

Mapping Conflict Motives: M23



Front Cover image: M23 combatants marching into Goma wearing RDF uniforms

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Introduction

Since 2004, IPIS has published various reports on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Between 2007 and 2010 IPIS focussed predominantly on the motives of the most significant remaining armed groups in the DRC in the aftermath of the Congo wars of 1996 and 1998.¹ Since 2010 many of these groups have demobilised and several have integrated into the Congolese army (FARDC) and the security situation in the DRC has been slowly stabilising. However, following the November 2011 elections, a chain of events led to the creation of a 'new' armed group that called itself "M23". At first, after being cornered by the FARDC near the Rwandan border, it seemed that the movement would be short-lived. However, over the following two months M23 made a remarkable recovery, took Rutshuru and Goma, and started to show national ambitions.

In light of these developments and the renewed risk of large-scale armed conflict in the DRC, the European Network for Central Africa (EURAC) assessed that an accurate understanding of M23's motives among stakeholders will be crucial for dealing with the current escalation. IPIS volunteered to provide such analysis as a brief update to its 'mapping conflict motives' report series. The content of the report does not necessarily reflect the position of EURAC and is IPIS' sole responsibility. As a result of time constraints no web maps are provided, however relevant data is indicated on print maps within the text.

The report looks into four hypotheses on M23's motives: historic grievances, ethnic tensions, economic gain, and political control over territory. Each of these explanations are compared with M23's discourse, decisions and actions. The researchers wish to stress that the situation on the ground is subject to constant change. M23 is a recent movement, created less than a mere seven months prior to this analysis; there are new developments almost every day.

Most of the information used exists in the public domain. When insufficient sources were available, additional information was gathered by IPIS researchers working on related topics in South Kivu, and through telephone interviews.

¹ For more information, see: <http://www.ipisresearch.be/mapping.php>

1. Background

On the 6th May 2012 a group of FARDC mutineers announced the creation of the M23 movement, a new armed group. The members were former rebels of the *Armée Nationale Congolaise / CNDP*. The CNDP justified the movement by evoking the Congolese government's unkept promises - promises made when signing a deal to integrate these soldiers into the FARDC on 23 March 2009. Although M23 is the successor of CNDP, it has a smaller support base (See Box 1).

Box 1: the M23 support base

A comprehensive comparison of CNDP and M23 is beyond the scope of this report, however in order to understand M23's motives it is important to point out the reduced support base of the latter.

The recruitment pool of M23 is smaller than CNDP's and the movement is less locally embedded. CNDP, at least initially² managed to win some support from Congolese Hutu and Banyamulenge communities, however elites from these communities have, to this date, principally refused to support M23. To compensate, M23 has reached out to other communities such as the Hema and Lendu in Ituri, but similarly failed to rally them to its cause.

Furthermore, Ntaganda replacing Laurent Nkunda as the head of CNDP sharpened divisions within the Congolese Tutsi community and support for M23 has been far from total.³ The majority of integrated CNDP combatants claim they are still committed to the peace process concluded on 23 March 2009 with the Kinshasa government and remain within the FARDC. As a consequence, initially fewer than 1000 former CNDP combatants joined M23, while CNDP controlled an estimated 4000 to 7000 troops before its integration into the FARDC at the end of 2008.⁴

Several events preceded M23's creation. Firstly, severe irregularities during the 28 November 2011 presidential election significantly weakened elected President Kabila's position.⁵ Etienne Tshisekedi, Kabila's main contestant, did not wait for the final results and proclaimed himself president on 23 December 2011 in his residence. Even more embarrassing for President Kabila was the absence of any Head of State at his swearing in, with the exception of Zimbabwe's President Mugabe.

Despite an overt lack of support by the international community, donors did not contest Kabila's re-election but used the opportunity to push Kinshasa for actions and reforms that had long been on their agenda.⁶ Consequently, in March 2012, rumours began to spread on the imminent arrest of General Bosco Ntaganda. Bosco has been wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) since 2006 for war crimes committed in the Ituri region between 2002 and 2003 while serving in Thomas Lubanga's rebel militia, the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC). The rumours of Bosco's imminent arrest were fuelled by the conviction of Thomas Lubanga in The Hague. It is alleged that Bosco, to evade a possible arrest, sparked a violent mutiny early April amongst some of the former CNDP members within the FARDC.

² S. Spittaels & F. Hilgert, *Mapping Conflict Motives*, IPIS report, 2008 pp. 6-8

³ Rift Valley Institute. *From CNDP to M23: The evolution of an armed movement in Eastern Congo*, Usalama Project, 2012 pp. 11, 37.

⁴ United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Final report 2008*, UN Doc. S/2008/773, 12 December 2008, paragraph 20.

⁵ In its December 2011 report, the Carter Center states that the provisional results for the election lacked credibility. In Katanga province they found that the rate of voter turnout was nearly 100 per cent in more than a dozen districts, "and in four districts, vote totals for Kabila were at or very close to 100 percent." Meanwhile in March 2012 the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) issued a report on the serious human rights violations committed by members of Congolese security forces in Kinshasa between 26 November and 25 December 2011 in the context of the Congolese presidential and legislative elections.

⁶ Rift Valley Institute, *From CNDP to M23: The evolution of an armed movement in Eastern Congo*, Usalama project, 2012, pp. 42-43.

However the attempted mass defection in April was preceded by a number of other mutiny attempts starting from the beginning of 2012. In January, a group of non-Tutsi army officers defected near Bukavu and called themselves *Conseil Supérieur de la Paix (CONSUP)*. Furthermore in January Colonel Kahasha, who was deployed near Beni, defected to form the *Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (UPCP)* in collaboration with Lafontaine's PARECO rebels. Then in February several high-ranking officers mutinied in Ituri.⁷ This succession of defections, including many high-ranking officers in somewhat privileged positions, caused suspicion about a new rebellion.

Timeline of M23's expansion in Eastern DRC

April 2012	Hundreds of FARDC soldiers abandon their army posts. The mutineers are linked to Bosco Ntagana, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes.
6 May 2012	A press release announces that a new politico-military movement known as March 23 (M23) has been formed. Its aim is to "revive" a peace agreement signed on 23 March 2009 between the Congolese government and the CNDP. The document states that the group is coordinated by Colonel Sultani Makenga and formed by former CNDP officers. CNDP officials respond by stating that they are committed to the original peace process agreed on in 2009.
10 May 2012	Runyonyi, Chanzu and Bikenge localities, Rutshuru territory, fall to the hands of M23 rebels, after two hours of fighting with the FARDC. Families from Kitchanga, Masisi territory, fearing violence, start to move to Nkamira refugee camp in Rwanda.
18 May 2012	Five days after a truce, during which the FARDC encouraged mutineers to return to barracks, heavy fighting breaks out. The FARDC and M23 clash in Jomba and Bunagana, close to DRC's border with Uganda and Rwanda, and on the Bugusa hillside, 90km North of Goma. Weeks of hostilities ensue in the Rutushuru territory.
14 June 2012	M23 rebels have occupied various localities and hills in the Rutushutu territory (including Runyonyi and Bunagana) for over a month. On the 14 th of June, M23 attacks the FARDC from its Runyoni hill positions in Bweza and Kisigari. By the 17 th , Bweza localities (including Tarika, Ruseke et Murambi) have been taken.
4 July 2012	FARDC launch an offensive against rebels in Kasiki, Miriki and Mbwanyinywa. By the 5 th , fierce fighting begins again; over the next days, M23 captures Bunagana, a border post between DRC and Uganda. 600 FARDC soldiers flee into neighbouring Uganda. By the 9 th , rebel soldiers have been removed from the town and replaced by M23 police officers under the command of Colonel Moses Rusingiza.
14 July 2012	M23 attack Rugari in Rutushuru.
24 July 2012	Heavy clashes between FARDC and M23 resume early in the morning in the villages of Kakomero and Mwaro. Sources suggest that the M23 has circumvented FARDC troops in Rugari.
25 July 2012	FARDC regains control of Rumangabo, 50 km from Goma, after a day long occupation of the town by the M23. Violent clashes take place between the FARDC and M23 in Kiwanja, Rutushuru, and Kalengera Centre. M23 takes Rutshuru.
26 July 2012	M23 attack FARDC in Rumangabo
4 August 2012	M23 set their centre of administration to be Rutushuru, North Kivu.

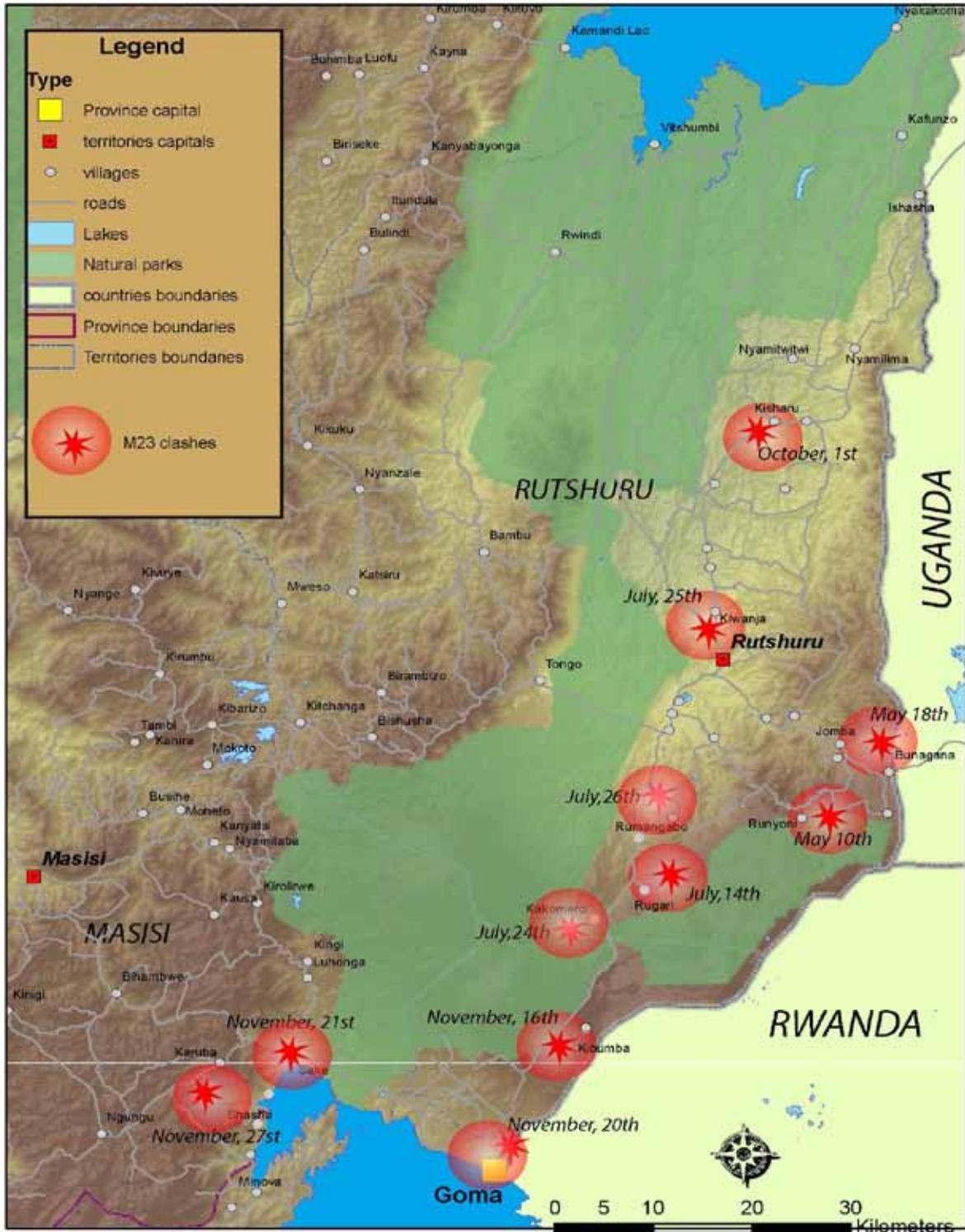
⁷ United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Interim report 2012*, UN Doc. S/2012/348, 21 June 2012, , paragraphs 125-129.

1 October 2012	M23 claim villages along the Kiwanja-Ishasha axis (including Katuiguru, Kisharo, Buramba, Nyamilima, and Ishasha) from the FDLR and the Shetani Muhima Mai-Mai group. Ishasha is a border post to Uganda, to the north of Bunagana.
17 November 2012	After a first failed attempt, M23 drives the FARDC from Kibumba.
20 November 2012	M23 takes control of Goma despite calls by UN and EU to the rebels to stop their advance. FARDC troops abandons the city and flee towards Sake.
21 November 2012	M23 take over the town of Sake (27km west of Goma) while the FARDC retreats to Minova. Over the following days, several battles are fought in and near Sake.
27 November 2012	M23 agree to withdraw from Goma, but the political and military leadership send contradictory messages. Heavy shelling is still reported near Kibumba. FARDC forces from Minova launch an offensive against M23 positions in Shasa, Karuba and Mushaki, Masisi territory
28 November 2012	Sultani Makenga says troops will begin to withdraw from recently captured towns, but 100 fighters will remain at Goma's airport. M23 announces that the administration in Goma, including the police, will remain under its control

Sources: Radio Okapi, allAfrican, UN, Guardian, La Potentiel, Reliefweb, Reuters and BBC.



Main M23 clashes in North Kivu Province



Map 1: Combat incidents involving M23

2. The rebels with grievances hypothesis: unconvincing

M23's communications are openly available to view on the different channels through which it communicates (See Box 2). Despite M23's numerous attempts to explain its grievances and *raison d'être*, the latter remain unclear and appear to have changed since its formation. When M23 was created, it claimed that it was seeking the correct and complete implementation of an agreement signed between the CNDP and the Congolese government on 23 March 2009.⁸ Until mid-July this position still seemed valid. In his official communication after the Bunagana attack,⁹ 'Coordinator' Sultani Makenga stressed that M23's intention was not to "conquer territory", nor to push for new negotiations, but to demand "the application of the March 23 agreement". During the same period, the M23 'representative' in Europe, Jean-Paul Epenge, repeated that M23's unique grievance was the implementation of the 23 March agreement and that it was not asking for a regime change in Kinshasa. However, within a month the M23 demands would change.

Box 2: M23 operated media

The rebels disclose messages and propaganda to the broader public via a range of websites and social media. <http://www.m23mars.org/> shows a disclaimer stating 'site officiel du mouvement du 23 Mars'. On the website visitors can apply for membership and make donations. It calls upon sympathisers to participate in debates on "Facebook, Twitter and YouTube". Until July M23's official communications referenced the following website <http://www.soleildugraben.com/> in the footer. The website remains operational and is regularly updated. A third outlet website for M23 propaganda is <http://congodrcnews.com/>. The website's subtitle is "M23 VS Kinshasa" and it has operated a twitter account since the resumption of fighting in Rutshuru in mid-October.

On the 8th July, right after the Bunagana attack, M23 also created a facebook profile entitled 'M23 Congo RDC', showing a picture of Sultani Makenga, <http://www.facebook.com/M23CongoRdc>.

In early August, just after the ICGLR summit, M23's communication and discourse were restyled. The movement not only changed its website and dropped all references to the CNDP, but also expressed its will to find "a political solution including all popular defence groups".¹⁰ Ten days later, M23 announced the appointment of a political cabinet with ten departments led by 22 chiefs and deputies.¹¹ In an interview published on the official M23 website on the 24th August 2012, Makenga stated that M23 could install a new DRC leadership that would be "capable of uniting the people... dialogue... representing DRC among free nations... [and] that cares about the well-being of its people...".¹²

The restyled M23 has continued to add items to its list of demands, rendering the likelihood of successful negotiations with Kinshasa increasingly small.¹³ In October the movement put forth four preconditions to participating in direct negotiations¹⁴:

1. Respect of the 23 March agreement,
2. Consideration for "additional demands and grievances" of M23 including social issues and issues of good governance,
3. A review of the "truth of the ballot boxes," and

⁸ As such, the letterhead of official M23 communications included the full name and logo of the CNDP.

⁹ M23 Communiqué Officiel N°0019/M23/CNDP/2012, signed by Sultani Makenga.

¹⁰ M23 Communiqué Officiel N°0024/M23/2012, signed by 'political coordinator' Bishop Jean-Marie Lugerero, 8th August 2012, Available at http://www.m23mars.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Communiqu%C3%A9_officiel_0024.pdf

¹¹ Communiqué Officiel N°0026/M23/2012, signed by 'justice and human rights department chief' Mahamba Kasiwa, the designated spokesperson, 17th August 2012, Available at <http://www.m23mars.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Communiqu%C3%A9-Officiel-N%C2%B00026.pdf>

¹² Pointe de presse du Chef du Haut Commandement militaire du M23, le Colonel MAKENGA Sultani, See www.m23mars.org

¹³ Until M23 took Goma, the Congolese government had persistently refused to even start negotiations with the rebels.

¹⁴ Compte-rendu de la troisième réunion du Conseil Exécutif du Mouvement du 23 mars, signed by Bertrand Bisimwa, 21th October 2012.

4. The participation of the political opposition, led by Etienne Tshisekedi and Vital Kamerhe, in the negotiations, as well Congolese diaspora and civil society.

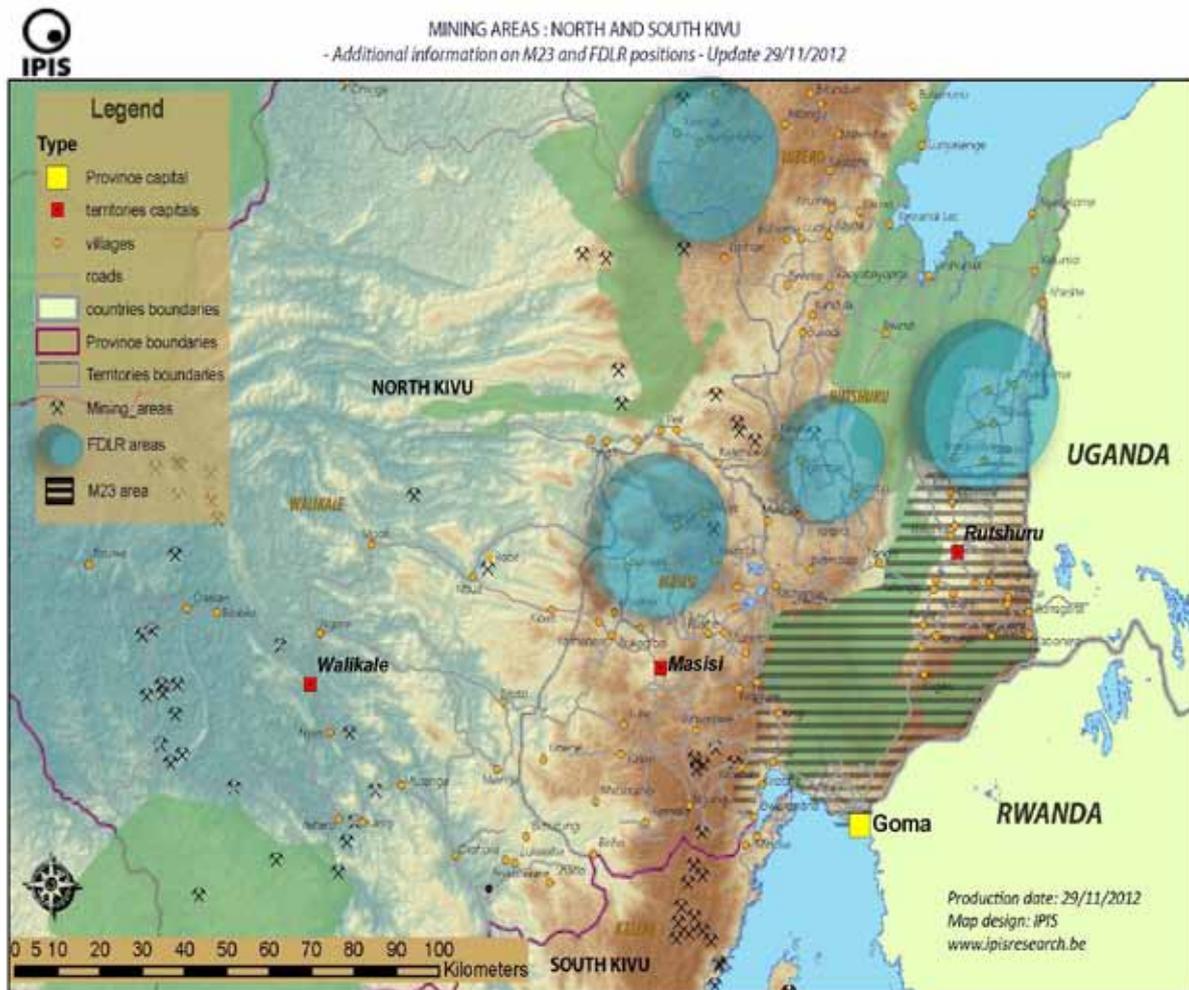
By November, grievances relating to the alleged lack of implementation of the 23 March 2009 agreement featured less and less prominently in M23 discourse; the group steadily unveiled a national agenda. After the seizure of Goma, M23 spokesperson Vianney Kazarama demanded the departure of President Kabila and announced to people gathered at a rally that the movement will march on Kinshasa.

Overall, the 'casus belli', as presented in M23 communication, has not been convincing. Meanwhile, due to these shifts in discourse and contradictions between statements and behaviour, the M23 leadership has been struggling to explain its motives to the Congolese population. For example, in a lengthy text signed by M23 politician Benjamin Mbonimpa, the author defends M23's intentions while vehemently denying the existence of any hidden agenda for dividing the country.¹⁵

¹⁵ Editorial: qui ose dire que le M23 est pour la Balkanisation de l'est de la RDC?, 10th August 2012, see www.m23mars.org

M23's strategy on the battlefield does not suggest that protecting the Tutsi population is its most urgent concern. After capturing the better part of Rutshuru, M23 decided to move on Goma first, before trying to conquer the territory of Masisi, which is home to a large part of the Congolese Tutsi and borders M23's positions in Rutshuru. After it took Goma, M23 advanced towards Sake but, instead of focussing its efforts on Masisi, announced that Bukavu would be next. Although M23 made some incursions into, amongst others, the Masisi towns of Mushaki and Karuba, the heaviest fighting with FARDC occurred on the Minova axis towards Bukavu.

It is also poignant that around half of the ex-CNDP Tutsi commanders have not joined M23, but have remained within the FARDC.¹⁸ Should these officers perceive a grave and urgent security threat to their community, they would probably refuse to fight against M23.



Map 3: FDLR positions relative to M23 positions

¹⁸ See <http://congosiasa.blogspot.be/2012/09/how-many-ex-cndp-commanders-have.html>

In addition to the assertions described above, M23 has declared on many occasions that it wants to cooperate with the DRC government on the “neutralisation” of the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), who have within their ranks several commanders who were involved in the Rwandan genocide. In addition, they have consistently argued that the FARDC are jointly operating with these Rwandan rebels. For example, in a video message dated the 24th November 2012, M23 Colonel Jean Paul Epenge lists a number of FARDC units who he claims are collaborating with the FDLR.¹⁹ Such cooperation would indeed alarm the Tutsi population in Rutshuru and Masisi.

However, the 2012 final report of the Group of Experts states that the Group has been unable to independently confirm 15 specific claims by the Government of Rwanda of FDLR/FARDC collaboration.²⁰

On the contrary, it appears that M23 is using an FDLR faction to fight the FARDC. In its interim report, the Group of Experts describes the operational alliance between M23 and an FDLR splinter group of over 50 combatants based in the Virunga Park.²¹ In an addendum to the same report, the Group estimates that at least another 40 demobilised former FDLR combatants have been deployed among M23.²² The incorporation of former FDLR within M23 could explain how an FDLR unit managed to infiltrate M23 controlled territory at Kibumba and cross into Rwandan territory where, according to the RDF, it launched attacks in the Bugeshi and Cyanzarwe sectors.²³

M23’s proclaimed intention to “neutralise” the FDLR is not apparent from its military actions either. M23 has not directed any of its operations against FDLR positions, instead focussing its efforts on capturing the larger administrative centres in the Kivus. In early October M23 did occupy some former FDLR positions along the Kiwanja-Ishasha axis North of Rutshuru, but according to the local population the FDLR gave free passage to the M23.²⁴

¹⁹ See http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=9dz74JWTZGg

²⁰ United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Final report 2011*, S/2011/738, 2nd December 2011, paragraphs 100-103.

²¹ United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Interim report 2012*, S/2012/348, 21st June 2012, paragraphs 100-106.

²² United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Addendum to the Interim report 2012*, S/2012/348/Add.1, 27th June 2012, paragraphs 20-21.

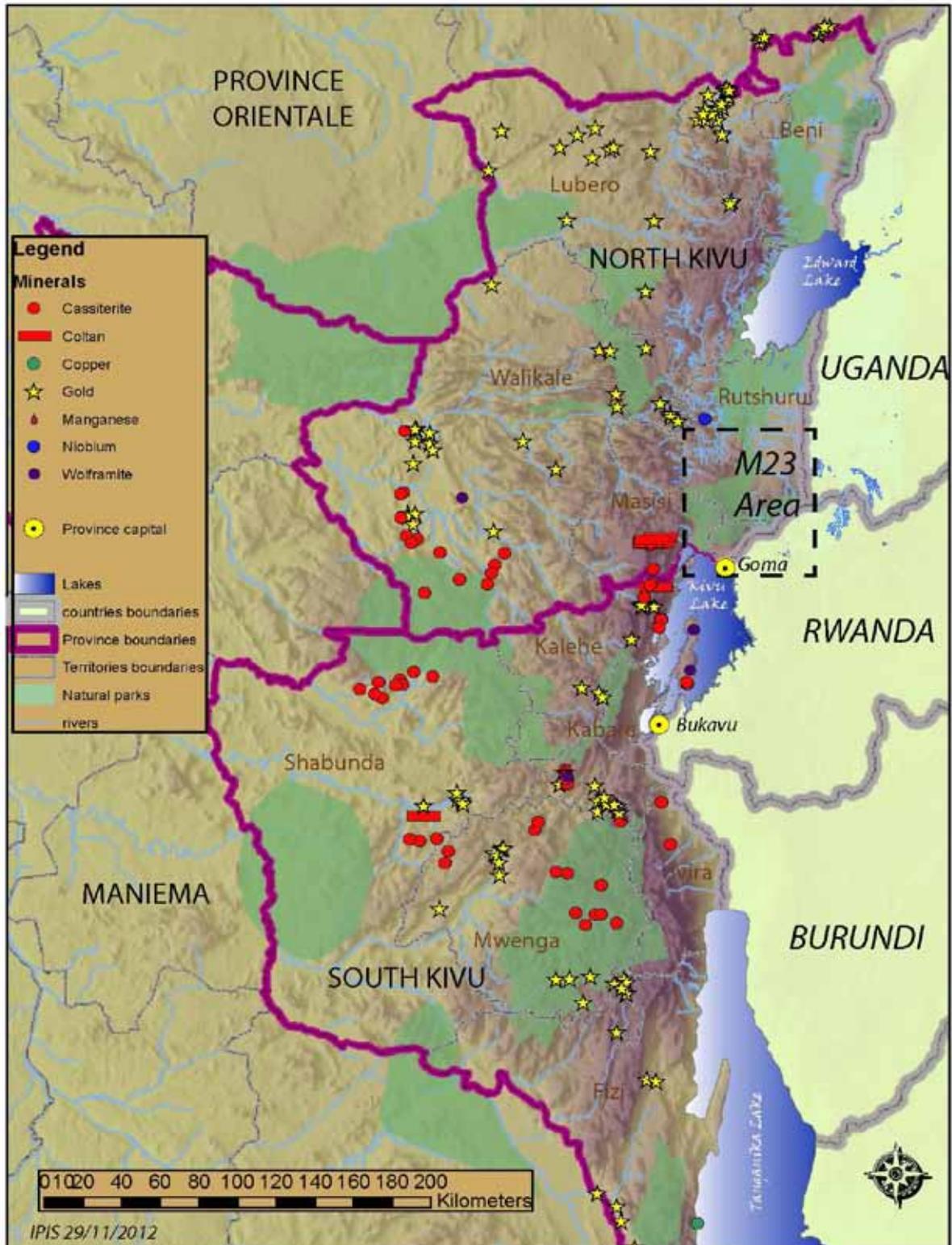
²³ It is unclear what exactly happened. FDLR spokes person La Forge Fils Bazeye and other FDLR cadres interviewed by IPIS over the phone denied the involvement of their group. See <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/index.php?i=15190&a=61175>

²⁴ See <http://radiokapi.net/actualite/2012/10/02/rdc-le-m23-controle-des-nouveaux-villages-sur-laxe-kiwanja-ishasha-au-nord-kivu/>

4. Control over minerals: Not a priority



MINING AREAS IN NORTH AND SOUTH KIVU PROVINCES



Map 4: M23 occupied area relative to mining sites

Congolese rebellions have a track record of plundering the country's vast resources for their benefit or for sustenance of their movement. In 2009 about half of the identified mining sites in the Kivu provinces were (partly) occupied by an armed group.²⁵ Journalists and other opinion leaders often stress rebel control over mining areas when attempting to explain the problem of armed groups in Eastern DRC. This has been no different for the case of M23.

The map above shows the most important mining sites accessible from Goma by road. It is striking that M23 currently does not control any of these areas. Moreover, none of the operations it has launched in the past months have targeted mining sites. This does not necessarily mean that M23 fails to derive a profit from the mineral trade. The bulk of North Kivu coltan and cassiterite are traditionally exported through the Goma/Gisenyi border crossing, creating opportunities for taxation. Additionally, after M23 captured Goma, it gained access to stocks of coltan and cassiterite that were waiting for export. Local sources have reported that M23 'liberated' a cargo of 1.3 tonnes of minerals that had been confiscated by DRC authorities on the 3rd November. They explained that the M23 commanders Innocent Zimurinda and Baudouin Ngaruye have been facilitating the fraudulent export of large quantities of minerals from mines at Ngungu into Rwanda.²⁶ There are also indications that M23 has traders working for them at the mining sites shown on the map.

However, it is important to note that before their defection from the FARDC, M23 commanders were often deployed in mineral rich areas. In 2011, the UN Group of Experts documented that ex-CNDP commanders made considerable money from the mineral trade, describing 'investments' of, amongst others, Bosco Ntaganda, Innocent Kaina and Yusuf Mboneza.²⁷ When these commanders joined M23 they subsequently lost control over such mining areas. Therefore M23's leadership currently gains less from the mineral trade than it did while within the FARDC.

From the above it is clear that establishing full military control over mining areas to maximise profits is not M23's priority for now. As a consequence it has to rely on other means to sustain its war effort.

²⁵ S. Spittaels & F. Hilgert, *Accompanying note on the interactive map of militarised mining areas in the Kivus*, IPIS report, August 2009, p. 11.

²⁶ IPIS telephone interviews. In addition, there are several indications that M23 is involved in targeted looting in Goma. Local sources report systematic cart heft, photographic evidence is publicly available of the rebels emptying FARDC arms stocks and the Guardian has reported looting at the National Bank (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/27/congo-rebels-defy-order-goma>)

²⁷ United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Final report 2011*, S/2011/738, 2nd December 2011, pp. 113-119.

5. Power motives: geopolitics and Rwandan involvement

M23 showed impatience and remarkable resolve when taking Goma, despite being faced with MONUSCO air strikes and international pressure from, amongst others, the UN and EU to stop its advance.²⁸ Following the fall of Goma, rebel commanders announced repeatedly that they would take Bukavu, Kisangani and Kinshasa too, further challenging state authority.

In addition, the ultimatum launched by the ICGLR Heads of State on the 24th of November – giving M23 no more than 48 hours to retreat from Goma – did not impress the political leadership of M23 either. Three days later, after the deadline had expired, M23 “President” Runiga set forth six preconditions for M23’s departure from the city, raising yet another series of issues that had not featured in official M23 communications before.²⁹ Considering that these preconditions include the arrest of a number of top officers in the Congolese army, the liberation of political prisoners, and direct negotiations with the political opposition, Runiga clearly did not expect President Kabila to accept. Additionally, in an interview on RFI, Runiga claimed that even after an eventual M23 troop withdrawal, the city would remain under his political and administrative control. Runiga and other M23 leaders show a clear political ambition.

In addition, there are a number of indications that an agenda beyond CNDP grievances and North Kivu has existed since M23s creation. The UN Group of Experts has established that the M23 leadership has been trying to forge alliances with other Congolese armed groups who were not involved in negotiating the 23 March agreement.³⁰ They identified ten armed groups who have been approached by M23 to create a broad coalition of armed opposition against Kinshasa. These attempts began in May 2012. The rebels have been using three proxy forces in Masisi and Walikale, including the Raïa Mutomboki. Beyond North Kivu they have made considerable efforts to expand their rebellion to South Kivu and the Ituri district. The Group of experts documented M23 support for armed groups in these areas through persistent mobilisation efforts, transfers of money, provision of arms, and recruitment.

M23 has further tried to challenge President Kabila by reaching out to the main Congolese political opposition. Vital Kamerhe privately disclosed that he has been contacted by M23 to establish an alliance - something he categorically refused.³¹ According to the Group of Experts, Etienne Thsikedï’s UPDS received a similar offer while M23 established an alliance with the armed group ‘Mouvement pour la revendication de la vérité des urnes’ in Tshisekedi’s home province of Western Kasai.³²

In the seven months since its creation, M23 has been very active on the political front and it has secured a remarkable territorial expansion. Analysts agree that the Congolese army is weak, but so was M23. They also agree that M23 could not have grown into a successful force in such a short time without external support. External support to M23 has been documented by the UN Group of Experts and the international NGO Human Rights Watch,³³ both of whom have extensively investigated support by the government of Rwanda. Many other people, including MONUSCO personnel, foreign intelligence officers, local NGOs and journalists,³⁴ have conducted their own investigations and reached similar conclusions.

The UN Group of Experts concludes that the Rwandan Minister of Defence, James Kabarebe, heads the M23 chain of command. Rwandan involvement in and control over M23 sheds additional light on the movement’s motives. M23’s actions indicate a desire to increase its power, which appears to be more important to them than any of the other motives discussed above. It shows a clear tendency to establish

²⁸ See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/democraticrepublicofcongo/9686404/M23-rebels-close-in-on-Goma.html>

²⁹ See <http://www.m23mars.org/le-president-runiga-lugelero-dissipe-tous-les-malentendus.html/>

³⁰ United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Final report 2012, S/2011/738*, 2nd December 2011, paragraphs 56-89.

³¹ IPIS interview with diplomat.

³² United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, *Final report 2012, S/2011/738*, 2nd December 2011, paragraphs 90-93.

³³ See <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/11/dr-congo-m23-rebels-committing-war-crimes>

³⁴ See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/democraticrepublicofcongo/9700471/Rwandans-fighting-an-illegal-war-in-the-Congo.html>

political control over territory and challenge Kinshasa's authority. Since 1996, working through different rebellions, Kigali has repeatedly shown a strategic interest in increased political control over Eastern DRC and regime change in Kinshasa. For example, after the Mobutu regime was toppled by the AFDL, Rwanda acknowledged that it had planned, directed and supplied the rebel forces.³⁵ Also Rwanda's support after 1998 of the RCD rebellion in DRC has been widely documented by, amongst others, the UN and Amnesty International.

³⁵ J. Pomfret, *Rwandan acknowledges supplying arms, troops, plans to Congo rebellion*, Washington Post, 1997.

Conclusion

When M23 was created, it claimed that it was seeking the correct and complete implementation of an agreement signed between the CNDP and the Congolese Government on 23 March 2009. After the capture of Bunagana and Rutshuru its demands changed. By November, grievances regarding the alleged lack of implementation of the 23 March 2009 agreement featured less and less prominently in M23's discourse.

M23's strategy on the battlefield does not indicate that protecting the Tutsi population is its most urgent concern. Likewise its proclaimed intention to "neutralise" the FDLR is not apparent from its military actions. Furthermore, it is striking that M23 currently does not control any important mining areas and has not attacked any mines, and thus, for now, is not seeking to maximise its profits from the mineral trade.

The rebels show a clear political ambition and have had an agenda beyond CNDP grievances and North Kivu since M23's creation. They show a clear tendency to establish political control over territory and challenge Kinshasa's authority – strategic interests they might share with Rwanda.