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**Kivu,  
Bridge Between  
the Atlantic and Indian Oceans**

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**Cyril Musila**

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## Introduction

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The last three rebellions and wars that have erupted in Kivu (started in 1996 by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo [AFDL - l'Alliance des forces pour la libération du Congo], in 1998 by the Congolese Rally for Democracy [RCD - le Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie] and in 2007 by the National Congress for the Defence of the People [CNDP - le Congrès national pour la défense du peuple]) have shed light on the workings of this Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in particular its economic integration into East Africa and the world of the Indian Ocean. Taking advantage of the fact that the DRC's communication and transport systems do not work, and of the geographical proximity of East Africa, these conflicts have resulted in Kivu being more firmly rooted in East Africa's economic system.

The economic integration of Kivu into East Africa and Asia is nothing new, just like the integration of Katanga's economy into that of Southern Africa. In Kivu the modern integration follows ancient trading routes used by the Arab slave trade and Swahili ports on the Indian Ocean<sup>1</sup>. In theory, these links should allow the DRC to become an essential trading hub – a bridge – between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, making the country a crossroads between the Eastern and Western spheres of Central Africa. However, the crisis of the 1980s and the strife of the 1990s broke ties between Kivu's farms and the markets of Congo's main cities in the west of the country; this then caused the majority of Kinshasa's politico-commercial bourgeoisie to withdraw their interests in these farms. From that time on, Kivu has firmly oriented itself towards East African and Asian interests.

This note aims to analyze these new Eastern influences that appeared in the 1990s and the effects that they have had. It will look

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<sup>1</sup> I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire générale du Congo. De l'héritage ancien à la République Démocratique*, Paris/Bruxelles, Duculot, 1998.

at the region's geographic position, the socioeconomic processes at work, and the recent emergence of centers of activity – both the indicators and the results of recent changes. In the following text Kivu refers to “Greater Kivu”, which is made up of the three Congolese provinces of Maniema, Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu.

## Geographical context

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### ***Between the rivers***

Found at the crossroads of trade routes leading from the Indian Ocean to South Sudan, Kivu is part of the Great Lakes region. According to Roland Pourtier, this region is uniquely situated where francophone Central Africa meets East Africa, an Anglophone and Swahiliphone region looking out onto the Indian Ocean and the Arab world<sup>2</sup>.

Kivu divides the drainage basins of two great rivers – the Congo and the Nile – one oriented towards the Atlantic, the other towards the Indian Ocean; the meeting point being at Kisangani. Filling faults, the lakes Albert, Edward, Kivu and Tanganyika running from North to South serve as a natural border for the DRC with its eastern neighbors, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania – all members of the East African Community (EAC) along with Kenya.

### ***Attractive ecological conditions***

Kivu has big ecological advantages – its high lands have the benefits of both tropical mountains and low temperatures. Such characteristics make the environment healthier to live in than on the plains. As an added bonus, the absence of tuberculosis and trypanosomiasis<sup>3</sup> gives better conditions for raising cattle; other types of farming benefit from the fertile volcanic soil. Kivu's high lands are therefore coveted by both farmers and cattle herders and have given rise to areas of high demographic concentration, where the population density exceeds 330 inhabitants per square kilometer (hbts/km<sup>2</sup>) – like in Rwanda and Burundi – whereas the average population density for the rest of Central Africa is 10 hbts/km<sup>2</sup>.

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2 R. Pourtier, *L'Afrique centrale et les régions transfrontalières : perspectives de reconstruction et d'intégration*, Paris, OCDE, 2003, p. 14.

3 African trypanosomiasis, often called sleeping sickness, is a parasitical illness that affects men and animals transmitted by the bite of the Tsetse fly.

## Demographic factors

In fact it is worth centering the analysis of this region of the DRC on the links between it and the neighboring countries, in particular on demographic and migratory flows and on commercial exchanges. Its population is very heterogeneous due to internal migrations (the result of numerous armed conflicts since the 1990s), cyclical migration and also the ever-present underlying tensions between cattle herders and farmers.

Without going into the history of willing and unwilling migrations in Kivu, organized by the Belgian colonial administration from Rwanda, or provoked by regular famines and violence in the Great Lakes region, and without trying to use these migrations alone to explain Kivu's development, it should be noted that the whole region underwent massive demographic growth from the 1940s to the 1990s, especially in Masisi *territoire* in Nord-Kivu<sup>4</sup>.

The unique and transformative nature of the 1994 Rwandan genocide thoroughly upset Kivu's demographics and transformed diplomatic relations between Rwanda and its neighboring states, including the DRC. The region played host to more than a million Rwandan refugees and fugitives in the zones along the border, whose presence exacerbated Kivu's existing ethnic and land tensions. These tensions were already strong in the *territoires* of Masisi, Walikale and Rutshuru at the beginning of the 1990s: the convergence of pastures, arable land and a high population in a restricted space creates strong tensions linked to land ownership, which lies at the heart of intercommunity, and even interstate, conflicts. The "natural resources" (wood and minerals) question and its links to the international market since the end of the 1990s have added an additional layer of complexity to these tensions. However they are presented, questions of land access or redistribution are one of the key factors in Kivu's recurring troubles. Conflicts arise over the control of coveted lands among a diverse population that has been unbalanced by massive migratory movements.

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4 The population of Masisi, and Nord-Kivu in general, grew from 12 hbts/km<sup>2</sup> at the beginning of the 1940s, reaching 62 hbts/km<sup>2</sup> in 1970 and 111 hbts/km<sup>2</sup> in 1990. For the data and details of the demographic effects of migration linked to the Belgian colonial administration's resettlement program for Rwandan Hutu peasants or as a result of the massacres of Rwandan Tutsis from 1959 onwards, see P. Mathieu and A. Mafikiri Tsongo, « Guerres paysannes au Nord-Kivu (RDC), 1937-1994 », Cahiers d'études africaines, vol. 38 (2-4), n° 150-152, 1998, p. 385-416. See also M.-F. Cros and F. Misser, Géopolitique du Congo (RDC), Bruxelles, Ed. Complexe, 2006; I. Ndaywel è Nziem, op. cit. [1], 1998, p. 211-226; J.-Cl. Willame, Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge. Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identitaire au Kivu, Institut Africain-CEDAF, n° 25, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1997.

## Kivu: Land of Rivalries

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### ***Rivalries over land***

While violence, and its persistent nature in Kivu, is fuelled by questions of land ownership, rivalries over land are maintained by the confusion caused by the coexistence of two methods of land management. According to national law, the land belongs to the state, which grants exploitation licenses; but, under traditional customs, the land is protected by traditional chiefs and belongs to the community or clan that cultivates them. However, the state, with its administrative and repressive arsenal at its disposal, always wins any disputes. Rich individuals can lease and purchase land, often bribing the administration or tribal chiefs. This puts peasants in an even more difficult situation: they themselves are unable to buy due to the high cost and complexity of the process. Having no defense against the administration and financially wealthy buyers, such expropriation increases the uncertainty and instability of peasants' land rights.

Added to these two methods are two cultural conceptions of land that are divergent, if not totally incompatible<sup>5</sup>. Effectively, some groups define territory as a link between an ethnic group, a *Mwami* (the traditional authority) and a given area. Access to land is therefore inseparable from membership of a network of social relations that imply a duty of loyalty (tributes and tithes) and the provision of services. For other groups, land has a value and can belong to individuals, free of personal ties or obligations. The latter conception makes land (and the farming and cattle herding rights which come with it) the object of personal desire. Conflicts over land ownership and the extension of territory have become essential components guaranteeing political and social emancipation.

### ***Rivalries of identity***

The 1970s and 1980s were marked by the manipulation of the law defining Congolese (Zairian) nationality, the basic condition for land

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5 P. Mathieu and A.Mafikiri Tsongo, op. cit. [4], 1998, p. 385

access. As a result, land disputes became incorporated into people's identities, and became the subject of important intercommunity arguments. Two contradictory laws designed to distinguish nationals from foreigners were issued with Kivu in mind. In 1972, Zairian nationality was automatically given to all populations with links to Rwanda that had been established in Kivu before independence in 1960. This law covered the historical peoples living on the land before borders were drawn in the 1910s, the populations of workers transferred by the Belgian colonial administration in the 1930s and 1940s and the illegal immigrants and refugees who had fled the massacres of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1959. The law, promoted by Barthélémy Bisengimana, a high-ranking Tutsi official who had arrived in 1959 and was the director of President Mobutu's cabinet from 1969 to 1977, opened up the advantages of land legislation to the new Zairians. It secured their land holdings by giving them political rights (the right to vote in elections), gave them access to modern administrative procedures (cadastre, concessions, etc.) to guarantee their land rights and emancipated them from the customs of traditional chiefs, giving them more independence<sup>6</sup>.

The law stirred up indignation among other ethnic groups, who saw it as unjust. For this reason, the National Assembly decided in 1982 that Zairian nationality would in the future only be accorded after individuals completed a process of naturalization, and annulled the old law. The new law did not distinguish between different ethnic groups and provoked more discontent: the populations affected attacked traditional chiefs and offices of vital statistics (where Zairian nationality was awarded). The destruction and arson of offices of vital statistics aimed to destroy all vital records – without archives or proof the law would be inapplicable!

From this point on, the disagreement between the two groups centered on two topics: the rights of populations culturally close to Rwanda to have Congolese (Zairian) nationality, and to own or inhabit land. Zairian lawmaking has had disastrous social side effects. It stirred up feelings and anxiety in the affected populations, creating deep uncertainty around individuals' identities. Expressions such as "Zairian of uncertain nationality" were coined, particularly in the run up to elections.

### ***Administrative redistribution: the concretization of politico-economic rivalries***

Kivu was one single province until 1986. It was then divided into three new administrative regions – Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu, and Maniema – ostensibly as a first step towards increasing political decentralization

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6 P. Mathieu and A. Mafikiri Tsongo, op. cit. [4], 1998, p. 385-416.

in Zaire; Kivu was supposed to be a trial region. However, in reality, the aim was to contain political tensions between the leaders of different ethnic groups. Despite its subdivision, Kivu has remained a land of rivalries: one exists between Nord-Kivu (Goma) and Sud-Kivu (Bukavu); Nord-Kivu is also riven by internal tensions. If we take a shortcut and analyze the recent declarations made at the Goma conference in January 2008<sup>7</sup>, we can see that the state of affairs in Nord-Kivu is dominated by politico-economic tensions between the Nande and Banyarwanda ethnic groups, and in Sud-Kivu, between the Bashi and the Barega.

This competitive atmosphere is driving big Nande traders to develop the cities of Butembo and Beni to give them a degree of “autonomy” with respect to Goma. Nande businessmen independently financed the construction of a hydroelectric plant in Butembo; the Catholic diocese founded a university. More plans are afoot to build a bigger hydroelectric plant on the river Semliki. On the other hand, the provincial capital Goma in Banyarwanda territory is the stronghold of Banyarwanda “barons”<sup>8</sup> who sell produce from their farms in Masisi and Rutshuru. This ethnic “domination” does not exclude businessmen from other ethnic groups however.

In Sud-Kivu, ethnic competition has given rise to a “political equilibrium” – when the province’s elected governor comes from the Bashi, his deputy is elected from among the Barega and vice versa. The economic anthropology of Kivu revolves around these four main ethnic groups and their support networks, to which should be added an Indo-Pakistani element. They are at the summit of the region’s pyramid of actors and decision-makers: the leaders of Kivu’s political and socioeconomic organizations are chosen from their ranks.

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<sup>7</sup> See the website created by the Amani Program: [www.amanileo.org](http://www.amanileo.org)

<sup>8</sup> Most of these high-level Banyarwanda actors, or “barons”, are traders, entrepreneurs and political actors at the same time, even if their political involvement often remains minor and focused on their own interests.

# The Structure of the Region's Economy

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## *Kivu's links to the national economy*

The underlying problem of Kivu's economy is related to how the market is structured<sup>9</sup> and depends on the communication networks between producers and consumers – between the countryside and the country's cities. It seems today that, in addition to the complications posed by failed infrastructure and enormous security challenges, these lines of communication have completely broken down, or work poorly or infrequently. Kivu's string of cities – situated along the frontier – “look to the outside, that is to say, to the different neighboring countries<sup>10</sup>”. In 2004, the DRC's Research Department for Planning and Urbanism (*le Bureau d'études d'aménagement et d'urbanisme*) described the DRC as being “torn” into three main “socio-economic and cultural zones<sup>11</sup>”:

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9 Information on the structure of Kivu's economy is taken from an investigation into the development of value chains in Kivu, carried out as part of a team for the Netherlands Development Organization SNV in Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu from May to July 2006; C. Musila, *Développement de filières porteuses dans le Kivu*. SNV mission report Goma, Kivu, July 2006, unpublished.

10 R. Pourtier, « Reconstruire le territoire pour reconstruire l'Etat : la RDC à la croisée des chemins », *Afrique Contemporaine*, n° 227, 2008, p. 26.

11 The DRC's Ministry of Public Works and Infrastructure & Research Department for Planning and Urbanism (*le Bureau d'études d'aménagement et d'urbanisme – BEAU*), *Schéma national d'aménagement du territoire. Villes et infrastructures*, Kinshasa, 2004, p. 5. The proposed national master plan for territorial planning was based on the connection between cities and the construction of transport links (road, rail and river). The priority road link for Kivu and the Eastern DRC would link the cities of Nord-Kivu (Beni, Butembo, Goma) and Sud-Kivu (Bukavu, but not Uvira) together and then attach them to Mbuji-Mayi and from there to Lumumbashi and Kinshasa. A network of secondary roads would complete this communication axis to ensure the territory's integration to the rest of the country (see the map on p. 8-9 in the same report). After having been reworked by the Roads Office (*l'Office des routes*) – the public company responsible for the DRC's road infrastructure – the master plan retained the idea of connection between cities and the two road networks. The first, or principal, network would link the capitals of all the provinces; the second, or integration, network connects up the rest of the cities with secondary roads. According to the master plan, all the cities of Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu would be linked by one primary road running along the eastern frontier from the far north

-a Western zone facing towards the Atlantic whose transport networks converge on Kinshasa and the port of Matadi;

-an Eastern zone with no dominant city, but centered on the highlands, having almost no links to the capital Kinshasa and oriented towards the Indian Ocean;

-a Southern zone focused on the DRC's copper basin and its hinterland, oriented towards Southern Africa.

Kivu's cities, and by extension its whole economy, are badly connected to each other – several parts of Kivu function as independent, inaccessible islands – and to the rest of the DRC's economy. As a result of the lack of secure drivable roads, light aircraft and big cargo planes are heavily relied on for transport, as well as the lakes (Lakes Edward, Kivu and Tanganyika). Kivu's links to the national economy, in terms of goods imported and exported to and from the region, fall into four geographical categories, or axes.

### ***Southwest to North Axis: Kindu (Maniema) – Goma (Nord-Kivu) – Kisangani (Province orientale) – Bunia (in Ituri in Province orientale) via Butembo and Beni***

This busy axis is dominated by heavy air traffic: light aircraft and massive Antonovs carry minerals or palm oil between the main cities of the three provinces. This main axis shows the real face of Kivu's economy, centered around Goma's international airport, which is increasingly connected to Province orientale – the cities of Butembo and Beni depend on these links. Roads leading to Rwanda, Uganda and Southern Sudan extend this already long axis. The Congolese national rail company (*la Société nationale des chemins de fer du Congo* – SNCC) recently rehabilitated the line from Kindu (the capital of Maniema) and Lubumbashi. Since 2006, it has assured a monthly freight train linking the cities – the decrepit “Kalembelembe” creaks along the rusting rails.

### ***Nord-Kivu – Sud-Kivu – Province orientale – Kinshasa: the opening to the West***

This exclusively air-based axis between Kivu and Kinshasa – over 2000km long as the crow flies – was once a busy lifeline supplying

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down to Lumumbashi. Two other primary roads would link Bukavu to Mbuji-Mayi and Kisangani. Numerous branches would join other cities like Kindu to the network (see R. Pourtier, op. cit. [2], 2008, p. 46-47 and the map on p. 26).

the capital with vegetables and meat from the large farms owned by airline companies. The collapse of these companies and farms, as well as the years of war in the 1990s, reduced the flow of goods. Since the official end of the war in 2003, around a dozen airlines, such as Hewa Bora, Wimbi Dira, CAA, Air Service, Malu Express or Bravo Air Congo, use this route to transport people as well as goods; levels of activity are nonetheless nowhere near those of the pre-war years.

### ***The Nord-Kivu – Sud-Kivu Axis***

Water-based traffic using Lake Kivu dominates the transport of goods linking the 120 km between Goma and Bukavu, the capitals of Nord-Kivu and Sud-Kivu respectively. The goods transported by a dozen boats and a multitude of motorized canoes range from agricultural produce (beans from Rutshuru and Masisi) to imported manufactured goods, foods, pharmaceuticals and electronics. The road between the two cities, on the other hand, is not only in very poor condition (the journey takes 8 hours), but armed groups control different segments of it.

### ***Sud-Kivu – Maniema Ties***

This is the most “handicapped” of Kivu’s economic axes in terms of connections and trade. Broken up into numerous segments, only half of the road from Bukavu to Kindu, currently being renovated by the Chinese, is usable. The air traffic supposed to supplement it is insignificant, being run by two small “agencies”. They are in fact associations of Bukavu-based traders who rent small planes from time to time to transport their goods or minerals collected by small-scale mining cooperatives. All other trade is carried on people’s – especially women’s – backs, a fact which underlines the low volume of trade.

### ***Enclaved and insecure: a double challenge***

While Kivu’s theoretical role as a central hub is indisputable, it suffers however from two major handicaps that the local administration struggles to overcome: being enclaved, or isolated, geographically due to unforgiving terrain not conducive to communication, and the insecurity of political instabilities and conflict.

The want of transport and communication infrastructure worthy of the name means that first of all, Kivu is badly linked to and

integrated with the DRC's other provinces. The lack of roads means that traffic between the DRC's Eastern cities – all dotted along the frontier – and their hinterlands is negligible. To reach Bukavu from Uvira (in Sud-Kivu), transporters prefer to cross the Congo-Rwanda border twice, as the roads are of a better quality. As for the exportation of agricultural produce, it is not guaranteed in such conditions; sometimes it even becomes impossible when security conditions worsen. Such difficulties do not concern mined minerals, which are transported by light aircraft. The fact that there is very little internal trade and communication in Kivu also has political consequences: outlying regions that do not have economic ties with Bukavu or Goma see their future elsewhere... Would a policy favoring decentralization coupled with the renovation of the road network be able to reduce or eliminate such problems?

Insecurity and violent armed groups, that have driven peasants from the countryside, have spread to the roads and to zones exploited for agriculture and mining. This has had three important effects: firstly, an increase in demographic pressure on urban centers where thousands of peasants seeking safety assemble in camps of “internally displaced persons”; secondly, a reduction in agricultural production has increased the region's dependence on imports; and, finally, some parts of Kivu have become “super-isolated” lawless regions reached with difficulty by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) trying to supply basic services (health, education, etc.). Pockets of insecurity exist in the *territoires* of Masisi, Rutshuru, Walikale in Nord-Kivu and around Fizi, Baraka and the mining zones of Shabunda in Sud-Kivu. The administrative apparatus has “failed” in these zones and is only visible via its often illegal repressive or tax-collecting services. Opening up Kivu would allow it to sell its produce to consumers in the DRC's big cities, and obtain manufactured and other goods that are not produced in Kivu. It would also reduce isolation and therefore insecurity.

However, insecurity – the analysis of which is not the aim of this note – is too complicated an issue to be covered in just a few lines. If we admit that the key factor of insecurity is the presence of armed groups that kill, pillage, rape and ransom the local population, it is clear that Rwandan Hutu rebels accused of participation in the 1994 genocide now living in Kivu are the main driving force behind the region's insecurity. Former Members of the old Rwandan army and the Interahamwe militias that supported them are now grouped together in the politico-military movement the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (*les Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* – FDLR). Accused of numerous atrocities in Kivu's countryside villages, they are involved in the exploitation of its mines and agricultural produce.

All the same, the participation of other actors having varied and different agendas and demands, is not at all negligible<sup>12</sup>. A notable example is the National Congress for the Defence of the People (*le Congrès national pour la défense du Peuple – CNDP*), lead by the Tutsi rebel leader, and former DRC army general, Laurent Nkundabatware Mihigo<sup>13</sup>. General Nkunda claims to be in rebellion against the government to protect Congolese Tutsi populations against the FDLR and the DRC army. According to Nkunda, the DRC army is in allegiance with the FDLR and various Mai-Mai self-defense militias, and is therefore incapable of defending Tutsis. Although the Mai-Mai oppose both the CNDP and the FDLR in theory, they often work with the latter against the CNDP. In some areas, the DRC army (*les Forces armées de la RDC – FARDC*) joins forces with the FDLR and the Mai-Mai against the CNDP, supposedly the recipient of support from the Rwandan army. Further north, in Ituri (which is not part of Kivu), Ugandan rebel groups from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) complicate the mix further and add to the country's insecurity. The universal victims of all these groups, and their changing alliances, are Kivu's population and its socio-economic structure.

Abandoned by civilians, some mining and agricultural zones are currently being exploited by armed groups or by the FADRC<sup>14</sup>; other mines are controlled by the FADRC whose use civilian populations to operate them and make money to fund their war. What's more, eyewitnesses have confirmed the existence of many sites that are the object of business partnerships and deals between enemy armed groups despite their supposed opposition.

The prevalence of armed groups in Kivu causes peasants to flee the countryside and the zones of production, reducing agricultural production, and encouraging illegal trafficking of natural resources (minerals, wood, etc.); this all leads to a drop in tax receipts for the government. In spite of the insecurity and the emptying of rural areas, Kivu's conflict-stricken economy remains strongly based on mining, although property booms in Bukavu, Goma and Butembo have also played their part. The main victim of the ongoing violence and conflicts however is Kivu itself.

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<sup>12</sup> For example, the AFDL set up a rebel government between October 1996 and May 1997; between August 1998 and 2002, it was the RCD's turn along with other groups. While making claims on the DRC only, these rebellions put in place tax and customs systems and even independent telecommunications networks in Kivu with the full complicity of neighboring states.

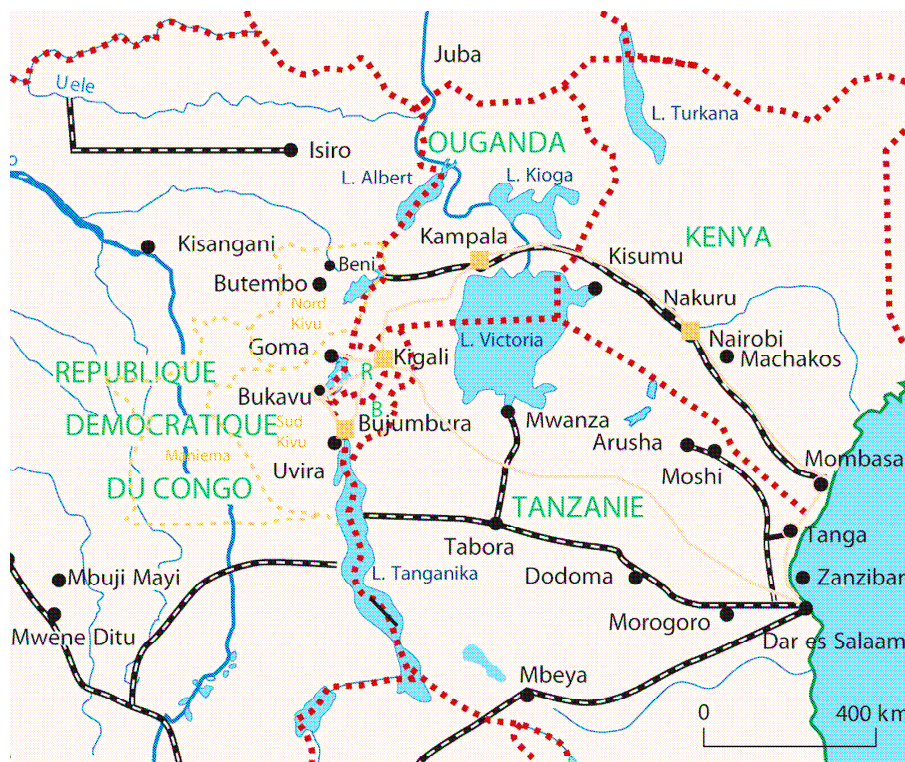
<sup>13</sup> Usually referred to as Laurent Nkunda, at the time of writing he was under arrest in Rwanda.

<sup>14</sup> See the Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations S/2008/773, 10 December 2008. The CNDP, the Mai-Mai and the FDLR, as well as the FARDC, control mines or trade routes that they can raise taxes from. In 2007, it was confirmed to me by two different sources (MONUC and FARDC) that the FARDC occupied a mining site in Walikale territoire that brought a million dollars a month to the senior officers controlling it.

## A cross-border economy

In a key central position, in the heart of the Great Lakes region, and well integrated into the East African economy and Swahili cultural zone, Kivu is clearly in a cross-border geopolitical situation. Connected to the West by air only, to the East, Kivu has numerous possible connections at its disposal: air, water-based routes across the lakes, roads, and rail. Two railway lines – the “Northern corridor” via Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya, and the “Central corridor” via Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania – link Kivu to the ports of Mombasa in Kenya and Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

**Map 1. Commercial routes between Kivu, the Great Lakes region and Indian Ocean ports**



If Kivu's orientation towards East Africa is obvious, the different cross-border exchanges conducted by ordinary people are the evidence of close integration. The daily traffic at border crossings enables trade density to be measured. Such crossings have been simplified by a series of trade accords signed by Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda within the framework of the Great Lakes economic community (*la Communauté économique des pays des Grands Lacs* – CEPGL)<sup>15</sup> designed to facilitate the circulation of people and goods

<sup>15</sup> The CEPGL was recently “reawakened” in 2007. It was originally created in 1973 by Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda, but fell into disuse after the wars in these

in the countries' frontier zones. Still in vigor, agreements signed in the 1970s allow the quasi-free circulation of people living in frontier towns, do not tax local produce at the frontier, and so on.

Uvira, Beni, Bukavu and Goma are “twinned” with Burundian, Ugandan and Rwandan towns on the other side of the frontier – they are at one end of mini cross-border corridors, and are fully integrated with the infrastructure of the three countries. Daily exchanges animate relations between inhabitants on both sides of the border; the “agents” of these exchanges range from women traders, physically handicapped people in tricycles, or people using simple wooden scooters, to collectively-owned mini-buses. Apart from official border posts, hundreds of unofficial, informal or hidden crossing points are used along the length of the border, in forests, national parks or on the Ruzizi plain between Sud-Kivu, Rwanda and Burundi, and particularly along the lakes (Edward, Kivu and Tanganyika) where fishermen in dug-out canoes shuttle back and forth from Kivu to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania.

The cross-border corridors described below shape the nature of the trade and exchanges between Kivu and its neighbors<sup>16</sup>:

**Uvira/Bujumbura** (Sud-Kivu and Burundi): Daily traffic of 6 000 to 10 000 people – traders, pupils and teachers. To this traffic should be added the unknown, uncontrolled number of people who cross Lake Tanganyika every day;

**Goma/Gisenyi** (Nord-Kivu and Rwanda): Daily traffic of 15 000 to 20 000. Three official crossing points and numerous paths cross the unmarked Rwanda-DRC border. Again, traffic on Lake Kivu is difficult to measure<sup>17</sup>;

**Bukavu/Cyangugu** (Sud-Kivu and Rwanda): Between 3 000 and 5 000 people, on scooters, by foot, in minibuses or pushing handcarts, cross the river Ruzizi marking the DRC-Rwanda border daily. Although Bukavu (population: 228 000) dominates Cyangugu (population: 8 500) size-wise, each town plays an equal role in the partnership – Cyangugu is a strategic warehouse-town with an

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countries in the 1990s. The CEPGL was a key factor in the integration of Kivu's economy with those of Rwanda and Burundi; it put in place important regional infrastructure in the energy and agronomy domains. The CEPGL saw the states' economic integration as being “under Atlantic influence”, as the three countries were also members of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which brings together the members of the CEPGL, the CEMAC and Angola. Before 2005, none of the three states were members of East African regional organizations.

<sup>16</sup> The data on cross-border corridors comes from a study carried out by the OECD's INICA program. See INICA and LARES, *Dynamiques transfrontalières dans la région des Grands Lacs: Burundi, RDC, Ouganda et Rwanda*, Paris, OCDE, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> The high level of ties between the two towns is strongly influenced by the basic anthropological fact that they share the Banyarwanda language and culture. Apart from that, Goma has an international airport (albeit damaged by the volcano eruption in 2002) that is well connected to Entebbe's and Nairobi's airports. Thanks to daily and weekly cargo and passenger flights, Kivu's economy is becoming irreversibly integrated into East Africa's long-distance network.

impressive network of financial services and an airport used by Bukavu's businessmen; Bukavu is a centre of consumption. In addition to the official traffic, numerous dug-out canoes convey goods to improvised unofficial landing stations along the shore, just like between Goma and Gisenyi – they constitute the transport system for the unofficial trade in minerals.

**Beni/Kasese** (Nord-Kivu and Uganda): This cross-border corridor, controlled by big Nande traders, is dominated by long-distance trading; trucks loaded with minerals or wood destined for export cross containers full of Asian manufactured wares or tank trucks of petrol. The Ugandan mining town of Kasese has a large neighborhood of run-down industrial units; on the other hand, at the end of the railroad from Mombasa, Beni and Butembo have become a single regional trading hub.

Presenting these cross-border corridors shows how the space is not only shaped around urban centers – often contiguous on both sides of the frontier – but also on these crossing points for both people and goods. Nevertheless, the areas in question have very mixed population patterns. On the Rwandan and Burundian sides of the border, the socio-cultural groups are very homogenous; while the Ugandan and Congolese populations are very heterogeneous. This variation has an effect on the nature of cross-border relations: it is conducive to smuggling, something already favored by the area's geography. While crossing the frontier is easy for local residents with a visa (which can be obtained from the local authorities in Burundi, the DRC and in Uganda), in practice, free passage at the border depends on the whims of the guards, especially if the person crossing is carrying a lot of goods. This is another factor that drives smuggling, along with cross-border price differences – a factor in petrol smuggling for example.

## Opening up Kivu to Asian Markets

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### ***Changing trade routes: a return to ancient times?***

Since ancient times, the Indian Ocean has been a zone of privileged maritime contacts between Sub-Saharan (Black) Africa and the Asian world. East Africa was connected to the Middle East by the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and to the Indian sub-continent and the Far East by following the winds of the monsoon. Until the arrival of the Portuguese explorer Vasco Da Gama in 1498, the African shores of the Indian Ocean thrived on trade, which caused the formation of great cities. Among some of the exported goods were: myrrh and other aromatic dried saps; spices such as cloves; ivory, rhinoceros horn and tortoiseshell. Later the produce of Southern Africa would join these goods: ebony, iron, copper, gold and slaves. For centuries, the control of the coast was the object of fierce fighting between Portuguese and Arabs, fighting which was to contribute to the decline of coastal trade and the Swahili culture. This culture was a hybrid civilization half way between the Arab and African worlds: a mixture of Bantu, Arab, Persian and Indian cultural influences.

However, other economic reasons are also to take into account for the decline of the Swahili cities:

- the fall of Baghdad, a key destination for slaves, reduced the demand for slaves;
- in gold-producing regions, the mineral began to be extracted under more difficult conditions and in reduced quantities;
- ivory became less desired – as a result the demand for it shrank.

From Mombasa, an ancient road cut through the mountains via Taveta and Ngong (near modern-day Nairobi), linking the coast to the inland regions. This road allowed the lakeside kingdoms to supply

ivory, ebony and other precious merchandise to the coastal traders<sup>18</sup>; it was the first road to reach modern-day Kivu.

While the fortress built by the Portuguese to protect themselves from the Dutch and the Ottomans in Mombasa, Fort Jesus, was taken by the Sultan of Oman's troops in 1660, they took longer to definitively oust the Portuguese. From 1730, East African trade was dominated by the Sultan of Oman. Under his guidance, the Isle of Zanzibar took over Mombasa's and Kilwa's (on the coast of Mozambique) trade routes, and became rich on the trade of slaves to India, Persia and Arabia. During the 19th century, Zanzibar was even made the capital of the Sultanate; Said Ibn Sultan moved the capital from Muscat in 1840. He developed massive clove plantations that demanded more laborers, and was a motivation for further expansion of the slave trade. Zanzibar dominated the entire coastal economy and became the biggest slave market in Africa<sup>19</sup>.

To feed Zanzibar's slave market, two more trade routes were forged into the East Africa inland. The first went from Dar es Salaam towards Lakes Tanganyika and Victoria and the Ugandan and Angolan kingdoms; further to the south, the second went from Kilwa towards Lake Malawi (also known as Lake Nyasa), the countries of the Zambezi river and the copper-rich region of Katanga<sup>20</sup>. Many segments of the modern central and southern corridors lie directly over what remains of these historic routes.

Arab slave-capturing expeditions benefited from a large number of firearms. Slave traders, like Tippo Tipp, organized missions deep into the continent. In 1867, in search of ivory, this mixed race Arab African from Zanzibar reached northern Congo (former Province orientale). He established bases in Ujiji (Tanzania), Kasongo, Kibouge and finally Riba Riba (today known as Lokandu, in Maniema province). Tippo Tipp dominated the Congo forest basin, ruled over populations from modern day Zambia to the north of Burundi; his empire stretched from Lake Tanganyika to the forest of Ituri and as far as Kisangani. He met and helped famous explorers such as Livingstone and Stanley<sup>21</sup>. The Belgian authorities named him governor of one of the regions of Congo. Tippo Tip contributed to the delimitation of trade routes linking Kivu, Maniema, Ituri and the coast of the Indian Ocean at the end of the 19th century; at one point all these trade routes were under his control, linking the heart of Kivu to the Arabo-Asian market for slaves and ivory. Thanks to the

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<sup>18</sup> I. Baba Kaké and E. M'bokolo, *Histoire générale de l'Afrique. Tome 4. L'Afrique moderne : l'Afrique centrale et orientale du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, ABC, 1977, p. 85-89.

<sup>19</sup> I. Baba Kaké and Elikia M'bokolo, *Histoire générale de l'Afrique. Tome 6. La traite négrière*, Paris, ABC, 1977, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> I. Baba Kaké and E. M'bokolo, *Histoire générale de l'Afrique. Tome 8. L'Afrique moderne : l'Afrique coloniale de la conférence de Berlin (1885) aux indépendances*, Paris, ABC, 1977, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> I. Baba Kaké and E. M'bokolo, *op. cit.* [19], p. 32.

opening up of Northern Congo as an important region for trade, the Zanzibar-Tanganyika axis (central corridor) took on increasing importance, becoming the backbone of a many-branched trade network<sup>22</sup>.

The railroads built under British colonization in 1903 and 1905 joined the port of Mombasa to Kasese in Uganda and the port of Dar es Salaam to Kigoma on the shore of Lake Tanganyika – they stop at the border of Kivu<sup>23</sup>. Inside Congo, a railroad linked the mining towns of Katanga to Maniema's, to Kisangani and to the central provinces. From there, the river Congo and its tributaries lead to the capital, Kinshasa, and the ocean port of Matadi on the Atlantic. Another railroad attached Katanga to the Atlantic via Angola's rail network. This organization was designed to fulfill the colonial vision of an integrated national territory organized around its capital, Kinshasa, and directed towards the Atlantic – the point of access to the rest of the world. Kivu was therefore incorporated into this paradigm.

However, war in Angola in 1975, after independence, cut off this southern railroad and led to a reorganization of distribution routes for the minerals mined in Katanga: they were transferred south through Zambia to Maputo and Durban<sup>24</sup>. As for Kivu, the segment of railroad linking Maniema to Katanga and the central provinces allowed internal trade to continue, but, following the destruction of the Angolan part of the rail network, the Indian Ocean ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salaam provided a natural export solution. However, a lack of maintenance of Congolese road and rail networks allied to the collapse of Maniema's and Sud-Kivu's mining industries in the 1980s started to cause a large imbalance in the destination of Kivu's trade.

From this time, Kivu has been dependent on the Indian Ocean ports, just like at the time of Tippu Tipp at the end of the 19th century. The difference at the end of the 20th and start of the 21st centuries being the new geopolitical context shaped by a long crisis, numerous armed conflicts, and the presence of new actors.

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<sup>22</sup> François Renault, *Tippo Tip, un potentat arabe en Afrique centrale au XIXe siècle*, Paris, Société française d'histoire d'outre mer, 1987, p. 103.

<sup>23</sup> A riverboat connection joined the two towns on the shores of Lake Tanganyika at the end of the Tanzanian and Congolese railroads, Kigoma and Kalemie.

<sup>24</sup> In colonial times the Belgian authorities organized an export route from Katanga avoiding British territory. Minerals were thus transported west by rail to Ilebo on the Kasai River. From here, a multimodal system of boats and trains took the materials to Kinshasa and from there to Matadi.

## **Current trends: Butembo's emergence as a trading hub**

In this new context, the opening up of Kivu to the world via the Indian Ocean ports has had some notable consequences on the local economy. One of the most visible has been the spectacular “upgrading” of cars in cities such as Bukavu or Goma, especially when compared with Kinshasa and its Atlantic influence. As a result, Kampala and Dar es Salaam have become huge open-air car lots where new vehicles are bought for Kivu. The cars for sale are right-hand drive – meaning that they were originally adapted and destined for the former British road systems of Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

Although the visible signs of this changed orientation appeared only recently, the beginning of the change dates back to the end of the 1980s or the start of the 1990s. In Kivu, and in particular in Nord-Kivu, new commercial hubs sprang up. These were the result of the ethnic “competition” touched on above and the dynamism of local businessmen, but most of all, the creation of an Oriental, or Asian market around the triad Dubai-Mumbai-Guangzhou (Middle East-India-China). The symbol of this new trend is the “city” of Butembo.

The connection of the region's market to Dubai's, and to Asia's, has introduced new patterns of behavior into the economy and into regional trade. Butembo has transformed into a veritable regional trading hub under the influence of big Nande traders and their Indo-Pakistani and Chinese networks: it has become the regional financial and monetary centre of gravity. It has also become the warehouse for the whole of Kivu with its commercial arcades and market for Arabo-Indo-Chinese manufactured goods. Research conducted in 2005 revealed another curious phenomenon: the market rate of exchange of Congolese francs to dollars was not determined by the announcements of the Congolese Central Bank in Kinshasa but by a network of businessmen in Butembo who controlled a chain of foreign exchange offices in Kinshasa and other main Congolese cities<sup>25</sup>. As a result there are sometimes exchange rate differences in between the North and the South of the country.

However, Butembo's notoriety and importance contrasts strongly with the agglomeration's infrastructure – or lack of infrastructure; there is not an international-standard airport like Goma's. Its emergence as a leading economic pole could result in actors adopting a new strategy vis-à-vis Eastern Congo's more vulnerable urban centers, Goma and Bukavu in particular. Butembo's rise is also the “surface” sign of illegal activities – the trafficking of precious stones, or other natural resources, like gold or wood. A substantial part of these illegal revenues is recycled into trade with

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<sup>25</sup> INICA and LARES, op. cit. [16].

Dubai, India and China, and into speculation on the parallel foreign currency markets.

### ***The English language's breakthrough***

Anglophone “culture” has infiltrated the whole of Kivu thanks to the business being done with East Africa and with the Arabo-Asian world, and to the region’s various conflicts. If this development was first visible in the “invasion” of right-hand drive cars badly adapted for the DRC’s highway code, it can now be seen daily in the presence of East African, European and Asian businessmen, European humanitarian workers, and Indian and Pakistani peacekeepers from the UN mission to the DRC (*la Mission de l’Organisation des Nations unies en RDC – MONUC*). They are the *vectors* of this new linguistic evolution. In this new internationalized milieu, ambitious young Congolese students wanting to work for private companies, MONUC or international NGOs (be they German, American, British or Dutch) have to learn English and be able to present themselves and their CV in English; English being the language used at work and for communicating with Anglophone partners or those who live in Anglophone countries.

Swahili serves a common language for trade and cultural communication between Kivu and East Africa. While this meant that French was secure in its regional home in Kivu, now the new Dubai-Mumbai-Guangzhou pressure and the humanitarian presence is blurring and shrinking the limits of this French-speaking zone.

## **Conclusion: Is Kivu Really Distancing Itself From Its Western Influences?**

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In this time of change in the Eastern part of the DRC, it is easy to see that Kivu's cities, fixed along the border, are still very badly connected, either to their hinterland or to cities in other provinces. However, their frontier position has also given them strong and easily formed relations with their neighboring countries. Despite such cross-border ties, this land full of tensions remains fiercely attached to the state of the DRC and to its Congolese national identity.

Moreover, Kivu finds itself torn between Kinshasa and the East: drawn politically towards the capital in the far West of the country, and pulled economically by East Africa's and Asia's enormous economic presence. This agonizing clash between Eastern and Western influences is all the more painful in a country wracked by socio-economic and politico-military crises. Signs of this pain can be found in the destroyed infrastructure, in the isolation of different zones and in the ongoing effects of war from which the region is still seeking to recover.

When Kivu is looked at closely though, it can be seen to have a double vocation: it both belongs to, and is strongly attached to, the Congolese state and cooperates closely with the Eastern (African) economy. Could Kivu's past and present conflicts be interpreted as the region's trying to find a way to "digest" both this double vocation and the sweeping sociopolitical reconstitution the Great Lakes region has undergone since the 1990s, as well as the result of contemporary international geo-economic tensions?

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