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Civilian Resistance against the Military in Eastern DR Congo: A Combined Social Navigation and Structuration Approach

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Abstract

Although two decades of militarization have normalized the presence of armed forces in eastern DR Congo, civilians continue to resist their power and practices, engaging in heterogeneous repertoires of contentious action. Focusing on resistance against the national army, this article analyzes the forms and effects of these contentious repertoires as well as the factors that shape them. The latter include the intimate and multi-faceted entanglement of civilian and military lives and the high fluidity of dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection. These factors foster an orientation towards both the socially immediate and the socially imagined. Accordingly, it is appropriate to analyze civilian resistance in eastern DR Congo through the lens of “social navigation,” a term used to conceptualize social practice in volatile settings. Yet social navigation’s focus on fluidity and flexibility does not allow for fully comprehending civilians’ contentious practices vis-à-vis the military. Following the theory of structuration, these practices are also shaped by relatively durable social structures, such as economic scarcity and deeply rooted socio-political imaginaries and modes of action relating to “stateness,” patronage, and social belonging. The imprint of these structures on social practice renders civilian resistance fleeting, incoherent, and personalized, thereby reducing its potential to undermine the military’s dominance. These observations indicate that even in highly volatile settings, the analysis of durable social structures remains crucial to understanding social practice, including resistance, and its effects on the social order. The analytical approach of social navigation must therefore be complemented by the theory of structuration.

Key words: Civil-Military Relations; Resistance; Social Navigation; Structuration; Militarization; DR Congo

One morning, the Congolese manager of a field base of an international relief organization located in war-ridden eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo got a big scare. When looking out of the window, he saw officers of the Congolese army, the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC, Armed Forces of the DR Congo), approaching his base. Oftentimes, the arrival of FARDC officers heralded trouble, in particular when the army was engaged in operations against rebel groups, as was currently the case. The officers told him that they lacked the means to rapidly transport a cargo of ammunition to troops deployed at the frontlines. Since he had several cars provided by his employer, a western-financed non-governmental organization (NGO), he should help them transport the ammunition. He had to do this, they emphasized, to fulfill his “patriotic duty” to assist the national armed forces. Overwhelmed and frightened, the base manager had contradictory feelings about how to handle this situation: On the one hand, he did not want to violate the humanitarian principles he had been taught by the headquarters of his organization, which prescribe neutrality and impartiality and prohibit the facilitation of any kind of armed activity. On the other hand, he had to maintain good relations with the FARDC brigade in his area of operations, since his NGO was working on a road rehabilitation project in an isolated and insecure area. During an interview at his base a few weeks after the incident, he proudly told me that to solve this dilemma, he initially accepted to transport the ammunition, but soon afterwards pretended that the engine of his car broke down. He then put up a whole performance of trying to fix the car, finally asking some young men to push it back to the base and offload the ammunition. This trick allowed him to respect the humanitarian principles while not endangering future operations by making enemies among the army.

This anecdote illustrates how—despite the relative normalization of the presence of both state and non-state armed forces after over two decades of ongoing warfare—civilians in the eastern Congo continue to resist these forces’ position and practices. “Civilians” are commonly defined as “those who are not full-time members of an armed group” (Kalyvas 2006, 19). Yet it is an imprecise and relative category, the boundaries of which are contextual, porous and at times dissolve (Slim 2008). “Resistance” is understood herein in the sense of Scott (1985, 290), namely, as any social and speech acts of civilians that are intended either to mitigate or deny symbolic (e.g. respect) and material (e.g. taxes) claims placed upon them by members of the Congolese armed forces. Such acts assume different forms, hovering between official and non-official, public and private, legal and illegal, violent and non-violent, everyday and incidental. Despite this diversity, my study shows that there are clear “contentious repertoires” (Tilly 1993), or recurring combinations of forms of resistance that emerge in particular conditions. In general, civilians in the eastern Congo engage more in individual, informal and non-public contentious action than in collective, public manifestations. Furthermore, they tend to engage in short-term, rather than continual contestation, often alternating resistance with collaboration.

How can we explain these contentious repertoires? And what are their cumulative effects on the overall power position of the FARDC? A growing body of work draws on the concept of “social navigation” to analyze social practice in volatile

and uncertain settings, like (post)conflict zones (e.g. Utas 2005; Vigh 2006). For Vigh (2009), the term social navigation expresses the idea that similar to vessels at sea, both social agents themselves and the very social environment in which they are situated are on the move. The resulting “motion within motion” draws attention to the “radical interactivity” (Vigh 2009, 420) between social agents and the social formations in which they are situated. The hyper-volatility of the eastern Congo’s socio-political order renders social navigation a pertinent approach to analyze civilian resistance to the military. As this contribution demonstrates, combined with the complex and intimate interweaving of military and civilian lives, this volatility elicits behavioral orientations typically associated with social navigation: on the one hand, a focus on short-term goals, like immediate safety and direct access to revenues; on the other hand, an effort to ensure a maximum of future possibilities, in particular by maintaining multiple networks of contacts.

While the concept of social navigation thus provides considerable insight into how and when civilians resist the Congolese army, it does not suffice as an analytical tool. As further outlined below, the emphasis on radical interactivity tends to obscure the ways in which social practice—even in situations of intense flux—is shaped by durable social structures. For Giddens (1984, 28), social structures are rules and resources constitutive of power relations, norms, and discourses (or structures of domination, legitimation and signification, respectively) that are reproduced over relatively long stretches of time. Like all social practice, civilians’ repertoires of contention vis-à-vis the military are imprinted by these structures. The most important of these are the general scarcity of income-generation opportunities in the Congo, and deeply rooted socio-political imaginaries and modes of action relating to patronage, ethnicity/autochthony, and “stateness.” Following Giddens’s (1984) theory of structuration, it is precisely by imprinting civilians’ everyday practices, including resistance to the military, that these social structures are produced and reproduced. Thus, structuration does not only help us understand how civilian resistance is shaped, it also provides insight into the effects of that resistance on the social order, specifically the military’s position within that order. If social structures are not instantiated by social practice, the social order that they constitute will ultimately transform. As this article shows, the main social structures shaping civilian resistance to the military as outlined above render it fragmented and unstable, thereby reducing its potential to undermine the armed forces’ dominance. From these observations, we can conclude that to understand contentious repertoires and their long-term effects, attention to the mutual influences between durable social structures and social practice remains indispensable, even in situations of high flux and uncertainty.

To make the case for the complementary relevance of social navigation and structuration, the article proceeds as follows. It first outlines the main theoretical concepts drawn upon, and then provides a brief discussion of the used methods and the challenges I encountered during field research. The subsequent section describes the main social structures that shape civilian-military interaction, and how they set in motion self-enforcing dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection. The next part describes a number of recurring acts of civilian resistance against the military,

drawing on examples from the fieldwork. The forms and effects of these contentious repertoires are then analyzed in the light of the main social structures and dynamics identified to shape social practice in the eastern Congo. The concluding section discusses the theoretical implications of the article's findings, arguing that when analyzing agency in volatile settings, a distinction must be made between fluid social dynamics and less fluid social structures, which jointly shape and are shaped by social practice.

Social Navigation and Structuration

The analytical approach of social navigation emerged from the observation that existing theories of social practice are ill suited to environments of high political, social and economic volatility and insecurity. For Vigh (2009), who has formulated the most comprehensive theorization of the concept of social navigation to date, this unsettledness induces a temporal orientation towards both the present and the future. Specifically, it causes social practice to be simultaneously informed by “the assessment of the dangers and possibilities of one’s present position” and “the process of plotting and attempting to actualize routes into an uncertain and changeable future” (Vigh 2009, 425). Thus, social navigation is movement “through both the socially immediate and the socially imagined” (2009, 425). As the wavering nature of the socially immediate prompts social agents to constantly adapt and attune their actions to the unfolding environment, understanding these actions requires an optic of “radical interactivity”. Such an optic would offer “an alternative perspective on practice and the intersection between agency, social forces and change” (2009, 420).

The notion of “radical interactivity,” however, seems to undervalue the structuring effects of those features of social orders that tend to transform slowly, such as power relations and discursive formations. At the same time, it appears to overvalue the effects that social actors have on their environment, which the language of interactivity suggests are substantial. While Vigh acknowledges the relevance of relatively stable institutions amid social flux, he does not identify what these institutions are or the mechanisms by which they come to inform social practice. Rather, he invokes “social forces” and “social environment” as relatively unspecified concepts. In addition, he deems “the slow processes of sedimentation and habituation” (2009, 427) central to Bourdieu’s theory of practice to be of limited relevance in situations of hyperfluidity. Moreover, in spite of the emphasis on interactivity, the concept of social navigation does not account for how people come to influence the social environments that they navigate—regardless of their own experience of control over that environment, which it foregrounds.

Social navigation’s relative neglect of durable social structures becomes apparent when comparing it to Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) conceptualization of agency. For Emirbayer and Mische, agency is constituted by a chordal triad with three dimensions that correspond to three different temporal orientations: past, future, and

present. Every instance of social practice is simultaneously informed by these three dimensions, albeit to differing degrees. The first dimension is *iterative*, referring to “the selective reactivation...of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 971). The second dimension is *projective*, denoting “the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured” (971). The third dimension is *practical-evaluative*, and relates to making “practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations” (971). Within this conceptualization of agency, social structures, in the form of past patterns of thought and action, are central to the iterative dimension, in particular via the mechanism of the schematization of social experience. But social structures also play a role in the practical-evaluative dimension, specifically via the “characterization of a given situation against the background of past patterns of experience” (997). Furthermore, although mostly future-oriented, the projective dimension is also informed by social structures, as it is linked to the past “through a retrospective-prospective process of identification, in which possible trajectories are located against a backdrop of prior typifications from experience” (988).

This theoretical detour allows us to see that while social navigation foregrounds the projective and practical-evaluative dimensions of agency, it downplays the ways in which these are informed by past patterns of thought and action. At the same time, it pays limited attention to iteration—routines, in particular. However, when analyzing civilian resistance to the Congolese army, as further described below, the imprint of sedimented modes of thinking and acting can clearly be discerned. This imprint is accounted for by the theory of structuration, which states that structures are both the medium and outcome of social practices (Giddens 1984). Within their everyday practices, knowledgeable, situated social agents draw upon recursively organized sets of rules and resources (or social structures), thereby intentionally and unintentionally producing and reproducing them. That is not to say that social structures determine social practices. Rather, they shape them by both enabling and constraining certain paths of action. However, what path is followed is also the result of *agency*, which fashions the ways in and extent to which agents draw upon structures in their day-to-day conduct (Giddens 1984).

Methods

While embroiled in episodic turmoil for decades, only particular moments of violence in the eastern Congo have been bracketed as clearly identifiable “wars.” Most recently, these moments concern the First (1996–1997) and Second (1998–2003) Congo Wars. The violence that has continued since is more difficult to fit into the meta-narrative of “a war.” At present, dozens of domestic and foreign armed groups of all shapes and sizes roam the countryside, in particular in the provinces of North

and South Kivu. These groups are the product of overlapping and fluctuating dynamics located at different scales. Therefore, their existence defies well-circumscribed explanatory schemes. What many groups have in common is that they claim to engage in the defense of often ethnically defined communities, and are tied to these communities through complex webs of relations ranging from more to less coercive (Verweijen 2016). In part to contain these groups, well over a third of the approximately 145,000 troops of the national armed forces (FARDC) are deployed to the Kivus. How do these various state and non-state forces interact with civilians at the micro level? And in what manners and why do civilians resist, collaborate or comply with this plethora of armed actors?

To answer these questions, I conducted fourteen months of fieldwork between 2010 and 2012, in stretches of four to five months per field trip. A series of shorter fieldtrips (two to four weeks) between 2013 and 2017, amounting to six months in total, helped consolidate the findings (for an extensive description of methods and methodology, see Verweijen 2015a). Data were gathered through a range of ethnographic methods, including informal conversations, semi-structured individual and group interviews, and observations (for instance of road block taxation, or of military involvement in civilian disputes). The research focused both on the FARDC and non-state armed groups. However, since the social embeddedness and modes of organization and operating of state and non-state armed forces were found to differ considerably, it was chosen to describe their interaction with civilians separately. This article focuses on civilians' resistance against the national army¹, but recognizes the influence of non-state armed forces where relevant.

On the civilian side, I contacted interlocutors from different categories, including local authorities, civil society organizations, and members of diverse economic groups (e.g. farmers, fishermen, shop-keepers, and artisanal miners). Of each category, and where possible, both men and women were contacted. This gave rise to the observation that while gendered differences generally matter for how civilians engage with members of the armed forces (the overwhelming majority of whom are male), the effects of these differences are highly variable. Moreover, the effects of gender were often difficult to disaggregate from the effects of other factors, in particular differences in class, status, profession and political connections. In many cases, these other factors appeared to shape civilians' agency vis-à-vis the military more decisively than gender. Because gender could not be identified as having determining influence in a stand-alone manner in any of the forms of civilian resistance discussed herein, it does not figure as a separate explanatory factor. This absence should not be taken to indicate its irrelevance: Gendered differences did importantly shape forms of civilian resistance not analyzed in this article, as well as some of their effects.

Given that neither military personnel nor civilians easily talk about particular aspects of their mutual relations, I had to build up networks of key informants and find research assistants who were locally well known and could therefore lower

¹ For civilian resistance against armed groups, see Suarez 2017

distrust during one-time interviews. Many of these one-off interactions took place in isolated rural areas, which tend to have significant army deployment and armed group presence. Due to high levels of insecurity, staying for a long time in one place in these areas is simply too dangerous. I therefore adopted a “roving approach,” which meant that I was constantly on the move, going from village to village. I mostly travelled by foot and by motorcycle, and occasionally by boat, accompanied by a research assistant. During the 2010–2012 research phase, transcripts and/or notes were made of conversations with 400 persons and 150 military personnel. However, I spoke with many more people—for instance during random encounters in the course of travel or in the cheap hotels where I stayed, which often lodged numerous FARDC officers.

Travelling in isolated areas and adverse circumstances—muddy and barely practicable roads, steep slopes in mountain areas, road axes with considerable ambush risk—helped me to make connections. Civilians and military alike were often surprised to see a *muzungu* (white person in Swahili, the lingua franca of the eastern Congo) in such far-flung areas, and many appreciated the effort I had taken to reach them. Most people were very helpful and hospitable, providing me with food and shelter, and helping me find particular key persons in the absence of phone network coverage. In most villages I was hosted by the village chief or in a local parish, and village elders often gathered in the evening to discuss with me. Occasionally, I was hosted by armed groups and the military, some members of which were surprisingly welcoming and collaborative. As in many other war zones (e.g. Wood 2006), they wanted their stories to be heard, and were willing to engage in lengthy exchanges.

To reduce distrust and foster open exchange, I adopted a range of strategies: presenting myself explicitly as a *mwanafunzi* (student) without much power and resources, learning Swahili, and making jokes. I also told people much about my own life and ideas, to avoid a purely one-sided conversation, and often first asked extensively about local history and general topics before slowly moving towards more sensitive issues. Developing these strategies, in constant awareness of the discursive and power effects of my presence as a white Westerner, required “hyper self-reflexivity” (Kapoor 2004). I constantly had to keep an eye and reflect on what my presence “did” in the research context and how it affected the discursive and social practices of both those “being researched upon” and myself. For instance, mentioning a term like “human rights” among civilians could elicit confidential stories about military abuses; probably because, despite my identity as an academic researcher, many people still associated me with the “humanitarian intervention complex” and hoped I could somehow “do something” for them. Yet among military officers, it was best to avoid the vocabulary of human rights, since it seemingly transformed me into an agent of control that was moreover associated with the distrusted “international community” they accuse of plundering the Congo’s rich resources. Dynamics of interaction were also importantly shaped by my real or perceived positioning towards the Congolese government. Among military and civilian interlocutors alike, dislike of the current government in Kinshasa was strong, and many people tried to elicit my opinion on their anti-government stance. Did I have to give in to these pressures to show I was “on the right side,” and would this help me gain trust? Or did I have to

guard “neutrality” by staying “out of politics”? As I discovered, both positions were highly consequential for how conversations and relationships would unfold, and what type of information was conveyed.

My roving approach in rural areas did not prevent me from meeting the same people numerous times. Not only did I often return to the same villages, I also continued to run into the same army personnel, as certain units rotated between the different areas where I conducted research. Furthermore, I became acquainted with numerous officers staying in the bigger towns where I generally spent longer—up to ten days—to work on field notes, organize field trips to remote areas, and introduce myself to the local authorities and security services. Owing more to luck than to any well-conceived strategy, I managed to secure permission for my research from the army headquarters of the 8th and 10th Military Regions (North and South Kivu province, respectively). This was no more than a stamp on my *ordre de mission* [mission order], a document explaining who you are, what institute you are linked to, and the purpose of your travel. Such a document is indispensable when conducting research, as all authorities ask for it. But even more important than having the right stamps from the right authorities were good personal connections. I was able to build up relations with a number of key officials from the army, and the migration and civilian intelligence services, who seemed convinced of the importance of my research. To reduce their suspicion, I engaged with them proactively, visiting them frequently in their offices and at times their homes on my own initiative. Such engagement moreover allowed me to heavily direct our conversations. And by telling mostly what I chose to tell myself, I could generally avoid questions I did not want to answer (for instance about protected informants). Fortunately, none of these authorities ever saw a need to report me to their hierarchy as suspicious, and as long as they accepted my research, their subordinates in the rural areas had to do the same.

The Social Structures and Dynamics Shaping Civilian-military Interaction

One of the first things the first-time visitor to the Kivu provinces notices is the pervasiveness of the FARDC. Both in urban and rural settings, the sight of its camouflage fatigues is inescapable. Circulating on motorbikes or vehicles in town, loitering in the streets and at markets, riding overcrowded trucks and minibuses, or walking dilapidated roads toward their next site of deployment: the FARDC is seemingly omnipresent. Consequently, civilians frequently encounter soldiers in their everyday lives. These contacts are further promoted by the fact that a substantial part of the FARDC personnel deployed in the Kivus originate from the provinces themselves. Thus, they stay relatively close to social networks related to their life beyond the army. These networks sometimes also encompass armed groups. One reason for this is that many soldiers are former rebels who integrated into the FARDC, while some of their former comrades remained in or returned to the bush (Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2013).

What also fosters frequent civilian-military interactions is that the FARDC resembles less a “total institution” (Goffman 1961) than some other militaries (Verweijen 2018). It is not a relatively closed, self-contained social order with its own facilities and logistics, where all aspects of social life are shaped by the military hierarchy and unfold in the co-presence of colleagues. Due to the insufficiency and unattractiveness of barracks, many FARDC soldiers rent rooms or houses from civilians, living intermingled with the population. Moreover, numerous soldiers have wives, girlfriends and children in the Kivus, which further embeds them in civilian networks. FARDC personnel also encounter civilians when arranging basic necessities like transport and medical care, which are not provided by the military organization. Additionally, many soldiers are engaged in different types of revenue generation among civilians, like petty trade, charcoal production, and “taxation” at roadblocks, markets, beaches and mining sites (Verweijen 2013).

Owing to civilians’ and military personnel’s shared living and socio-economic space, there are not two well-delineated “civilian” and “military” spheres. The same applies to the military sphere of armed groups, which are similarly closely embedded in civilian social networks (Verweijen 2015b, 2016). What further weakens the boundaries between the “military” and “civilians” is that these notions constitute superordinate (or umbrella) identity categories that are not always salient in everyday situations (Slim 2008). “Soldiers” and “civilians” enact many different social roles, often simultaneously, and therefore do not always see and define each other in these respective terms. Instead, they may regard each other as relatives, neighbors, suppliers, clients, lovers, protectors, co-religionists, business partners, traitors, or ethnic in-or out-group members. Furthermore, “the Congolese armed forces” is far from a homogeneous group, encompassing people from various origins and a wide range of classes, with the rank-and-file belonging to the poorest segments of Congolese society and the top leadership to the richest.

The diversity of social roles enacted by military and civilians reflects their entanglement in social webs that span all dimensions of life. These webs crosscut “public” and “private” spheres, meaning that neither is well delineated. This blurriness stems in part from the salience of patronage networks, which are marked by personalized power relations and generally encompass both state and non-state actors, and both military and civilians (Bayart 2006). The result is a social constellation where the relations between dominant and dominated are more characterized by domesticity and intimacy, or what Mbembe (1992, 10) calls “conviviality,” than by binary opposites, like civil society vs. state, or subjection vs. autonomy. However, intimacy and proximity do not exclude coercion and distance. Civilians do not know every soldier in the FARDC, and there are many situations where soldiers perform primarily a military-coercive role. Clearly, this affects the possibilities for and expressions of resistance.

To understand civilian resistance to the military, it is necessary to grasp what social roles are salient within civilian-military interaction in general, and how these roles are constituted. The concept of social role foregrounds performativity and situatedness (Goffman 1959). However, the performance of social roles is scripted by

social categorizations, or typifications, that are constituted by particular configurations of discourses, norms and power relations (cf. Giddens 1984).² These configurations cause social categories, and the social roles they shape, to be surrounded by predefined meanings and (normative) expectations concerning obligations, prerogatives and social practices. During my field research I found that the main social categories drawn upon within civilian-military interaction in the Kivus are: first, the category of “patron” and relatedly “client;” second, that of “state actor,” which is inscribed in heterogeneous associative fields relating to “stateness” (cf. Hansen and Stepputat 2001); and third, the category of “the (ethnic/autochthon) Other.” Each of these categories relates to sedimented socio-political imaginaries and modes of action, hence durable social structures.

Within the Congo, patronage networks—which overlap and intersect with other social ties, like family, ethnic, and professional background—have elevated significance in political and socio-economic life. They are deeply inscribed in the “moral matrix” surrounding authority (Schatzberg 1988, 73), and permeate the state apparatus, including the armed forces, where they intersect and conflict with the formal hierarchy and rules (Verweijen 2018). This permeation is one of the root causes of the arbitrary and deficient workings of the state apparatus (Bayart 2006). Not only does the state offer limited social services and security, it is often a source of insecurity itself, engaging, for instance, in arbitrary arrests, extortion, or the sudden withdrawal of permits (Trefon 2009). Insecurity and the state’s lack of service provision, in turn, incentivize people to solicit patronage networks for help. This tendency is exacerbated by the workings of the economy. Revenue-generation opportunities are scarce, and access to them is politically mediated. Thus, to get jobs, loans, permits, trade partners and sometimes customers, people need help from a patron.

As mentioned, FARDC personnel are part of the same patronage networks as civilians, with especially high-ranking officers serving as important patrons to civilians. For civilians, entering into patronage ties with military figures is particularly attractive given the multi-faceted insecurity that reigns in the Kivus. FARDC officers can mobilize coercion, have economic power and political connections and can influence the state apparatus; hence, they can mitigate the insecurity that it causes. These capacities enable officers-cum-patrons to provide their clients powerful forms of “protection,” like intimidating opponents, securing property, and influence-peddling among other state agents. In exchange, clients grant these officers loyalty, information, and resources, which are crucial to sustaining their power (Verweijen 2013; see also Raeymaekers 2014). Officers generally maintain particularly close patronage ties with civilians from their region of origins and with members of their own ethnic group. This became clear during a visit to a village in the Ruzizi Plain (Uvira territory), an area plagued by insecurity, where certain army generals having family members in the area were said to be very influential, despite having no formal

² While Giddens uses the terminology of “social positions,” the term “social categories” was deemed to better reflect their structural nature.

authority there. A cattle-owner of the Banyamulenge group explained: “All our cattle has been stolen by the Mai-Mai [generic name for armed groups claiming to engage in community defense]. If it was not for General Mustapha (a general in the FARDC from the same ethnic group), we wouldn’t even be able to live here.” Entering into protection arrangements with armed actors occurs on a very large scale, not least owing to the fact that significant segments of the population are exposed to physical insecurity and depend on economic activities facilitated by patronage for their livelihood. Moreover, due to its long lineage, maintaining patronage ties has become an institutionalized practice, which follows well-established informal rules and is sometimes highly routinized (Verweijen 2015a).

The second social category that strongly informs social role performance within civil-military interaction is that of “state agents,” which is linked to the polyvalent concept of “stateness.” In relation to the military, “stateness” may, for instance, refer to an idealized notion of “the military” as a constitutionally mandated provider of public security, charged with defending the country’s territorial integrity, and protecting civilians (Verweijen 2015a). This notion was clearly invoked by the FARDC officers seeking support from the humanitarian field base manager described above. At this abstract level, the military is linked to the idea(l) of “the state,” which—despite the malfunctioning of its actual embodiment—continues to be central to imaginaries of political order in the Congo (Englebert 2003). At a less abstract level, the military is associated with its historical *modus operandi* of deterrence, or the occasional display of disproportionate and at times arbitrary force, in vogue since the colonial era (Schatzberg 1988). Consequently, there is a latent distrust towards the FARDC, which prompts civilians to keep their distance. In the words of a village elder: “We collaborate closely, but with a lot of caution” [*avec beaucoup de reserves*]. A woman trading in cigarettes put it as follows: “Even when they are our neighbors, we still do not fully trust them.” Aside from being associated with the possibility of brutal violence, the military in the Congo is also seen in relation to the state’s parasitic tendency to live off the population’s back through all types of “taxation,” service fees, and extortion (Trefon 2009). While these forms of state extraction are essentially based on coercion, many have become routinized and are quasi-official. This latter category includes: demanding free rides from civilian transport operators (especially on trucks and boats), house-to-house collections of *bunga* (cassava or maize flour), market taxation, and the navy’s appropriation of a part of fishermen’s catch (Verweijen 2015a).

In addition to patronage and stateness, a third social category that informs the FARDC’s interactions with civilians is that of “in/out-group,” seen either in terms of autochthony or ethnicity. Autochthony relates to claim of being the original, first inhabitants of an area, as opposed to foreigners or newcomers. It may overlap with ethnicity, when foreigners are defined in ethnic terms (Geschiere 2009). Similar to ethnicity, the elevated socio-political significance of autochthony is largely an outgrowth of colonial-era policies of indirect rule, and postcolonial leaders’ engagement in identity politics (Hoffmann 2014). Both notions of belonging continue to be heavily drawn upon in political and armed mobilization today, having been

among the main narratives framing conflict since the start of the 1990s (Jackson 2003). In the Kivus, these narratives tend to pit self-styled “autochthonous” groups against “Rwandophones” or speakers of Kinyarwanda (the language also spoken in neighboring Rwanda). The latter are framed as “(Rwandan) immigrants” and “foreigners,” who are not “authentic Congolese” (Verweijen 2015b). Autochthony and ethnicity also shape civilian-military interaction, in particular when the military associates civilians with armed groups from a similar ethnic background, or where patronage networks with an ethnic component dominate particular military units or structures (Verweijen 2015a; 2018). This last scenario was in place between 2009 and 2012, when a Rwandophone rebel group that had integrated into the FARDC in 2009 dominated the army’s command structures in the Kivus. As a result, the old joke that FARDC stands for *Forces Armées Rwandaises en RD Congo* [Rwandan Armed Forces in the DR Congo] regained currency, reflecting the extent to which civilians perceive the military through the lens of autochthony (Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2013).

Conflicts coded as relating to social belonging generally overlap with other conflicts, like those over land ownership and use, local governance, and access to scarce resources. Other conflicts that are frequent in the Kivus are less often seen through the lens of autochthony or ethnicity, like family-related and personal disputes over dowry, children and love affairs. Whether having an identity dimension or not, due to deficient mechanisms of conflict regulation, including state-led justice, it is exceedingly difficult to resolve disputes in the Kivus (Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2014). Unresolved conflicts generate considerable insecurity, adding to the many other factors that render everyday life precarious. In particular the enduring condition of economic scarcity weighs heavily, forcing many people to engage in a permanent struggle for survival, while also feeding into conflicts and competition.

As we have seen, to overcome these challenges, and secure one’s life, family, property and income, people solicit protection from patrons, including officers in the military. While intended to overcome insecurity, however, protection mechanisms generate considerable conflicts and insecurity themselves. They nourish fierce and ongoing competition among both providers and solicitors of protection. For instance, within the FARDC, there is significant rivalry between different patronage networks, which may lead one faction to outcompete the other in terms of extorting civilians (Verweijen 2015a). Moreover, in particular when involving armed actors, patronage relations foster the use of coercion for social regulation, like for settling disputes, countering opponents and gaining economic and political advantage. Hence, the very responses people develop to deal with conflicts and insecurity create further conflicts and insecurity, which in turn fuel an increased demand for protection (Verweijen 2013, 2015a). In this manner, dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection become self-enforcing. Due to their importance as protection providers, these dynamics crucially underpin the dominance of armed actors, including in non-security-related spheres of social life. Following Thee (1980), I call the processes through which this dominance is created and sustained “militarization,” describing social-structural transformations in at once power relations, norms and discourses. As stipulated by

the theory of structuration, these militarized social structures shape social agents' practices. In this manner, they set in motion the self-enforcing dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection described above, which are at the root of the instability of the social environment. In the following, it is further demonstrated how these entwined structures and dynamics shape civilian resistance to the military.

Repertoires of Civilian Resistance to the Military

Despite widespread compliance with army personnel's demands and regular collaboration (Verweijen 2013, 2015a), Kivutians from all layers of the population frequently resist the military in variegated manners. By far the most common form of resistance is individual, unorganized, everyday acts of contention, including those that some would label "self-interested," as they center on immediate material gain or the direct avoidance of material loss. Similar to Scott (1985), I consider such efforts to ensure socio-economic safety resistance nonetheless, since they counter the material and symbolic claims of the military. A second form, which is less frequently encountered, is collective, public acts of resistance, which may be either spontaneous, like mob justice targeting soldiers, or organized, such as manifestations and strikes. A third form relates to targeted efforts by professionals (e.g. local authorities, businesspeople) to change the military's practices. These efforts may be either mostly to the advantage of their own faction or constituency (e.g. lower "taxes" for a specific group of businesspeople only) or benefit the population as a whole (e.g. dismantling road blocks). In the following, these three forms of resistance are further elucidated by means of examples from the fieldwork.

Everyday Micro-Resistance

Everyday practices of resistance to the military are embedded in the daily flow of activities, and are therefore shaped by routines (cf. Giddens 1984). One practice where the effects of routines can clearly be observed is bargaining to reduce the price of fees, "taxes" and fines imposed by the military. Due to the long-standing parasitic tendencies of the Congolese state apparatus, bargaining with state agents has become an engrained social practice that follows widely known but informal norms (Bilakila 2004; Trefon 2009). Aside from informal norms, civilians' bargaining performance is generally shaped by their social and political capital, their bargaining acumen, and the unfolding dynamic of the interaction, which carries an extra risk when soldiers are armed and intoxicated. When passing a military roadblock on the back of a motorcycle, a soldier whose breath betrayed the consumption of *kanyanga* (a local brew made of cassava and maize waste) imposed an extra fee of 200 *Francs congolais* (FC), on top of the usual 500 FC.³ When I started to protest, my *motard* [motor-taxi driver] begged me to stop, whispering in my ear: "He is a drunk. This

³ 200 *Francs congolais* equals USD 0.13

hotheaded fellow may reach for his gun. I have seen such soldiers before. Let us just pay and go.” This example indicates how this *motard*, when dealing with a situation in the here and now, where in Emirbayer and Mische’s description the “practical-evaluative” strand of agency dominates, still characterized it “against the background of past patterns of experience” (1998, 997).

But bargaining is not only shaped by past experiences and efforts to minimize present risks or seize upon direct opportunities; it is also influenced by estimations of how dangerous or useful a certain soldier, officer or military unit will be in the future. The importance of future danger was evidenced by often-heard statements like “The military never forgets,” or “The military can always return to take revenge one day.” When waiting at the parking of the town of Kirumba (North Kivu) for the departure of the big truck in which I had secured a place in the cabin to travel to Kiwanja, I observed how a soldier approached the driver to ask for a place on top of the cargo, where passengers paying a small fee are commonly piled up. However, the driver had already accepted five soldiers to travel on top of his truck for free, the maximum according to unwritten conventions. Not intimidated by the soldier—as reflected in his body language—he initially refused. But after haggling over it for a while, he eventually accepted. When I asked for the reasons of his decision, he replied: “You never know, maybe you once end up in a situation where this soldier is the only one to help you,” emphasizing that he often passed isolated stretches of road, where ambushes are frequent.

In addition to social practices like bargaining, everyday resistance also takes the form of speech acts, like jokes, gossip, rumors, tales and allegories. Such acts generally serve to ridicule and desecrate the powerful, symbolically invert power relations, undo official rhetoric, or foment dissent (Scott 1990). Civilians in the Kivus use the full range of this discursive repertoire to comment on, cope with, and contest the oppressive weight of military extraction and abuses (Verweijen 2015a). One particular frequent speech act of resistance is talking negatively about the FARDC on *radio trottoir* [pavement radio], described by Ellis (1989) as a rumor-mill discussing matters of public interest or concern on which official information is lacking or found suspicious. *Radio trottoir* broadcasts particularly frantically within the feverish atmosphere of war zones. As observed by Jackson (2003, 195): “[W]here certainty is in short supply, but desperately craved, meaning is manufactured, resulting in an ‘economy of truth-making’ in Kivu.” In such circumstances, people often cling to versions of “reality” that confirm their existing worldviews and forms of (collective) identification. Thus, in areas predominantly inhabited by self-styled “autochthones,” rumors harming the FARDC are sooner spread when the locally deployed unit is dominated by Rwandophones, with the blame specifically ascribed to that group.

One area where this mechanism was found to be at work was the Ngandja sector of Fizi (in South Kivu), where the Mai-Mai group of Yakotumba has a strong influence (Verweijen 2015b). When arriving in Misisi, a town in Ngandja close to an artisanal gold mining site, in January 2010, I was lodged in a guesthouse owned by civil society organizations that was located on the outskirts of town, next to a military camp. The place was deserted, not only as it had been occupied by military officers,

but also, as I came to learn, as it was reportedly the site of a mass grave. At the end of 2009, I was told, an FARDC brigade consisting primarily of Rwandophones was deployed to the Misisi area to conduct operations against the Mai-Mai. On November 29, 2009, an angry mob composed in majority of motor-taxi drivers gathered in front of this brigade's headquarters. Their main demand was that the military hand over the suspected perpetrator of the murder of one of their colleagues, with the purpose of killing him to take revenge. When the mob repeatedly refused to obey the FARDC's orders to evacuate the premises, the military opened fire. According to civil society actors attending the event, local civilian authorities and health care centers in the surroundings, four people were killed on the spot and 17 others were wounded, one of whom was documented to have died afterwards. However, many other people I contacted, including shopkeepers, artisanal miners, and members of local NGOs, spoke of a large-scale massacre with dozens of victims, who were reportedly buried near my guesthouse. When trying to establish the reasons for these diverging narratives, I came to the conclusion that the alleged mass graves functioned as a symbol of the atrocities committed by Rwandophone troops, even while the commanding officer during the massacre had not been a Rwandophone. Propaganda spread by the Mai-Mai corroborated this reading. On February 5, 2011, the Mai-Mai Yakotumba issued a political statement in which they denounced the mass atrocities committed by Rwandophone troops in Fizi, alluding to the "60 deaths" of the "massacre of Misisi" (Mai Mai Reformé 2011). While it remains unclear what role the Mai-Mai group and its supporters played in inflating the body count, it is obvious that autochthony discourses heavily colored the telling and retelling of the story of the massacre. This story thus illustrates how rumors on the FARDC, as a form of everyday resistance, are shaped by existing grids of intelligibility, or in Giddens's terminology "structures of signification."

Collective Public Protest

While less often than individualized everyday resistance, civilians in the Kivus also engage in collective public protest, which occurs either organized or spontaneously. Spontaneous protest is commonly provoked by particular incidents, like murders or arrests by the military seen as unjust. In rare cases, such spontaneous resistance takes the form of *justice populaire* [mob or popular justice], whereby civilians collectively attempt to kill a soldier, for instance, by burning them alive (Verweijen 2015c). *Justice populaire* against soldiers mostly occurs in environments where the military is held responsible for insecurity experienced as excessive, and civilians catch an alleged perpetrator of crime. This was a common scenario in the town of Kirumba. In 2009, the FARDC established operational headquarters there, leading to a large influx of military personnel, most of who moved to civilian residential areas. The omnipresence of ill supervised service members contributed to a spike in robberies, burglary, murders and forms of violent score-settling, whereby FARDC soldiers act as "guns for hire" (see Eriksson Baaz and Verweijen 2014). Sustained efforts by the town authorities to address the situation—like registering all military living in civilian

areas, or forcing them to live in the military camp—failed to bring change. As the *chef de cité* [town authority] told me—on the verge of desperation—after a meeting with the FARDC command to which he had invited me: “You see, all the agreements made here today, they will simply never implement them.” Aside from a lack of will, he explained, this was also a result of frequent rotations, as incoming commanders refuse to respect agreements made by their predecessors.

The frustration about the military that was building up in Kirumba created a fertile climate for *justice populaire*, as evidenced by a string of incidents that occurred after my departure. People with whom I had stayed in touch informed me about these events by phone. On July 8, 2011, an FARDC soldier was found on the terrain of a private house in the Birere quarter, with the clear intention of burglary. Outraged, the quarter’s inhabitants immediately decapitated him. On September 23, 2011, yet another incident of mob justice occurred, when civilians recognized a soldier who had committed an armed robbery in the neighborhood one month earlier, and stoned him to death (Yotama 2011). As corroborated by research into *justice populaire* that I conducted in other areas (Verweijen 2015c), when targeting soldiers, this practice has characteristics of two types of crowds identified by Canetti: first, a “baiting crowd” (1984, 49), which attempts to kill a “bait;” and second, due to the symbolism attached to attacking a soldier, a “reversal crowd,” “whose discharge consists mainly in its collective deliverance from the stings of command” (1984, 59). In this case, the involved reversal goes even further: it also relates to civilians’ usurping of the military’s command over life and death and its role of “public security provider.” Thus, this form of resistance is deeply shaped by structures of legitimation and signification relating to “stateness;” not only is it the norm-violating behavior of a state agent that triggers the protest in the first place, the act of resistance itself draws upon prerogatives and duties that are officially the exclusive domain of “the state.”

A second form of collective public protests is of a more organized kind. Such orchestrated contentious action rarely takes the form of manifestations in the streets. Instead, citizens in the Kivus prefer to hold a general strike, called *ville morte* [dead city]. During such days, shops do not open, no markets are held, motor-taxi drivers and other transport operators do not move; civil society organizations do not open the doors of their offices; and, in some cases, schools and administrative offices close as well. The *ville morte* came to fruition as a protest tactic during the rowdy early 1990s, when the political opposition fought to dislodge the autocratic regime of Mobutu Sese Seko, who had been in power since 1965. The tactic was developed in part to avoid the extreme violence by which previous protest marches had been suppressed. For De Villers and Omasombo (2004, 146), the *ville morte* therefore reveals “more despair and collective impotence than constructive political mobilization.” Yet, it does send a potent signal of discontent.

Due to the low risks involved—compared to taking to the streets—the *ville morte* is a popular channel to protest the performance of the security services. For example, in March 2010, the platform of local civil society organizations organized a *ville morte* in the town of Kasindi, on the border between North Kivu and Uganda. In order to maximize the effects, the organizing committee composed a list of detailed

demands to the local authorities, like rotating personnel from the civilian and military intelligence services, and the release of several people unlawfully held in military detention. However, none of these demands were honored. As one human rights activist who had helped organize the strike told me, about a month after the *ville morte* had taken place: “Up to today this strike has remained without impact [*sans suite*]. Immediately after, these [security] services disappeared for a while, but they have all returned here.” Moreover, soon after their return, arbitrary arrests and extortion continued at more or less the same level as before.

One reason for the limited effects of the *ville morte* is that they tend to be of limited duration. The majority of Kivutians cannot afford to be involved in protest actions that paralyze economic life for a long time. Cultivators have to work their fields and sell their produce; day laborers and petty traders can barely survive when missing more than one day of income; and people cannot stop providing for basic necessities, like fetching water and firewood. These circumscribed possibilities for sustained engagement reduce the effectiveness of strikes, as authorities anticipate they will not last long. Together with the fear for repression described above, these socio-economic constraints indicate how what Giddens (1984) describes as “structures of domination,” relating to the asymmetric distribution of allocative and authoritative resources, strongly shape not only civilians’ repertoires of contention but also the effects of that contention.

Professional Practices of Contestation

Particular professional groups, like civilian authorities, human rights defenders, and economic operators, often take targeted action to resist the FARDC’s practices and power. They may, for instance, advocate the dismantling of roadblocks, demand apologies, reparations, and the punishment of perpetrators, or—like the *chef de cité* of Kirumba—ask for service members to be removed from civilian residential areas. The ways in which such sensitive issues are brought up with the military are highly varied, and encompass both formal and informal, direct and indirect channels. As with street action, public denunciations, like radio broadcasts, are risky, as they may lead to retaliations and intimidation. In the highly insecure Binza area in Rutshuru (North Kivu), I spoke to a local radio journalist, who only wanted to talk behind closed doors. He feared being seen with a white person, since the military might think I was a human rights investigator. After checking once more whether the curtains were well closed, he explained: “We made a radio broadcast about soldiers who cut bunches of bananas from the trees and then force civilians to transport them to their camp. After that, they [the military] followed that journalist [who made the broadcast] and threatened him with death. We are now very careful in discussing security issues in our programs.” Human rights defenders often face similar intimidation. Moreover, aside from having to deal with immediate threats, they also anticipate danger at a later stage. In particular, they fear that perpetrators will take revenge on those who helped getting them behind bars. A human rights defender in Fizi said: “The problem is that I can denounce him [the perpetrator] today. But tomorrow he is back in the village.

And who is going to pay for that?” These fears are well founded in the light of the porosity of prisons in the Congo, where detainees easily escape through prison breaks or corruption. As several of my interlocutors emphasized, the fact that civilians and military live intermingled makes things worse, as one can never completely hide from the military or stay anonymous. Hence, even when direct intimidation is limited, those pressing for change tend to impose self-censorship with an eye to future threats. In such cases, the projective, future-oriented strand of agency clearly dominates. Yet as the generalized fear for revenge from prison escapees shows, within such forms of projectivity, possible trajectories are still “located against a backdrop of prior typifications from experience” (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 988).

Self-censorship often induces the adoption of more discreet channels of protest. Local authorities may for instance choose to address letters to their hierarchy, instead of directly confronting the locally deployed army commander, or challenge the military in informal settings, like face-to-face meetings behind closed doors. Such informal contentious action tends to be shaped by patronage logics, as those seeking change attempt to harness existing contacts in the military, asking them to follow up on a particular issue as a “favor” within broader relations of exchange. These forms of non-public action are less confrontational, and allow people to not openly advocate their position. Making public statements can be particularly inconvenient where one’s behavior contradicts one’s professed principles. In the town of Uvira (South Kivu), a ship-owner told me during an interview that he was infuriated by the FARDC’s practice to impose a fixed number of soldiers travelling for free on his ships over Lake Tanganyika (due to the military’s lack of transport). When trying to protest this practice, as member of the ship-owners’ association, he approached an officer high up in the military hierarchy that he knew very well, as he originates from the same area of Uvira territory, and they had grown up together. At the same time, according to multiple sources, this businessman was widely known to collaborate with the FARDC naval forces to illegally import goods over the lake. One can therefore imagine he preferred to refrain from making public statements on the FARDC’s malpractices, rather trying to reduce the imposed number of soldiers travelling on his ships by using his personal contacts within the military discreetly. Allegedly, this businessman also harnessed his collaboration with the navy to harass competing ship-owners, whose passengers and cargo were, as a result, frequently subjected to extensive controls in the harbor. This competition might have been another reason why he preferred individual informal channels to address the issue of free transportation, instead of building a broader coalition among ship-owners, even though he professed to act in his capacity of member of the ship-owners’ association. Indeed, it is a recurring practice that civilians consider it more in their interest to liaise with certain factions in the FARDC to defeat (civilian) competitors than to collaborate with their colleagues to push back the military’s overall influence (Verweijen 2013, 2015a).

The case of the ship-owner in Uvira shows the ambivalent effects of civilian-military conviviality and concomitant shared intimate knowledge. On the one hand, close contacts, in this case the ship-owner’s relation to an army officer he had grown up with, facilitated his approaching the military to express discontent. One can also

imagine how intimate knowledge, like knowing secrets of this particular officer's past, could have further helped the ship-owner to mobilize the officer for his cause. On the other hand, other close contacts, namely the ship-owner's relation with the navy, prevented him from taking a more overt confrontational stance. Moreover, the navy's intimate knowledge of the ship-owner's engagement in illegal practices rendered him vulnerable to pressures to give up his efforts to protest certain military practices. Since in this case, civilian-military intimacy stemmed to a large extent from patronage relations, the boat-operator's actions also further reveal the imprint of the social structures constitutive of patronage on social practice. In particular, they show how patronage logics and relations induce seeming inconsistencies in civilians' behavior towards the military, leading simultaneously or alternately to conflict and collaboration.

Analyzing Civilian Resistance and its Effects

The above discussion of repertoires of civilian resistance against the FARDC demonstrates how these repertoires are shaped by at once the unsettledness of the Kivus' socio-political order and durable social structures. Considerable volatility and uncertainty prompt civilians to seize upon present opportunities to express discontent with the military and reduce or avoid its negative impacts on their lives and livelihoods, while factoring in immediate risks. At the same time, and as further prompted by the complex interweaving of civilian and military lives, contentious action is generally performed with an eye to reducing future threats and enlarging future opportunities. Yet these efforts to navigate the present while keeping an eye on the future are strongly shaped by prior experiences, engrained patterns of thought and action, and socio-economic constraints, or in other words, social structures. For instance, both anticipated repression and patronage logics make people avoid public protest and seek more private channels for articulating opposition instead. When trying to reduce the extent of extractive claims placed upon them by the military, civilians draw upon routines of bargaining developed in the course of decades of parasitic statehood. And when articulating resistance, civilians' narratives may be shaped by deeply rooted discourses of autochthony, leading them to single out Rwandophone soldiers as the main culprits.

It follows that the analytical lens of social navigation, with its attention to how unsettled environments shape thoughts and action in and towards the socially immediate and the socially imagined, does not suffice for comprehending the ways in which civilians in the Kivus resist the military. Rather, we also need to look at how resistance and its expressions are enabled and constrained by social structures. Scott (1985) adopts a similar approach, analyzing how the nature of peasant resistance is influenced by structural factors like existing forms of labor control, the parameters of repression, shared worldviews and values, and social stratification and networks shaped by class and kinship. Yet contrary to what is observed by Scott, in the Kivus, an overall penchant for forms of everyday, individualized and non-public forms of resistance does not only stem from beliefs about the likelihood and intensity of

repression. It also results from the salience of patronage logics, as well as the desire—characteristic of social navigation—to keep as many future options open as possible (Vigh 2009), an ambition that is undermined by open confrontations. It is precisely in this attention to how people contemplate charting future paths through flux, and how these contemplations inform their current actions, that social navigation provides added value. Moreover, it usefully highlights how social practice in fluid situations is shaped by the multiplicity of social networks that people are embedded in and the multiple social roles that they enact, rendering their paths of action versatile and multi-pronged.

Attending to intersecting social roles and networks is of particular importance for comprehending civilian resistance to the military in the Kivus. The multifaceted entanglement of civilian and military lives renders the boundaries between public vs. private, civilian vs. military and state vs. non-state elastic and occasionally irrelevant. In this context of civilian-military intimacy, it is difficult to qualify less public manifestations of civilian resistance as “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990), since they are often performed in co-presence of members of the military. Furthermore, as the case of the ship-owner in Uvira demonstrates, intimate and intersecting civilian-military contacts, and the resulting blurred lines between “public” and “private,” render resistance fleeting and unstable. Since contestation in one area affects practices in another, like when public protest has ramifications in the private sphere or vice versa, fluctuations in attitudes and behavior are a frequent occurrence.

Another factor that undermines the development of stable and coherent collective civilian opposition to the military is the relative weakness of the superordinate identity category of “civilians”: People in the Kivus define themselves only occasionally as “civilians” with common interests vis-à-vis “the military.” When I asked the owner of a house how she felt about an officer renting a room there, she replied that she was bothered by it, since he was months behind on the rent. Yet, she did not engage in protest. According to a shopkeeper living in the same street, this woman refrained from action—despite the missed income—as this allowed her to harness the officer to intimidate her neighbor, with whom she had a long-standing conflict. For the same reason, she refused to participate in an initiative by the *chef de quartier* [low-level urban authority] to compile a list of all homeowners victim of arrears of rent and hand it over to the military authorities. In sum, especially when combined with high levels of conflict among civilians and weak collective civilian identification, a context of civilian-military intimacy undermines collective contentious action. Not only may it lead civilians, like the homeowner, to forego resistance altogether, it also induces a preference for informal, personalized forms of contention.

Using informal, personal channels of protest further compounds the collective action problems that civilians commonly face when trying to resist armed actors (cf. Arjona 2014). Informal channels have less of a signaling function, in that dissent remains hidden to a wider audience. This invisibility affects beliefs in the possibility of generalized opposition, which would render contestation both more efficacious and

less risky for individual actors. Moreover, informal forms of protest induce a particularistic orientation, as they increase the chance that people primarily try to further their and their faction's own interests rather than ensure collective benefits. This chance is already substantial given the utilitarian mindset fostered by volatility and acute economic, political and physical insecurity: Where events unfold in unpredictable manners and long-term collective benefits are far from guaranteed, it is tempting to ensure immediate personal gains. Utilitarian and patronage rationalities may also prompt civilians to primarily contest the temporary dominance of certain military factions or commanders, including by harnessing the latter's rivals in the military, instead of trying to structurally reduce the military's overall power. Collaborating with some military networks to contest others risks merely changing temporary power equilibriums within the armed forces, instead of permanently altering the balance of power between military and civilians.

It follows that to understand the effects of resistance on the social order we must examine two dimensions: first, how contentious action affects fluid and volatile dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection, and second, how such dynamics in turn impact durable social structures. To give an example, the rumors about the "Misisi massacre" fuelled antagonism towards Rwandophones, which in turn bolstered the local Mai-Mai group using this antagonism as a mobilizing narrative. Yet this group's increased prominence prompted an intensification of FARDC operations against them, which ultimately further entrenched the military's power in the area (Verweijen 2015a). Similarly, by creating fear for revenge from the military, *justice populaire* targeting soldiers may drive people to solicit protection from other parts of the military. In addition, it contributes to the normalization and "democratization" of violence in the long term (Verweijen 2015c). The result might be a larger role for the FARDC in either effectuating or stemming that violence, and will therefore likely reinforce its power position. In sum, civilian resistance often intensifies the very dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection that underpin the FARDC's position of dominance, thus contributing to entrenching, rather than undermining, the militarization of the Kivus.

Conclusion

Drawing on extensive ethnographic field research in the eastern Congo's Kivu provinces, this article has shown the twin relevance of social navigation and structuration for understanding the ways in which civilians resist the national armed forces, and the effects of this resistance in terms of challenging the military's dominance. While social navigation usefully draws attention to how social practice is influenced by ever-changing and precarious environments, it appears to overlook the imprint of past patterns thought and action. In fact, it may be precisely in situations of high flux and uncertainty that prior experiences and existing typifications—providing clear points of anchorage amidst rapid change, uncertainty and opacity—come to

inform not only current social practice, but also imaginations of the future. Additionally, despite its emphasis on radical interactivity, social navigation cannot fully account for the effects of social practices on social orders. Immediate effects on fluid social constellations might not always translate into permanent transformations of the social structures that shape these constellations. Hence, instead of conceptualizing the social environment in a monolithic manner, a distinction should be made between on the one hand, fluid dynamics, and on the other hand, durable social structures, which both shape and are shaped by these fluid dynamics.

Such a distinction can clearly be discerned within Kivutians' temporal orientations and their professed beliefs in their own agentic possibilities. In many of my interlocutors' discourses, perceptions of hyper-fluidity were palpable, and coincided with feelings of having a limited grip on the situation. These feelings were particularly strong in areas that frequently change hands between the government and different rebel forces, or those with rapid rotations of FARDC units, forcing civilians to negotiate and cope each time with different armed actors. A local authority in Fizi territory commented:

Military deployment is like a game of chance. If you have good luck, they send you intellectuals. If you have bad luck, they send you bandits, and you have perpetual confrontations. But each time they change, you have to start from zero.

Notwithstanding this experienced volatility, civilians in the Kivus also display an elevated awareness of the social order's fixity. They are particularly conscious of the military's stable position of dominance, which renders it difficult to discern the effects of individual efforts to challenge it. As one human rights defender in Lubero territory commented: "Today I can follow up on this case [of illegal detention by the military] and liberate him [the detainee]. But tomorrow they arrest someone else, and we have to start all over (...). This discourages us."

In sum, when conceptualizing resistance in volatile settings, we should take into account that "actors are always simultaneously located in a variety of temporal-relational contexts at once" (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, 1008), some of which are more and some of which are less fluid. But merely differentiating between these contexts does not suffice: How these divergent temporal-relational environments inter-relate, and are mutually implicated in shaping agency, should also be analyzed. Conducting such analysis is particularly important for understanding militarization as a process of structuration: It is only by recognizing how fluid dynamics of conflict, insecurity and protection imprint civilians' practices—including their repertoires of resistance against the military—that we can understand how such fluidity both contributes to and is a product of the (re)production of militarized social structures over the *longue durée*.

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