions for the rank-and-file. Soldiers’ monthly official income is around 70\$, which is far from enough to maintain even a small family.<sup>12</sup> Hence, as in the administration in general, most FARDC staff depend for their primary income not on their salary, but on revenue-generation possibilities linked to functions and opportunities that are mostly granted by Big Men. However, Big Men may withdraw this access any moment, specifically to avoid that their clients build up an autonomous power position or reduce their loyalty. The subsequent pervasive uncertainty makes army staff reap the benefits of their position as long as it lasts, which in turn feeds insecurity amongst those from whom they extract wealth.<sup>13</sup>

One manifestation of these mechanisms of revenue-generation and power projection is the infamous system of *rapportage*, which can also be found in other state services.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> J.Verweijen, forthcoming, *The Ambiguity of Militarization. The Complex Interaction Between the Congolese Armed Forces and Civilians in the Kivu Provinces, Eastern DR Congo*, Utrecht University, PhD dissertation, forthcoming 2013.

<sup>11</sup> *Final Report of the UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (United Nations Security Council S/2010/596), 29 November 2010, 48–49.

<sup>12</sup> Salaries went from 10.826 Franc Congolais (900FC = \$1) for a soldier second class and 21.508 FC for a colonel full in 2006 to 60.018 FC for a soldier second class and 74.198FC for a colonel full in 2012. Note that generals tend to receive only around 15\$ a month more than a colonel full. Data obtained from EUSEC RD Congo sources.

<sup>13</sup> Schatzberg, *Dialectics of Oppression*.

<sup>14</sup> M. Eriksson Baaz and O. Olsson, "Feeding the horse: unofficial economic activities within the police force in the DR Congo", *African Security* 4, no. 4, (2011): 223–241; T. Trefon, "Public service provision in a failed state: looking beyond predation in the Democratic Republic of Congo", *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 136, 2009: 9–21.

*Rapportage* refers to the obligation of subordinates to pay prescribed regular sums to key figures in the hierarchy. These payments guarantee continued deployment in lucrative zones, such as near border-crossings or in areas rich in natural resources. This system works as an instrument of power at all levels of the hierarchy, as those failing to submit sufficient revenue, or otherwise fall out of favor, are being sent to, so called, “drier zones,” which have less revenue-generating opportunities.

Given that Big Man networks tend to cross-cut civilian/military boundaries, civilian actors are also involved in these sometimes violent dynamics of revenue-generation and power projection, and not merely as victims. For instance, economic operators and politicians use the FARDC for facilitating their power projects and income-generation schemes, approaching them, for example, for protecting the transport of their goods, for obtaining, by means of influence-trafficking, licenses, permits, and reductions on import/export tariffs, for intimidating personal competitors or for establishing monopolies through coercion.

At the same time, the weakness of civilian authorities, including police and justice institutions, prompts civilians from all layers of the population to turn to the military for the resolution of both more public and more private disputes. The disputes for which people solicit the intervention of the FARDC encompass a wide range of issues, such as conflicts around land, mining concessions, debts, inheritance, succession, love affairs, and personal rivalries. Certainly, these processes of military involvement in civilian dispute-resolution are not simply a question of civilian demand and military offer. The military also impose themselves in conflicts, sometimes with force.<sup>15</sup>

The dynamics described above indicate that military functioning cannot be seen in isolation from the various roles that the FARDC plays within society. These roles far exceed that of the provision of security (or insecurity), but also encompass economic and governance functions. Yet, the FARDC’s security role remains a key discursive frame of reference and yardstick for how they are evaluated, both among domestic and international actors.

### **The FARDC as a Combat Actor**

In the previous section, we have described some of the main characteristics of the functioning of the FARDC. Logically, these features shape the FARDC’s performance on the battlefield in important ways. As should be obvious, the workings and organization of the FARDC are not primarily geared towards effectively engaging in combat. Although the FARDC is in some contexts seen to contribute to civilians’ protection,<sup>16</sup> this is often primarily related to their mere presence rather than to any active efforts to foster security. Activities like systematic day-and nighttime patrolling, strategic deployment and cordon-and-search operations happen at a variable scale and with rather low intensity. In this respect, it should also be mentioned that due to deficient logistics and infrastructure, soldiers spend a large time of the day on extra-military tasks, such as fetching water and

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<sup>15</sup> J. Verweijen, “Military business and the business of the military in the Kivus”, *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 35, 2013: 67–82.

<sup>16</sup> S.Van Damme, “Commodities of War. Communities speak out on the true cost of conflict in Eastern DRC”, *Oxfam International Briefing Paper* No. 164, November 2012.

firewood, building or repairing their huts, or income-generation, either for their hierarchy or for themselves.

In addition to distracting attention from combat, the weak institutionalization of the FARDC also hampers combat itself, specifically through irregular command structures and inefficient systems of logistics, communications and intelligence. Combat requires seamless command chains and a high level of coordination. Moreover, the military units involved need steady supplies of especially ammunitions, rations, medicine, and transport for rapid (re)deployments. All these components are weak in the FARDC, leading to confusion and disputes between units during battle, and troops ending up at the frontlines without sufficient food, shelter or ammunition. These malfunctions became unmistakably clear in the recent military operations against the M23, where troops were uncoordinated and quickly ran out of supplies<sup>17</sup>

Another element reducing the FARDC's combat capacity is the limited motivation to engage in life-risking behavior. This restrained enthusiasm to fight can mainly be attributed to two factors. The first is soldiers' relative lack of material and non-material rewards such as salaries, pensions, housing, access to education, social status and recognition. Soldiers generally feel that neither the population nor the authorities recognize their contributions, which reduces their willingness to sacrifice.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, primary unit cohesion, or the affective bonds that connect peers and direct superiors is generally weak in the FARDC.<sup>19</sup> This further undermines both combat motivation and performance.<sup>20</sup> As we will demonstrate below, these various combat demotivating factors have been seriously aggravated by military integration processes.

## II. THE FARDC'S ERRATIC TRAJECTORY OF MILITARY INTEGRATION

In this section, we provide a brief historical overview of the various military integration initiatives and processes that were launched after the 2002 Pretoria agreement. This provides deeper insights into the mechanisms and effects of military integration, which are crucial for reflections on policy interventions and future developments.

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<sup>17</sup> F. Mumena, "Goma-incompréhension et colère des soldats Congolais", *Le Congolais*, 24 November 2012. Accessed 25 February 2013, <http://www.lecongolais.cd/goma-incomprehension-et-colere-des-soldats-congolais/>.

<sup>18</sup> M. Eriksson Baaz and M. Stern, "The Complexity of Violence: A critical analysis of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)", Sida Working Paper on Gender based Violence, Sida Stockholm, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Verweijen, *Ambiguity of Militarization*; M. Eriksson Baaz and M. Stern, *Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War?: Perceptions, Prescriptions, Problems in the Congo and Beyond*. (London and New York: Zed Books, June 2013).

<sup>20</sup> E.g. E. Shils and M. Janowitz, "Cohesion and disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 12, 1948: 280–315; R. Little, "Buddy relations and combat performance" in *The New Military: Changing Patterns of Organization*, ed. M. Janowitz, (New York: Russell Sage, 1964), 195–224.

## **“Half-brewed”: The Lukewarm Results of Initial Military Merging (2003-2007)<sup>21</sup>**

During the Sun City peace talks, the main rebel factions (RCD-G, MLC, RCD-K/ML, RCD/N<sup>22</sup> and various groups of Mai Mai), agreed to merge their fighters into a new military structure following a quota system based on declared troop numbers. The creation of the command structures was to follow an intricate distribution key, based on the principle that each commander was to be assisted by two deputies from two different groups. This was to guarantee that all the different armed factions would be represented and that no single faction could control a part of the command chain. Furthermore, it was decided that no vetting processes would take place, allowing factions to integrate any of their troops and commanders, regardless of past behavior. While the final peace agreement contained an amnesty provision that exempted war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, no efforts were made to implement this clause in the army integration process.<sup>23</sup>

Although the ex-belligerents reached agreement on the basic principles of integration, operationalization and implementation became a continuous bone of contention. This was already evident in the first step of integration, which involved the division of positions in the central and regional command structures. Each faction wanted to hold on to its former strongholds by carving out islands of control in the new command of the Military Regions, leading to parallel power structures. The next step - the recognition of ranks - was equally contentious. Whereas members of the more influential, bigger armed groups were able to keep their former rebel ranks, albeit with some minor adjustments, smaller armed groups, like some Mai Mai factions, saw only few of their higher ranks recognized. Only those with important connections in Kinshasa fared better in the process. Expectedly, the generous distribution of ranks according to political rather than merit-based criteria caused frictions between superiors and their often much better militarily educated subordinates. This phenomenon reappeared in later integration phases and continues to trouble the army up to today.

The following phase in the army integration process consisted of the mixing of troops into new brigades. This process only started in 2004, and was very incremental, with the last Integrated Brigade (the 18<sup>th</sup>) ending its formation at the start of 2008. “*Brassage*” (brewing), as it was called, consisted of the mixing of fighters on an individual basis, followed by a training period of in principle 45 days. This training was not only supposed to instill basic military principles among troops with little conventional education, but to ensure that old loyalties were broken down and a unified chain of command established. Officially, the process had to mix combatants from all over the country, in order to ensure

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<sup>21</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of this initial phase of military merging see J. Verweijen, forthcoming 2013, “Half-brewed: The lukewarm results of creating an integrated Congolese military”, in *New Armies from Old. Merging Competing Military Forces after Civil Wars*, ed. R. Licklider, Georgetown University Press, forthcoming 2013.

<sup>22</sup> See list of acronyms at the end.

<sup>23</sup> L. Davis, “Power shared and justice shelved: the Democratic Republic of Congo”, *International Journal of Human Rights* 17 no. 2, (2013): 289–306.

that the composition of the new Integrated Brigades followed the prescribed quota,<sup>24</sup> and that there would be an even geographical distribution of fighters. However, these principles were not consistently adhered to. Not only was the process plagued by logistical, financial and management obstacles, it also suffered from manipulation by factions who were keen on maintaining combatants close to their former strongholds.<sup>25</sup>

### *Refusal and Manipulation*

The military forces to be integrated were not stand-alone armed groups: they were integral parts of wider political-economic networks that had gained prominence in the course of the wars. Hence, the stakes of integration were very high, as both elite political and economic actors, as well as wider civilian constituencies, depended on these armed forces for income, power and a sense of security. Consequently, some of the ex-belligerents either refused to send their troops to *brassage* centers, or tried to manipulate the process. This manipulation took on two forms: first, factions prevented their integrated troops from being deployed far from their zones of influence; second, they ensured that troops were put under a different command chain.<sup>26</sup> The refusal strategy was adopted especially by armed groups strong enough to persist outside the framework of the government forces, like a certain faction of the RCD-G that was tied into cross-border political-economic networks extending into Rwanda. Partly due to the RCD-G's bleak electoral prospects, this group felt that military integration would bring them few benefits. Additionally, they referred to security fears among the Tutsi community in the Kivus, arguing that integration into mixed units would leave this community exposed. It was from the leadership of this dissident faction of the RCD-G that the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), headed by Laurent Nkunda, would later emerge. While Nkunda had been appointed General in the FARDC in 2003, he had refused to take up his new command position, remaining instead as a dissident in North Kivu.

But the Nkunda group was not the only one to refuse *brassage*: several smaller-scale groups with only localized influence, like Mai Mai militia and some groups in Ituri, also dragged their feet. Furthermore, some who did integrate were profoundly unhappy with the results. Many of these disappointed groups lacked the high-level political and military connections required to obtain important positions, both in the central and regional command structures and within the Integrated Brigades. Given that it is positions, rather than ranks that determine access to (informal) revenue-generating opportunities in the FARDC, groups with little political and military weight were bound to experience a loss in influence, income and status after their integration. In many cases, the fact that they lacked qualified candidates also played an important role. However, we by no means want to imply that Mai Mai groups are, in the words of some observers, “untrainable” due to their

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<sup>24</sup> The official quota system for Integrated Brigades was FAC (35%), MLC (17%), RCD-G (28%), Mai-Mai (8%) and other groups (12%). See International Crisis Group, *Security Sector Reform in the Congo*, Africa Report No. 104, 13 February 2006, Brussels and Nairobi: International Crisis Group.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. Amnesty International, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Reform of the Army*, August 2006, London: Amnesty International; R. Onana and H. Taylor, "MONUC and SSR in the Democratic Republic of Congo", *International Peacekeeping* 15 no. 4, 2008: 501–516.

<sup>26</sup> S. Wolters, *Update on the DRC: Is the Transition in Trouble?* ISS Situation Report, 20 July 2004, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies.

“magical” ways,<sup>27</sup> or that there are inherent “socio-anthropological limits” to the integration of Mai Mai combatants in the FARDC.<sup>28</sup> Aside from reflecting stereotypes of “savage African warriors,” such assumptions ignore that supernatural and magical beliefs can be found among highly disciplined, “modern” and effective combat forces around the world.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, military skills and competence are not primarily the result of prior education, but are produced by training and group processes.<sup>30</sup>

However, training and education were hardly provided in the newly created army, with the result that less educated officers had little opportunities to improve. Rather than diagnosing their difficult access to higher positions as related to their lack of competence or importance, members from smaller factions often interpreted their marginalized positions as evidence of a deliberate policy of the systematic discrimination of so-called “autochthones” by the perceived Tutsi/Rwandophone<sup>31</sup>-dominated command of the new army. This experienced discrimination did not only reduce the enthusiasm of these groups to join the integration process; it also formed a reason to desert for those who did integrate. Many of such dissidents, when not joining armed groups, did not enter formal demobilization programs, but, “auto-demobilized,” meaning that they simply returned to civilian life without assistance, and while retaining their arms.<sup>32</sup> Amongst those who were officially demobilized, many did not manage to develop sustainable forms of livelihoods-generation. In this way, the military integration process produced a large mass of quasi-demobilized and jobless ex-fighters, which proved a rich reservoir for new armed group recruitment.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> S. Melmot, *Candide in Congo: The Expected Failure of Security Sector Reform (SSR)*, Focus Stratégique No. 9 bis, (Paris and Brussels: Laboratoire de Recherche sur la Défense, Institut Français des Relations Internationales, April 2009), 18.

<sup>28</sup> T. Vircoulon, “Militariser les miliciens magiques? Les limites socio-anthropologiques de la militarisation des Maï Maï”, in *Réformes les armées africaines. En quête d’une nouvelle stratégie*, ed. A. Augé and P. Klaousen, (Paris: Karthala, 2010), 131–147.

<sup>29</sup> For example, the US army chaplain’s handbook includes a section on Wicca since 1978, Wiccan gatherings are tolerated at US army bases, and Wiccan symbols are allowed on military graves. See e.g. “US Army says Wiccan work it out”, *The Australian Times*, 29 November 2011, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/us-army-says-wiccan-work-it-out/story-e6frg6so-1226208546523>; “US to allow Wiccan symbols on military graves”, *Washington Times*, 23 April 2007, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2007/apr/23/20070423-104939-6596r/?page=all>) [both websites accessed 25 February 2013].

<sup>30</sup> A. King, “The word of command: communication and cohesion in the military”, *Armed Forces & Society* 32 no 4, (2006): 493–512.

<sup>31</sup> “Rwandophone” refers to speakers of Kinyrwanda, but has become a more ethnicized label to designate Hutu and Tutsi. Self-styled “autochthonous” groups have come to be antagonistically defined towards Tutsi/“Rwandophones”/Nilotics, with the object of enmity being contextual, indicating the slipperiness of the “autochthony discourse”. See S. Jackson, “Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in eastern D.R. Congo”, *African Studies Review*, 49 no. 2 (2006): 95–123.

<sup>32</sup> Verweijen, *Ambiguity of Militarization*.

<sup>33</sup> G. Lamb and others, *Rumours of Peace, Whispers of War. Assessment of the Reintegration of Ex-Combatants into Civilian Life in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, Democratic Republic of Congo*, Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2012.

Ironically, perceptions of the nascent army as “partial” were not limited to “autochthonous” groups, but were shared by “Rwandophones”. This created two self-enforcing and interlocking security dilemmas. Firstly, it made groups reluctant to send their troops into the army, as they believed their communities would otherwise remain unprotected. Secondly, the fact that some groups refused to engage in *brassage* became an important argument for competing groups to also refuse army integration. This nexus between inter-community dynamics and army integration has continued to this day.

### *Mixed, Yet Predictable Results?*

With hindsight, the results of the first wave of post-settlement military integration can be described as mixed. In addition to leaving numerous un-integrated or only theoretically integrated forces on the ground, it created a favorable climate for the emergence of parallel command structures and power networks within the FARDC. However, the eighteen Integrated Brigades that came out of the *brassage* process eventually became reasonably cohesive forces, specifically in the first years after their formation. Therefore, rather than calling military integration an outright “failure,” we describe its results as “incomplete”. Furthermore, we suggest that the mixed success of army integration was perhaps a key reason why the “transition”<sup>34</sup>— albeit exceedingly fragile— did not fall apart.<sup>35</sup> While the incomplete nature of the military integration process had various unfortunate effects, such as the clashes between Bemba’s troops and the Presidential Guard in Kinshasa in March 2007,<sup>36</sup> it is unlikely that the ex-belligerents would have stayed committed to the “transition” if they had been pressurized to give up their entire military structures and economic and political spheres of influence overnight. It was precisely through the half-baked nature of army integration that factions could maintain the levels of economic, physical and political security required to remain somewhat committed to the process.

This draws attention to the questions of political space and the feasibility of policies in light of a complex political, economic and military constellation. Without arguing that the outcomes of the “transition” were a foregone conclusion, we believe they should be seen in light of “structured contingency,” with political actors moving within the broad parameters set by institutional continuities. These cannot be rapidly changed through social engineering, although interventions might generate a momentum that leads to gradual change. However, as we will demonstrate below, the space for such momentum withered away after the first elected post-settlement government took power in 2007.

### **The Open Door Policy: Never-Ending Military Integration (2007-up to Present)**

The government led by Prime Minister Gizenga faced an explosive and fragmented politico-military landscape in the east, which was flooded by several non-integrated forces, and

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<sup>34</sup> Following Raeymaekers, we suggest that the term “transition” is misleading in that it did not lead to a fundamental transformation of the political-economic order. See T. Raeymaekers, *The Power of Protection. Governance and Transborder Trade on the Congo-Ugandan Frontier*, Ghent University, 2007, PhD dissertation.

<sup>35</sup> J. Verweijen, “Half-brewed”.

<sup>36</sup> T. Carayannis, *Elections in the DRC: The Bemba Surprise*, Special Report 200, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, February 2008.

numerous foreign armed groups, like the Rwandan-led *Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR). In the absence of a strong and cohesive military, the government seemed to hope that with sufficient negotiations and promises, *brassage* dodgers could still be enticed to join. Hence, instead of formulating a clear end date for the process of military integration, all those refusing *brassage* were allowed to integrate whenever they wished. Serious efforts at military operations were only undertaken against the CNDP, who had by then emerged as the most powerful military threat. However, recurring military defeats meant that here too, the government ultimately resorted to the time-tested strategies of co-optation.

In sum, Kinshasa adopted a policy of negotiation and co-optation rather than pressure vis-à-vis armed groups, which can be succinctly described as a “many-carrots-with-few-sticks” approach.<sup>37</sup> It allowed dissident groups to turn (threats of) desertion or the rejection of army integration into a bargaining chip, as each time they perceived the rewards to be unsatisfactory, they would simply withdraw. Furthermore, those who deserted had incentives to produce violence, as this would inflate their significance and guarantee them a better negotiation position in the next round of (attempted) integration. Hence, rather than punishing dissidents and deserters for their disobedience and the violence they had caused, military integration rewarded them for it.<sup>38</sup> As a result, some (parts of) groups alternately deserted and reintegrated, each time trying to obtain more benefits, while also putting more conditions on their integration, such as remaining in or close to their former fiefs or not handing in their arms caches.

Predictably, this approach had a detrimental impact on internal dynamics in the army, as the continuous (dis)integration of dissident groups stimulated the reproduction of parallel power structures and fuelled power competition. Furthermore, it weakened the boundaries between the army and extra-military networks, as the frequently (dis)integrating groups often remained closely connected to their local civilian constituencies or non-integrated armed remnants. This had important consequences for conflict dynamics in the east. As will be outlined below, the most notorious case of this “revolving door” type of army (dis)integration is the CNDP. However, it should be emphasized that this is by no means the only group that followed such a trajectory.

### *The Difficult Integration Path of the CNDP*

The first attempt to integrate the CNDP into the FARDC was made at the onset of 2007, in the wake of a failed government offensive. Negotiations held in Kigali resulted in Nkunda agreeing to mix his forces with non-integrated FARDC brigades, a process that was labeled “*mixage*”. By integrating CNDP troops into the army, the government hoped to isolate Nkunda and gradually dilute his influence. However, the results of this exercise were the very opposite. The CNDP troops were not re-trained before being mixed, they were allowed to stay in their former strongholds, and were broken down only to the battalion level, enabling Nkunda to maintain effective command. Furthermore, Nkunda managed to

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<sup>37</sup> For a more detailed discussion see M. Eriksson Baaz and J. Verweijen, forthcoming 2013, “The volatility of a half-cooked bouillabaisse. Rebel-military integration and conflict dynamics in eastern DRC”, *African Affairs*, forthcoming July 2013.

<sup>38</sup> K. Vlassenroot and T. Raeymaekers, “Kivu’s intractable security conundrum”, *African Affairs* 108 no. 432, (May 2009): 475–484.

expand his sources of income, by controlling the money destined for soldiers' salaries and other official funds. This helped him to substantially increase the area under his control as well as the number of troops under his command.<sup>39</sup> The CNDP's sudden rise in power provoked a strong reaction among other communities, in particular the Hutu, Hunde and Nande, who joined hands to form an armed group named *Patriotes Résistants Congolais* (PARECO).<sup>40</sup> Thus, *mixage* aggravated rather than mitigated tensions in the Kivus.

Already at the start of May 2007 it had become clear that the *mixage* experiment was failing. Nkunda's brigades operated autonomously from the 8th Military Region (North Kivu), and had initiated military operations not planned and controlled by the hierarchy. While the CNDP asserted that the problems with *mixage* were located "on a logistical and organizational level," the DRC Government claimed that it was an "orchestrated failure," arguing that Nkunda never intended to truly integrate his troops into the army.<sup>41</sup> With hindsight, it is difficult to see how the modalities of *mixage*, boiling down to the integration of the government army into the rebel forces instead of vice versa, could have worked in the first place.

Soon after the mixed brigades disintegrated mid-2007, a new round of major fighting erupted. Battle was again followed by talks, which were this time complemented by a major peace conference held in Goma in January 2008. This conference intended to regroup all the Congolese armed groups in the Kivus and led to the signing of a cease-fire agreement. However, due to the generous distribution of pay-offs, it could not escape the "rents of violence"<sup>42</sup> syndrome that had characterized previous efforts to deal with armed groups. Smelling lucrative per diems and future positions in the army and administration, armed groups reinforced recruitment and multiplied. Thus, the outcomes of the Goma conference came to reflect Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers' observation that "every negotiated peace deal in the DRC has been followed by the proliferation and fragmentation of armed groups that each wants a portion of existing power agreements."<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, the main military player, the CNDP, was by no means satisfied with the Goma process, leading to an unraveling of the cease-fire and renewed fighting. In September 2008, the crisis escalated again, with the CNDP advancing towards Goma. By early October, they also started to raise their stakes rhetorically. Bolstered by his military and PR successes, Nkunda now talked not only of defending the rights of Congolese Tutsi, but also of liberating the whole of the Congo. Faced with the weak performance of the

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<sup>39</sup> J. Stearns, "Laurent Nkunda and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP)", in *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs. Annuaire 2007-2008*, ed. S. Marysse, F. Reyntjens and S. Vandegiste (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008), 245–267.

<sup>40</sup> J. Stearns, *PARECO. Land, Local Strongmen and the Roots of Militia Politics in North Kivu*, London: Rift Valley Institute, Usalama Project, 2013.

<sup>41</sup> S. Wolters, *Trouble in Eastern DRC: The Nkunda Factor*, ISS Situation Report. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 3 September 2007.

<sup>42</sup> D. Tull and A. Mehler, "The hidden costs of power-sharing: reproducing insurgent violence in Africa", *African Affairs* 104, no. 416 (2005): 375–398.

<sup>43</sup> Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers, "Intractable security conundrum", 476. For more examples of these dynamics around the Goma conference, see Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, "Volatility of half-cooked bouillabaisse".

FARDC, and failing to get external military support, Kabila was pushed into negotiations with Rwanda. Kagame, for his part, was under pressure after a UN Group of Experts' report revealed substantial support from the Rwandan government to the CNDP.<sup>44</sup> In the course of January 2009, during a series of meetings behind closed doors, it was decided that the CNDP would once more integrate into the FARDC. Furthermore, it was agreed that Nkunda would be removed from the CNDP's command and be replaced by his Chief of Staff, General Bosco Ntaganda, against whom an arrest warrant had been unsealed by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2006. This created considerable resentment among Nkunda loyalists, who were however put under pressure by Kigali to integrate into the FARDC.

On 28 January 2009, an integration ceremony took place at the Rumangabo military base, where CNDP soldiers symbolically changed their uniforms. A week earlier, joint Rwandan army-FARDC operations had been launched against the FDLR. These were followed by Kivus-wide FARDC operations under the name of "Kimia II," supported by the UN Mission in the DRC, MONUC. For that purpose, a new operational command structure was created, parallel to that of the Military Regions of North and South Kivu. Once again, a fast-track military integration process was initiated in which around 5500-6000 CNDP troops<sup>45</sup> and an equal number of troops from smaller armed groups were mixed with the FARDC into new brigades. The process did not foresee any vetting or training of the newly integrated troops, who were broken down to the company-level.<sup>46</sup> Finally, on 23 March, the CNDP's integration was formalized with the signing of a peace agreement with the DRC government. This paved the way for its transformation into a political party.

As the DRC government had embarked upon negotiations with the CNDP from a position of weakness, it had to make significant concessions, which allowed the CNDP to dictate the terms of its integration. As a consequence, the group came to dominate the command of the newly created Kimia II structures, while also obtaining the leadership of many of the new brigades some of which were composed of 50-75% ex-CNDP troops. Furthermore, the ex-CNDP were granted privileged access to lucrative areas of deployment, like environments rich in natural resources or near border-crossings. Additionally, they were allowed to keep their arms caches and maintain, at least initially, parallel systems of taxation, administration and police in their fief in central Masisi. They also kept a number of non-integrated units there that were not under the control of the provincial command structures. Aside from a small contingent deployed to Orientale, and a few commanders with strained relations with Kigali who went to the west, all ex-CNDP troops remained deployed in the Kivus. This enabled them to extend their influence far beyond their traditional stronghold and build up a position of military dominance.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Final report of the UN Group of Experts on the DRC*, (United Nations Security Council S/2008/773), 12 December 2008, 15–18.

<sup>45</sup> EUSEC figures mention a total of 17.587 integrated troops after the fast-track integration, yet there are many reasons to believe that around one third of that number were ghost soldiers. This became clear when the brigades were disbanded in order to form regiments in 2011.

<sup>46</sup> International Crisis Group, *Congo: No Stability in Kivu Despite a Rapprochement with Rwanda*, Africa Report No. 165, Nairobi and Brussels: International Crisis Group, 16 November 2010.

<sup>47</sup> *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*. (United Nations Security Council S/2009/603), 23 November 2009, 45–57; *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the*

The unbalanced composition of the newly created brigades, and their deficient geographical spreading, came to fuel inter-and intra-community tensions in the Kivus. In areas predominantly inhabited by “autochthonous” groups, political and military entrepreneurs reacted to the deployment of Rwandophone-dominated brigades with increasing mobilization, trying to reinforce their position and protect their communities.<sup>48</sup> Such entrepreneurs portrayed the ex-CNDP dominated FARDC as infiltrated and controlled by Rwanda. In order to galvanize support, they drew upon the “balkanization” discourse, arguing that the domination of the ex-CNDP formed part of a plot to secede the Kivu provinces from the DRC, thus paving the way for an annexation by Rwanda.<sup>49</sup> In some cases, Rwandophone FARDC troops came to be associated with local Rwandophone communities, like the Banyamulenge in South Kivu, exacerbating tensions between them and “autochthonous” groups. This illustrates the ways in which tensions surrounding the composition of the national army often reverberate throughout the Kivus, where different communities live intermingled.

### *From (ex) CNDP to M23*

The dominance of the CNDP came with high political costs for the Kabila government, already widely perceived as a Rwandan puppet, particularly so in the West of the DRC. While it did engage in efforts to diffuse CNDP power, these were largely unsuccessful. First, it tried to capitalize upon the divisions between the pro-Nkunda and pro-Bosco wings. Since these ultimately managed to find a working collaboration, this strategy failed. Furthermore, in the course of 2010, pressure for the redeployment of a part of the ex-CNDP out of the Kivus mounted, which was met with resistance. In 2011, a restructuration process was launched that transformed brigades into regiments, with the intention of breaking parallel command chains. However, this process was hijacked by the CNDP, with Bosco dominating the appointments in many of the new regiments. Hence, none of the efforts to defuse CNDP power had the intended effects. This was to a large extent the result of both disorganization within the FARDC and substantial complicity of numerous of its officers, who profited importantly from ex-CNDP-run business networks and rackets.<sup>50</sup>

The high political costs attached to these failures, and the continued insecurity in the Kivus, were reflected in the results of the contested elections in 2011, as support for Kabila dropped substantially compared to 2006. Furthermore, while international actors failed to strongly condemn the manipulation surrounding the elections, Kabila nevertheless came

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*Democratic Republic of Congo*, (United Nations Security Council S/2010/596) 29 November 2010, 42–46.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, Mai Mai leader “General” Janvier Buingo Karairi, located north of Masisi-centre, feared that the reinforced position of the ex-CNDP would lead to increasing land grabs to the detriment of his ethnic Hunde community. *Final report S/2009/206*, 78; *Final report S/2010/596*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the impacts of military integration on local conflict dynamics, see Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, ‘Volatility of a half-cooked bouillabaisse’.

<sup>50</sup> J. Stearns, *From CNDP to M23. The Evolution of an Armed Movement in Eastern Congo*, London: Rift Valley Institute, Usalama Project, 2012.

under increasing donor pressure.<sup>51</sup> At the start of 2012, in an effort to restore some of his lost domestic and international support, Kabila launched renewed efforts to crack down on ex-CNDP power. He announced new military reform initiatives, with plans for redeployments and changes in command, including the ousting of the ICC indicted Bosco Ntaganda. This intensified pressure, possibly in combination with other dynamics internal to the ex-CNDP and their Rwandan allies, triggered a new rebellion. The latter was named M23, after the 23 March 2009 agreement, which they claimed had been violated. In a few months, and with substantial Rwandan backing,<sup>52</sup> the M23 grew into a major military threat, capturing the city of Goma in November 2012.

### *The Prospects of Yet Another Wave of Military Integration*

In December 2012, the M23 agreed to leave Goma and to start official talks with the DRC government in Kampala. These dragged on until a split within the M23 in February 2013 between the pro-Bosco and the pro-Makenga wing changed the dynamics. After weeks of internecine fighting between the two factions, the Bosco-wing was defeated, and fled in large numbers to Rwanda. In a surprising development, Bosco surrendered himself to the American embassy in Kigali, which facilitated his transfer to the ICC. At the time of finalizing this paper, negotiations between the government and the remaining part of the M23 (i.e. the Makenga wing) are still ongoing. The government has presented a proposition which calls for a differentiated integration of the M23 into the FARDC. While the rank-and-file and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) would be allowed to integrate *en bloc*, officers would be judged on a case by case basis. For both groups, those suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity, or the subject of national or international arrest warrants, would be excluded from integration. However, the M23 has contested this proposition, judged as unfavorable. In the meanwhile, the upcoming deployment of a UN Intervention Brigade with a peace-enforcement mandate<sup>53</sup> has altered the imaginary military balance in favor of Kabila. It now seems unlikely that he will agree to any deal that could be interpreted as a concession to the M23, thereby further reducing his weak popularity, before the deployment of the Brigade.

Yet, while the integration of the M23 might not be imminent, the absorption of other rebel groups into the FARDC has continued. While the government announced an official end to this policy in May 2011, and even disbanded the *Structure Militaire d'Integration* (SMI), the body charged with managing integration, the M23 episode seems to have resulted in a reintensification of integration efforts. This is partly related to fears that uncontrolled groups might team up with the M23, which has tried to forge alliances with groups all over the DRC.<sup>54</sup> However, it also points to a possible strategy of “dilution” of M23 power, should they eventually be integrated into the FARDC. On 16 April 2013, a first convoy of 50 supposed Mai Mai from Fizi was sent to the Nyamunyunyi military base in South Kivu for their integration.<sup>55</sup> They joined 170 combatants of a Kalehe-based armed group called

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<sup>51</sup> Whereas Kabila obtained 77% of the votes in North Kivu and 95 % in South Kivu during the run-off of the 2006 elections, in 2011, it were respectively 39% and 45%, in spite of extensive rigging.

<sup>52</sup> *Final Report S/2012/843*, 618.

<sup>53</sup> United Nations Security Council Resolution, 2098, 28 March 2013.

<sup>54</sup> *Final Report S/2012/843*, 19-27.

<sup>55</sup> “Sud-Kivu: début du regroupement des Mai-Mai Yakutumba pour leur réintégration dans les FARDC” *Radio Okapi*, 17 April 2013. Accessed 23 April 2013,

Nyatura who had regrouped there earlier.<sup>56</sup> In the meanwhile, negotiations with a coalition of seven Mai Mai groups in Uvira are ongoing, while talks with groups in Masisi and the rebels headed by Cobra Matata in Ituri continue as well. While the outcomes of these talks are far from clear, it appears that the stage is set for more integration.

As demonstrated above, military integration has up to now proven to lead into a vicious cycle of military integration and disintegration. The most effective way to stop this cycle— albeit perhaps not entirely feasible at this point (as we will return to below)— would be to abandon integration altogether. This evokes the question whether there are possible alternatives to military integration. Furthermore, in case integration proves inevitable, what if anything, can be done to manage this process without reproducing the detrimental effects of earlier integration efforts? Finally, what position should donors take in these unfolding processes? In the following, we will attend to these questions by highlighting the most important issues and dilemmas of military integration, while providing some clues for donor engagement. We will start with providing some very brief ideas on possible alternatives to military integration, a question which clearly merits further reflection than what can be provided in this paper, given its limited scope.

### III. MILITARY INTEGRATION: ISSUES, DILEMMAS, POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

#### Alternatives to Military Integration

While putting an end to military integration is desirable, particularly so in the long run, it is important to realize that this is not likely to be a silver bullet to bringing peace, especially in the short term. In the absence of a cohesive, neutrally perceived army with strong fighting capabilities, armed groups might have enough incentives to continue their activities, even without the prospects of army integration. As long as there is no real serious military pressure, the economy and politics remain militarized, arms are cheap and omnipresent, fighters can be recruited without much difficulty and communities can be easily mobilized on identity-based rhetoric, armed group activity is likely to continue. In other words, putting an end to military integration is not a solution to violent conflict in itself, and will not resolve its other drivers. In the following, we provide a number of brief reflections on alternatives to military integration, addressing only the issue of what should be done with armed groups. This implies that we leave aside the much wider question of peace-building in general, which has been discussed in detail elsewhere.<sup>57</sup>

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<http://radiokapi.net/actualite/2013/04/17/sud-kivu-debut-du-regroupement-des-mai-mai-yakutumba-pour-leur-reintegration-dans-les-fardc/>.

<sup>56</sup> “Les Mai Mai Nyatura et Raiya Mutomboki acceptent d’intégrer les FARDC”, *Radio Maendeleo*, 27 March 2013. Accessed 23 April 2013, <http://www.radiomaendeleo.net/les-mai-mai-nyatura-et-raiya-mutomboki-acceptent-dintegrer-les-fardc/>.

<sup>57</sup> For a recent discussion and recommendations on wider peacebuilding processes in eastern DRC see e.g. A. Bouvy, *Ending the Deadlock. Towards a New Vision of Peace in Eastern DRC*, London: International Alert, September 2012.

### *Differently Designed DDR?*

It is crucial to think harder about what forms sustainable demobilization— providing a viable alternative for groups wishing to lay down arms— could take. Up to now, the experiences with Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs in the DRC have been quite disappointing. One reason is that these programs have tended to reproduce at a small scale the same skewed incentive structures as military integration. As a participant in a study on popular attitudes towards DDR in eastern DRC commented “They first went out to loot and steal, and now they receive support through DDR. They gain twice while the communities suffer.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it has been concluded that DDR programs have had a limited impact on whether combatants really demobilize or not, since this decision remains largely in the hands of armed group leadership, who often dispose of extensive mechanisms of surveillance and punishment for deserters.<sup>59</sup> But even for combatants who have been allowed to demobilize, the effects have been limited. This is to a large extent related to the design of DDR programs, particularly their orientation towards short-term material benefits, to the detriment of attention to social and psychological processes. As highlighted by an evaluation of DDR programs in the DRC, the provided financial benefits and training usually do not provide former combatants with the possibility to develop sustainable livelihoods-schemes.<sup>60</sup> Newly acquired skills cannot be applied in the absence of employment in that sector. Lump-sums sometimes obtained after selling reintegration kits usually rapidly evaporate due to the repayment of debts and contributions to (extended) family matters, such as funerals, marriages and medical costs. Hence, while the provision of benefits may occasionally function as a trigger for the initial decision to demobilize, the longer-term positive effects are meager.<sup>61</sup>

For this reason, it seems that *longer-term programs* would be more likely to be successful. These could, for instance, run on a two-year basis, and include sensitization, professional training, the regrouping of ex-combatants in associations, and the provision of work, such as in the rehabilitation of roads, schools, and medical centers. Rather than providing immediate sums of cash, such programs could, in addition to some kind of monthly salary for subsistence, involve a component in which the participant develops a business plan and receives a final amount disbursed at the end. Whereas this is no guarantee for success, and has the obvious risk of creating incentives to join armed groups in order to benefit from DDR programs, such longer-term programs could sever the ties to life in the bush and the use of violence.

### *Political and Administrative Integration?*

For groups with a political wing, transformation into a political party as well as integration of key leaders into administrations could be an option. However, rebel-to-party transformations after the “transition” have rarely been successful. Most armed groups in the east are too small and localized to become recognized as political parties, something

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<sup>58</sup> H. Rouw and R. Willems, *Connecting Community Security and DDR: Experiences from Eastern DRC*, no. 30, Peace, Security and Development Network, 2010. 20.

<sup>59</sup> J. Richards, *Demobilization in the DRC. Armed Groups and the Role of Organizational Control*, Armed Actors Issue Brief No.1, Geneva: Small Arms Survey, April 2013.

<sup>60</sup> G. Lamb and others, *Rumours of Peace*.

<sup>61</sup> Rouw and Willems, *Connecting Community Security*.

which requires access to a support base in several provinces. Where they do manage to become accredited as political parties, they might still represent a constituency that is too small to get candidates elected, specifically where demographics work against them.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, *political integration should be instead of and not in addition to military integration*. When the former armed wing of integrated groups dominates the local security institutions, the stage is set for coercion in order to influence voter behavior. The case of ex-CNDP interference in the 2011 elections in Masisi is a telling example.<sup>63</sup>

Another possibility for the inclusion of former armed groups into decision-making structures could be to integrate their members into the national, provincial or local administrative apparatus. Again, if this would not occur in a balanced manner, it might have serious drawbacks, such as creating power competition, fostering parallel influence spheres, and promoting the partiality of the politico-administrative institutions. Yet, political and administrative integration have potential advantages. For instance, it can allow groups to maintain their grievances on the political agenda and address them through high-level channels. Moreover, integrated cadres might exercise pressure on their wider networks, specifically former armed wing members and local communities, to respect the signed agreements. In this respect, it should be remembered that in many cases, powerful political leaders might have a greater influence on the life-cycle of armed groups than the commanders in the field. Customary chiefs and other local community leaders often have significant influence too, as they can convince community members not to be recruited into armed groups. Therefore, any strategy to promote successful demobilization as an alternative to military integration, must also pay attention to community-level dynamics.

#### *Provincial or Local Level Peace Initiatives to Deal with Armed Groups?*

While the 2008 Goma conference had serious drawbacks, the underlying ideas– to create a platform to voice and address grievances, promote discussions between groups in conflict, and search for common solutions– were constructive. Hence, it could be fruitful to again initiate such a process, perhaps on a provincial or territorial basis this time (including North Katanga, South and North Kivu, and parts of Province Orientale) while avoiding the same mistakes. This would imply that only civilian delegations are invited, composed of local authorities and representatives of civil society organizations and local communities. Moreover, no promises of positions or other pay-offs should be issued.

Such an initiative should not only address conflicts within and between communities, but also focus on how to deal with the armed groups within their areas. In particular, they should reflect upon and develop proposals for how these groups can be convinced to lay down arms. This would imply, for instance, thinking about whether and how militias could be integrated politically, what security measures should be taken after armed groups disappear, and how their fighters can be demobilized, including through the development of DDR plans. Finally, such a process could address the issue of how to handle war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as the perpetrators of such crimes, by

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<sup>62</sup> This is for example the case with the ex-*Forces Républicaines Fédéralistes* (FRF), accredited as a political party in 2011, after their armed wing integrated into the FARDC.

<sup>63</sup> *Final report S/2011/738*, 85–86; M. Gouby, “DRC army’s loyalties uncertain around election”, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 27 January 2012, Accessed 25 February 2013, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/drc-armys-loyalties-uncertain-around-election>.

reflecting for instance, upon the desirability and modalities of documenting and remembering crimes and bringing justice to victims. Such localized initiatives would allow for a differentiated approach towards armed groups, each of which has its own dynamics, making one-size-fits-all solutions unlikely.

Yet, however desirable an end to army integration would be, it seems not to be imminent. Although the upcoming deployment of the Intervention Brigade raises the prospects for increased pressure on armed groups, the expectations surrounding this brigade appear inflated. Given the political costs of casualties for political leaders in the troop contribution countries, particularly South Africa, it remains to be seen how proactive the new Intervention Brigade will be. Moreover, the brigade has a serious disadvantage in terms of familiarity with the difficult terrain in which armed groups operate. Importantly, more aggressive military operations risk having counterproductive effects, since they can enkindle inter-and intra-community conflicts. In light of these developments, it is possible that military integration will continue for some time in the future. Therefore, attention must be directed to how to better design and manage such processes, in order to minimize harmful effects.

In the following sections, we will highlight the key issues that should be addressed in any future military integration processes. These relate to: 1) minimizing incentive structures that reward violence due to a skewed cost/benefit balance; 2) lessening the enkindling effects on intra-and intercommunity conflicts in the east; and 3) avoiding further destabilizing and disabling effects on the FARDC.

### **Minimizing Incentive Structures Rewarding Violence**

As outlined above, a fundamental problem with military integration, as it has been implemented up to now, are the skewed incentive structures that it has generated, with army desertion and insurgent violence being rewarded, instead of punished. At the core of this problem are the low costs of integration (e.g. no need to handover arms caches, lack of military pressure on non-integrated remnants and drop-outs, permission to remain deployed in former zones of influence) vs. the high rewards (financial benefits, impunity for past crimes, high ranks, good positions and lucrative deployment locations). Moreover, the “demonstration effects”<sup>64</sup> of military integration play an important role too, as each group who integrates sets an example for others, showing that violence and disobedience can be translated into benefits.

However, given the FARDC’s limited military capacities and the political reality of a weak center, it is clear that few groups would be willing to integrate without significant pay-offs. Hence, a type of military integration that consists only of sticks and no carrots is not likely to be very effective. The question is then how much one can raise the costs and lower the benefits without deterring factions from integrating altogether, specifically when they are in a position of military strength? Let us start with the question of raising the (psychological) costs of integration through fostering a basic sense of accountability.

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<sup>64</sup> Tull and Mehler, “Peace and powersharing”.

### *Fostering a Basic Sense of Accountability*

The problems with impunity in military integration processes are well-known and have been the object of numerous campaigns by human rights organizations.<sup>65</sup> Certainly, integration with systematic persecutions and vetting systems in place is the preferred route. However, previous integration processes have included neither prosecution nor vetting, demonstrating a strong resistance against these measures. In case this resistance cannot be trounced alternative ways of addressing accountability— at least temporarily— should be considered. One such possible mechanism could be to *include a truth-telling dimension into integration procedures*, at least for those suspected of less grave offenses. Such a mechanism can only be applied after prior research and consultations among victims, communities and other stakeholders, who should be implicated in its design. Even when not leading to persecutions, this would imply at least an official recognition from the side of the DRC government that crimes have been committed, and therefore would constitute a modest improvement in comparison to the long-standing policy of impunity. However, truth-telling is in itself not likely to satisfy victims or contribute to reconciliation, as experiences from elsewhere have demonstrated.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, additional measures for victims and communities are needed.

Despite the limited benefits for victims, we believe that including a truth-telling dimension into integration procedures would be useful in that it *could foster some sense of accountability and signal “new beginnings” among those subjected to it* (that is, the suspected perpetrators). Being confronted with allegations of past abuses, ideally in a process also involving army chaplains, might be considered as a form of *rite de passage*, heralding the transition to the government army. In combination with training and education, this could possibly contribute to a reinforced commitment to professional values, and strengthen combatants’ identification with their new institution. Until now, army integration has been accompanied only by minimal ceremonies or other attention to psychological processes. This has lowered the threshold for military to desert, as integrated soldiers feel only weakly connected to the FARDC.

Clearly, truth telling instead of persecutions should be avoided in relation to the worst offenders, particularly those in senior positions. If for whatever reason such figures would be exempted from judicial action *it is crucial that they are at least removed from the day-to-day command of the army*, especially within and around their former spheres of influence.

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<sup>65</sup> For instance, Human Rights Watch is engaged in continuous advocacy efforts to apprehend senior commanders of the M23 and FARDC. See “DR Congo: war crimes by M23, Congolese army. Response to crisis in east should emphasize justice.” *Human Rights Watch*, 5 February 2013, Accessed 15 March 2013, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/02/05/dr-congo-war-crimes-m23-congolese-army>.

<sup>66</sup> E.g. on Sierra Leone see, R. Shaw, *Rethinking Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. Lessons from Sierra Leone*. Special report 130, Washington DC: United States Institute on Peace, February 2005; G. Millar, "Local evaluations of justice through truth telling in Sierra Leone: Postwar needs and transitional justice", *Human Rights Review* 12 no. 4, (2011): 515–535.

### *Promoting Conflict-Sensitive Pay-Offs*

As concluded above, in the absence of effective military pressure or more comprehensive political processes, pay-offs have been the main way for convincing groups to stop insurgent activity. Pay-offs have usually been material and self-financing, taking the form of deployment in lucrative zones and tolerance for corruption, such as allowing the manipulation of biometric identification in order to inflate the payroll. A major set-back of this (unofficial) policy has been the pushing out of established economic networks and the fuelling of power competition, leading to instability both within the army and within the zones that are the object of economic competition. Although the involvement of the military in revenue-generation activities is clearly undesirable, we believe that in the current circumstances, *a zero-tolerance policy is not feasible*. This is particularly true as long as the general workings of the state apparatus do not change and official salaries do not reach levels that allow for sustaining a family.

Therefore, it is urgent that the DRC government develops strategies to *ensure pay-offs to integrated groups that do not fuel further destabilization*. This could imply, for example, focusing more on non-material pay offs, like educational opportunities abroad. Importantly, there is a need to identify and regulate less violent revenue-generation opportunities that do not undermine local communities' livelihoods, or bolster inter and intra-community conflicts. Furthermore, it is important to prevent pay-offs from becoming entrenched, giving the integrated groups so much financial autonomy that they would be able to create a parallel network within the FARDC.<sup>67</sup>

### *Designing More Detailed Integration Agreements with Credible Control and Sanctions Mechanisms*

The ease, with which integrated groups can drop out or integrate only partially into the army, is a serious impediment to successful military integration. In order to mitigate this, *more transparent and detailed integration agreements* need to be developed. Agreements must have clear time-lines and specify the rights and duties of the signatories in detail. The majority of integration deals have been negotiated in an opaque manner with minimal and vague clauses, and no timelines. On the one hand, this has facilitated integration, as it has made it possible for integrating groups to dodge commitments judged detrimental to their interests. On the other, it has made the unraveling of deals fairly easy and has hampered enforcement (since there has not been much to enforce).

Furthermore, within integration deals, *provisions of control and enforcement need to be sharpened*. It is recommended that strict conditions be imposed in terms of handing over arms and ensuring that all fighters are either integrated or properly demobilized. This would necessitate *control and verification* in the zones formerly controlled by integrating armed groups, in order to uncover arms caches and remaining combatants. It should be

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<sup>67</sup> However, where integrated networks manage to obtain hegemony in a certain area, usually accompanied by far-reaching economic control, a certain (but often temporary) stability might result. To some, such stability is preferable to constant violent clashes, even when leading to exploitative economic domination. For an example in relation to the 85<sup>th</sup> brigade in Walikale, see N. Garrett, S. Sergiou and K. Vlassenroot, "Negotiated peace for extortion: The case of Walikale Territory in Eastern DR Congo", *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3, no.1 (2009): 1–21.

contemplated in how far outsiders, like MILOBS (UN Military Observers) can play a role in such verification mechanisms.

### **Reducing Enkindling Effects on Intra-and Intercommunity Conflicts in the East**

One of the central propositions of this report is that military integration in eastern DRC is not merely a military issue, but goes to the heart of conflict dynamics. This has been illustrated by the effects of CNDP integration, which provoked the mobilization of other armed groups and fuelled inter-community tensions. Given that eastern DRC is a kaleidoscope of numerous armed groups that are closely linked to communities with tense relations, military integration tends to trigger chains of reactions that sometimes go in unanticipated directions. This implies that any military integration exercise must take the potential effects on conflict dynamics into consideration.

#### *Addressing Political and Other Grievances in addition to Military Demands*

Even though not all armed groups have a political wing, most of them do voice grievances, often linked to certain communities or the areas where they are active. In some cases, military integration goes along with political negotiations, yet most of the time this amounts to little and is not anchored in agreements, or the clauses of such agreements are never implemented. Clearly, the mere integration of military leaders and their troops will do little to address the grievances of the wider communities they are connected to, and which they sometimes rhetorically pretend to represent. Therefore, it is extremely important to *address political and other grievances* each time an armed group is integrated and to try to ensure that there is some integration-dividend for grassroots populations. This has the added value of making it more difficult for military entrepreneurs to mobilize these populations in case they are dissatisfied with the results of integration processes.<sup>68</sup>

#### *The Sequencing, Balancing & Handling of the Integration of Armed Groups*

Given the multiplicity of armed groups in the east, there is a need to reflect upon whether they should be integrated all at the same time or sequentially. On the one hand, integrating a single group is bound to provoke reactions of enmity, fear or emulation, and reinforce the imagery of the FARDC as partial. On the other hand, integrating multiple groups simultaneously is both technically difficult to manage and might create the additional problem of fuelling tensions within the army. This was demonstrated by the 2009 integration episode, when all groups demanded the preferential treatment given to the CNDP. Although there do not appear to be clear-cut solutions, given the heterogeneity of armed groups, we do recommend that *any integration effort must reflect upon its impact on other armed groups*.

Another crucial issue of concern is the deployment and concentration of troops. Ever since the Sun City talks, the issue of autonomous local spheres of influence has been on the table, as well as the feasibility of integrating officers into the army who would rather serve in a provincial rather than the national army. It is important to emphasize that in our analysis, this problem plays more in relation to officers than the rank-and-file, many of

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<sup>68</sup> Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen “Volatility of a half-cooked bouillabaisse”.

whom are willing to serve anywhere in the country.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, *a distinction should be made between the first phase of integration and later phases*, especially since it is understandable that *initially, trust needs to be fostered* (see next section for further elaboration). However, *in the longer term, the issue of geographical distribution is inevitable*. The idea of localized or territorial security mechanism, rather than national security institutions, is an untenable solution. Given that all communities live intermingled in the Kivus, such a solution is bound to fuel more conflicts. The history of the armed forces in Congo has amply demonstrated that a policy of the systematic geographical spreading and mixing of troops from different backgrounds is not only possible, but may have the additional effect of strengthening a sense of national, rather than regional or ethnic identity, in the armed forces.

However, any policy aiming at the balanced geographical spreading of troops must pay due attention to provisions to *maintain security in areas evacuated by armed groups*. The distrust between communities, but also the political and economic competition between networks whose strength is based on their capacity to mobilize force, means that groups are reluctant to redeploy their troops out of their sphere of influence. Logically, groups linked to communities facing (perceived) direct threats from other Congolese or foreign armed groups will only be motivated to leave their fiefs if these threats are neutralized, or if a credible and neutral force will be deployed in their absence.

### **Avoiding Further Destabilizing and Disabling Effects on the FARDC**

The followed path of FARDC military integration, in particular the 2009 process, has had serious detrimental effects on what in military-sociological language is termed horizontal cohesion (bonding between troops of similar ranks within the primary combat unit) and vertical cohesion (bonding between troops and their superiors). Both these forms of cohesion are identified as important for combat motivation, performance and norm-enforcement in armed forces.<sup>70</sup> The main cohesion-undermining aspects of military integration processes in the DRC are the lack of retraining and redeployment of troops, the unbalanced composition of units, and the distribution of ranks and positions with disregard for merit. These factors are, in turn, both a cause and a consequence of the failure to break down the integrated group as a separate power network, leading to parallel command chains and systematic favoritism. This does not only undermine centralized command and control, but also provokes heavy resentment among troops.

Within the FARDC, the power competition generated by the CNDP integration in 2009 was interpreted primarily through an identity-based lens, leading to the reproduction of a very pronounced “autochthon”/Rwandophone division.<sup>71</sup> Within the FARDC in the Kivus, “autochthones,” especially ex-Mai Mai and soldiers from the west, perceive real discrimination, specifically in the command structures.<sup>72</sup> They feel systematically

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<sup>69</sup> Verweijen, *Ambiguity of Militarization*.

<sup>70</sup> G. Siebold, "The essence of military group cohesion", *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 2 (2007): 286–295.

<sup>71</sup> For more details see Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, “Volatility of a half-cooked bouillabaisse”.

<sup>72</sup> Ex-CNDP officers were appointed to 36% of the command positions in North Kivu, with government officers receiving 48%. However, at least 60% of the government appointees were from the ex-RCD, which was dominated by Tutsi and Hutu. See *Final report, S/2011/738*, 82.

disadvantaged in the distribution of positions and functions, and subjected to unjust and unfair treatment in relation to informal and formal punitive actions and disciplining. As we have seen, this often becomes a rationale to desert. However, Rwandophone troops in the FARDC also fear discrimination, and are even haunted by the specter of prosecution. These fears go back a long time in history. Many Rwandophone communities have bad memories of biased FAZ behavior in the 1990s, but also vividly remember the massacres of Tutsi troops by their colleagues in the national army in August 1998, at the outbreak of the RCD rebellion.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, it should be considered that in the wake of the M23 rebellion, the government has invested substantially in propaganda to promote national unity. These messages have urged the population to “show solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the east” and appealed to young, literate, single citizens to join the FARDC through nationwide recruitment campaigns. While this new recruitment has produced rather disappointing results, and while the campaign does not seem to be very successful in boosting Kabila’s corroded popularity, it has certainly further nurtured anti-Rwandophone sentiments, also in the western parts of the country. This should be taken into consideration if M23 will be reintegrated.

Clearly, the “autochthon”/Rwandophone tensions resulting from the 2009 integration further undermined both horizontal and vertical cohesion and were manifested in subordination. As can be expected, troops are less willing to obey orders from superiors they judge to defend only the parochial interests of their own ethnic group. However, ethnic background is not the only factor that has undermined vertical cohesion: both the rapid changes in leadership prompted by integration and the perceived lack of qualifications of the newly appointed commanders have had serious detrimental effects. Logically, commanders who are little respected due to their limited training struggle to maintain control over and loyalty from their (often better educated) subordinates.<sup>74</sup>

Aside from corroding cohesion, integration has also sharply undermined morale. The continuous rewards to army deserters and insurgent groups have had profoundly demoralizing effects. Understandably, the propensities to excel and risk one’s life in combat sharply diminish when there is a great chance that the ones you fight will be welcomed back into the army, perhaps in an even more privileged position than before, and perhaps even becoming your new superiors.<sup>75</sup> Another factor in undermining morale, which has also had implications for cohesion, is the distrust generated by suspicions of divided loyalties, especially where integrated groups have maintained close relations with remnants or allies outside of the military. One way in which this has been manifested is repeated leaks of military intelligence, making unexpected operations difficult. Obviously, to know that one is

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<sup>73</sup> For example, numerous killings took place in 1998 at the *École de Formation des Officiers* (EFO) in Kananga and the Kamina base in Katanga. See *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*, (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, August 2010), 161, 163.

<sup>74</sup> For examples of how this discontent is articulated see M. Eriksson Baaz and M. Stern, 2008, “Making sense of violence”

<sup>75</sup> M. Eriksson Baaz and J. Verweijen, “The M23 rebellion and the dead-end street of military integration in eastern DRC”, *Congo Siasa*, 1 August 2012, Accessed 26 February 2013, <http://congosiasa.blogspot.nl/2012/08/guest-blog-m23-rebellion-and-dead-end.html>.

fighting an enemy already warned in advance is very demoralizing for troops. However, subversion has not been restricted to leaks of information, but is also believed to include other forms of sabotage, like counter-productive orders from suspected figures in the hierarchy. According to several FARDC sources, these dynamics were evident in the military operations against the M23.<sup>76</sup>

The various cohesion and moral undermining factors described above clearly need to be addressed in future integration efforts. Whereas several of the previous recommendations already partly cover these issues, we suggest the following additional measures:

Firstly, *newly integrated troops should go through at least three months of training* not separately, but together with the new units where they will be placed. This training should focus on collective drills and exercises, in particular involving lower-level commanders (section, platoon, company). Such exercises are crucial in fostering task cohesion, the development of shared systems of communication, and the socialization of troops into standard leadership procedures, which are all important elements for effective military performance and maintaining discipline.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, it must be recognized that the effects of isolated training are quite limited, pointing to the need for *continuous training and refresher courses*.

Secondly, there must be a *balance in the composition of new units*. Ideally, the amount of newly integrated troops per unit at every level (from section to brigade/regiment) should not exceed 25%. There should also be a *balancing of command*, especially in the crucial initial trust-fostering stages. Therefore, and following the system which was generally applied in previous integration processes, every commander at every level should be assisted by two deputies from different backgrounds.

Thirdly, integration processes must reflect some basic *respect for meritocracy*. Even though it is clear that groups who integrate need a certain amount of pay-offs, and that favoritism will always play some role in the Congolese army, the violation of meritocratic principles in the FARDC has been just too blatant. For this reason, it is urgent to restore a modicum of (a sense of) meritocracy, for instance by initiating tests at the end of the proposed three month training period. Moreover, it would be beneficial if the General Staff in Kinshasa takes up a more direct and proactive role in making appointments in the east.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, there is an urgent need to *address identity-based tensions within and outside the FARDC*. Given their deleterious effects on internal cohesion in the military as well as local conflict dynamics more generally, any deployment scheme will need to pay attention to

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<sup>76</sup> Interviews with FARDC staff in Bukavu, January 2013. See also Mumena, "Colère et incompréhension".

<sup>77</sup> King, "Word of command".

<sup>78</sup> This was to a certain extent the case with the regimentation process, where representatives from Kinshasa were present at regiment formation. However, they ultimately only had some impact in regiments not strongly under ex-CNDP influence. Furthermore, in comparison to appointments made in the Integrated Brigades, positions were distributed before, not after the training period of the regiments.

discrimination and prejudices, *attending to all sides*. Unfortunately, until now the initiatives to address this issue within the FARDC have been inadequate. Sensitization sessions, often sponsored by donors, focus commonly on general human rights issues or sexual violence-leaving aside the thorny topic of identity-based tensions, or only touching upon it superficially or in formal equality discourses. It seems therefore pertinent to mainstream attention to identity-based tensions in curricula, sensitization sessions, and moral talks by army chaplains, preferably in a creative manner, for example through participatory theatre and radio emissions

As the previous sections display, there are many possibilities to either replace or improve military integration. This raises the question what role donors could play in order to promote these solutions. This question cannot be answered without addressing the wider debate surrounding donor engagement and the (im)possibilities of army reform in the DRC. Furthermore, it is necessary to evaluate what position donors have taken in the military integration saga up to now. In the following, we will first reflect upon these issues, in order to later come back to the role of donor engagement in military integration.

#### IV. POLITICAL WILL, POLITICAL SPACE AND THE DONOR CONUNDRUM

In this final section, we will situate the issue of donor responses to the cycle of army integration and disintegration in the wider context of the mechanisms underlying donor engagement in army reform. Hence, we do not intend to assess defense reform initiatives as such, but rather focus on the discourses and narratives surrounding external interventions in this domain, both from the perspective of donors and the Congolese army.

One reason why we do not intend to assess defense reform initiatives is that the multitude of programs and the lack of data on their impact simply preclude possibilities to make serious, empirically grounded, judgments. Interventions in the sphere of defense reform have been carried out by a range of actors, such as the UN, the EU (through EUSEC),<sup>79</sup> the US, China, South Africa, Belgium, Angola and France. This multitude of actors and the lack of coordination between them are commonly described as an important reason for “failure.”<sup>80</sup> Yet, in the absence of data, we do not think that the narrative of “total failure” can be substantiated. This is particularly true given that assessments tend to be grounded in rather vaguely defined expectations, often measured against an overall judgment of FARDC performance, with little connection to actual interventions. Furthermore, assessments seldom take the balance between invested resources and outcomes into consideration. Between 2006 and 2010, just over 1% (\$84.79 million) of total aid (excluding debt relief and excluding bilateral military assistance) was spent directly on the security sector.<sup>81</sup> Additionally, while most bilateral interventions take the form of

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<sup>79</sup> EUSEC is a small in-country Security Sector Reform advisory and assistance mission from the European Union that has been deployed to the DRC since 2005.

<sup>80</sup> E.g. H. Hoebeke, H. Boshoff and K. Vlassenroot, *Assessing Security Sector Reform and its impact on the Kivu Provinces*, Situation report, Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 26 November 2008; ASADHO et al, *The Democratic Republic of Congo: Taking a Stand on Security Sector Reform*, 2012; Melmot, *Candide au Congo*.

<sup>81</sup> ASADHO et al. *Taking a Stand on SSR*, 3.

training, only approximately six percent of FARDC troops have received specialized training by or under the supervision of foreign military personnel since 2007.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to being based on limited, selective and normative assumptions, narratives of total failure are also problematic in that they tend to ignore the perspectives of the “other side” in “defense collaboration.” While FARDC staff are highly aware of the deep-seated problems in their own army, they tend to hold different expectations concerning the scope and pace of reforms. From their perspective, the slow pace of defense reform often appears somehow logical in light of the meager resources allocated, but particularly given that reform is taking place in the midst of continuing conflict and the continual integration of combatants from armed groups.<sup>83</sup>

For these reasons, we refrain from joining the choir of “generalized failure” concerning defense reform. Nevertheless, similarly to mainstream assessments of army reform efforts, we do contend that the ways in which external actors have engaged with the issue in the DRC are problematic. This is not the least reflected in donor responses to army integration, a theme which we will attend to below.

### **International Responses to Army Integration**

Overall, international actors have exercised little influence on the contents of the various integration deals that were made since the transition. Most of these, like those surrounding the 2007 and 2009 CNDP integration, were negotiated in an opaque manner, with the modalities determined by a few key players, like General John Numbi, the former commander of the Congolese Air Force. Despite having a limited impact on shaping the contents of integration, international actors have generally welcomed the announcement of integration deals, thereby providing an impression of basic approval. Even the news of the planned military operations in the wake of the 2009 CNDP integration was positively received, and even garnered the support of the MONUC. However, anyone with a basic understanding of military realities in eastern DRC could have seen that the operations were bound to have dire humanitarian consequences, specifically given the lack of cohesion of the newly integrated troops. Yet, it was only after the disastrous effects of the Kimia II operations became fully visible<sup>84</sup> that doubts were openly expressed about the way they were managed and about whether the ends justified the means.

This reflects a wider trend of limited efforts to proactively and critically monitor integration processes in order to exercise pressure to adjust their modalities. Aside from limited technical and logistical support by MONUC/MONUSCO<sup>85</sup>, as well as assistance with biometrical identification by EUSEC, there has been little direct donor involvement in the implementation of integration processes. Certainly, the Congolese side, specifically key

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<sup>82</sup> S. Van Damme and J. Verweijen, unpublished, *In Search of an Army. How the FARDC Can Improve Civilians' Safety*, Oxfam International policy brief, unpublished 2012, 10.

<sup>83</sup> M. Eriksson Baaz and M. Stern, forthcoming, “Willing reform? An analysis of defence reform initiatives in the DRC”, in *Globalization and Development: Rethinking Interventions and Governance* ed. A. Bigsten, (Routledge, forthcoming 2013).

<sup>84</sup> Human Rights Watch, *You Will Be Punished”. Attacks on Civilians in Eastern Congo*, New York, NY: Human Rights Watch, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> The name of the UN Mission in the DRC was changed in 2010 from MONUC to MONUSCO.

figures and military advisors close to the President, has not been very receptive to such involvement, partly as they perceive this to be meddling in internal affairs. Moreover, in the case of the 2009 integration, they had planned immediate military operations, rather than training. However, apart from limited political space, it appears that donors have made few efforts to influence military integration processes in the first place. We believe that donors, specifically those running bilateral military assistance programs, could have been more proactive in bringing integration issues to the table, for instance through efforts to impose a quota of newly integrated troops for the units they were training, or to build in more conditionalities into military assistance. It was only after the M23 rebellion was well on its way that public denouncements of military integration policies by diplomats started to proliferate,<sup>86</sup> and media attention increased.<sup>87</sup>

While it would be foolish to believe that a deeply political process like military integration can be stirred by merely changing the technical modalities, we do believe that concerted and well-timed pressure, as well as technical assistance, could have made some difference. Different inputs could have created a momentum ultimately leading to other—albeit perhaps not radically different—outcomes. But these opportunities were not seized upon. Rather, external actors seemed to resort to a “let’s wait-and-see” attitude. There were several reasons for this meager attention to military integration. In the post 2009 period, the failure to put pressure on the Congolese government was linked to a fear to spoil the fragile rapprochement between Kinshasa and Kigali. Moreover, it was believed that pressure would be counterproductive, leading Kinshasa to marginalize donors even more in the realm of defense reform.

However, the ostrich policy towards military integration must also be understood as a manifestation of the complex motivations to engage in Security Sector Reform (SSR) in the DRC. The impetus for such engagement is not only located in a wish to reform the Congolese defense forces; various political, diplomatic, strategic and economic interests also play a role. One manifestation of this is that the arena of SSR in the DRC has been characterized by quite fierce competition between the various actors involved—vying for visibility and over who is “to take the lead” in the process. Following this—and the demands to deliver according to already established plans and budget lines—external actors, like in

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<sup>86</sup> The first diplomat to specifically and openly address the problem of military integration was Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders, who brought it up during a visit to Kinshasa on 20 August 2012; “Guerre dans l’Est: la Belgique appelle la RDC à réformer son armée”, *Radio Okapi*, 21 August 2012, Accessed 26 February 2013, <http://radiookapi.net/actualite/2012/08/21/guerre-dans-la-belgique-appelle-la-rdc-reformer-son-armee/>.

<sup>87</sup> E.g. M. Gouby, “Congo-Kinshasa: Will Kinshasa go easy on M23 rebels?”, *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, 15 November 2012, Accessed 26 February 2013, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/will-kinshasa-go-easy-m23-rebels>; We experienced this rising interest directly through a *hausse* in requests from journalists and diplomats after our initial publication of some blog posts in August 2012, see footnote 75 and M.Eriksson Baaz and J. Verweijen, “Harvesting the rotten fruits of repeated rebel military integration: some reflections on the new rebellion in eastern DRC”, *Mats Utas’ blog*, 3 August 2012, Accessed 26 February 2013, <http://matsutas.wordpress.com/2012/08/03/harvesting-the-rotten-fruits-of-repeated-rebel-military-integration-some-reflections-on-the-new-rebellion-in-eastern-drc-guest-post-by-maria-eriksson-baaz-and-judith-verweijen/>.

other domains of intervention, have a tendency to focus on short-term and quantifiable indicators of success. In the case of military integration, numbers of combatants integrated were often presented as “successes” rather than potential problems. Meanwhile, setbacks with integration, as well as the lack of visible progress with army reform more in general, have been blamed on the DRC governments’ “lack of political will,” an argument that we will turn to next.

## Political Will and Political Space

One of the (many) inconsistencies in donor engagement in defense reform is that while donors fail to take “the political” into account when designing their interventions, they readily point to “the political” in explaining the latter’s disappointing results,<sup>88</sup> specifically “the lack of political will” from the side of the DRC government. This narrative is repeated almost like a mantra in every analysis of SSR in the DRC.<sup>89</sup> Certainly, the argument has quite some validity. Part of the limited progress in defense reform can be attributed to a moderate commitment from elements within the Presidential circle and the government. This especially concerns those who benefit from profits collected by military entrepreneurs in the east and those primarily seeking to instrumentalize donor aid, like key figures in the Ministry of Defense have been reported to do. Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that fear for the regime-threatening potential of a strong FARDC contributes to a lukewarm commitment to army institutionalization. Nevertheless, we think that the “lack of political will narrative” is rather unsophisticated in that it downplays a range of crucial aspects.

Importantly, analyses purely focusing on “political will” commonly ignore that the fragmented nature of the FARDC seriously hampers efforts of straight-forward policy implementation. Kinshasa’s control over the Kivus, and other parts of the country, has historically assumed more the character of “indirect rule” by means of power projection through intermediaries, than direct administrative intervention. This mode of governance has only amplified in the post-settlement era, when Kinshasa emerged as a quite weak political center.<sup>90</sup> This is also visible in relation to the army. Not only have the number of competing power networks within the military increased, many of these are rooted in extra-military political and economic networks with strong cross-border connections, rendering them relatively autonomous from the presidential Big Man network. These strong extra-military connections imply that each time a group threatens to be marginalized within the military; they can resort to mobilization outside of it, or simply desert. Logically, this weakens Kinshasa’s room for maneuver. The multiplicity of competing factions within the army also complicates control by making the internal dynamics unpredictable. The number of action-reactions in the chain becomes so large that it is difficult for one actor to retain control or manage divide-and-rule strategies. In this context, it is not surprising that the possibilities for applying pressure are limited. Neither is it surprising that the main instrument for retaining leverage and pacifying power networks becomes co-optation by providing pay-offs. In conclusion, weak progress and disappointing results cannot simply be

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. D. Keen, *Complex Emergencies*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

<sup>89</sup> For an analysis of these discourses and FARDC responses see Eriksson Baaz and Stern “Willing Reform?”

<sup>90</sup> K. Vlassenroot and T. Raeymaekers, “New political order in the DR Congo? The transformation of regulation”, *Afrika Focus* 21, no. 2 (2008): 39–52.

attributed to a “lack of political will” alone. Any evaluation of defense reform must also pay due regard to the political space for implementation and enforcement.

A further problem with the “lack of political will” narrative is that it blinds external actors to the post-colonial dynamics that shape Congolese perceptions of their interventions, and how that in turn informs defense cooperation. Similar to other contexts of development interventions, there is a tendency to reduce the rationale behind all Congolese actions simply to “tactics” masking ulterior motives of personal or collective self-enrichment.<sup>91</sup> However, similarly to their donor partners, the Congolese government and defense establishment are driven by diverse, complex, shifting and contradictory interests and values. Furthermore and importantly, FARDC staff attribute the same motivations of “shameless greed” to aid donors that the latter ascribe to them.<sup>92</sup> These views are informed by a long history of colonial and postcolonial occupation, military interference and mercenary activity, generally seen as the product of resource-hungry (Western) imperialist powers and their regional allies. Regardless of their correspondence to “reality,” these narratives are experienced as very real. Hence, they cannot simply be reduced to tactics of cunning manipulation while “feigning a simulacrum of dependency,”<sup>93</sup> but should also be seen as nurturing a generalized mistrust towards external actors’ “real” intentions. In sum, while Congolese actors certainly strategize and act in a utilitarian manner— as do external actors— this does not necessarily render “political will” an adequate lens to capture the complex dynamics of defense reform in a postcolonial setting.

Certainly, resistance to reform can be found at various levels within the Congolese defense establishment, particularly so in functions controlling the flow of (access to) resources. However, “political will” is not a dichotomous variable that either exists or does not. It is contextual, shifting and variable, depending, amongst others, on agents’ positions, personalities and the “reform issue” at hand. For instance, resistance towards measures to improve financial transparency does not go necessarily hand in hand with a reluctance to sharpen mechanisms aimed at disciplining human rights offenders. Moreover, dispositions towards reform are often determined by shifting positions in Big Man networks, implying that the “champions of change” of today can be the “spoilers” of tomorrow. Consequently, evaluations of political will and political space need to be ongoing, and donors must be more flexible and adaptive in navigating these murky waters.

Finally, it is important to highlight that whereas it is not difficult to find resistance to reform in the FARDC; our research findings indicate that “willingness for reform” is also quite substantive. Especially among the second tier of senior staff (deputy commanders), mid-level commanders, NCOs and the lower ranks, the dissatisfaction with the current functioning of the FARDC is widespread, as is the awareness that “things are not as they should be.” The wish for better discipline, clear chains of command, competent superiors, a system of promotion based on experience and merit, and fair punishments for those

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<sup>91</sup> For instance, as one Congo expert concluded recently, “Congolese mask reality and hide the truth in their dealings with reform or development experts. While feigning a simulacrum of dependency, Congolese influence and often control their foreign partners.” T. Trefon, *Congo Masquerade: The Political Culture of Aid Inefficiency and Reform Failure* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2011), 18.

<sup>92</sup> For a further discussion of these dynamics see Eriksson Baaz and Stern, “Willing reform?”

<sup>93</sup> Trefon, *Congo Masquerade*, 18.

transgressing the military code are regularly articulated. Given the generally low levels of formal military (and other) education and training, this awareness is quite striking.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, there is not only a desire to improve matters, there are also many ideas as to what needs to be improved and how. In fact, we found that many sector or unit commanders already take initiatives “from below” in order to improve the behavior of their troops and relations to civilians.<sup>95</sup> These include ensuring transport for or control over troops on rotation, supervising the repayment of military debts to civilians, removing soldiers from civilian living areas and paying reparations to victims of military abuses, such as looting and theft.<sup>96</sup> These are clear indications that many commanders have a basic sense of responsibility and feel an urge to engage in efforts to improve military functioning. Such existing “willingness for reform” among lower level commanders demonstrates that there is substantial scope for change, should the higher levels buy into it.

### **Concluding Reflections: Breaking the Cycle of Military Integration and Disintegration**

An increasing amount of negotiated settlements to civil wars include provisions for military power-sharing, either through the merging or integration of ex-belligerents’ fighting forces. Contrary to other contexts where this policy was applied,<sup>97</sup> in the DRC, the doors to the army were never closed after the initial merging, leading to a path of never-ending military integration. Intended as a policy to end armed group activity, when caught up in the convoluted and fragmented politico-military landscape of the DRC, the effects of military integration have been the opposite. Military integration has destabilized and weakened the Congolese army and fuelled conflict dynamics in the east. At the same time, from the point of view of the DRC government, with its limited space to maneuver and weak capacities for implementation and pressure, this policy “made sense” as an instrument of cooptation and control. Furthermore, until recently, it was never flagged as a major issue by international actors engaged in the DRC.

Yet, times seem to be changing. Both Congolese and international actors have started to show signs that military integration, as implemented up to now, is highly problematic, and that the policy needs to be either abandoned or drastically reformed. This opens up the question what donors could do in order to address this issue. As indicated in the paper, alternative ways of dealing with armed groups or managing military integration are possible. However, the scope for reform is seriously reduced by Kinshasa’s limited political space and capacity to implement military policies, the limited military capacity to put pressure on armed groups, and the limited “political will” in certain circles both among donors and the DRC government. Although these factors hinder policy changes, they do not render it impossible.

We do not believe that externally driven social engineering is possible—let alone desirable—in the DRC, certainly not in the absence of massive flows of resources and political pressure. Nevertheless, we do believe that within the bounds of structured

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<sup>94</sup> See for example Eriksson Baaz and Stern, “Making Sense of Violence”.

<sup>95</sup> For an overview of these initiatives see Van Damme and Verweijen, *In Search of an Army*

<sup>96</sup> Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen, “The Mother of Armies”.

<sup>97</sup> R.Licklider, ed., forthcoming, *New Armies from Old. Merging Competing Military Forces after Civil Wars*. Georgetown University Press, forthcoming 2013.

contingency, interventions can, in certain circumstances, generate a momentum ultimately leading to somewhat different outcomes. Therefore, it is imperative that pending processes of military integration will be more actively and critically monitored and engaged with, if only to reduce potential negative effects. This could include conditionalities attached to military assistance. Equally crucial is a longer term commitment to provide the necessary resources. The implementation of vital measures aiming to mitigate the negative effects of military integration, and to stimulate viable alternatives to it, will doubtlessly require substantial resources over a longer period of time.

Lastly, let us briefly turn back to the initial story of the integration of the first military of independent Congo, the ANC, from the mid-1960s onwards. If Mobutu succeeded in stabilizing a chaotic environment, forging a reasonably cohesive force and reinforcing the projection of central state power to the semi-autonomous social orders in the east, this did not go without massive corruption and co-optation in the ANC, systematic human rights violations, and the repression and elimination of dissidents. Perhaps this is the biggest challenge for donors engaged in the DRC: to contemplate how to reconcile the stabilization of the immensely fragmented and volatile east with army reform, while simultaneously foster respect for basic standards of human rights, accountability, democracy, and natural resources management. Although laudable, it is an open question in how far such an ambitious project is feasible, especially in the absence of far-reaching transformations in the nature of the Congolese state.

## List of abbreviations

ANC	Armée Nationale Congolaise
CNDP	Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EUSEC-RD Congo	Mission de conseil et d'assistance de l'Union européenne en matière de réforme du secteur de la sécurité en RD Congo
FARDC	Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo
FAZ	Forces Armées Zairoises
FDLR	Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda
FRF	Forces Républicaines Fédéralistes
MILOBS	Military Observers
MLC	Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo
MONUC	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo
MONUSCO	Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo
PARECO	Patriotes Résistants Congolais
RCD-G	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Goma
RCD-K/ML	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie – Kisangani/Mouvement de Libération
RCD-N	Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-National
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMI	Structure Militaire d'Intégration
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations