

Demilitarising militias in the Kivus (eastern Democratic Republic of Congo)¹

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Introduction

The devastating conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which resulted in a tragic humanitarian catastrophe that claimed the lives of four million people, officially came to an end in 2003. Since then the country has been undergoing post-conflict reconstruction. A fragile peace has been achieved with the organising of elections, the withdrawal of foreign troops, and the implementation of the demilitarisation process. However, the eastern regions of the country, specifically North Kivu and South Kivu (the Kivus), continue to be plagued by endemic violence which has had calamitous effects on civilians, including forced displacement, death, economic and physical insecurity, and sexual violence. The main spoilers to the peace process, and

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more specifically national demilitarisation efforts, are dissident militias that emerged after 2003.

The armed groups and militias to be examined in this paper operate mainly in the Kivus, and range from the highly organised *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR, Democratic Force for the Liberation of Rwanda), to factionalised, informal groups such as the Mayi Mayi and Kinyarwanda under General Nkunda to renegade elements in the *Forces Armées de la République du Congo* (FARDC, the Congolese national army), such as the 81st and 83rd brigades in North Kivu. These groups are held together by coercion, violence, strong leadership and, in the case of the Kivus, also by espousal of a specific ethnic configuration and incentives such as resource exploitation and looting. The recent stand-off between FARDC, Nkunda's forces, the FDLR and Mayi Mayi (who have organised themselves with FDLR deserters to form a new group, *Front pour la Libération du Nord Kivu* (FLNK, North Kivu Liberation Front)) clearly shows that the demilitarisation process is far from complete and that the Congolese government still faces numerous challenges in disarming and demobilising these volatile elements in the Kivus.

This paper seeks to provide:

- A background to demilitarisation efforts in eastern DRC
- A critical analysis (local context, motivation and organisational structure) of the character of the militias currently based in the Kivus
- An assessment of the major challenges facing the demilitarisation of these dissident groups

Demilitarisation efforts in the eastern DRC

Demilitarisation is defined as a process involving the disarmament and demobilisation of combatants and their reintegration into society (DDR). Demilitarisation is based on the notion that combatants are potential spoilers to the peace process and therefore pose a danger in a post-conflict environment. They have the capacity to disrupt and undermine the peace process, either by returning to hostilities with their opponents or by resorting to armed banditry.² Therefore, recognising that this volatility can be alleviated through targeted programmes, demilitarisation focuses not only on structured disarmament and demobilisation of combatants, but also provides monetary incentives designed to facilitate reintegration into civilian life. The DRC combined the DDR process with security sector reform (SSR), which affords combatants the choice of reintegrating into civilian life or joining the FARDC.

Owing to the complexities of the Congolese war, the government and international community have had to deal with both Congolese and foreign armed groups and militias. Congolese armed groups underwent the DDR process, which was coordinated by the *Commission Nationale pour la Démobilisation et la Réinsertion* (CONADER, National Commission for Demobilisation and Reinsertion), guided by the *Plan National pour la Désarmement, la Démobilisation et la Réinsertion* (PNDDR, National Plan for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reinsertion), and financed in its entirety by the World Bank. Foreign armed groups, on the other hand, underwent the disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, reintegration or resettlement (DDRRR) process, coordinated mainly by the United Nations Mission in DRC (*Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo*, MONUC), guided by the Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Program (MDRP), and spearheaded by the World Bank and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

As of January 2007, CONADER had disarmed and demobilised 115 000 adult combatants and 54 000 children associated with armed groups and forces (*enfants associés aux forces et aux groupes armés*, EAFGA). Of the adult combatants, only 44 600 have been reinserted (CONADER 2007)³ while most of the children were returned home to their families with the support of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).⁴ As of February 2007, there were 85 000 adult combatants and an estimated 15 000 to 20 000 children waiting to undergo the DDR process (CONADER 2007).⁵ With regard to DDRRR, figures indicate that MONUC repatriated a total of 14 100 soldiers (and dependants) from foreign armed groups (mainly from Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi) between 2003 and February 2007.⁶

The demilitarisation of Congolese armed groups has been a difficult and complex process, as it attempts to link demilitarisation with integration into the national army. The DDR programme has three main objectives:

- Transfer of weapons from combatants to MONUC and finally to the FARDC
- Giving former combatants the option either to be integrated into the FARDC or reintegrated into civilian life
- Changing the FARDC's main function to be the fostering of national security

The DDR process begins at the transit site where the identity of the combatant is verified and weapons are handed over. Typically, the equation for disarmament is 'one combatant, one weapon'. However, in areas where Mayi Mayi were prevalent, one weapon was taken for as many as ten combatants.⁷ But, there have also been many instances in which combatants had more than one weapon each. Early on in the process, hand grenades – readily available in the eastern regions of DRC – were also accepted as 'weapons'.⁸

After the verification process, combatants receive a certificate of demobilisation and enter an orientation centre. During orientation, which lasts for three to four days, combatants are provided with sensitisation training and have to make the crucial decision of whether they want to integrate into the national army or return to civilian life. Those who choose integration into the FARDC become the responsibility of the *Structure Militaire d'Intégration* (SMI, Integrated Military Structure) which, along with the FARDC and MONUC (the latter providing logistical support), transport the ex-combatants to *centres de brassage*. The *brassage* process runs for about 45 days and involves 'military training', after which the former combatant is officially integrated into the national army and posted to a FARDC brigade, usually not at his place or region of origin. Those who opt for civilian reinsertion are given US\$110 to cover transport back home and basic needs. After that former combatants receive US\$25 per month for 12 months to cover basic living expenses and to 'hold them over' until a reintegration programme has been established in the home community. Only about 38 per cent of former combatants have undergone training as part of the reintegration programme. Currently, the entire DDR process is on hold (although there are about 80 000 combatants waiting to undergo it) since the World Bank has withdrawn its funding of CONADER owing to allegations of mismanagement of resources and corruption.

Ituri, in Orientale Province, had its own demilitarisation programme known as Ituri DCR. Its emphasis was on community reinsertion. The programme was piloted in 2004 in response to the Dar es Salaam Accords, and initially it did not form part of the PNDDR. In 2006, however, it was formalised as part of the PNDDR.⁹ The Ituri DCR had three distinct phases of demilitarisation owing to the sheer number of combatants in the region. The first was between September 2004 and June 2005, during which 12 000 combatants were demobilised and the second was from June to September 2006, during which 6 000 combatants were demobilised. The third phase, currently under way, entails attempts by CONADER to demobilise armed groups and militias still operating in the region.

The DDRRR process, organised by MONUC and the World Bank, focuses mainly on disarming foreign armed groups and then returning them to their countries of origin. The main groups undergoing the DDRRR process are the FDLR and CNDD-FDD (*Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie – Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie*) in the Kivus, and the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda ADF-NALU and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Ituri and the Kivus.¹⁰

Local context in the Kivus: Politicisation of ethnicity

Before taking a closer look at the main militias and armed groups active in the Kivus post 2003 it is imperative to gain a contextualised understanding of the Kivus and, more specifically, the politicisation of ethnicity.

Ethnicity in the Kivus has been politicised by local/provincial/national governments and armed groups alike to further their own political legitimacy. Armed groups have also successfully used ethnicity to garner local community support and to recruit and retain fighters. The key identity-based conflict revolved around manipulation along the broader Great Lakes Rwandaphone ethnic configuration, and the debate on autochthony (in other words, the conflict between *originaires* and *non-originaires*, locals and strangers). These conflicts have their roots in the Second Congolese War (1998–2003), in which the role of Rwanda and Uganda¹¹ turned the local, historically contained conflict over land and resources into a regionalised, ethnic war. Furthermore, the politicisation of ethnicity cannot be divorced from the issues of land tenure and political power, and military and political leaders have manipulated ethnicity and land issues as a means of securing their power base and control over economic resources (agricultural land, forestry, mining). In the Kivus, as in much of the rest of the eastern DRC, land tenure remains the strongest factor in determining economic survival and has contributed to the persistence of ethnic-based militias and outbreaks of violence.

The Kinyarwanda speakers (referred to as Banyarwanda in North Kivu and Banyamulenge in South Kivu) are of Tutsi origin. This group was at the centre of the second Congolese war and were eventually ‘victimised’ to serve the political interests of local and regional actors. Throughout the conflict, their identity (in other words, their Tutsi origin) was manipulated along dangerous Hutu versus Tutsi, and Bantu versus Nilotic ethnic lines under the overarching concept of Rwandophoncity, despite centuries of peaceful coexistence and intermarriage among the numerous ethnic groups in the Kivus. The issues of citizenship and autochthony were other root causes of the conflict in the Kivus, and are currently still fuelling ethnic hatred among the Kinyarwanda Tutsi militia collectives and the Mayi Mayi. The local versus stranger duality of autochthony versus allochthony finds expression in the DRC through rumours, political tracts and speeches, and draws its energy from imprecise overlaps with other powerful and pre-existing polarities in identity (Jackson 2006). The Mayi Mayi have reconstructed their identity on the basis of their strong claim to be ‘authentic’ Congolese, or ‘autochthones’, and are generally anti-Kinyarwanda, anti-Tutsi and anti-Rwanda. Numerous Mayi Mayi groups are sympathetic to the FDLR, and have collaborated with them on many occasions, especially in targeting local Tutsi communities and mobilising resources. However, there are also some Mayi Mayi groups who have expressed a clear disdain for the FDLR and regard its members as ‘foreign occupiers and aggressors’.¹²

Many commentators consider the manipulation of ethnicity, particularly in the Kivus, as one of the major causes of the Second Congolese War.¹³ According to Mamdani, the conflict sprung from ethnic tensions when the Banyamulenge revolted against the government’s efforts to deny them recognition as Zairean/Congolese citizens, which led to a fully fledged civil war between the Banyamulenge and Hutu refugees, with the government supporting the latter (Mamdani 2002:501–502). The presence of armed Rwandan Hutus

in eastern Congo exacerbated tension between Hutus and Tutsis, who had for many years been coexisting in North Kivu, as well as between 'local' Zaireans and Zairean Tutsis (Banyamulenge) in South Kivu.¹⁴ Ethnic tension in the Kivus has become worse since the 2004 Bukavu crisis,¹⁵ as the ethnic configuration remains implanted in the consciousness of local populations, authorities and militias in both Kivus. Historically, local populations have internalised the ethnic discourse at grassroots level, and there has been significant distrust between the Kinyarwandan Tutsis and the rest of the population in the Kivus (which included the Hutu, Nande, Hunde and Nyanga ethnic groups).¹⁶ As such, Kinyarwandan Tutsis are caught between two mutually reinforcing and conflicting ideologies. On the one hand militias in the Kivus are attempting to bind various communities along Hutu and Tutsi lines; on the other hand the president and leadership in the western parts of the DRC are inciting popular sentiment against the Rwandan threat and accuse all Kinyarwandans of being foreigners and puppets (ICG 2005:8–12). Some have claimed that RCD-Goma (*Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie*, Rally for Congolese Democracy) orchestrated the Bukavu crisis with support from Rwanda and continue to support the various Kinyarwandan Tutsi armed collectives active in the Kivus.¹⁷ RCD-Goma denies this emphatically. Nonetheless, at both the national and the regional level, the Bukavu crisis heightened disdain towards the Kinyarwandan Tutsi population.

Overview of militias

Mayi Mayi

The Mayi Mayi worked alongside the Congolese government, were treated as an independent entity and participated in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in 2002 and, as such, were given positions in the national assembly, provincial administration and army. However, after 2002, with the rebel threat contained, the Mayi Mayi militias took on a life of their own. Many defected from the army, while other Mayi Mayi groups were disassembled by regional military commanders and integrated into other military units (ICG 2006b:15–16).

As of February 2007, the three main Mayi Mayi groups in North Kivu have a collective strength of between 1 600 and 2 300 combatants. The group led by Colonel Yelemei Jackson was dismantled when he was put under house arrest, but small bands of between 300 and 500 combatants continue to resist DDR. The Mayi Mayi group led by Colonel Baraka, a 12-year-old who inherited his leadership position from his deceased father, has a collective strength of between 700 and 1 000 combatants.¹⁸ Finally, the Mayi Mayi group operating in the Vurondo area in Lubero territory comprises individuals who are interested only in personal enrichment. They have no clear leader and have a collective strength of between 600 and 800 combatants. While the Baraka group and remnants of the dismantled Jackson groups continue to engage in local defence activities and personal

enrichment activities, the Vurondo group has no intention of demobilising and remains a highly criminalised armed band in North Kivu.¹⁹ Although all three groups are engaged in criminalised economic activities, the Baraka and Jackson groups are distinguished from the Vurondo group by their goal of providing local defence for their communities in addition to seeking personal enrichment.

In South Kivu there were seven main Mayi Mayi groups with a collective strength of between 3 500 and 4 500 combatants. Recently, the groups, led by local warlords Colonels Dunia, Kalala Ruhara, 106 and Abdul, have submitted to the process of demilitarisation. Yet many officers and combatants from the South Kivu Mayi Mayi continue operating in their local 'areas of origin'.²⁰ They are mainly concerned with personal enrichment through resource exploitation, and resist DDR in order to garner high-ranking posts in government and the FARDC. All these groups retain local support by stating they are active only to provide local defence.²¹ The Mayi Mayi groups led by Bedi Ibuli Ngangla, Major Kirikicho and Moime Alexander are local defence forces and comprise between 50 and 100 combatants each. They have all refused DDR and have an anti-Tutsi ideological basis which enables them to recruit and retain combatants and garner popular support. The Bedi group has also been known to collaborate with Rasta outside its normal areas of operation. In addition, Colonel Mutapeke of the 108th Brigade of the FARDC in South Kivu is resisting army integration because he wants to defend Mayi Mayi territory and its population.²²

Forces démocratiques de libération de Rwanda and Rasta

The most significant foreign militia in the Kivus is the Rwandan FDLR. The FDLR was formed in 2000 and comprises ex-FAR (*Forces armées rwandaises*) and 'interhamwe' elements that fled to the eastern DRC during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The group espouses a radical pro-Hutu, anti-Tutsi revisionist view of the genocide, and aims to organise military operations against the Rwandan government (ICG 2005:8–12). The armed wing of the FDLR, known as FOCA (*Force combattant Abachunguzi*, Abachunguzi Combat Force) plays a significant role in the decision-making process of the FDLR. The FDLR is currently estimated to have about 8 000 combatants in the Kivus (5 000 in North Kivu and 3 000 in South Kivu).²³

Rasta is a notorious criminalised militia operating in FDLR areas that has committed a number of violent attacks against civilians.²⁴ The group was initially formed by Commander Koffi, an FDLR deserter, but its current leadership is unknown.²⁵ Rasta comprises local criminal elements, ex-Mayi Mayi elements and FARDC deserters, and has a collective strength of between 300 and 500 combatants. The group does not have any ideological, ethnic or political objectives; their only aim is self-enrichment. Rasta has a good information network with local collaborators in many villages who identify potential targets. The general perception is that Rasta is a special branch of the FDLR,

which loots and kidnaps as a means to raise funds for the FDLR, but the FDLR has systematically denied these allegations.²⁶

Front pour la libération du Nord Kivu

The FLNK, a new militia that emerged in mid-2007, is a collective consisting of Mayi Mayi and FDLR deserters. The Mayi Mayi and FDLR share a common, anti-Tutsi ideology; however, it is more deeply entrenched within the FDLR due to the institutionalised indoctrination/training programme for combatants. The FLNK claims to be patrolling the areas where Nkunda operates, and that it has cooperated with the Congolese army to contain Nkunda's forces. However, the Congolese army strongly denies any link with the FLNK (or the FDLR). The recent military conflict between the Congolese army (supported by MONUC), the FLNK and Nkunda's troops led to more than 370 000 civilians being internally displaced. Despite numerous ultimatums to disarm and demobilise, Nkunda has been resolute in his defence of the Tutsi population and is resisting forced demilitarisation (BBC 2007a, 2007b).

Kinyarwanda Tutsi armed collectives

A number of Kinyarwanda Tutsi armed collectives have sprung up in the Kivus in reaction to the rise of the FDLR and anti-Tutsi sentiment. Currently the most notorious of these militias is Nkunda's group in North Kivu. Nkunda has managed to mobilise between 4 000 and 5 000 combatants, all of whom fall under his direct control. They conduct his military operatives under the banner of a broad rebel movement known as the *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP, National Congress for the Defence of the Nation) (IRIN 2007). Nkunda refuses to undergo the DDR process and asserts that he is defending the marginalised Kinyarwanda Tutsi population in the Kivus against the FDLR and other anti-Tutsi organisations. Nkunda wields significant support over the 81st and 83rd brigades in the FARDC, resulting in approximately 6 000 soldiers falling under his direct command. Most of these FARDC soldiers have refused to partake in the army integration process, and are former RCD-Goma supporters.²⁷ The co-option of rogue FARDC brigades has given rise to an uneasy but lucrative partnership between Nkunda and the FARDC, including opportunistic senior officers such as Captain Akatomba of the 118th brigade in North Kivu. Akatomba has asserted that he and his soldiers will never join the army integration process because the Tutsi population will not be properly defended by an integrated army.²⁸

In South Kivu, the Group of 47 and the Moramvia Group are a collective of Banyamulenge Tutsis loyal to Colonels Laurent Nkunda and Jules Mutesbusi, and number approximately 1 000 combatants. The Group of 47, lead by Colonel Viente Bisogo, was instrumental in the capture of Bukavu by Nkunda and Mutebusi in 2004. The group consists of Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsis in South Kivu) who want to

rule themselves and be treated with respect in the territory they occupy on the Haux Plateau (southern part of South Kivu). The Moramvia Group is led by Major Michel Rukunda and, like the Group of 47, consists mainly of Banyamulenge. This group was set up specifically to defend the Banyamulenge minority on the Haux Plateau. There is general consensus among Tutsi armed collectives that Banyamulenge combatants should not be integrated into a 'Bantu' army, as they will be attacked and persecuted.²⁹

Motivations and organisational structure

Motivations

The motivations of armed groups and militias operating in the Kivus can be understood at three mutually constitutive and reinforcing levels. The first and overarching level is an emphasis on personal enrichment (at the individual and leadership levels) and 'criminal' economic-related activities (at the organisational level), including occupying and controlling mining areas, keeping supply routes open for arms/ammunition and logistics, arms trafficking, illegal tax collection and looting. The austerity of economic and social conditions in eastern DRC serves as an incentive for individual combatants to engage in armed activity. Individual combatants receive far fewer economic benefits than do high-ranking officers within an armed movement, which 'forces' such individuals to exploit and loot local populations in order to supplement their income. However, within the rubric of personal enrichment, there must be a slight differentiation between economic survival of individual combatants, and economic exploitation of local populations and natural resources, especially by high-ranking officers. Although both have a dimension of criminality, as economic gains are achieved by exploiting local communities and natural resources, the large scale of exploitation reinforced by kidnappings and killings by groups such as the FLDR, Rasta and Nkunda's collective remains the major difference.

At the second level, many militias are also motivated by the prospect of providing security to their communities, reinforced by a dangerous ethnicised configuration. The use of ethnicity and protection as motivation, even at the level of rhetoric, enables armed groups to garner local sympathy and has proven to be an effective strategy for recruiting and retaining combatants. For example, the Mayi Mayi have historically been a local defence force³⁰ recruited and organised along ethnic lines, and worked very closely with the FAC, ex-FAR and members of the 'interhamwe' during the two Congolese wars. The main focus of the Mayi Mayi has been on protecting land, defending local populations against ongoing violence perpetrated by various armed groups and militias, and protecting 'Congolese' soil against foreign incursion. The Kinyarwanda Tutsi collectives in the Kivus and, most notoriously, Nkunda's forces, rely on promoting the local defence of Tutsi populations in the region who feel politically and ethnically targeted by non-Tutsi communities and armed groups such as the Mayi Mayi, the FDLR and, most recently, the FLNK.

The third level, which is closely linked to the second level, involves taking advantage of the post-transition political climate and resisting the demilitarisation process. The political transition and post-transition processes in the DRC have emphasised political co-optation, integration of the army and economic growth. As such, there is a low level of impunity, thereby making it easier for groups to flourish. With the exception of the Mayi Mayi, the armed groups and militias currently active were not signatories to the Sun City and Dar-es-Salaam accords. Therefore, firstly, they seek to be recognised as a threat to security in the region, which will prompt the FARDC, MONUC and the government to negotiate with them. This will in turn enable them to make specific demands. Secondly, once they form part of the army integration process, they aim to increase their numbers and remain in their respective regions, which will enable them to dominate certain regions and brigades for the sake of economic and political advancement. Demands by militia groups include amnesty for combatants (especially for key leaders), high-ranking FARDC positions for militia officers, and permission for former combatants to remain in their respective home regions. Numerous Mayi Mayi militias have benefited from having their demands met in this way, including major Ituri militias, the *Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais* (MRC, Congolese Revolutionary Movement) led by Mathieu Ngijololo, and the *Front de résistance populaire de l'Ituri* (FRPI, Ituri Popular Resistance Front), led by Cobra Matata. A similar arrangement was offered to Laurent Nkunda, which he has systematically refused on the grounds that only he (and his armed groups) can protect the Tutsi community in the eastern DRC.³¹

Organisational structure

The organisational structure of militias in the Kivus ranges from highly centralised and formal to disparate and informal. The Mayi Mayi are mostly localised, have informal structures, and operate in groups ranging in numbers from one hundred to more than one thousand. The leaders and combatants are Congolese, usually from local villages.³²

In contrast, the FDLR is highly organised, and FOCA, its armed wing, observes a strict military structure built around highly mobile battalions that average four companies of approximately 140 men each. Most FOCA combatants are Congolese younger than 18 years, and most of them were either kidnapped or coerced into joining the organisation.³³ The leaders are predominately Rwandan or pro-FDLR/‘Hutu’ Congolese, and control their troops through coercion, terror and discipline.³⁴ In addition, most combatants are ideologically indoctrinated.³⁵ All these factors combine to create a dangerous ethnicised armed movement.³⁶

The Kinyarwanda Tutsi collectives in the Kivus, specifically the Group of 47 and the Moramvia Group, are loosely organised, but Nkunda’s forces are highly organised along local community and clandestine networks and have a clear chain of command. The Kinyarwanda Tutsi collectives receive financial and political support from the local

‘Tutsi’ population and leadership, as well as moral support based on a natural sense of ethnic identification and survival. In addition, Nkunda has strategically co-opted various elements of the FARDC (former RCD-Goma combatants) to align with the objectives and activities of the Kinyarwanda Tutsi armed collectives. In addition, Nkunda’s group has established network-like organisational structures, which makes it more difficult to dismantle them externally. The network centres on the leader, who is in charge of numerous units of between 400 and 700 soldiers. The units are usually of equal strength and are unaware of each other. They report directly to the leader who provides them with arms and ammunition when required.³⁷ Although the armed groups remain ultimately answerable to the leader of the movement, the network system encourages individual or unit-level initiative and allows for expedient responses.

Meeting the challenges of the demilitarisation process in the DRC

Despite the successful demilitarisation of a significant number of combatants, the government and the international community still face a number of challenges with regard to the demilitarisation process in the Kivus. The most significant challenge lies in getting a firm commitment from leaders of armed groups and militias to take part in the demilitarisation and *brassage* processes. Laurent Nkunda’s forces and a number of Mayi Mayi groups (such as remnants of the Jackson group, as well as other smaller groups operating in Vurondo and Buline in the Lubero region) are resisting the *brassage* process because they want to continue defending their local population and territory and do not wish to be transferred to another region.³⁸ This links to another key issue, namely army integration. Due to the diversity of soldiers, training and loyalties, it is difficult to form a professional republican army. In addition, the newly integrated FARDC soldiers continue with their private activities (such as looting, terrorising and abducting local members of the local population) with impunity, under the guise of legitimacy. According to a MONUC official, the FARDC are the ‘most prominent crooks’ in the Kivus.³⁹

Another key challenge can be found in the rise of new armed groups and militias who were not part of the original peace agreements. The main dilemma was whether to include these groups in the DDR process, and especially whether to integrate them into the national army. It was then decided to include all groups who wished to disarm and demobilise voluntarily, regardless of whether they had been signatories to the peace agreement. This ‘open’ policy led to the co-option of numerous militia leaders into the national army, with the result that the national army is now composed of between 70 and 75 per cent commanders and barely 25 to 30 per cent soldiers. It is therefore literally overrun by commanders. For example, in the FARDC 14th brigade in North Kivu, 950 of the 3 484 soldiers are generals.⁴⁰ Therefore, the standard triangular military structure (more soldiers and fewer commanders) has been reversed into a top-heavy, inverted

triangle, which creates significant problems for security sector reform.⁴¹ Finally, the government and the international community should be beware that many opportunistic individuals and groups will first take up arms and then opt to go through the DDR process for no other reason than financial benefit.⁴² This situation is exacerbated by the continuous flow of small arms into the region. It is not merely a problem of access, but rather of low cost, as a Kalashnikov can be purchased for US\$20 and a hand grenade for less than 50 cents.⁴³

The process of reintegrating ex-combatants into civilian life has also proven to be a complex one. Currently, reintegration support programmes contain highly attractive elements – such as cash payments (in installments), foodstuffs (or coupons), health care, civilian clothing, job placement, land distribution, credit schemes, training and counseling – with the focus remaining on economic reintegration, rather than social and political reintegration. Of major concern is the huge number of former combatants and the logistical challenges associated with running reintegration programmes in areas that are still grappling with violence. The lack of reintegration and reinsertion activities can potentially undermine the entire demilitarisation process, since ex-combatants may revert to violence to meet basic needs. Moreover, since the DDR programme is currently on hold, newly demobilised soldiers have no option but to join the *brassage* process. Overall in the DRC, disarmament and demobilisation have been overemphasised, whereas reintegration has been an afterthought.⁴⁴

Recommendations

The government and the international community must strive to cooperate on containing the rise of ‘newer’ militias, who aim to exploit the weakness of the FARDC and its inability to secure the eastern regions of the country. An effective SSR strategy must focus not only on strengthening the national army by providing professional training and modern weapons, but also on combating corruption within the army administration and creating financially beneficial incentives (proper salaries, housing and food) for soldiers not to engage in clandestine activities or looting civilians. At the same time, the government must set firm deadlines for dissident militias and rogue FARDC soldiers and officers to disarm and demobilise. The government should inform them that those who resist will not only face offensive attacks by the FARDC (supported by MONUC) but, once captured, will not be able to claim any political or economic benefits, and may even face legal proceedings. Furthermore, a more effective reintegration programme must be established and must provide ex-combatants with the financial and logistical support they need to be able to reintegrate into civilian life. In this context, the overall humanitarian situation of civilians must improve, so that when ex-combatants return to a place of their choice, there will be social and economic infrastructure available to facilitate their effective integration into the community while improving overall development in the community.

In order to implement these strategies the government must garner more diplomatic and financial support from the international community, and must also manage its natural resources in a more transparent and effective manner. Finally, the international community, in cooperation with the Congolese military and policing apparatus, must take a more proactive role in preventing illegal arms trafficking into the DRC. Easy access to light weapons and ammunition continues to be a major factor in the perpetuation of violence in the eastern regions.

Overall, the government faces overwhelming challenges, but these can be overcome and the government has shown that it has the political will to do so.

Acronyms

ADF-NALU	Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda
CNDD-FDD	<i>Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie – Forces nationales pour la défense de la démocratie</i>
CNDP	<i>Congrès national pour la défense du peuple</i> /National Congress for the Defence of the People
CONADER	<i>Commission Nationale pour la Démobilisation et la Réinsertion</i> /National Commission for Demobilisation and Reinsertion
EAFGA	<i>Enfants associés aux forces et aux groupes armés</i> /children associated with armed groups and forces
EUSEC	EU Security Sector Reform Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
FAR	<i>Forces armées rwandaises</i> /Rwandan Armed Forces
FARDC	<i>Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo</i> /Armed Forces of the Republic of Congo; the national army
FDLR	<i>Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda</i> /Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
FLNK	<i>Front pour la Libération du Nord Kivu</i> /North Kivu Liberation Front
FOCA	<i>Force Combattant Abachunguzi</i> /Abachunguzi Combat Force
FRPI	<i>Front de résistance populaire de l'Ituri</i> /Front for Patriotic Resistance of Ituri
Ituri DCR	Ituri Disarmament and Community Reinsertion
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDRP	Multi-Country Demobilisation and Reintegration Program
MRC	<i>Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais</i> /Congolese Revolutionary Movement

PNDDR	<i>Plan Nationale pour la Désarmement, la Démobilisation et la Réinsertion/</i> National Plan for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reinsertion
RCD-Goma	<i>Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie en Goma/Congolese Rally for</i> Democracy in Goma
SMI	<i>Structure Militaire d'Intégration/Integrated Military Structure</i>

Notes

- 1 This paper is the result of a broader research project, *Reigning in the dogs of war: demilitarisation of armed groups and militias in Africa*, supported by the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and Training for Peace (TfP), with C Alden and M Arnold. Thanks to Chris Alden and Matthew Arnold for their comments and to Tanya Schenk and Ambika Vishwanath for their research assistance. Fieldwork for this paper was conducted in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and Kinshasa from January to February 2007, with support from NUPI and the American University in Cairo.
- 2 See Spear 2002, Berdal 1996 and Alden 2002.
- 3 Information gleaned during a personal interview with Daniel Kwata (coordinator general, CONADER), conducted in Kinshasa on 9 January 2007.
- 4 Personal interview, UN personnel, Goma, 15 January 2007.
- 5 Figures obtained during a personal interview with Evelyn Mbata (head of communication, CONADER), conducted in Kinshasa on 10 January 2007.
- 6 Personal interview, Peter Swarbrick (head of DDR/DDRRR, MONUC), Kinshasa, 11 January 2007.
- 7 Personal interviews with a MONUC official in Goma on 15 January 2007 and one in Bukavu, 23 January 2007.
- 8 Personal interview, UN official, Buina, 30 January 2007.
- 9 See Bouta 2005.
- 10 See Gonzáles 2006.
- 11 Uganda and Rwanda intervened directly in the eastern Congo conflict from 1998 to 2003, on the pretense of protecting the Kinyarwanda Tutsi community in the Kivus; but in reality both aimed to recoup political control over the country after being marginalised by the Laurent Kabila regime, as well as to engage in economic exploitation of natural resources in the east. Both countries supported various armed groups, all of whom espoused a particular ethnic configuration. Rwanda provided support to RCD-Goma, composed mainly of Banyamulenge combatants, while Uganda simultaneously supported more than ten armed groups (pro-Tutsi and pro-Hutu groups) in the Kivus and Ituri.
- 12 Focus group with former Mayi Mayi combatants, Bukavu, 27 January 2007.
- 13 See Thakur 2005, chapter 2.
- 14 The conflict in North Kivu differed from that in South Kivu. The conflict in North Kivu was between the 'autochthones' (real) Zairians and the Banyarwanda (people of Rwandan origin, both Tutsi and Hutu), while the conflict in South Kivu was a combined effort of Hutu refugees from Rwanda (including ex-FAR and 'interhamwe' extremists) and local 'real' Zairians, against the Banyamulenge (Prunier 1995, chapter 9).
- 15 In May–June 2004, Colonel Jules Mutebutsi, a FARDC deputy regional commander for South Kivu, led a mutiny against his commanders and retained control over several hundred troops. Mutebutsi, a Banyamulenge, allied with General Laurent Nkunda from North Kivu, eventually captured Bukavu under the pretext of preventing a genocide against the Banyamulenge population. However, as a result of strong international pressure, Mutebutsi and Nkunda fled to Rwanda and Goma, respectively (see ICG 2006a:15–17).
- 16 Historically, there has been a series of small-scale ethnic conflicts over land, the most notable of which was the 1963–1965 conflict of the Nande, Hunde and Nyanga against the Banyarwanda in North Kivu.
- 17 Information gleaned during a personal interview with a former advisor to A Ruberwa (RCD-Goma), conducted in Goma on 16 January 2007, and during a focus group with civil society organisations held in Bukavu on 26 January 2007.

- 18 Personal interview, former Mayi Mayi combatant, Goma, 16 January 2007.
- 19 Personal interview, Colonel Delphin Kahimbi, acting commander/deputy commander, FARDC 8th Military Region, Goma, North Kivu, 19 January 2007.
- 20 Personal interview with FARDC official, 10th Military Region, South Kivu, Bukavu, 25 January 2007, and with MONUC official, Bukavu, 24 January 2007.
- 21 Focus group with Mayi Mayi combatants, South Kivu, 25 January 2007.
- 22 Personal interview with UN official, Bukavu, 22 January 2007, and with CONADER official, Bukavu, 23 January 2007.
- 23 Personal interview with Colonel Delphin Kahimbi, acting commander/deputy commander, FARDC 8th Military Region, Goma, North Kivu, 19 January 2007; MONUC official, Goma, 15 January 2007; FARDC official, FARDC 10th Military Region, Bukavu, South Kivu, 25 January 2007; and MONUC official, Bukavu, 24 January 2007.
- 24 On 23 May 2005, at Nindja, Rasta members hacked and beat 19 Congolese to death with machetes and hammers. Other civilians were impaled, women were raped, and 50 were abducted. On 9 July 2005, at Mamba, 39 civilians were burnt alive and many others were maimed.
- 25 Personal interview, FARDC official, FARDC 10th Military Region, Bukavu, 25 January 2007.
- 26 Personal interview, MONUC official, Bukavu, 24 January 2007.
- 27 Personal interview with FARDC official, FARDC 8th Military Region, Goma, North Kivu, 19 January 2007, and with CONADER official, Goma, 18 January 2007.
- 28 Personal interview with EUSEC official, Goma, 18 January 2007, and focus group with former RCD-Goma combatants, Goma, 17 January 2007.
- 29 Personal interview with FARDC official, FARDC 8th Military Region, Goma, North Kivu, 19 January 2007, and with MONUC official, Goma, 15 January 2007.
- 30 Pierre Mulele and Gaston Soumialot, with support from Laurent Kabila, led the first Mayi Mayi rebellion against the government after Lumumba's assassination in 1961.
- 31 Personal interview, political advisor to Laurent Nkunda, Goma, North Kivu, 16 January 2007.
- 32 Focus group with Mayi Mayi ex-combatants, in Goma, on 17 January 2007, and in Bukavu, on 27 January 2007.
- 33 Focus group with seven former FDLR combatants at the DDRRR MONUC transit site, Goma, 19 January 2007. The group was waiting to be repatriated and reintegrated as part of the DDRRR process.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 For example, throughout the day, FDLR leaders make speeches to boost soldier morale, and every day, these speeches include phrases such as 'kill Kagame', 'take Rwanda back', 'end Tutsi domination and Hutu oppression' (personal interview, former FDLR combatant, Goma, 19 January 2007).
- 36 Focus group with former FDLR combatants, DDRRR MONUC transit site, Goma, 19 January 2007.
- 37 Personal interview, UN official, Kinshasa, 13 January 2007.
- 38 Personal interview, MONUC official, Goma, 15 January 2007.
- 39 Personal interview with MONUC officials in Goma on 15 January 2007, and in Bukavu, on 23 January 2007.
- 40 Personal interview, EUSEC official, Goma, 18 January 2007.
- 41 Personal interview, EUSEC official, Kinshasa, 12 January 2007.
- 42 Personal interview, UN official, Bunia, 30 January 2007.
- 43 Personal interview, FARDC official, FARDC 9th Military Region, Ituri, Orientale Province, Bunia, 31 January 2007.
- 44 Personal interview, Daniel Kwata (coordinator general, CONADER), Kinshasa, 9 January 2007.

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