

**POLITICO-STRATEGIC APPROACH OF CONGOLESE
GOVERNMENT ACTION FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF
SOVEREIGNTY IN THE FACE OF THE AGGRESSION OF THE DRC:
VALUE, MEANING AND CRITICISM OF THE CREATION OF THE
ARMY AND DEFENSE RESERVE**

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ABSTRACT

This reflection analyzes the government initiative to create the Army and Defense Reserve (RAD), adopted by Law No. 23/014 of May 22, 2023. This structure aims to mobilize the Congolese population, in particular through the so-called "Wazalendo" self-defense groups, to support the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) in the face of persistent insecurity in the east of the country. Without falling into sentimentality or populism, this article examines the patriotic value, the strategic sense and the critical limits of this approach. In a context of external aggression (notably via the Rwandan-backed M23) and state fragility, the RAD appears to be a national mobilization effort to strengthen sovereignty. It is part of a logic of renewal of patriotism and sacred union around the defense of the territory. However, its success will depend on the ability to professionally supervise these forces, to avoid excesses (uncontrolled integration of armed groups, tensions with the FARDC, ambitions of local leaders) and to prevent it from becoming an additional source of instability.

Keywords: Government action, sovereignty, aggression, Wazalendo, patriotism.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

For more than three decades, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has faced chronic security instability, particularly marked in its eastern provinces. This crisis is characterized by a mosaic of interconnected armed conflicts, involving local rebel groups, foreign forces, and natural resource exploitation dynamics, which permanently undermine state sovereignty, civil peace, and socio-economic development (Stearns, 2021). For a large part of the Congolese population, the state appears to be a powerless or even absent entity, incapable of ensuring the protection of its citizens in the face of persistent aggression and generalized insecurity.

In this context of structural vulnerability, the Congolese government, under the presidency of Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, adopted a major strategic measure in 2023: the creation of the Army and Defense Reserve (RAD), instituted by Law No. 23/014 of May 22, 2023 and officially launched in February 2025. This reserve force aims to integrate local armed groups, including those claiming to be Wazalendo ("patriots" in Swahili) as auxiliaries of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) in the fight against threats such as the Rwandan-backed M23 rebellion. Inspired by historical precedents of popular mobilization in times of crisis (such as the French Resistance under German occupation in 1940), this initiative seeks to renew patriotism and mobilize collective energies to restore territorial integrity and strengthen national sovereignty.

The persistence of armed conflicts in eastern DRC, aggravated by regional interference and the weakening of state institutions, raises the question of the effectiveness of national defence strategies (Verweijen & Thill, 2025; ADF Magazine, 2025). The creation of the RAD, by institutionalizing the use of local militias as a proxy force, raises a double issue: can it effectively contribute to stabilization and the strengthening of sovereignty, or does it risk, on the contrary, exacerbating the fragmentation of the security forces, perpetuating abuses and creating a "parallel army"?

The central hypothesis of this study would be that the creation of the RAD represents a pragmatic patriotic act of the current governance, capable of effectively mobilizing the Congolese people in the face of aggression and strengthening national sovereignty through a union of patriotic energies, provided that a rigorous management of military integrations and a clear subordination to the FARDC is maintained. Otherwise, it could replicate past failures to integrate armed non-state actors and further weaken state authority.

To carry out this research, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on the literature review and the critical interpretation of secondary sources. The data comes from academic books, reports from international organizations, scientific articles and geopolitical analyses covering the period from independence to 2026. A systematic review of the literature and a thematic analysis (Baaz & Verweijen, 2013; Thill, 2021) make it possible to identify recurring patterns.

Thus, the general objective of this study is to analyze the political-strategic approach underlying the creation of the RAD and to evaluate its value and meaning in strengthening the sovereignty of the DRC in the face of persistent aggression. The specific objectives are to:

1. To retrace the historical and contemporary circumstances of the aggression suffered by the DRC;
2. Examine government responses, including popular mobilization and security reform efforts;
3. To make a critical interpretation of the value, meaning and potential limits of the RAD as an instrument of national defence and the consolidation of living together.

The structure of the study consists of three axes, in addition to the introduction and conclusion:

- Reminder of the circumstances of the aggression of the DRC;
- Efforts of the Congolese governance in the face of this aggression;
- Critical analysis of the value and meaning of the ADR for the strengthening of national sovereignty.

2.0 AGGRESSION AGAINST THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

2.1 Brief reminder of the circumstances of the aggression against the DRC

The current history of Congo-Kinshasa remains obscure to many of our contemporaries. To liquidate a people, we begin by taking away its memory by falsifying its history (Onana, 2023). The roots of the DRC's aggression, particularly in its eastern part, can be traced back to the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan genocide and events in Burundi, resulting in disorderly and uncontrolled population movements to eastern Zaire, now the DRC (Stearns, 2021).

Rwanda, a small country of 26,338 km², has been able to produce mountains of bones of human corpses to prove to humanity that one can be small but capable of performing macabre feats to amaze the planet. Thus, in the spotlight, Rwanda has gone further: museums of corpse bones have been created and valued to display the diabolical bravery of Rwandans among themselves to the world. The diabolical situation in Rwanda has led to massive displacement, loss of life and human rights violations. It is in this logic that the eastern part of the DRC has been flooded with populations coming from Rwanda to install insecurity in Congo, destabilizing the country, particularly its eastern part (North and South Kivu, Maniema, Tanganyika, Ituri). Rwandans exported their problems and difficulties to Congo-Kinshasa (Ebuteli & Congo Research Group, 2024).

2.2 Sufficiently thought-out and matured chaos by the imperialists

To know the reasons for the presence of the Rwandan military on Congolese soil, it is important to understand the causes of the 1994 Rwandan war and the objectives that underpinned this war (Onana, 2023). Contrary to what some claim, the Rwandan conflict began in 1990 with the invasion of Tutsi rebels from Uganda with the aim of overthrowing the ruling President Juvénal Habyarimana. These Tutsi aggressors were in the Ugandan army, but were of Rwandan origin; they decided to leave the Ugandan service to take power in Rwanda with the objective of establishing democracy. More than three decades later, they are still in power and no political alternation has ever been envisaged in this land of a thousand hills (Stearns, 2021).

We can see that the lies about democracy have worked well, because Paul Kagame has been in power since 1990 and he has never ceded power to another person. It is likely that he plans to

stay there until 2035, which will make at least 45 years of undisputed rule. In this reality, the Hutus and the Twa are totally excluded.

For the Western imperialist, the main idea was to put at the head of Rwanda a man capable of invading Congo-Kinshasa (formerly Zaire) and seizing its wealth for the benefit of Western companies and the private interests of the Anglo-Americans, supported by certain Western leaders (Baracyetse & SOS Rwanda-Burundi, 1999). As Rwanda is a small, poor and landlocked state, those who had supported Paul Kagame and the Tutsis in their seizure of power in Rwanda had planned to be compensated by minerals from the DRC. To achieve this, a war was launched against the Rwandan population and forced them to move to the DRC (Englebert, 2003).

They have begun a meticulously prepared military action to invade and occupy the eastern part of Congo-Kinshasa with the aim of exploiting its natural resources. And there, the mission is to push the indigenous population of the eastern part of the DRC to flee and abandon their lands for the interest of non-natives, for a good organization of the plundering and exploitation of the natural resources of this corner of the Republic (Onana, 2019; Wakenge et al., 2021).

To achieve this, the AFDL's aggression, under the guise of Rwanda and Uganda, pushed several reasons for aggression in the DRC in 1996, including regional security, the fight against Hutu rebels who had taken refuge in Congo, and the overthrow of the Mobutu regime. However, economic and geostrategic motivations have also been identified. To mask his ambitions in Congo-Kinshasa, while pushing the argument that he is acting to defend himself against an existential threat from armed groups operating in the DRC, notably the FDLR, made up of former Rwandan Hutu genocidaires. The Rwandan government maintains that its actions are aimed at preventing the conflict in the DRC from spilling over into its territory. Despite the AFDL overthrowing the power of Marshal Mobutu, Uganda and Rwanda continue to impose their influence and/or hegemony on the Congolese government, which brings us to the aggression of the M23/AFC rebellion (Ebuteli & Congo Research Group, 2024).

These two countries, having noted the appetites of the Western imperialist for the natural resources of Lumumba's country, have asked the alliance to cede to them a part of the land of Congo-Kinshasa which will allow them to expand their territory. This is why, when the AFDLian war company was created in a hotel in Remera (a district of the city of Kigali), the sponsors of Laurent Désiré Kabila and the AFDL (Ugandan and Rwandan) are said to have demanded, before embarking on the adventure of territorial conquest in Kivu in particular and in Congo-Zaire in general, that it be necessary to sign a commitment providing that all the Congolese soil and subsoil would belong to the Alliance and not to the future The state, and the latter, on the other hand, undertook to cede a minimum of "300 km from the Ugandan-Rwandan borders to the interior of the DRC, for the simple reason of securing its neighbours in the African Great Lakes countries against rebel insurrections" (Péan, 2010, p. 337). In addition, the AFDL would undertake, once in power, to pay "special retribution" to its Rwandan-Ugandan-Burundian allies (Mbura Mbahikya, 2021, p. 201).

Rwandan President Paul Kagame is also said to have demanded that the AFDL, once in power, proceed directly to the pure and simple reinstatement of the controversial 1972 law on nationality abolished in 1981, also demanding that Congolese nationality be granted

collectively and unconditionally to "Banyamulenge brothers, sisters and comrades" and other populations of Rwandan origin established in the country before 30 June 1960 (Mbura Mbahikya, 2021, p. 201). A few months after the Kadogo march were enough for the Banyamulenge to be comfortably integrated into the Congolese political sphere, especially with the fall of the capital Kinshasa on May 17, 1997, which finally heralded the total liberation of the entire national territory from the hands of the repressive power of Marshal Mobutu and the seizure of power by Laurent Désiré Kabila. This explains the repetition of wars in the DRC and could be the reason for the balkanization of the country (Putzel et al., 2008).

The territorial conquest project in the Democratic Republic of Congo was conceived by the aggressor states of Congo-Kinshasa, part of which was carried out by the AFDL by granting Congolese nationality in a collective manner to the Rwandan refugees known as Banyamulenge. During the aggression of Congo-Kinshasa by the Ugandans and Rwandans in 1998 under the cover of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), the latter carried out the project of carving up the country by creating administrative entities, in this case that of Minembwe, which is at the root of the endless conflicts in the territory of Fizi.

If we properly observe the current situation in the DRC, we will quickly understand that the massacres carried out in the country of Lumumba with millions of deaths, these images filmed in the DRC show that these are not conflicts between the tribes of the black continent in the heart of darkness. After analyzing the various United Nations surveys and reports, they show that the shocking instability that the DRC is witnessing is organized and maintained on purpose (Wondo Omanyundu, 2014). It is the simple strategy or policy of chaos knowingly organized with the objectives of bringing Congo-Kinshasa to its knees and considering it as a baby state (Bongeli Yeikelo Ya Ato, 2008, p. 59) qualified as a safe where multinationals and Western elites can exploit and plunder the country's natural resources without being bothered by anyone. And it is the implementation of the well-conceived theory of constructive chaos, important in the eyes of American strategists (Mbeko & Ngbanda, 2014, p. 601; Wakenge et al., 2021).

2.3 J. K. K.'s governance, from trial and error to complicity and betrayal

It is important to know that all the wars that take place in Congo-Kinshasa are about the control of natural resources, including the country's rich mineral deposits. To achieve this, it is important for them to maintain chaos for longer and this strategy has won out from the media war. In the context of the DRC, the manipulation of information results in the concealment not only of the real stakes of the war, but much more of the personalities and multinationals who, under the cover of this sustained chaos, monopolize colossal products (Wakenge et al., 2021).

To allow the materialization of this economy of chaos that allows Anglo-American multinationals to reap profits that are always astronomical, a political mechanism has been put in place. It is articulated around a triumvirate associating the three Tutsi-Hima presidents of the Great Lakes region: the Ugandan Yoweri Museveni, in the role of architect; Rwanda's Paul Kagame in the role of project manager; and Joseph Kabila in the role of Trojan horse (Mbeko & Ngbanda, 2014, p. 601). These three men, through their respective armies, have the mission of maintaining Congo-Kinshasa in a situation that allows for a failed state, with a Congolese army that is continuously paralyzed and unable to impose itself, even in the face of an ordinary armed group (Mbeko & Ngbanda, 2014; Ebuteli & Congo Research Group, 2024).

2.4 Laurent Désiré Kabila's government in the face of aggression

Laurent Désiré Kabila, a danger for the finalization of the occupation plan, he must die. Clearly, the United States is organizing the subcontracting of a coup d'état that it plans to carry out against Zaire by entrusting Uganda and Rwanda with the mission of executing it militarily without it being perceived as such (Onana, 2023, p. 117).

2.5 Reviving the sovereignist spirit and its stifling

In a sovereignist spirit, the supreme authority, the Congolese people, must be allowed to decide their fate sovereignly without being subjected to atrocious interventions from outside; thus the Congo tried, but suffocated. The country tried to take a stand to return power to the people. The regime of Laurent Désiré Kabila created the CPP with a view to establishing a true democracy to put an end to the management of imperialism on Congolese soil and to fight against any "institutional mimicry whose vulnerabilities are obvious" (Kabuika Tshipata, 2025, p. 19). His successor dared to change his mind to give hope to the Congolese people; he tried with China in favor of the Chinese contract. He promulgated the new Mining Code (Kabuika Tshipata, 2025, p. 22).

The new Code aims to strengthen state control over the mining sector, increase state revenues from mining, including through increased taxes. Second, there is a need to better involve local communities in mining activities, particularly in terms of community development and subcontracting. Third, it also introduces measures to improve transparency in the mining sector and strengthens the fight against corruption (Wakenge et al., 2021).

In 2018, the regime of Joseph Kabila Kabange sovereignly organized the elections without the slightest assistance, especially from the West (Kabuika Tshipata, 2025, p. 23). These behaviors are considered unacceptable and unwelcome in the eyes of the West, which must not let go of the DRC. Thus, for example, the names of Kwame Nkrumah, "the intransigent Pan-Africanist", who was chased out of his country like a bandit; as for Patrice Lumumba, he will be immolated as a sacrificial lamb for the well-being of the colonizing nation of Congo; and Thomas Sankara who paid with blood for his love for Burkina Faso and Africa.

2.6 The Mai-Mai, a forgotten, ignored and marginalized Congolese resistance people

"In reality, for the Congolese in general, the partition of the country is an unthinkable, undesirable prospect and the concern to defend national integrity is unanimously shared by all. The only ones to dream of an implosion of the Congo, of a fragmentation in which they would find their account, are the neighboring countries and this project itself is not formulated out loud" (Kisubi Nguomoja, 2025, p. 221). By the notion of civil resistance, we mean the spontaneous process of civil society's struggle by unarmed means against the aggression of which society is a victim (Mikedo Hatari, 2020). The Mai-Mai are the Congolese peoples united around a cause to defend. They are made up of farmers, fishermen and craftsmen, all categories combined, who have decided to react to the injustice and insecurity imposed on them by those who have come from elsewhere, recognized as aggressors, invaders or occupiers, who have invaded or occupied Congolese territory.

Among the factors that contributed to the emergence and amplification of the Mai-Mai ideology, we have retained: hegemonic wars, the creation of new customary entities and the abusive granting of land to foreign subjects, the inability of the Congolese regimes to defend territorial integrity, and above all the large-scale massacres and inhumane treatment of the population by the occupiers (Mikedo Hatari, 2020; Stearns, 2021).

According to Mikedo Hatari, the study of Mai-Maism has helped us Congolese to discover our personality by searching in the depths of our past for the rich heritage bequeathed to us by our ancestors. It has succeeded in re-establishing the indispensable link between the past and the present of our history. The result of this effort has resulted in the creation of an ideology based on authentic Congolese resistance examined under the concept of Mai-Maism or Mai-Mai ideology (Mikedo Hatari, 2023).

2.7 Operational approach report between French railway resistance workers and Mai-Mai resistance fighters in the DRC

The French Railway Resistance was a French resistance movement against the Nazi occupation during World War II. This specialized movement, composed of French railway workers, took an active part in the resistance (Ribeil, 2006). The movement was created at the beginning of 1943. These railway workers refused defeat and the German occupation and their collaborators. Their commitment was also motivated by the desire to fight to liberate France and preserve the values of the Republic. The commitment of railway workers to the resistance was of great importance, and their role was often decisive in the struggle against the occupation.

Compared to the situation in the DRC, the situation is almost similar; we can compare the concept of resistant railway workers with the Mai-Mai (Wazalendo). The Mai-Mai are the working population that cultivates the land in the villages of the DRC. They organized themselves to resist the aggression from outside to take away their land, something that was unacceptable in the eyes of the population (Rouw & Willems, 2010).

The Congolese people are the defenders of their territory and communities against invaders and external actors. They are for the defense of the sovereignty of the DRC and the protection of their territory. As for the operational approach, the Resistance railway workers made life difficult for the occupiers. They carried out clandestine operations by sabotaging the railways to block the transport of war materials from the occupiers to the various front lines.

2.8 The Mai-Mai, the Congolese people identified as a negative force

The imperialist world is shaken by a deep crisis that is forcing multinationals to develop strategies aimed at grabbing all possible sources of profit in Third World countries and pushing the exploitation of the working class around the world to its extreme limits (Mikedo Hatari, 2023, p. 299; Wakenge et al., 2021).

3.0 CONGOLESE GOVERNANCE AND THE AGGRESSION OF THE CONGO

3.1 Political alternation and its political buzzing

Political change in Lumumba's country is very important to strengthen democracy, prevent wars and promote the socio-economic development of the country. Because it makes it possible to renew leaders, to ensure the legitimacy of power and to respond to the needs of citizens. Political change in Congo-Kinshasa is an essential aspect for any democracy. It shows that the political and administrative institutions are well operational and that the elections are credible. In Congo-Kinshasa, where political history has been marked by violent or unconstitutional transitions, peaceful alternation strengthens the democratic system (Kankwenda Mbaya, 2018).

It helps to put an end to the dynamics of fixed power, often associated with corruption, clientelism and bad governance. A change of leadership in the governance of a state opens the way to new ideas, more inclusive policies and better representation of populations. The absence of the latter could cause discontent, frustration, politico-ethnic and other tensions, and may be at the root of the violence. And yet, it could be that in the DRC the various political crises are linked to attempts to extend political mandates or non-consensual transitions (Putzel et al., 2008).

The renewal of political actors at the top of the state or in power makes it possible to promote new ideas that redefine politico-economic reforms to boost the socio-economic and institutional development of the country. Political change in Congo-Kinshasa could also promote transparency and accountability, two key elements in attracting investment and improving public services.

Despite the necessity or importance of political change, Congo-Kinshasa is still a weak and/or fragile state. Elections have always been contested, lack independence of electoral institutions; The country has never experienced a peaceful transition resulting from the votes and this since the elections of 2006 to the present day. This demonstrates that each alternation in Congo-Kinshasa is a test (BTI, 2024).

The situation of political alternation in our country remains weak and fragile, but the evolution is marked by internal conflicts between the country's political actors and within the ruling coalition, and an agreement of the population to actions with a palpable impact. Since the election of Felix Tshisekedi in 2018, the DRC has experienced its first peaceful alternation since independence, thus putting an end to the reign of Joseph Kabila. This action was hailed as a very important political turning point for the country, but unfortunately it did not escape controversies, particularly over the transparency of the vote and post-election political arrangements.

The Congolese people are showing discontent and fatigue in the face of the various political crises that are blocking socio-economic development and the implementation of long-awaited political and administrative reforms. The ruling coalition, the Sacred Union of the Nation, is facing very intense internal rivalries. The resignation of Vital Kamerhe from the post of president of the National Assembly, under the threat of an impeachment vote, demonstrates the growing tensions. This instability highlights the challenges of cohesion and leadership within the presidential majority. The change of government is not limited to the change of face at the top of the country. On the contrary, it must be accompanied by a real alternative in the management of public affairs, which is a major challenge in Congo-Kinshasa (BTI, 2024).

3.2 Responsible governance of stakeholders and awareness

The FSD approach is based on a participatory and integrated approach, where actors are empowered through ideological, military and productive pillars, with a strong emphasis on citizen awareness (Amnesty International, 2007).

- **Ideological pillar:** It aims to instill patriotism, civic-mindedness, self-esteem and the culture of defending the ancestral territory. Because it is based on citizenship education that empowers each actor as a defender of the nation.
- **Defence pillar:** It is provided by specific and specialised training to harden reservists. These training courses are supervised by the FARDC, guaranteeing a structured and professional military governance.
- **Production pillar:** It mobilizes stakeholders around multi-sectoral industrialization projects. It involves partnerships between the state, local communities, and economic operators to drive development (Thill, 2021).

3.3 The population involved in the work of stabilizing and securing the country

The east of the DRC has fallen into darkness since the country gained independence in 1965, i.e. five years after independence; The Congolese people have begun to contribute to the stabilization and security of their country. Those who know well the struggle of the resistance of the Mai-Mai self-defense, who today are the Wazalendo. It is important to point out that the Wazalendo have existed since 1965 when they fought to support the vision of Patrice Emery Lumumba through the Lumumbists. This movement disappeared after Marshal Mobutu defeated it (Stearns, 2021).

Around 1996, this movement reappeared in the territory of Fizi in the province of South Kivu, to combat the aggression of the AFDL, involvement of Mzee L. D. Kabila, calmed this movement and the AFDL continued to Kinshasa on May 17, 1997. During the aggression of the country in 1998 by RCD-Goma against the power of L.D. Kabila, the latter had called on his former Mai-Mai Mulele friends and allies, such as General Sikatenda, General Lokole, General Lwe'ya, General Madowadowa and others, to reorganize the resistance against his AFDL allies, whom he had described as aggressors. That same year, the resistance fighters of the Mai-Mai self-defense were urgently organized and officially reappeared in the territory of Fizi under the name of FAP (People's Armed Force). The latter fought alongside L. D. Kabila until his death and have continued to this day (Rouw & Willems, 2010).

This situation of security instability in eastern DRC has pushed the Congolese people to contribute to the stabilization and security of the country through various means, including by complying with the necessary political reforms and consolidating the gains made in the east of the country, while fighting persistent challenges such as insecurity that causes the predation of natural resources by grabbing large tracts of land and mass displacement of the population in the combat zones. People participate in activities that promote economic development and peace, and in a context where security remains very fragile. It is important to build public trust and implement policies that contribute to stability and security (Amnesty International, 2007).

The Congolese people contribute to the stabilization and security of the national territory by participating in socio-economic development and demonstrate civic and patriotic commitment

on the battlefield. Currently in the eastern part where fighting is raging between the FARDC against the M23/AFC rebels. The Congolese people have enlisted in the army to defend the territorial integrity of the country. It is therefore important to know that in the current situation of the country, the Congolese populations are organizing themselves by strengthening national defense, promoting patriotism, and stimulating multi-sectoral industrialization (Ebuteli & Congo Research Group, 2024).

3.4 Strengthening sovereignty and mobilizing energies

To support the strengthening of the authority of the State in current conflict situations, which weaken and weaken the security situation in the DRC, it is important to know that state force or power is an ideal to which a population aspires. The fear of disappearance leads to the will to power. Because it can be made and unmade, but it is this that commands respect from others. To live in peace, it is imperative to build a power or a deterrent force against states that envy and are ready to attack with or without reason and motive (Bongeli Yeikelo Ya Ato, 2008, p. 59).

This is why former US President Theodore Roosevelt said: "No people can hope to obtain from the international community what it cannot grant itself" (Bongeli Yeikelo Ya Ato, 2008, p. 113). And that it is irresponsible for a state to deprive itself of the right to develop its armed force (Bongeli Yeikelo Ya Ato, 2008). And there, the Congolese government has the obligation to equip itself with a powerful deterrent force to guarantee its survival on the international scene. Because without a deterrent power, international treaties and agreements are worth no more than the crumpled papers on which they are recorded.

It is important to know that the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo is an unsecured empty area, i.e. an empty unfenced lot. This part is the gateway to all the aggressions that Congo-Kinshasa is experiencing, because of a manifest absence of state authority in this corner of the Republic. It is important to know that Kivu has a favorable environment for the construction of military training centers and military camps. If we build the military centers and camps in this part of the Republic, it will allow the country to close all the entry doors that are open for the aggressors (Baaz & Verweijen, 2013).

The reasons why this part has been left without security by the settlers is the fact that it is rich in natural resources and is considered a free movement zone to plunder and exploit the resources contained in the soil and subsoil of this part of the country. For them, strengthening the authority of the state in this area could not give them easy access to natural resources; that is why it has been left at the mercy of all. However, today, Fizi has a heavy military presence due to clashes between the FARDC and the various armed groups operating there. This militarization is a source of insecurity for the civilian population (Wakenge et al., 2021).

No state in the world has a duty to another state. Each State has a duty only to itself and its members. These duties can be summed up in one: to be strong, to become stronger and stronger; and the stronger a state is, the more it will have reasons for being and subsisting. If he has no strength, his existence will remain precarious, because it depends on the will of those who have the strength to decide his fate (Bongeli Yeikelo Ya Ato, 2008, p. 60). And this is the case of Congo-Kinshasa today. Despite this, Congo-Kinshasa has the capacity to become a strong,

powerful and prosperous state in the heart of Africa. If we take into account the elements likely to favor the development and emergence of Congo-Kinshasa as a powerful state, we find its geography, the natural resources it has, the human materials and a good organization that will put these aspects to music. And here, we say that Congo-Kinshasa has the necessary means to become a power. The greatest problem in the Congo has been political governance since 1960 to the present day, as private interest takes precedence over collective interest and delays the emergence of the country's development (Putzel et al., 2008).

For Congo-Kinshasa, the culture responsible for peace must include the preparation of the mind for self-defence in case of necessity. No one likes war, and you have to resign yourself to it in the event of a threat (Bongeli Yeikelo Ya Ato, 2008). The need for a powerful army is irrefutable now in the DRC. And to strengthen the authority of the state in the territory of Fizi, it is important to build military camps and training centers in this part of the country.

Because it is irresponsible that the restoration of state authority in the DRC depends on the great powers, but first we must take charge of ourselves and redefine our future and work seriously for it. Secondly, to seek to cooperate, but by choosing allies in all areas of our education, innovation, investment, geopolitics and our defence by working with the Asians, the Americans, the Europeans and the Africans; We want to have the best relations in the world, but we don't want to depend on them. Our sovereignty and stability must be respected everywhere (Englebert, 2003).

To defend its sovereignty, integrity and future in the face of interference, Western hegemony and aggression from neighbouring countries. As Western countries support Rwanda and Uganda by sending weapons, funding, military training, tactics, defense systems and significant logistical support to the aggressor countries in Congo-Kinshasa, others are concerned about the longevity of the conflict in eastern DRC that is destabilizing our country's sovereignty (Ebuteli & Congo Research Group, 2024).

4.0 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE AND MEANING OF THE FDR FOR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY IN THE DRC

Politics is the art and action of predicting destiny, orienting and governing the interests of a human community, of a state (Kankwenda Mbaya, 2018, p. 299). Faced with this ambivalence, which depersonalizes and paralyzes, Mabika Kalanda invites the Congolese to refound, broaden and strengthen a national consciousness through a "questioning" (Kankwenda Mbaya, 2018, p. 306). The security of the country must be understood as the effort to enhance and vitalize the common space. This development requires the mobilization of energies and calls for the contribution of all.

The Army and Defense Reserve (RAD) is a structure that brings together the various forces of the population that defend the integrity and sovereignty of the country. It is a reserve force created in the DRC to institutionalize a practice for the harmonious, effective and efficient use of armed groups in the DRC. It is as a supplementary force, an auxiliary force of the army. The structure aims to integrate armed groups into an orderly, controlled framework with the aim of combating security threats facing the country (ADF Magazine, 2025; Verweijen & Thill, 2025).

Congolese patriots must find in this action a message of invitation to solidarity for a reconciled humanity of all communities in the perspective of prosperity.

The political-strategic approach refers to the way in which a political action is designed and implemented, taking into account the objectives to be achieved (political) and the means to achieve them (strategic). It is an approach that integrates both the political dimension (intentions, values, goals) and the strategic dimension (methods, plans, tactics) to influence others and achieve desired outcomes (Thill, 2021).

4.1 Government is waking up with pragmatic government action

In life, everything is a choice. We face alternatives every day even in our daily and private existence. The choice we make will depend on the success of our day or its failure, the success of our business or, on the contrary, their bankruptcy, etc. The same is true of state affairs (Wingenga-wi-Ependo, 2008, p. 65). The aggression, the situation of destabilization (balkanization) of the Congo is a coup meticulously prepared for a long time by the Anglo-Saxons. Neighboring countries (Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, etc.) are used as propaganda instruments, as enforcement agents, because the intention of the Anglo-Saxons is to have the DRC, to have a stranglehold on our country, particularly minerals (rare earths) (Wakenge et al., 2021).

Lumumba refused the fragmentation of his country as well as of Africa, and fought fiercely against any attempt at balkanization or secession. He wants a truly free and united Congo that could trigger and sustain Africa's development. Lumumba refused Jacobin terror and advocated non-violence without hesitation. He more or less consciously assumes the option of martyrdom, of becoming an example for the African future rather than behaving like a traitor like some African leaders (Rampazzo Bazzan, 2012).

The problem of the DRC is that it lives too much of the present in nostalgia for the lost paradise of childhood. The problem with the DRC, with Africa, is that too often it judges the present in relation to a totally imaginary purity of origins that no one can hope to resurrect (Rampazzo Bazzan, 2012).

4.2 The Congolese population facing its destiny

Insecurity in the DRC is a complex and widespread problem, with high levels of crime. Faced with this macabre situation, the situation requires a global and coordinated response; this is how the meaning and value of the creation of the RAD must be interpreted, grasped and understood. Insecurity in the DRC is having a devastating impact on the Congolese population, with security consequences. Eastern DRC has been the scene of armed conflict for decades, with armed groups implicated in violence against civilians (Ebuteli & Congo Research Group, 2024).

In the name of the people, the Congolese government demands that the aggressors leave Congolese territory and that they be replaced by a contingent of the Congolese army because as long as the aggressors' troops remain in the DRC to continue their action, their aggression, there will be no peace in Congo. Although the Congolese government has taken this courageous and pragmatic step by establishing a reserve army, its success will depend on the government's

ability to avoid the mistakes of the past and integrate these new forces in an effective and structured manner, without compromising the stability of the national army (Amnesty International, 2007; Baaz & Verweijen, 2013).

4.3 The Value and Meaning of the Creation of the DLN

The institution of the Armed Defense Reserve in the DRC is now an achievement. The Senate accepted the law establishing the Armed Defense Reserve in the DRC ("RAD") in May 2023, as part of a new national defense policy aimed at strengthening the fight against armed groups such as the M23. The creation of this reserve force comes in a context of threat posed by armed groups, including the M23, and aims to strengthen the country's defence capacity (ADF Magazine, 2025; The Conversation, 2025; Verweijen & Thill, 2025).

The creation of the "RAN" allows the government to reward allies of armed groups by integrating them while placing them under institutional control. The "Wazalendo" patriots have acquired a quasi-official status and have increasingly identified themselves as defenders of Congo's territorial integrity. They are now identifiable under the name of "Wazalendo" which means "patriots" in Kiswahili. They have become symbols of Congolese resistance against foreign aggression and occupation forces, just as railway workers in France did during the German occupation during World War II (Rouw & Willems, 2010).

In February 2025, the RAD was officially launched in Butembo, with the mission of enlisting, training and preparing citizen volunteers to strengthen the defense of territorial integrity (Kinshasa 24, 2025).

4.4 The projection of the failure of the RAD, a time bomb

In most cases, Congolese public institutions have a very weak capacity for strategic anticipation; the result is distressing (Kankwenda Mbaya, 2018, p. 319). Some experts fear that this initiative could have negative consequences. The integration of armed groups into a reserve force could encourage them to recruit more to strengthen their negotiating position. In addition, tensions could arise between the reserve force and the regular army, or even backfires against the government (ADF Magazine, 2025; The Conversation, 2025; Verweijen & Thill, 2025). The Congolese nation-state survives, but for how much longer? The answer is not certain. But what is certain is that it is fragile because of its government and its elites (Kankwenda Mbaya, 2018, p. 378). If the Congolese state does not take this structure seriously in its management and organization, it would risk being an over-government and budget-intensive structure.

In 2026, the government allocated 30% of the national budget to defence and security, highlighting the urgency of building military capacity, including through the RAD, to recover the occupied territories (Jeune Afrique, 2025). However, criticism persists about the creation of a "parallel army" and the risks of confusion in eastern DRC (ADF Magazine, 2025; Baaz & Verweijen, 2013).

5.0 CONCLUSION

For three decades, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo has been the scene of multifaceted aggression, initiated by the consequences of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 and

maintained by repeated regional interference and the systematic exploitation of mineral resources. In the face of the state's protracted inability to fully restore its authority and protect the population, community-based self-defense groups, historically referred to under the umbrella term Mai-Mai and more recently grouped under the name Wazalendo ("patriots"), have emerged as a form of spontaneous popular resistance. Composed mainly of civilians, farmers and former combatants, these movements have mobilized to defend ancestral lands, local communities and territorial integrity against successive waves of aggression, particularly in areas such as Fizi territory.

The institution of the Army and Defense Reserve, adopted in 2023 and operationalized in 2025, aims precisely to channel this endogenous patriotic energy into a structured state framework, placing it under the command and supervision of the Armed Forces of the DRC. It thus meets the strategic objective stated by the current governance, that of strengthening the national defence capacity through an inclusive and controlled mobilisation of the population, while avoiding the perpetuation of uncontrolled parallel armies.

The hypothesis defended in this study, according to which the RAD constitutes a pragmatic and patriotic act capable of consolidating sovereignty on the condition of a rigorous and hierarchical integration, finds its critical outcome here. If the structure manages to effectively integrate the Wazalendo, to professionalize their fighters, to recognize their merits in the field while imposing uniform military discipline and ranks validated by the Ministry of Defense, it could contribute significantly to the sustainable stabilization of the East and the restoration of state authority.

Conversely, the risks remain high. The persistence of self-proclamations of high ranks by some group leaders, without formal validation or state military training, is a major source of potential tension. A lax or clientelist management of these ambitions could turn the RAD into a further vector of fragmentation, or even a hotbed of new rebellions once the military phase against the M23/AFC is over. The Congolese state is therefore faced with a major challenge: reconciling the recognition of patriotic sacrifices with the reaffirmation of the legitimate monopoly of violence.

Ultimately, the creation of the RAD should not be analyzed solely as a short-term response to the current crisis, but as a litmus test of the ability of Congolese governance to transform fragmented popular resistance into a coherent instrument of sovereignty and national cohesion. Its success or failure will have a lasting influence on the trajectory of the Congolese state in the face of internal and external threats.

This study sought to shed light on this dynamic by combining a historical review, an analysis of government responses and a critical assessment of the RAD initiative. It calls for increased vigilance with regard to the effective implementation of this reform, the outcome of which remains decisive for the future of peace and sovereignty in the DRC.

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