

The Geopolitical and Legal Issues of the Intervention of the Wazalendo in The East of the DRC Against the M23 Rebellion Supported By Rwanda

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Abstract

The resurgence of the rebellion of the March 23rd movement (The March 23 Movement is made up of former rebels of the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) integrated into the Congolese army following a peace agreement signed on March 23, 2009 between the CNDP and Kinshasa, who mutinied in April 2012, believing that the Congolese government was not respecting the terms of the agreement. On May 6, 2012, the rebellion adopted the name March 23 Movement, in reference to the peace agreement.). This movement receives support from the Rwanda's government, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) since 2022 has led to the emergence of the "Wazalendo" (Patriots) self-defense movement. This article analyzes the geopolitical and legal implications of their intervention. It examines the reasons for their involvement economic, strategic, and geopolitical and assesses their status under international law, debating whether their actions constitute a violation, a form of mandated self-defense, or an expression of security self-determination. The analysis explores the multifaceted impacts of the participation of the wazalendo: geopolitical, diplomatic, political, strategic, security, legal, economic, social and proxy wars. The article concludes that the Wazalendo currently operate as a de facto armed branch of the Congolese State in response to Rwandan aggression. Their existence highlights the challenge to the state's recognized monopoly on violence and poses significant challenges for post-conflict stability, which will require disarmament and social integration of the Wazalendo into civilian or military life.

INTRODUCTION

The past three decades have been marked by a succession of crises that have had serious repercussions on the security architecture of the DRC: internal wars, non-international armed conflicts, and aggressions solely aimed at destabilizing the DRC in its eastern part. This resurgence of conflicts results notably from security failures, the absence of political will, and the non-compliance with the various negotiated roadmaps for the Great Lakes sub-region in general and in the DRC in particular. The resurgence of armed activism by the M23, a non-state entity defeated in 2012, characterized since February 2022 by intensified attacks on Armed Forces of the DRC positions in various territories of North Kivu, had caused emotion among the Congolese population of Kivu already in mourning and strongly marked by the horrors of two Congo wars from October 1996 to February 2003.

Indeed, the events following this resurgence led the Congolese authorities to call on all the patriotic forces of the country to unite their forces alongside the FARDC in order to drive out of the national territory this umpteenth Rwandan intervention under the cover of the M23 rebellion, and which in light of the various reports of the United Nations experts and the conclusions of the Congolese government on this situation, constitutes a crime of aggression on the part of the Rwandan government. Thus, it is in the name of this call from the Congolese government that self-defense groups formerly considered as negative forces operating in the East of the DRC, were formed under the name "WAZALENDO" which means "PATRIOT" in Swahili, to lend a helping hand to the FARDC in this war. However, two years later, the direct intervention of the Wazalendo in 2023, and despite their active participation in hostilities, though commendable and beneficial. Although feigning a certain amount of patriotism, this did not go unnoticed and sparked as much controversy as criticism, which this article intends to present and analyze in the rest of its development.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT WAZALENDO

It is a motley group formed by several former rebel groups and young volunteers. It is commonly called so after the 2025 call of the Congolese head of state Felix TSHISEKEDI to the youth of Congo, in order to defend its territory and fight the terrorism that has settled in the East of the DRC.

Many young people from other provinces have enlisted in the regular army, but others, often from these war-torn corners, have turned to rebel and self-defense groups. Having responded favorably to the call of their government, militias and patriotic resistances converged, joined forces and in 2023 regrouped into a single self-defense group called "Wazalendo". Formerly enemies fighting the regular army and terrorists at the same time, and sometimes making incursions into the population, leaving behind numerous exactions and roundups; tears and ruins, have finally allied themselves with government forces to form a common front against the M23 rebellion. However, this active participation in hostilities has given rise to controversy following the numerous exactions attributed to members of this self-defense group.

To this day, the Wazalendo constitute a group of FARDC reservists, for some, while for others it is a militia or even an ally of circumstance.

2. THE REASONS FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE WAZALENDO IN THE CONFLICT IN THE EAST OF THE DRC

The reasons for seeing several forces involved in armed conflicts, both national and international, are as multiple as they are varied. However, we will focus on three important aspects while remaining concise and relevant.

2.1. Economic Reasons

Economic reasons are not lesser in their impact on the fighting taking place in the East of the DRC. Hence this quotation that says “Poverty is the breeding ground for the violence of terrorism, if we want to strengthen peace, strengthen the prospects for peace in the world, it is important to address this issue of poverty to lift these people out of their daily survival,” said Muhammad Yunus, former Prime Minister of Bangladesh (as cited in “Invention du microcrédit,” n.d.). The nerves of every war as an American admiral said when asked what reason can push to war: From antiquity to this day, in every war, there is an underlying economic reason, even when the latter is called a war of liberation. The United Nations International Commission promoting the principle of the responsibility to protect (the responsibility of each State to protect its populations “pillar I”; the responsibility of the international community to help States protect their population “pillar II”; and the responsibility of the international community to protect when, manifestly, a State is not ensuring the protection of its population “pillar III”), speaks of the fight against socio-economic inequalities, which can lead to wars.

The Wazalendo, young people whose ages vary between 20 and 35 for the most part, face poverty that affects more than 60% of young people in the DRC. The poverty and the exactions suffered by the populations of this area can, without wanting to justify it, lead the most moderate to take up arms or join a movement that they would normally denounce. The lack of severe sanctions against those of the former rebel movements and the luxury bordering on insolence that is exhibited by the warlords in the DRC, can unintentionally lead the most credulous to believe that the armed way is a way to change their economic situation. Geologically endowed with gold, important and strategic minerals, the East of the DRC is the object of covetousness of the Rwandans, sponsors of this M23 insurrection. And the Wazalendo, beyond patriotism, also see it as a way to exploit resources.

2.2. Strategic Reasons

On the one hand, the wait time for these young people to be enlisted by the State in the regular army was long and did not allow for its realization while the terrorist troops advanced. The Wazalendo whose enlistment and constitution are neither formalistic nor administratively heavy, were therefore formed and deployed more quickly on the ground of the clashes, and against all expectations were able to provide strategically and tactically prompt responses. But, this also caused the involvement of people in the field, who know the sector in order to resist terrorist attacks and those of other armed gangs.

On the other hand, the Congolese state has managed to turn yesterday’s enemies into allies against a common enemy: M23 and its sponsor Rwanda, which is strategically effective at the end of 2025, because it has also aroused a patriotic feeling coupled with a fed-up attitude towards the abuse suffered at the hands of the M23 and other armed groups.

2.3. Geopolitical Reasons

More generally, the intervention of young people or their mobilization without waiting for public authorities is a sign that these young people are becoming aware of their importance in resolving the problems they face spontaneously and extra- institutionally.

Knowing that the ambitions of the M23 forces supported by Rwanda are also an expansionist and replacement policy, aware of the geopolitical repercussions of this imposed war since 1996-97, the Wazalendo are fighting to keep the territory, but also the authority of the Congolese state over its territories. As Patrice Emery Lumumba First Prime Minister of independent Congo said: “The Congo will remain one and indivisible”, a true geopolitical credo of the government and the Wazalendo who are now involved in the war in the East.

3. ON THE INTERVENTIONISM OF THE WAZALENDO IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE DRC AND THE M23: VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, SELF-DETERMINATION OR LEGITIMATE DEFENSE

The interventionism of the Wazalendo in the conflict between the DRC and the rebel group, M23 under the protectorate of the Rwandan Armed Forces (RPF) has amplified the conflict, because the Wazalendo intervened following the call of the Congolese authorities, to defend themselves against an insurrection supported by a foreign state. But also due to the irresponsibility and the limitations, both material, tactical, and operational, of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC), to put an end to a conflict that, like so many others in the past, increases insecurity and causes millions of deaths. Leading to significant internal displacements in the eastern part of the DRC for more than three decades already.

Indeed, several academics, journalists, strategists and scientists in this field are asking themselves the following question: is this not a flagrant violation of international law, knowing that the Wazalendo are only a group of insurgents who would intervene in complete autonomy? Is this not a question of legitimate defense or self-determination of a people who do not know which way to turn in view of the limitations observed in the head of their protective State, the DRC? These are the questions we are answering on this point.

3.1. Is this a violation of international law?

In international law, we speak of a violation of international law when a state commits an unlawful act, that is, what is prohibited according to the principles and customs that regulate relations between states in the international system (Lumbika & Kuika Tsoni, 2024). This could be aggression, the use of the territory of another state by carrying out unlawful activities, etc. An illustration is given by the case of military and paramilitary activities in and against Nicaragua in which “the USA was obliged to recognize its damage committed on Nicaraguan territory according to the International Court of Justice (International Court of Justice, n.d.-a). The same is true in the case of armed activities DRC v. Uganda during which the International Court of Justice had to recognize the active involvement of Uganda in the commission of abuses and especially serious crimes against the civilian population in Kisangani.

Moreover, international law also recognizes the privilege of states to use armed force to defend themselves against aggressors, in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which deals with self-defense. That being said, each state sets up security measures to defend itself both inside and outside its national territory. This explains, until proven otherwise, the existence of armies within states as a social construct with an effective and independent government (sovereign, which excludes any external interference). Especially at the dawn of the renaissance of carnivorous states, this seems an inescapable necessity. After the Ukrainian aggression by Russia, it was noted in Europe a reorganization of armies following the example of Germany which set up a new program for its army (Blanchard & Rieger, 2024). Consequently, only the state can in the broad sense hold the monopoly of legitimate violence (have an army) according to international law, the opposite would be in our opinion armed groups that defend their identities, their ideas, their ideologies etc. these self-defense armed groups not having international recognition.

In addition to the above, it is difficult to assert at this level that the Wazalendo are violating international law with regard to their intervention to date because they are not behaving as a republican army of the Congolese State. But on the other hand, it is their existence and the actions that result from it that constitute a violation of international law before 2025, and if they commit acts that go in the direction of a violation of international humanitarian law during their operations. This would be qualified as rhetoric of existence and legitimate intervention or

illegitimate.

3.2. Is this legitimate defense?

In international law, this privilege is reserved for states. Self-defense is this belligerent procedure that international law recognizes for the state, the primary actor of international law, when it notes an aggression on its territory (Lumbika & Kuika Tsoni, 2024). It can be individual or collective. But on the other hand, it must be meticulously noted by the presence and the foreign camp on its territory. Powerful states often proceed to an anticipated legitimate defense to avoid being attacked, and to annihilate the adversary before it proceeds to an attack.

Indeed, as the Wazalendo are not a republican army and nor a state. We deduce a mandated legitimate defense, since they were called by the Congolese authorities to defend the homeland. That is to say, this legitimate defense is granted to them and mandated by the fact of their belonging to the Congolese State which, due to lack of political goodwill, struggles to maintain peace and security on its territory. Faced with its limits, the valiant people have the right to defend themselves. When the resistance was successful under the blessing of President Charles de Gaulle, while France was occupied in the 1940s, no one dared to speak of a certain bad defense procedure, but on the other hand, the resistance was a means of expression and defense of one's identity through one's State to which one belongs.

3.3. Is this self-determination?

In international law, self-determination of peoples is a principle enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and other international legal instruments, according to which every people has the right to determine its own government, independent of any foreign constraint. By extension, here, it also refers to the struggles and protest movements that have relied on this principle, particularly since the period of decolonization, after the Second World War (Le Monde diplomatique, n.d.).

Unfortunately, the above literature hardly determines whether peoples also have the right to also resort to the army to self-determine. However, the realities are different. According to the dynamism of the international system, it has been noted that most self-determination processes are those that end in armed struggles. Today, we no longer talk about the greater Sudan since 2011, because the right to self-determination had indirectly given the people the choice and the right to create two states through arms before the referendum in 2011 (Bustamante, 2021). Ethiopia and Eritrea are also examples.

This analysis leads us to say that the interventionism of the Wazalendo in this conflict is a security self-determination. That is to say, the people defend themselves through weapons to preserve their vital space in the light of the expansionist ideology of the Rwandan government which uses the M23 to materialize it always under the cover of discrimination or even an attempted genocide of which the Congolese populations of Rwandophone expression would be victims. Curiously, the legitimacy of the intervention of the Wazalendo seems to be acquired thanks to the legitimacy granted to them by the Congolese government and the Congolese population. It is therefore a real right to self-determination which is recognized in this process of emancipation of the Congolese population in defiance of foreign domination. The question is whether one day this will not lead to independence sentiments.

4. GEOPOLITICAL AND STRATEGIC IMPACTS OF THEIR INTERVENTION

4.1. Geopolitical impact

Nine years after its military defeat by the Congolese army and the forces of MONUSCO, the United Nations mission in Congo set up in 2009, the M23 is once again making headlines in the east of the country. By attacking the positions of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) in the towns of Chanzu and Runyonyi on the night of March 27 to 28, 2022 (official toll: 3 Congolese soldiers killed and 17 wounded), the rebel movement demonstrated the extent of its capacity to cause harm. Although defeated in November 2013 after eighteen months of conflict in North Kivu, the M23 is still considered one of the most structured rebellions to have raged in the east of the country since the end of the Second Congo War (“Congo-Kinshasa: Pourquoi le M23 renaît de ses cendres,” n.d.).

It is clear that the conflicts in the DRC and their consequences remain a source of major concern, as they constitute a multidimensional challenge to economic and human development in the country and the region. Faced with growing concern due in large part to decades of political and security crises, the Great Lakes region is helplessly witnessing a new wave of violence increasingly deadlier than the previous ones. A situation all the more worrying and to which the states of the region seem to pay no attention, which could ignite the entire region if a favorable and sustainable solution cannot be found. Promote the advent of peace and its consolidation in order to guarantee at least some harmony among the peoples of the region. The active participation of the Wazalendo self-defense group alongside the FARDC in an armed conflict opposing them to the M23 rebels raises some concern because it could carry within it the latent premises of a future political crisis. Something that would not be desirable but from past experience, pseudo-saving alliances that are made end in evil... We are witnessing a situation that resembles a proxy war: on the one hand, the DRC represented by its government holding bellicose speeches towards the Rwandan government, the two States avoiding direct confrontation on the ground, using non-State entities but which they always try to deny despite the conclusions of the reports of the United Nations experts on the issue of January 9, 2025; and on the other hand, a certain diplomatic hypocrisy is taking hold without much effort on the regional scene of the Great Lakes and even internationally in the face of the security crisis that the DRC is experiencing, the first victims of which are the civilian populations.

Although diplomatic initiatives aimed at finding a favourable solution to these crisis have been launched, hope for a favourable outcome is still struggling to hold to this day: Both processes (Luanda in Angola and Nairobi in Kenya) have regional and UN Security Council recognition as being of a politico-diplomatic and politico-military nature, respectively, and should be implemented in parallel in a regime of complementarity with the sole objective of resolving the common conflict between the DRC and Rwanda (Radio Okapi, 2022). It should be noted, however, that while the “Nairobi process” focuses on armed groups, the “Luanda process” addresses political relations between the DRC and Rwanda. It therefore functions as a reminder of the 2013 “Framework Agreement for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the DRC and the Region”, which has not been implemented (ISS Africa, n.d.). It is clear that since the resumption of hostilities by the M23 in March 2022 and the multiple efforts made both at the regional and international levels to achieve the return of peace to the East of the DRC, diplomatic relations between the DRC and Rwanda have continued to deteriorate overnight.

4.2. Strategic and political impact

From a strategic point of view, the active participation of the Wazalendo self- defense group in these hostilities constitutes a considerable obstacle to the resumption and harmonization of

diplomatic relations between the DRC and Rwanda, thus making unlikely any resumption of the cooperation long paralyzed by this Rwandan-Congolese crisis: as an association of several armed groups operating in the East for the past few decades. The Wazalendo are suspected by the Rwandan government of having in its ranks elements of the FDLR and its ex-Interahamwe, responsible for the Tutsi Genocide that the Rwandan Republic experienced in 1994. Hence since the and 2024, the foreign policy adopted by the Congolese government tends to obstruct any discriminatory discourse formulated by the Rwandan government after 1994 and aimed at victimizing the Congolese Tutsi in order to legitimize its expansionist policy in the East of the DRC.

While the wars that the DRC has experienced and is experiencing have exposed significant flaws in its security architecture, they have also illustrated the inefficiencies and lack of structure in the global response to conflict. These wars have resulted in the heaviest death toll in the history of contemporary warfare. Moreover, international intervention has not been proportionate to the scale of the death toll and human suffering. International intervention has been inadequate in terms of resources and has focused on humanitarian assistance. Insufficient attention has been paid to the complex nature of the root causes of conflict and the harm that wars inflict on individuals and communities.

It is established, in light of the performances on the battlefield, that the intervention of the Wazalendo is perceived as an opportunity to restore peace in the DRC. However, in the long term, this self-defense group would be a latent threat to the DRC in general, and its eastern part in particular, if the disarmament, demobilization, community recovery and stabilization program (PDDRC-S) is not rigorously developed upstream and applied downstream with the establishment of specific monitoring mechanisms in order to anticipate any risk of resumption of arms by ex-combatants.

Hence “(...) the determining impact of alliances of convenience in a context where borders are porous and where actors follow the logic of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. The disintegration of the state opens the door to very diverse, even contradictory, local and regional, public and private interests. Such a context favors the privatization of public violence and calls into question the territorial integrity of States” (Reyntjens, 2012). The government’s in former time’s ineffectiveness in formulating appropriate public policies to provide infrastructure and social services has weakened the legitimacy of central power in the eyes of the local population. And provided a basis for opposition movements fueled by feelings of alienation, particularly in provinces endowed with natural resources such as Katanga, North and South Kivu.

4.3. Legal impact

The security situation in eastern DRC is becoming increasingly worrying: far from being a simple armed group, the M23 is behaving more and more like a conventional army because it has increasingly sophisticated firepower and equipment since 2012, which is increasingly worrying humanitarian organizations operating in the region due to the multiple human rights violations in conflicts, facts that are attributable both to the M23 on the one hand, and to the Congolese government and the Wazalendo self-defense group. However, the most important question remains what are the legal issues of the active participation of the Wazalendo self-defense group in these offensives against the M23 rebellion in eastern DRC?

Through the intervention of the Wazalendo self-defense group, the DRC may see its responsibility engaged, in the sense that the draft articles on the responsibility of states for internationally wrongful acts provide in its articles 5 and 8: “The conduct of a person or entity which is not an organ of the State under article 4, but which is authorized by the law of that state to exercise prerogatives of public authority, insofar as, in the circumstances, this person

or entity acts in this capacity, is considered an act of the state according to international law” (International Law Commission, 2001, Art. 5); “The conduct of a person or group of persons is considered an act of the State according to international law if this person or group of persons, in adopting this conduct, is in fact acting on the instructions or directives or under the control of that State” (International Law Commission, 2001, Art. 8).

The intervention of the Wazalendo self-defense group seems to find its basis in article 63 of the Constitution which makes the defense of the country as well as its territorial integrity a right and a sacred duty for every Congolese citizen (Constitution of the DRC, 2006/2011, Art. 63). Questioned about this intervention, the Congolese government through its spokesperson had declared that “for the compatriots, an armed defense reserve has been set up, with a mechanism to supervise all these compatriots ready to defend the homeland” (Muamba, 2023). Because it is a right and a duty that is made to them to defend their country against external aggression. It is already very clear that states, such as the DRC, have the power to resort to self- defense in the event of external aggression. But, the question that remains to be asked is whether the Wazalendo self-defense group can also exercise it in order to defend the national territory of the country of which they are nationals against aggression from a state or a foreign armed group.

At this level, it should first be specified that the state acts through its organs that provide for its functioning. And each state freely determines its organs and powers according to the principle of sovereignty. However, already, by virtue of the latter, the Congolese constituent has recognized individuals’ power and duty to defend the integrity of the state when it is threatened, which is equivalent to endorsement by the state (Constitution of the DRC, 2006/2011, Art. 63). The constitution of a self-defense group, such as the Wazalendo, is part of this logic. But even more, in relation to this question and very clearly, Patrick Muyaya, Minister of Communication and Media and spokesperson for the Congolese government had reacted: “When compatriots defend the homeland, you cannot describe them as negative forces [...]” (as cited in Muamba, 2023).

It is at these two levels that we could situate the legitimacy of the intervention of the Wazalendo self-defense group, in terms of legitimate defense, to face the Rwandan aggression under the cover of the M23. However, the Wazalendo self- defense group intervenes as a de facto body whose behavior could be legitimized by the Congolese State due to the current context.

4.3. Economic impact on the population of the East

Whether it results from a physical constraint or a social imperative, the use of weapons in the East of the DRC is not conceived as a vocation or as an exceptional act. The result of contingencies, it responds to considerations that are part of the “short time marked by improvisation” (Mbembe, 2010, p. 194). And this in a context where “the distinction between the struggles for subsistence properly speaking and the struggles for survival pure and simple has blurred” and “where daily life is increasingly defined from the paradigm of threat, danger and uncertainty” (Mbembe, 2010, pp. 192-193).

In a context of endless crisis that has become the normal living environment of the population, the activities carried out within the armed group are not perceived as fundamentally distinct from those that could be carried out in the space of civilian life. To a certain extent, the surveillance of communication routes, the supply of food, the collection of taxes on goods have been amplified by the intervention of the Wazalendo self-defense group in the conflict zones since 2023; Some of their practices are therefore part of the local economic fabric, from which we are witnessing a vertiginous rise in the price of foodstuffs. As a consequence that the Congolese housewife’s basket is impoverished, health risks and food insecurity in the

outskirts of urban centers are becoming feared due to a massive influx of civilian populations from conflict zones. Cohabitation between members of the Wazalendo self-defense group and the civilian population raises a certain number of challenges, both economic and social.

5. FUTURE PROSPECTS AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Over the last three decades, it is clear that the Democratic Republic of Congo has tended to be eclipsed on the international scene, not only because of the porosity of its borders, but also because of a certain extraordinary proliferation of armed groups since its independence in 60's, but also following diplomatic hypocrisy in which various actors engage at the regional level.

It is quite normal to recall here that most of these armed groups operate in the eastern part of the DRC, rich in rare minerals, from which several states benefit. The conflict in which the Wazalendo intervene is no longer just a Non Internationalized Armed Conflict, but an internationalized Conflict, due to the involvement of the expeditionary troops of the Rwanda Defense Forces in the armed insurrection led by the M23. Which constitutes a proxy war, given the advantages that the M23 enjoy from the Rwandan government and certain complicit multinationals.

To this end, proxy warfare is increasingly becoming the means by which powerful states plunder the natural resources of the DRC. The fact that the Wazalendo defend their homeland is in no way an offense, but on the other hand, everyone knows that the history of armed groups in the East of the DRC remains interminable, and constitutes a real security risk for the Great Lakes region. The evil is the endangerment of the right to self-determination of the people. If today the Wazalendo defend the Congolese state, no one doubts that tomorrow, if the war ends, they can also constitute a permanent danger for the country like the Congolese Liberation Movement, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) with the objective of conquering power not by the ballot box but always by the expression of arms.

Unfortunately, there is a certain condescension that prevails over the idea of the Congolese, who think that the Wazalendo are there to help *ad vitam aeternam*, but their intervention limited in time. Let us recall that it is an armed group that, currently because of the danger that threatens the state, is resorting to state self-defense, but at what price?

To end this conflict, it is time for the Congolese authorities to pull themselves together and take the baton in hand to avoid any drift in the near future, because everything is temporary, no conflict is eternal. That being said, everything would go through the establishment of a strong army in the future, a seasoned elite and the advent of effective leadership. In addition, a strong Congolese elite must be based on ideals of national cohesion. This would allow the State to remain strong in all areas, through of course a proactive and reactive diplomacy based on concrete actions in the fight against subversive activities.

CONCLUSION

The issues being multiple and varied with regard to the intervention of the self- defense movement called Wazalendo, we limit ourselves to its geopolitical and legal aspects which have an impact on the course of the clashes and even after the war of aggression of Rwanda under cover of the March 23 movement (M23).

Geopolitics has revealed Rwanda's interest in this part of the country rich in subsoil and its unfulfilled and unacknowledged expansionist ambition. But also the unexpected effect of a patriotic surge among young Congolese from the very beginning of the conflict. This spontaneous movement has reconfigured the face of this war that has lasted for decades.

Legally non-existent, if not considered as contravening the laws of the country in the past, the Wazalendo have transformed with the development of the war into the armed wing of the Congolese state. And especially into a service supporting the war efforts and reservists of the national army of the DRC.

The erosion of state power in national and international armed conflicts at the international level leads to the rise of new actors and stakeholders who must be considered as a force in the presence and subject to the law of war or international humanitarian law. We are now observe new actors in armed conflicts, namely armed groups allied with the attacked state, which was not anticipated by the normative framework of international law. Because, truly, they can be the perpetrators of acts of bravery, but also the perpetrators of crimes under international law and therefore be liable to prosecution.

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Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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