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Rasmussen, Jacob

Published in:
Private Security in Africa

DOI:
[10.5040/9781350221987.ch-007](https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350221987.ch-007)

Publication date:
2017

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Rasmussen, J. (2017). Political becoming and non-state emergence in Kenya's security sector: Mungiki as security operator. In P. Higate, & M. Utas (Eds.), *Private Security in Africa : From the Global Assemblage to the Everyday* (pp. 120-141). Zed Books. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350221987.ch-007>

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7 | Political becoming and non-state emergence in Kenya's security sector: Mungiki as security operator

Jacob Rasmussen

Global security assemblage and ethnographies of non-state security

Over the last decades, Kenya has gone through a series of political upheavals and societal changes. In addition to these internal developments, changing international security interests in the eastern African region and shifting global dynamics in the security sector have transformed the security landscape of Kenya dramatically. This chapter investigates how the reconfiguration of the security sector in Kenya has provided opportunities for new and alternative actors and how it has produced new alliances within the sector. Investigating the security sector at a time of transformation and change, the chapter reveals how the new opportunities and alliances are unstable and in a constant process of emergence, which presents the different actors a space for political influence and political becoming. The chapter focuses on the Mungiki movement and its involvement in the social and political upheavals in Kenya as an example of how non-state actors can find their way into the security sector and how they use security as a tool for organizational institutionalization and political becoming. Mungiki was one of the main perpetrators in the 2007/08 post-electoral violence, at the same time that the organization has been systematically persecuted by state security agents. This presents Mungiki as an intriguing case for investigating how the politics of security plays out.

The chapter draws on long-term ethnographic fieldwork on the Mungiki movement and shows how the everyday considerations and experiences of non-state actors assists us in understanding security as a process of emergence; hence it supplements more mainstream studies of security that tend to focus on the role of the state and formal institutions. Despite the local focus of the chapter, the global dynamics in the security sector and their influence on security politics and practices in Kenya frame the analyses of Mungiki as security provider. Rita Abrahamsen's and Michael Williams' global security assemblage theory elaborates how different actors interact and compete in a transformed security sector; hence it provides an analytical framework for unpacking the complex transformations within the Kenyan security sector (see Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 90).

It is argued that ethnographies of non-state actors in relation to global security assemblages add insights well beyond the global by inserting understandings of everyday processes of emergence and becoming usually left out of the more generalized analyses of the workings of security politics. The predominant statist perspective of much of the private security literature overlooks the non-state perspective, though some of the drivers and expressions tend to be similar. Therefore, using Mungiki to show how localized expressions of security emerge as part of the global security assemblages, the chapter adds nuances to how apparently marginal events and actors are nevertheless at the centre of how power is produced and problematized (see Roitman 2005: 419).

Rita Abrahamsen and Michael Williams define global security assemblages as 'complex, multi-sited institutional orders where a range of different security agents interact, cooperate, and compete to produce new practices and structures of security governance' (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 95). Abrahamsen and Williams build on Saskia Sassen's argument on global assemblage theory, which posits that the state is no longer the primary focus for organizing governance (this also applies to the security sector); rather, the analytical attention is directed towards new actors, new relations and new roles (Sassen 2006; Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 89). Hence, this chapter investigates how a new actor like Mungiki establishes and maintains its relations to the state while carving out a new role for itself in the security sector and in Kenyan society in general.

Abrahamsen and Williams argue that the transformation of global structures happens in three phases: first, a process of disassembly where public functions are outsourced or taken up by private actors; second, a development phase where the private actors or non-state actors acquire new capacities that enable them to operate at the global level; and the last phase involves the process of reassembly in which the new actors become part of global assemblages embedded in national settings, yet operate on a global scale (*ibid.*: 91).

Their focus is on the role of private security companies within the security sector. However, rather than writing off the role of the state as diminishing, as much globalization theory has tended to do, Abrahamsen and Williams argue that the state is not *per se* losing its power or authority owing to such transformations of the security sector; instead the state plays a key role in enabling new actors and new relations to emerge (*ibid.*: 91; cf. Sassen 2006). Furthermore, the incorporation of new actors in the new security assemblages produces new practices and structures of security governance owing to the constant interaction, cooperation and competition amongst actors (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 95). The global in this regard is constituted by the disassembly of public functions, thereby changing the role of the state without necessarily diminishing its authority; the state now enables alliances between new and old actors connected to global systems. The state has encouraged private security companies to operate within state structures which have

enabled them to build their capacity; a similar observation can be made in regard to non-state security actors like Mungiki. Therefore, looking at the changed role of the state and its changing relations to new security actors also provides the opportunity to look at non-state actors like Mungiki within the framework of the global security assemblage.

Before going into the ethnographic accounts of Mungiki's security engagements, it is necessary to gain an understanding of how the Kenyan security sector has transformed over time and what role the state has played through these transformations. Following the analytical overview of fragmentation within the security sector in Kenya the chapter builds up to the ethnographically informed section on Mungiki. The analysis of Mungiki through the lens of global security assemblages is focused on Mungiki's relation to the Kenyan state and politics, justice and authority, as well as how the movement has been able to find its way into the security sector. In conclusion, it is argued that Mungiki is both part of the wider security sector and subjected to the security practices of the state, and shows how this ambiguous position of Mungiki in Kenyan society carves out a peculiar space for political becoming.

Framing security reform and the disassembly of the security sector in Kenya

The fall of President Moi's oppressive regime and the change to multiparty democracy in 1992 formally initiated a change that had been brewing at the grassroots level and in civil society circles up through the 1980s; though it took another ten years before the long-serving KANU party was replaced by NARC (National Rainbow Coalition). In addition to these democratic tendencies, which at the surface level promised oversight and a changed role for the police, the 2007 elections erupted into violent clashes driven by political and ethnic clashes following allegations of electoral fraud. These violent clashes initiated a range of transformative processes including investigative commissions, juridical and police reforms, and a constitutional referendum in 2010, as well as interventions by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and UN special rapporteurs. The commissions and tribunals were to analyse the roots of the conflict and, in turn, provide for future reconciliation and resilience in the fact of conflict. As such, the post-electoral violence (PEV) became the catalyst for actually initiating security reforms and for commissions to look into past atrocities, such as the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), alongside ongoing police reforms. The flawed elections fuelled a political crisis shaped in part by an upsurge in youth militarization in which the Mungiki movement has been placed at the centre on the one hand and, on the other, of particular interest to Al-Shabaab.

In the same period, Kenya has become a target of international terrorism, noted in the 1998 bombings of the US embassy in Nairobi, the 2013 Westgate

shopping mall attack, and the 2015 Garissa University College attacks, all of which have attracted global attention. Partly as a consequence of these attacks in Kenya, and as a consequence of neighbouring countries hosting training grounds for international terrorist groupings, Kenya has become an important ally for Western-led anti-terror initiatives. Furthermore, for the first time as an independent nation, in 2011 Kenya undertook offensive military interventions in a foreign state through its attacks on the Al-Shabaab militia in Somalia.

Taken together, these developments have seen the security dynamics of Kenya drastically reconfigured. Internal political and ethnic conflicts, external military engagements, large-scale corruption of public funds, and political wrangles regarding how best to avoid the challenges of the International Criminal Court (ICC) have influenced how various arms of the Kenyan police and military relate to one another and to the wider public. In addition, private security operators and non-state security actors alike are tangled up in struggles about how to define, provide and govern security in Kenya. In the following I trace the political development of security in Kenya by showing how security politics in Kenya in different ways have been centred on maintaining political power, pointing in turn to the close links between security forces and domestic political interests.

Securing the one-party state At independence in 1963, Kenyan's common goal of overcoming colonialism through national unity was achieved. Soon after, opposition to the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) party arose. In an attempt to prolong the unity of independence and to strengthen its grip on power, KANU co-opted and crushed the opposition and effectively became synonymous with the Kenyan state. It was a challenge to avoid divisions among the more than forty different ethnic groupings while simultaneously retaining the power of the state. KANU refined the colonial 'ideology of order' by building up an increasingly repressive regime, where order was a tool with which the ruling elite repressed political opposition, dissidents and people who insisted on accountability, and in general kept the governed in place (Odhiambo 1987: 189–91). What was left of the Mau Mau rebellions from the 1950s anti-colonial fight for land and freedom was crushed. Rather than as a defensive bulwark against foreign threats, President Jomo Kenyatta structured the military forces to consolidate state power by centralizing the control of the military and further enhancing the ethnic dimension of the military left by the colonial regime to ensure it suited the interests of the political elite (Katumanga 2013: 137). The paramilitary police structures of the General Service Unit (GSU) and the Administration Police (AP) were placed directly under presidential command to counter internal threat from factions within the military (ibid.: 138–9).

In repressing early opposition, the regime also dismissed alternative ideas of decentralizing power, most notably the notion of *majimboism* (regionalism).

On another level, the Kikuyu elite tried to conceal and silence internal divisions within the Kikuyu community (the largest of Kenya's forty-two ethnic groups, composing close to 20 per cent of the population) to keep grip on power (Lonsdale 2002). Further, a series of (alleged) state-sanctioned killings of opposition figures took place: opposition politicians such as Pio Gamma Pinto and Tom Mboya were killed in the 1960s, J. M. Kariuki in 1975, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Ouko in 1990 (Cohen and Odhiambo 2004: 4–6). Coupled with large-scale corruption scandals, these killings remain at the core of what civil society has dubbed Kenya's culture of impunity, which continued in the post-electoral violence of 2008, the extrajudicial killings of Mungiki members from 2007 to 2009, and in the recent killings of Muslims preachers (KNCHR 2008; Alston 2009; Al Jazeera 2014).

At the death of the first independent president, the Kikuyu Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, Daniel Arap Moi from the smaller tribe the Kalenjin assumed the presidency. Following a failed coup against him in 1982, Moi turned Kenya into a *de facto* one-party state, as well as initiating an ethnic change of guard within central security units like the GSU and the Special Branch (Katumanga 2013: 140). Moi was president for twenty-four years and, even after caving in to the popular pressure for multiparty elections in 1992, managed to use oppressive mechanisms and divisive political strategies to remain in power for two consecutive multiparty elections. During the struggle for multiparty democracy in the early 1990s Moi's regime revived the idea of *majimboism* but with an outspoken ethnic dimensions intended to create divisions – the regime successfully played on inherent tensions between the regions and the nation (see Anderson 2010: 23). Moi deployed the secret intelligence service – Special Branch (known for its widespread use of torture) – to clamp down on opposition leaders, intellectuals and the general citizenry (Katumanga 2013: 140).

Democratization and increased security fragmentation

Democratization in 1992 increased the contestation over the presidency as politicians were now guaranteed only five years in power during which they could extract wealth from the state (Branch 2011). The increased competition led to fragmentation of the political elite (Branch and Cheeseman 2008; Kagwanja and Southall 2010: 3).

The ethnic clashes surrounding the elections in the 1990s were in some ways opportune for Moi's regime as they demonstrated the 'dangers' of political pluralism and legitimized enduring state oppression. Through the 1990s, the use of youth gangs as political and ethnic militias to create political disorder became a widespread instrument in the quest to maintain power (Kagwanja 2001; Katumanga 2005). Despite the employment of youth militias to commit and take the blame for the extralegal violence of the state (Kagwanja 2001), the president retained strong control over the police and the military, which

since independence have seen a continuous creation of special units loyal to the needs of shifting presidents (Musila 2012: 159–60; Katumanga 2013). However, with the informalization of political violence and security, the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence has been eroded (Branch and Cheeseman 2008; Kagwanja and Southall 2010; Mueller 2008).

Owing in part to the economic crisis in the 1980s and political developments in the 1990s, Kenya suffered from a reputation for violence and crime (Gimode 2001; Katumanga 2005; UN Habitat 2002). The scarce police presence in many areas reduced residents' faith in the police as an institution and their legitimacy as providers of security. Furthermore, many Nairobi residents perceived the police as part of the criminal problem as much as they saw them as the solution to it (Gimode 2001: 321–2; Katumanga 2005; Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 202–4). Similar patterns describe the relation between the state and residents of the northern territories and large parts of the Kenyan coast. Inspired by community policing projects from the USA and South Africa, Kenya decided to introduce community policing initiatives in Nairobi to improve the level of security and restore faith in the police through closer relations with communities (Brogden 2005; Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003). The community policing pilot projects sought to build trust in the police and fight crime at the same time, but they failed as they were neither implemented nor assessed properly (Brogden 2005: 77–8). As many of the areas had established traditions of running their own security initiatives, community policing initiatives were to some extent perceived as legitimizing vigilantism, which over the years helped to establish local youth gangs as quasi-legitimate security providers (see Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003). However, the police have continually resolved to respond robustly and, in so doing, have continued to neglect underlying factors when responding to crime and violence in the poor neighbourhoods of Kenya's urban centres (Ruteere et al. 2013).

This community policing initiative reflects a wider problem of not only a lack of trust in the police but also a general experience of a security shortage whereby state security forces have been used for regime consolidation rather than for providing individual or public security (Ngunyi and Katumanga 2012: 31–2), a tendency that has seen a growth in private security provision at all levels of Kenyan society (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 198). Nairobi has been labelled as a city under siege, owing not only to the crime rate but also to the fractured and competing security operators, and there seems to be little coordination between the police, private security companies and non-state actors, resulting in uneven access to security provision and a blurring of lines between different actors (Colona and Jaffe 2016).

Besides these domestic developments, the 1990s also witnessed an expansion of military forces intended to build the capacity to engage in military operations outside Kenya while still having the capacity to tackle internal

threats to order (Katumanga 2013). Conflicts in Somalia, northern Uganda, Rwanda and Sudan had spillover effects on Kenya in terms of refugees and the arms trade, which forced Kenya to deal with the security threats from its neighbours (Murunga 2005: 144–5). The conflicts also introduced further Western and international aid and security presence in Kenya's border regions, and Kenya's international role in regional and international security conflicts was further enhanced by the 1998 terrorist attack on the US embassy in Nairobi. Suddenly Kenya was a key player in regional stabilization in terms of managing development aid and refugee support. It also became a central actor in the war on terror, which influenced sharing of security and intelligence reports as well as a foreign military presence in the form of training and support to the Kenyan military. The recent focus on piracy off the coast of Somalia has encouraged Kenya to address maritime security to protect both national and international threats to market and trade interests, which has resulted in international development support of the Kenyan marine. As with the war on terror, Kenya was also under pressure from the international community to play a central judicial role in battling piracy (Taussig-Rubbo 2011). However, Kenya declined to take on the role of supporting international justice at a time when their current president (Uhuru Kenyatta) and vice-president (William Ruto) had pending cases at the ICC. Furthermore, Kenya's military engagements against Al-Shabaab in Somalia since November 2011 have also marked a shift in how Kenya approaches external security threats and how they are linked to international security politics (Olsen 2014; Anderson and McKnight 2015).

Securitization of Africa

One of the central global influences on the disassembly of the Kenyan security sector is the merger of security and development (Abrahamsen 2005; Collier and Ong 2005: 18; Duffield 2001). Abrahamsen criticizes Western foreign politics for increasingly being based on an understanding of Africa as a danger and a threat to the international community, what she calls the securitization of Africa (Abrahamsen 2005: 56). Abrahamsen refers to the Copenhagen School of security studies and their theoretical understanding of how particular speech-acts allow and legitimize a security intervention or a securitization move (cf. Buzan et al. 1998). However, she argues that the discourse on the securitization of Africa is more than merely a linguistic act, and that it has real and practical implications on the ground when the international focus on the continent shifts from development to becoming primarily organized around security (Abrahamsen 2005: 68).

This tendency is especially prevalent in the global war on terror, and in eastern Africa this process has been accentuated following terrorist attacks in Kenya on both Western and Kenyan targets. The politics Abrahamsen criticizes builds on the increased merging of security and development in politics and

practice (cf. Duffield 2001; Buur et al. 2007). One of the key claims of the security–development nexus is that poverty acts as a catalyst for particular violent threats such as terrorism, meaning that a securitizing of poverty is not only necessary but in itself justifies a security intervention. Similar discourses and actual interventions have been applied by the Kenyan state to Mungiki and more recently to Al-Shabaab, manifesting themselves as extrajudicial killings by secret police squads (Rasmussen 2010; KNCHR 2008; Al Jazeera 2014). Following this logic, for the state to provide more viable solutions to the poor and marginalized population it needs to secure them first, and herein lies the ambiguity that securing the poor means providing security for them and making sure that they don't present a security threat to the wider society. In the case of Mungiki, the state has used secret death squads to 'free' Kenya from what it presents as a violent and brutal menace, similar to the rhetoric that has been used in the militant clampdown on so-called radical Muslim clerics associated with Al Shabaab mobilization. Ironically, both Mungiki and the Muslim clerics claim legitimacy by representing the interests of the poor and marginalized citizenry. Secret death squads have been a way for the state to deal with political and security threats, yet they threaten to undermine the legitimacy of the state's security interventions while adding to an increasing militarization of society.

The above outline of the main transformations of the Kenyan security sector has shown how the Kenyan state since independence has been an important co-producer of ethnic politics as well as continuously fragmenting the security landscape. The state's history of oppression and accumulation of personal wealth has effectively created a culture of impunity where the key objective has been preserving state power in the hands of the elite. Chief Justice Willy Mutunga has called the current Kenyan state of affairs a 'bandit economy' where political leaders control criminal cartels that extort the citizens, who live in fear of violent repercussions if they speak out against them (Lindijer 2016). These politics have simultaneously undermined the state's ability to legitimately keep order and provide security and eroded its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. The internal focus on keeping power has influenced how security is practised and performed by a variety of actors and has coincided with a global attention to security matters that increasingly affect Kenya. These developments have created room for a variety of national and international security actors (both formal and informal) to enter the scene of security politics and security provision in Kenya.

The above provides an understanding of some of the broader political dynamics underlying Kenya's political crisis and the changing processes of disassembly of the security sector. The Mungiki movement is situated amidst these political processes and practices characterized by exclusion, corruption, oppression, violence, impunity and exception to the rule, all of which are

central grievances for Mungiki against the Kenyan state. All are central aspects of how security manifests itself in practice and influence how Mungiki and other security actors have to negotiate and navigate their role in Kenyan security politics. In the following, I briefly introduce the Mungiki movement to situate it against this understanding of the broader dynamics of Kenyan security politics as it is currently being reassembled.

Mungiki as a vehicle for social and political becoming

Since its formation in Central Province in the early 1990s, Mungiki has been labelled as a youth gang, a political militia, a vigilante group, a millenarian movement, a traditionalist sect, a grassroots organization and a political party (Servant 2007; Anderson 2002; Kagwanja 2005; Kilonzo 2008; Wamue 2001; Gecaga 2007). The movement has been engaged in activities that justify the use of each of the categories to describe particular aspects of the movement at given times. The simultaneity of these activities points to the dynamic and transformational potential of Mungiki and emphasizes its continuous but changing relation to the state and to the society it operates in.

In the Kikuyu language *Mungiki* means multitude, masses or people. As such, the emic term for the movement has its own descriptive value in defining the movement as indeterminable. Mungiki often try to capitalize on this indeterminacy both in terms of the strength of their numbers and in terms of their actual practices (Rasmussen 2013). On one hand, Mungiki's ability to gather huge crowds at political and religious rallies testifies to their ability to show numerical strength, yet their actual support base is indeterminate. On the other hand, as their involvement in the PEV and their control of local security exemplify, their ability to constantly establish uncertainty about their actions and intentions (whether peaceful or violent) reveals the indeterminacy in character. Mungiki continuously downplay their violent engagements, yet there is always a latent potentiality for violence, which lives through narratives of their brutal killings and through the secret ritual oaths performed at initiation into the movement. As such, Mungiki embodies a certain level of political agency through its name; they appear to have the potential to form a mass movement of disenfranchised youth who can potentially make a democratic difference through their sheer numbers, and they appear to have the ability to influence politics through the potential threat of masses of violent youth running amok.

Mungiki's main recruitment base is amongst poor and disenfranchised Kikuyu youth – to begin with in poor rural areas and later in Nairobi's informal settlements. The poor youth is often seen as a challenge to Kenyan society, owing due to their numbers and partly because they face unemployment and limited access to political participation, hence providing for a potential conflictual relation to society. When youths are mobilized into Mungiki they

become political and they become ambiguously positioned in relation to the wider set of security practices; first, Mungiki is an officially illegal movement, which makes the members potential subjects of the state's violent actions as exemplified by extrajudicial killings. That is in itself political. Second, Mungiki cells operate as security providers on a local level as they have provided their violent services to the Kikuyu political elite on a number of occasions. This places Mungiki as an alternative to state security provision, yet at the same time as a subcontractor of state-sanctioned security and violence. On the one hand Mungiki fills a gap in poor urban areas left by state security operators, and on the other hand they perform violent acts outsourced by the state. Finally, the fact that some Mungiki members were amongst the ICC witnesses against Uhuru Kenyatta has added a political dimension to the membership of Mungiki, as they could potentially influence presidential politics and notions of justice and national authority.

The localized and everyday perspective of non-state actors like Mungiki challenges the framework of global security assemblage theory as it reveals the friction between the state and non-state actors like Mungiki as the lines separating the public from the private are transformed. At the same time, it reveals how the global assemblage is defined as much by the exclusions it produces (see Collier and Ong 2005: 12). Whereas Abrahamsen and Williams in their work on the global security assemblages focus on private security companies in part using Nairobi as a case example (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 172), Mungiki provides insights into how the poor residents of Nairobi outside the walled neighbourhoods guarded by private security companies seek security and protection. Abrahamsen and Williams argue that cities are the sites of struggle over security, and cities are the sites where new forms of security governance transgress the boundaries between public and private, and where the global and the local emerge (ibid.: 174–5). Mungiki, in this view, displays how localized expressions of security emerge as part of the global security assemblages while their seemingly local engagements nevertheless influence how power is produced and problematized.

Becoming a member of Mungiki is a highly ritualized process, and it means becoming a member of a moral and religious community. New members must undergo baptism and take an oath of unity at their initiation into the movement; it marks the formal process of becoming a member of Mungiki and it is an important way of investing the members with the power of Mungiki's knowledge, history and traditions, which are to a large extent a reinvention of Mau Mau rituals and practices. After initiation, members are placed in local cells named after the traditional Kikuyu warrior bands that were also the inspiration for the organization of Mau Mau. The religious aspects of Mungiki are often presented as demonic and uncivilized practices (cf. Kilonzo 2008; Knighton 2009), which has the effect of reducing the movement's multiplicity

to a singular identity. Stressing the production of identity in Mungiki's heterogeneity allows for violent engagements to be part of what makes up Mungiki while nevertheless allowing these engagements to take a political character (Frederiksen 2010).

Mungiki organize themselves along the lines of the old Mau Mau warrior bands, and in doing so they reinvent themselves as revolutionaries in the present and invest in themselves the powers of the past. By linking their identity to the Mau Mau movement, Mungiki establishes a common place in Kenyan history for the members that provides an ideological point of reference and a position in society as marginalized and largely unrecognized. The importance of such identity politics and their influence on political becoming and violent actions is often overlooked through the lens of global assemblage theory. While the analytical inclusion of identity politics positions the movement within a broader history of order and security in Kenya as global security assemblage theory also would, it adds an everyday perspective of emergence to the motives and understanding of Mungiki's normative positioning vis-à-vis the Kenyan state.

Focusing on the relational aspects between Mungiki and the state allows us to move analytically beyond the violent engagements as purely criminal and illegal and instead to understand them as tantamount to the politics of security. Through the lens of security, we can see how Mungiki's relation to the Kenyan state is constantly shifting, and it reveals how authority is renegotiated and how the state enables militarized youth groupings as proxies for violent actions yet simultaneously tries to control or even dismantle them.

Investigating Mungiki and their security engagements through the lens of global security assemblage theory places the movement within a broader analytical frame than usually applied to them, as it positions them analytically on an equal footing with formal institutions like the police and the military. In so doing we can focus on the relational aspect between Mungiki and the state without solely focusing on antagonism or conflict, but also on what that relation reveals about how security is produced and negotiated by a variety of different actors inside Kenya. Furthermore, it moves beyond the instrumentalist approaches often used to describe Mungiki's relation to the state, where Mungiki is seen mainly as young guns for hire to politicians.

Emphasizing the constantly shifting relations between Mungiki and the Kenyan state presents Mungiki with some agency and hence as an emergent political actor. Furthermore, including the ethnographic perspective of a non-state actor like Mungiki adds an everyday perspective not prioritized to the same extent in Abrahamsen and Williams' macro-level political analyses of various security actors and how they are connected to each other and to global flows. In some ways, the ethnographic perspective might come at the cost of a wider generalizability and larger-scale political analysis, but it contributes

an understanding of and a view on the everyday and mundane and its role in the production of the global assemblages (see Collier and Ong 2005: 17). It means that the global aspect of the assemblages presents itself in a less explicit way; rather than seen as a direct global connection the analysis of the global in Mungiki's changing role in the Kenyan security sector manifests itself in the key determinants that produce exclusion inherent in the assemblages in which Mungiki is enmeshed.

The emergence of militarized youth groups

Mungiki has been one of the most influential non-state actors in the political changes in Kenya for the last two decades. Mungiki has played a central role in Kenyan popular politics as a Kikuyu cultural and religious revivalist movement claiming to fight poverty and inequality, while also being one of the main protagonists in the 2007/08 post-election violence and pro-constitution human-rights-friendly activism in the 2010 constitutional referendum. Furthermore, Mungiki's involvement in more mundane activities such as security and transport provision, garbage collection and criminal extortion has placed the movement and its members at the centre of poor Kenyans' everyday concerns regarding security. The poor people are often marginalized from both private and state security provision; hence alternative modes of security organization have emerged (Anderson 2002; Ruteere 2011).

Despite its religious and cultural roots, Mungiki is often associated with the widespread emergence of youth gangs in the 1990s, which is popularly perceived as a response to difficult socio-economic circumstances, increased urban growth, insecurity and the absence of the state in many poor areas of urban Kenya (Anderson 2002; Katumanga 2005; Ruteere et al. 2013). The Mungiki movement is widely believed to be among the most violent and influential of these gangs (Anderson 2002; Branch and Cheeseman 2008; Mueller 2008; Maupeu 2008: 224; Kagwanja and Southall 2010). Emerging largely as a response to the absence of the state in poor neighbourhoods, after democratization in 1992 the youth gangs were increasingly mobilized for political purposes by the state and sometimes rewarded with almost unconditional and unsanctioned control over local areas (Katumanga 2005; Mueller 2008). This also characterizes Mungiki's rise to fame as fierce security providers in Nairobi's Eastlands (Maupeu 2008). Politicians showed little interest in and capability for demobilizing the youth militias (Branch and Cheeseman 2008: 14–16; Mueller 2008: 189–93; Kagwanja and Southall 2010: 12–14). Certain levels of disorder were deemed increasingly opportune for politicians as the militias could be mobilized to fragment the opposition, while also serving as a tool for elite corruption, and lastly, in case of public outcry, the violent behaviour of the militias would justify strong responses against them to show leadership (Branch 2011).

However, prior to the elections of 2002 and following a particularly violent clash between Mungiki and a group known as ‘the Taliban’ most of the militias (including Mungiki) were banned (Anderson 2002). Despite the ban, many of the youth militias didn’t dissolve; instead they became semi-autonomous units that would act with impunity as guns for hire for the highest bidder. They were left to pursue their own interests, which were not limited to criminal behaviour and economic survival but included security and other order-making functions; and some activities became increasingly politicized (ibid.; Branch and Cheeseman 2008). Mungiki were probably the most multifaceted and best organized of the groups banned in 2002, as they were founded on a different basis to most of the other gangs they were associated with. Mungiki and these other groups operate at the margins of the state’s core areas of security seeking further influence and inclusion, yet, depending on the political situation, the state seems to allow them in while simultaneously treating them as a general threat to national and local security. Since the 2002 elections, the state has persecuted Mungiki with varying intensity by setting up secret police death squads to systematically kill members of the movement in an extrajudicial manner (Ruteere 2008; Alston 2009). This is partly seen as settling political scores, as Mungiki publicly supported the opposing presidential candidate in 2002, and partly seen as an attempt to deliver the public from the militia menace.

Mungiki’s everyday performances of security, development and violence

Mungiki has been active in general security provision in Kikuyu-dominated poor neighbourhoods where they work as night guards at marketplaces and parking lots. Koigi, a local Mungiki cell leader from Nairobi’s Eastlands, narrates how he was part of a week-long battle with Masai morans in the Kayole neighbourhood over the right to provide security. According to Koigi, Mungiki forcefully chased the Masai away by showing up in large numbers and beating them up. After days of violence the Masai gave up the territory and Mungiki took over local order-making and security functions. Koigi works as a night guard looking after the parked *matatus* (informal public transport), but as a cell leader he also plays a role in deciding whether or not to clamp down on local crime. He reveals how he has violently disciplined the local youth, who, in turn, have gone on to become new Mungiki recruits. In some areas these undertakings have had overlaps with community policing initiatives (Ruteere and Pommerolle 2003; Rasmussen 2010), with the difference that Mungiki don’t have any formal working relation with the police. According to Koigi and his friends in the local Mungiki cell, they provide security for the local vendors while the police are demanding bribes.

Visits to the dump site next to the quarry in Kayole with Koigi and his friends reveal how city council garbage trucks pay ‘commission’ to Mungiki,

members of whom have taken charge of garbage collection, and its sorting at the dump site. This business provides a solid income to the movement and jobs to the members, yet local residents have little choice but to accept Mungiki's garbage services. Similar situations prevail within certain parts of the *matatu* sector (Rasmussen 2012), and the movement has expanded its service provision to include control of water distribution in some slum areas, as well as the production and retailing of counterfeit music and film at marketplaces.

Mungiki's ad hoc security provision has helped the movement expand its operational sphere in search of market shares for the movement's members, and this process raises questions concerning the meaning of 'private security'. Mungiki's fees can be viewed as either taxation or extortion, and this ambiguity has been raising concerns about the legitimacy of Mungiki's security operations. Whichever way one looks at it, the movement's expanded security operations (whether forced or not) have contributed towards their political authority and power as well as playing a central role in institutionalizing the movement in Kenya.

An illustrative example of how the state has enabled Mungiki in their security efforts is Mungiki's capture of lucrative routes in the *matatu* industry in Nairobi and central Kenya. Many of the movement's members are recruited from the *matatu* sector, which has become a central source of income for the movement and its individual members. Mungiki made advances in the sector around the time of the 2002 elections. The *matatu* sector had for years been unregulated, and many passengers considered it unsafe as it was infested with crime and violence. In order to control and profit from the routes, security had to be improved en route, at the staging points, and at the adjacent marketplaces. Mungiki and other non-state groups started building their capacities in this field and slowly began capitalizing on this. In this period, Mungiki were in competition with a number of other youth groups of varying organizational size and structure, all of whom were operating on the margins of the law, but in areas where the state had limited presence. In return for Mungiki's official support to high-ranking politicians, Mungiki were allowed to take over routes from other vigilante groups without police interference (Katumba 2005; Anderson 2002; Kagwanja 2005).

Ethnographic insights into the everyday operations in the *matatu* sector reveal how Mungiki's criminal activities (such as extortion and violence) are perceived as similar to those of the state (Rasmussen 2012). Mungiki members working in the *matatu* sector accuse the police of systematic bribery, illegal arrests and fabricated charges against them. In the members' view, the state's allegedly corrupt and violent practices legitimize Mungiki's illegal activities, as Mungiki in their own view are not only formally marginalized but also marginalized in the informal sector. While Mungiki's engagement in the *matatu* sector provides jobs and the possibility of individual economic

growth for members, the movement reinforces its political potential through the collective, and through the collection and redistribution of fees. Through the individual contributions to the collective, Mungiki claims to show how the individual is part of bringing about a collective change the state is not able or is unwilling to do.

The global dimension appears to be at some distance from the everyday perspective of such seemingly marginalized individual members of an illegal organization like Mungiki. Despite their exclusion from the formalized politics of security, Mungiki constantly transgress into the areas under the control of formal security operators. Mungiki's ongoing struggles to carve out a space for themselves at the local and national levels is a constant battle for inclusion or connection, as the assemblage of security politics in Kenya is not only about formation but as much about exclusion (see Collier and Ong 2005).

Mungiki and the International Criminal Court (ICC)

As previously alluded to, Mungiki members were listed among the key witnesses at the ICC trial against six prominent Kenyans accused of instigating the 2008 PEV, among them the current president Uhuru Kenyatta and his vice-president William Ruto. In the 2013 presidential elections, Kenyatta and Ruto formed what became known as the 'alliance of the accused' and managed to win the election on a dominant narrative of international vilification of the ethnic identities of Kikuyu and Luo represented by the core electorate of the two candidates (Lynch 2014). As such, the ICC intervention that sought to allocate responsibility for the violence and brutality of the previous election was successfully turned on its head and became an issue of international violation of Kenyan sovereignty. The international interventions pushing for redress for the PEV victims, and for police, military and judicial reforms, saw Mungiki placed in opposition to Uhuru Kenyatta, who had allegedly mobilized their violent services in 2008. The ongoing reforms of public security institutions and the increased focus on private security at all levels of Kenyan society opened up new spaces for non-state actors like Mungiki to become involved in security. The inherent tensions within the security sector in the years between the 2008 PEV and the 2013 elections not only produced instability and partiality, they allowed for the emergence of new alliances influenced by the global forces enhancing the disassembly of the Kenyan security sector (see Collier and Ong 2005: 12). The intervention by the ICC invited Mungiki to position themselves against their alleged former patron Uhuru Kenyatta and potentially gain influence in national politics and issues of impunity and justice.

Sociologist Saskia Sassen has argued that the ICC belongs to a specific category of specialized and normative global assemblages composed of territory, authority and rights that increasingly seem to escape the grip of national institutional frames (Sassen 2008: 62–3). Being situated above and beyond

the nation-state, such institutions challenge the complex interdependency between rights and obligation, and between power and the law, because they can intervene in and judge on internal matters from outside (*ibid.*). The ICC is the first global public court with universal jurisdiction among its signatory member states (*ibid.*: 62). The ICC and similar institutions coexist with nation-states, meaning that the global is to be found inside the nation-state and in compliance with national law and order, yet at the same time they produce contestations and advocate a partial denationalization of authority (*ibid.*).¹ Examples of such contestations could be the UN special rapporteurs challenging the existing culture of impunity, or Kenyan members of parliament trying to mobilize support in the African Union (AU) for a collective withdrawal of the Rome Statute (including the ICC). Hence, such institutions have the potential to unsettle existing norms within the nation-state. Given that the ICC accused a number of influential political figures and officials within the Kenyan security sector following the PEV while partly building the case on Mungiki members' testimonies, the interference of such specialized global assemblages as the ICC further influenced the relation between Mungiki and the Kenyan state.

The ICC accused the current Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta of having allegedly bought the violent support of Mungiki to commit retaliation attacks against Kalenjin and the Luo people during the post-election violence in 2008 (ICC 2015). The case against Uhuru Kenyatta has now fallen apart and the charges have been dropped. Allegedly, Mungiki received a large sum of money for these violent services, hinting at an economic and pragmatic logic to Mungiki's involvement in the PEV violence. The insufficient evidence against Uhuru Kenyatta leaves open the question of who was behind mobilizing Mungiki, but according to official reports investigating the PEV, high-ranking politicians and officials within the security forces assisted armed Mungiki members' movement through military roadblocks to undertake the attacks (TJRC 2013; CIPEV 2008). Besides the financial aspects, there is an ethnic dimension whereby Mungiki protected the interests of poor Kikuyus who were persecuted by Kalenjin attacks. However, a further motive that seems to be as interesting is the possibility that the Mungiki used the violence to tarnish the reputation of the political elite who bought their services, hence seeking political influence based on their previous violent behaviour. Ultimately, the credibility and legitimacy of the Mungiki witnesses and their testimonies were brought into question, and this uncertainty was a central factor in the ICC case falling apart (ICC 2015). At the determination of the case, the ICC accused the Kenyan government of withholding central documents and intimidating witnesses (*ibid.*).

There seem to have been economic, political and security justifications behind Mungiki's violent engagements in the PEV, which brought the country to a standstill. Regardless of who assisted Mungiki, the PEV reveals how

involved the Mungiki was in the fragmentation of security provision as the movement provided local security services while furthering its political interests through threats to national security and stability. Simultaneously, some state actors used Mungiki as a proxy for the state to do its dirty work both at the level of everyday local security provision and in terms of settling political and ethnic scores during the heightened national conflicts.

The examples of Mungiki's security engagements show how the movement constantly transgresses the boundary between the formal and the informal and thereby attains the power to make things work. As such, Mungiki's security provision in many ways seems to be driven by their market interests and as such mirrors how the state's security services have been employed for internal political and economic interests, as much as for securing the nation and its citizens (see Ngunyi and Katumanga 2012). This points to the argument made in the introduction that the disassembly of the security sector opens new spaces for alternative actors, even if the space was not filled by state agents in the first place.

Mungiki's control of the *matatu* industry, the violent activities, the extortion and the security provision, in addition to its engagement in the PEV, have not only placed Mungiki firmly within the wider fragmentation of the Kenyan security sector, they have also positioned Mungiki as a security threat, which was only accentuated by the possibility of Mungiki providing central witnesses to the ICC. As such, Mungiki became something that needed to be securitized (see Buzan et al. 1998). Besides police persecution for illegal activities, members of the movement have, as previously mentioned, been targeted by extrajudicial practices of the state. Over the years several hundred Mungiki members have disappeared and been killed (Alston 2009; KNCHR 2008). These extrajudicial killings and the violent persecution of Mungiki members were, according to the ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, part of covering up the traces of the political orchestration of the PEV and to intimidate Mungiki members and dissuade them from testifying at the ICC trial (ICC 2015: 44).

The aftermath of the PEV, especially the ICC intervention, not only influenced the campaigns and results of the 2013 presidential elections (Mueller 2014), it also impacted on the security sector and the ongoing assemblage processes. Not only were the Kenyan government involved in tackling external security threats like offshore piracy and Al-Shabaab-led terrorism, the ICC intervention challenged the authority of the Kenyan state through its supra-national and universal jurisdiction (see Sassen 2008: 62). At a time of general debate about justice and security, the ICC intervention was used by politicians to centre political debate on the protection of national sovereignty rather than on providing justice for the victims of the PEV (Mueller 2014). The disassembly of the security sector in itself doesn't mean a threat to the authority of the state. Yet the emergence of non-state actors like Mungiki as security

actors combined with the intervention of a supranational global institution like the ICC was suddenly perceived as a challenge to the authority of the state. Owing to its association with the PEV, the current regime has struggled to acquire legitimacy for their general security practices as they have constantly been caught between expectations of providing security for the people while sidelining the legal principles protecting citizens' rights. The alleged political mobilization of Mungiki during the PEV serves as a reminder of how the state outsourced its violence, only to later violently persecute Mungiki in order to cover its tracks. The ICC case threatened to bring that into the open, and to legally persecute the ruling elite for the dubious security practices.

Conclusion

As the Kenyan police and military are perceived as much a security hazard as a guarantor of security, the majority of Nairobians have come to rely on some form of private security regardless of social status (Abrahamsen and Williams 2010: 197–9). Non-state and non-corporate organizations like Mungiki present themselves as alternative security providers in poor locations, though embody the same ambiguity as public and private security providers do, namely that of being providers of both security and insecurity.

This chapter has traced how Mungiki entered the limelight of violent youth politics in Kenya from a political perspective with regard to how the state has been implicated in outsourcing the use of violence, which has created room and potential for alternative actors to take part in the reconfiguration of the security landscape in Kenya. The global influences informing the securitization of Kenya, and Africa in general, put pressure on the Kenyan state to engage in international security alliances. Simultaneously, they demanded certain codes of conduct and allegiance to human rights. It is here that we see non-state actors like Mungiki emerge as security operators with political agency. The uneven and unequal distribution of state-sanctioned security and private-company-led security provision leaves a security gap in the poor areas, which is not fulfilled through development engagements. Hence, actors like Mungiki emerge to capitalize not only on the state's inability or unwillingness to provide security in these areas, but also draw attention to the state's inability to properly securitize these areas. Non-state actors like Mungiki appear more flexible than the state in terms of continually transgressing the division between a developmental discourse, with the aim of providing development through security, and the state's unequal delivery and rights negligence in the security sector. Despite their flexibility, Mungiki can't combine the two as they constantly fall into the role of being something that needs to be securitized.

The general restructuring of the security landscape has not only seen a reconfiguration of the lines between the public and the private, but the way security and order are maintained has also been transformed (see Abrahamsen

and Williams 2009: 3). Local forms of security are expressed differently across social and geographical settings, and Mungiki's security interventions in Nairobi and central Kenya reveal how poverty and ethnicity inform these expressions. Such normatively varied and unequal distribution of security highlights some of the exclusive consequences of the global security assemblage as they manifest themselves at a local level in Kenya.

Mungiki emerged in Kenya as a response to political oppression and a lack of cultural recognition, through tapping into generational grievances concerning access to education, employment and political participation. However, the institutionalization of Mungiki in Kenya must partly be seen as an effect of the general restructuring of the security landscape, as Mungiki's entanglement in various forms of security provision provided them with a platform for strengthening their influence on local service provision and national politics.

The case of Mungiki exemplifies some of the ways in which the authority of the state is performed anew through the increased fragmentation of security provision and the gradual dissolution of the state's monopoly on the use of violence. At the same time it reveals how the state nevertheless functions as a key actor in facilitating the continuous reconfiguration of security (see Abrahamsen and Williams 2009, 2011).

Despite the state persecution of Mungiki, the movement has managed to survive for more than two decades by continually moving in and out of positions where their security engagements can be seen as political. Simultaneously, these strategic adaptations have allowed Mungiki to actually become political in arenas beyond the security sector – for example, in relation to human rights issues or as part of a general political mobilization of disenfranchised youth.

Mungiki's involvement in the PEV shows how violent politics feeds into other forms of politics and political becoming. The intervention of the ICC in an attempt to provide justice to the victims of PEV and Mungiki's involvement in the case underscore the complexity of security politics, but also of the global assemblage of normative agendas concerning justice and its relation to state authority. As such, the analytical perspective on a non-state actor like Mungiki in an exceptional case like the Kenyan one allows us to see how organizations that appears excluded and marginal to global flows and discourses still provide important insights into the workings and process of the global security assemblage.

The presentation of Mungiki as both providers of local security, as a liability to national and local security, and as victims of the Kenyan state's excessive security undertakings adds further complexity to our understanding of the local implications of security reconfigurations, especially in situations where security actors are employed in struggles over political power and economic gains. As such, the global security assemblage has local consequences that go well beyond the security sector as it influences how supposedly marginal

non-state actors like Mungiki carve out discrete spaces for political becoming through their everyday security activities.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editor Paul Higate for his thorough review comments and patience, and my colleagues Laust Schouenborg, Lars Buur and Johan Fisher for giving valuable and insightful comments to early drafts of this chapter.

Note

¹ The ICC and similar institutions might project a global image, but the normative baggage they are founded on is based on Northern/Western values. As such, they are not objective or neutral; at least, that is what Kenyan opponents of the ICC intervention argue when labelling the ICC as a neocolonial invention.

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