CONTESTED STATEHOOD, SECURITY DILEMMAS AND MILITIA POLITICS: THE RISE AND TRANSFORMATION OF RAÏA MUTOMBOKI IN EASTERN DRC

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Résumé

En ciblant principalement les rebelles des FDLR, mais aussi des soldats gouvernementaux, les Raïa Mutomboki (« citoyens fâchés ») ont déclenché une nouvelle dynamique de contestation d'État et de militarisation et violence à l'est de la RDC. Cet article propose que les Raïa Mutomboki en tant qu'une milice genre « franchise » a émergé comme conséquence du succès limité des programmes de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion (DDR), de la négligence du gouvernement, et de dilemmes de sécurité locales. Elle s'appuie sur la mobilisation populaire, à la fois grâce à une ingénierie sociale à base populaire mais basée sur les intérêts des élites locales.

Le cas des Raïa Mutomboki suggère jusqu'ici une dynamique plus axée sur des aspects sociaux qu'une économie de guerre. Même s'ils s'engagent dans des activités économiques, le recrutement reste dominé par des récits d'identité, d'autochtonie, de sécurité communautaire et défense locale. Non seulement les chefs militaires, mais aussi des autorités coutumières, des prêtres, et l'entourage familial jouent un rôle crucial dans la mobilisation des jeunes combattants.

Cet article vise à illuminer les raisons de l'émergence et de la transformation des Raïa Mutomboki dans les parties nord et ouest de la province du Sud-Kivu, dans l'est de la RDC, ainsi que la fluidité des arrangements sociales et territoriales centrés sur l'État dans cette même zone. Il montre également comment la mobilisation armée est devenu un élément clé de l'organisation sociale et de la formation de l'identité, en dépit de son intrication constante dans les modes civils d'interaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

> *"La politique est formée dans les pensées des gens qui tiennent leur expérience dans les mains."*[1]

Armed conflicts have ravaged the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since the early 1990s. While certain explanations emphasise the 'greed' for natural resource rents and 'ethnic hatred', and link these to the emergence

[1] Interview with a Raïa Mutomboki commander, April 2013. The citation refers to the self-judgement of Raïa Mutomboki considering themselves as citizens who have taken up arms and formed politico-military movements employing their own and their communities' exposure to violence.

of 'rape as a weapon of war', the actual interplay of different root causes is much more complex than that. Certainly, land tenure, elite contest, identity questions, external intervention, militarisation, and economic (not exclusively limited to minerals) motivations all play a role in the struggle over power and authority and the deteriorating human security situation.[2] Continued armed conflict has also created a situation whereby the central state authority is no longer the single guarantor and in some areas not even a key broker of security. It becomes one actor among others, maintaining a façade of sovereignty to employ a variety of the 'politics of the mirror' toward the outside world.[3] With central authority dismantled, the state either vanishes from the public sphere or blends in with non-state actors.

In spite of multiple activities and programmes to foster peace, the proliferation of armed groups in the Kivus recently reached new heights. Under UN Security Council Resolution 2098, the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO was beefed up by a 'Force Intervention Brigade' (FIB) with the mandate to "neutralise armed groups"[4] that reject disarmament, but so far it 'only' fought the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and the Alliance des Patriotes pour un Congo Libre et Souverain (APCLS) alongside the government troops and has not yet engaged in provinces outside North Kivu.

Until recently, the Rutshuru-based M23 was preponderant in public debates on the DRC, whilst the emergence of Raïa Mutomboki as an "armed franchise" went widely unnoticed.[5] Targeting primarily *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) rebels, but also Rwandophone soldiers of the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC), the Raïa Mutomboki have unleashed new dynamics of militarisation and violence.

So far, there has been a lack of scholarly analysis concerning one of the DRC's 'newest' militia formations and their surrounding environment. Only two academic publications deal with the phenomenon in particular.[6] This has two implications: it makes it an exploratory field of research depending on a fluid context, while it underlines the need for further efforts to specifically

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[2] See for instance: VLASSENROOT, K., RAEYMAEKERS, T. (eds.), *Conflict and social transformation in eastern DR Congo*, Gent, Academia Press, 2004; STEARNS, J., *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters. The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, New York, Public Affairs, 2010.

[3] Cf. CHABAL, P., DALOZ, J.-P., *Africa Works. Disorder as a Political Instrument*, London, James Currey, 1999.

[4] Cf. UN Security Council, *UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2098*, (2013), at: http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2098(2013).

[5] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *Raïa Mutomboki. The flawed peace process in the DRC and the birth of an armed franchise. Usalama Project Report*, London, Rift Valley Institute, 2013.

[6] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.* and HOFFMANN, K., VLASSENROOT, K., "Armed groups and the exercise of public authority. The cases of the Mayi Mayi and Raya Mutomboki in Kalehe, South Kivu", *Peacebuilding*, Vol. 2, 2014, No. 2, pp. 202-220.

understand this, initially atypical – due to its initially flat hierarchies and fast-selling label – formation of local defence militias in eastern DRC.

This paper explores the reasons for the emergence of Raïa Mutomboki and the concomitant increase in militarisation of the northern and western parts of South Kivu. It shows how popular mobilisation has become a key element of societal organisation and identity formation through its entanglement in civilian and political modes of interaction. Moreover, it shall be analysed how this modifies existing boundaries and contests state-centric territorial arrangements in eastern DRC's local 'security dilemmas', to use a paradigm that was originally coined in the analysis of interstate conflict.

Empirical data for this paper was gathered through qualitative interviews in North and South Kivu from February to May 2013, January/February, and May 2014.[7] Interviews were held employing an ethnographic approach and interlocutors include a range of members of Raïa Mutomboki, but also civil society, military, international actors, and state representatives. Since much has been written on the history of conflict in and around the Kivu provinces of DRC[8], this article will focus on the emergence and transformation of Raïa Mutomboki, so most of the last twenty years' conflict history will be skipped.

2. WHO ARE THE RAÏA MUTOMBOKI?

With remote rural populations largely abandoned by the government army, Raïa Mutomboki emerged as a mix of a localised self-defence group and a decentralised militia, with the primary aim to repel the FDLR's attacks. The latter are the successors of the infamous *interahamwe* that had carried out the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. After successfully having chased the FDLR away from many parts of South Kivu, Raïa Mutomboki became increasingly entangled in criminal activities, power politics, and – like the FDLR – abuse of civilians.

Raïa Mutomboki are not monolithic. Rather, they can be seen as a complex web of several local militias in the context of South Kivu's volatile security neighbourhood. Their insurgency must partly be seen as a 'self-help' reaction

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[7] In the frame of the Rift Valley Institute's Usalama Project on "Understanding Congolese Armed Groups" and a research project funded by the Swiss National Foundation.

[8] For an overview, see for instance: STEARNS, J., *Dancing…*, *op. cit.*; VLASSENROOT, K., RAEYMAEKERS, T. (eds.), *Conflict and social transformation …, op. cit.*; PRUNIER, G., *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe*, Oxford, OUP, 2009; REYNTJENS, F., *The Great African War: Congo and regional geopolitics, 1996-2006*, Cambridge, CUP, 2010; PRUNIER, G., *The Rwanda Crisis. History of a Genocide*, Kampala, Fountain, 1995; LEMARCHAND, R., *The dynamics of violence in Central Africa*, Philadelphia, PUP, 2009; JOHNSON, D., *Kongo. Kriege, Korruption und die Kunst des Überlebens*, Frankfurt, Brandes & Apsel, 2008, AUTESSERRE, S., *The Trouble with the Congo. Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, Cambridge, CUP, 2010.

following the lack of central security provision that came along with the state's loss of the monopoly of violence.[9] This reaction happened in a context where governance often happens without, beyond, or despite the government[10] and where 'statehood' is a rather fluid concept under constant negotiation[11] among various actors. In South Kivu, these include Raïa Mutomboki, FDLR, and FARDC, as well as other armed and non-armed stakeholders.

The result is a situation than can be described as a contest between various 'state-like' micro-units, justifying the notion of security dilemma – a concept otherwise used in realist analyses of interstate conflict. While national and regional contests over influence and power – often situated around so-called 'big men' networks[12] – are reflected on the local levels, powerbrokers within the communities have developed their strategies of governance within the formal relics of state authority but rely on informal mobilisation strategies.

2.1.   The creation and development of Raïa Mutomboki

Established 2005 in South Kivu's south-western margins, Raïa Mutomboki defended 'their' territory against threats posed by the FDLR. Jean Musumbu, a local healer, was a founder and spiritual head of the movement. According to the combatants' belief, his *dawa* – the magic potion supposed to render combatants invincible – was particularly strong and helped defeat a much better equipped enemy.[13] At that time, politico-military events across the unstable Kivu area had triggered insecurity in Shabunda and other parts of the province. Reshufflings within the FDLR and the hastened integration of former Mayi Mayi militias both encouraged the emergence of a security in many areas, including the cradle of Raïa Mutomboki. After a quick successful campaign, the newly established group managed to root out the FDLR segments operating in southwest Shabunda. Around the core structure led by Musumbu, a range of other cells emerged independently, loosely connected to the founding group by requesting their *dawa*.[14] Even later, Musumbu's aura prevailed and his magic influence continued to be in demand.

After a more or less dormant period of about five years the phenomenon

[9] Cf. ROE, P., "The Intrastate Security Dilemma: Ethnic Conflict as a 'Tragedy'?", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 36, 1999, No. 2. Roe's and Posen's (cited in ROE, *op. cit.*, pp. 188ff.) emphasis on ethnic conflict should however be taken with a pinch of salt.

[10] Cf. RAEYMAEKERS, T., MENKHAUS, K., VLASSENROOT, K., "State and non-state regulation in African protracted crises: governance without government?", *Afrika Focus*, Vol. 21, 2008, No. 2.

[11] Cf. HAGMANN, T., PÉCLARD, D. (eds.), *Negotiating Statehood. Dynamics of Power and Domination in Africa*, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

[12] Cf. UTAS, M. (ed.), *African Conflicts and Informal Power. Big Men and Networks*, London, Zed Books, 2012.

[13] Interview with a Raïa Mutomboki combatant, April 2013.

[14] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-16.

returned around 2011. From that time onwards, militia activity had become even more of a bargaining chip in the multi-layered contest among political elites.[15] On the other hand, this renaissance also coincided with heightened levels of insecurity in the aftermath of the Goma peace conference in 2008. The ensuing military operations against the FDLR provided for the Hutu rebels to be chased into the depths of the Kivutian hinterland, close to where they had been pushed out by the first generation of Raïa Mutomboki in 2005. Several factions, or "armed franchises"[16] due to the label-like nature of their diffusion, emerged, notably in northern Shabunda, where a series of FDLR atrocities caused popular outrage:

> "This outrage was most vividly expressed after a visit by the South Kivu governor, Marcellin Cisambo, to Shabunda centre in July 2011, in response to the security problems there. Replying to a question in a town hall meeting about the withdrawal of Congolese troops, he reportedly said: 'Liberate yourselves!' This event is now widely recounted to justify the emergence of the Raia Mutomboki."[17]

Again, these new Raïa Mutomboki began to attack FDLR positions, mainly in the territories of Shabunda, Kalehe, and Mwenga (South Kivu) up to Southern Walikale and Masisi (North Kivu). All factions, in one way or another, invoked the historical Raïa Mutomboki as a guiding example but there were considerable differences between previous *Mayi Mayi* groups (such as *Kifuafua* and *Kirikicho*, parts of which joined the Raïa Mutomboki umbrella for short-lived alliances)[18] and newly mushrooming local self-defence groups: While the latter were characterised by very flat and loose chains of command, previously existing *Mayi Mayi* groups maintained a more hierarchical structure.

Until early 2013 there were roughly four main franchises of Raïa Mutomboki, which mainly consisted of *Rega, Tembo, Nyanga*, and *Kano* communities.[19] An original chapter in southern Shabunda, now defunct, was directly linked to the original Raïa Mutomboki under the guidance of Jean Musumbu. It was said to have been in favour of FARDC integration since mid-2013. A second chapter, based in Nduma, spanned across northern Shabunda, southern Walikale and Kalehe (Bunyakiri). Juriste Kikuni led this section since the Congolese army captured Eyadema Mugugu, their initial leader. A small Bunyakiri branch is adjunct to the Eyadema chapter. A third chapter

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[15] *Ibidem*, pp. 9 & 11.
[16] *Ibidem*.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 22.
[18] *Ibidem*, p. 32-34.
[19] In early 2013 there were four clearly identifiable ones, while in the second half of 2013 there were observable rifts and shifts, and in 2014 again, five main groups can be distinguished.

operated mainly in Southern Walikale. In mid-2013 it engaged in fighting with *Mayi Mayi Kifuafua* combatants, who used to constitute another chapter based in southern Walikale and Masisi but had given up the Raïa Mutomboki label. Chapter four regrouped the eastern Shabunda part under the leadership of ex-FARDC Major Donat Kengwa.[20]

By 2014 multiple re-configurations had altered the landscape to five main identifiable sub-groups: From June 2013 onwards, a new coalition emerged, regrouping parts of the four previous franchises. It employed the label *Coalition Raïa Mukombozi* ('citizens liberators'), a term previously used by another small militia. Led by various commanders, they appeared to have agreed upon a merger of their units. Key leaders included Sisawa Kindo, Daniel Meshe, Ngandu Lundimu, Maheshe, and Albert Kahasha, aka Foka Mike. By late 2013, this group seemed to have disintegrated again, with clashes erupting between the Sisawa part and others. Thereafter, the units led by Foka Mike, Daniel Meshe and Pierre Muamba surrendered to the government. This marked the formal end of the coalition that – according to some of its members – never existed beyond a formal declaration issued in June 2013.[21]

As of early 2014, the situation remains volatile. Sporadic FARDC operations against some factions have weakened the overall position of Raïa Mutomboki, while attention was largely diverted towards ongoing joint operations against North Kivu based armed groups. The Walikale branch of Raïa Mutomboki has remained largely inactive since a formal peace accord with *Mayi Mayi Kifuafua*. From February 2014, the Bunyakiri branch of Hamakombo and Shukuru worked to forge a coalition with Delphin Mbaenda's *Kifuafua* and a small group led by a commander called Madeni. Juriste Kikuni's group continues to exert considerable influence over the Kalehe branch and consolidates itself around Lulingu and Nduma, while Sisawa has established himself in a geographical sandwich position between Kikuni and the group of Ngandu and Donat. The latter now controls a large stretch between Nzibira and Kigulube. The following table approximates the set-up of Raïa Mutomboki in March/April 2014, while ongoing reconfigurations at the time of writing make this more of a snapshot than a durable observation:[22]

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[20] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*

[21] Interview with Raïa Mutomboki commanders, February 2014.

[22] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, VOGEL, C., *Mapping armed groups in eastern Congo*, at: www.christophvogel.net/mapping, based on fieldwork in January/February 2014.

Approximate current set-up of Raïa Mutomboki

FACTION	AREA	LEADERS	COMMENTS
Shabunda/Kikuni	Lulingu Nduma	Juriste Kikuni Albert Mutima Faustin Muzumbi Pascal Musombwa Devos Kagalaba	Ex-leader Eyadema in prison Most influential group in spiritual terms Hierarchical control over Kalehe faction
Shabunda/Sisawa	Mapela Lubao	Sisawa Kindo Charlequin (?)	Sisawa lost respect from others after attacking humanitarians
Shabunda/Ngandu-Donat	Kigulube Nzovu Isezya Lubimbe	Donat Kengwa Ngandu Lundimu Maheshe Nyanderema Mabala Mese Batachoka Constant Djinja Maiti ya Nyoka Makombo	Former Coalition Raïa Mukombozi Consolidating territory between Walungu, Kabare, and Shabunda margins Ngandu and Donat lead the group
Kalehe	Bunyakiri Hombo Kalonge	Hamakombo Bwale Shukuru Kawaya Akili Abubakar Wasubita Safari	Many former Mayi Mayi Padiri Hierarchical connections to Juriste Kikuni group Negotiations on alliance with Kifuafua and Kirikicho groups
Walikale	Itebero Isangi Otobora	Heritier Elenge Amisi Kipuka Kisekelwa Katanda	Clashes with Mayi Mayi Kifuafua in early 2013, later the same year ceasefire.
Shabunda/Musumbu	Penekusu	Jean Musumbu	Defunct initial group
Ex-Raïa Mukombozi	Nzibira Isezya	Albert Kahasha Pierre Muamba Daniel Meshe Deo Bizibu	Defunct and surrendered Kahasha, aka Foka Mike, suspected to have been part of M23 before

2.2. General characteristics of the Raïa Mutomboki

In their earlier days, Raïa Mutomboki did not dispose of classic hierarchies or a real organisation chart. The "segmentary nature of the Rega society"[23], combined with the experience some combatants gained while fighting for *Mayi Mayi* groups, convinced them to develop a fluid and flat hierarchy. In several cases, the Congolese government easily co-opted or bought off commanders to virtually decapitate the respective group (such as in the case of *Mayi Mayi Tembo* in the area of Bunyakiri).[24] This does not, however, exclude the observation that, given their limited logistic and material means (exemplified

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[23] STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
[24] Interview with a Raïa Mutomboki commander, April 2013.

for instance by their restricted means to purchase communication devices), Raïa Mutomboki face serious challenges in establishing more coherent control over the vast territories they operate in. In several subgroups, there are also tensions between the rank-and-file's preference for a decentralised approach and the leaders' attempts to form less fragmented coalitions. This has serious implications for the durability of the phenomenon – while it may with difficulty be transformed into a massive armed movement, its segregation may, however, in the end help Raïa Mutomboki to survive at least as a label.

Among the various sections there is an increasing number of self-styled generals and colonels, most of them demobilised rebels or government soldiers who have defected. This could gradually alter their initially non-hierarchical structure if additional resources become available. One example was renegade Colonel Kahasha, who temporarily joined under the guise of being abducted by Maheshe, another commander.[25] Others include the self-styled Generals Ngandu Lundimu and Donat Kengwa, who used to be FARDC officers.[26]

Raïa Mutomboki's lowest common denominator remains deep hatred of the FDLR and other *Kinyarwanda*-speaking people, who are perceived as the root of violence and insecurity by most Raïa Mutomboki. Responding to the question as to whether they would not differentiate between the *Banyamulenge* (literally, the people from Mulenge, a village on South Kivu's high plateau), on the one hand, a community that lived on Congolese territory for generations, and the FDLR on the other, who recently invaded the country in 1994, a laconic, almost cruel explanation is "you can have three children but they do not necessarily have the same intellect."[27] In fact, the contemporary Raïa Mutomboki have become a mix of self-defence groups, liberation armies, and ruthless militias wreaking havoc among (not only) Rwandophone civilians in its areas of operation.

Beyond the use of sayings, certain parts of Raïa Mutomboki present concrete demands, such as proportional representation of communities in the army regiments but also improvements in the field of governance and socio-economic development.[28] Some of their representatives also denounce the

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[25] Kahasha took part in four other rebel formations before, lastly the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23).

[26] Cf. *Acte constitutif de la coalition politico-militaire denommée Rahiya Mukombozi* in June 2013 (unpublished).

[27] Interview with a Raïa Mutomboki combatant, April 2013. Later on, the interviewee stated that senior military and political figures were perfectly aware that Rwandophone populations in the Kivus are significantly diverse but rank-and-file militiamen would often not differentiate.

[28] Various interviews with commanders and combatants featured indications of discontent not only about the government's failure to tackle insecurity caused by the FDLR, but also because of larger failures in terms of governance and development, referring to e.g. UN statistics such as the Human Development Index or the DRC's status as a Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC). Cf. *Statuts de la coalition politico-militaire denommée : Coalition Raiya Mukombozi* in June 2013 (unpublished document).

unequal distribution of ranks and positions in the government army – where most senior positions for South Kivu are currently filled by Banyamulenge, and thus Rwandophone, commanders.[29] Beyond the threat represented by the FDLR, Raïa Mutomboki's "emergence is linked to neglect and bad governance."[30]

Despite the fact that they regularly engage in skirmishes with government troops, they also benefit from arms supplies via government army officials, as last year's report of the United Nations (UN) Group of Experts on the Congo has shown in the case of meanwhile dismissed Army Chief of Staff Amisi.[31] The prevalence of FARDC defectors among their ranks means that there are ties at various levels between the militia and the army. As opposed to other militias, Raïa Mutomboki are often not considered as enemies by large parts of the FARDC. They are mere *"inciviques"*, seen as patriotic citizens "to be re-educated and convinced to leave the *maquis*."[32]

2.3. Mobilisation and the construction of legitimacy

Popular mobilisation can happen through various incentive structures, such as monetary, material, or reputational ones but also in reaction to experiences by the populations (individually and collectively) and activated by the narratives of powerbrokers. The case of Raïa Mutomboki suggests the dynamics are slightly more socially than economically driven. Although they also engage in mineral exploitation, recruitment is still dominated by narratives of identity, autochthony, community security, and local defence.[33] Customary authorities (e.g. *bami,* singular: *mwami*), priests, and family play a crucial role in motivating the mostly young combatants.

Because of the lack of available records on Raïa Mutomboki's recruitment strategies, this part has to rely on the scarce material gathered through fieldwork. In Shabunda, the movement's initial home turf, recruitment usually happens on the basis of (semi-)voluntary enrolment – triggered by the willingness of young people to combat FDLR rebels but also by the lack of other labour alternatives. This includes young locals, but often also delinquents, unemployed miners/diggers[34], and army defectors. Analysing *Mayi Mayi* militias, Jourdan noticed

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[29] On the role of Banyamulenge in South Kivu, see STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *Banyamulenge. Insurgency and exclusion on the mountains of South Kivu. Usalama Project Report*, London/ Nairobi, Rift Valley Institute, 2013.

[30] Interview with a Congolese researcher, June 2013.

[31] UN Security Council *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the DRC (S/2012/843)*, New York, United Nations, 2012.

[32] Interview with a FARDC commander, February 2014.

[33] Cf. *Statuts de la coalition politico-militaire…, op. cit.*

[34] The presidential mining ban and the subsequently pending implementation of section 1502 of the US Dodd-Frank Act drove major parts of the Kivutian mining communities out of business.

that "(i)n East Congo, enrolment in rural militias is a response to a complete lack of alternatives such as social and economic integration and security."[35] While enrolment as such is reported to be voluntary, the social pressure exerted through families and customary authorities, often under the slogan of *tujigombowe*, should not be underestimated.[36] In a further step, the recruits need to be retained on the lists of combatants. In the normal process, this requires a recommendation by a *chef de village* or *chef de localité*, transmitted to the respective *chef du groupement*, who then approaches the nearest Raïa Mutomboki commander.[37]

As with most *Mayi Mayi* groups, Raïa Mutomboki are known for rituals that are believed to render combatants invincible when practised prior to fighting. As the name suggests, water (*mayi*) plays a substantial role in these rituals. Healers prepare liquid potions, the *dawa*, to sprinkle them all over the combatants. Having been presented to the local Raïa Mutomboki commander, new recruits are supposed to see a spiritual doctor, called a *kadogo*, and receive vaccinations, as some of the initiation ceremonies are described.[38] After 'vaccination', new recruits need to stay under observation for a few days (the duration differs between sub-groups). In addition to these medical substances, other – more 'magical' rather than classically medical – elements play a role. Some Raïa Mutomboki fighters wear amulets and other insignia such as bracelets to protect them from hostile bullets. While they are relevant to the mimicry of military practises as discussed afterwards, objects obtained in combat can also be turned into *dawa*. Many combatants display 'collected' FARDC galloons and stripes on their own clothes or weapons. While these procedures perform a key role in protection, they are equally important in mobilisation and concomitant rites of passage[39] for fresh recruits. Once a recruit has gone through all the procedures, he is called to stay away from other recruits and follow specific dietary rules.[40] Among the *Rega* – the community forming the key part of Raïa Mutomboki – the reference to *kimbilikiti*, a powerful spirit, is a substantial element of combatant identity and initiation. The example of invoking *kimbilikiti* and his 'wife' shows that both men and women play key roles in performing initiation rituals and preparing *dawa*.

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[35] JOURDAN, L., "Mayi Mayi: Young Rebels in Kivu, DRC", *African Development*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2011, Dakar, Codesria, p. 90.
[36] *Tujigombowe* means 'let's liberate ourselves' (from FDLR). Cf. MUSAMBA, J., *La dynamique du recrutement et de la mobilisation des Raïa Mutomboki*, Bukavu, unpublished paper (2013); and interview with a Congolese researcher, September 2013.
[37] Cf. MUSAMBA, J., *op. cit.* The terms reflect the still prevailing quasi-customary administrative setup fostered during colonial rule.
[38] Cf. MUSAMBA, J., *op. cit. Kadogo* literally means 'little one' and/or 'child'. In Kiswahili, a doctor would rather be referred to as *muganga*.
[39] JOURDAN, L., *op. cit.*, provides some insights into the activities linked to the transition of a civilian into a combatant.
[40] The male forms are used for simplicity only; there are also female recruits.

Moreover, (groups of) women have been instrumental in pressing for armed resistance against FDLR.[41]

Arsenal is how some factions call the system of internal organisation and diffusion. It means that, after defending or liberating a village from the FDLR, voluntary male villagers would be initiated to the movement through some sort of snowball effect. Again, when another neighbouring village is attacked or beleaguered, it would be their turn to lend a helping hand. While in the beginnings of the movement (2005 under Musumbu) the mobilisation was restricted to the *Rega* community, this changed from 2011 onwards, when recruitment also started among the *Tembo, Nyanga, Kano,* and partly *Shi* communities.[42] A considerable number of the combatants forming the Raïa Mutomboki in the area of Kalehe (Bunyakiri, Kalonge, Hombo) are former *Mayi Mayi Tembo* of General Bulenda Padiri, who integrated into the FARDC. As Hoffmann explains, "Padiri's group was the most extensive of the Maï-Maï resistance groups operating in Eastern Congo."[43] Many of their ex-combatants had been unemployed prior to the Raïa Mutomboki's rise.

In line with what Jourdan noted for the Mayi Mayi, the Raïa Mutomboki "movement articulates a set of common grievances, based on nationalist ideals, in order to oppose Ugandan and Rwandan military intervention in Kivu. This mix of 'secret power' and nationalism seems to be very attractive to young people in East Congo."[44] While it is not sufficient to trigger armed movements as such, it works as a necessary condition in situations where young people are disenfranchised enough by other socio-economic phenomena, such as unemployment. Formal employment is almost nonexistent in rural areas and the number of informal jobs has declined. In the most recent wave, several miners lost their jobs as a result of a de-facto embargo on minerals after President Kabila's mining ban in 2010 and US legislation known as the Dodd-Frank Act, prompting the enrolment of some former miners in Raïa Mutomboki.[45]

While such dynamics generate an initial critical mass of recruits for a strongman, "once the conflict has started, the escalation of violence often forces young people to enrol en masse given that in a situation of widespread insecurity, enrolment is sometimes the only alternative to death."[46] The

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[41] Interview with Raïa Mutomboki spokesperson, March 2013. Cf. also HOFFMANN, K., VLASSENROOT, K., *op. cit.*

[42] Cf. MUSAMBA, J., *op. cit.*

[43] HOFFMANN, K., *Governing the 'Maquis': A case study of General Padiris Mayi Mayi movement*, Working Paper No. 6. Conflict Research Group, 2007, p. 3.

[44] JOURDAN, L., *op. cit.*, p. 91.

[45] The Dodd Frank Act forces US stock market listed companies to disclose whether their mineral supplies derive from the DRC. While the law only came into force recently and faces judicial appeals, it has already prompted a pre-emptive boycott of Congolese mines.

[46] JOURDAN, L., *op. cit.*, p. 97.

difference between forced and voluntary recruitment is often a thin line. While field research indicates that classic recruitment by force (usually of youngsters or children) is not very common with Raïa Mutomboki, there is another nuance in 'forced recruitment': through social pressure, people either feel pressured into joining the ranks 'voluntarily' often through their own family if the latter has experienced atrocities by either the FDLR or the FARDC before, but also through local dignitaries or customary leaders. In the case of one of the current factions, a meeting of women complaining about renewed FDLR abuses prompted the creation of Raïa Mutomboki.

Popular narratives amongst the *Rega* (Shabunda and Mwenga) and *Tembo* (Kalehe)[47] communities consider it problematic when outsiders (the deployed FARDC soldiers in this area mainly originating from other parts of the DRC, often integrated ex-CNDP) fight other outsiders (FDLR) in the frame of military operations.[48] In this context, Raïa Mutomboki are seen as a more legitimate force by parts of the population especially since they had already shown their willingness to tackle the FDLR threat. This argument helped swell the ranks with some Raïa Mutomboki franchises.[49] Economic motives played subordinate roles in this context; however they cannot be excluded – specifically not on the part of recruiting commanders. While most of the rank-and-file are villagers and peasants, the senior ranks include quite a few disgruntled, formerly integrated or defected army officers (e.g. Sisawa Kindo, Ngandu Lundimu, Donat Kengwa, Albert Kahasha and others). It is this class of people that brought in some more commercial ideas into the self-defence narratives.[50] Interestingly, each sub-group appears to be recruiting on its own, meaning that besides the *arsenal* snowball system and specific inter-factional agreements, there is no overall troop command or common combatant pool.[51]

While community pressure and family ties play a major role for the mobilisation of Raïa Mutomboki in a context of continued insecurity, the name as such has been most prolific since it was used as a label to denominate franchises loosely attached to similar beliefs and narratives.[52] This made the movement, or rather its name, subject to more openly fraudulent and illegitimate tendencies in the broader frame of elite competition: various deputies (national and provincial) and unsuccessful *candidats malheureux*, for

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[47] The *Rega*, the *Tembo* ('cousins' of the *Rega*), the *Nyanga*, and the *Kano* are the main constituencies of Raïa Mutomboki. More recently, *Shi* from Walungu and Kabare also joined.
[48] For instance, the former Coalition Raïa Mukombozi, in its *Statuts de la coalition politico-militaire dénommée Coalition Raiya Mukombozi*, demands the unconditional retreat of foreign armed groups, such as the FDLR, from Congolese territory.
[49] Interview with a Congolese researcher, September 2013.
[50] Cf. OBSERVATOIRE GOUVERNANCE PAIX, *Le Sud-Kivu un véritable Far West en RD Congo: La place des ressources minières dans l'organisation économique des groupes armés nationaux et étrangers pendant l'opération Amani Leo*, Bukavu, OGP, 2011.
[51] Cf. MUSAMBA, J., *op. cit.*
[52] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*

instance, anonymously conducted or supported recruitment in the name of Raïa Mutomboki.[53] As opposed to its very beginnings in 2005, the movement is no longer only a mere army of villagers. It is becoming increasingly entangled in provincial and national power politics, in which some factions have become a bargaining chip for competing big men (networks), such as the politicians mentioned.[54] To some extent, the logics of mobilisation so far seem to persist, while they are also captured by or embedded in elite strategies of armed resistance. While it is often unclear if they are real or staged,[55] increasing internal tensions are a further indication of this gradual change.

3.   RISE AND TRANSFORMATION OF RAÏA MUTOMBOKI

Raïa Mutomboki as a politico-military movement arose from a situation of continued insecurity in South Kivu's Shabunda territory, first after the end of the so-called 'second Congo war', and again around 2011. Structurally, four major political factors helped create Raïa Mutomboki:

- A general and continuous militarisation of the area since the early 1990s.
- The failure of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) – as well as the slow disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration (DDRRR).[56]
- A stalled security sector reform (SSR) process (including *intégration accélérée* and the regimentation process) within the FARDC provoked a vacuum of security forces.[57]
- Renewed threats through residual FDLR after joint FARDC/UN and FARDC/Rwanda operations between 2008 and 2010. These operations forced the FDLR back into areas where Raïa Mutomboki developed in 2005 and resurged from 2011 onwards.

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[53] Interviews with Raïa Mutomboki combatants, April 2013, and commanders, February 2014.

[54] Cf. UTAS, M., *op. cit.*

[55] In the frame of the coalition that emerged in June 2013, many tensions have been reported between Kahasha and Maheshe, then between Kahasha and Sisawa, then between Ngandu and Sisawa, etc. The struggles over influence have become a more common feature as compared to the period in which Jean Musumbu created the movement's first cell in 2005.

[56] For an assessment of DDR, see: STEARNS, J., VERWEIJEN, J., ERIKSSON BAAZ, M., *The national army and armed groups in the eastern Congo. Untangling the Gordian knot of insecurity. Usalama Project Report*, London/Nairobi Rift Valley Institute, 2013 and BOSHOFF, H., *Completing the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration process of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the link to security sector reform of FARDC. Mission difficult!*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2010.

[57] For an assessment of SSR, see: STEARNS, J., VERWEIJEN, J., ERIKSSON BAAZ, M., *op. cit.*

3.1. Militarisation in the Kivus

The emergence of Raïa Mutomboki would hardly be possible without the general tendency of militarisation. While the Kivu area had been a place of conflict for at least a century,[58] the 'over-militarisation' with small arms and light weapons is a rather recent phenomenon. Old conflicts over land, succession and tribal order had usually been violent but short-lived. The 20th century brought a gradual shift, connected with unsuitable colonial politics, increasing population density, and a politically induced ethnicisation of existing fault lines among the Kivutian people. The collapse of the Mobutu system and the influx of Rwandan refugees and *génodicaires* in 1994 massively exacerbated these trends: "The major transformation of the Kivus' economy during the Congo wars, and the ensuing decline in livelihood opportunities, further legitimised unscrupulous and coercive income-generation."[59] In a situation where a Potemkin colonial, then post-colonial order was replaced by warring oligopolies of varying allegiances (Kinshasa, Kigali, Kampala, or locally confined) the instruments of political and social contest have changed:

"Violence as a legitimate tool for social interaction gave rise to a new kind of local strongmen, in some cases former army commanders. The latter try to control what remains of local market structures though militarised informal networks. These 'local warlords' find in the existing grassroot (sic!) militia an easy power-base for the protection of their rent-seeking activities, which in turn gave a new impulse to militia-formation."[60]

Thus, militarisation in the Kivutian context can be framed as "the process of the increasing imprint of armed actors and violent modes of regulation, action and thinking on various arenas of society".[61] In this logic, violent means of coercion become readily available and to some extent accepted as a currency in the socio-cultural marketplace. Militarisation then relies on popular "adoption and visible signs of military culture and values and ensuing support for militaristic policies"[62] such as the observable galloon cult among various militias that 'recycle' official army trappings and produce their own

[58] For examples, see STEARNS, J., VERWEIJEN, J., ERIKSSON BAAZ, M., *op. cit.*, MURAIRI MITIMA, J.-B., *Qui sont les Bahunde*, Goma, unpublished paper, 2007; CHRÉTIEN, J.-P., *The Great Lakes of Africa. Two Thousand Years of History*, New York, Zone Books, 2003.
[59] VERWEIJEN, J., "Military business and the business of the military in the Kivu", *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 40, 2013, No. 135, p. 70.
[60] VLASSENROOT, K., VAN ACKER, F., "War as exit from Exclusion? The formation of Mayi Mayi militias in eastern Congo", *Afrika Focus*, Vol. 17, 2001, No. 1–2, p. 55.
[61] VERWEIJEN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 69 (adapted from BERNAZZOLI, R. M., FLINT, C., "Power, Place, and Militarism: Toward a Comparative Geographic Analysis of Militarization", *Geography Compass*, Vol. 3, 2009, No. 1, pp. 393–411).
[62] BERNAZZOLI, R. M. FLINT, C., *op. cit.*, p. 396.

badges too. Multiple integration and disarmament phases brought along a status quo of societal relations whereby "interdependencies between military and civilian elites further foster military revenue-generating practices, while entrenching the militarisation of the Kivus' social order."[63]

3.2. DDR(RR): *"Le bilan est nul"*

The DRC's previous national disarmament programmes were set up as a result of the Sun City and Pretoria peace accords of 2002 – putting an end to five years of 'continental war'. They provided for a certain number of combatants to be integrated into the new national army – today's FARDC – while others would be demobilised and reintegrated into civilian life. A national programme was set up in the form of the *Commission Nationale de Désarmement et Réintégration* (CONADER). It was in charge of implementing DDR on the basis of UN and World Bank funding. Established in 2003, one year after the *Accord Global et Inclusif*[64] of Pretoria, the programme only became operational in 2004. Tens of thousands of combatants were disarmed and demobilised in different waves as a consequence.[65]

However, the meagre success of DDR has exacerbated the dynamics of militia formation. The logistical impossibility of running a synchronic and thorough disarmament across the whole of eastern DRC led to additional imbalances in the still fragile local security contexts.[66] Subsequent politicisation created perverse incentives for popular mobilisation to create or maintain armed groups. The current shape of the DRC's national army, the FARDC, weakened by myriad subsequent waves of integration, usually in a rush without proper vetting and dissolution of parallel chains of command, was propitious to that scenario.[67] In most cases, integration deprived some communities of their own defence while allowing others to reinforce military strength over others – creating further socio-economic imbalances. The UN-led DDRRR process for foreign combatants suffered less from such influence; however, its success was also limited due to ongoing military operations against the FDLR and their inability to go beyond individual repatriation measures.

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[63] VERWEIJEN, J., *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[64] Cf. http://www.irinnews.org/pdf/in-depth/dial_rdc.pdf.

[65] For an overview and analysis of DDR in DRC, see: BOSHOFF, H., *Completing the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration process of armed groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the link to security sector reform of FARDC. Mission difficult!*, Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2010.

[66] Numerous representatives of current and former militias in the Kivus clearly state that groups have repeatedly ignored or manipulated DDR efforts in situations where they could not trust that opponent groups were being disarmed simultaneously.

[67] Cf. ERIKSSON BAAZ, M., VERWEIJEN, J., *Between Integration and Disintegration: The Erratic Trajectory of the Congolese Army*, New York, SSRC, 2013.

To the detriment of sustainable development, corruption in Congolese DDR efforts was rampant. Thousands of combatants never received any assistance to return to non-military professions, and the more remote the area the more pitiful the situation was. As a Raïa Mutomboki member put it, "if someone quits a rebel group, this person has to be taken care of, otherwise he will become a rebel again."[68] Demobilising from *Mayi Mayi Tembo* in the early 2000s, this particular combatant was never given the vocational training promised. The government decided to recruit mostly presidential cronies for the higher positions within CONADER – Reverend Daniel Kawata, the agency's head, is a prime example. In addition, DDR activities were subject to considerable political pressure ahead of the country's 2006 elections. Instead of incrementally planning and conducting disarmament activities, the priority was to create integrated FARDC brigades as quickly as possible, employing the concept of *intégration accélérée* characterised by a lenient vetting of combatants' human rights records.[69]

In addition to such politicisation, DDR suffered from another dysfunctional influence. Neither the donors, nor the implementing agency CONADER and its contractors had a continuous presence in the target areas, such as the territories of Mwenga, Shabunda, Kalehe, Walungu, and Fizi for South Kivu. Reintegration measures such as the distribution of assets and vocational training were affected by a lack of proximity and follow-up. Combatants had to come to regrouping centres in urban or semi-urban areas, where they were disarmed and demobilised.

Moreover, several militias attempted to subvert the process. In fear of being left defenceless against other armed actors, they either joined the process only with a part of their effective or they established arms caches in their areas of influence, sometimes because the arms used were the property of the customary leaders. As a result of the demobilisation steps, CONADER employed local non-governmental organisations, e.g. Caritas, to implement the reintegration measures. Often this happened in a nepotistic and kinship-based approach. This translated into a neglect of many groups of combatants, including *Mayi Mayi Tembo, Kifuafua, Nyakiliba, Mongol*, and several others.

The example of CONADER presents a case of unfortunate collusion between donor institutions and the DRC government. With the international community lacking genuine interest in following up on the state of the programme until 2007, the government was able to pursue the "politics of the mirror"[70] – to display a fictional situation in which DDR programmes were seemingly running smoothly and according to donor expectations. A few years later, the Goma peace agreement marked an official end for DDR by

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[68] Interview with a Raïa Mutomboki spokesperson, April 2013.
[69] Interviews with former CONADER and government officials, April 2013.
[70] Cf. CHABAL, P., DALOZ, J.-P., *op. cit.*, p. 118.

proclaiming the official reintegration of most armed groups, including the first generation of Raïa Mutomboki.

Ever since, only DDRRR activities have continued. The *Unité d'Exécution du Programme National DDR* (UEPN-DDR) officially continues reintegration programmes but most of their current activity is either of an administrative or fictional nature. As a local observer put it drastically, "the failure of DDR activities by programs such as CONADER blends into a logic of organised crime by the higher governmental echelons, and Raïa Mutomboki is one of the multiple illustrations of that."[71] Thus, the mentioned 'nil balance' left wide parts of eastern DRC as a sanctuary for future (re-)recruitment, not only for the Raïa Mutomboki but primarily so.

By the end of 2013 and concomitant to the military defeat of the M23, the DRC government set up a new DDR plan. It provides a four-step approach, with a sensitisation phase preceding the actual DDR. Combatants are supposed to be relocated from the transit and cantonment centres, most notably Bweremana, to DDR camps in the Western and Southern parts of the DRC. As of early 2014, donors remain reluctant to fund the plan and delays on its execution have already prompted demobilised combatants to defect from transit centres.[72]

3.3. Regimentation process in FARDC

A further impetus for the rise of Raïa Mutomboki was the government's 'regimentation process' in 2011, transforming brigades into regiments. In an attempt to balance out previously created grievances by neglected militia groups and leaders and to temper the adverse consequences of previous *intégration accélérée*, the Congolese government proposed a large-scale restructuring of the FARDC's units.[73] Besides the observation that this initiative was, again, taken over by political interests and strongmen bargaining, it also caused increased insecurity. Shabunda, in particular, was left with virtually no military to protect civilians over a period of many months since the restructuring required calling in the units to central spots before sending them back re-configured to their positions again.[74] Hence, the

"FDLR took advantage of this security vacuum, moving into mining areas

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[71] Interview with a Congolese researcher, June 2013.

[72] Cf. http://www.irinnews.org/report/99741/briefing-ddr-in-eastern-drc.

[73] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al., op. cit.*, pp. 8–9. On regimentation, see also ERIKSSON BAAZ, M., VERWEIJEN, J., "The volatility of a half-cooked bouillabaisse: Rebel-military integration and conflict dynamics in eastern DRC", *African Affairs*, Vol. 112, No. 449, 2013, pp. 563-582.

[74] The FARDC are among the major sources of insecurity in eastern DRC. Without challenging this point, the argument here focuses on the subsequent loss of state legitimacy in the area concerned.

around Mulungu (eastern Shabunda) in May, and Lulingu and Nyambembe (northern Shabunda) in June […] set[ting] up new roadblocks and carried out raids in villages previously controlled by the Congolese army."[75]

It is also in light of this absence of other security forces that Raïa Mutomboki returned and developed into numerous decentralised units. The latter often acted with the consent of local customary and state authorities who felt abandoned by the country's regular forces. In many villages, it was the elders and the chiefs who encouraged young locals to form self-defence groups. Most of them adopted the label of Raïa Mutomboki, since its reputation from the 2005 successful riposte of FDLR in southern Shabunda had lived on. The leaders of the emerging subgroups went on pilgrimage to see Jean Musumbu or Eyadema Mugugu to ask them for the *dawa*. During that period the now shifting order of chapters, or franchises, developed.

3.4. "*Œil pour œil, dent pour dent*": Continuous FDLR threats

Despite Kimia II, Umoja Wetu, and Amani Leo, the main military operations against FDLR, the successors of the *interahamwe*, continued. *Kimia II* and *Umoja Wetu* were joint Rwando-Congolese operations in 2009 under the command of Generals Numbi (FARDC) and Kabarebe (Rwandan Defence Forces, RDF). *Amani Leo* followed between 2010 and 2011, undertaken by the FARDC with the UN peacekeeping mission's (MONUSCO) support. It lives on under the umbrella of 'OPS' (for: operations) segments of the FARDC, to some extent a parallel chain of command within the army, partly bypassing the respective provincial army command organised as *région militaire* (8th and 10th for North and South Kivu respectively).

The anti-FDLR offensives had one major thing in common: Instead of rooting out the Rwandan Hutu militia or forcing them to lay down their weapons, they were merely driven out of their former strongholds. However, they found new, more remote sanctuaries, mostly westwards (in South Kivu) or northwards (North Kivu). While there was considerable success in weakening the FDLR – estimated combatant numbers have fallen from 8,000 to around 2,000–3,000 including North Kivu – the operations failed to create security.[76] Displacement was massive and like a threatened predator, the FDLR increased the brutality of its response. The resurgence of Raïa Mutomboki was also a consequence of these operations, but also of their failure to protect civilian populations from retreating FDLR.[77] The large-scale creation of Raïa

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[75] STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
[76] The number of FDLR combatants is, more than in other rebel groups, a fiercely debated subject. The numbers chosen here are a rough median of various different sources and claims. They are likely to have fallen further between 2011 and 2013.
[77] Cf. STEARNS, J. *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-22.

Mutomboki groups brought a further escalation and contributed to a series of tit-for-tat massacres in 2011 and 2012.[78]

After the defeat of M23, MONUSCO developed plans to have its FIB launch joint operations with the FARDC against the FDLR. Having been announced in late 2013, it is unclear when they will actually begin (apart from a few first small advances in March 2014). Their outcome is also likely to shape the future threat scenario and related activities of the current Raïa Mutomboki factions.

4. LOCAL SECURITY DILEMMAS IN A REGIONALISED CONFLICT

Scholars of the Congolese conflicts for good reasons often emphasise the following heuristic frames in their explanations: land conflicts, community tensions, elite competition, and economic motivations.[79] On the other hand, many attempts to grasp the prevailing complexity end up in maintaining western narratives and paternalist prejudices, such as barbarism, underdevelopment, greed, and other "dominant narratives".[80] In eastern DRC, militia creation and coalition building emerged as a constant factor shaping the politico-military reality, but perception has also played a role. As developed above, disarmament, both for the Congolese (DDR) and foreign (DDRRR) armed groups has had mixed success, at best. Also, neglect and the politics of divide-and-rule by the government have often either pitted communities against each other, or weakened some of their self-defence capacity while others were allowed to retain their military strength. Asymmetric power distribution – reflected by the relative strength of the FDLR between 1996 and 2009 but also by the CNDP and M23 rebellions since 2006 – has added to these ingredients resulting in a set of various local security dilemmas as the following analysis tries to explain.

4.1. Militia formation and ambiguous state contest

Confronted with the vicious circle of violence in eastern DRC, observers often become either cynical or puzzled. The protagonists, however, maintain a rather pragmatic viewpoint: "Politics are formed in the musings of people that hold their experience in their hands,"[81] a commander answered when asked

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[78] Cf. http://congosiasa.blogspot.de/2012/05/tit-for-tat-massacres-kill-hundreds.html.
[79] Cf. VLASSENROOT, K., RAEYMAEKERS, T. (eds.), *Conflict and social transformation …*, *op. cit.*, STEARNS, J., *Dancing…*, *op. cit.*, and AUTESSERRE, S., "Dangerous Tales. Dominant Narratives on the Congo and their unintended consequences", *African Affairs*, Vol. 111, 2012, No. 443, pp. 1-21.
[80] Cf. AUTESSERRE, S., *op. cit.*
[81] Interview with a Raïa Mutomboki combatant, April 2013.

why Raïa Mutomboki was retaliating against the FDLR by the same means. The fight against 'everything Rwandophone' follows a clear tit-for-tat logic.

Political legitimacy is a crucial pattern of contest in eastern Congo. The continuous de-legitimisation of the state as a Weberian monopolist of violence has strengthened the legitimacy of non-state actors perceived as representatives of the population. However, this appears to work the other way around as well: Raïa Mutomboki, like other groups, thrive to a certain degree on state-like legitimacy in their fight against FDLR. Their re-emergence in 2011 coincides with a loss of state legitimacy as a result of the regimentation process and concomitant neglect of civilian populations in western South Kivu. On a local level, this led to a gain in legitimacy for non-state structures coupled with the notion of legitimacy that arises from ethnically and nationally framed narratives. This applies to military, bureaucratic, and political actors, several of whom have defected from government service to Raïa Mutomboki. Much of what is ascribed to the 'state' in terms of expectations can be found in the parlance of Raïa Mutomboki. The loss of state legitimacy, in this context, was not only a condition for the emergence of groups such as Raïa Mutomboki, it is also an outcome of the latter appropriating and re-imagining 'state'-like attitudes, reflected in the positioning and discourse of political and military leaders.[82] In a similar vein, lower-level collaborators (local state agents, policemen, rank-and-file soldiers) adhering to the movement also shape the non-state construction of 'state'-like attitudes. Where social pressure makes them join a militia, they not only often succumb to such pressure – they also transfer their *habitus* as state agents into this very militia, in particular if the latter employs narratives of nationalism and patriotism such as Raïa Mutomboki does.

The current Kigulube group is a particularly good example of how Raïa Mutomboki 'mimicks' the state. In every village the local commanders and secretaries use government-like stamps to lend a kind of official character to their movement. Hoffmann and Vlassenroot point to this by stating that "while the state has lost much of its authority and governance capacity, state discourse manifestly has not, and the state has remained a very effective symbol of power."[83] Regarding the control of movement, they are actually replacing the state and in this capacity, they also interact and negotiate with the customary authorities (when the latter are not already part of the movement anyway). Revenues are generated through both voluntary contributions and coercive taxation of goods circulating through their areas of control. There is also income generated from mineral exploitation, in particular in northern and north-eastern Shabunda, but not necessarily in the sense of a stereotypical 'blood minerals' paradigm, rather as a normal economic activity where senior

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[82] The author owes this insight to a conversation with Justine Brabant.
[83] HOFFMANN, K., VLASSENROOT, K., *op. cit.*

figures act like civilian pit owners in non-conflict zones. Since our current understanding of this issue is still insufficient, further research is necessary to assess the degree of coercion and violence used by Raïa Mutomboki in their mining activities. While this should not be misunderstood as a confirmation for greed-based hypotheses, subsequent studies need to address the entanglement of mining, taxation, and other forms of income generation in light of violent transformations that have impacted on the way economic activities are embedded in social relations.[84]

Under the guise of mediated, or "negotiated statehood"[85] and "governance without government"[86], not only customary authorities but also official state representatives have joined the Raïa Mutomboki movement – some even as key leaders, mobilisers, or supporters. They include different people from provincial and national members of parliament to local clerks and policemen. In this straddling logic and very similar to other militias, Raïa Mutomboki provides an example of how statehood is creatively re-interpreted and 're-configured' by individuals and communities. A whole set of "actors constantly negotiate, collaborate, compete, and fight over the daily exercise of public authority. Many of these actors draw on and evoke the idea of the state in order to legitimize their claims to authority and power."[87] According to this logic, militia activity can also become a functional element in the context of elite contest and the quest for legitimacy and authority (such as for so-called *candidats malheureux* after losing an election).

In a system that induces high insecurity levels, creating and maintaining militias can also generate relational security for a given group. The collective trigger leading to militia creation often emerges when a threatened group becomes anxious about their survival and general wellbeing. At a more individual level, militia politics in DRC suggest power-based explanations. The utility of violent insurgence is an aligning element – creating, or being a member of a militia can offer rational benefits that go far beyond those discussed in the positivist literature on 'greed and grievance'. The absence or comparative disadvantage of alternative livelihood strategies is a key variable in that regard.

4.2. Volatile neighbourhoods

The concept of bad neighbourhoods is often used as a politico-geographical explanation for countries sliding into political instability. It mainly refers to questions of border porosity and spillover effects. The African continent,

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[84] The author is grateful for a particular comment by one of the reviewers that shaped this idea.
[85] Cf. HAGMANN, T., PÉCLARD, D., *op. cit.*
[86] Cf. RAEYMAEKERS, T., MENKHAUS, K., VLASSENROOT, K., *op. cit.*
[87] HOFFMANN, K., VLASSENROOT, K., *op. cit.*

due to its infamous colonial demarcation history, is often cited as a prime example for cross-border insecurity and regionalised conflicts created through transnational spread of armed activity. While we should not fall prey to uncritically employing this concept there is plenty of evidence for such cross-border dynamics have existed in the context of the Great Lakes region. Within Congolese territory too, cross-border tendencies of spreading insecurity are observable. The idea of "governance without government" is supportive of that insofar as it suggests a different reading of statehood and civil war.

Continued armed conflicts during the last twenty years have created an unstable status quo in the DRC whereby the central authority of the state is no longer a monopolist and sometimes not even a key broker of security – it has become one actor among others. With central authority gone, the state then either vanishes from the public sphere or blends in with non-public actors or interests. The result is a situation than can best be described as the contest between various state-like micro-units. Subsequently they reproduce the idea of the bad neighbourhood at the intrastate level. At this level, constant negotiations of statehood in the shape of "institutionalization of power relations into distinct forms of statehood"[88] take place.

Classic state-centric analysis – most common in the discourses about 'state failure' – therefore appears to be too static to understand alternative, sometimes 'hybrid' types of governance. Instead, contested areas are characterised by fluid, constantly negotiated borders and societal arrangements. These might be violent or peaceful, but they usually differ from Westphalian ideal types of social organisation.[89]

4.3. The notion of Security Dilemma

The initial notion of a/the "security dilemma" is a result of John Herz's work. Although he is an international relations theorist, his conception of security dilemmas – despite what is often claimed – is not necessarily confined to interstate relations as a state of anarchy among like units. Following Herz, "wherever such anarchic society has existed – and it has existed in most periods of known history on some level – there has arisen what may be called the 'security dilemma' of men, or groups, or their leaders."[90] Such dilemmas can entail a (vicious) circular logic of action and reaction – both on the grounds of real and perceived insecurity in relation to other actors posing a threat. Influenced by such pressure, actors will try "to attain security from such attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape

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[88] HAGMANN, T., PÉCLARD, D., *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[89] Cf. RAEYMAEKERS, T., MENKHAUS, K., VLASSENROOT, K., *op. cit.*
[90] HERZ, J., "Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma", *World Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1950, Cambridge, CUP, p. 157.

the impact of the power of others."[91]

Following this logic, Jervis estimates that the "lack of an international sovereign not only permits wars to occur, but also makes it difficult for states […] to arrive at goals that they recognize as being in their common interest."[92] Since an overarching unit of oversight and set of binding rules do not exist, actors on the same level will remain in a context of competition and insecurity. The notions of 'international' and 'states' could, in the Congolese context, be replaced by 'national' and 'militias'/'powerbrokers' without distorting the structural logic of Jervis' argument. The most commonly cited example for the idea of security dilemmas is certainly the Cold War arms race between the USSR and the US. However, this does not mean that security dilemmas do not arise in a sub-national context or outside any state context at all.

4.4. Local Security Dilemmas

Many of the multiple conflicts in eastern DRC are framed less by a constantly massive nature of violence than by cyclical developments. Large areas in the region thus represent a continuum of regionalised conflicts that translate into (often interconnected) local or intrastate security dilemmas similar to those outlined by Posen for the case of Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia as it disintegrated.[93] While the DRC is certainly not Yugoslavia, the condition of the state in the DRC also features a central authority too weak to avoid the partial emergence of non-state governance and armed contest.

As Roe noted, it is not necessarily deep hostility or hatred that is responsible for such situations, because security is constructed relationally: "Uncertainty as to others' intentions is therefore central in understanding the tragedy of the security dilemma."[94] The precarious security situation in much of the Kivu region, as it is sketched in the preceding paragraph on armed groups and shifting alliances, is exemplary for these dynamics. For the parts of South Kivu under discussion, this is linked to the activity of the FDLR and Raïa Mutomboki. Where the state is either absent or not concerned with the provision of security, the resulting "anarchy promotes 'self-help' behaviour"[95] – a trigger for Raïa Mutomboki. Considering the aforementioned competing and overlapping systems of governance and authority, this makes the security dilemma a concept to be transplanted from its interstate home turf to domestic contexts.

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[91] *Ibidem*, p. 157.
[92] JERVIS, R., "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma", *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1978, Cambridge, CUP, p. 167.
[93] Cf. ROE, P., *op. cit*., and POSEN, B., "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict", *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1993, pp. 27–47.
[94] ROE, P., *op. cit.*, p. 184.
[95] *Ibidem*, p. 185.

However, while international relations theory emphasises the perception of insecurity, the threat posed by the FDLR is also grounded in real experiences of large parts of the population. The resulting relational danger or lack of security for individuals and communities is a main feature of local security dilemmas. In the DRC case, this often includes a juxtaposition of indigenous and Rwandophone groups, but examples are not limited to that.[96]

Contrary to the Cold War protagonists, many militias in the DRC do not engage in what we know as arms races. They aim to ensure relational rather than absolute security and wellbeing as compared to potential enemies. Most of the Raïa Mutomboki operations against the FDLR or Rwandophone FARDC units[97] – often denounced as *Forces Armées Rwandaises Déployées au Congo*[98] – or their respective dependants have led to retaliation against the civilian population as such, for the simple fact that it is often impossible to single out Raïa Mutomboki combatants. With ensuing ripostes being carried out as severely as possible – often targeting the helpless dependents rather than the combatants – vicious circles of violence and counter-violence underpin the formation of local security dilemmas. Frequent interference by strongmen pursuing their own agendas such as creating leverage by maintaining a militia adds fuel to the fire once ignited at the local community level.

5.   CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the recent past, eastern DRC has experienced an increased volatility as compared to the so-called post-conflict phase from 2003 onwards. Since the last presidential elections in 2011, low-intensity warfare appears to have increased again in North and South Kivu as the general proliferation of armed groups indicates.[99] Focussing on the Raïa Mutomboki, this contribution tried to capture some of the manifold dynamics prevailing in the Kivutian militia landscape. It listed a couple of main enabling factors for this decentralised movement to emerge. Employing field data on their structure and strategy, it has argued that for several specific reasons, Raïa Mutomboki – in particular its juxtaposition to the FDLR and the ambiguous role of the national army – has strongly contributed to the emergence of local security dilemmas.

The mobilisation logics of Raïa Mutomboki follow a combination of self-defence but also to a certain extent elite-based dynamics, which apply to different extents to the different franchises and chapters. Deeper research is

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[96] Cf. ERIKSSON BAAZ, M., VERWEIJEN, J., *Between Integration and Disintegration…*, *op. cit.*, p. 12-13.

[97] In 2012 and 2013, FARDC battalions of Bunyakiri and Kalonge were made up of ex-CDNP or Banyamulenge. Raïa Mutomboki combatants left no doubt that they would try to dislodge them.

[98] Interview with Raïa Mutomboki combatants, April 2013.

[99] Cf. VOGEL, C., "Mapping armed groups…", *op. cit.*

necessary in order to clarify, where and why specific logics predominate – in particular with regard to elite strategies reflected in the rise of Raïa Mutomboki – as well as on the differences among the different parts of Raïa Mutomboki. Moreover, the changing nature of the Raïa Mutomboki phenomenon demands increased research on the organisational development and *raison d'être* of the armed franchise's various factions.

In more general terms, the evolution, as much as the currently scattered set-up of Raïa Mutomboki begs the question to what extent this represents a durable and cohesive armed movement in the Congolese militia landscape. This is due to the aforementioned strategic reasoning and subsequently developed decentralised structure but refers to difficulties in both forming and attracting support for a larger movement à la *Mayi Mayi* Tembo. Under these conditions, and with government efforts to convince parts of the movement to demobilise at the time of writing, Raïa Mutomboki's future remains largely unpredictable. However, the underlying grievances and an unevenly improving security situation in the region – coupled with continuous power struggles among elites – might be conducive to the survival of this phenomenon despite a certain lack of internal cohesion and limited financial, social, and political support.

Regarding policy implications, there is a high probability that, as long as the current security dilemmas – expressed by continuous incidents[100] – are not resolved (e.g. through thorough DDR), cyclical violence in eastern DRC might continue. Against the backdrop of ongoing military activities of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade, it appears likely that the military topography of the Kivus will be shaken up once again. If there is no adequate structure to secure areas after fighting – MONUSCO's current approach to set up 'Islands of Stability' is a patchy solution at best – newly emerging security voids might be the result.[101] This could, in the end, be a situation similar to the one that gave birth to Raïa Mutomboki in the first place and, in the worst case, perpetuate (the cyclical nature of) eastern DRC's local security dilemmas.

Bukavu/Goma, June 2014

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[100] See also: http://www.irinnews.org/report/95626, http://congosiasa.blogspot.ch/2012/05/tit-for-tat-massacres-kill-hundreds.html, http://christophvogel.net/2013/06/11/local-security-dilemmas-in-eastern-congo/, http://www.rnw.nl/afrique/article/rdc-qui-sont-les-raïa-mutomboki-2, or http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/29/world/africa/in-congo-self-defense-can-offer-its-own-risk.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

[101] Cf. VOGEL, C., *Islands of Stability or Swamps of Insecurity? MONUSCO's Intervention Brigade and the danger of emerging security voids in eastern Congo*, Brussels, Egmont, 2014.