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Article:

Luddites in the Congo? Analyzing violent responses to the expansion of industrial mining amidst militarization

Abstract

The expansion of industrial mining in the war-ridden eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has provoked resistance from those depending directly and indirectly on artisanal mining for their livelihood, and has been faced with violent actions from politico-military entrepreneurs. By analyzing the interplay between armed and social mobilization against industrial mining in the Fizi–Kabambare region, this paper sheds new light on the relations between industrial mining, resistance and militarization. It argues that the presence and practices of industrial mining companies reinforce the overall power position of politico-military entrepreneurs. This occurs both directly, by efforts to co-opt them, and indirectly, by fuelling dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection that crucially underpin these entrepreneurs' dominance. At the same time, due to the eastern Congo's convoluted political opportunity structure for contentious action, politico-military entrepreneurs enlarge the scope for social mobilization against industrial mining. They offer a potential counterweight to repressive authorities and provide collective action frames that inspire contentious politics. Yet they also harness popular resistance for personal or particularistic purposes, while extorting the very people they claim to defend. These complexities reflect the ambiguous nature and versatility of both armed and social mobilization in the eastern Congo, which transcend socially constructed boundaries like the rural/urban, state/non-state and military/civilian divides.

Key words: resistance; large-scale mining; militarization; social movements; armed conflict; Democratic Republic of the Congo

Introduction

In April 2014, Bembe armed fighters assaulted the town of Misisi, a burgeoning artisanal gold mining site located in Fizi territory in South Kivu province, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Getting close to the compound of CASA Minerals, a Virgin Islands incorporated company engaged in gold exploration, the assailants framed their attack as a protest against the alleged sale to CASA of 'their' hill, the gold-rich Akyanga Mountain, seen as part of the Babembe's ancestral grounds. About a year earlier, a retired general of the Congolese armed forces sent his

armed bodyguards to occupy a part of the concession of the Canadian industrial gold mining company Banro in Namoya, located approximately 150 kilometers west of Misisi in Kabambare territory in Maniema province. He presented this action as a way to express disapproval with Banro's alleged surpassing of its concession limits, and the derisory compensation offered to expropriated peasants. At the face of it, these actions constitute violent reactions against the intensifying expansion of industrial mining in the eastern Congo, which threatens the livelihoods and ways of life of hundreds of thousands of people depending both directly and indirectly on artisanal mining. When taking a closer look at the politico-military entrepreneurs initiating these actions, however, they are difficult to unambiguously qualify as Luddites 'raging against the machine(s)' to defend marginalized populations, even if they do enable and inspire resistance against industrial mining. This paper provides an insight into the complexity of the relationships between politico-military entrepreneurialism, social mobilization, and the expansion of industrial mining amidst violent conflict. As such, it contributes to debates on the nexus between mining and militarization and between mining and resistance, connecting two bodies of literature that have hitherto been in limited dialogue.

In the Fizi–Kabambare region, industrial mining fuels the militarization of the political economy, but mostly indirectly. Crucially, it enkindles and aggravates the conflicts and insecurity that prompt people to solicit protection from politico-military entrepreneurs, in this way reinforcing the latter's power position. This position, in turn, allows these entrepreneurs to create space for contentious action in the face of repressive authorities, including by diffusing collective action frames. Yet politico-military entrepreneurs also 'appropriate' the social mobilization they help activate, for instance, by harnessing it to demand increased contributions from companies. These findings call for a holistic 'contentious politics' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007) approach to the study of mobilization against industrial mining. Such an approach entails examining the links between the contentious performances and repertoires of both armed and non-armed actors, and how these links shape and are shaped by political opportunity structures and processes of framing.

The paper is structured as follows. It first reviews the literature on the interplay between resistance, industrial mining and militarization in low-income countries. Subsequently, it analyzes the Congo's militarized political-economic order, and the opportunities and difficulties this order presents for collective contentious action and the expansion of industrial mining. The next part focuses on the militarization of the Fizi and Kabambare areas, and its relation to the expansion of and resistance against industrial mining. The concluding section considers the paper's main findings against recent scholarship on social movements in Sub-Saharan Africa and makes a case for a holistic 'contentious politics' approach.

The data and analysis provided in the paper are based on periodic fieldwork in the Fizi and Kabambare areas between 2010 and 2016, as part of wider research on the militarization of the eastern Congo's political economy. Individual and group interviews were held with civilian and military authorities, armed group leaderships, civil society organizations, representatives of mining cooperatives and corporations, and other economic operators. The fieldwork data were complemented with and triangulated by academic literature, international and Congolese media articles, and reports of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations. Since the presented field data are always derived from multiple sources, they are not attributed to one specific interview, unless information was conveyed by a single source.

Mining, resistance, and militarization

Throughout history, dislocations, dispossession and other social transformations generated by industrialization have provoked broad 'contentious repertoires' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 11), including violent action. Destructive attacks on textile machines in the English Midlands at the start of the 19th century by the followers of the mythical Ludd, 'the General of the Army of Redressers' (Sale 2006, 73), are but one of the most famous examples. Similar to Luddism, resistance against industrial mining is commonly informed by a plethora of (perceived) threats. As theorized by Bebbington et al. (2008), these concern both threats to the material aspects of livelihoods and the immaterial losses that are incurred when livelihoods are disarticulated. Such losses often stem from a process that Habermas (1987) describes as 'the colonization of the life-world', or the encroachment of outside forces on people's daily lives that are felt to be beyond their control. The experience of colonization generally results from either 'accumulation by exploitation', which is effectuated within the framework of capitalist relations, or 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2003), which involves other forms of coercion than those inherent to capitalist labor relations (Bebbington et al. 2008).

Leading to both types of accumulation, the expansion of large-scale mining (LSM) generally gives rise to a wide array of forms of contentious action. This is no different in low-income countries, where a colonial past often adds layers of signification to the notion of the 'colonization' of the life-world, especially where it involves transnational corporations. In most of these contexts, LSM poses a direct and indirect threat to the livelihoods and life-worlds of peasants and those depending on artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM). These groups are commonly displaced, dislocated and dispossessed of their land, territory and resources, or suffer from the environmental and wider socio-economic effects of LSM (e.g. Fisher 2007; Hilson and Yakovleva 2007; Holden, Nadeau and Jacobson 2011). The resulting conflicts, which sometimes turn violent (Aubynn 2009; Carstens and Hilson 2009), tend to be aggravated by divergent interpretations of the nature and legitimacy of claims to property and resources. Moreover, they often enmesh with existing processes of social exclusion and marginalization, which generate differential access to political and financial capital, technology and information. Such institutionalized inequalities strongly impact the possibilities for and nature of social mobilization (Hilson 2002; Fisher 2007; Urkidi 2011).

A growing body of literature studies mobilization against LSM from a social movements angle. This literature focuses on dimensions like protest movements' contentious repertoires; their internal coherence and conflicts; the multi-scalar networks of which they form part; and how these networks shape and are shaped by places, forms of identification and corporate or state-led counter-mobilization (e.g. Bebbington et al. 2008; Urkidi 2011). Despite Harvey's (2006, 165) observation that 'struggles against primitive accumulation could provide the seedbed of discontent for insurgent movements', few studies comprehensively analyze the links between resistance against LSM and violent conflict. An exception is Holden and Jacobson (2007), who distinguish a number of mechanisms by which LSM feeds into armed conflict, three of which were deemed most pertinent. The first relates to looting and extortion, and partly builds on Ross's (1999) argument that the failure of states to enforce property rights makes companies willing to pay 'protection rents' to extra-legal organizations. This applies particularly to LSM companies, which have high fixed costs and are immobile (Le Billon 2001). The second mechanism concerns the

militarization of mining areas, or the increased presence of state security services and private security companies. High concentrations of security personnel may contribute to stifling opposition and augment human rights violations, thereby reinforcing support for insurgents (Le Billon 2004). Militarization therefore overlaps with the third mechanism, 'grievance', relating to the ways in which the negative effects of industrial exploitation may prompt people to take up arms to protest the status quo (cf. Le Billon 2001). Since there is no linear causal path from conflict to collective organized violence (Brubaker and Laitin 1998), the grievance mechanism can never be merely assumed, but must always be empirically demonstrated. Holden, Nadeau and Jacobson (2011) present one such empirical case study, focusing on the armed branch of the Communist Party of the Philippines. This organization attacks the installations of LSM companies, which they label 'monopoly capitalists' and 'imperialist plunderers', in the name of the defense of the ancestral domain of particular indigenous groups. These attacks have provoked increasing deployment of the national army and paramilitary forces around mining sites, leading to the asphyxiation of opposition and the proliferation of human rights violations. The result is growing sympathy for and possibly enrolment in the communist insurgency.

This paper provides another in-depth empirical study of the links between militarization and mobilization against LSM amidst violent conflict, focusing on one sub-area of the eastern Congo (the Fizi-Kabambare region). It works with a fine-grained conceptualization of 'militarization', seeing it not in terms of the quantity of armed actors present within a particular context, but as referring to a dominant position for such actors in non-military domains of social life (Thee 1980). It focuses on two dimensions of the interplay between organized armed mobilization (relating to insurgent and other armed group activity) and social mobilization against LSM, seen as collective contentious action not involving armed group activity (but which may be violent). The first is 'collective action frames' or 'action-oriented set[s] of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization' (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). The second is the 'political opportunity structure' (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, 49) for collective contentious action, which is discussed in the following.

The political opportunity structure of a militarized political-economic order

The Congo's history is marked by periodic social and armed mobilization, reflecting and giving rise to periods of social, economic and political upheaval. The intense accumulation by both exploitation and dispossession that marked the colonial era provided fertile ground for social movements with an anticolonial dimension, which often had syncretic visions and occasionally turned violent. A telling example is the social unrest among mineworkers in Katanga province in the 1940s, where, according to Higginson (1988: 99), 'agrarian and industrial rebels often made common cause', and 'neither "archaic" nor "modern" values triumphed completely independent of each other during the protests'.

The social tensions and fissures created by the colonial political economy continued to shape the first years of the Congo's independence after 1960. Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba's pledge to steer an anti-imperialist course scared foreign investors and the wider 'Western bloc' that had materialized in the context of the Cold War. His subsequent assassination, with the implication of both the USA and

Belgium, helped foment a climate of unrest that eventually sparked two insurgencies: that of Pierre Mulele in Kwilu and the Simba rebellion originating in Kivu, the easternmost part of the Congo. While the Kwilu insurgency was unambiguously identified as a case of 'rural radicalism' (Weiss 1967, xxii), the Simba rebellion was an ambiguous project, involving different social groups with heterogeneous worldviews and beliefs. Although articulated in universal discourses of anti-imperialism and nationalism, in practice, local and particularistic conflicts and interests heavily shaped the rebellion (Verhaegen 1966). For Che Guevara, who arrived in Fizi to reinforce the insurgency with a small contingent of Cuban revolutionaries in 1965, the rebellion was plagued by the absence of revolutionary awareness among the peasant rank and file, whom he described as 'completely raw' (Guevara 2011, 221). Guevara also lamented its deficient leadership, stating about one of its leaders, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, that he lacked 'revolutionary seriousness, an ideology that can be a guide to action and a spirit of sacrifice that accompanies one's actions' (238–239). Similar deficiencies were visible in the revolutionary organization that Kabila developed after returning to Fizi in 1967 the *Parti de la révolution populaire* (PRP), which would stay headquartered in Hewa Bora in the Lulenge sector up to 1984. Engaging in the trafficking of ivory and gold to finance the rebellion, economic activities increasingly became objectives in themselves (Wilungula 1997).

Among the dozens of armed groups that emerged during the First (1996–1997) and Second (1998–2003) Congo Wars, numerous were inspired by the discourses and practices of the Simba rebels. This applied in particular to Mai Mai militias, who fought the rebel movement *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie* (RCD), which occupied large parts of the eastern Congo. Being backed by Rwanda, the rebellion was perceived to be a 'foreign invasion' of *Rwandophones* (Kinyarwanda speakers) aiming to dispossess self-styled *autochthones* ('native' populations) of their lands, local authority and natural resources. Many of the Congo's Rwandophone populations –long seen as 'immigrants' – had joined the rebellion, confirming their status as 'foreigners' in self-styled autochthons' eyes. These views were also reflected in the discourses of Mai-Mai groups, which presented the war – in part due to RCD's engagement in the coercive exploitation of mineral resources – as the umpteenth time the Congo had fallen victim to 'resources plunder' by (neo)imperialist 'foreign powers' (Jackson 2006).

While the belligerents of the Second Congo War adopted a peace accord in 2003, fighting in the east has continued since. This region currently consists of a patchwork of zones under shifting control of over 80 different armed groups and the Congolese national army. Many of the smaller armed groups continue to operate under the 'Mai-Mai' banner and are closely tied to particular ethno-regional identities. These groups employ similar mobilizing narratives as during the Congo Wars, drawing on notions of autochthony, ethnicity, self-defense and spirituality, including beliefs in the spirits of the ancestors, while also using discourses of anti-imperialism and government critique reminiscent of the Simba and Mulele rebellions (Hoffmann 2015; Verweijen 2015a). The multifaceted nature of Mai-Mai groups' discourses facilitates their embedding in multi-scalar political-economic networks that encompass different categories of civilians, including local authorities, businesspeople, politicians, and state agents. These networks link the military group, often operating in remote forest or mountain areas, to civilian actors based in the national and provincial capital cities, and sometimes in neighboring countries and beyond (Verweijen 2016). Thus, armed group networks straddle the state and non-state spheres, as well as zones qualified as 'urban' and those seen as 'rural', notions

that are considered herein 'categories of practice' (Wachsmuth 2014) that correspond to rural and urban imaginaries specific to the Congo. Both types of spaces have been affected by processes of militarization, the core dynamics of which are manifested in the eastern Congo as a whole, although having different socio-spatial articulations per time-space context (Verweijen 2015b).

A key driver of militarization is rampant physical, socio-economic and political insecurity, which partly stems from and feeds into omnipresent conflicts between and among individuals, families, communities, elite networks, and state services. Both insecurity and conflicts drive people, either on an individual basis or as a group, to solicit forms of protection from politico-military entrepreneurs, that is, powerful figures – having either a civilian or military status, and encompassing both state (e.g. army officers) and non-state (e.g. armed groups) actors – that mobilize armed violence to further their ends (Raeymaekers 2014). While intended to overcome insecurity, the system of protection generates considerable conflicts and insecurity itself. Not only do protection relations often have coercive undertones, they also tend to nourish fierce competition among both providers and solicitors of protection. Moreover, given that protection thrives in insecure environments, protection providers have limited incentives to eradicate insecurity (Gambetta 1993). For these reasons, interlocking dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection importantly underpin politico-military entrepreneurs' position of dominance (Verweijen 2015b).

The militarization of Kivu's political-economic order has important consequences for the political opportunity structure for collective contentious action. For Tilly and Tarrow (2007, 57), this structure consists of six elements: (1) the multiplicity of independent centers of power; (2) openness to new actors; (3) the instability of current political alignments; (4) the availability of influential allies/supporters to challengers; (5) the regime's repression or facilitation of collective claim making; and (6) changes in any of these elements. In relation to the first four dimensions, it can be observed that the eastern Congo's fragmented political-military landscape encompasses multiple semi-autonomous centers of power that maintain variegated ties to the political center, which is dominated by the presidential patronage network. Due to ongoing competition and constant realignments, the relations between the political center and local centers of power, as well as those within the latter category, are relatively fluid (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers 2008). The result, however, is not a very open political settlement. Given the militarized and patronage-based nature of politics, only those knowing how to manipulate armed force and/or having connections to either the presidential patronage network or regional elite networks (stretching into neighboring countries) can reinforce their position (Verweijen 2016).

For political actors engaging in contentious action, this convoluted political configuration circumscribes the choice of allies or supporters: without backing from figures that are able to manipulate violence or have connections to powerful political networks, opportunities to effectuate change are limited. In fact, not having connections with politico-military entrepreneurs makes contentious action dangerous, as it renders contesters vulnerable to repressive action by the authorities or competing power networks. Government repression mostly targets opposition parties or pro-government politicians deemed no longer loyal, but may also be directed against non-party movements or serve to quell ad hoc contentious action (ICG 2010). While repression is generalized and has rapidly intensified over the last years, it is not systematic. Rather, state coercion is unequally distributed (focusing on political,

administrative and commercial core areas) and erratic. The security services' capabilities for comprehensive surveillance and monitoring are limited, as they have deficient systems of information gathering and diffusion, and a low capacity for rapid interventions. Consequently, they often operate through deterrence, trying to set an example via occasional disproportionate violence. Additionally, both the security and administrative apparatus are fragmented and subject to internal power competition. These features widen citizens' space for maneuver vis-à-vis state agencies, allowing them to play off one agency or faction against another (Verweijen 2015b).

The possibilities for and nature of contentious collective action are also shaped by the protracted conflicts, insecurity and volatility that mark the eastern Congo, which reinforce the salience of pragmatic and utilitarian calculations. Political actors often seize opportunities for immediate, individual gain, to the detriment of securing longer-term (but due to volatility, often far from guaranteed) collective benefits (Verweijen 2015b). Moreover, in combination with the unsettledness of the social environment, the drive to maximize opportunities induces a constant switching between different social roles, discursive registers and social networks (cf. Vigh 2006). Such flexibility and versatility may prohibit lasting and stable positions of opposition. Similar effects are generated by the omnipresence of conflicts, which hamper broad-based coalitions of resistance, and by the salience of personalized and informal politics. The emphasis on the informal may prompt groups striving for change to negotiate arrangements with elites in private rather than to seek public confrontations. Informal and private deals, however, increase the likelihood of co-optation and side switching (de Waal and Ibreck 2013). In the following, it is further described how these various dimensions of the eastern Congo's political opportunity structure for collective action shape responses to the intensifying expansion of industrial mining.

Expanding industrial mining in a volatile setting

Industrial mining in the Congo first emerged under the Belgian colonial regime (1908–60) that succeeded the Congo Free State (1885–1908). It was dominated by chartered companies linked to foreign financial groups, which constituted 'states within a state', being enclaves of self-administration with their own infrastructure and facilities (Fetter 1973). In Kivu, industrial mining of mostly gold and cassiterite (a tin ore) was developed by the business group of Belgian baron Édouard Empain, which had received vast land and mining concessions in exchange for creating a rail and waterway system (Hillman 1997). Industrial mining in Kivu would however never attain the same importance as copper and cobalt mining in Katanga, which became the Congo's economic powerhouse. This situation remained unchanged in the postcolonial era. In fact, industrial mining in Kivu steadily diminished under the weight of the ongoing contraction of the formal economy from the mid-1970s onwards. At the same time, artisanal mining, including in parts of now inactive industrial concessions, grew in importance, in particular after its legalization in 1982 (Vwakyanakazi 1991). After 1976, most of these concessions were controlled by *Société minière et industrielle du Kivu* (SOMINKI), owned in majority by *Groupe Empain* and for 28% by the Congolese state (de Failly 2000).

In the mid-1990s, the Congolese government tried to privatize parts of the crumbling industrial mining sector, which drew decreasing interest from its main investors. However, the outbreak of the First Congo War in 1996 interrupted

negotiations and eventually forced potential investors to do business with the new president, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who assumed power in May 1997. But Kabila did not always respect earlier deals, sometimes invoking the same anti-imperialist discourses as during his time in the rebellion in Fizi. For instance, he cancelled the concessions of the Canadian mining corporation Banro, which had earlier obtained SOMINKI's gold titles. It was only in 2003, after Joseph Kabila had replaced his father as president in the wake of the latter's assassination, that Banro managed to regain its mining rights (Geenen 2014).

The settlement with Banro was indicative of Kabila junior's efforts to create a more hospitable investment climate for industrial mining, with the encouragement of the World Bank (Mazalto 2005). Together with the formal end to the war in 2003 and a rise in the world gold price, this change in policy environment prompted numerous companies to launch exploration activities in the east, despite ongoing violence. One of the first to move in was Banro, which started in 2004 and 2005 in two of its four concessions, namely, Namoya (Maniema) and Twangiza (South Kivu). In 2012, it commenced production in Twangiza, and in January 2016 in Namoya. Several other companies, including CASA and AngloGold Ashanti, have followed suit. These companies, however, struggle to navigate the complex political–military environment of the eastern Congo. They face in particular the following difficulties: (1) insecurity related to militarization; (2) resistance and discontent from those depending directly and indirectly on ASM; and (3) competing local power networks that vie for drawing benefits from companies' presence (Geenen 2014; Geenen and Claessens 2013; Geenen and Hönke 2014). As the issue of militarization will be addressed in the next section, the focus here is on resistance and local elite competition.

When involving a partial or total stop of ASM, the expansion of LSM threatens the livelihoods and life-worlds of a broad range of groups. Aside from those directly involved in ASM as diggers, traders, and pit-owners or managers, a host of groups depend on ASM in an indirect manner: peasants and traders in consumer goods; the service sector (e.g. bars, restaurants, sex-work); customary chiefs who are considered to (customarily) own the soil and subsoil, entitling them to levy taxes; and a bewildering array of administrative and security services engaging in more and less legal 'taxation', extortion and other forms of revenue generation around mining sites. These various groups invest the surplus from ASM in other sectors such as real estate, trade and the hotel business, which are often concentrated in zones qualified as 'urban'. Hence, ASM is not an isolated sector of 'rural' economies, but interwoven with Kivu's political economy as a whole.

While the material aspects of livelihoods are the most immediate concern, LSM-induced prohibitions to mining are not merely experienced in terms of material loss. As research by Geenen (2014) demonstrates, artisanal miners in the Congo value their ways of work and life. Drawing on alternative conceptualizations of social justice and land ownership than those enshrined in legislation and official policy, they consider being chased away a violation of their rights. Furthermore, people originating from the area where industrial concessions are located often lament the loss of their ancestral grounds, which hold spiritual value to them due to the connection with the spirits of the ancestors buried in the ground. This connection to the soil may lead resistance to be articulated in discourses of autochthony. But the practices of LSM companies, seen to symbolize 'Western wealth', are generally also viewed in the light of the Congo's history of natural resources plunder by foreign forces. As a result, they become framed in terms of (neo)colonialism and imperialism (Geenen and Verweijen 2017).

Due to the importance of immaterial values and the context of multifaceted injustice and poverty, the displaced and dispossessed rarely experience companies' efforts to offer compensation, such as cash payments per disowned field, sufficient or adequate. The same applies to measures to provide alternative jobs, whether through being employed as a day laborer by mining companies, or via the vocational training and development initiatives provided under the banner of 'corporate social responsibility'. These efforts have proven largely insufficient to offset the livelihoods losses incurred by the closure of artisanal mining sites. Moreover, the offered work, in particular day laboring, is generally seen as inferior to ASM (Geenen 2014; Geenen and Claessens 2013). Disappointment and disagreements also surround the *cahier des charges*, a convention between company and 'community' that lists (promised) contributions to 'development', like building roads, schools and health care centers. These contributions are often considered to be insufficient, to take too long to materialize or to be badly executed.

Popular discontent is aggravated by local politics and elite manipulation, which undermine companies' efforts at compensation, 'development' promotion and alternative livelihood provision. Local elites vie for controlling the distribution of the economic opportunities created by LSM, including by claiming to 'represent the population' (Geenen and Hönke 2014; Geenen and Verweijen 2017). The resulting conflicts are central to what Hardin (2011, S113) calls 'concessionary politics', describing the local political dynamics generated by the presence of concession companies. These dynamics are characterized by complex and ongoing negotiations, the politics of patronage and co-optation, and 'fields of territorialized identity politics that tend toward relationships of rivalry and alliance across groups for redistribution of wealth through services, gifts, and performances of collective contestation or celebration'.

In Namoya, concessionary politics entered a new phase after Banro shut down all ASM and farming activity on its concessions in 2013. As a result, an estimated 8,000–10,000 miners, several hundred peasants and their families lost their main source of livelihood overnight. While the company offered alternative housing to a part of the displaced and promised to assist with the creation of a new artisanal mining site and cooperative, the implementation of these initiatives is believed to have been manipulated by Banro's most trusted local collaborator, the chief of Salamabila sector (the highest local administrative authority). Not only did the chief appoint a person who is loyal to him as head of the new mining cooperative, when allocating the housing, he purportedly favored his own networks to the detriment of the intended beneficiaries. Since the sector chief is close to the governor of Maniema province and the Congo's (now former) prime minister, both of whom are part of the presidential patronage network, people believe it is difficult to hold him to account. His alleged penchant for intimidating those trying to counter him further reinforces this feeling.

Elites in Kivu have also attempted to manipulate contentious collective action against LSM, whether by promoting or repressing it (Geenen 2014). Over the past years, both Misisi and Kabambare have seen a flurry of contentious performances against CASA and Banro. This social mobilization has generally been fluid and fragmented, consisting of ad hoc, episodic actions, with limited sustained coordination between the involved groups, and almost no supra-local involvement. Moreover, these groups have expressed different and differently framed demands and grievances, which hover between a total rejection of LSM to demands for 'inclusion' (Geenen and Verweijen 2017). In Namoya and surroundings, people have for instance

practiced non-collaboration and non-compliance (e.g. artisanal miners entering the company's concession at night to dig gold); engaged in covert protest (e.g. distributing anti-Banro pamphlets); voiced opposition during meetings with Banro community liaison officers and at the *Forum communautaire* (the platform created to mediate between Banro and 'the community'), addressed letters and petitions to higher authorities, and held *marches pacifiques* (peaceful marches) and *marches de colère* (marches of anger), sometimes combined with sit-ins. While mostly concerning non-violent activity, these protests have occasionally turned violent.

In January 2016, local customary chiefs and the umbrella of civil society organizations of Salamabila organized a protest march that found broad support. This march culminated in the four-day occupation of Mwendamboko Hill, a former artisanal mining site located on Banro's concession, where protestors engaged in what might be termed 'guerilla mining' (cf. Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2015). The storming and occupation of this site were triggered by the death of Valérien Salumu Kalubu, an activist from the human rights organization *la Voix de sans voix* (Voice of the Voiceless). Kalubu was shot by a captain of the rapid intervention unit of the Congolese police that is contracted by Banro to guard its installations. At the very site where he died, close to Banro's compound, a grave was erected (see Figure 1). Having become a martyr of anti-Banro resistance, civil society organizations in Namoya now demand that a monument for Kalubu be erected at this site.

Figure 1 Grave of human rights defender shot during a protest march against Banro near Namoya (Maniema).

Banro's reactions to the events of January 2016 have further deteriorated the already tense relations between the company and Namoya's inhabitants. Although it never followed through on the threat, its announcement to file a complaint against the president of the umbrella of civil society organizations and a local community radio

station, accused of 'intoxicating' the population, was widely denounced. Furthermore, while the police officer who shot the human rights activist was convicted by a military court, he has appealed the sentence. Many in Namoya believe that this appeal is supported by Banro, which was assigned civil responsibility for the activist's death and sentenced to a hefty fine and compensation. While Banro's support to the appeal could not be substantiated, the allegation is indicative of and feeds a general feeling that the company does not invest in ensuring the good behavior of the security personnel that it contracts. The rapid intervention unit that guards its installations is cited in various types of human rights abuses, like arresting and beating those mining illegally on Banro's concessions at night (Geenen and Verweijen 2017). This experienced climate of repression enhances the appeal for protestors to seek allies among factions that are able to mobilize force, including non-state armed actors.

Industrial mining amidst militarization in Fizi-Kabambare

During the Second Congo War, the Fizi–Kabambare region was a hotbed of armed activity, as Mai-Mai groups predominantly led by commanders of Bembe origins fought the RCD. One of the main Mai-Mai forces was headquartered in Kilembwe (Lulenge sector), and directed by General Shabani Sikatenda. Having served with Laurent-Désiré Kabila in the PRP rebellion in nearby Hewa Bora, Sikatenda had become an officer in the government forces under Kabila's presidency. His Mai-Mai forces made regular incursions into the neighboring Namoya area, including the RCD-occupied artisanal gold mines. Another Bembe commander, Dunia Lwendama Dewilo, operated more to the southeast, in the Ngandja sector of Fizi, which hosts the goldmines of Misisi.

   After the adoption of a peace accord in 2003, the Mai-Mai in Fizi were supposed to either integrate into the newly formed Congolese armed forces (FARDC) or to demobilize. The Mai-Mai from Ngandja, however, resisted both options. They were supported by local Bembe elites who felt that losing autonomous military capacity would weaken their power position. In combination with inter-community animosities between the Babembe and a Rwandophone group living in Fizi (the Banyamulenge), these considerations pushed one of Dunia's commanders, a certain Williame Amuri Yakotumba, to desert and launch a new rebel movement in 2007 (Verweijen 2015a). In one of their first comprehensive declarations, the movement states that 'the Mai-Mai revolution starts in 1964 […] and has as objective to revive the Lumumbist ideology (fight against injustice, dictatorship, defense of the fatherland, protection of the people and their resources)' (Mwenebatu 2008, 5). While placing themselves in the tradition of Lumumba and his anti-imperialist agenda, Yakotumba's Mai-Mai also employ virulent xenophobic discourses. In the same declaration, they list as the first two points of their political agenda: '1) Defending the soil and subsoil of Fizi territory coveted by Rwandan immigrants. 2) Defending the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo against foreign forces' (Mwenebatu 2008, 6).

   Discourses of autochthony and resistance against 'resources plunder by foreign forces' are widely shared in Fizi, and ensure a measure of popular and elite support for the Mai-Mai. But people also collaborate and comply with the Mai-Mai out of opportunism and fear (Verweijen 2015a). The group engages in intimidation, extortion, kidnapping opponents, revenge attacks and banditry-style revenue generation, such as ambushes. They also derive revenue from artisanal gold mining sites in their main areas of influence, in particular around Misisi. Aside from

imposing 'taxes' on artisanal miners, pit owners and gold traders, they receive regular donations from befriended businesspeople and the main cooperative of artisanal miners in Misisi, the *Coopérative minière de Kimbi*. This cooperative was set up by the powerful customary chief of Misisi, Katombo M'Munga W'Elongo, who previously had good relations with the Mai-Mai Yakotumba (UNSC 2011).

Due to Katombo's influential position, not least his good contacts with the Mai-Mai, the mineral exploration company CASA started to co-opt him when arriving in the area in 2010. Thus, they granted him favors in exchange for his facilitating the company's activities. For instance, to guard its compound, CASA contracted Fizilux, a small private security company co-created by chief Katombo. However, this strategy of co-optation backfired. Considering that Katombo did not sufficiently redistribute the benefits he obtained from CASA, a part of his family began to protest his leadership in 2014. When a peaceful sit-in in front of the chief's house remained without results, they solicited a former Mai-Mai officer now working in the mineral business to attack Misisi, as described at the start of this paper. Supported by Katombo's family, this officer and his group, who subsequently joined the Mai-Mai Yakotumba, spread the message that 'Katombo had sold Akyanga to CASA', and that all artisanal miners would soon be thrown out. The attack forced CASA to scale down its activities, and led to Katombo's temporary abdication as chief. It also became the starting point of a strategy by the Mai-Mai Yakotumba to profile themselves as 'defenders' of the ASM sector, which allowed them to demand increasing contributions from local economic operators fearful of future LSM-induced livelihood losses. They were supported in this effort by General Sikatenda, who organized popular meetings in Misisi to denounce the expansion of LSM.

After retiring from the national armed forces around 2010, General Sikatenda returned to his native village in Fizi's Lulenge sector. While no longer holding an official function, the general, who keeps approximately 20 army soldiers as bodyguards, developed into a local strongman. By lobbying the governor of South Kivu, he managed to change the sector chief of Lulenge three times in recent years. The general also maintains contacts with various local Mai-Mai groups, including Yakotumba's, which he provides with advice and assistance. As he states, he wants to teach these groups how to behave more like 'revolutionaries', based on his experiences in Kabila's Hewa Bora rebellion which had an anti-imperialist orientation (interview, Kilembwe, December 2011). He also attempts to discipline the army, tearing down all army roadblocks in his zone of influence, which are primarily erected to levy fees from road-users. Such actions have earned him a modicum of popularity, although many people also fear him. When heading the national military intelligence agency, Sikatenda built up a reputation for brutality, leading to his nickname '*nguma*' (boa or python in Lingala). Sikatenda's influence is further underpinned by his relative wealth, which he derives from a wide range of business activities. These include ASM activities in Namoya and Misisi, where he has stone-crushing machines, intermediaries who buy gold, and digging teams that are deployed to mining pits without paying the owner, a common practice of extortion by the state security services.

Although doing more business in Misisi, Banro's presence in Namoya threatens Sikatenda's revenue-generation activities there. This may have contributed to his decision, described above, to send his bodyguards to occupy a part of Banro's concession at the start of 2013. While rapid intervention police deployed from Maniema's capital eventually managed to dislodge the general's group, Sikatenda has remained a menace to the company. The fact that the main access road to Namoya

runs through his fief plays no small part in this. Thus, Banro goes out of its way to 'pacify' the general, providing him, for instance, generously with fuel whenever he shows up in Salamabila. Sikatenda's contacts with various armed groups, including the Mai-Mai Yakotumba, further fan such fears. While never having specifically targeted Banro, which only transits through their fief, Yakotumba's group declares to be against the company, accusing them of 'imperialism' and 'resources plunder' (interview Mai-Mai political representative, Uvira, April 2014). Furthermore, towards the end of 2016, armed bands emerged that started to attack vehicles of Banro's logistics subcontractors close to Namoya. In September 2016, a convoy transporting mining equipment and fuel was assaulted, with six trucks being burned and all drivers kidnapped (Wilson 2016). On 31 December 2016, a similar attack occurred, again involving kidnappings and damage inflicted on two vehicles (Radio Okapi 2017). While there is no conclusive evidence about the attackers' relations to Sikatenda, these incidents do occur close to his fief, raising suspicions about his support. For Banro, these events have inflated existing concerns about armed group activity in its zones of passage and operations. These fears had already prompted its logistics subcontractors to equip their drivers with envelopes with money to distribute to emissaries of armed groups along the road, in order to ward off ambushes (Sheck 2015). This practice underscores how armed actors may benefit from LSM through extracting 'protection rents'.

Aside from his ties to armed groups with an anti-Banro agenda, Sikatenda forms a threat to the company as he actively incites the population against LSM. In 2015, he held public meetings in Misisi and Namoya, encouraging the population to revolt against CASA and Banro, accused of usurping the population's ancestral grounds and of 'imperialism'. Furthermore, in the antagonistic climate that reigned in Namoya after the bloody events of January 2016, several local leaders declared that Sikatenda was on their side. In the words of a chief: 'Sikatenda, he has become the advocate of the population. When he arrives here, he does not arrive but to attack/criticize Banro. "Why do you abuse the population?" That is his goal' (interview, Salamabila, April 2016). Indeed, due to his pronounced anti-Kinshasa attitude and his reputation as fearless when it comes to defying the authorities, Sikatenda is seen as one of the few leaders willing and able to stand up against the powerful interests facilitating Banro's presence. Furthermore, in the face of (potentially) repressive practices from the authorities and security services in Namoya, only a leader able to mobilize force is seen to constitute a credible counterweight. Hence, when looking at the eastern Congo's political opportunity structure for contentious collective action, Sikatenda's appeal as an ally in mobilization against Banro becomes clear.

Despite this appeal, Sikatenda is widely feared due to his brutal actions, like the habitude to flog his opponents in public. Additionally, his military status elicits doubts about collaboration. As a civil society activist declared: 'We…we also fear him, how can we associate him to engage in purely civilian affairs? He is a military. If he arrives here he intimidates no matter whom' (interview, Salamabila, April 2016). Furthermore, Sikatenda is distrusted by the Bangubangu, the majority group in Salamabila, who believe he primarily defends the Babembe. Others also believe he is opportunistic, and therefore susceptible to being co-opted by Banro and to sell out on the population's interests. In sum, Sikatenda's status and impact on social mobilization are ambiguous, reflecting the complex position of politico-military entrepreneurs in the eastern Congo's militarized political-economic order.

Concluding remarks

The above analysis shows that the principal mechanisms linking LSM to violent conflict as identified by Holden and Jacobson (2007), namely, protection rents, militarization stifling opposition and grievances creating support for rebellion, apply to the context of Fizi-Kabambare. Yet, these mechanisms do not fully capture the observed interplay between LSM and armed mobilization. While LSM companies like Banro indeed provide armed actors with resources by paying protection rents, these payments are part of a wider and more fine-grained politics of co-opting politico-military entrepreneurs. Such cooptation may also assume the form of providing favors to civilian political actors that are in close contact with armed groups, like using their companies as subcontractors. Furthermore, while the expansion of LSM fuels militarization, this does not only lead to increased support for politico-military entrepreneurs via growing repression and grievances. It also fuels a rising demand for protection from such entrepreneurs by intensifying 'concessionary politics', enkindling conflicts and competition between local elite networks seeking to reap the benefits of LSM expansion. At the same time, the grievances and conflicts that allow politico-military entrepreneurs to reinforce their position are not a given: these entrepreneurs actively contribute to the framing and sometimes inflation of experienced injustices, drawing on deeply engrained collective action frames like discourses of autochthony and anti-imperialism.

 While politico-military entrepreneurs thus inspire and support resistance against LSM, this support often has a self-interested dimension. They may, for instance, seize upon protest to reinforce their own negotiating position *vis-à-vis* LSM companies, or capitalize on local businesspeople's fears for LSM-induced revenue losses to demand increased contributions. Hence, in some cases, resistance becomes 'appropriated' by politico-military entrepreneurs and their factional interests, reflecting a generalized practice among local elites (Geenen and Verweijen 2017). Certainly, this appropriation does not go uncontested by civilians, who do not always want to be associated with violent actors that extort the very artisanal miners and peasants whose rights they claim to defend. Yet, in a militarized political–economic order, the political opportunity structure for collective contentious action is skewed towards forging alliances with factions able to manipulate force.

 The ambiguous position of politico-military entrepreneurs raises the question to what extent their violent actions against LSM companies can be qualified as forms of 'popular resistance'. Dominant discourses in policy and media circles ascribe the malpractices of present-day armed groups in the eastern Congo to their 'criminalization', which would constitute a departure from the supposedly more ideologically oriented rebellions and the 'rural radicalism' of earlier epochs (Verweijen and Marijnen 2016). Such readings neglect that contemporary politico-military entrepreneurs do voice widely shared grievances, including discontent with the current political–economic order, and advocate for change, even if such efforts invariably coexist with self-interested, abusive and predatory behavior (Verweijen 2016). Throughout the Congo's history, armed rebellion has been a mixture of varying, and sometimes seemingly contradictory, political visions, projects and interests. Social mobilization has been equally ambiguous, often lacking well delineated ideologies and clearly identifiable social movements. Emerging from ongoing, but sometimes silent discontent, it rather tends to be expressed in a moment, in actions by ad hoc coalitions or by groups that may be versatile in their positions. Moreover, within the volatility of the eastern Congo's militarized environment, the

frictions and uncertainties provoked by resistance tend to fuel dynamics that eventually reproduce, rather than transform, the political-economic order (cf. de Waal and Ibreck 2013).

Recent scholarship on social movements in Africa similarly emphasizes the 'messy, ideologically confused' and 'inherently contradictory' nature of contentious politics on the continent (Larmer 2010, 260). Yet, as concluded by Larmer (2010, 252) the fact that social movements are

> 'an expression of the contradictions and hierarchies of the society in which they operate […] does not make them "inauthentic" representatives of the poor or exploited; rather, it makes them venues or spaces in which political difference is articulated in societies characterized by inequality, exploitation and social conflict'.

Furthermore, in volatile conditions, versatility may be as much a strength as a weakness. Crucially, it allows for transcending (socially constructed) boundaries that structure deeply engrained understandings of socio-political order, notably the rural/urban; state/non-state and military/civilian divides. The conditions of multifaceted insecurity, violence and conflict that shape people's agency in unsettled contexts, including their engagement in contentious action, cut across these boundaries, and so does contentious action itself.

The boundary-transcending nature of resistance in the Congo raises questions about the pertinence of drawing sharp lines between armed and social mobilization. Analyzing African social movements, de Waal and Ibreck (2013, 305) conclude that violent action 'undermines the potential for non-violent popular uprisings' and erodes 'the promise of transformative collective action'. Yet such a conceptualization of violent action risks obscuring the fine-grained interplay between armed and social mobilization and the ways this interplay shapes and is shaped by the same political opportunity structures and mobilizing discourses. As Tilly and Tarrow (2007, 138) state: 'various forms of contention overlap, mutate into each other; and result from similar mechanisms and processes in different combinations, sequences, and initial conditions'. Hence observing armed and social mobilization through the same 'contentious politics' lens, while analyzing their interconnections and shared contentious repertoires, may be analytically more fruitful than to conceptualize them as distinct or antagonistic phenomena. After all, leaders of armed resistance and the discourses they employ have proven to be enduring sources of inspiration also for non-violent resistance. This is well demonstrated by the appeal that the militarized figure of 'General Ludd' enjoys even among the non-violent side of the neo-Luddite spectrum (Banning 2001). As concluded by Navickas (2005: 284): '"General Ludd" was perhaps only the most visible manifestation of what was in fact a mythology of Luddism, a whole mindframe of opposition which was framed by both participants in, and suppressors of, the disturbances.' From this mythological point of view, the politico-military entrepreneurs engaging in violent practices against industrial mining companies may, in fact, be Luddites in the Congo.

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