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1

Introduction

Die ich rief, die Geister, / Werd' ich nun nicht los
(The spirits I called / I cannot drive away)

—JOHANN WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

IN EARLY 2008, I set up my research base at the VIP hotel in downtown Goma, a trade hub in the eastern Congo nestled between the Nyiragongo Volcano and the shores of Lake Kivu. A peace conference was being held close by, and many of its attendees were staying at the hotel, where they also dined. After a year and a half of fighting, the Congolese government had decided to sit down with several dozen armed groups to talk peace.

Expectations ran high. While the main Congo wars, which had lasted from 1996 to 2003, had ended in a comprehensive peace deal, the fighting had escalated to the north of where we sat, displacing hundreds of thousands of people. This time, the peace brokers wanted to go further than just elite pacts and deal with the root causes of the conflict. “For the first time, the sons and daughters of North and South Kivu have come together to speak about peace, security, and development,” announced the minister of the interior in his speech. Envoys from the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations rubbed shoulders with armed group commanders, NGO workers, and civil society leaders.

The peace conference was, in many aspects, a positive and cathartic experience. It situated conflict as the historical product of local tensions over land and identity; community leaders were given space and time to express their anger and grief over decades of war, voicing emotions they had never had a chance to put into words in front of their rivals. I met a preacher and peace activist from the Banyamulenge community of South Kivu province who carried in his briefcase a fifty-page-long list—handwritten, on yellowing paper—of all the people from his community who had been killed in the previous fifteen years. “This is why our youths are fighting,” he said. Jeannot Muhima, a combatant from just outside of Goma, described to me eloquently, calmly, how his sister had been raped and his younger brother killed by an armed group. He turned his head to show a shiny scar parting his hair on the back of his head. “I barely escaped,” he said. “That is why I fight. But it is also why, more than anything, I want peace.”¹

And yet, in the end, despite the best intentions of many of the participants, the Goma Peace Conference became a source of profiteering and accomplished little. Initially, six hundred people were supposed to attend, ranging from civil society leaders to customary chiefs and members of armed groups. However, attracted by per diems of \$135, which were even given to people who lived nearby, attendance reportedly swelled to fifteen hundred people. “Peacemaking has become a source of business around here,” a friend, a rebel turned human rights activist, cynically remarked, watching armed group commanders walk past the lunch buffet at the VIP hotel, plates piled perilously high with food.² In the evening, the bars and nightclubs of Goma were full of delegates to the peace conference; one establishment, having run out of Congolese beer, had to source it from neighboring Rwanda.

As in subsequent peace talks, negotiations also became a tactic, a means of maneuvering. A United Nations official shared confidential reports with me about how both the armed groups and the national government were rearming and recruiting new troops during the truce. “These guys were never serious,” she told me. “And we play along with their game.” In the end, after months of laborious negotiations, fighting

erupted again to the north of Goma, pushing all the way into the outskirts of this town of several hundred thousand people.

How could it be that the violence persisted, when so many of the key actors—soldiers, civilians, diplomats, and members of civil society—wanted it to end? This is the puzzle that this book addresses. Despite billions in international aid, a national army of 130,000 pitted against ragtag rebel groups, and the largest United Nations peacekeeping operation in the world, conflict has simmered on until the present day.

These snapshots from the Goma Peace Conference offer pieces of an answer. While many suffered from the conflict, a slim class of commanders and politicians emerged for whom, plates laden high, the conflict had become a source of survival and profit. These protagonists have had little interest in bringing an end to a conflict that was peripheral for the government but for many combatants had become a livelihood. Conflict, as well as peacemaking, had become an end in itself, the fighting carried forward by its own momentum. Meanwhile, foreign donors and diplomats provided food and urgent health care for millions in need, preventing the Congolese state from collapsing, but were unable to bring about transformational change. “Too big to fail” was a quip I often heard from diplomats, riffing on the financial crisis unfolding in the United States at the time.

Congolese have developed their own, often witty ways to express this sad state of affairs. “No Nkunda No Job,” was a popular saying in Goma around this time, referring to the main rebel commander and suggesting that violence had become a source of employment for foreign aid workers and local militia. The epithet “Ebola business” surfaced in 2018, when donors pumped in a billion dollars to stem an epidemic of hemorrhagic fever in northern Congo, creating a cottage industry of Congolese security contractors—some of whom stoked violence so as to increase demand for their services—rental car dealers, and hoteliers. The eccentric Congolese pop star Koffi Olomide put it differently, alluding to the propensity to turn adversity into a source of profit, even pleasure: “Oyo eza système ya lifelo—moto ezopela kasi tozo zika te” (We live in the system of hell—everywhere the fire is raging, but we don’t get burned).

What is this *système ya lifelo*? How has it come about? That is the motivation for this book. Drawing on two years of field research, interviews with over three hundred people intimately involved in the conflict, and almost two decades of continuous work in the country, I try to explain why conflict in the Congo has persisted from the time of the 2002 peace deal until the time of writing in 2020, defying international and local efforts to bring about peace.

Congo's Forever War

Serious armed conflict has roiled the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through different permutations, at least since 1996. The early phase of the conflict received considerable media and diplomatic attention. The First Congo War (1996–1997) saw a coalition of neighboring countries band together to overthrow Mobutu Sese Seko, who had ruled the Congo for thirty-two years. His successor, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, then fell out with his foreign backers, triggering the Second Congo War, which split the country into at least four parts and lasted from August 1998 until June 2003.

Under the leadership of the South African government, the United Nations, and the African Union, a peace deal—called the Global and Inclusive Agreement—was negotiated in 2002. All major Congolese belligerents joined a transitional government and merged their troops into a new national army. The former belligerents, together with civil society and members of the political opposition, passed a new constitution and held the country's first democratic elections in over forty years in 2006, bringing an end to the transition. The peace deal, however, did not end the conflict; instead it spawned a more amorphous and fragmented phase of violence—*la guerre qui ne dit pas son nom* (“the war that doesn't say its name”), as Congolese sometimes refer to it.

The conflict became mostly confined to the eastern Kivu region, where it escalated and fragmented, becoming more intractable. Armed groups proliferated to over 120 in 2021, fighting over often intensely local issues. At the time of writing, 5.5 million people were internally

displaced in the Congo, more than at any other time and more than in any other country in the world except Syria. Estimates of mortality from the conflict are contested, but it is fairly certain that hundreds of thousands have died from direct violence, with probably between 1 million and 5.4 million people dying due to the humanitarian consequences for the period between 1998 and 2007—less than half the total conflict period between 1996 and today.³

While the First and Second Congo Wars received significant international media and diplomatic attention, the subsequent wars seemed less important, in part because they no longer threatened major urban centers and featured a dizzying number of armed factions. This complexity became a challenge for journalists and activists alike—how can you get people to care about a conflict featuring over a hundred different groups, fighting for a host of reasons? Despite its enormous human toll, the Congolese conflict was mentioned only twice on the front page of the *New York Times* in 2017; by contrast, the Syrian conflict was mentioned 240 times. It did not appear at all on US broadcast news, except for a few brief mentions, including George Clooney’s charitable work and efforts to protect gorillas.⁴

As the Congolese conflict has plodded on inexorably, hindsight makes it easy to think that there was never any hope for peace. This view infuriates my friend Raphael Wakenge, a human rights activist in Bukavu who is locally known as a *mtu matata* (troublemaker) for his propensity to cause controversy. “That’s just defeatism,” he told me one morning after reading an article—one of many in Western media—arguing that the Congo was unviable and should be broken up.⁵ “As if we didn’t get into this mess because of decisions that our leaders made. As if there were not other paths that could have been taken, more visionary people who could have taken us there.”

Raph was right—at least in part. This did not have to be a forever war. Closer inspection of the morass of the Congolese violence reveals

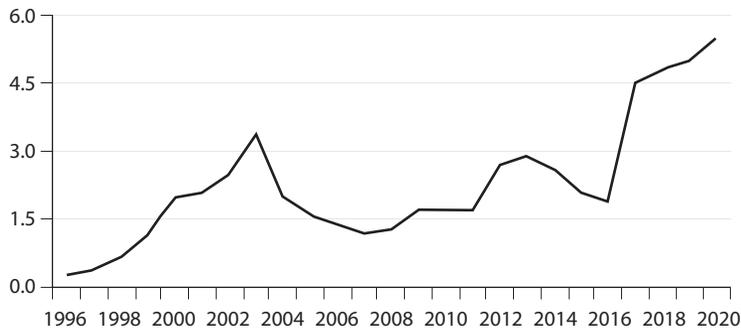


FIGURE 1.1. Internal displacement in the Congo, millions of people, 1996–2020
(Source: various OCHA reports)

patterns and nuances that call into question the inevitability of the conflict. Two particularities stand out.

First, the violence had dramatic peaks and valleys, suggesting that the conflict was susceptible to change. In 2002, with the signing of the Global and Inclusive Agreement between the major belligerents and the formation of a power-sharing government, there was a sharp drop in displacement and violence. Between 2002 and 2007, internal displacement dropped from 3.4 million to 1.2 million people, and 130,000 combatants were demobilized in a national program. Then, abruptly, violence escalated again, reaching levels never before seen in the Congo (see figure 1.1). What happened in 2003 that de-escalated the conflict, and what happened in 2007 to ramp it up again?

Second, there has been striking geographic variation. While conflict in the Kivu provinces has escalated since the end of the transitional government in 2007, it initially declined dramatically in Ituri province, just to the north, once the scene of some of the most gruesome violence in the country. Displacement there declined from 500,000 in 2003 to 146,000 in 2015. What helped stabilize Ituri even as violence in the rest of the eastern Congo persisted?⁶

These questions pose a challenge to conflict scholars. Most of the variables invoked by academics to explain why conflicts last so long—poverty, state weakness, ethnic conflict, the absence of peacekeepers, the abundance of natural resources, and ethnic exclusion—are spread

relatively evenly across the eastern Congo and have not changed much over the past twenty years.⁷ And yet, we see huge differences, both temporally and geographically, in the intensity of conflict.

Part of this book is an engagement with these broader academic debates. My explanation places much greater emphasis on government elites—in the Congo and Rwanda—than on local actors, in contrast with the “local turn” adopted by some conflict scholars.⁸ It is also more focused on the actors, their interests, and their interactions than on material variables, in contrast with literature by conflict scholars that has aimed to detect laws of causation through large datasets with high degrees of abstraction. The story told here is not primarily one of natural resources, a corrupt government, an impoverished population, and a difficult topography—after all, those features are relatively commonplace, while conflict is not—but of the protagonists who animate and interpret these factors.

Explaining the Congolese Conflict

So what explains this persistence of conflict in the Congo? The evidence provided here points to several concurrent dynamics—to be distinguished from “variables” in that they consist of relationships between groups of people, each with its own, contingent interpretation of its political and social context: a lopsided peace deal that pushed one former belligerent back into war; a failed army integration process that created a multitude of new armed groups led by army defectors; and an electoral process that created incentives for politicians to ally with armed groups. All of this occurred against the backdrop of a weak, patrimonial state and a political culture in which armed violence was seen as an acceptable and established means of obtaining power and resources. In chapter 3, I trace these developments and flesh out this analysis. The second part of this book, consisting of chapters 6 through 8, provides further detail to this story by investigating the armed groups that mobilized against the state.

Many of these dynamics were linked to the same peace process that ushered in the democratic transition: it privileged the incumbent president, Joseph Kabila, and allowed an elite that was unaccountable to

voters to entrench itself and to resist a democratic reckoning. It also dramatically disfavored one of the strongest but least popular belligerents, the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD). These two factors interacted to spark a new insurgency, the *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* (CNDP), which then provoked countermobilizations by dozens of other groups.

Meanwhile, outside actors failed to transform these dynamics. Since 1999, when the peace process officially began, the United Nations has deployed two of its largest and most expensive peacekeeping missions there. Donors have spent over \$48 billion on development, stability, and relief projects, and in 2015, 180 different international nonprofits had projects there.⁹

The results have been mixed. International efforts did help broker the 2002 peace deal, reuniting the country and setting up new, democratic institutions. However, in the wake of the 2006 elections, as the conflict became more amorphous and fractal, donors and diplomats adopted a postconflict mindset and became increasingly marginalized. As I explore in chapter 9, donors and diplomats were blinkered by a liberal model of peacemaking that placed too much emphasis on the formal trappings of the peace process, especially the creation of new democratic and regulatory institutions, and on liberalization of the economy. Real power, however, resided in informal, parallel networks largely untouched by these interventions. The government showed little interest in creating strong, impartial state institutions. At the same time, the peace process triggered a fire sale of state assets, in particular mining concessions, which led to a massive influx of money into the ruling elite from multinational corporations—a process encouraged and fostered by the World Bank with little pushback from donors. This further entrenched the new, unaccountable elites in Kinshasa and the provinces.

Inscrutable Congolese, Defiant Rwandans

Why did donors get it wrong? In part, outsiders spent too little time trying to understand the belligerents. This is not surprising; portrayals of the Congo have often dealt in stereotypes. This is how Joseph

Conrad—whose *Heart of Darkness* remains one of the best examples of how compassion, even when conjoined with eloquence and erudition, is not immune to prejudice—described his protagonist’s trip up the Congo River:

The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse.¹⁰

More recent depictions recall Conrad’s imaginary Congolese. A *New York Times* journalist, musing about the gruesome rapes, wrote: “No one—doctors, aid workers, Congolese and Western researchers—can explain exactly why this is happening.”¹¹ His colleague, Nicholas Kristof, concurred: “This is a pointless war—now a dozen years old—driven by warlords, greed for minerals, ethnic tensions and complete impunity.”¹²

The war was *not* pointless. It was driven by actors with specific interests, steeped in particular institutional and political cultures. Much like Conrad’s sailor, donors and diplomats were handicapped by their preconceptions, unable to see or understand these interests and cultures.

For example, after the 2006 elections, donors placed priority on strengthening government institutions, or “the extension of state authority,” as it was formulated in the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission. Belgian, American, French, and South African officers trained the Congolese army, the World Bank launched an overhaul of Congolese administration, and various donors set up a stabilization program in the eastern Congo to build roads, government offices, prisons, and courts.

This approach underestimated the degree to which weakness had become a means of rule, as I discuss in chapter 4, with elites actively colluding in the erosion of state institutions. During this period,

Congolese government rarely showed an interest in strengthening its institutions or bringing an end to a peripheral war that did not threaten the country's capital a thousand miles away. It has favored the maintenance of patronage networks, some linked to its armed opponents, over the security of its citizens and the personal survival of its elites over institutional reform. The challenge here was not so much how to increase administrative efficiency or promote free market reforms but rather how to render political power more accountable and invested in security, rather than conflict.

A second example further elucidates the centrality of political culture in the conflict. For many years, the inability of donors and diplomats to acknowledge Rwandan intervention in the eastern Congo formed a major stumbling block. This was driven both by misguided assumptions about the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government and by pathologies in the donor bureaucracies. "The Rwandan government has no interest in backing the CNDP. They want a stable eastern Congo," a senior British diplomat insisted to me in 2008.¹³ He was not alone. Leaders from former British prime minister Tony Blair to billionaire philanthropist Howard Buffett to former US national security advisor Susan Rice either rejected the mounting proof that Rwanda was involved or justified it by playing up security concerns.

Rwanda played a critical role in the creation of both the CNDP and Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) rebellions, in 2006 and 2012, respectively, dramatically undermining the stability of its neighbor. It did so even though it had experienced few security threats and—contrary to popular belief in the Congo—stood to lose as much as it could gain economically. To understand why it intervened nonetheless, we must examine how the RPF functioned. Decision-making was dominated by members of the security forces, was rarely the result of open internal debate, and was marked by a deep fear of internal military dissent. Involvement in the eastern Congo reinforced the image of a besieged Rwanda and reminded domestic elites of the RPF's role as defender against genocidal forces, a key legitimizing discourse of the government. All these factors supported belligerency toward the eastern Congo, as I explore further in chapter 4.

The Social Nature of Rebellion

What can these dynamics teach us about conflict more broadly? My argument here, laid out in detail in chapter 5, is staked out in two inter-related realms: structural factors—fragmentation and the rise of a military bourgeoisie—as well as ideational or cultural ones—phenomena that I call *involution* and *symbiosis*. I argue that these trends are being reproduced in other conflicts on the African continent as well, linked to the liberalization of politics and the economy.

Self-interest, to paraphrase Alexander Wendt, is what belligerents make of it. The goals, ambitions, and desires of belligerents are deeply shaped by the worldviews of the main actors and the institutions, norms, ideas, and habits that shape these. The conflict in the Congo has persisted because war has become a means of governing the country; this was increasingly an acceptable and profitable lifestyle for a military bourgeoisie stretching from Kinshasa through the Kivus to Kigali that has matured and flourished through conflict.

Interests, in other words, need to be examined, not assumed. This is hard, as the high stakes of violent conflict create incentives to dissimulate and obfuscate what belligerents really want and feel. In chapter 4, I draw on dozens of interviews with government officials and security operatives in the Congo and neighboring Rwanda. In both places, elites' attitudes toward conflict have been marked by *involution*, reproducing and intensifying existing patterns of violence, despite the cost to the local population and even though other approaches could be more beneficial to these elites.

While in part this *involution*, this rut in which the conflict is stuck, is driven by naked economic interests, these attitudes have also been driven by the normalization of violence and the essentialization of identity. How else can we understand the apathy—and sometimes complicity—of political and military elites in Kinshasa toward the grinding violence that affects millions to the east? After all, few of these decision-makers derive direct benefits from the conflict, and one could imagine many other ways in which they could extract resources or render themselves popular that do not involve violent conflict. Similarly, Rwanda's

dogged intervention cannot be easily explained away by greed or self-defense, as I show in chapters 4 and 6.

The second realm of analysis is structural, perhaps best exemplified by the dramatic fragmentation of armed actors immediately apparent in the maps of the Congolese conflict at the end of this chapter. The riotous splatter painting of roughly 120 armed groups—up from a few dozen in 2008—shows the growing complexity of the conflict (see the maps and accompanying key on pages 16–23). This fragmentation has rendered the conflict less threatening to the central government but also more intractable and devastating for the local population.

At the same time, as hundreds of thousands of combatants have cycled through armed groups and the security forces, a new elite of violent entrepreneurs has emerged—what I call a *military bourgeoisie*—controlling large parts of the economy in the eastern Congo and with deep links to political elites across the country. This bourgeoisie is endowed with engrained habits and vested interests, further entrenching the conflict.

This analysis runs against the grain of the most familiar notion about war—that it is fought between two sides seeking to defeat or compel the other, battering rams going at it until one side wins.¹⁴ Instead, war has become a social condition, an outcome that may not have been the intended objective of any of the protagonists but that has produced its own actors, cultures, and interests.

A Methodological Note

The main argument of this book is that in order to better understand why the Congolese conflict has persisted for so long, and to understand conflict duration in general, we need to have a better understanding of the constituencies of an armed group—the ties between the belligerents and the other groups in society—and the interests and identities of the main actors in the conflict, including the state. This methodological approach relies on a combination of process tracing and comparative analysis, methods that I briefly describe here.

Over a period of two years—and drawing on research and contacts in the region that go back another decade—my research team interviewed 305 people associated with armed groups. The research team interviewed people with direct knowledge regarding the trajectories of armed groups, although we also conducted interviews with experts on the historical context. Of the interviewees, 41 percent were former or current members of armed groups, 21 percent were former or current members of the national security sector (police, army, or intelligence officials), 12 percent were foreign diplomats and United Nations officials, 15 percent were members of civil society or customary chiefs, and the remaining 11 percent were political and economic elites.

In addition, I was able to obtain around three thousand pages of confidential internal reports from the UN peacekeeping mission, whose team would report daily on security dynamics across the country.

My team was made up of researchers whom I knew well and who had deep personal ties with the group in question. For example, one of my research assistants had been a member of the CNDP and had deep family and personal ties with both the CNDP and the M23. Another was a former Congolese intelligence official who had facilitated supplies to armed groups from the government.

The interviews that we conducted took place against the backdrop of a context in which armed groups have ambivalent feelings about foreign observers. After all, a quarter of all the people indicted by the International Criminal Court have been Congolese, and over the past 150 years there have been numerous foreign interventions—often by white men, like myself—that have had sinister consequences for the Congolese state and its citizens. Why should they tell a relative stranger who was financing their movement, who was involved in negotiations with the government, and what the main interests of the group were? My research assistants helped deal with this challenge, but I doubt it can be fully overcome.

Once we had gathered the data, my first step was to establish causation within a particular armed group through process tracing, the

“analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case.”¹⁵

As opposed to statistical analysis, process tracing is well suited for trying to establish causality within single cases while remaining sensitive to social relations and interests, which are difficult to capture quantitatively. Researchers who deploy process tracing are not simply describing the sequence of events but are developing causal theories, distilling observable implications for these theories, and then applying them to the facts at hand. This is a heuristic device that we can easily grasp intuitively, as it has similarities with medical diagnosis as well as legal detective work. Like process tracing, these disciplines also often employ processes of induction and deduction, confronting them with facts, then adapting the theory and trying it out again on the facts.¹⁶

The final step, which I employed in my analysis of each armed group, was to elaborate competing hypotheses and their observable implications and to test these out against the facts. This step reverses the order of induction and deduction, beginning with abstractions based on prevailing theories of conflict and studies of the Congo and inferring what the observable implications would be in this specific case—for example, I evaluated whether natural resources and local struggles over power and identity played a role, as some scholars have argued.

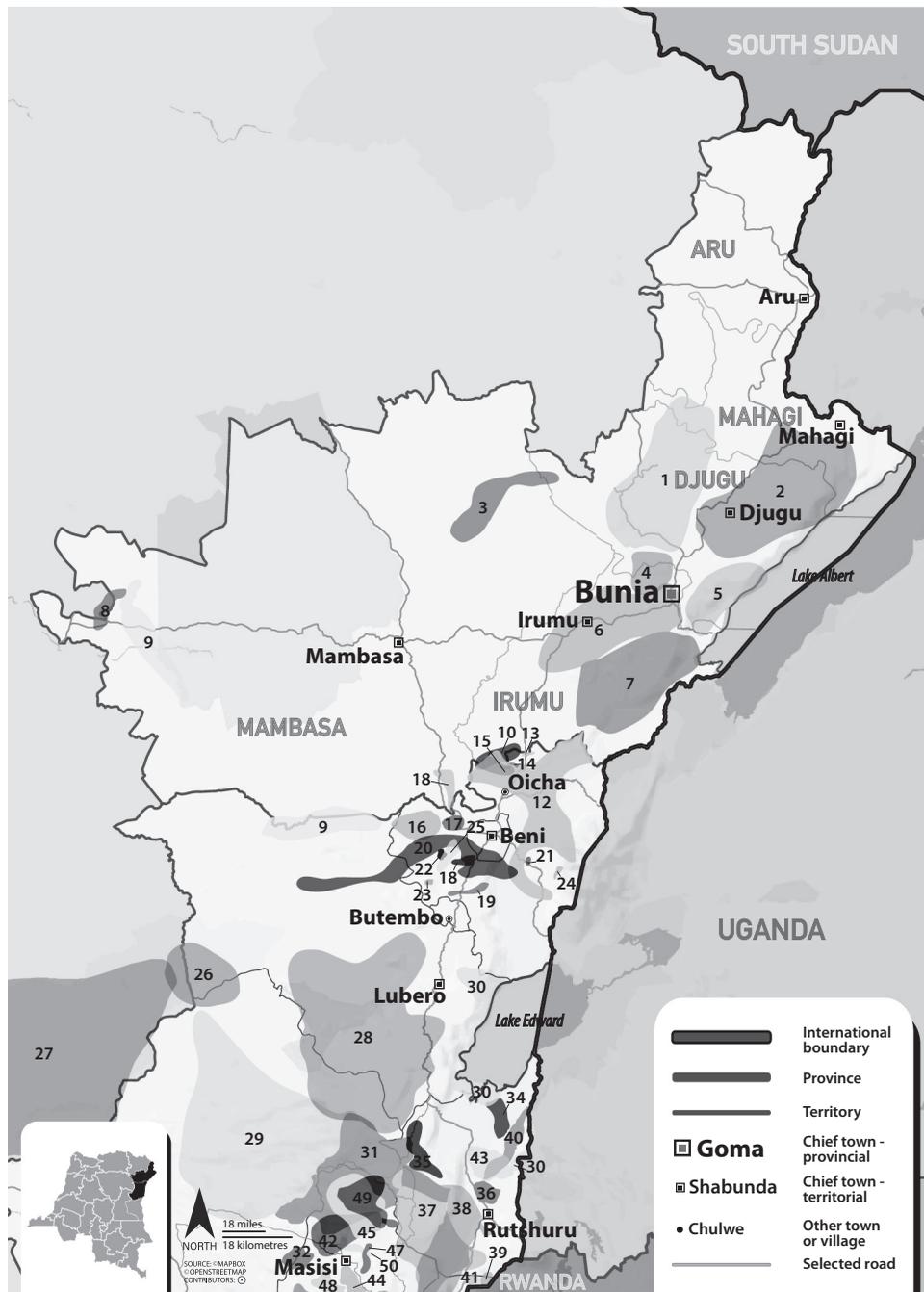
Conclusion

I cannot wholly agree with my friend Raph’s trademark optimism regarding how malleable the course of the Congolese conflict is. While it could easily have taken a different turn in 2003, or even in 2006, by 2018 parts of the dynamics of violence had become self-perpetuating. The conflict has produced an entire generation of Congolese politicians and military officers. The economy of the Kivus has become deeply militarized, and the fact that a weak Congolese state is now interacting with 120 armed groups means that even the most visionary of governments

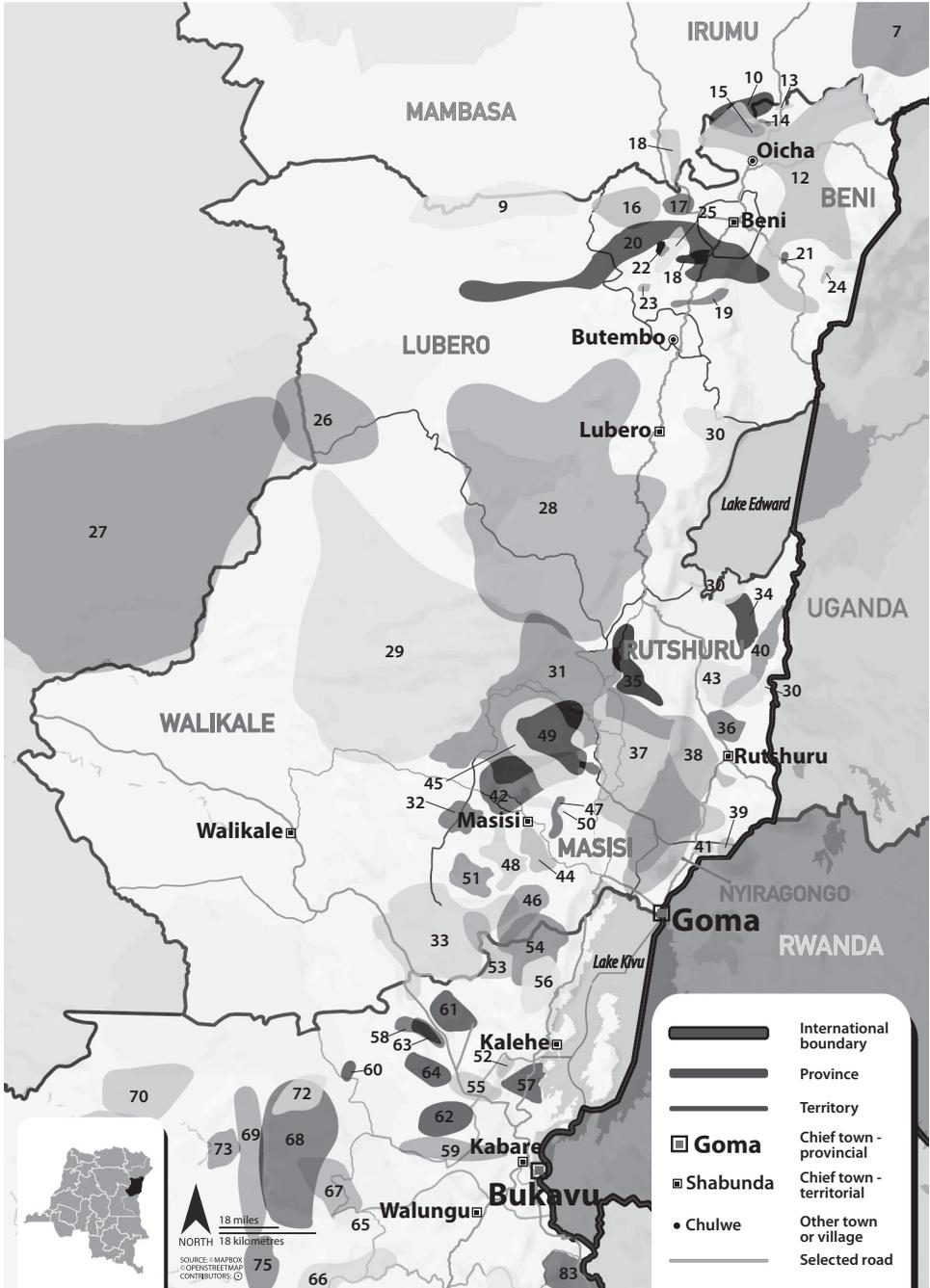
would be hard-pressed to stabilize the region. It will take at least a generation, probably more, to undo the damage done by the wars, damage that includes the infrastructural and the psychological, the social and the political.

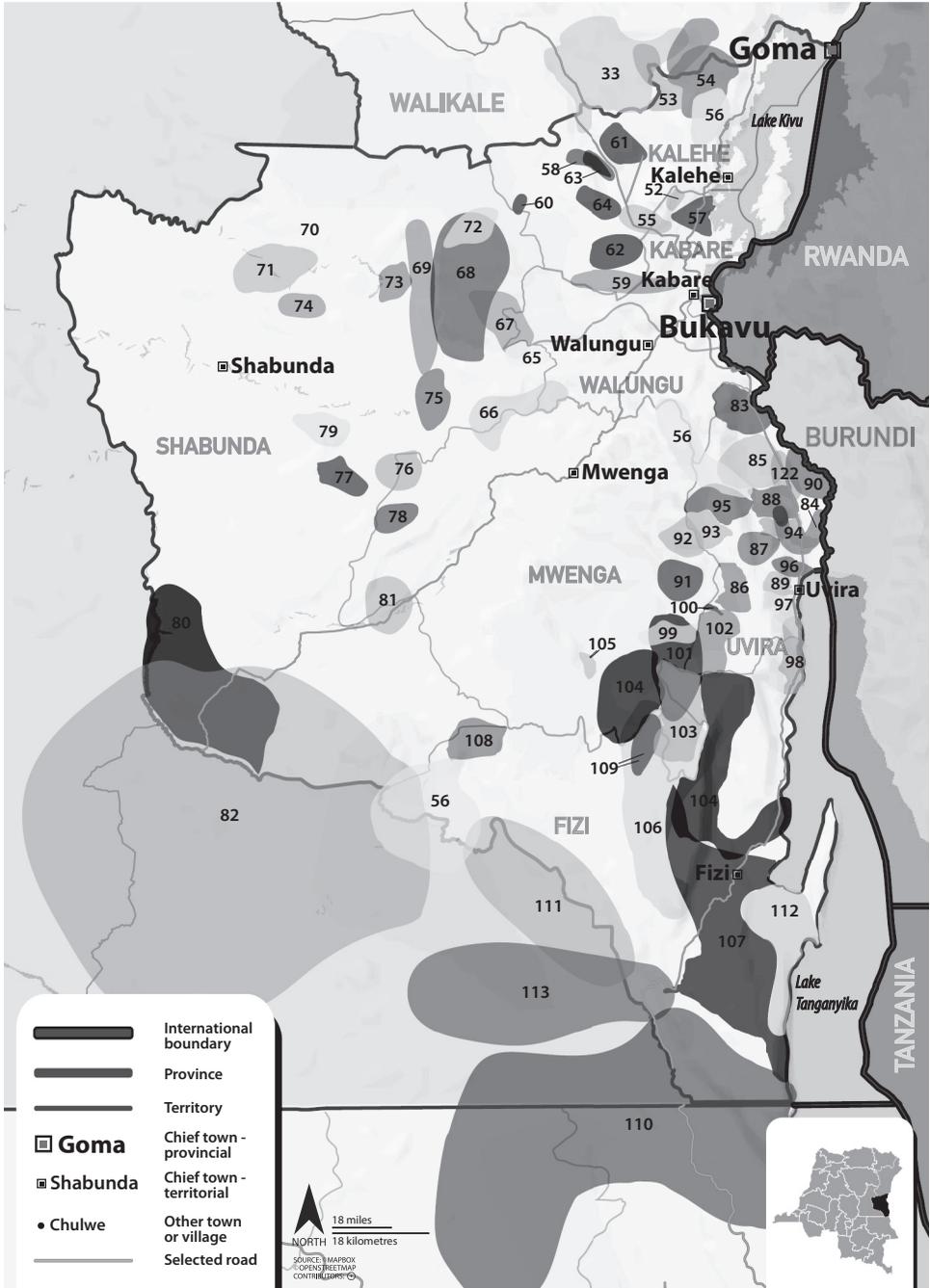
The main thrust of the book is to understand the Congolese conflict as a social phenomenon, with its capillaries reaching deep into society, political culture, and the economy. It will be impossible to find a solution to this kind of conflict without transforming society and politics as a whole. Defeating armed groups requires a more functional army, which in turn requires a shift in the incentives for elites but also a shift in political culture. While there are many ways to produce this, it is impossible to envisage a path out of the violence without some form of accountability for both national and international actors, an element that has been almost completely excised from the peace process. It is also difficult to imagine a transformation away from the political horse-trading and cynical power that elites have embraced without youth movements, political parties, and civil society leaders setting examples of a different kind of politics. Finally, the Congolese economy must be reworked, both in its internal logic as well as in its place in the world. Currently, almost all investment and attention is focused on mining, telecommunications, and banking, leaving only a tiny share of the profits in the Congo, with almost no concern for the agriculture and petty trade that sustain the majority of Congolese.

In the coming years, Congolese, donors, and diplomats will discuss how to move beyond the turmoil in which the country has been embroiled for over twenty years. This book aims to inform that conversation by scrutinizing the roots of the current predicament and the failures of past remedies. As I highlight in chapter 5, I do not think Congo is an anomaly on the African continent—in the fragmentation and involution of the conflict and in the perverse symbiosis between the belligerents and the government, it exemplifies trends occurring more broadly across the continent.



Map 1.1. Armed groups in the eastern Congo in 2020. The numbered key to the groups is on pages 20–23. (Source: Kivu Security Tracker)





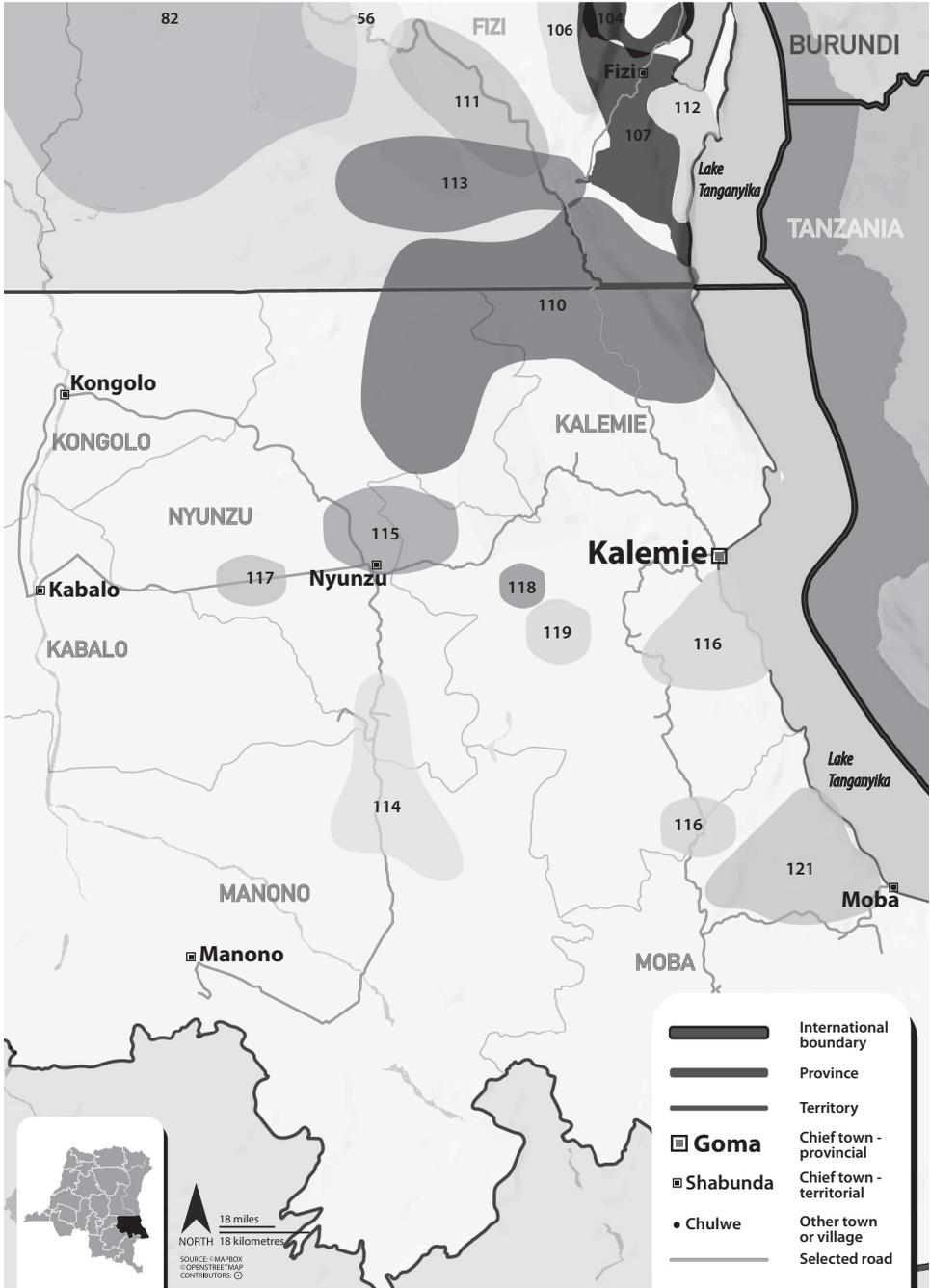


TABLE 1.1. Key to armed groups in the eastern Congo, October 2020

Ituri

- 1 Zaire–FPAC
(Front populaire d'autodéfense en Ituri)
- 2 CODECO–URDPC
(Union des Révolutionnaires pour le Développement du Peuple Congolais)
- 3 CODECO–FCBC
(Forces contre la balkanisation du Congo)
- 4 CODECO–BTD
(Bon Temple de Dieu)
- 5 CODECO–ALC
(Armée de Libération du Congo)
- 6 Chini Ya Kilima–FPIC (Front des Patriotes Intégrationnistes du Congo)
- 7 FRPI
(Force de Résistance Patriotique de l'Ituri)
- 8 Mai-Mai Alaise
- 9 Mai-Mai Simba Mangalibi
- 10 Mai-Mai Kyandenga MNLDK
(Mouvement National pour la Libération Durable du Kongo)
- 11 Mai-Mai Barcelone

North Kivu

- 9 Mai-Mai Simba Mangalibi
- 10 Mai-Mai Kyandenga MNLDK
(Mouvement National pour la Libération Durable du Kongo)
- 11 Mai-Mai Barcelone
- 12 ADF
(Allied Democratic Forces)
- 13 FLEC/NG
(Front de Libération à L'Est du Congo/Nouvelle Génération)
- 14 Mai-Mai Ngolenge
- 15 Mai-Mai Uhuru OAPB
(Organisation d'Autodéfense pour la Paix à Beni)
- 16 Mai-Mai Shingo Pamba
- 17 Mai-Mai Mandefu
- 18 Mazembe-APASIKO
(Alliance des Patriotes pour le Salut Intégral du Kongo)
- 19 Mai-Mai Léopards
- 20 Mai-Mai UPLC
(Union des Patriotes pour la Libération du Congo)
- 21 APRC
(Armée du Peuple pour la Reconstruction du Congo)
- 22 Mai-Mai Ninja
- 23 FAP
(Force d'Autodéfense Populaire)
- 24 APR
(Armée patriotique de Ruwenzori)

-
- 25 RNL
(Résistance Nationale Lumumbiste aka « Mille tours par seconde »)
- 26 Mai-Mai Simba UPLD
(Union des Patriotes pour la Libération et le Développement)
- 27 Mai-Mai Simba FDS (Forces Divines Simba)
- 28 Mai-Mai Kabidon FPP/AP
(Front Populaire pour la Paix Armée du Peuple)
- 29 NDC-R/Guidon
(Nduma Defense of Congo–Rénové, Guidon wing)
- 30 Mai-Mai Jackson FMP
(Front des mouvements populaires)
- 31 NDC-R/Bwira
(Nduma Defense of Congo–Rénové, Bwira wing)
- 32 MAC, ex-Guides
(Mouvement d'Action pour Changement)
- 33 Mai-Mai Kifuafua
- 34 AFRC
(Alliance des Forces de Résistance Congolaise)
- 35 Nyatura FPDH
(Force de Défense du Peuple Hutu)
- 36 Amka Jeshi
- 37 Nyatura CMC
(Collectif des Mouvements pour le Changement)
- 38 FDLR-FOCA
(Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda-Forces Combattantes Abacunguzi)
- 39 M23
(Mouvement du 23 Mars)
- 40 Rassemblement Unité et Démocratie (RUD)-Urunana
- 41 Nyatura Turarambiwe (Rutshuru)
- 42 APCLS
(Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain)
- 43 Nyatura FPPH (Forces pour la Protection du Peuple Hutu)
- 44 Nyatura GAV
(Groupe armé les volontaires)
- 45 Nyatura APRDC
(Alliance des Patriotes pour la Restauration de la Démocratie au Congo, APRDC, now Abazungu)
- 46 Mai-Mai Kifuafua Maachano
- 47 Nyatura Bagaruza
- 48 Nyatura Delta FDDH
(Forces de défense des droits humains)
- 49 Nyatura Jean-Marie
- 50 Nyatura Musheku
- 51 UPDC Kapasi
(Union des Patriotes pour le Défense du Congo)

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- 52 Raia Mutomboki Soleil
- 53 Mai-Mai Kirikicho
- 54 Nyatura Kalume

South Kivu

- 33 Mai-Mai Kifuafua
- 52 Raia Mutomboki Soleil
- 53 Mai-Mai Kirikicho
- 54 Nyatura Kalume
- 55 Raia Mutomboki Shabani
- 56 Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD)-*Ubwiyunge*
- 57 Groupe JKK / CCCRD
(Coalition Congolaise pour le Changement Radical et la Démocratie)
- 58 Raia Mutomboki Mungoro
- 59 Raia Mutomboki Blaise
- 60 Raia Mutomboki Bralima
- 61 Raia Mutomboki Butachibera
- 62 Raia Mutomboki Bipopa
- 63 Raia Mutomboki Hamakombo
- 64 Raia Mutomboki Lance
- 65 Raia Mutomboki Lukoba
- 66 Raia Mutomboki Ndarumanga
- 67 Raia Mutomboki Mabala
- 68 Raia Mutomboki Donat aka FPP
- 69 Raia Mutomboki Walike
- 70 Raia Mutomboki Kazimoto
- 71 Raia Mutomboki Kabazimia
- 72 Raia Mutomboki Musolwa
- 73 Raia Mutomboki Charles Quint
- 74 Raia Mutomboki Kabé
- 75 Raia Mutomboki 100kg
- 76 Raia Mutomboki Kimba
- 77 Rai Mutomboki Kampanga
- 78 Raia Mutomboki Bozi
- 79 Raia Mutomboki LeFort
- 80 Raia Mutomboki Musumbu
- 81 Mai-Mai Makindu
- 82 Mai-Mai Malaika
- 83 Mai-Mai Rasta
- 84 FNL (Front national de libération)
- 85 Mai-Mai Buhirwa
- 86 Mai-Mai Ilunga
- 87 Mai-Mai Kashumba
- 88 Mai-Mai Kijangala
- 89 Mai-Mai Makanaki
- 90 Mai-Mai Mbulu

-
- 91 Mai-Mai Issa Mutoka
92 Mai-Mai Ruma
93 Mai-Mai Mushombe
94 Mai-Mai Nyerere
95 Résistance pour un état de droit (RED)-Tabara
96 Mai-Mai Rushaba
97 Mai-Mai René
98 Mai-Mai Réunion FPLC
(Forces pour la libération du Congo)
99 Mai-Mai Ngalyabatu
100 Mai-Mai Mupekenya
101 Twigwaneho
102 AFP–Gutabara
(Alliances de fédéralistes patriotes, alias Android and Abakenya)
103 Gumino
104 Mai-Mai Mutetezi FPDC
(Forces populaires pour les défenses du Congo)
105 Mai-Mai Bishake
106 Biloze Bishambuke
107 Mai-Mai Yakutumba
108 Mai-Mai Aochi
109 Mai-Mai Shoshi
110 Mai-Mai Apa na Pale
111 Mai-Mai Mulumba
112 Mai-Mai Alida
113 Mai-Mai Brown
114 PERCI Nyumbaisha
115 Mai-Mai Éléments Katadaye
116 Mai-Mai Fimbo na Fimbo
117 PERCI John Majimbo
118 Groupe Mazout
119 PERCI Kaomba
120 PERCI Mpululu
121 Mai-Mai Éléments Mutono
122 Mai-Mai Mwenyemali

Tanganyika

- 110 Mai-Mai Apa na Pale
114 PERCI Nyumbaisha
115 Mai-Mai Éléments Katadaye
116 Mai-Mai Fimbo na Fimbo
117 PERCI John Majimbo
118 Groupe Mazout
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Data from Kivu Security Tracker, <https://kivusecurity.org/>

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