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**Mungiki in Kenya: From Religious Movement to Militia**

Master's thesis

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## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 15. 5. 2020

Mgr. Ervín Hausvater

## References

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## **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.

## **Abstrakt**

Nestátní ozbrojení aktéři představují v posledních desetiletích významnou výzvu pro národní i mezinárodní bezpečnost. Jedním z řady států, které byly zasaženy rozsáhlým násilím ze strany těchto entit, je také Keňa. Obzvláště ozbrojená skupina jménem Mungiki se v Keni stala důležitým bezpečnostním, politickým, kriminálním a náboženským aktérem. Vzhledem k častým transformacím této skupiny, které komplikují jasné určení toho, o jaký typ nestátního ozbrojeného aktéra se jedná, není případ Mungiki lehce uchopitelný. Za účelem lepšího porozumění fungování této entity a rozšíření současných poznatků o nestátních ozbrojených aktérech si tato práce klade za cíl konceptualizovat jednotlivé fáze

vývoje Mungiki a současně vysvětlit mechanismy dílčích transformací z jednoho typu aktéra na druhý.

Na základě rešerše existující literatury zaměřené na nestátní ozbrojené aktéry, jejich konceptualizaci, vznik a transformace, diplomová práce využívá metodu sledování procesu v případové studii zaměřené na vysvětlení jednotlivých transformací. Výzkum zahrnuje hloubkovou analýzu vývoje Mungiki v kontextu keňského bezpečnostního a politického prostředí. Výsledky výzkumu ukazují, že Mungiki vystupovalo v dílčích fázích svého vývoje v roli různých typů nestátních ozbrojených aktérů, včetně milice, gangu nebo domobrany. Časté transformace jsou potom způsobeny řadou rozličných faktorů včetně vládní politiky, oportunistu vůdců skupiny, chamtivostí či politickým patronátem.

## **Keywords**

Mungiki, violent non-state actor, Kenya, election violence, militia, gang, vigilantism, neopatrimonialism

## **Klíčová slova**

Mungiki, nestátní ozbrojený aktér, Keňa, volební násilí, milice, gang, vigilantismus, neopatrimonialismus

## **Title**

Mungiki in Kenya: From Religious Movement to Militia<sup>1</sup>

## **Název práce**

Mungiki v Keni: Od náboženského hnutí po milici

<sup>1</sup> Original title of the thesis *Mungiki in Kenya: From Cultural Movement to Political Militia to Vigilantes and back* was eventually slightly adjusted to better correspond with the results of the research.

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## **1. Introduction**

In recent decades, the nature of violent conflicts has experienced substantial changes. Largely, this can be attributed also to the proliferation of violent non-state actors (VNSAs) in various parts of the world. This proliferation also shifted global security discourse with a practical impact on the security policies of individual states and international organizations. Wars between states became rather uncommon phenomena in the contemporary world. A prevailing number of conflicts nowadays are intrastate conflicts or internationalized intrastate conflicts, with a violent non-state actor as one or more of the conflict parties. While VNSAs became an important element in the security agendas of Western countries, it is mainly countries with emerging or developing economies that are challenged excessively by these non-state actors, particularly on the African continent. Nevertheless, in many cases, these entities emerged not only as a challenge to national security but also international security.

With the change of the global security environment also academic debates shifted. Abandoning classical realist state-centric paradigm, scholars of political science, international relations, security studies or development studies more and more often tend to focus on violent non-state actors in contemporary conflicts and less often also their function in state-building or governance. Interestingly, while there have been many attempts to conceptualize violent non-state actors and differentiate between particular types of them, given the diversity of these actors as well as their differing modus operandi and objectives, the consensus on clear unambiguous definitions and categories is lacking. This conceptual fuzziness is further fueled by shifting nature of VNSAs and their tendency to change their objectives, strategy, ideology, structure or capacity. This process of transformation has been so far rather omitted by scholars studying VNSAs. Hence, there is also a limited amount of academic literature and theoretical models explaining the dynamics and metamorphoses of violent groups.

In the contemporary world, we find a number of groups that are difficult to contain under a single conceptual type of VNSAs. Such example is Mungiki, one of the most infamous violent groups in Kenya. Started as a rather religious movement built on ideological roots of Kenyan anti-colonial armed movement Mau Mau in the late 1980s, Mungiki went through several remarkable transformations. During the 1990s, Kenya was among many African nations where democratic transition began. When the constitutionally determined one-party

system was abandoned in 1991 and multi-party politics reintroduced, formal repression of the state was replaced with informal repression of government's proxies. Post-colonial Kenyan politics have always been heavily influenced by ethnic affiliations and patron-client networks based on ethnicity. This was also reflected in the changing security environment after 1991 when the constitution was amended to allow political competition. As early as the one-party system was abandoned, chiefly Kenyan rural areas were hit by politically motivated violence perpetrated predominantly by pro-government armed groups. The victims were usually regionally non-autochthonous ethnic groups perceived to be supporters of the opposition. To protect members of affected ethnic groups, counterweight anti-government groupings emerged, including ethnic Kikuyu based Mungiki. Later, they were, however, able to build an impressive membership base also in impoverished urban areas, particularly in the city of Nairobi.

Group's urban presence was characterized by the provision of government-like services including security, public transport or garbage collection. This was however accompanied by criminal activities and economically motivated violence, portraying the group as one of the most notorious gangs in Kenya. Soon, Mungiki also revealed their ambitions in formal politics. After negotiations with ruling party leaders, Mungiki surprisingly announced to support the Kenyan incumbent party in 2002 general elections operating as its armed wing, the very same party they opposed since the beginning. Attempts to penetrate formal politics, however, continued. While maintaining their criminal activities in the urban areas, reports suggest Mungiki's involvement in post-election violence in subsequent elections.

While Mungiki is one of the Kenya based VNSAs that attracts scholars the most, due to their secretive nature and therefore limited information sources the scholarship on this topic is far from overwhelming. Often, the authors build their studies on the information provided by Mungiki members, focusing on the narratives of the movement about itself. From the amount of the literature that is dealing with the movement from different perspectives, the focus on their metamorphoses in the existing literature is narrow if not omitted. Therefore to contribute to filling this gap, the focus of the thesis is on the transformations of Mungiki as a violent non-state actor. The changes in the nature of the group are examined in time from its foundation until the final years of its increased public activity.

What kind of VNSA is Mungiki? What are the forces behind its metamorphoses? By answering these questions, this thesis aims to explain the causes of the transformation of the

Mungiki movement. Focus is mainly on changing strategies and objectives, means used for achievement of the group's goals and environment within which the changes of the movement occurred.

In the first chapter, the research design and methodology that is used for studying the phenomena are outlined. Given the limited amount of literature focused on the transformation of violent non-state actors and focus of the thesis on the particular violent group, a single-case study using the explaining-outcome process-tracing method combining systemic and non-systemic mechanisms with help of existing models was selected. The second part of the thesis is devoted to the conceptualization and theoretical framework. Key concepts and definitions for studying non-state armed groups are reviewed, including the definition of violent non-state actors and classification of their particular types, along with conceptualization of hybrid types of such groups. Next, to get a better understanding of the security environment within which Mungiki has been developing, concepts of weak/fragile/failed statehood in contrast to recent contesting concepts of limited statehood or alternative governance are discussed. Subsequently, selected theories and models dealing with the transformation of violent groups are reviewed. In the empirical part of the thesis, chapter four introduces the reader to the Mungiki as a violent non-state actor and the metamorphoses of the movement are analyzed against the available evidence. This encompasses an introduction to the political and security developments in Kenya since the re-introduction of multi-party politics in the early 1990s followed by an introduction of Mungiki emergence and its development as a VNSA. Mungiki is conceptualized as a violent non-state actor and stages of its development are assigned to particular conceptual types of violent non-state actors. Based on this, it is differentiated between approximate phases of transformations of Mungiki, which enables to analyze the group's metamorphoses. Finally, the last chapter concludes and wraps up the results of the research.

## **2. Methodology and research design**

The primary objective of the thesis is to disclose processes behind Mungiki's frequent transformations from one type of violent non-state actor or movement to another. Hence, the research is case-centric with a focus on a particular non-state armed group. The qualitative case study approach allows conducting complex inquiry while taking into account the necessary context of Kenyan security and political development. While this approach offers only limited external validity, the findings stemming from the inquiry may expand current knowledge of violent groups conceptualization and transformations and possibly help to understand other violent groups operating in a similar context of the African state.

As mentioned earlier, academic literature dealing with transformations of violent non-state groups suitable for this case is sparse. Thus, if we want to reveal a convenient explanation of various transformations of the Mungiki, current theoretical models might not be sufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to focus closely on existing empirical data of the group's development. For this reason, the thesis utilizes a single case study design and process-tracing as a method of research. In this chapter, the method used for the analysis is reviewed and requisites for its application and limits of the research design outlined.

### **2.1 Process tracing method**

As Collier (2011, p. 824) puts it, process tracing is an “*analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from diagnostic pieces of evidence, often understood as part of temporal sequence of events or phenomena*”. Nevertheless, while vast of the scholars deal with process tracing as a single method, Beach and Pedersen (2013, p. 3) differentiate process-tracing methods into three different variants applicable in social sciences and used for different purposes. Those are *theory-testing process-tracing*, *theory-building process tracing* and *explaining-outcome process tracing*. *Theory-testing process tracing* enables the researcher to investigate whether the existing hypothesis of causal mechanism proves to be present in a particular case and if it functions according to its theorization. As a result, theory can be then confirmed or rejected for a particular case (ibid., p. 14). In the *theory-building process tracing*, on the other hand, the researcher seeks to develop a theory of hypothetical causal mechanism based on empirical evidence, which is generalized on a larger number of cases. While the empirical evidence is gathered from a single case, the casual mechanism

should be applicable beyond the scope of the case (ibid., p. 16-18). Both approaches described above are however theory-oriented, which is not the primal focus of the thesis. Also unlike in theory-testing and theory-building methods where the researcher seeks to reveal the presence or absence of causal mechanism, the focus here is on whether the explanation is sufficient.

For this reason, most suitable is the third type of process-tracing method that Beach and Pedersen list, which is *explaining-outcome process-tracing*. This type of process-tracing is most common in scholarship and aims at a minimally sufficient explanation of a particular outcome. To achieve this, both systematic mechanisms based on existing theories and rather unique non-systematic mechanisms specific to a particular case and its context are tested. By mechanism, the causal complex consisting of a sequence of events and processes that result in a particular event is meant (ibid., p. 22-23). These events and processes are in each step embodied in observable manifestations of activities of certain entities, for example of government, group leaders or the public. This sequence then consists of such particular steps (or parts) that together are represented in the causal mechanism of the outcome researcher is already aware of (e.g. transformation to a criminal group). Hence, key concepts and existing theories of a transformation of VNSAs are examined (see chapter 3), which serves as a stepping stone for crafting sufficient explanation. These theoretical models have to be combined, reconceptualized and complemented with non-systematic mechanisms suitable for the specific case of Mungiki, rooted in empirical evidence. Given the importance of structural and institutional developments in Kenya in the 1990s and 2000s as well as the role of Mungiki's leaders and decision-makers, it is necessary to study both macro-level and micro-level mechanisms.

When using the explaining-outcome process-tracing method, it is necessary to define the outcome which we seek to explain. Therefore, specific phases in Mungiki development are conceptualized using the typology of violent non-state actors. The aim is to craft an explanation for the group's transformation from one type of VNSA or social movement to another type of VNSA. Using the process-tracing method allows examining the developments and transformations over time and conduct in-depth analysis to uncover the mechanisms. In the case of Mungiki in Kenya, we seek an explanation not of only one single outcome, but several outcomes in the group's development. Therefore, for analytical purposes, the evolution of the Mungiki is separated into four approximate chronological

conceptual phases: Mungiki as a religious/social movement; ethnic militia; vigilante/criminal group and political militia. The goal is to differentiate between these stages and unfold the mechanisms of transformations between the individual phases.

## **2.2 Sources and limitations of the research**

To gather sufficient evidence for the research, it is necessary to draw on a number of sources, both primary and secondary. Mainly, academic articles and books are utilized as well as reports of NGOs and international organizations. This is complemented by official documents and reports or public statements of politicians and group leaders. Further, both local and foreign newspaper articles are employed. However, given the secretive nature of the movement, the amount of information about the movement is scarce in certain aspects of its development. Therefore, academic literature on Mungiki is often built on fieldwork conducted among members of the group. Evidence collected in this manner may be thus influenced by self-perception of the group members and group's narratives about itself, possibly detached from the reality. Simultaneously, narratives about the group created by the government and media might be also influenced by the dominant discourses at a given time, that has to be taken into account. Hence, this may negatively influence the reliability and consequently internal validity of the analysis. Further, some of the primary sources such as group leaders' statements may be available only in local Kikuyu language or Kiswahili. The thesis, however, relies only on sources in English.

Another limitation stems from the conceptualization of Mungiki as a specific violent non-state actor. Given that concepts of particular types of VNSAs are ideal types, which is often not reflected accurately in reality, the conceptualization serves mainly as an analytical tool that allows the researcher to study the phenomena of VNSAs and its transformation. Also in the case of Mungiki, the group's characteristics as a single type of violent actor in specific periods do not always fully correspond with the concepts. However, while the functions of Mungiki as social/religious movement, vigilantes/gang and/or militia may overlap, this approximate arrangement appears to be most plausible for studying the phenomena.

### **3. Conceptualization and theoretical framework**

Given the complexity of studied phenomena, heterogeneity of violent actors, their various types and characteristics, defining non-state armed groups is not an easy task. Some authors use the term *non-state armed groups*, other *violent non-state actors*, some *armed non-state actors* or even *illegally armed groups*, but usually, they largely mean the same type of entity and the terminology is used interchangeably. The author of the thesis prefers the term *violent non-state actor* (VNSA). Generally, the authors agree that we talk about non-state actors using violence to achieve their goals, usually political or economic. However clear and unambiguous definition agreed among scholars, international organizations or decision-makers is lacking. In this chapter, the concept of a violent non-state actor is defined and existing categories reviewed. Next, to understand the security environment of Kenya, analytical framework of limited statehood is examined. Last but not least, models and hypotheses of emergence and transformation of violent non-state actors are outlined.

#### **3.1 Violent non-state actors**

International Council of Human Rights offers a broad definition of VNSAs, according to which non-state armed actors are “*armed and use force to achieve their objectives and are not under state control*” (Hoffman 2006, p. 396). Underlining the independence of such groups on state’s structures, Schneckener (2009, p. 8), defines armed non-state groups as “*willing and capable to use violence for pursuing their objectives and not integrated into formalized state institutions such as regular armies, presidential guards, police or special forces*”. But importantly, he emphasizes that they may be linked or supported by states but they maintain a degree of autonomy. This definition enables to incorporate also armed groups hired as informal militant wings of politicians or political parties. DCAF and Geneva call (2015, p.7) NGOs, on the other hand, lay stress on the condition of the structure of command, stating that violent armed groups have a “*basic structure of command operating outside state control that uses force to achieve its political or allegedly political objectives*”. Emphasis on the basic structure of command in effect excludes groupings of individuals with loose organizational structure if any structure exists. Given the width and equivocality of the term, it is possible to include various types of non-state actors using violence to pursue their objectives. While some authors incorporate also groups such as private military or security companies and paramilitary organizations (Alston 2005; Williams 2008; Krause and Milken



2011; Clapham 2016), our focus is mainly on violent groups that are independent on the state as defined by Schneckener (2009) while they may be linked to the state, including political militias, gangs or vigilante groups.

### **3.2 Types of violent non-state actors**

Similar to the definition of VNSAs alone, also their classification is problematic. In existing scholarship, there is a number of typologies of violent non-state actors. Recent literature usually offers largely similar typologies, however, the number of categories differs. Authors tend to disagree on which categories should be included or excluded or whether to merge some of them under single category. This again points out to lack of consensus and gaps in the conceptualization of violent groups, which is also apparent in this case as will be disclosed. In reality, it is very difficult to contain an armed group under a particular category. Hence, the categories should be considered ideal types that do not necessarily perfectly correspond with factual conditions. In this subsection, typologies profoundly used in scholarship are introduced as well as other less quoted authors that complement often insufficient typologies.

Among the most commonly cited classifications of VNSAs are those by Stefan Mair (2003) and by Phil Williams (2008). While Mair distinguishes only between four types, *warlords*, *rebels*, *terrorism* and *organized crime* based on their motives, strategies, and power, Williams differentiates between six distinct categories considering nature of the actor along several dimensions, namely motivation, strength and scope, funding, organizational structure, the role of violence, relationship with state and its ability to govern. In the following paragraphs, Williams' (2008) extended typology amended by findings and categories identified by Mair (2003) and Schneckener (2009) is reviewed.

#### **3.2.1 General typology**

As (1) *warlords* are considered charismatic individuals controlling particular territory using military power. As Mair (2003, p. 12) puts it, they “*aim at maximizing their profits from state disorder*”. They usually pursue political power and resources through participation in the informal economy and use of coercion, however they can hold a certain degree of legitimacy in controlled areas. Self-interests of warlords dominate their behavior, although

they can provide state-like services to some degree. Cooperation with the state is nonetheless exceptional (Williams 2008, p. 9-10). Nevertheless, they often form alliances with other actors, such as terrorist or criminal groups (Mair 2003, p. 13). Schneckener adds that warlords control territory during or after violent conflict within the state benefiting from the breakdown of its structures (2009, p. 11). Interestingly, comparing use of the term by scholars for different entities in different historical episodes, namely Chinese military commanders at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and late 20<sup>th</sup> century warlords in Africa, Hills (1997, p. 39) considers the term to be lacking any analytical value.

(2) *Militias*, on the other hand, are not embodied in a charismatic individual. They are irregular armed forces operating on the territory of a weak or failed state, often representing particular ethnic, religious or other communal groups. Possibly, they may be linked to the state, they are however outside their command. They can also substitute functions of the state where the state's presence is missing (Williams 2008, p. 10-11). Since Williams does not pay much attention to militias' motivations, they also partly resemble what Mair (2003, p. 15) describes as *rebels*. The picture becomes clearer with Schneckener's (2009, p. 9) description, in which he explains militias as groups that act on behalf of the government or certain segments of society. Their function is therefore to intimidate opposition or certain social groups, rebel groups or criminals. Schubert (2013, p. 306) adds that for militias the relationship with the state is determining aspect, whether the group supports the regime or the opposition.

(3) *Paramilitary forces* as a rule of thumb are backed by the government. They stay outside formal governmental armed forces but can be considered an extension of them. While they serve to the interests of the government, Williams (2008, p. 12) notes they often get out of control.

(4) *Insurgencies*, on the other hand, are groups that aim to seize power for themselves and topple the existing government. Possibly, they can be also secessionist or separatist groups that pursue the establishment of a new state within the territory of an existing state or achieve a degree of autonomy. There are many similarities with *rebels*, the type of VNSA Mair (2003, p. 15) includes in his typology.

(5) *Rebels* usually pursue fairer distribution of wealth or other political motives, including those mentioned above in insurgencies category - secession, separatism or toppling the

government. Further, they can control limited areas of the state. Schneckener (2009, p. 9) describes them as groups seeking "liberation" of social class, political community or nation. They usually utilize guerilla "hit and run" strategy, operating predominantly in rural areas with limited state's control, therefore they are dependent on the support of the local population, foreign governments or other non-state actors.

(5) *Terrorist organizations* use violence against civilians and spread fear seeking political change. They often create transnational networks and the political objectives of such groups vary. Usually, they attempt to discredit the state and provoke repression against the population, they are however lacking an ability to conduct insurgency campaigns (Williams 2008, p. 14-15). Similar to other types of VNSAs, they tend to have links to other types of violent actors, including criminals and rebel movements (Mair 2003, p. 19).

(6) *Criminal organizations* and *youth gangs* encompass both local and transnational actors seeking profit through illegal activities. They differ in structure and also in the level of threat they represent to the state. Some of them are able to penetrate the state, however, their goal is not to topple the government (Williams 2008, p. 15-17). If they pursue political influence, they do so in order to secure their revenue and undermine the government (Schneckener 2009, p. 12).

Schneckener (ibid., p. 10) further distinguishes (7) *clan chiefs* or *Big Men* as a single category. These actors are leaders of traditional communities based on a common identity, both religious or ethnic, often controlling limited space within the state. They form armed forces for protection and to keep order within the community. Other rather rarely discussed category is (8) *marauders*, loosely organized former combatants that participate in looting and intimidation of civilians during or after a conflict, benefiting from the lack of state control of territory (ibid., p. 14).

### **3.2.2 Community-based armed groups**

In an attempt to bring more clarity to often too general classifications, Schubert (2015a) identifies other sub-group within non-state armed groups which he calls *community-based armed groups* (CBAGs). CBAGs are often sponsored or created by the state itself, nonetheless, they remain informal and outside state structures. Further, CBAGs do not usually have political goals and if they do, they rather act on behalf of political entrepreneurs

or are hired as militias of political parties. Community-based armed groups are defined by territory, blood ties or shared identity and do not pursue taking over the state. He recognizes only three ideal types of CBAGs (ibid., p. 300) based on three dimensions: security, political and economic. If the security dimension is pronounced most, we are dealing with (1) *vigilantes*, category which encompasses crime-control groups and self-defense forces and can eventually evolve into para-states. The primary function of the vigilantes is security provision, they nevertheless tend to transform into militias or gangs and possibly also develop into para-states controlling certain territory and substituting functions of states (ibid., p. 303-304).

When the political dimension dominates, we talk about ethnic or popular (2) *militias* which can develop into warlord state. According to Schuberth, both ethnic and popular militias act on behalf of their political patrons based on neo-patrimonial patron-client networks in former case and populism in later. Key characteristics of militias are hence their connection to political actors, notwithstanding whether they hold state power or not. Hence, the pivotal difference between vigilantes and militias is that militias do not replace the state where it is absent like vigilantes do, but they can be linked to formal state structures or eventually warlords (ibid., p. 304-308).

Last but not least, the third type based on the economic dimension is (3) *gangs*. Gangs are criminal entities that pursue economic gains. They do not aspire to be providers of security nor to seize the power. However, Schuberth also differentiates between youth gangs and criminal gangs. The first type is rather associated with culturally and a socially rooted phenomena and is characterized by loose institutional basis. Criminal gangs, on the other hand, are more profit-oriented and institutionalized. Nevertheless, gangs can evolve into *criminal fiefdoms* and govern over certain territories (ibid., p. 308-311).

### **3.2.3 Hybrid violent non-state actors**

Often, when one group can be attributed to a single category, we rather look at a snapshot of a set of qualities that particular group fulfills in a certain time, not at a permanent state of the group's qualities. It is necessary to have in mind that it is dealt with ideal types, thus artificial constructs which usually do not reflect reality precisely. Therefore, besides the commonly used classification described above, some authors also attempted to depict such groups that

do not fit easily in established categories. If we look at the development of a group like Mungiki in its complexity, it is far from any of the ideal type developed by analysts. However, there are at least two ways how to conceptualize these groups more generally. Firstly, the term *hybrid actor* implies that the non-state entity fulfills the basic characteristics of different categories of VNSAs. Janů and Zelinka (2009, p. 48) use the term *hybrid* for those non-state actors, that use violence to pursue their political and economic goals and have a mixed organizational structure. A combination of political and economic goals creates space for a combination of activities and methods typical for different types of VNSAs. The notion of organizational structure is derived from types of societal organization as presented by Ronfeldt (1996, p. 2) and applied to violent groups. Ronfeldt differentiates between four types of organization: the kinship-based tribe characterized by the structure of lineage systems; hierarchical; competitive-exchange market and collaborative network. The hybrid actor then results from a combination of these organizational structures. According to Zelinka and Janů (2009, p. 51-54), the process of hybridization is further fuelled through the increasing level of transnationality and cooperation between non-state actors. To name some of the hybrid actors, the authors list Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines or Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

Cline (2015, p. 213) describes hybrid groups more loosely as groups that combine characteristics of different groups. Most often, these are organized criminal groups that develop political or ideological goals or vice versa, groups with political goals that focus also on economic profit. As an example, Cline (*ibid.*, p. 213-222) mentions Jamaat al Muslimeen in Trinidad and Tobago, Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army, D Company in India, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, gangs operating in Jamaica and also Mungiki in Kenya.

Another possible conceptualization of non-state armed groups that are difficult to contain under one term is to depict them as *shape-shifters*. Shape-shifters are groups that are changing over time not only in terms of goals, interests or membership but also types (Cline 2012; 2015). Contrary to commonly used categories, the shape-shifter category implies that the group is not a static actor. Such an understanding might be useful for studying certain violent groups. Focusing on a violent group solely in a particular category might be misleading in an attempt to understand its goals and motivations. If we really want to unveil underlying mechanisms under which violent group operates, it is necessary to recognize its

complexities and context. Framing complicated groups in single categories and therefore ignoring reality can also have negative consequences for decision-makers, resulting in the inability of governments to recognize how to effectively approach these actors.

### **3.3 Weak state or limited statehood?**

By a large number of Western scholars, the inability of African states to exercise power over their territories has been attributed interchangeably to the weakness, fragility or failure of the state. These terms have been however not overwhelmingly adopted only within academia, but also by Western governments, decision-makers, international organizations, development agencies or media. When discussing the African state, failure or weakness remains dominant universal discourse regarding not only to security. While this correctly points to the inability of African states to maintain a monopoly of violence and control over its territory, some authors argue this approach limits our understanding of statehood and governance in Africa (Bøas and Jennings 2005; 2007; Boege 2009; Clements 2007; Jones 2008).

Weak/failed/fragile state thesis and its conceptualization has been however criticized on many accounts. Nay (2013, p. 329-335) for example criticize the ambiguity of the concepts and that the discourse of failed and fragile states emerged mainly as a reflection of strategic and economic concerns of Western governments. Further, the state-centric approach ignores informal actors involved in security provision, international and historical complexities and the concepts also lack empirical evidence. A state-centric approach towards Africa was also objected by Kevin C. Dunn (2001). His criticism is aimed mainly at the Westphalian approach of scholars in attempts to understand statehood in Africa that ignores the political realities of the African continent.

According to Dunn, “*state in Africa has not achieved hegemonic domination over society*” (ibid., p. 51). He highlights four types of non-state actors which question the African state as a primary unit of analysis in international relations theory: international financial institutions as World Bank or International Money Fund; regional strongmen as “Big Men” or warlords; extractive and non-state military corporations. In recent decades, also violent-non state actors reached significance when discussing governance.

Rather than to think about African states in terms of failure and weakness, some authors have suggested the concept of hybridity. Linking the topic closer to the issue of VNSAs, Boege (2008) reconceptualizes fragile statehood as a hybrid political order which according to him helps to understand the governance in such countries. According to him, the Westphalian type of state is an exception among non-OECD states (ibid., p. 2). In contrast, hybrid political order is an area where different formal and informal centers of power overlap and co-exist. Hence, the state shares its authority, legitimacy, and capacity with other non-state actors. This is a phenomenon observable all around Africa and elsewhere among nations of Global South. The state is only one of the actors that claim it is a provider of security, services, and frameworks for conflict regulation. Particularly traditional non-state kin-based authorities as chiefs, elders or Bigmen, but also non-state violent actors share the power to control the territory with the state (ibid., p. 6-7). Hybrid political orders, therefore, comprise of a number of non-state forms of order and governance interacting with each other. This hybridity, however, does not have to be perceived always as a negative occurrence, since these non-state actors may sometimes complement the formal structures, rather than undermine (Boege et al. 2009, p. 19). More than with VNSAs however, this notion should be associated with customary authorities.

To a similar note, Risse (2010) criticizes the concepts of fragility and failure and suggests to study states that do not enjoy full domestic sovereignty over its whole territory in the context of *limited statehood*. Areas of limited statehood are parts of the state's territory, where it is lacking the capacity to claim a monopoly of violence or enforce rules (ibid., p. 5). These areas of limited statehood, where state authority is limited, are therefore governed by transnational non-state or domestic actors, including VNSAs. It, however, does not mean that the state is completely absent in such areas. While it is unable to govern, it is in *negotiation relationship* with the actors that substitute the state's functions (ibid., p. 23). Nevertheless, areas of limited statehood are not present only in states of Global South. In fact, most of the internationally recognized states contain such areas. There are just a few fully consolidated states (Risse 2011, p. 8). Likewise, Clunan and Trinkunas (2010a) stress that other frequently used concept, *ungoverned space*, is inadequate, stemming from narrow state-centric approach to sovereignty. Contemplating the argument of Risse (2010; 2011), they claim that such spaces actually are under some form of governance, however, not necessarily state governance. Hence, they suggest that ungoverned spaces are in fact usually

governed by alternative authorities and are better depicted with the term *softened sovereignty* (Clunan and Trinkulas 2010a, p. 19).

Authors cited above recognize that alternative non-state forms of governance do not necessarily have to have a negative effect on security and development. For the areas of limited statehood where alternative forms of governance hamper security on human, national or international levels, Williams (2010, p. 36) uses term *dangerous spaces*. However, more than controlled by sole authority or not being governed by any actor at all, these spaces are contested by different actors claiming their monopoly of violence over the area. Clunan and Trinkunas (2010b, p. 282) establish under which conditions alternatively governed spaces pose a threat to security, therefore deteriorate into dangerous spaces. In terms of control of violence, when non-state actors make physical harm to population, livelihoods and deny their rights, such entities constitute a security threat. Similarly, when non-state actor's control of resources results in a decline of human welfare and rights, it constitutes a security threat. Last but not least, when non-state actors enforce rules that exclude the majority of the population residing in the area at the expense of the minority, it poses a threat to security. Further, when the rules result in the violation of internationally recognized human rights, we are again dealing with dangerous space (ibid., p. 283-285). Something similar was described also by Stanislawski (2008, p. 368-370), who speaks about so-called *black spots*. Black spots according to him, are uncontrolled or less-controlled territories where the state is not the dominant actor, but rather violent non-state actors are, while from outside they seem to be controlled by a recognized central government. Such spaces are however not ungoverned. Instead, they are under the governance of internationally unrecognized alternative authority, usually sustained by illicit operations.

Interestingly, the lacking capacity of the state to govern occurs not only in remote areas far from the state's administrative centers, but also right under its nose, in capital cities. Urban spaces with growing levels of violence, particularly between militias and police, can be conceptualized as *fragile cities*, as Raleigh (2015) puts it. According to him, countries affected by political instability but without civil wars experience urban unrest most frequently, mainly during elections. Based on quantitative research, he links the transition of violence from rural areas to the cities mainly to institutional changes of African states, particularly the democratic transition. Such transitions in African states, often incomplete, led political parties to secure public support in rural areas. This resulted in increased



marginalization and exclusion of population in the cities. In effect, limited support of urban political identities encouraged the formation of violent opposition groups (Raleigh 2015, p. 91). On the other hand, Urdal and Hoelscher's (2012) suggest that the unrest in Asian and Sub-Saharan Africa cities can be accounted for a low economic growth and illiberal democracies or regimes in democratic transition.

### **3.4 Models of transformations of non-state violent groups**

The literature dealing with the transformation of violent non-state actors is considerably limited. There have been a few attempts to develop models of such transformations, but most of the scholars focus on particular cases. Any sufficient complex model for explaining various metamorphoses of VNSAs is lacking. To some degree, this can be attributed to the troubling and unclear conceptualization and classification of violent groups, that are frequently complicated to contain under a single concept. Existing explanations of VNSAs transformations are often based on theories originated in different academic disciplines, rather than from security studies, political science or international relations scholarship.

Literature often focuses on the emergence of the VNSAs rather than their transformation. While not all seem to be viable in the Kenyan context, some findings may be useful also for studying violent group transformations, including particular phases of Mungiki's transformation. In this subsection, several models and hypotheses are reviewed.

#### **3.4.1 Emergence of VNSAs from social movements**

Building on social movement theory, Hazen (2009) studied the emergence of armed groups from non-violent social movements on the case of Nigeria. Similarly to Mungiki (as disclosed in following sections), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) in Nigeria started as a part of a social movement, however, it evolved into violent militia on an ethnic basis, fighting the government and other VNSAs. NDPVF emerged as a splinter group of social movement Ijaw Youth council representing ethnic Ijaws in the Niger Delta region. Originally, Ijaw Youth Council was a civil rights organization founded in 1998 representing local people in their effort to assure rights and control over Niger Delta resources. With the change of leadership within the movement and widespread accusations of Nigerian elections

in 2003 being rigged, part of the members including organization president Mujahid Asari Dokubo began calling for a more radical and confrontational approach in pursue of movement's demands and eventually for armed struggle. As a result, a more militant wing of the movement with Asari as its leader broke away from Ijaw Youth Council and founded NDPVF (ibid., p. 288-291).

In an attempt to explain the break away from the non-violent way of pursuing group's interests, Hazen introduces the *cycle of protest model* (ibid., p. 285-288). Four main explaining variables from social movement theory proved to be appropriate for an explanation of the movement's transformation. *Political opportunities* as a degree of likelihood that group can gain access to power; *framing alignment*, meaning context and group's perception of using violence as a legitimate mean of achieving its goals; *resource mobilization*, therefore group's ability to recruit new members and acquire financial resources; and *group competition*, both internal and external (ibid., p. 284). Put together, these factors can explain the transformation and together constitute a dynamic cycle of protest.

According to the model (Porta and Tarrow 1986), the process of social movement transformation initially stems from the multiplication of the movement's organizations. This can result in increasing competition within the movement followed by inter-group conflicts. That is caused by a limited amount of resources and contradictions of preferred strategies of gaining resources, including support base and group relationship with the government. This competition, repressive government tactics or negative change of political opportunities for the movement then result in situation, when fraction of the original movement resolves to violence tactic, therefore becomes VNSA (Hazen 2009, p. 287-288). Hazen's inference suggests that different factors previously mentioned played an important role at different stages of the process in the case of NDPVF. Apart from the political ideology of the group, it was also group's ability to gain revenues from bunkered oil pipelines (ibid., p. 296).

### **3.4.2 Transformation of gangs to militias**

Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014) attempted to develop an explanatory model of the emergence of militias based on evidence directly from Kenya. In their "*Four-Point Hypothesis*", they seek to explain the mutation of criminal groups into militias. The term militia here is however

defined rather vaguely and dealt with mainly in the context of economic motivations. In effect, their occasionally confusing understanding of militias can encompass also gangs, vigilante groups or private military companies. Nevertheless, they distinguish between three basic types of militias: *organic militia* that develops based on the demand of the community; *organized militia* which emerges for political or economic motivations and *state-indulged militia* supported by the state through patronage or cooperation with formal security institutions (ibid., p. 37-38). Further, they list three types of militias according to the degree they rely on violence (ibid., p. 39). When they differentiate between militias and gangs, they understand militias as a form of more powerful VNSA that can develop from a criminal group. They build upon four theoretical assumptions supported by evidence from Kenya.

Firstly, the distance decay hypothesis suggests militias likely emerge in spaces that are distant from the center. In other words, further the space is from the administrative center, the less is the state able to govern it. Therefore, such places create fertile ground for violence. This is however not linked to geographic proximity only, but also to decay of relationships, such as economic exclusion. That is why both urban slums and rural areas can be an object of the proliferation of VNSAs (ibid., p. 1-2).

The gap hypothesis says that where the presence of the state is lacking in terms of service provision including security, this gap is filled by an alternative authority. This stems from the assumption that these spaces are not adequately policed and therefore the influence of state is limited, demand for alternative governance is increasing by the community and VNSAs are able to gain some degree of legitimacy and provide the supply. It is not only state absence that creates an opportunity for VNSAs to thrive but also state abstinence, meaning the state is overpowered by the militia or the state is providing patronage for it and security gaps are created deliberately (ibid., p. 2-4). So-called Hedonistic theory builds upon the logic of the theory of rational choice. Therefore, members of the community evaluate possible gains and losses, which creates a symbiotic relationship between services providing VNSAs and the community, as a result of state inability to govern the space (ibid., p. 4-5). The fourth hypothesis deals with the privatization of violence, claiming that the state's degeneration shifts monopoly of violence to the oligopoly of violence.

Put simply, all four hypotheses point out to state's inability or unwillingness to control the territory and claim monopoly of violence over it. According to their model of criminal groups' transformation to a militia, all gang activity emerges from the so-called *base*. The

base of the gang represents a space within a community where young people meet, usually regarding the economic activity. It is "*the incubator through which crime is hatched*" (ibid., p. 78). Such space is a subject of certain norms, has specific membership and is usually under someone's patronage, be it police, administration worker or a politician. When the base is determined by ethnic affiliation, Nygunyi and Katumanga (ibid.) call it *a captured base*. The state's absence or abstinence is naturally replaced by the gang. Among the members of the base, the most talented and capable constitute the *green formation*, which emerges as a response to the state's absence or abstinence in terms of security, and therefore demand for security provision. Green formations also carry a degree of joint consciousness of its members. Put differently, Nygunyi and Katumanga describe more of a vigilante group in this phase of transformation. At this stage, the legitimacy of the group is high and it often evolves as a response to threats posed by an already existing gang. Moreover, members of the community are usually voluntarily willing to pay for protection (ibid., p. 81).

With improving organization and increased opportunity, this entity develops into *the actualized organized gang*, focused on particular illicit economic activities. In contrast with the green formation, the actualized gang is opportunistic, taking advantage of the state's absence or abstinence to be predatory and exploit the community. They seek to dismantle any opposition including the state and their legitimacy and symbiotic relationship with the community start to deteriorate (ibid., 81-82).

In urban areas, gangs have a variety of possibilities for illegal economic activities. However, when they are able to accumulate enough resources and invest it in the formal market, the chances the group will give up on criminal activities is rising. On the other hand, in rural areas, there is only a limited field for extortion which is continuously reducing. This is forcing the gang to either transform and seek formal or alternative markets or develop into a militia. According to their understanding, the final phase of a criminal group's transformation, therefore, stems from the inability of the gang to generate revenue (ibid., p. 80-82). Given the conceptual fuzziness and narrow economic focus of the presented model, it does not seem to be a sufficient framework for explaining some of the Mungiki transformations comprehensively. However, some of the findings should be taken into consideration in the analysis.

### 3.4.3 Emergence and trajectories of VNSAs

In his article on the birth of VNSAs, Schlichte (2009) suggests there are at least three different mechanisms of emergence and possible trajectories of development of violent groups - *repression*, *ad hoc*, and *spin-off*. Demonstrated on the case of Moro National Liberation Front and Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines, that emerged from the community of socially and politically excluded Muslims, this model implies that VNSAs emerge as a response to state repression. Usually, when society goes through rapid social change, such as steep economic growth or political regime changes and its societal consequences, state elites seek to hold onto the power. In effect, this can result in the political exclusion of certain groups that could jeopardize their position. As a response to the exclusion, opposition movements are formed. When the state reacts with indiscriminate repression, this often leads to radicalization of the opposition and eventually armed rebellion. Often, the excluded segment of society reside loosely governed spaces, in which it is easier for VNSA to gain legitimacy in exchange for some level of protection. Moreover, they can hold a degree of legitimacy even prior to the conflict, thanks to their embeddedness within the structure of excluded social groups (ibid., p. 250-254).

The ad hoc mechanism, on the other hand, produces VNSAs as a result of the political crisis of neo-patrimonial systems. Neo-patrimonialism is a concept adopted by a number of scholars studying African politics and firstly suggested by Christopher Clapham (1985, p. 48), depicting a type of personal authoritarian rule exercised through rational-legal institutions and bureaucratic political system, relying on legitimacy built upon patron-client networks and treating the governance as a personal rather than public matter. Often, ad hoc groups emerge as a response to the exclusion of members of the political class from their share on power. The armed group, therefore, comes to existence with the purpose to seize the power by force. This is usually a result of the collapse of clientelist networks that cause the removal of certain political figures from power. It is an "*initiative of the disappointed*," as Schlichte (2009, p. 253) puts it. Affected individuals often seek support from regimes abroad and military expertise. Groups generated through ad hoc mechanism are usually unstable and it is difficult for them to gain legitimacy. As an example, Schlichte (ibid., p. 253-256) illustrates this on the case of Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). After gaining the support of leaders of Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire and military training in Libya, Taylor started the rebellion against the central government in an

attempt to overthrow it. Taylor and the number of other high ranked personnel within the group were former members of the Liberian government. Shortly, it became clear that they also have their personal agendas in their struggle against the state and NPFL fragmented into subgroups, never becoming a coherent organization.

The third mechanism suggests that VNSA may emerge as a result of state effort. The birth of spin-off groups is initiated by the state, they, however, break away from the government control and become independent. They often form during the wars as state paramilitary forces, however when they are successful and capable, they withdraw and start acting independently. They usually lack popular support and legitimacy, however, they do not necessarily have to be in a hostile position against the state. This was, for example, the case of Srpska Dobrovoljačka Garda (SDG) in former Yugoslavia, which was founded by Željko Raznatovic and trained with the assistance of Serbian institutions (ibid., p 256-259).

#### **3.4.4 Transformation from political to criminal violence**

In his analysis, Schubert (2015b) was studying the unexpected upsurge of urban and rural VNSAs in Haiti in 2004. Similarly to Kenya, violent groups here have often been under the patronage of politicians and hired as informal armed wings of political parties. Taking into account the context of structure and external actors, the main argument here is that while internally gang's function is to generate revenue for its members, externally it's function can be criminal or political, which is influenced by interests of their patrons. In other words, while the primary motivation of gang members can be still economic, they as the clients might be assigned with objectives of their patron. As a result, the gang may transform their actions from politically to criminally motivated and back. If the patron is lacking, on the other hand, gangs turn to their community in a predatory way (ibid., p. 10). This patron-client networks could have been observed in Kenya since the 1990s when political class and political parties used VNSAs to intimidate the opposition and its supporters, usually along the ethnic affiliation. In Haiti, this was demonstrated between 2001 and 2004, when the president Aristide and other politicians in an attempt to consolidate their power funded gangs in exchange for violence. Similarly, between the elections period, they used VNSAs to improve their economic power through criminal activities (ibid., p. 13). When president Aristide was toppled in 2004, politicians abruptly stopped funding the groups and these

patron-client networks collapsed. Absence of income from politicians for the gangs turned against the interim government, killing policemen and kidnapping state authorities in hope for the return of Artside and therefore reclamation of the funding. As Schubert (ibid., p. 15) points out, the gangs then became clients of economic elites and organized criminal groups, interested in political destabilization of Haiti. Therefore, the transformation of gangs depends mainly on the interests of their patrons.

### **3.4.5 Vigilantism as a result of socio-political processes**

While there is general consent among scholars that state weakness is the main factor in the emergence of vigilantism, this approach can be challenged with another Schubert's (2013) hypothesis on the development of violent groups. According to his research, the emergence of vigilantism cannot be always explained by state weakness. The author demonstrates on cases of Brazil and South Africa that vigilantism can be also result of the socio-political processes such as polarization, marginalization, criminalization or securitization, which might be the consequence of the state's policy choices. This as well contains state's unwillingness to address the security needs of the poor rather than an inability to do so. In Schubert's (ibid., p. 50) view, "*vigilantism is an inherently political phenomenon*". The state is often cooperating with vigilantes, vigilante group frequently also develop their own political agenda and their emergence can be intentional, like in cases mentioned above.

In terms of polarization, both Brazil and South Africa have a history of institutionalized racial discrimination. As a result of these policies, the society remains divided, perceiving particularly townships and favelas inhabitants as a sort of non-citizens who do not receive sufficient provision of security by the state. This is where vigilantism usually emerges. Crime in these areas is commonly not prevented, but rather isolated in order to not spread into more privileged neighborhoods. Therefore access to state's services often depends on economic and political standing. People living in these neglected areas often cannot rely on the protection of the state and opt for vigilantism. Both polarization and marginalization are also related to the criminalization of poverty and race since the poor and mostly black population is being pushed to the slums by governments and the upper class in the name of progress. Eventually, this criminalization further supports the demand for vigilantism as a protection from dangerous segments of society. Furthermore, the securitization of urban

crime in neglected areas fuels the use of extraordinary means in tackling criminality and creates support and justification for the emergence of vigilantes and the use of extensive violence (ibid.).



## **4. Case study: Mungiki in Kenya**

*Masses of people* or the *crowds*. That is what stands for the Kikuyu word *Mungiki*. Among the number of violent non-state actors not only in Kenya, Mungiki has however been extraordinary not only in terms of its size but also its scope of activities and flexibility. The group is nevertheless interesting also for its origins and development. Initially, the group emerged as a non-violent movement, nevertheless influenced by political and security development of renewed multi-party elections in Kenya, Mungiki also changed accordingly to the given context. In this chapter, firstly necessary context within which the movement evolved is reviewed followed by a brief introduction to the group's foundation, development, organizational structure, and ideology. Next, individual phases of Mungiki as a VNSA are differentiated and conceptualized as particular types of violent groups. Finally, the group's metamorphoses are analyzed.

### **4.1 Informal violence and Kenya's transition to multi-party politics**

Similarly to many other African countries, the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Kenya was a period when the transition from a single-party authoritarian regime to the multi-party democratic regime begun. And similarly to a number of other African countries, the process has been troublesome and accompanied by political turmoil. Not many individuals in Kenyan post-colonial history have had the opportunity to shape the direction of Kenyan politics. And even in recent decades, it has been frequently the offspring of the first independent Kenyan leaders who have been in power. Also, modern Kenya politics have been always heavily influenced by ethnic affiliations. Or rather vice versa, politicians have been utilizing ethnic identities for political ends. That is also part of the reason why virtually all elections in Kenya's restored multi-party history were accompanied by violence between ethnic groups. Particularly election violence in the 1990s, when also Mungiki emerged as VNSA was a result of abuse of ethnic identities by political elites.

Since the independence and the first elections in 1963, Kenya had been de facto and later also de jure one-party state until 1992. For more than a decade later, however, old regime including incumbent president remained in power. As some authors argue (Kirshke 2000; Kagwanja 2003; Branch and Cheeseman 2009; Rudbeck et al. 2016) the formal repression

that opposition and particular segments of society had been experiencing during the one-party rule was replaced by informal repression.

In the initial years of multi-partism, the opposition was fragmented and elections non-transparent and rigged (Hornsby 2013, p. 466) which together with disguised repression allowed president Daniel arap Moi and his party to stay in power. As Branch and Cheeseman (2008, p. 13) put it, this informalization was reflected in the privatization of violence. This was demonstrated by the president's Moi ruling party Kenyan African National Union (KANU) mainly through delegation of repression against the opposition and its supporters to various VNSAs. The victim was particularly Kikuyu ethnic group, thereby potential voters of the opposition parties and the same ethnic group Mungiki emerged from. Kikuyus played a significant role in both liberation struggle during the final years of colonial rule and politics in the first two decades of independent Kenya.

After the first president Jomo Kenyatta, also Kikuyu, died in 1978, his successor Daniel arap Moi of Kalenjin ethnic group began the process of consolidation of power. This unavoidably meant also weakening of Kikuyu elites. After unsuccessful pro-Kikuyu coup in 1982, the regime became more intensively repressive in an attempt to prevail despite limited support base (Hornsby 2013, p. 397). President built a net of loyal Kalenjins within the government while dividing and gradually weakening the influence of formerly dominant Kikuyus, often expelling them from key government positions. Eventually, also most senior Kikuyu politician vice-president Mwai Kibaki was removed in 1988. The regime was becoming increasingly corrupt, repressive, autocratic and popular almost only in Kalenjin regions. Nevertheless, it also led to increasing dissatisfaction with Kenyan politics and economy both domestically and internationally, which on the brink of the 1990s brought the regime under overwhelming pressure. Eventually, this forced the regime to open for political competition in December 1991, at least nominally (ibid., p. 398-399).

Ethnic violence emerged even before the upcoming restoration of political pluralism. Targeted ethnic groups were associated with the opposition, particularly Kikuyu in Rift Valley province. The regime capitalized on rooted land disputes and grievances of some ethnic groups against other non-autochthonous ethnic groups, embodied in the widely debated vision of *majimboism*, ideology calling for ethnic federalism in Kenya. However, while the government interpreted the violence as a spontaneous result of ethnic grievances, this was not the case. Evidence shows that the violence was largely orchestrated by the government

(Brown 1995, p. 97). The attackers were mostly Kalenjin *warriors* and Maasai *morans*, targeting other ethnic groups armed with bows and machetes, burning the farms and the houses. Rift Valley province, which was affected by the violence the most and where the most parliamentary seats were being elected, was considered an opposition stronghold. However, all were won by the ruling party (Kirschke 2000, p. 399). The government was funding the training of pro-government militias and supported them logistically during the clashes. Also, the investigation initiated by the Parliament resulted in a report claiming that the violence was organized by people close to president Moi including the vice-president, which was of course denied by government officials. Some of the perpetrators were even members of the state's paramilitary organization General Service Unit (Rudbeck et al. 2016, p. 156). The politicians hired gangs and militias of young and unemployed men to harass potential voters of the opposition and assure that the KANU will stay in power. As a consequence, affected people were not able to vote and many others feared to do so (Mueller 2008, p. 189).

The violence continued also after the elections. What was new, however, was that the violence spread also to urban areas, particularly to Nairobi and Nakuru (Carver 1994). Generally, the period of the late 1980s and 1990s was characterized also by the rise of violence in urban areas. Nairobi officials were illegally taking land from the people for city development, which fuelled the growth of the city slums and overall decay of the shanty towns where the poor lived. The dwellers were pushed out from some of the areas and slum markets were being destroyed (Mueller 2008, p. 192). Gangs were let by the police to operate freely in particular slums of Nairobi where the likely opposition voters lived (Rudbeck et al. 2016, p. 157).

The scenario was largely similar prior to the 1997 elections when the violence firstly broke out also in the coastal area of Kenya. Again, the victims were mainly non-autochthonous ethnic groups living in the areas where KANU dominated. And also this time, it was mainly Kikuyu who were targeted (Brown 2001, p. 727). During the 1990s altogether, 2000 people were killed and 500 000 displaced as a result of ethnic violence around the elections (Mueller 2008, p. 191).

As a consequence of state incited de-monopolization of violence in the 1990s together with its inability to exert control over its territory, the crisis of election violence continued also in the new millennium. In 2002 elections, the ruling party was finally defeated by National

Rainbow Coalition and Mwai Kibaki was elected a new president of Kenya, ending president's Moi 24 years long rule. While the elections were significantly less violent, many VNSAs emerged as influential political players before the elections, including Mungiki (Mwongera 2012). The violence erupted again after the announcement of the 2007 general elections. While the attacks were not orchestrated by the political parties themselves, most attacks were again conducted by Kalenjins against Kikuyus in Rift Valley, and by militias in urban areas against others that rejected the results of elections (Branch and Cheeseman 2008, p. 2). The scale of violence was however unprecedented, with over 1100 people killed and around 350 000 internally displaced (Aluoka 2016, p. 22) Elections in 2013 and 2017, while violent incidents occurred, were finally lacking the large-scale violence experienced in past elections (Carter Center 2018, p. 7).

Co-opting militias in the 1990s enabled the state to introduce modes of repression that it could not undertake using formal security forces, mainly because the state can refrain from being held accountable for the violence. The motivation of the state to delegate violence to militias was to create fear around the elections and discourage opposition supporters from voting (Branch and Cheeseman 2008, p. 13). A similar use of informal violence could have been observed in a number of other African countries, including Zimbabwe, Malawi, Rwanda, Nigeria or Cameroon (Kannevorff 2008, p. 119). The VNSAs hired by the government, however, did not cease to exist after the elections in Kenya. Rudbeck argues, that it was the high transaction cost of the formal repression that forced the government to turn to informal repression. That is because international donors' response to formal repression was cutting the aid (Rudbeck et. al. 2016).

The developments described above are a necessary brief introduction to the political and security context of Kenya during the emergence and of Mungiki as a VNSA. The rise of Mungiki will be illustrated in the following overview.

## **4.2 Rise of the Mungiki**

Among a large number of VNSAs active in Kenya in the last two decades, Mungiki was one of the most influential and remarkable. Information about Mungiki's initial years of existence is scarce since it stayed in secrecy due to the authoritative one-party system, which did not favor space for opposition association. Supposedly, they were founded around 1987 by ethnic Kikuyu youths, while some of them like Maina Njenga and Ndura Waruinge became

leaders of the movement (Kagwanja 2005, p. 55). Spokesperson of Mungiki Ndura Wauinge claimed he founded the movement with other six young people after consultation with ex-Mau Mau freedom fighters in Laikipia district (Wamue 2001, p. 455-456). Anderson (2002, p. 534) suggests that the movement emerged as a faction of Kikuyu religious group Tent of the Living God. Anyway, the movement did not initially start as a militia, criminal gang or vigilantes, but rather a social movement calling for a return to the traditional way of life.

As a VNSAs, Mungiki emerged before the first multiparty elections took place in 1992 as a Kikuyu force defending the members of their ethnic group against pro-government militias, particularly in Rift Valley province. The movement started recruiting youths through illegal oath-taking ceremonies and protecting their communities against atrocities while maintaining a sense of order in affected regions (Kagwanja 2003, o. 36-37). Subsequently, their agenda was economic emancipation and land rights of internally displaced, landless and jobless Kikuyu from the Rift Valley, which was simultaneously also an important source of Mungiki membership base (Oloo 2010, p. 153). Continuously, Mungiki became a militarily powerful violent actor during the 1990s with a deep grievance against the government of President Moi that sponsored the attacks against Kikuyus.

After 1997 when the violence in rural areas ceased, Mungiki migrated also to urban centers, particularly Nairobi, continuously building their strongholds in the city slums (Muthoni 2011, p. 169). The transformation of Mungiki to the urban environment also led to the transformation of its activities. Mungiki absorbed criminal elements, started to focus on economic objectives and eventually became a client of politicians, similarly to VNSAs they fought against in the 1990s. In terms of economic activities, they dominated the *matatu* industry (privately owned minibuses serving as means of public transport), collected garbage or offered protection (Kilonzo 2012, p. 232-233). Moreover, violent clashes between the Mungiki and the police began to take place on a weekly basis (Kannevorff 2008, p. 122).

Before the 2002 elections, Mungiki also attempted to enter formal politics when some of the leaders joined the opposition party Forum for the Restoration of Democracy - Kenya (FORD K) and aspired to become top officials in the party structure. Nevertheless, their candidature was eventually rejected (Oloo 2010, p. 161). Later, they also attempted to become the KANU candidates in the elections (Kannevorff 2008, 124-125). Surprisingly, the same year they also changed their long-lasting anti-government position and began openly supporting Moi's ruling party KANU and its presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the first president

of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta (ibid., p. 123). Mungiki started to be taken seriously as a political force, negotiated with the politicians and political parties and even with president Moi. However, the elections were won by the opposition National Rainbow Coalition-Kenya (NARC) and Moi's presidency ended. The new president Mwai Kibaki started a crackdown against the movement and Mungiki leader Maina Njenga was arrested for a time (Rasmussen 2010b, p. 435; 438). Later, Mungiki was allegedly tied to new ruling party and opposition politicians and continued with their activities also as a criminal organization (Gecaga 2007, p. 83).

In regards to the organizational structure of Mungiki, it is not highly centralized. The group consists of different units with different functions, such as an operational unit responsible for administering the oaths or collecting money, defense unit operating as an armed wing of the movement, public relations unit, coordination unit, and administration unit. Further, the group consists of cells (similarly to Al-Qaeda) of 50 members administered by the committee further divided into platoons. This scheme is applied in all areas they operate (Oloo 2010, p. 154; 158). The main decision-making bodies are the leadership council and the council of elders (Kannevorff 2008, p. 120). According to estimates, Mungiki had 1.5 to 2 million members paying fees for their membership, including 400 000 women (Kagwanja 2003, p. 34).

### **4.3 Conceptualizing Mungiki as a violent non-state actor**

Looking at the development of the Mungiki, the universal category best fitting for the group would be *a hybrid violent non-state actor* and *shape-shifter*. However, for the research, we differentiate between and establish particular phases of the Mungiki as a violent non-state actor. This, of course, is not be possible without some simplification that makes the analysis possible. Hence, it is necessary to identify to what ideal types of VNSAs were Mungiki closest to in particular periods of the group's development. While the categories are often blurred and in reality, violent groups rarely fulfill all criteria of theoretical concepts, for the analytical purpose, it is a necessary step for explaining their metamorphoses. Mungiki has been labeled with many categories during its history. Interestingly, most of them and simultaneously none of them fit. Nevertheless, with an aid of concepts introduced in previous sections and analysis of empirical material, it should be possible to determinate approximate

but still more specific phases of its development as a VNSA. Suggested phases and key milestones are illustrated in the following flowchart (Fig. 1).

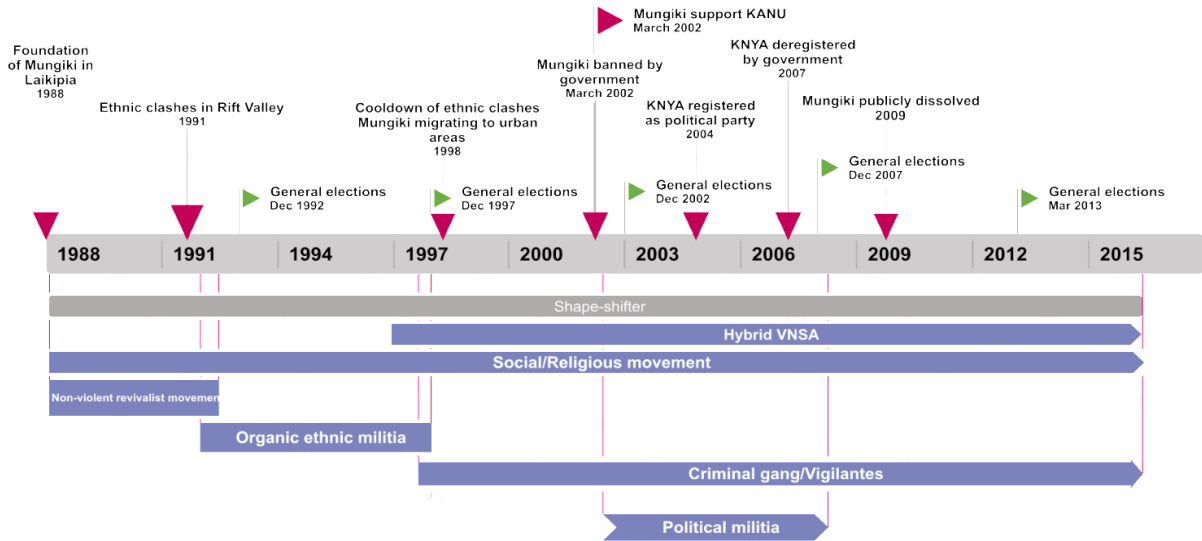


Figure 1. Approximate stages of Mungiki development

### 4.3.1 Mungiki as a social/religious movement

In the initial years of its existence, Mungiki was not a violent group. While the information about the early stage of its development is scarce, scholars believe that the group originally emerged as a youth movement seeking the return of traditional Kikuyu values and denouncing materialism of existing Christian churches in central Kenya (Anderson 2002, p. 533-534).

According to Giddens (2009, p. 1010), social movement embodies “*collective attempts to further a common interests or secure a common goal through action outside the sphere of established institutions.*” It can be both violent and non-violent focusing on social or political change and therefore can also encompass various VNSAs. Hence, Mungiki has always been a social movement. To conceptualize Mungiki in its initial years of existence more narrowly, it will be likely better to consider it a religious movement. Under the term religious movement, we can imagine various groups, including cults or sects existing all around the world. In recent decades, authors have been using term *new religious movements (NRM)*.

While there is no widely accepted definition of NRM, we speak of groups that emerged since World War II and in some ways differ from existing religions (Introvigne 2004, p. 980).

Nonetheless, to be even more specific, Mungiki can be described as a *revivalist movement*, label used by scholars generally to depict religious movements with fundamentalist reactions to globalization, modernism, and secularism (Lopez 2016, p. 3). Evers and Siddique (1993, p. 1-2) speak of religious revivalism as of a counter-movement to rationalization seeking to overcome the pressure of modernization or a type of anti-imperialist or anti-hegemonic movement. Simultaneously, the group may be communicating a renewal of a particular religion. Revivalist believe that "*modern society rewards them with material gain and consumer goods but robs their soul*" (Dorraj 1999, p. 227). Examining Mungiki's ideology, proclamations and activities shows that we are on the right track.

However, the agenda of Mungiki has been broad, including religious, cultural, economic and political liberation. According to Gecaga (2007, p. 71), fundamental principles of Mungiki are "*cultural self-determination, self-pride, and self-reliance*". The ultimate goal of Mungiki has been the establishment of the Kirinyaga Kingdom, a community-based Kikuyu religious kingdom in central Kenya. Subsequently, Mungiki expects other ethnic communities to establish their own kingdoms. The main enemy is a Western culture, neocolonialism and Christianity that brought oppression and exploitation to Kenyan people embodied also in the Kenyan government and Christian churches, according to the movement. This has to be achieved through liberation from mental captivity and return to indigenous culture, religion and traditional way of life (Wamue 2001, p. 459-460).

Mungiki's ideas and objectives fit for all three (sub)categories of movements mentioned above. They were, however, present during its whole period of existence, even though the means of achieving it and motivations for their actions have been changing and determined also by political and social developments in Kenya. Needless to say, during the time the tenets described above has been manipulated and adjusted according to the current context and needs of the leaders. Nevertheless, the period of Mungiki as a social/religious movement can be considered as a period since its foundation in 1987 until recent years, even though the group is virtually inactive nowadays. While it operated as a violent actor in later phases, it has still maintained a robust membership base among the predominantly non-violent population. Regarding the religious-revisionist agenda, particularly the leaders of the movement, however, have not always been stubbornly following Mungiki dogmas, but



approached their beliefs rather pragmatically. In 2000 for instance, following the national coordinator of Mungiki Ndura Waruinge, a number of the members converted to Islam in order to escape the government's persecution. Shortly, Waruinge and other members were arrested after visiting a church service and after the release, the leader founded his own Christian church. In 2009, another leader of Mungiki, Maina Njenga, converted to Christianity (Kilonzo 2012, p. 234-235).

Further, Rasmussen (2010a) considers Mungiki also a youth movement. Mungiki was supposedly founded by the youths. With over 60 percent of the members being under 30 years old it is predominantly youth movement and the idea of generational exchange in politics has been one of group's key standpoints when advocating for their objectives, making it a dominant narrative of their political involvement in post-2000s politics (Rasmussen 2010a, p. 306; Wamue 2001, p. 456). The youth plays a crucial role in Mungiki ideology. According to the movement, the older generation failed and betrayed the Kenyans, for example by not respecting their mandate periods and staying in power overdue and therefore neglecting the youths, who are marginalized and speechless. Handing over the power is a key element in Mungiki ideology, stemming from the tradition of *itwika*, ceremony of transferring tribal responsibility from one generation to another. This is also what the group has been demanding towards the Kenyan government (Wamue 2001, p. 463-364). Since the focus is on Mungiki as VNSA from a security studies standpoint in this paper, not on sociological aspects of the movement, considering Mungiki a social/religious movement while keeping in mind its revisionist ideology will do the job for the analysis. As will be demonstrated, Mungiki cannot be considered solely a religious movement.

#### **4.3.4 Mungiki as an ethnic militia**

It did not take long until Mungiki took up the arms. As early as in 1991, shortly before the first multi-party elections since the 1960s took place, ethnic clashes against the non-Kalenjin population in the Rift Valley and Western province broke out.

According to Raleigh (2014, p. 1), militia's goal is to "*alter the political landscape, increase power for patrons, protect supportive communities, and hinder opponents*". Mungiki's initial role as a VNSA between 1991 to 1998 was repulsing the attacks of mainly Kalenjin Warriors and Maasai Morans against the Kikuyu community. Mungiki believed that the state was backing the attackers and therefore started mobilizing the youth against the incumbent

government through ritual oaths. Sometimes they were able to successfully protect ordinary citizens from the attacks. Simultaneously, Mungiki already had some political patrons by that time, which is a typical attribute of ethnic militia (Kagwanja 2003, p. 35-37). These elites, however, do not have to be represented by the government officials nor political opponents but also by a community or religious leaders as in the case of early Mungiki existence as VNSA (ibid., p. 2).

Often, scholars merge militias and vigilantes into one category. What differs militias from the vigilante group is particularly the relationship of the group with the state, no matter whether they support the ruling regime or the opposition. While for the militias, the relationship is a determining factor, the vigilantes "*mimic the state in its absence*" (Schubert 2015a, p. 306). Taking into account Schubert's (ibid.) framework of community-based armed groups, one could hesitate whether Mungiki could have been labeled vigilante group or militia. The security dimension was dominant initially when the group operated mainly as a self-defense group of ethnic Kikuyu. However, it shortly became apparent that the interests of the group are also political, stemming from their ideology and assumption that the attacks were being orchestrated by the government. Moreover, rather than the violence occurred in ungoverned or alternatively governed spaces as vigilante groups usually operate in, the spaces were governed informally through the militias backed by the state. Furthermore, political patronage is a significant feature of militias and according to the evidence, also some of the Kikuyu politicians sponsored Mungiki's protection of civilians and retaliatory attacks against the state-sponsored militias (Kagwanja 2003, p. 35-37). Hence, while being aware of the artificiality and blurriness of the concepts, dominant features of Mungiki in the period between 1991 to 1998 seem to be fitting closest to the features of militias. Clearly, in the early phase of Mungiki's existence, the group cannot be considered pro-government militia as militias often are (Carey et al. 2011).

Also, ethnicity played a central role for Mungiki. Studying Nigerian militias, Agbu (2004, p. 7) observes that common attributes of ethnic militias are "*the uncritical use of violence, a preponderance of youth membership, ethnic identity affiliations, movements of a predominantly popular nature, demanding change over the status quo*". Firstly, Mungiki was founded by the youths and remained mainly a youth movement during its existence (Rasmussen 2010a, p. 302; Kagwanja 2003, p. 34). As explained earlier, ethnic identity has been strongly pronounced in the post-colonial Kenya and further fuelled by ethnic clashes.

Mungiki has been almost exclusively Kikuyu movement and also its ideology to a large extent revolved around Kikuyu ethnic affiliation. Regarding Agbu's notion of the popular nature of the ethnic militias, Mungiki started as a social movement before transforming itself into the militia. Last but not least, the change of status quo is an integral part of Mungiki ideology. In his framework, Schubert (2015a, p. 305) adds that ethnic militias retrieve their legitimacy based on neopatrimonialism and in connection with the traditional leader. In the case of Mungiki, the legitimacy is derived from the Mau Mau legacy and Mungiki leaders, self-proclaimed descendants of the original anti-colonial movement (Rasmussen 2010a). To large extent similar in this context was, for example, Mai-Mai in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which emerged as a militia protecting local communities from attacks of non-autochthonous groups (Schubert 2015a, p. 306).

In Raleigh's (2014) classification of militias based on the political context, the author distinguishes three types of militias: *local security providers* emerging in a state of decay, *emergency militias* emerging during crisis and *competition militias* arising in consolidated democracies during the political contest. His typology, however, does not seem to work for cases like Mungiki. It is possible to find features of Mungiki as a militia that fit one or more categories but they do not correspond with the political context and governance scenarios of the 1990s Kenya.

According to Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014, p. 32), Mungiki was an *organic militia* that developed as a response to the demand of the community, therefore to defend the Kikuyus from attacks of pro-government militias. Their assumption stems mainly from the fact that the group emerged organically, driven by the demand rather than conducting violence for political ends, as *organized militias* do. Authors, however, caution, that organic militias tend to turn into organized and become predatory. The third category is the so-called *state-indulged militia* encompassing militias supported by the state or under the patronage of powerful political figures, similarly to Mungiki in the later stage of their existence and pro-government militias during the period of early democratic transition.

Hence, based on a review of VNSAs and militias typology, it seems reasonable to conceptualize Mungiki during this period as an organically emerged ethnic militia. It is necessary to mention, however, that Mungiki activities as a social and religious movement during this period and on have been still present. The group maintained its religious and ideological aspects, supported the displaced Kikuyus and helped them establish farms,

advocating for social justice mainly in terms of land rights (Brownhill and Turner 2001; Kagwanja 2003).

#### **4.3.4 Mungiki as vigilantes/criminal gang**

In the late 1990s, Mungiki began to increasingly penetrate the urban areas of Kenya, particularly slums in Nairobi, in smaller scales also towns of Nakuru, Naivasha or Eldoret. When the ethnic violence calmed after 1998 and urbanization in Kenya was rapidly rising, also a number of often landless Kikuyus including widening Mungiki support base began to migrate into the cities (Kilonzo 2012, p. 232-233; Henningsen and Jones 201, p. 4). The shift in the political development and change of Mungiki's physical environment from rural to urban with all of its benefits and disadvantages resolved also in the change of group's manners of operation and strategies of achieving its goals.

While maintaining its membership base in rural Kenya, in the urban areas Mungiki continuously developed a range of economic interests, predominantly in the informal economy including security provision. Anderson for example (2002, p. 537) draws a distinction between religious rural Mungiki and criminal and political Mungiki in the cities. While initially not violent, the group got gradually involved in violent clashes with gangs and vigilante groups as well as with state security forces. Within the environment of poorly governed and overpopulated informal settlements bustling with violence, impoverished and unemployed slum dwellers and absence of public services, side by side with the proliferation of other VNSAs, Mungiki found themselves as a powerful economic, security and alternative governance actor while simultaneously expanding its membership base (Rasmussen 2014).

A number of reports of Mungiki's involvement in violent incidents in Nairobi rose after 2000, particularly in connection with clashes with other groups over the control of matatu routes and protection rackets. Security was provided by the members at matatu stages, markets and various settlements in Nairobi in exchange for forced fees (Rasmussen 2010c, p. 31). The group was also involved in widespread violence around the rents in the slums. Also, attacks on improperly dressed women were reported (Anderson 2002, p. 537-539). Mungiki members were also involved in robberies and car-jacking or weapons enterprises (Kagwanja 2006, p. 65). In other words, urban Mungiki entered the path of crime.

Williams (2008) recognizes both local and transnational criminal organizations and youth gangs, he nevertheless focuses on transnational crime only, Mair (2003) likewise. No data, however, suggest, that ethnically and locally oriented Mungiki had any significant international connections. For both subcategories of this type of VNSA however, applies that the violence is motivated mainly by economic gains. More helpful here is again Schubert's (2015a) framework of community-based armed groups, which enables to separate Mungiki in this stage from other stages. Using Clausewitz's vocabulary, contrary to militias whose main motivations are political, gangs' activities according to him "*are continuation of economics by other means*" (ibid., p. 309). Mutahi (2011, p. 13) sums up general characteristics of a gang that are agreed on in the scholarship, which is the ability to organize, name and symbols, claimed territory, usually shared ethnic or age group identity, high level of criminal activities and perception of the group as a gang.

Schubert (2015a) differentiates between two types of gangs. Youth gangs usually grow as a consequence of unfavorable social and cultural environment and their criminality is tied mainly to juvenile delinquency. While urban slums were largely insufficiently governed by state and such environment likely contributed to the proliferation of gangs in Nairobi along with the majority of Mungiki members being the youths, Mungiki corresponds rather with sub-type Schubert calls criminal gangs. The member base of these gangs is not limited by age. Youth gang members usually do not continue in criminal behavior after reaching maturity. The age span of Mungiki members, usually dreadlocked and recognizable by chewing tobacco, on the other hand, was not limited to youths, encompassing also children and elder people with the majority of its members in age between 18 and 40 (Kagwanja 2003, p. 34). The bulk of Mungiki members was young Kikuyus, however not "too young". Criminal gangs are also more institutionalized and organized and profit-oriented (Schubert, p. 310). Mungiki organizational structure described earlier suggests it was more than haphazard youth gang and organized activities were rather focused on economic gains than being just delinquency. Furthermore, the majority of income generated from the criminal activity did not end in the hands of the perpetrators (Kilonzo 2012, p. 237). In these terms, apart from the extortion of money from slum residents and businesses in form of protection rackets and public services, major income was from the Matatu industry through operating its own routes and forcing the drivers and conductors to pay a share to Mungiki (Kilonzo 2012, 236-237). In 2004, the police reported that a special unit called *Bagation squad* was created within the Mungiki as a response to transport reforms, which main tasks was to

secure funding through matatu routes and extorting money from the households in slums in exchange for security provision. The hit squad was also responsible for dealing with defectors who decided to leave the movement (Kagwanja 2006, p. 69).

Significant were also clashes of Mungiki with other armed groups in Nairobi over these Matatu routes, particularly in 2001 with the Kamjesh gang (Anderson 2002, p. 538). Before 2002 elections, Mungiki and other 17 groups were banned after reprisal attack against residents of Kariobangi North estate followed by an encounter with a local vigilante group called Taliban, leaving 20 residents dead (Anderson 2002, Rasmussen 2010c, p. 33) In response to a number of incidents including clashes with the police forces, law enforcement started a crackdown against the Mungiki, the meetings were outlawed and a number of members arrested (Gecaga 2007, p. 79).

There is however also another point of view on how to conceptualize Mungiki during this stage. According to Kagwanja (2003, p. 37), Mungiki's activities also involved successful campaigns against alcoholism, drugs, prostitution or sexually transmitted diseases in city slums and were also successful in eliminating criminality in certain areas of Nairobi. Through the control of matatu routes, local security, dumpsites, and other public services in certain areas including garbage collection, public toilets or water taps and illegal electricity collection, the group was also providing jobs for their members (Rasmussen 2010, p. 22-24; 34). These activities shed a light on Mungiki also as a vigilante group.

Contrary to the gangs, vigilantes' priority is to provide security within a particular community, both from criminals or general disorder. Johnston (1996, p. 220) argues that vigilantes have to be voluntary organized as a social movement, use or threaten to use violence, aiming at controlling crime and providing security and arise as a response to (even potential) collapse of rule of law. This fairly corresponds with Mungiki's presence and certain activities in urban areas described above.

The group has been present in various slums in Nairobi, mainly those dominated by the Kikuyu population, namely Mathare, Dandora, Kayole, Korogocho, Kariobangi and others (Oloo 2010; Landinfo 2010; Rasmussen 2010). Slums in Nairobi have been largely neglected by the state, they have high population density, public services do not exist or are at a minimal level and most of the inhabitants have low income (Mitullah 2003, p. 8). These gaps of governance were filled by alternative non-state governance actors in the slums - in other

words, the state did not have hegemony in these informal settlements. This corresponds with high rates of crime in Nairobi, which contributed to the emergence of violent groups that focused on security provision. According to a survey conducted in Nairobi in 2001, 22 % of respondents had fallen victim to street mugging and 28.5 % of a home burglary in the previous 12 months (Anderson 2002, p. 533).

As was stated earlier, what distinguishes vigilantes from militias is the relationship of a group with the state. While militia maintains some type of relationship with the state and political patrons, vigilantes act as a state in areas where the state is absent (Schuberth 2015a, p. 306). While it is likely that Mungiki has had some ties to (mainly) Kikuyu politicians during most time of its existence (Kagwanja 2003, p. 37), there is not an evidence it was a dominant feature which would significantly influence Mungiki's activities in urban areas during this phase, especially compared to elections run-up before 2002. Analyzing Mungiki in a period around 2000, the best matching categories reflecting preeminent features of the group seem to be a gang and vigilante group.

Using Schuberth's (2015a) classification of community-based armed groups that emphasize the dimension that prevails in a given armed group, namely economic, security and political dimension, for urban-based Mungiki in the time period between approximately 1998 and 2002, first two dimensions seem to be fitting the best. The reason for this time span is a considerable decline of ethnic clashes in 1998 followed by an increased presence of the members in urban areas and Mungiki's extensive involvement in the formal political structures before 2002 general elections in Kenya.

However, if we accept Schuberth's (2015a) distinction, the economic dimension seems to be pronounced stronger than security dimension, since the main motivation of Mungiki's activities regarded to security provision was the acquisition of funds, even though ideologically oriented rhetoric of group's members might suggest the contrary. Therefore, we suggest that the closest ideal type of VNSA to Mungiki during this period is a gang.

Media, the Kenyan government and some scholars (Anderson 2002; Gecaga 2007; Mutahi 2011, Muthoni 2011) have been labeling Mungiki simply a gang or vigilantes. It is, however, important to keep in mind that Mungiki has never been solely a gang or vigilante group, although the dominant characteristics of how the group operated in urban areas in the late 1990s, early 2000s and to some degree even in following years match the categories. It is

best to say that Mungiki functions as various types of VNSAs overlapped. To be more specific, in reality, it is difficult to isolate Mungiki as a criminals/vigilantes and Mungiki as a militia since the group's activities in urban areas became intertwined relatively quickly with politics as demonstrated in further sections. For the analysis, however, to track Mungiki's transformation, it is useful to separate these functions instead of merging them together, because these categories are often used incorrectly.

Reports of Mungiki activities since this period suggest that the group had maintained this status also in following years until its gradual disintegration, for some period of time under political patronage and political dimension dominating (International Crisis Group 2008) co-opted by part of ruling elite (Kagwanja 2006, p. 53), which shifts the group under another category. Mungiki's function as a criminal organization motivated by materialistic goals, however, continued even after 2002 elections simultaneously with several attempts to enter formal politics and alleged patronage of some ex-KANU and opposition politicians (Landinfo 2010, p. 15). These activities were always present particularly in urban areas, which further complicates clear conceptualization.

### **4.3.5 Mungiki as a political militia**

The phase of Mungiki's engagement in politics is not easy to separate from the Mungiki as vigilantes and gang. Rather, these stages of the group's existence were overlapping and complementing each other. For both of them, the common feature was that these stages were related predominantly to the group's urban presence. While initially largely distanced from formal politics, the group transformed in highly politicized VNSA. Signs of politicization of Mungiki were, however, possible to observe even earlier, when some politicians were arraigned with their involvement in group's activities like organizing defense against pro-government militias (Gecaga 2007, p. 79). Still, to demonstrate various facets of the group which will help unfold processes behind the group's metamorphoses, it is distinguished between Mungiki as a predominantly criminal organization and Mungiki as a political militia.

Mungiki's co-option in mainstream politics reached its peak prior to 2002 Kenyan general elections, when they started to support the ruling party KANU, the party they opposed since the very beginning of their existence as a VNSA. According to Hornsby (2013, p. 676), with



increasing influence the group was able to gain support from wealthy Kikuyus, members of parliament, and ministers. Seeking the support of Kikuyu youth, also president Moi partnered with Mungiki for the upcoming elections. Also, the number of violent incidents in which Mungiki was involved was increasing and ethnic tensions as well, particularly after killing in Kariobangi estate in March 2002. Despite that Mungiki and other groups were banned after the attack, the government came under heavy criticism for soft stance against Mungiki (Gecaga 2007, p. 82). The police was announcing crackdowns against the group, however, the effort to really do so was not apparent (Daily Nation 2002a).

Previously, president Moi had frequently accused Mungiki of taking illegal oaths in order to overthrow the government (Wamue 2001, p. 464). In 2000, Mungiki held a protest gathering in Nairobi against Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the first president of Kenya and KANU politician, accusing him of being a traitor (Anderson 2002, p. 540). Two years later, everything changed. So-called Project Uhuru was a strategy of president Moi in response to generational sentiments in the society tied with KANU candidate for president Uhuru Kenyatta and other young politicians such as Raila Odinga or Musalia Mudavadi known also as *Young Turks* which he contrasted with veteran politicians in the opposition (Kagwanja 2006, p. 57). Project Uhuru appealed also to Mungiki, which embraced the idea of generational transfer of power in its ideological tenets, the tradition of *itwika*. The leaders of the movement negotiated with the political parties and even attended five meetings with president Moi (Rasmussen 2010b, p. 440). Moi's government also helped the group during its takeover of Matatu routes in the Nairobi neighborhoods and glossed over Mungiki's criminal activities (Kagwanja 2006, p. 64-65).

Mungiki's leaders' ideological reasoning behind the support for Uhuru Kenyatta was mainly his youth. Despite the group was prohibited by then, on the day of Kenyatta's nomination in August 2002, thousands of Mungiki members armed with melee weapons flooded the streets of Nairobi to demonstrate the support (Kagwanja 2006, p. 63). There, Mungiki together with two Kikuyu members of parliament threatened with violence against those insulting president Moi (The New Humanitarian 2002; Daily Nation 2002a). Furthermore, while the demonstration in support of the opposition coalition was dispersed by police forces a few days later, Mungiki's unlawful and armed gathering in the city center was left without any police counter-measures or government condemnation (Daily Nation 2002b). The group leaders even subsequently claimed that Kenyatta was a member of Mungiki, which he

however denied and distanced himself from the group (Daily Nation 2002b; East African Standard 2002). Some members of the group nevertheless claimed that their support of Uhuru Kenyatta was only a strategy of how to discredit him (Rasmussen 2010b).

Mungiki leaders were at the same time attempting to acquire parliamentary seats for themselves. Both spiritual leader Maina Njenga and national coordinator Ndura Waruinge campaigned as KANU candidates for the upcoming elections. On the day of voting of nominees, Mungiki deployed its members in Laikipia District where Njenga campaigned, to "monitor" the voting, undermining the process and creating fear among the potential voters. Eventually, Njenga was announced to be a winner. The day later, the results were eventually canceled and in both cases, the nomination was refused by the KANU (Kannevorff 2008, p. 124-125).

Surprisingly, the December 2002 elections did not end well either for the incumbent government of Daniel arap Moi. Instead, a coalition of opposition parties called the National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition led by Mwai Kibaki won a parliamentary majority, ending Moi's over the two-decades-long rule. This was the ultimate failure for Mungiki to attempt to penetrate mainstream politics. The results catalyzed violence in Kenyan cities by Mungiki and its rivals that were encouraged by opposition victory, mostly over matatu routes. According to testimonies by arrested members, killings in Nakuru were sponsored by former politician David Manyarra aligned to KANU who was also arrested (Kagwanja 2006, p. 66). After two months since elections, it was reported that more than 50 people died in violence Mungiki was involved in (Kannevorff 2008, p. 126). Meanwhile, new Kibaki's government started a crackdown on Mungiki's leaders almost immediately. Allegations of links to Mungiki, however, appeared also within the winning coalition between the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK) and Liberal Democratic Party, since group's members participated at their candidates' rally (Gecaga 2007, p. 83).

The newly elected government took a harsh approach towards Mungiki, declaring total war (retaliated by Mungiki in many occasions) and was able to weaken the group, particularly with help of public transport reform that hurt Mungiki's main source of funds, the Matatu industry (Hornsby 2013, p. 709). Although the violence continued, the Mungiki had to keep a low profile. The new government adopted new "shoot to kill on sight" policy against all Mungiki members, internal disputes erupted around Mungiki's support of KANU (by 2004, it is estimated 75 % of members left the movement, including national coordinator Ndura

Waruinge and other leaders), group lost its financial sponsors, some of the leaders including Maina Njenga were arrested and the movement was struggling to define a new position after unsuccessful political involvement. This resulted in Mungiki's renewed orientation on informal economy, crime, and a war on movement's defectors, as described in the previous section (Kannevorff 2008, p. 127).

The 2002 elections were however not the final word from Mungiki in mainstream politics. Before 2004, Mungiki's formal political wing which they also used to gain political influence, The Kenya National Youth Alliance, was registered as a lobby group. In 2004, it registered as a political party, however, the registration was canceled by Kibaki's government. In 2008, the group held a political rally under the name Progress Party Alliance (Kilonzo 2012, p. 240). In late 2009, Mungiki was attempting to register KNYA as a political party once again. After another unsuccessful attempt, the group's members began to register as members of the Mkenya Solidarity Movement, the party has however not been successful neither (Rasmussen 2010b, p. 440).

Within the context of violent 2007 elections, Mungiki was again involved in politically motivated violence, allegedly supported by Kikuyu senior members of the government (Henningsen and Jones 2013, p. 5). Only a few hours after the results were published, Mungiki started the violence against ethnic Luo and Luhya in urban areas of Nairobi (International Crisis Groups 2008, p. 9). In response to tens of thousands of Kikuyus displaced as a result of election violence, Mungiki also started killing Luo and Kalenjin in Central Province and Nakuru, with indications of Kikuyu politicians supporting the violence (Waki 2008; Hornsby 2013, p. 764). Group was also likely well-armed. According to the police, there were six armories in Central Province and Rift Valley full of AK 47 and G3 rifles and ammunition (Ngunyi and Katumanga 2014, p. 42). Reportedly, the violence was conducted on behalf of the Party of National Unity led by Mwai Kibaki, leader of dissolved NARC coalition, also ethnic Kikuyu (International Crisis Group 2008, p. 14). The elections were won by Orange Democratic Party led by Raila Odinga with 99 seats of 208 seats earned in Parliament. The violence initiated by Mungiki led to the establishment of so-called *kwekwe* unit within the police, specialized in hunting down Mungiki members, for which human-rights organizations blamed security forces for excessive extra-judicial killings (UN Human Rights Council 2009). Mungiki also continued in their crusade against defectors that

involved beheading of "traitors", which resulted in almost 2 500 suspected Mungiki members being arrested in 2007 (Landinfo 2010, p. 13-14).

In 2009, the leader of Mungiki Maina Njenga publicly announced the dissolution of the group, converted to Christian Pentecostal Church, and encouraged members of Mungiki to follow him. In 2012, Njenga took over the leadership in party Mkenya Solidarity (Rasmussen 2013). Reports of violence by Mungiki continued also in the following years, however with the declining trend with rather isolated incidents dispersed around the country with Mungiki alleged involvement. This indicates that the group went underground and significantly weakened (see Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2013; CESNUR 2019).

Clearly, in the periods particularly around elections, Mungiki was a different violent non-state actor than it was in previous stages. This stage, however, seems to be most difficult to be assigned to a particular category of VNSA. Mungiki have had kind of "snowballing" various characteristics from individual phases analyzed in previous sections and merging them together. Nevertheless, one aspect of this phase stood out above other facets - Mungiki turned fully political. Unlike other politically motivated VNSAs as insurgencies or rebels and while Mungiki's ultimate ideological goal was the establishment of the Kirinyaga Kingdom of ethnic Kikuyus, the group had not demonstrated ambitions to do so, to topple the government, demand greater autonomy or conduct insurgencies. This suggests that Mungiki can be categorized under Schuberth's (2015a) subgroup of VNSAs - community-based armed groups which include also militias. While some of the violent attacks could carry signs of terrorist attacks, their motivations were economical or based on patron-client networks between the group and politicians. Mostly, however, the attacks were against other VNSAs, retaliatory or against security forces rather than civilians. Similarly, as Williams (2008, p. 10-11) describes militias, Mungiki was representing the particular ethnic, religious, and communal group and substituted functions of the state in certain spheres of public services. These attributes can be however observable also in different stages of the group existence. More important is a notion of possible ties to the state, which clearly existed as demonstrated with evidence described above. Militias usually act on behalf of the government (Schneckener 2009, p. 9). Public threats to the president's opponents, support of the incumbent government, and ethnic violence not dissimilar to violence by pro-government militias in the 1990s support this thesis. Raleigh (2014, p. 1) points out that militias seek to "*alter the political landscape, increase power for patrons, protect supportive*

*communities, and hinder opponents*". All of these features were observable during this stage. Mungiki supported the generational exchange of government and pursued their desire to participate in it, supported the ruling parties as their patrons, simultaneously defended ethnic Kikuyus against attacks by other ethnic groups, and threatened and targeted the opponents. Contrary to Mungiki during its phase as an ethnic militia, their patrons were not mostly community and religious leaders but first and foremost the politicians. The violence was on its peak mainly around the elections, which is typical for VNSA Raleigh (2014) calls competition militias.

Schuberth's (2015a) framework of community-based armed groups enables to analyze the VNSA in greater detail. The actions of Mungiki under political patronage were a continuation of politics by other means, with patrons both within the political system and in the leadership of the movement. Schuberth (ibid.) differentiates between two types of militias, ethnic militias, and popular militias. Mungiki was already identified in previous sections as an ethnic militia during the 1990s ethnic violence in Kenya. Rather than on populism, also this time was the relationship between the patrons and the group based on neo-patrimonialism. Instead of ethnicity, however, which undoubtedly also played a significant role in this relationship (particularly during 2007 elections), it was mainly the generational exchange anchored in Mungiki's ideology as a Kikuyu tradition of *itwika* and manifested in Moi's campaigning of Young Turks, that served as a legitimization for the relationship by side of Mungiki. Of course, the self-interest of Mungiki in this connection was present as well.

Description of Mungiki during this stage clearly corresponds with a category scholarship classifies as a militia. It is clear, however, that Mungiki as a militia in the 1990s was not the same as Mungiki during this phase. Therefore, to differentiate these two phases and to emphasize the political dimension of the militia and its ties to the state, similarly like Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014, p. 32) describe state-indulged militias, we suggest to label it a political militia. While militias are according to some classifications political by their nature and adjective "political" is not widely used (e. g. Bazenguissa-Ganga 1998), here it seems reasonable considering the level of politicization of the group accompanied by attempts of leaders to enter formal politics officially. Initially, in accordance with Mungiki ideology its followers were rejecting political involvement, since desired Kirinyanga Kingdom was not supposed to be a political entity but rather religious (Wamue 2001, p. 460).

Again, it is important to remind that Mungiki has never fitted neatly to a particular category of VNSA. The movement has been rather layering features of various types of VNSAs on top of each other. This was manifested especially during the last stage of Mungiki evolution starting before 2002 elections and forward when initially political dimension was dominating while complemented with activities typical for other ethnic militias, gangs, or vigilantes. Hence, if more general category is to be used, group since its expansion to urban areas can be characterized as a hybrid-group while the label shape-shifter is valid for the whole time of Mungiki's existence.

#### **4.4 Transformations of Mungiki**

Since the key terms and approximate phases of Mungiki development were conceptualized according to the categorization of VNSAs (or CBAGs alternatively), this section finally focuses on the processes of metamorphoses of the movement. Given that the method of explaining-outcome process tracing was selected, the mechanisms of transformation between each of the phases according to previous conceptualization are explored. Therefore, it is sought after why the group transformed from religious movement to ethnic militia, then from ethnic militia to gang/vigilantes and finally why it got politicized and became also political militia. The analysis of each of the transformations is conducted in the following subsections.

Firstly, the deductive path of inquiry is used, meaning that theories and models introduced in previous chapters are tested against empirical evidence. In the third chapter of the thesis, relevant theories of VNSAs transformations and emergence were reviewed. Secondly, when the systematic mechanisms prove not to explain transformation sufficiently, non-systematic case-specific evidence is inductively evaluated to uncover processes that led to the outcome.

##### **4.4.1 From religion to arms**

How Mungiki transformed from non-violent religious movement to ethnic militia? It was mainly the events of elections violence between 1991 and 1993 and later around 1997 that had formed movements future as a VNSA. While the early history of the movement is puzzling as demonstrated when Mungiki was conceptualized, the political, security, and

social developments in Kenya at that time complement the picture of the group's metamorphosis.

The first model reviewed was Hazen's (2009) *cycle of protest* model stemming from social movement theory tested on the case of Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) in Nigeria, which also transformed from non-violent social movement into VNSA. According to the model, there are four key variables that researchers should focus on when explaining groups becoming violent: political opportunities, framing alignment, resource mobilization, and group competition. While the process does not correspond with the development of Mungiki, these key variables help to unveil some of the aspects of transformation.

Similarly to Mungiki representing Kikuyus, a politically marginalized ethnic group with jobless and poor youths, Ijaw Youth Council was representing the Ijaw community of marginalized youth in the Niger Delta area. And as well as in Kenya, the process of (re)democratization in Nigeria was marked with violence of militias hired by politicians. While the context of the evolution of NDPVF had some similarities with Kenya in the early 1990s, the transformation from social movement to VNSA differed on many accounts. Firstly, NDPVF emerged as a splinter group of IYC, social movement consisting of several groups united under the umbrella of this social movement which remained non-violent. Meanwhile, more militant NDPVF was competing with other groups within IYC over resources and popular support. While other scholars mostly do not dig deep into the possibility of Mungiki roots in other movements, Wamue (2002) claims Mungiki started as a splinter group of sect Tent of the Living God. Mapeu (2002) on the other hand suggests Mungiki had connections to the Tent of the Living God, however, they cut the ties before the 1997 elections when the sect began to mingle with the KANU party. According to Anderson (2002), Mungiki detached itself from sect before 1990. Most of the scholars, however, deal with Mungiki as with independent entity. Nonetheless, it is not documented that any competition within the larger movement, apart from the fact of Mungiki being more radical in their ideology, contributed to the violence.

In terms of framing alignment, on the other hand, this factor played a crucial role. The violence by Mungiki was clearly not random aggression but rather a tool for protection and survival. Hazen (2009, p. 284) identifies two key elements of framing alignment, that is context and legitimacy of using violence. The context involves the identification of an opponent, its characteristics, and the group position towards it. In the case of Mungiki, the

opponent was the government as an oppressor, embodied in Kalenjin and Maasai militias. Kikuyus represented by Mungiki were therefore mainly a victim. This narrative is also closely tied to the legitimization of violence. Kikuyus felt oppressed, marginalized, and believed that the violence perpetrated by Kalenjins and Maasais is orchestrated by Moi's government even before official reports were released (Wamue 2001, p. 465). The violence was nevertheless not considered primarily as a mean of social or political change, but rather a mean of protection.

Resource mobilization was vital for Mungiki particularly in terms of group membership and public support. While the ways of funding of the group in its early years are not clear, it is likely these included member fees as well as donations of wealthier Kikuyus and possibly also some Kikuyu politicians. Mungiki revivalist rhetoric appealed to Kikuyu public, that was marginalized during Moi's rule not only politically, but also economically and socially. Kikuyus were for a long time being removed from key government positions, large Kikuyu organizations were de-registered, citizens were negatively affected by unfair quota systems of resource distribution, and farmers not being paid for their products (Gecaga 2007, p. 69). Public support was further guaranteed with ritualized oaths taken by the members binding them to the movement. Oathing rituals are an important heritage of Mau Mau reintroduced by Mungiki to secure the loyalty of Kikuyus to the movement and its ideology (Green 1990). Referencing to group's roots in Mau Mau and Kikuyu culture, Mungiki were, therefore, able to successfully and quickly ensure wide support among Kikuyu public, mobilizing mainly poor and jobless youth within the well-defined structure of organized cells not only for defense but mainly for improvement of the economic situation of Kikuyus. Regarding the collective effort of Kikuyus based on Mungiki structures in agricultural production, Kahura (2017) likens the organizational system to the kibbutz system in Israel. Resource mobilization was an important factor for the group's ability to successfully repulse the attacks and future increase of power. The available evidence, however, implies that popular support and funds were at least initially not gathered to produce violent action but to enhance economic and social footing. Given the continuing increase of support of Mungiki when the ethnic clashes began in 1991, the violence carried out by Mungiki apparently did not discourage Kikuyus from joining the movement. In the eyes of its supporters, the violence was a legitimate mean of defense against informal repression of government's proxies, retaliatory attacks then adequate response. The use of violence was also not a response to



political opportunity. That came years later when Mungiki established ties with government officials.

A number of scholars (see Kagwanja 2003; Wamue 2001; Anderson 2002; Brownhill and Turner 2001) agree that Mungiki violent action was a response to attacks of pro-government militias against ethnic groups perceived to be supporters of the opposition. Despite the limited data on Mungiki, looking at how Kikuyus and other communities responded in various locations to ethnic clashes, it appears to be a major factor for the transformation. The hypothesis of distance decay by Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014) also corresponds with Mungiki's emergence in the sense of decay of the relationship between Kikuyu members and the government.

This hypothesis finds partial support also in combination with Schlichte's (2009) suggested mechanisms. According to the *repression mechanism*, VNSAs emerge from non-armed groups as a reaction to the state's repression of political opposition. In this case, however, the repression was informal and did not result in armed rebellion. Notably, what he suggests as a *spin-off mechanism* when state-sponsored militias become independent, was the case of proliferation of VNSA in Kenya during the 1990s that laid the ground for the security environment within which Mungiki was developing.

Human Rights Watch (1992) thoroughly addressed the ethnic clashes that occurred during 1992 multi-party elections in Kenya and government's support for militias was also confirmed by Parliamentary Committee in the document known as Kiliku Report (1992), stating that violence was instigated by Kalenjin and Maasai politicians close to the President and other government officials. As soon as the first clashes began in 1991, ethnic Luos, Luhyas and Kikuyus responded with retaliatory attacks. Human Rights Watch also reported on oath-taking among Kikuyus to defend their lives and property, on part probably by Mungiki members. Interestingly, the violence helped Mungiki to mobilize more and more supporters during the following years, mainly victims of ethnic clashes and people displaced as a result of them (Kagwanja 2002, p. 29). Informal repression only strengthened Kikuyus grievances against Moi's party rule. The oath-taking also led to the increased attention of the government towards Mungiki, which was preparing itself for anticipated violence during 1998 elections, when it was actively protecting Kikuyus from pro-government militias' attacks (Gecaga 2007, p. 78).

An important factor was also government reaction after the clashes broke out. Moi's government refused any involvement in the clashes and labeled them a result of ethnic tensions. The victims received little support from the government and law enforcement did not show much effort in stopping the violence. Kalenjin and Maasai perpetrators were often not prosecuted and if they were, they were in many cases released, members of other ethnic groups, on the other hand, were being arrested disproportionately more actively, mainly for possession of weapons (Human Rights Watch 1993). The government's discriminatory approach likely only encouraged Mungiki in their decision to militarise itself.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that calls for *majimboism* also significantly influenced security discourse in Kenya. Kikuyus are actually a non-autochthonous ethnic group in Rift Valley province, where ethnic clashes were most intense. With upcoming elections, a number of mainly Kalenjin politicians including president Moi called for ethnic exclusivity of individual parts of Kenya and the return of the land to its original settlers from the pre-colonial era. In the case of Rift Valley, those were mainly Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana, and Samburu. This ethnic federalism became a hot topic before the 1992 elections with politicians rallying and mobilizing Kalenjins and other smaller ethnic groups for support of KANU. This significantly contributed to the tensions between pro-government ethnic groups and opposition supporters (Human Rights Watch 1993; Kagwanja 2003; Hornsby 2013).

It is, however, necessary to mention also Mungiki's radical ideology rooted in Mau Mau, which formed the group's inclination to violence. Supposedly, the Mungiki foundation was consulted with some of the ex-Mau Mau generals, fighting against the colonial system before Kenya's independence. Also, similarly to Ndura Waruinge, many members claim to be grandchildren of Mau Mau fighters (Wamue 2001, p. 455). Mau Mau became infamous for its brutality not only against British settlers but also African loyalists, who served the colonial regime (Meriwether 1998). Referencing to Mau Mau, Mungiki leaders only strengthened the narrative of its militancy and ethnic exclusivity.

Despite the lack of detailed information on Mungiki's early development, it is possible to get a snapshot of the processes behind the group's transformation from social movement to an ethnic militia. Evaluating available data with the aid of Hazen's theory and contextual analysis based on non-systematic mechanisms specific to the case, it is possible to trace key events that led to Mungiki's inclination to violence.

Clearly, the most decisive events for Mungiki's militarization were attacks of Kalenjin and Maasai militias against Kikuyus particularly in Rift Valley province, which led to the mobilization of group members and recruitment of new members to protect fellow Kikuyus, respectively might also provoke retaliatory attacks. The violence on behalf of Mungiki was legitimate in the eyes of many Kikuyus given the circumstances. It was also a belief that violence was the only possible way for the survival of the group. Ideological roots in Mau Mau in connection with ritualized oath-taking then sealed Mungiki's commitment to resistance even with the use of violence.

Ethnic clashes would however likely not occur without the introduction of the multi-party system. As a result, the government's formal repression transformed into informal, which was reflected in its tolerance and even support of the proliferation of pro-government VNSAs. The government's inaction, calls for ethnic federalization possibly resulting in wiping Kikuyus out of Rift Valley, discriminatory approach towards perpetrators and victims of ethnic clashes, criminalization of Mungiki, and recurring support for pro-government ethnic militias only cemented group's position as an armed movement. On the other hand, there is no direct evidence that economic factors significantly contributed to the decision of the group to become violent, at least not in this initial phase. Economic aspects nevertheless gained their significance with Mungiki's migration to the urban areas. It should be also noted that the de-monopolization of violence was not a result of state failure. Rather, coinciding with Boege's (2009, p. 19) concept of hybrid political order, ethnic militias were an extension of the state's power, which resorted to alternative forms of repression as a reaction to the opening of the political system.

The suggested mechanism is therefore as follows. The introduction of the multi-party system by Moi's government as a response to international and public pressure was a key trigger for government's replacement of formal repression, enabled by the nature of the authoritative political system, to informal repression against its political opponents, embodied in Kikuyu and other ethnic groups perceived to support the opposition. To stay in power, incumbent elites chose to employ non-state armed groups to harass and deter perceived opposition supporters from voting. This was further boosted by calls for majimboism by pro-government politicians, which only increased ethnic tensions. When the violence started, Mungiki followers having strong grievances against Moi's rule recognized the use of violence as protection and retaliation against the attacks legitimate. Hence, the

metamorphosis was rather a strategy for survival and protection of the community. Simultaneously the decision was likely supported in Mungiki's ideological roots, including Mau Mau militancy and binding of the members through illegal oaths. The efficient organizational structure further helped the mobilization. Eventually, the government's inaction in result only strengthened support for Mungiki transformation to VNSA.

#### **4.4.2 Path of crime**

By the time of ethnic clashes after 1997 elections, Mungiki already established itself as violent non-state actor acknowledged by the government, when it participated in retaliatory attacks and grew in numbers (Kagwanja 2003, p. 37). While the group had already its members in urban areas, many migrated to the cities after the 1990s ethnic violence, particularly to Nairobi slums. In these neglected parts of the metropolis, Mungiki got extensively involved in the activities mostly resembling those of vigilantes and gangs.

African shanty towns are often a good example of hybrid political orders and a reflection of limited statehood. Mostly, slums in Nairobi emerged as informal settlements with minimal state involvement in terms of services or security. While some form of governance was provided by VNSAs including Mungiki, de-monopolization of violence also led to the creation of what Williams (2010) terms dangerous spaces reflected in frequent clashes between gangs and vigilantes operating in urban areas. Particularly around the elections of 2002 and 2007, Nairobi represented the fragile city as conceptualized by Raleigh (2015). In other words, the slums illustrate gaps in the state's governance that are to be filled with alternative forms of governance. In Nairobi at the end of the 1990s, one of these hybrid governance actors were also Mungiki. Following the gap hypothesis, Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014) point out that state absence and abstinence in urban areas in Kenya also breeds the bandit economy, consisting of crime-based markets.

According to Vincenzo (2006, p.69), urban violence is closely tied to rapid migration to urban areas, creating communities usually clustered mainly along ethnic lines. After the clashes in the 1990s, a high number of victims including Kikuyus established themselves in Nairobi slums (Servant 2007, p. 522). Facing the challenges of land scarcity and lack of revenues in the rural areas, Mungiki followers were able to find new sources of income in Nairobi (Kilonzo 2012, p. 236). This is what Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014) describe in their

distance decay hypothesis, which in the case of urban Kikuyus reflects the decay of the relationship between the state and ethnic group. For Mungiki, these communities were also a fertile ground for recruits. The group was able to incorporate a number of youths mainly in slums inhabited predominantly by Kikuyu and thus creating what Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014) label ethnically exclusive captured base, developing into green formation reacting to the demand for security, not provided by the government. Given the alleged advancement of the organizational structure of the group, captured base and green formations were likely rather fertile ground for recruitment than actual development phases of already established VNSA. Mungiki activities were not limited only to vigilantism but contained also profit-oriented criminal activities. Specialization on particular ventures including Matatu industry, protection rackets or services substituting the state along with frequent violent clashes with other groups or law enforcement indicate that Mungiki established itself as actualized organized gang as portrayed by Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014, p. 81-82)

On account of Schuberth's theory of vigilantism as a result of socio-political processes (2013), it should be noted that Mungiki's emergence as this type of VNSA could be also a result of state's policy choices. While Kenya does not have a post-colonial history of institutional racism, it is possible to trace institutionalized discrimination to the colonial era. In 1948, city planning inspired by racially segregated South Africa shaped Nairobi to similarly segregated city with designated zones for Africans who were mostly regarded not to be permanent residents and streets projected in fashion to increase control of such neighborhoods. Even in the post-colonial period, however, these parts of the rapidly growing city kept low prioritization in terms of service provision and were left on their own until nowadays. As a result, VNSAs including Mungiki were able to take advantage of these areas lacking any development (Rasmussen 2010c). Katumanga (2005) further elaborates on how the state contributed to violence and insecurity during the 1990s and early 2000s through the privatization of violence and patronage of VNSAs. Also, the crackdowns against violent groups particularly in the early 2000s during both Moi's and Kibaki's rule reflected the securitization of crime in slums (Elfverson 2019). Interestingly, the relationship of the state with VNSAs was changing between confrontation and patronage. Further, calls for majimboism and state-sponsored ethnic violence in the 1990s only contributed to ethnic polarization in Kenya, already divided along ethnic lines after decades of politics of patronage. While the impact of these policies was likely not as deep such as in cases of South Africa or Brazil as described by Schuberth (2009), policy choices outlined above

significantly contributed to demand for alternative governance and protection, offered by vigilante groups including Mungiki.

This culture of violence raised in neglected urban areas explains the group's transformation only partly. Mungiki's metamorphosis to the gang/vigilante group has its roots also in migration of Kikuyus to urban areas, particularly slums in Nairobi, caused by forced displacement, impoverishment, and land loss during 1990s ethnic violence. Simultaneously, shanty towns were a perfect source of recruits, particularly the youth. A broad spectrum of activities in the informal economy suggests that motivation to develop into the the gang was largely economical. Matatu industry, security provision, or range of public services in shanty towns were ventures closely tied with violence against rival VNSAs and even police interfering with group's businesses. These sources of income are almost exclusively urban in nature. Remarkably, Mungiki's crusade for social justice and economic emancipation anchored in the group's ideology was in contrast with these predatory activities committed on its own community. This reflects urban Mungiki's abandonment of its original ideological roots, at least partly. Considering for example also the conversion of Mungiki elites and members to Islam in 2000 to find protection from state repression and threatening with Jihad until the state stops with the crackdown against the group (Gecaga 2007, p. 80), it seems that the transformation was rather instrumental. Moreover, testimonies of Mungiki's members suggest that a major share of revenues was in the end collected by Mungiki elites (Kilonzo 2012, p. 237). This is not to say that the ideology and original mission of the group did not play any role, as reflected in Mungiki's vigilante activities, including crime control, job provision, or campaigns against drugs or prostitution. Mungiki's vigilantism seems to be a response to high crime rates in Nairobi and the overall decay of city slums.

To illustrate the process, we suggest the following mechanism as an explanation of the group's transformation into gang/vigilantes: As a result of government-sponsored ethnic violence, a number of Kikuyu youths including Mungiki followers moved to urban areas in the second half of the 1990s. For a long time neglected Kenyan shanty towns, particularly in Nairobi, were fertile ground for the group's expansion. Government policies originating in times of colonial administration and subsequent disregard of slums, along with the government's share on the proliferation of VNSAs significantly contributed to such an environment. Growing in numbers, Mungiki similarly as other VNSA utilized these gaps of governance not only to sustain its mission of fight for social justice as vigilantes protecting

its community but subsequently as a source of income. A wide range of illicit profitable activities suggests that substantial motivation for metamorphosis to the gang was economic, to some degree influenced by group's leaders as main profiteers.

#### **4.4.3 Becoming political**

While the group did not cease on its criminal activity, with upcoming general elections in 2002 new era for Mungiki begun. More accurately, gang-like activity went hand in hand with its political involvement. Space for political patronage of VNSAs using them as armed proxies of political parties was set by Moi's regime already in the early 1990s, as demonstrated earlier. This time, however, the ruling elite found its ally in a long-time adversary, transforming powerful gang into its own militia.

Once Mungiki began to merge with KANU, it is more suitable to speak of state abstinence rather than absence that allowed VNSAs to emerge as gangs in urban areas as Ngunyi and Katumanga (2014) put it, since the gaps of state's governance and security provision were maintained deliberately for Mungiki under the patronage of the ruling party. According to them, Mungiki entered the formal economy through their matatu ventures and thus avoided becoming a militia (ibid., p. 81). This is in contrast what was argued in previous sections of the thesis. Matatu industry then was far from formal economy enterprise, subjected to the violent competition of VNSA. Contrary, our argument here is that the group transformed into militia through its politicization which could be motivated to some degree economically. Patronage of the political elites granted Mungiki a better position in the bandit economy and enabled the group to face increasing repression from the state apparatus to operate more freely, which was likely one of the aspects that motivated the group to transform.

Around 2000 and onward, a government clampdown against the group intensified, particularly after attacks in Kayole or Kariobangi estates and other violent incidents. With increasing power and influence of Mungiki, law enforcement began to infiltrate and discredit the movement and heightening police pressure, forcing Mungiki to reduce its activities, particularly the public gatherings. In October 2000, Mungiki meetings were illegalized (Gecaga 2007, p. 79). Jailing and clampdowns against the members became frequent. In April 2001 for example, police started a shoot-out against 200 Mungiki followers meeting in Nairobi leaving one member dead (Kagwanja 2003, p. 41). In 2002 election run-up,

however, the number of violent incidents increased, many members were arrested for their oath-taking or crimes and eventually, after the Kariobangi incident in March 2002, Mungiki along with many other gangs and militias were, at least formally, banned after strong opposition criticism of governments negligence (Rasmussen 2010b; Gecaga 2007). Increasing repression of Mungiki likely significantly contributed to its leaders' decision to back KANU and become a client of Moi's party, resulting in a softened government's approach towards the movement.

To find protection against the state's repression similarly as Mau Mau and Kikuyus did in the 1950s, Mungiki leaders even converted to Islam in 2000, blaming Christian churches for encouraging law enforcement to prosecute group's members. In September 2000, the National Council of Churches of Kenya organized a convention on how to deal with Mungiki. Calls for the government to take action however came also from the Muslim community (Hackett 2001, p. 125 - 132; Kagwanja 2003, p. 40). Interestingly, in 2003 one of the leaders of the movement known for its strong antipathy towards Christianity Ndura Waruinge publicly converted to Christianity (Gecaga 2007, p. 81).

Moi's government used the decay of security in Nairobi to blame opposition which had the majority in the City Council, for mismanagement of the city (Gecaga 2007, p. 82). Mungiki's criminal activities undermining the opposition's capability to resolve insecurity in the city only played in hands of KANU. Allegedly, this was part of the deal between the party and Mungiki in exchange for sponsorship (Kagwanja 2003, p. 48). Furthermore, according to the group's representatives' testimonies, Moi promised Mungiki to provide a job for youths in law enforcement (Rasmussen 2010b, p. 442). Given the soft stance of the government towards the group and despite proclamations of a crackdown, KANU political patronage also enabled Mungiki to expand group's ventures, including matatu industry, security, and other illicit services provided in the slums (Kilonzo 2012, p. 238). Hence, the ties to political leaders were undoubtedly economically beneficial for Mungiki, not to mention direct financial support by KANU (Kannevorff 2008, p. 124).

The major force behind Mungiki's politicization was likely also the desire of the group's elites to increase its political influence. Group's inclination to politics was apparent since around 1998 when politicians were supposedly embroiled in the group's activities in both Rift Valley and Nairobi (Anderson 2002, p. 540; Gecaga 2007, p. 80). Campaigning of Njenga and Waruinge for parliamentary seats, the foundation of the group's political party



KNYA and repeated attempts for its registration as well as rallying as Progress Party Alliance or Mkenya Solidarity Movement later and continual pursuit of patronage of politicians only underline the argument. Mungiki's spin to support the ruling party and come under extensive patronage of KANU seems to be an instrumental move to enhance the group's influence.

Mungiki had strong grievances against the Kenyatta family, blaming them for being traitors of Kikuyus, particularly for land redistribution by Jomo Kenyatta after gaining independence. New independent governments neglected Mau Mau veterans, maintained their status of outlaws, and failed to recognize their contribution in liberation struggle appropriately. Mungiki perceived it as historical injustice (Rasmussen 2010b, p. 444; Chercheuse 2020). Even in 2000, the group's supporters loudly demonstrated against Jomo's son, KANU politician and presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, only to support his candidacy in 2002. This was in direct contradiction to Mungiki's long-term stance, not to mention they supported and cooperated with the political party that was considered the group's main enemy since its emergence as a VNSA. On the other hand, Mungiki ideology stemming from Kikuyu traditions played a crucial role in the elections, especially in terms of the group's emphasis on the generational exchange of the political leaders. The discourse of generational exchange was stressed in the election campaigns by KANU, appealing to Mungiki and particularly ethnic Kikuyus on one hand, and capitalized by incumbent ruling party in Moi's "Project Uhuru" on the other. The *itwika* narrative replacing narrative of ethnic identity was attractive particularly to youth, generation of *iregi*, waiting for their voice to be heard after decades of rule of elders (Kagwanja 2006). Therefore, the decision of Mungiki to put this discourse forward along with the decision of president Moi, who was constitutionally barred from running in 2002 presidential elections, to abuse the *itwika* in KANU election campaign in order to ensure maintaining power through his successor, was also integral in Mungiki's transformation to the political militia.

Schuberth (2015a) argues that political patronage can shift the gang's actions into those demanded by the patron, causing VNSA's transformation one way or another. In the case of Mungiki, this was demonstrated in the threatening of the opposition supporters and violence against pro-opposition militias, as well as in attempts to disrupt electoral processes. The loss of patronage and political sponsorship, on the other hand, forced Mungiki to focus again on securing its economic ventures, protect itself from state repression and carry on predation on

its own community, including dealing with defectors. The unexpected loss of KANU, however, resulted in a breakdown of the patron-client relationship between formerly ruling elites and Mungiki. The victory of opposition further encouraged the group's rival VNSAs to claim areas of Mungiki's enterprises and immediately sparked post-election violence, reportedly in some cases still backed by KANU (Kagwanja 2006, p. 66). Shortly, Kenyatta nevertheless distanced himself from the movement. A swift crackdown by newly elected NARC government was significantly damaging for the movement, which however even without major political patronage continued to act violently. With upcoming elections in 2007, the group was supposedly again able to obtain support in Kibaki's regime, however not in scale experienced before.

Political patronage offered by Moi's party was essential in the group's transformation to the political militia. Factors that facilitated the development were however political, economic, security-related as well as ideological. While the government's action played an important role, it is nevertheless likely that the metamorphosis was to a certain degree instrumentalized by Mungiki's elites in their favor. Movement's political endeavor had however significant impact on its future development and loss of influential political patron started its gradual disintegration.

In sum, the proposed mechanism of the third major transformation is the following: Increasing repression of Mungiki forced the group to seek protection. Cooperation with the ruling party resulting in state abstinence then enabled Mungiki to operate more freely and thus secure its economic revenues, while offering prospects of political influence for the leaders. The patronage of the ruling party also influenced the group's activities presumed to undermine the opposition, threaten its supporters, and in result contribute to KANU victory in the elections. Narratives of *itwika*, the generational exchange also helped the legitimization of the transformation in the eyes of Mungiki followers.

## **5. Conclusion**

The increasing importance of non-state actors both as a security challenge and influential governance actors demands greater attention of not only academia but also decision-makers and international organizations. As was demonstrated on the case of Kenya, violent non-state actors shaped the political and security development of the country since the beginning of the democratic transition. In cooperation with the state apparatus, sometimes as its adversary, violent groups were able to obtain popular support and frequently also replace the state locally as an alternative governance actor. Kenya is only one of many countries that have experienced a rapid proliferation of VNSAs in recent decades. Furthermore, the nature and consequences of contemporary armed conflicts that involve VNSAs have also implications for countries without domestic problems analogous to those portrayed in this thesis. Migration crises or international terrorism are examples of such implications. Therefore, every inquiry into possible developments of these groups can provide vital insights with extensive interdisciplinary applicability.

Often, it is difficult to even distinguish what kind of VNSA is being dealt with. That is however caused not only by gaps or lack of consensus in scholarship but also the fluidity of these groups. Simultaneously, the forces behind this fluidity have been scarcely examined so far. The main objective of this thesis was to unveil both of these aspects in the case of Mungiki, one of the most influential violent non-state actors in Kenya. Firstly, the aim was to differentiate distinctive stages of Mungiki development as VNSA and determine what kind of violent group Mungiki was in individual approximate periods. Secondly, the thesis ambition was to disclose the mechanisms behind the group's frequent transformations. Further, the research also tested the validity of selected theories for this specific case, confirmed that proliferation and emergence of VNSAs can not be reduced simply to state failure, and demonstrated that there are still gaps in VNSA scholarship.

To understand Mungiki's development, the thesis provided the necessary context of the political and security environment in Kenya including the group's role in the country's recent history. Simultaneously, fundamental topic-related concepts and theories for studying the phenomena were reviewed and subsequently applied to the case. As a method, a qualitative case-centric explaining-outcome process-tracing method was selected, which enabled us to conduct an in-depth analysis of this specific VNSA.

From the number existing VNSA typologies, it was identified that four particular types corresponded with Mungiki's nature in different phases of its development. Firstly, while Mungiki originally started as a social and religious movement, it organically transformed into what scholars conceptualize as ethnic militia. The second major transformation came with its migration to the urban areas, turning in a vigilante group and criminal gang. The final extraordinary metamorphosis occurred with the group's co-option under extensive political patronage, developing in what was categorized as a political militia. Simultaneously, it was emphasized that these stages were overlapping and the conceptualization was derived from dimensions that dominated at a given time of the group's development. Also, it was identified that considering the group's frequent transformations and multiple functions during its existence, Mungiki can be also labeled with more general concepts of shape-shifter or hybrid violent actor.

The second part of the empirical section of the thesis focused on how these transformations occurred. Discovered mechanism of Mungiki's metamorphosis into the VNSA suggests that the government's decision to engage informal repression in form of employment of state-sponsored militias forced the group to become violent in order to protect the community and retaliate against the attackers. Continuing repression and lack of government's effort to stop ethnic violence and help the victims further legitimized the group's decision to sort to violence in the eyes of Mungiki followers. Next, the transformation of Mungiki to vigilantes and gang is explained by a mass migration of victims of the ethnic clashes to city slums, policy choices of the government leaving these urban areas neglected and ungoverned, and utilization of these gaps of governance by Mungiki along with greed of group's elites. Last but not least, the group's transformation into political militia was caused by increasing repression by law enforcement putting illicit ventures at risk, which made Mungiki seek patronage. Prospects of gaining more political power for Mungiki leaders further encouraged the establishment of a patron-client relationship between the group and the ruling party.

With the breakdown of political patronage, Mungiki continuously lost its power. But while the group remains in underground and even though Kenya experience other challenges stemming from VNSAs activities, Mungiki's mobilization power as well as its connections to influential political figures represent potential threat even nowadays. For the Kenyan government, it is still challenging to overcome political culture deeply influenced by ethnic affiliations and patron-client networks as well as country's issues concerning an extensive

number of jobless youth, neglected urban areas, or unsettled historical grievances. Since other VNSAs including vigilantes, gangs, terrorist groups, or militias are still active these days in Kenya as well as in many other countries on and outside the African continent, the research of these entities remains critical. If we want to understand them, foresee their developments and prevent potential threats they may represent, it is necessary to study currently active VNSAs as well as examine the emergence of those from the past we do not fully comprehend yet.

While the research in this thesis is case-oriented, examining one particular and fairly unique VNSA development in a specific environment, the findings may contribute to expanding current academic knowledge of the phenomena and should encourage researchers in studying patterns of development of other comparable violent actors. For studying similar phenomena of hybrid non-state violent actors, urban violence, or political patronage of VNSAs particularly in African emerging democracies like Kenya, the insights provided by the research might bring useful clues.

Further research of Mungiki could also bring more fruitful findings, possibly applicable to other cases of shape-shifter or hybrid types of violent non-state actors. A challenging task for the researchers is particularly to enhance academic understanding of the group's developments in the early years of its existence and internal processes and structure. A large amount of the evidence about Mungiki is shrouded in mystery, hence both internal and external validity of any research of the group including this one is limited by insufficient evidence. The collection of the evidence is further complicated by amplifying narratives of how group members perceive themselves, the public image created by Mungiki elites, and narratives expressed by Kenyan politicians. To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address also the differences between Mungiki in rural and urban locations including more detailed impacts of these environments on the group's development.

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