

Abstract

Violent non-state actors have represented a significant challenge for both national and international security in recent decades. One of the many countries that have experienced extensive violence perpetrated by these entities is also Kenya. Particularly armed group called Mungiki managed to become influential security, political, criminal and religious actor. Considering frequent transformations of the group making it difficult to determine what type of violent non-state actor Mungiki is, the group still represents a challenging case for researchers to fully comprehend. To contribute to the understanding of this entity and extend contemporary knowledge of violent non-state actors, this study aims to conceptualize individual phases of Mungiki development and discover mechanisms behind its recurrent metamorphoses from one type of violent actor to another.

Based on the review of existing literature focused on violent non-state actors, their conceptualization, emergence, and transformations, the thesis uses a case-centric process-tracing method aimed at explaining particular outcomes of individual transformations. The study consists of an in-depth analysis of Mungiki development in the context of Kenyan security and political environment. The results indicate that Mungiki represented different types of violent non-state actors during its existence including militia, gang, and vigilantes. Frequent transformations are caused by a wide range of factors including the government's choice of policies, group's leaders' opportunism, greed or political patronage.