



**Universiteit Utrecht**

**UNDER A CLOAK OF ETHNIC TENSIONS  
UNVEIL VIOLENCE AGAINST THE BANYAMULENGE IN SOUTH KIVU,  
EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

Tran Vu Tuong Nguyen  
0615722  
Utrecht University  
Date of submission: August 1st, 2022

Word count: 14,660  
Supervisor: Jolle Demmers  
Trajectory: Internship and Thesis Writing (15 ETC)

A Thesis submitted to  
the Board of Examiners  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of  
Master of Arts in Conflict Studies & Human Rights

## **Summary**

This thesis unearths an appalling tragedy of the Banyamulenge community in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the network connections that have sustained the violence. The primary motivation for the researcher to start this research is to invalidate a common yet hazardous belief about the fundamental nature of this predicament - that the violence is simply a result of tribal or race tensions. At the same time, the research also aims to advance the current understanding of violent conflicts' dynamics in South Kivu. By delving into the activities of actors in alliances that produce communal violence against the Banyamulenge, the research aims to explore the realms where actors sustain violence that benefit self-serving interests and satisfy private agendas. Hence, the study applies alliance theory as a theoretical framework to explain inter-group and intra-group dynamics that have shaped the region's violent landscapes for the past few years. With primary and secondary evidence gathered through NGO reports, local news, and prior literature, this research seeks to analyze the actual situation and modify the theoretical framework critically. By the end of the study, this investigation reveals that the private agendas of armed actors and allies in South Kivu are essential to constituting the harsh reality in question and clarifying the logic of violence.

## **Acknowledgements**

It is my pleasure to express my deepest gratitude to my internship and thesis supervisor, **Prof. Jolle Demmers**, Professor in Conflict Studies at the History of International Relations section of the Department of History and Art History, Utrecht University. Her dedication and interest in helping her students has been accountable for the completion of this thesis. Her meticulous scrutiny and scholarly advice have helped me to learn a lot during the whole process and accomplish this project.

I also owe a deep sense of thanks to **Dr. Delphin Ntanyoma**, Economics of Development & Emerging Markets Programme, Institute of Social Studies (ISS)/Erasmus University Rotterdam and **Mr. Alex Ntung**, PhD researcher at the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent, UK, for their keen interests and enthusiastic help at every stage of my research. Their insights on the violence against the Banyamulenge in South Kivu have lent me direction and motivation to complete this thesis.

I want to profusely thank **Edwin Canggadibrata**, my friend, who helped me to proofread this thesis.

Last but not least, I am extremely thankful to my family, my boyfriend, my friends, and co-workers at the Next Century Foundation, who provided me with tremendous emotional support and constant encouragement during my research pursuit.

## Table of Contents

Annex: Armed actors engaged in violence in South Kivu (between 2017 and now)

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Analytical framework</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Overview of major theoretical debates	10
a. Micro-analysis versus macro-analysis	10
b. Primordial views versus constructivist views	11
2. Analytical frame: Alliance theory	13
3. Key concepts of alliance theory	15
<b>Chapter 2: Alliances in the High Plateaus</b>	<b>17</b>
1. RED Tabara - Mai-Mai coalition: A foreign actor-local actor alliance	17
2. State actor-armed group collaborations	21
3. Among Mai-Mai factions: Intra-group alliances	23
<b>Chapter 3: A joint production of violence under an ethnic disguise</b>	<b>25</b>
1. The problem of the ethnic narrative	25
2. The dominant ethnic narrative in South Kivu	26
3. Mai-Mai’s mobilizing narratives, their collaborations, and an ethnic disguise	29
<b>Chapter 4: Explore the private sphere</b>	<b>32</b>
1. Cattle-looting activities	33
2. Extra-military lucrative activities	36
3. Political advantages and protection networks	37
4. Endless and normalized violence	39
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>41</b>

Annex: Armed actors engaged in violence in South Kivu (between 2017 and now)

NAME	OPERATION AND COLLABORATION
BILOZE BISHAMBUKE	A Mai-Mai group associated with some communities such as Bafulliru and mainly operating in Milimba, Byalere, Rugomero, Kasiru, Kitumba. They often allied with Mai-Mai Mulumba and Mai-Mai Mtetezi.
GUMINO	A Banyamulenge self-defense group mainly operating in Basiloca, Basimunyaka- Sud, Hauts Plateaux of Kigoma, and Itara.
ARMED FORCES OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC	The national armed forces forge alliances with wide-range actors, including Mai-Mai armed groups and Banyamulenge self-defense

OF THE CONGO (FARDC)	groups.
NATIONAL FORCES OF LIBERATION (FNL)	A Burundian armed group mainly operating in Itombwe; Moyens Plateaux (Middle Plateaus) of Kigoma and Muhungu. They ally with Mai-Mai Makanaki.
RAIA MUTOMBOKI	A Mai-Mai faction mainly operating in Shabunda and in the High Plateaus of Uvira and Fizi.
RED TABARA	A Burundian armed group mainly operating in Masango. They ally with Mai-Mai Ilunga.
TWIRWANEHO	A Banyamulenge self-defense group organizing themselves in Bijombo, Minembwe, Kamombo, Kahololo, and the Itombwe part of the High Plateaus.
MAI-MAI EBUELA/ MTETEZI	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in Basiloca, Hauts Plateaux of Balala Nord, and Mutambala, Basimunyaka, Basimukuma Sud; Basimwenda; Basimukindje. They ally with Biloze Bishambuke, Mai-Mai Ilunga, Mushombe, and Mupekenya
MAI-MAI KASHUMBA	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in the Middle Plateaus of Mangwa, Kihuha, Ndegu, Kiruli, Mukono and Kasheka, Taba, Ndegu Katembo. They ally with Mai-Mai Ilunga and Mai-Mai Mushombe.
MAI-MAI MAKANAKI	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in Uvira city. They ally with Mai-Mai Ilunga, Mai-Mai René, and the FNL.
MAI-MAI MULUMBA	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in the High Plateaus of Kasolero- Mmonda, Lekesha, Ibumba, Kangembe, Malingumu, Kakunga. They often ally with Biloze Bishambuke and Mai-Mai Mtetezi.
MAI-MAI MUPEKENYA	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in Itombwe and Bijombo. They often ally with Mai-Mai Mtetezi, Mai-Mai Ilunga, and Mai-Mai Mushombe
MAI-MAI ILUNGA	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in Bijombo North and East. They often ally with Mai- Mai René, Mai-Mai Makanaki, Mai-Mai Mushombe, Mai-Mai Kashumba, Mai-Mai Mupekenya and RED Tabara.
MAI-MAI RENE	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in the Middle Plateaus of Kalungwe and Makobola. They ally with Mai-Mai Ilunga and governmental forces.
MAI-MAI YAKUTUMBA	A Mai-Mai group mainly operating in Fizi and often allying with Biloze Bishambuke.

## Introduction

### *Anecdote and research puzzle*

In the land of the forgotten, the High Plateaus of South Kivu in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, an alarming genocide against the Banyamulenge community is raging in broad daylight. This horrific violence has escalated yearly without any decisive national, regional, or international interventions. The Banyamulenge has been the main target of inhumane intolerances and abuses ranging from village burning and cattle looting to mass killings for years (Eastern Congo Tribune, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. The main perpetrators, Mai-Mai groups and Burundian allies deployed in the region and their allies, are still free from punishment (Eastern Congo Tribune, 2020)<sup>2</sup>. Since 2019, Mai-Mai groups have been reported to have burnt over 300 villages, provoking massive displacement (Eastern Congo Tribune, 2020)<sup>3</sup>. One may ask, how did the hatred begin? A number of authors have posited that the hatred and marginalization were a colonial legacy. Some studied the psychological effect of warfare and explained how these psychological effects feed into the creation of intercommunal tensions. Many other scholars pointed out that what further fueled the marginalization were abuses of civilians caused by the Banyamulenge soldiers affiliated with the Rwandan army during the First and Second Congo Wars. Nevertheless, however intricate this violence may appear, a common interpretation suffices that violence is merely a product of an indelible inter-communal hatred and is thus unsolvable by outsiders. This dominant narrative has blurred another deepening and discriminating discourse on in and outgroup, which labeled the Banyamulenge as Rwandan outsiders (or Rwandophones).

In Minembwe, a tragic event caught my attention and laid a foundation for this research project. On June 30th, 2021, trusted news reported that the FARDC (Armed Forces of the Democratic

---

<sup>1</sup> Call for special international protection and humanitarian assistance: Banyamulenge of South Kivu at risk of genocide. Retrieved from:

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=eastern+congo+tribune+banyamulenge&cvid=3915792ceac841bbab6d592e3bb251ca&aqs=edge..69i57.12572j0j1&pqgt=299&FORM=ANNTA1&PC=EDGEDB>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Republic of Congo) got involved in the killing of four women and one man in place of rescuing them from Mai-Mai militias (Eastern Congo Tribune, 2021)<sup>4</sup>. This empirical observation raises a critical question about the lack of responsibility of the national army deployed in South Kivu in protecting a marginalized community and a possibility of a collaboration between FARDC soldiers and Mai-Mai militias. Unfortunately, this is not the only suspected coalition present in the High Plateaus of South Kivu. In fact, since 2017, the region has witnessed numerous abuses of the Banyamulenge deployed by coalitions of Mai-Mai and other national or foreign actors (Mahoro Peace Association, 2021)<sup>5</sup>. Starting with these observations, I began questioning the motives of armed groups in inflicting violence collectively, even when some actors seemed to pursue different goals from the other. I construct my empirically informed complication as follows:

*Through what forms of brokerage and alliance did the Mai-Mai militias, the national army, and foreign armed groups deploy violence against the Banyamulenge community in the High Plateaus, South Kivu, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo between 2017 and 2022?*

### ***Significance and the aim of the research***

I am pursuing this research project since it is socially and theoretically significant. First, it helps advance the current understanding of violence against the Banyamulenge in the High Plateaus of South Kivu. It is hazardous to automatically adopt an ethnic perspective without carefully analyzing the complex dynamics going on the ground. My research will yield real insights into actors' agendas related to directly affecting the production of violence. Even though news, local radio, and advocates have raised the issue, this research will accumulate insights and evidence and organize and interpret them with a structured analytical framework. Second, this research uses and modifies an existing

---

<sup>4</sup> Killing of unarmed Banyamulenge women: The world must respond. Retrieved from: [Killing of Unarmed Banyamulenge Women Protestors: the World must Respond \(Sebahizi and Hintjens\) – Eastern Congo Tribune](#)

<sup>5</sup> This information is retrieved from a petition link created by the Mahoro Peace Association

theory, thus testing the theory's applicability and, in a way, advancing the theory. Given the unique nature of the protracted violence in the High Plateaus in the post-war era that incorporates varied perpetrators from different levels, there is a need to develop a framework that considers all-level actors and highlights the instrumentalized aspect of an ethnic discourse. On that account, this research will advance an existing theory, not entirely applicable to a complex, protracted post-war violence in the DRC and generate a framework that explains the logic of violence.

Therefore, the key aim of this research is to advance existing theory. I acknowledge that the theory that my research relies upon, alliance theory, despite being relevant in explaining the drivers of violence in the post-war era of the Eastern DRC, needs some adjustments. Specifically, the theory does not draw attention to violence or atrocities against a community. Moreover, the theory also operates in contexts of civil wars, which do not take foreign or regional actors/dynamics into consideration. The aim of advancing theory requires me to continuously elaborate and refine the concepts per the empirical case and evidence.

### ***Ethics***

The issue of bias remains the main issue of this research. I mention this ethnic issue due to the usage of several sources of human rights advocates, news, and natives of the Banyamulenge community, which may raise the question of whether my interpretations of violence's perpetrators were neutral. I am also concerned about cherry-picking and misinterpreting data, which might severely affect my research. However, I did two tasks to make sure my research remained neutral. First, I extracted only facts and not opinions or the authors' claims with the sources that may contain biases. Second, I collect evidence from official news sites, NGO reports, and United Nations reports to avoid partial evidence for my claims. Likewise, to interpret and analyze data correctly, I did not find the data to prove an existing claim but adjusting claims and concepts based on my data and the analytical framework.



## *Methodology*

The ontological properties that I investigate include the actions of individuals and groups. I concede that what is researchable and what I am interested in for this research project include mainly rational thinking or strategy of individuals or groups that choose to forge alliances. Thus, my ontological assumption will be about actions. Likewise, I define "actor agency" as the intellectual puzzle, which helps to link my investigative thinking with the actual situation in South Kivu. This is because multiple actors' choices in forging alliances and pursuing private agendas could explain to me how violence against the Banyamulenge has been sustained in the region. My epistemological approach, therefore, will also be actor agency and choice.

This thesis is based on a qualitative literature review. This research project aims to identify literature that analyzes conflict and violence dynamics, the formation of ethnic tensions, and armed groups' activities in South Kivu, especially between 2017 and now. Besides, the research requires closely investigating armed groups' activities and abuses in reports and local news. Three main databases that set the foundation for this research include Google Scholar, JSTOR, and WorldCat. Besides, I also gathered data from local news, blog posts, and NGO reports. I retrieved data from three regional and local news sites: Radio Okapi, ChimpReports, and the Great Lake Post. For blog posts, the research relied on the Eastern Congo Tribune, Acidic Security Blog, and Kivu Security Blog. While the Eastern Congo Tribune and Kivu Security Blog emphasized the security and violence in Kivu provinces, Acidic Security Blog dealt with regional dynamics. In terms of NGO reports, this research collected data from the following reports: UNHCR annual reports, The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), Kivu Security Tracker (KST), Congo Research Group (CRG), Austrian Center for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD), and Genocide Watch.

Regarding sampling, I opted to sample people (groups, identities) and significant events that reflect the collaboration activities of Mai-Mai armed groups, the national army, and foreign armed groups between 2017 and now. In terms of the space dimension, my sampling are where violence against the Banyamulenge occurred (mainly in the High Plateaus of South Kivu) and where collaborative activities of groups involved in violence occur (for example, along the DRC- Burundi border). Therefore, I searched for literature that included information regarding the activities of armed groups or actors from neighboring countries that might have forged alliances with Congolese fighting units. Furthermore, even though I acknowledge that history and civil wars' legacies play an essential role in causing violence, I mainly focused on the time between 2017 and now because, since 2017, violence against the Banyamulenge in the region has surged again. Below are the main questions to guide my research:

- *What is the master cleavage in South Kivu from 2017 to now?*
- *What are the local cleavages in South Kivu from 2017 until now?*
- *Who are those who fight along local cleavages?*
- *Who are those who fight along the master cleavage?*
- *What is the joint production of violence between local, national, and regional actors in South Kivu?*
- *What transaction deals were forged between different actors on the grounds that allowed them to engage in joint violence?*

### ***Limitations***

When designing my research, one of the biggest questions about feasibility was how I could know the details of armed groups' transactions if I did not conduct fieldwork research. It has been proven difficult for even researchers in the field to know these details since there were rarely revelations about who gets what in exchange for what. To solve this, I tried to look for interviews,

secondary evidence from different sources, and NGO reports to yield appropriate evidence. Another limitation of this research is that I need to deal with a wide range of actors or groups of actors with distinct interests. Remarkably, many Mai-Mai factions have been actively deploying in South Kivu, let alone their foreign and national allies, which made analyzing the situation in the region daunting.

### ***Order of the chapters***

The order of the chapter is as follows. First, in chapter 1, I will discuss the theoretical debate and my analytical frame. The chapter contemplates prior academic literature on conflict analyses and debates on ethnicity and war relation, which sets the foundation for the use of alliance theory. In chapter 2, I will convey how different alliances take place and play an essential role in shaping the conflict and violence dynamics in the High Plateaus of South Kivu. By focusing on alliances at three levels, I cover the how and what of violence: *What alliances join the production of violence? How were these alliances formed? What has been exchanged for what?* In chapter 3, I will argue that the alliances mentioned in chapter 2 have produced joint violence against the Banyamulenge community from 2017 to 2021 under the cloak of an ethnic narrative. I will first present a dominant ethnic narrative widely understood by the UN and many other NGOs (the tension between those who call themselves "autochthonous" and those labeled as outsiders). I will also analyze how this dominant narrative blurs away other hard-to-spot agendas that contribute tremendously to inflicting violence and helps Mai-Mai and allies to construct a false reality. This part is mainly about the *why* of violence in South Kivu - why violence occurs behind a disguise of ethnic tensions. Finally, in chapter 4, I will outline what specifically the private agendas that the dominant ethnic narrative obfuscates are and how these private agendas have sustained the violence. I split these private agendas into cattle-looting, extra-military activities, and protection networks. These agendas probe the *why* or the logic of violence in South Kivu by delving into actors' agency and transactions. Last but not least, I will emphasize how

alliance mechanisms have kept violence against the Banyamulenge continue, through provisions of recruits, ammunition, weapons, information, and a culture of impunity.

***What is this a case of?***

It can be liberally interpreted that these collaborative events happen for a mutual goal – to inflict violence on the Banyamulenge community. In other words, violence resulted from collaborative efforts between the present state and non-state actors. Nevertheless, it will be too hasty to conclude that the genuine interest in these acts of violence deployed by various alliances is only to inflict violence on the Banyamulenge. It is always essential to draw a line between, on the one hand, *perpetrators' interests* or what a co-perpetrator wants out of a violent act and *the real act of violence*. I will now turn to a discussion of three different pieces of literature, which may or may not analyze the plight of the Banyamulenge in South Kivu. Nonetheless, these works help to generalize the empirical observation on the genocidal act against the Banyamulenge posed at the beginning.

***a. Beyond ethnic tensions***

The empirical observation suggests a case that is more than just ethnic violence. On several occasions, state actors in Pakistan have shaken hands with non-state actors to conduct violence against the Hazara community in the Balochistan region. In particular, the Frontier Corps and the military would ensure that the perpetrators of violence will not bear any responsibilities (Wani, 2019). Explaining this act of impunity, Wani (2019) pointed at a popular anti-Hazara discourse and government-backed attacks of the Hazara, whose purpose is not about ethnicity or identities. He explained that the alliance between the corrupted state actors and the perpetrators of violence stemmed from a fear that Hazaras might have any connections with Iran. The violent act, thus, could be interpreted as political violence – violence occurs to help actors achieve a political end (Hayes and McAllister, 2005). Ntanyoma and Hintjens (2021) concluded that framings related to other factors

(such as land, citizenship, and identity politics) different from ethnicity had been neglected after analyzing the root causes of warfare in South Kivu. To support the claim, they presented evidence showing how a Mai-Mai leader gained popular support by being “openly hostile to Congolese of Rwandan descent” (p.388). As shown in later chapters, political actors have also leaned on linkages and cooperation with Mai-Mai armed groups to gain political popularity.

***b. Multilayered dynamics of conflicts and violence***

To make sense of the complex and ever-expanding nature of violence in the post-war Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Verweijen et al. (2021) analyzed processes through which a vicious cycle of violence has been formed. She pointed out four mechanisms that violence in South Kivu is most likely to be ascribed to: (1) ethnic tensions, (2) an interlocking security dilemma, (3) militarization, and (4) multilayered dynamics linking local violence to national and regional developments. She further argued that the mechanisms of “militarization” and “multilayered dynamics of violence” have long been neglected by stabilization initiatives. Verweijen and Vlassenroot (2015) argued that armed (re)mobilization in Eastern DRC was not driven by ethnic identification or other struggle related to territory. Instead, it was an outcome of a mixture of factors, “including personal ambitions, clan politics, political and economic elite interests, regional and national positioning, and divergent political visions.” (p.2). With this claim as a foundation, I will assess these factors' interactions behind an alliance mechanism in the High Plateaus.

***c. Fragmented and fluid networks***

Speaking of the complex dynamics of conflicts and violence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo but not explicitly referring to the violence against the Banyamulenge community, Stearns and Vogel (2017) contended that coalitions between armed groups have taken place in a networked fashion. They ascribed how several coalitions had gained momentum in the region with a

diminishing role of the FARDC and a fluid, short-lived nature of coalitions. Ntung (2019) also briefly mentioned the alliance mechanism in South Kivu, concentrating on Mai-Mai militias. According to Ntung (2019), Mai-Mai factions have established alliances with various groups following the political circumstances and perceived economic threats. While Stearns and Vogel’s research shed light on the question of the relations between the national political turmoil and the creation of new networks in the High Plateaus, Ntung seemed to briefly touch on the idea of shifting alliances. Both pieces of literature’s objectives, nonetheless, do not serve as an answer to a complex question: *What is the function of alliances and networks in interpreting elements that sustain violence against the Banyamulenge in the High Plateaus of South Kivu?*

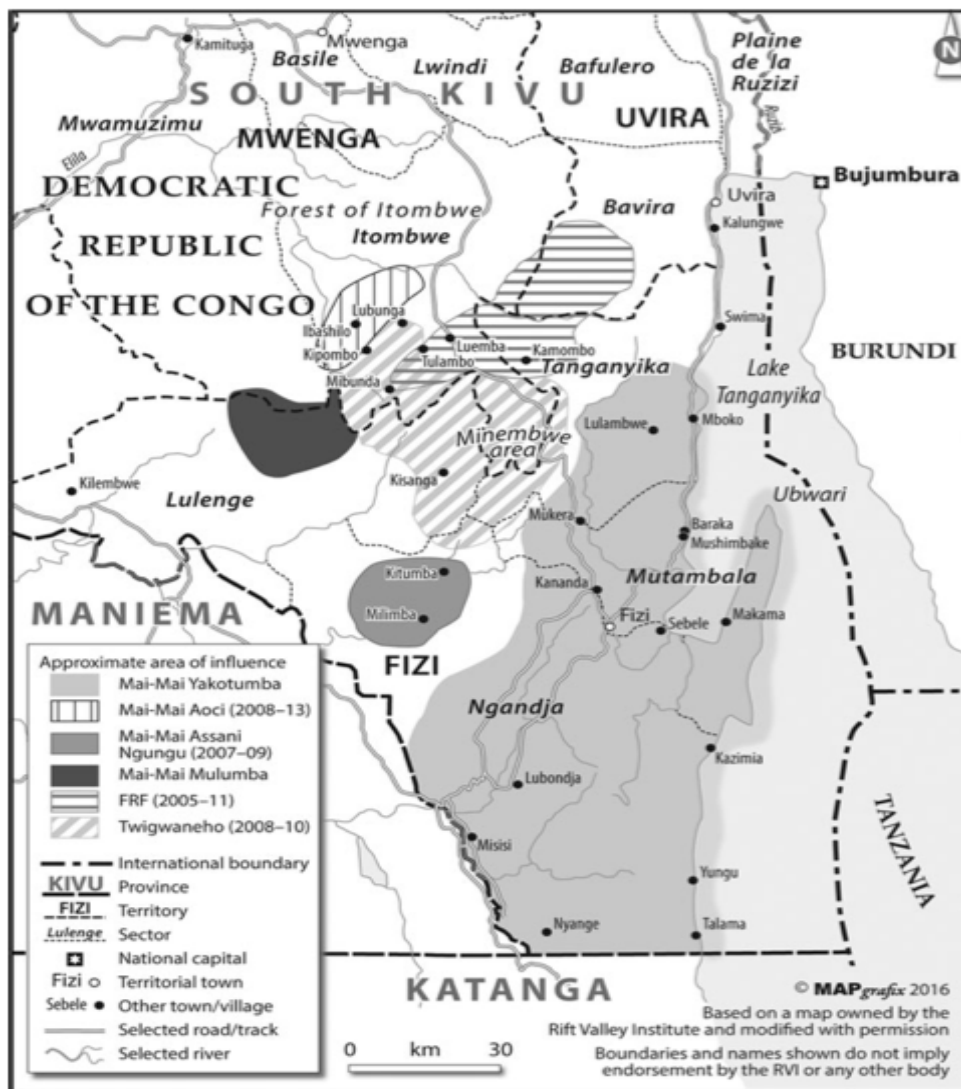


Figure 1 Fizi and Itombwe, showing approximate areas of armed group influence.

## Chapter 1: Analytical framework

### *1. Overview of major theoretical debates*

#### *a. Micro-analysis versus macro-analysis*

Carayannis et al. (2018) examined the drawbacks of previous approaches to understanding the violence in the Kivu provinces. The advent of the first Congo war in 1996 counted different narratives that tried to answer questions about the drivers and complexities of violence South Kivu, which is located in the East of this country. A prominent academic and public debate around the time concentrated on the role of the military involvement of neighboring countries (Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi). Nonetheless, the outbreak of the second Congo war in 1998 pivoted the attention of researchers to the competition for mineral resources. Before, during and even after the second war, many narratives still fell back to greed or resource exploitation as the primary driver of violence in the DRC. Such mono-causal narratives thrived internationally and impacted international policies at that time, while a growing academic literature on multilayered drivers and microanalysis of Congolese conflicts remained hidden.

The incidents of violence in the High Plateaus often portrayed as ethnic tension are, in actuality, weakly related to their dominant narratives. By framing the agendas of a non-state actor, for instance, the Mai-Mai, as ethnic detestation or a rivalry against another ethnic group, the Mai-Mai could create a justification for themselves to inflict violence to protect the "native community." The ethnic narrative is not the driver of violence in the region, as I will show with my analysis in the upcoming chapters. Therefore, this research project departs from a body of literature focusing on drivers of civil wars. On the one hand, a group of researchers concentrated on explaining how conflicting interests of leading actors of conflicts such as governments, opposing groups, and ethnic groups resulted in civil wars or political violence (Horowitz, 1985; Garfinkel, 1990; Skaperdas, 1992; Hirshleifer 2001; Reynal-Querol 2002; Fearon & Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). This body of literature has been criticized due to its refutation of micro-foundations of violence (Kalyvas, 2006; Kalyvas, Shapiro, and Massoud,

2008; Verwimp, Bruck, and Justino, 2009). A focus on national-level explanations of conflicts' drivers blurs away local dynamics, which most of the time contribute substantially to fuel and sustain conflicts. To Keen (2008), these macro-level approaches also neglected greed-grievance interactions in conflict settings.

Frequently, the study of violence adopts perspectives shaped by predominant conflict narratives such as one ethnic group against the other or rebel groups against the government. Brass (1997) and Kalyvas (2006) suggested that when looking closely at incidents of violence, these are not or are weakly related to the dominant narratives. In many cases, one side of conflict or violence can use the dominant narrative to create justifications to harm the other. An emerging emphasis on micro-level drivers of violence and conflicts, on the other hand, has been generating critical insights on varied dimensions: violent collective actions (Lichbach 1994; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Blattman 2009), interactions between competing groups (Grossman 1991; Gates 2002), and internal organization of armed groups (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008; Christia 2012; Staniland 2014) and how violence against civilians is produced within armed organizations (Osiel, 1999). As stated in these pieces of literature, a micro-level approach advances our insights/understandings of conflicts by arguing that conflicts are shaped by the behaviors of communities, individuals, and governments.

#### ***b. Primordial views versus constructivist views***

The violence in the Eastern DRC is a subject of not only the micro-macro analysis debate but the debate of ethnicity - whether violence is born out of ethnic differences or ethnicity was instrumentalized or constructed, which then serves the production of violence. While the former holds a primordial view that ethnicity breeds violence, the latter is more about the function or meaning of ethnicity in violence and contemporary conflicts (Demmers, 2016). It was not hard to spot this division in literature and reports surrounding ethnic-related violence in the Kivu provinces, even until this day. The most apparent manifestation of a primordial view is the reports of UNJHRO in 2020 that pleaded



that the violence in South Kivu was a tribal clash resulting from equally murderous ethnic groups that emerged out of intercommunal differences<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, as I will exemplify in chapter 3, this view is exceptionally superficial and virulent to a community encountering discrimination. On the other hand, the constructivist view shapes queries on a deeper understanding of the salience of ethnicity in violence and conflicts.

In this view, ethnic wars or ethnic violence could be functional or inflicted by ethno-symbolic resources (Demmers, 2016). In this research, I will specifically focus on the functional and instrumentalist view of ethnicity in violence, then aim to analyze what is behind the instrumentalist scheme. Just as Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2009) once assessed, armed forces constantly sought their instrumental benefits while relying on racialized narratives to foment insecurity across armed groups. Thus, my research project relies on the literature on micro-dynamics and instrumentalist views on ethnicity in conflicts and violence. Even though the scope of my research is the post-war era in the DRC, the literature above lends tremendous insights into the logic of violence, which the literature on macro-dynamics and post-war violence seems insufficient to address. Research on the High Plateaus of South Kivu primarily emphasizes the genocide by attrition against the Banyamulenge (Ntanyoma & Hintjens, 2021), a security dilemma between armed groups, the militarization of armed groups (Verweijen et al., 2021), and the operations and deployments of Mai-Mai armed groups (Stearns et al., 2013), and the role of the identity-territory nexus in shaping conflict landscapes (Vlassenroot, 2013). The mutuality of these pieces of literature is that they all have a constructivist approach. Nonetheless, these pieces of literature have not drawn a link between armed groups' coalitions and the micro-level drivers of violence against the Banyamulenge. At the same time, however, researchers curious about conflict and violence dynamics in Eastern DRC do acknowledge a need to explore networks and their activities in the region. Carayannis et al. (2018) expressed that their networks in the Eastern DRC define political and economic conditions as well as realities.

---

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/analysis-human-rights-situation-may-2020>

## *2. Analytical frame: Alliance theory*

Among established literature on micro-level perspectives on conflicts' drivers, the alliance theory of Kalyvas (2006) resonates the most with my research puzzle. Alliance theory also corresponds with my research complication because it emphasizes factors falling in the private categories and encourages researchers to look beyond the master cleavages. According to Kalyvas (2003), "alliance entails a transaction between **supralocal and local actors**, whereby the former supply the latter with external muscle, thus allowing them to win decisive local advantage; in exchange the former rely on local conflicts to recruit and motivate supporters and obtain local control, resources, and information" (p.486). Also, Kalyvas contended that alliance theory lends a theoretical advantage for it "allows for **multiple rather than unitary actors, agency located in both center and periphery rather than only in either one**, and a variety of preferences and identities as opposed to a common and overarching one" (p.486). Alliance results in violence that aggregates yet still reflects actors' manifold goals. In simpler words, alliance theory is a lens through which I research the agency of different actors in joint violence. This framework of Kalyvas unveils a new perspective on my current topic in that it pays attention to the micro-cleavages and alliance system, in which actors collaborate for their own agendas. I will interpret the violence against the Banyamulenge as a cooperative act of varied actors deployed in South Kivu and not a product of any specific armed group organization. Starting with that hypothesis, I will ascertain that collaborative activities among armed groups result in continuous violence against the Banyamulenge in the High Plateaus of South Kivu.

Even though Autesserre (2006) disseminated alliance theory to analyze the post-war situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, she concentrated on interactions between local-national-regional dynamics, not alliances of armed groups. She also did not address the ethnic or identity-based narrative in South Kivu. I, thus, will shift the focus to the prevalent ethnic narrative, which is often portrayed as a seed of violence in the region. The ethnic cleavage in South Kivu,

especially in the High Plateaus, occurs between those who call themselves autochthonous and the Banyamulenge, who have long been labeled as "Rwandophone" (or Rwandan outsiders) (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021). Leading the autochthonous in South Kivu are mostly the Mai-Mai militias, who have manifested themselves as defenders of Congo (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2021). Alternatively, the Banyamulenge was a small community that faced numerous attacks and was only capable of defending itself by small-scaled self-defense groups. By dissecting the local agendas, I examine how alliances were forged between groups from not only the locals to pursue particular purposes and whether such alliances breed and sustain violence in South Kivu. Accordingly, my research will explore the interaction of different actors at separate levels who produce joint violence in South Kivu that fits their interests in their interwoven local, national, and regional agendas.

This research project relays alliance theory as an analytical frame to fill the gap in the erstwhile micro-level research on conflicts in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in two facets. First, it explores the interface between actors from the local, national, and regional levels and their shared interests in the joint production of violence. Second, it draws attention to economic and political cleavages of violence in the High Plateaus of South Kivu, which relate to armed groups' motives and activities. Applying alliance theory to explain the logic of violence in South Kivu is significant because violence occurs considering not only interethnic Congolese groups pursuing ethnic agendas but collaborations between local, national, and foreign armed actors pursuing private gains. Alliance theory also interprets how local cleavages operate beside the master cleavage of conflicts to inflict and sustain violence. Therefore, the violence in South Kivu, especially in the High Plateau, despite being dressed as an inter-communal, ethnic conflict between the Banyamulenge (labeled as Rwandophone) and communities considering themselves as *autochthonous* or *native Congolese*, is not just about ethnic. The violence in an area is fueled by different local dynamics connected to regional and national dynamics and enabled by varied alliance mechanisms. The ethnic narrative in the High Plateaus is deemed to cover the political agendas of different political actors, from national to local ones, who

want to gain higher ground in the national political competition. Many state-level elites and military commanders have relied on the anti-Rwandophone narrative to gain popular political support in the region. Furthermore, economic activities such as gold mining, illegal taxes, protection, contract killing, cattle looting, etc., in South Kivu, which are strongly connected to the violence happening in the region, are joined by local, national, and regional actors.

I will also explore the characteristics of alliances in violence to sample alliance constellations for this research. Literature on alliances corroborates that there are four characteristics each alliance in violence has. First, alliances are based on either informal or formal relationships (Bencherif and Campagna, 2017). In this research project, most of the alliances will fall under the informal category. Second, coalitions connect actors that pursue varied private agendas to produce a joint production of violence (Kalyvas, 2006). Third, each side or member of the coalition will reap benefits that fit their objectives, whether the objectives are linked to the joint production of a violent act or not (Christia, 2012; Kalyvas, 2006). Christia (2012) featured some examples of benefits, which are survival of a group, additional leverages on the military and political processes, sharing information, obtaining new resources, increasing credibility, etc. Finally, inter-group alliances are highly subject to change in high fragmentation and fluidity.

As stated earlier in the introduction, this research project is interested in coalitions between armed groups deploying violence against the Banyamulenge in South Kivu. Some of these armed groups share the same identity; nevertheless, whether their interests and objectives are subject to an ethnic-related goal is still debatable. According to Bencherif and Campagna (2017), there are two types of alliances that we should distinguish. The first type is an intra-group alliance. Alliances of the first type bring together factions, subgroups, and individuals (Bencherif & Campagna, 2017). For example, different Mai-Mai factions identified as autochthonous defense groups pursuing different agendas may ally with each other. There are also inter-group alliances, which tie several armed groups together. In this research, I will emphasize both types of alliances (Bencherif and Campagna, 2017).

### 3. *Key concepts of alliance theory*

Four essential concepts are noteworthy in alliance theory: joint production of violence, supra-local and local actors, master cleavages, and private agendas. The first one is a **joint production of violence**, which illustrates that violence is a joint activity between two or more two actors. In the words of Kalyvas, a joint production of violence could be reconceptualized as an interaction between actors with distinct “identities, motivations and interests” (p.476). Discussing alliance as a concept, Kalyvas (2006) also illustrates connections between **supra-local and local actors**, with the former fighting along the national or central cleavages and the latter fighting along the local cleavages. While this research substantiates Kalyvas’s argument, in the context of post-war violence, especially in the Eastern DRC, the nature of violence is quite different. In my research, the term supra-local actor does not refer to those fighting along the central cleavage but to those considered state actors or foreign actors. Moreover, the **central or master cleavages** do not refer to the national cleavages in civil wars’ contexts but to the widespread ethnic narrative in the High Plateaus of South Kivu. The reason for this is that, as I will proffer in later chapters, the local violence in South Kivu is not a manifestation of any national dynamics, although it does reflect the aspirations of many national actors. Kalyvas also emphasized that local agendas are private spheres, as opposed to political spheres from national agendas. While this has been proven true in many empirical cases, when researching the motivations of Mai-Mai armed groups, for example, they also sought political agendas through violent deeds on a local level. Thus, I would not have a clear-cut distinction between political and private agendas but generally define **private agendas** as activities and motives that fall in both political and private realms at both local and supra-local levels. A correct understanding of private agendas was that they have little to do with the master cleavages. Therefore, my definition of private agendas includes not only personal grudges or individual fights operating strictly at the local level but personal political aspirations of elites, armed groups' political and economic schemes, or needs for protection on local,

national, and sub-regional levels. Private agendas are not personal or intimate dynamics; instead, they are events and schemes centering fighting units' activities that help us re-read the logic and functions of violence. Exploring the private agendas means rejecting master cleavage as a default concept and delving deeper into realms where violence may be a means, not an end. In other words, private agendas can serve different aims in violent conflicts other than the aim of winning.

## Chapter 2: Alliances in the High Plateaus

This research project explores how a wide range of actors forged alliances on the ground and how these affected and sustained the violent conflict. Specifically, in this chapter, I will explore the alliance and collaborative relationships in South Kivu and what these alliances' transactions are about. The investigation will be carried out with an assumption that actors seemingly irrelevant to the conflict pictures in South Kivu enter alliances with each other, mutually seek benefits and foster local violence. To gain a handle on the emergence and organization of these alliances, I begin by investigating the *how and what of violence*. Hence, the sub-questions that need to be answered here are: (1) *Who are the local and supra-local actors that forge alliances?* (2) *What are these alliances about?*, and (3) *What are the transaction deals?*

### **1. RED Tabara - Mai-Mai coalition: A foreign actor-local actor alliance**

Local violence involves not only local actors but supra-local actors who could contribute to the production of violence. In Uvira, South Kivu, a colossal coalition between a foreign rebel group and several Mai-Mai groups has occurred since 2017 (Mahoro Peace Association, 2021)<sup>7</sup>. The coalition's activities have resulted in excessive violence, with the Banyamulenge being the most affected victim (Mahoro Peace Association, 2021). Accordingly, this part dissects the main activities of the Mai-Mai-RED Tabara in Uvira and how this coalition's activities have inflicted violence, mainly against the Banyamulenge in this region of South Kivu (Mahoro Peace Association, 2021). A Burundian armed group named RED Tabara (Résistance pour un état de Droit Tabara) has allied with several Mai-Mai groups to deploy violence against the Banyamulenge community since 2017. These violent episodes are non-stop, escalating, and lasting from 2017 to 2022 (Mahoro Peace Association, 2021).

---

<sup>7</sup> This information is retrieved from a petition link created by the Mahoro Peace Association

Mai Mai was reported by Radio Okapi (2022) to have allied with RED Tabara to march on the villages of Rudefwe, Marimba, Majaga, Mashuba and Masango in Uvira in 2022<sup>8</sup>. When the attacks happened, killings, burnings of houses, and lootings of agricultural products were also reported. A group of experts on the DRC concluded that the RED-Tabara had around 300 combatants located northwest of Uvira, which was also their rear base. These experts also observed that they had committed many cases of abuse against the Banyamulenge villages, "setting them on fire and looting their cattle, thereby forcing them to live in enclaves", in coalition with the Mai-Mai Yakutumba, the Mai-Mai Mtetezi or Biloze Bishambuke (KST, 13 April 2021). Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Projects (ACLED) reported that on the 16th of March 2021, RED Tabara allied with the Mai-Mai Ilunga, Mai-Mai Rene, Makanaki and Kashumbato kill 4 Banyamulenge in the villages of Kageregere, Gocheni, Rwikubo and Kahundwe in Uvira, where they also lotted cows, goats and sheep (7 April 2022).



Figure 2 Map of Uvira

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from:  
<https://www.radiookapi.net/2022/01/29/actualite/securite/sud-kivu-situation-securitaire-confuse-masango-apres-des-combat-s-entre>



I sketch these empirical cases not to assert that violent acts always ensue as a cooperative act among alliance members. Rather, most of the violent episodes recorded the presence of an allying actor that does not possess any grievances or hatred against the Banyamulenge. At least on the side of the RED-Tabara, they pursued a different political aspiration outside the DRC (Acker, 2019). RED-Tabara's presence in South Kivu and the High Plateaus is not subject to specific ethnic agendas; instead, they aspire to pursue their political agenda in Burundi. Their agenda was clarified by Kivu Security Tracker (2021) as follows:

*“This was the first Burundian group to set up a rear base in the eastern Congo following the re-election of Burundian President Nkurunziza in 2015. Various RED-Tabara recruits benefitted from military training in Rwanda before crossing into the Ruzizi Plain. Increased international scrutiny over their recruitment and training in Rwanda, as well as their involvement in conflicts in the Ruzizi Plain, weakened the RED-Tabara. Nonetheless, its presence prompted the Burundian army to subcontract Congolese militias to fight them. RED-Tabara has been able to launch several operations into Burundi since 2015, including into Cibitoke and Gatumba in 2018 and Kibira in 2019.” (KST, February 2021, p. 39)*

RED Tabara's presence and collaboration with local armed groups oiled the wheels of violence due to the pursuit of private agendas and the connection of a local agenda with a wider transnational one. First, the alliance continuously deployed violence against the Banyamulenge, primarily to appropriate properties, lands, and cattle. Therefore, violence happens more often with RED Tabara equipping ammunition and extra forces for Mai-Mai to attack villages and fight the Banyamulenge self-defense groups (Verweijen et al., 2021). Private agendas will be further explored in chapter 4, yet these examples of transaction deals reveal that a transnational dynamic impacted the alliances. Such transnational political dynamics have been conducive to the concurrent episodes of violence initiated by local armed groups in South Kivu and its beneficiaries.

Second, the spillover of political violence in Burundi and countless horrifying incidents of fighting in the High Plateaus have deepened local insecurities. To illustrate how a transnational dynamic can impact a local situation, I will consult two articles discussing the past sub-regional dynamics in the Eastern DRC. A piece of literature by Autesserre (2006) clarified the local dynamics of violence in post-conflict DRC that is still relevant to the events today and points at multi-level drivers of local violence. A regional cause was one of them. She described multiple stakes of the Rwandan army in the region allied with local rebels to counter the threat posed by Hutu militias and exploit available mineral resources (Autesserre, 2006). The Rwandan soldiers proclaimed to protect the “Rwandophone” communities, but that was not the only reason they stayed and forged alliances. Likewise, to appraise most of the Rwandan army’s choices to deploy in the Eastern DRC, Keen (2012) reasoned that their fear of demobilization and loss of certain privileges dictated their decision. The ethnic argument might exist yet could not itself probe the presence of a foreign armed group in the region. To Keen (2012), the soldiers were reluctant to give up the privileges given when they lent support to the mass killing. “After the genocide, with Rwanda and its new Tutsi-led army intervening in the DRC (ostensibly in pursuit of those responsible for genocide), fears around military demobilization continued to feed into violence” (Keen, 2012, p.111). Alliances of RED Tabara and Mai-Mai groups shared the same logic: Another nation’s political situations added to shaping local dynamics. The political violence in Burundi, in which RED Tabara is a prevalent fighting actor, has spilled over South Kivu and bred the existing violence due to privileges extracted from the violence. These privileges vary from arms supplies to fight the opposition to shelter or locations to receive supplies and launch attacks against the Burundian national forces. For instance, the Great Lake Post (2019) reported that in September 2019, RED Tabara and Mai Mai forces surrounded the villages of Minembwe to capture Minembwe Airport. The objective manifested RED Tabara's plan to receive supplies and spearhead incursions on Burundian troops (Great Lake Post, 2019).

## 2. *State actor-armed group collaborations*

Mai-Mai groups do not forge alliances with only other groups but also individuals, especially high-profile state actors such as military commanders or politicians. The involvement of national elites in conflicts and violence in the High Plateaus has raised questions: *How did military and political elites enter into alliances with armed groups? What did they receive in exchange for what?* I will submit three events proffering Mai-Mai-elite collaborations and what transaction deals underlying the alliances' production of violence.

The local-supra and local actors' links also expanded to the national level, with local armed groups establishing relationships with the national armed forces' commanders and political elites. One of the most dominant alliances occurred between Colonel Katembo, the 12th Rapid Intervention Brigade Commander, and the Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke group (Verweijen et al., 2021). In May and July 2019, it was reported by local sources that Colonel Katembo and Biloze Bishambuke exchanged radio communication (Acidic Security, 2020)<sup>9</sup>. The Great Lake Post (2019) also asserted in an article that Katembo was nabbed supplying arms to Mai-Mai Yakutumba and RED Tabara in Minembwe<sup>10</sup>. The source also stated that Colonel Katembo acquired guns and ammunition from Rwandan Special Forces stationed in Fizi forests (Great Lake Post, 2019)<sup>11</sup>. Colonel Katembo was not the only Commander who liaised with Mai-Mai groups. General Muhima Dieudonné was also accused of providing ammunition to the Mai-Mai to attack the Banyamulenge in Fizi (Acidic Security, 2020)<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, there is no concrete evidence surmising that these military commanders entered into transactions with the Mai-Mai for ethnic purposes, especially when, for example, General Muhima Dieudonné engaged in violent episodes against not only the Banyamulenge community but other

---

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from: <https://acidicsecurity.blogspot.com/2020/05/general-muhima-dieudonne-accused-by.html>

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from: <https://glpost.com/dr-congo-military-chief-used-by-rwanda-to-arm-mai-mai-rebels-to-kill-banyamulenge-in-minembwe-fire-d/>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from: <https://acidicsecurity.blogspot.com/2020/05/general-muhima-dieudonne-accused-by.html>

communities as well (Acidic Security, 2020)<sup>13</sup>. Instead, they are more prone to extra-military activities, which will be further explored in chapter 4.

Violence against the Banyamulenge takes the form of not only physical violence, but hate speech and systematic discrimination. To enable this, the involvement of political actors who need to advance their political privileges is crucial. Now, I want to refer to the connection between politicians and armed groups-an alliance that sustains violence in South Kivu by adopting and spreading the ethnic rhetoric through hate speech. Claude Misare, a member of the parliament representing Uvira, called upon the Bifuliru community to take up arms against the Banyamulenge (Ndanhinda and Mugabe, 2022). This incident happened during a political competition in the Bifuliru community (Ndanhinda and Mugabe, 2022). During his political campaign, Misare bragged about his connections with the Mai-Mai armed group (Ndanhinda and Mugabe, 2022). Even though this may sound like an elite strategy to mobilize support at first, I regard these schemes as significant catalysts for violent episodes to soar. Instead, a complex network that links politicians and armed groups for exchange benefits is the key in inflicting violence.

The above evidence extrapolates two points: Military commanders and political elites have interests in forging alliances with Mai-Mai armed groups, and these alliances reap benefits from the production of violence against the Banyamulenge. Military commanders teamed up with Mai-Mai armed groups to mainly provide the groups with the means and conditions to conduct violence. However, there has been no concrete evidence suggesting the specific benefits of the military commanders; therefore, it could not be hastily concluded that their acts were purely a result of personal interest-seeking. Nevertheless, at the same time, no proof seemed to suggest that the alliance was based on ethnic hatred, especially when the commanders were not even from the local communities. The political actor-Mai-Mai coalition, on the other hand, clearly mirrors political elites' political aspirations. Political elites relied on their alliance with Mai-Mai to garner support from the local

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

communities, which enabled them to gain higher ground in local political competitions. Mai-Mai groups, in return, enjoyed regaining more control of the area and a greater *parapluie*, a concept I will explain in-depth in Chapter 4.

### **3. *Among Mai-Mai factions: Intra-group alliances***

The roles and missions of each Mai-Mai faction differ, and these groups are not ethnically cohesive. In other words, I contend that Mai-Mai factions are not homogenous entities but autonomous groups pursuing varied agendas that only share one characteristic: They justified their mobilizations as an act to safeguard Congo from outsiders. As I will show later, Mai-Mai's intragroup alliances reflect the sub-groups' separated aspirations; on occasion, they collided over conflicts of interest. The general idea of focusing on intra-group alliances is based on previous research by Kenneth Bush on intra-group alliances in Sri Lanka. He proposed that in place of a need to "read between the lines," it would be more accurate for researchers to "read within the lines", or shift the focus to intra-group alliances (Bush, 2003, p.10).

Mai-Mai's intra-group alliances often affiliated with native communities also perpetuated violence against the Banyamulenge. One instance of this is the Biloze Bishambuke, a coalition of Mai-Mai groups including Mai-Mai Yakutumba, Mai-Mai Mtetezi and groups affiliated with Banyindu and Bafulliru, which were often reported to have attacked civilians and clashed with Banyamulenge defense groups Gumino and Twirwaneho (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021, p.29). Nonetheless, their mobilizing narratives should be interpreted with caution because, on many occasions, Mai-Mai groups under Biloze Bishambuke clashed with each other over shared interests (UNSC, 2021). Furthermore, despite declaring its mission to fight Banyamulenge armed groups Gumino and Twirwaneho to protect the Bafulliru and Banyindu communities, Biloze Bishambuke was also engaged in abuses of the Babembe community (UNSC, 2021).

Another active intra-group coalition in the High Plateaus, among numerous others, was forged between Raia Mutomboki ('outraged citizens')<sup>14</sup> and other Mai-Mai groups. Raia Mutomboki, a Mai-Mai group claiming to defend their communities, started operating in Shabunda in 2011 as a response to atrocities committed by the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDRL) (Hoffman & Vlassenroot, 2014). Nonetheless, once successfully challenging the FDRL's control, Raia Mutomboki started to challenge the authority of the Congolese army and get involved in local conflicts. In July 2020, Shabunda was drastically affected by the activities of the Mai-Mai-Raia Mutomboki alliance. In South Kivu, approximately 3,216 households were displaced (UNHCR/INTERSOS, 20 August 2020, p.8). Nevertheless, Raia Mutomboki's main reason not to demobilize to this day was not that they wanted to chase the "Rwandophone others" away. They were often deployed in activities rather than fighting - harassing traders and vehicles and creating roadblocks to collect money, goods, and gold. Hoffman and Vlassenroot (2016) also explored the motives of Raia Mutomboki in the post-conflict period to conclude that they became the patrons for those in need, in exchange for payments of contributions and taxations. Raia Mutomboki have in many places evolved into a horrible and fatal group, which killed hundreds of civilians and set up illegal tax schemes while still styling themselves a self-defense group against attacks of Banyamulenge armed groups (Hoffman & Vlassenroot, 2016).

As the evidence has revealed, many Mai-Mai factions are deployed in South Kivu, pursuing agendas that differ from supporting and defending the communities. "Reading within the lines" helps prove why a closer investigation of armed groups' internal divisions can interpret both inter-group and intra-group dynamics that lead to the production of violence. Furthermore, studying each faction's activities also enables researchers to see how often the activities of armed groups in South Kivu do not match their self-declared missions. Armed groups' collaborations often reflect diverse interests; in this case, the intra-group alliances of Biloze Bishambuke or Mai-Mai-Raia Mutomboki witness varied

---

<sup>14</sup> They are vigilante groups carrying out justice and claiming to defend their communities from the government and neighboring communities.

preferences usually based on personal or group interests, be it taxation, cattle, or any other monetary benefits.

In brief, intra and inter-group alliances occur and operate actively to perpetuate excessive violence against the Banyamulenge between 2017 and now. These alliances include local and supra-local actors, whose interests have been met by different arrangements of informal transaction deals. It is also worth noting that the local dynamics have been shaped by the objectives and interests of local, national, and sub-regional actors, including ammunition, recruits, profits, political popularity, impunity, and information. Supra-local and local dynamics are conjunct and fuel an already savage violence in South Kivu through alliance mechanisms.

### **Chapter 3: A joint production of violence under an ethnic disguise**

Chapter 2 has answered the questions about what alliances are in South Kivu and how alliances are formed to perpetuate violence. In chapters 3 and 4, I will delve into the logic of violence or *why* actors engage in deal-making processes. This chapter will particularly explain how the joint production of violence of alliances against the Banyamulenge is made under a cloak of ethnic narratives. A vital question to ask now is what drives these cross-border, national-local, and intra-group alliances. *If ethnic sentiment is not involved, what makes the ethnic narrative widespread? Does Mai-Mai rely on instrumentalizing such narratives to gather support? Furthermore, how is the joint production of violence associated with such an ethnic narrative?* In this part, I will unearth how the autochthony discourse results from a colonial legacy that marginalizes the Banyamulenge community and grievances of Rwandan interventions in Congolese politics during the two Congo Wars. Various actors then instrumentalize this autochthony discourse to pursue their private agendas.

#### ***1. The problem of the ethnic narrative***

The United Nations and most humanitarian organizations' reports claimed that the bloody scenes in the High Plateaus of South Kivu resulted from ethnic conflict (Verweijen, 2021)<sup>15</sup>. This hasty conclusion contains three main problems. First, it assumes all local armed actors are pursuing an ethnic agenda and fall into either one in two ethnic groups - native Congolese and Rwandan outsiders. In actuality, this is hardly the case. Verweijen has pointed out that under each primary fighting side, multiple factions participated in violence for different purposes. As illustrated in the previous chapter, Mai-Mai armed groups are engaged in activities other than protecting *native communities* such as Bafulliru or Banyindu. Second, it blurs away the real victim of atrocity - the Banyamulenge community. Ntanyoma and Hintjens (2021) have referred to the plight of the Banyamulenge as a *slow*

---

<sup>15</sup> Why is violence in the Hautx Plateaus of South Kivu not ethnic? Retrieved from: <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/why-violence-in-the-south-kivu-highlands-is-not-ethnic-and-other-misconceptions-about-the-crisis/>



*genocide* or *genocide by attrition*, a day-to-day process of annihilating an entire community. Coleman (2004) contended that narrative framings surrounding ethnic violence have intensified with globalization since the colonial era. Ntanyoma and Hintjens (2021) argued that the race or tribal narrative tended to obscure the violence against the Banyamulenge, "as both asymmetric and expressive, taking the form of systematic persecution of a particular identity group" (p.337). International actors backed this ethnic carve-up and thus left the burden on the victims.

Third, inviting an ethnic label as a driver of violence in the High Plateaus means other micro-level, personal, and private dynamics that sustain the conflicts are subject to scant attention. Kalyvas (2006) argued that civil wars were often "understood based on what is perceived to be their overarching issue dimension on cleavage: we thus speak of ideological, ethnic, religious, or class war. Likewise, we label political actors in ethnic civil wars as ethnic actors, the violence of ethnic wars as ethnic violence, and so on" (p. 476). Even though the plight of the Banyamulenge in South Kivu is also occurring in a post-war context, Kalyvas's statement is still apparently relevant because it does not attempt to apply an ethnic lens to analyze the proper drivers of the violence. As we shall see later in Chapter 4, more private activities are going on the ground and demand attention from international actors and donors than just ethnic or tribal tensions. Likewise, these private activities are vital to comprehending the sustenance of violence in the High Plateaus.

## ***2. The dominant ethnic narrative in South Kivu***

What is covering the private agendas is a widespread ethnic and tribal discourse. Prunier (2009) noted that a popular tribe narrative widely understood by Kivu civil society and European NGO allies illustrated that all tribes residing in South Kivu (Banyindu, Bafulliru, Babembe, and Banyamulenge) are inherently aggressive. The narrative also stressed that deaths and violence arose during clashes between these tribes. This narrative has intensified again since 2017, when Rwanda-Burundi hostility broke out. Mai-Mai's ideology is connected to "fighting outsiders." Thus, when they collided with

Rwanda, they also targeted the Banyamulenge. What I am trying to unravel here is not the root cause of Mai-Mai's resentment towards the Banyamulenge community or any deemed as Rwandophone. Instead, I strive to expose why violence against the community lingers until this day and shows no sign of ceasing anytime soon.

Based on Kaldor's framework of instrumentalist conception of ethnic violence, I will examine the function of the ethnic narrative attached to violence in South Kivu. This framework studied the case of Herzegovina-Bosnia, according to which fighting units rely on ethnic narratives to reinvent specific versions of history to construct new rhetoric used for political mobilization intents (Kaldor, 2013). I first counted on an article by Ntanyoma and Hintjens that argued that armed actors against the Banyamulenge community had instrumentalized the ethnic rhetoric. Banyamulenge fighters were associated with the Rwandan military and their political intervention in the DRC. Until this day, even though the Banyamulenge fighters-Rwandan military alliance no longer exists, a widespread perception hardens that the Banyamulenge are still connected and loyal to Rwanda (Hintjens & Ntanyoma, 2021). To dissect why the ethnic discourse gains dominance and how armed actors instrumentalize this ethnic narrative for their purposes, I first examine the formation and build-up of the autochthony discourse, an ingroup-outgroup discourse that emerged from ethnic tensions among communities. Nevertheless, before that, let me explain what led to the discrimination against the Banyamulenge in the first place.

The lives of Banyamulenge in South Kivu were never easy. Whether they have resided in the region since the 19th century or are suspected of moving here as Rwandan migrants in the 20th century, the Banyamulenge has faced severe discrimination and marginalization. Mass violence during the rule of Leopold II traumatized civilians, while forced labor and divide-and-rule policies reinforced these traumatizing events (Hintjens & Ntanyoma, 2021). Many have pointed out how the colonial power was excluded for the fear that these "difficult to govern" people would incite others to avoid European influence (Weis, 1958). During the colonial time, they were also not granted any chieftdom,

which led the Banyamulenge to a situation when they had to be under the commands of chiefs from other communities (Verweijen et al., 2021). Later, post-colonial wars and mass violence during the rule of Mobutu instilled and sustained the existing terror. To Ntanyoma and Hintjens (2021), these cross-generational traumas gripped every civilian that vicious cycles of violence and revenge would persist doggedly.

Verweijen et al. (2021) had more to add in terms of factors that led to discontent of communities in South Kivu. The Simba Rebellion in 1967 led to a more profound deterioration in the inter-communal relationship. When Bafulliru, Banyindu, and Bavira communities chose to join the insurgency in the Simba Rebellion, the Banyamulenge displayed little enthusiasm (Verweijen et al., 2021). In response to these communities' hostile actions resulting from both the rebellion and their outrage towards the Banyamulenge's indifference, the Banyamulenge joined the pro-governmental, counterinsurgent forces (Verweijen, 2015a). Later on, political emancipation activities of the Banyamulenge in Bijombo against the local chief manifested their wish to get equal treatment from the government, yet they deepened other communities' resentment (Verweijen et al., 2021). Indeed, growing dissatisfaction from the Simba Rebellion and the Banyamulenge's political emancipation fed into the current war mood and colonial divide-and-rule legacies in South Kivu and produced more hatred. The notion of in and outgroup was incorporated into the political and armed mobilization processes, pitting self-styled autochthonous groups against the Banyamulenge, or those labeled "Rwandophone" in general (Verweijen, 2015b). The latter is framed as "Rwandophone", or "(Rwandan) immigrants" and "foreigners," who are not considered "authentic Congolese" (Verweijen, 2015b).

These occurrences bred the rise and offered favorable conditions for an autochthony discourse that dictated the Banyamulenge as foreigners with no right to Congolese citizenship. The autochthony discourse has become salient since the Banyamulenge strived to be counted as a local administrative entity. Viewing the Banyamulenge's yearning for recognition as a menace, other communities in Kivu

provinces started to emphasize the differences and their status as "sons or daughters of the soil." (Jackson, 2006). Tensions over cattle and land also added to the cross-community tension. Intercommunal deterioration overlapped with agropastoral or land tensions, intensifying the autochthony narrative (Verweijen & Vlassenroot, 2015). The natives versus outsiders distinction coincided with a dichotomy between 'Tutsi' groups, often portrayed as "pastoralists" and "Bantu" populations, which depended primarily on agriculture (Jackson, 2006). Verweijen and Brabant (2015) emphasized that this overlapping autochthony discourse and its politicization inflicted the conflict between the Banyamulenge and neighboring communities.

Tragically, armed groups and elites relied on this ethnic crack and a racialized narrative to bolster the autochthony discourse for their advantage. That being the case, tensions between communities do ensue; yet, they do not entirely correlate with armed groups' (re)mobilizing narratives, their collaborations with beneficiaries, and their growing violence against the Banyamulenge since 2017. To reveal why the upsurge of violence started again in 2017, Verweijen (2021) reasoned that the outbreak was a consequences of multiple factors: abuses of civilians committed by Gumino self-defense groups and a decree confirming a community's loss of authority over the Minembwe grouping<sup>16</sup>. As I will illustrate below, Mai-Mai's (re)mobilization and collaboration narratives move beyond the autochthony discourse and are steered towards a private sphere.

### ***3. Mai-Mai's mobilizing narratives, their collaborations, and an ethnic disguise***

Mai-Mai's self-declared reasons for taking up arms were often about self-defense and grievances surrounding lingering conflicts about land and local authority. However, at the same time, for many military and armed group leaders, there are more advantages to reap: status, income, political control, and influence. Verweijen (2017) contended that by leading armed groups, they receive visibility and opportunities to be considered by high-profile figures or international donors.

---

<sup>16</sup> In the Highland of South Kivu, a political impasse and a chain of desertions. Retrieved from: [In the Highlands of South Kivu, a Political Impasse and a Chain of Desertions | EAM \(eam-us.com\)](#)

Mai-Mai's presence in constructing a robust autochthonous narrative is essential to understanding the image of Mai-Mai among actors in the High Plateaus. Jackson (2007) contended that Mai-Mai wanted to hold the Banyamulenge responsible for what the country had endured. At this point, it may be significant to ask why Mai-Mai armed groups specifically and other insurgents generally failed to demobilize after the second Congo war and the demobilization program. Ntung (2019) claimed that Mai-Mai began to become an abstract idea, which refers to combatants who (re)mobilized to protect local communities against the "foreigners." Nonetheless, researchers studying violent conflicts in South Kivu might reject the idea that Mai-Mai acted solely on behalf of the native communities. Even though the race narrative that Mai-Mai framed to project hatred onto the Banyamulenge sounded to have a lot to do with struggles for liberation and resistance to foreign forces, the frame was rebutted by Ntanyoma and Hintjens (2021). The authors proved that Mai-Mai armed actors used the problematic race narrative to garner hatred towards the Banyamulenge. Hence, Mai-Mai's alliances with other groups were nowhere near a sole pursuit of ethnic interests. Stearns (2013) presented two reasons for Mai-Mai's remobilization and growing operations. He asserted that armed groups "struggled to find alternative livelihoods, highlighting the challenge of demobilization in a context of widespread poverty" (p.9). In addition, he suggested that remobilization resulted from military and political schemes to draw on the grievances of armed actors (Stearns, 2013). Even though this research does not take a structural, top-down stance, I agree with Stearns that Mai-Mai's motivation was no longer to liberate their communities solely. Violence in the High Plateaus is multifaceted and driven by various factors, so it is simply incomplete to conclude that *the Banyamulenge are one party in an ethnic conflict* or that Mai-Mai followed what they vowed to do.

Furthermore, even though Mai-Mai was framing their actions within an ethnic narrative, not every Banyindu or Bafulliru community member decided to join collaborative relationships or plan/organize violence. If there were collaborations, involved actors' reasons and motives would vary.

As Verweijen put it, many of the population saw the Mai-Mai as those they were obliged to help<sup>17</sup>. Meanwhile, many collaborations or assistance resulted from sympathy for the mission of the Mai-Mai or fears of reprisals. Verweijen illustrated that civilians engaged in collaborative activities with armed groups are often driven by various overlapping motives different from individuals. Collaborations that relate to the native communities may reveal the motives of the actors reflect self-interests:

*“The Bembe Groupement chief of Basimuyaka Nord, Nuhu Mwenelwata -Selemani Munyaka, encouraged Mai-Mai Aoci not to surrender to the government and to keep stealing cattle from the Banyamulenge on the Mibunda Plain - important cattle grazing area.” (Verweijen et al., 2021).*

Yet, a significant question to ask now is: *If not ethnicity or nationalism, what do Mai-Mai's frenzied violent episodes reflect?* As illustrated in the previous chapter, Mai Mai factions occasionally clashed with each other over interests. Verweijen (2020) argued that within autochthonous groups, there are various internal divisions within Mai-Mai, which share wide-ranging interests<sup>18</sup>. These specific interests and agendas will be specifically discussed further in the next chapter.

---

<sup>17</sup> Why is violence in the Hautx Plateaus of South Kivu not ethnic? Retrieved from: <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/why-violence-in-the-south-kivu-highlands-is-not-ethnic-and-other-misconceptions-about-the-crisis/>

<sup>18</sup> Why is violence in the Hautx Plateaus of South Kivu not ethnic? Retrieved from: <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/why-violence-in-the-south-kivu-highlands-is-not-ethnic-and-other-misconceptions-about-the-crisis/>

## Chapter 4: Explore the private sphere

This chapter proceeds to explore the private realms of armed actors and allies that are often covert in the violence. In exploring the private agendas of armed groups and their networks, I will place a premium on the activities that fighting units rely on to finance and sustain the violence. I will then analyze their broader political agendas that are not often explicit about spotting yet play an important role in sustaining the violence on the ground. What sustains the violence in South Kivu is Mai-Mai's emerging and shifting interests, as well as their and their allies' extensive actions in financing and maintaining the violence. It is also worth noting that financial or economic activities here are not just a goal but a means through which alliances function, project violence, and acquire other private objectives. These income-generating activities, political competition, and armed groups' aspirations for local control are both drivers and catalysts (conditions) for more violent episodes.

Rather than seeing Mai-Mai as a representative or protector of the native communities, it would be more proper to consider Mai-Mai as a group whose interests shift over time. In truth, Mai-Mai emerged from a yearning to defend DRC from the labeled outsiders; however, over the years, it has shown that Mai-Mai groups disconnect themselves from their initial motivations as liberators and instead focus on their private agendas. Therefore, Mai-Mai's claim to protect the native communities now needs to be subject to comprehensive analyses *beyond the ethnic discourse*. Verweijen (2017) contended that Mai-Mai groups had become the proxy of national and sub-regional movements and were engaged in competitions and activities regarding economic resources. In particular, Mai-Mai groups have liaised with political-military movements and competed over natural resources (Verweijen, 2017). I claim that violence in South Kivu is not a consequence of ill-planned or random acts of relevant actors on the ground but well-organized "expropriation, exploitation and violations" disguised as ethnic tension (Keen, 2012).

Thus, it is significant to see through the ethnic disguise and explore the function of actors in a complex network that produces joint violence. Mai-Mai remained a dominant force in the region as

they have derived substantial support from state actors, politicians, civilian leaders, and business people. Kisagani (2003) also argued that in the "militarized" Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, forces were a shortcut to political power and resources. In this part, I will analyze the private agendas of multiple networks in South Kivu and profiting from the violence against the Banyamulenge in greater detail.

### *1. Cattle-looting activities*

I will first usher in "asset transfer", a concept coined by Duffield (1993), to illustrate a redistribution of existing assets to favor the fighting units. There are two forms of asset transfers: the basic form (looting, pillage, hostage, for example) and, on the other, a more sophisticated form including protection money and taxation. In the case of South Kivu, these private income-generating activities finance the fighting units, thus fueling more violence in which the Banyamulenge is the victim. The monetary interest is both a means and goal of armed groups and allies in the region, as I will analyze below. However, first, let us delve into the cattle looting activities of armed groups.

Ever since the two Congo Wars, as Verweijen and Brabant (2015) illustrated, armed actors were concatenated to the practices related to cattle, including looting activities and prevention of these activities. The two Congo Wars were the reap time for tensions over lands and cattle across communities in the Kivus to escalate. These were also the time armed groups availed themselves of the opportunities to use violence generally and loot cattle specifically. Cattle looting has become a weapon of war, which aims to attack the most valuable property of the Banyamulenge (Verweijen & Brabant, 2015). Self-styled autochthonous Mai-Mai groups have also successfully kindled a deep sense of sympathy among farmers of the native communities by framing their looting activities as self-defense against hostile acts of Rwandophone foreign invaders (Verweijen & Brabant, 2015). Nonetheless, I was mainly curious about how Mai-Mai's collaborations with other actors enabled cattle looting to be



feasible, for what purpose, and whether such a purpose contributed to the production of violence in the High Plateaus.

In the highlands of Mwenga, Fizi, and Uvira, two Mai-Mai factions, Biloze Bishambuke and Mai-Mai Ebuela, shared their control over the region (Verweijen et al., 2021). Mai-Mai Ebuela's operations were mainly in Fizi and Mwenga territories, and they have become one of the most active Mai-Mai groups in the region (Verweijen et al., 2021). Their main activities include clashing with Gumino and the FARDC, cattle looting, and illegal taxation (Verweijen et al., 2021). Cattle looting is one of the main income-generating activities of some armed groups such as Mai-Mai Mulumba in the region (Verweijen et al., 2021). Each cattle looted and sold could bring 150 USD to 500 USD in cash for the Mai-Mai and their allies (Verweijen & Brabant, 2015). Nevertheless, to sell stolen cattle in markets, robbing actors needed an efficient means of transportation and falsifying cattle documents, which required a vital role of "patron" actors (Verweijen et al., 2021). An outstanding example of such "patron actors" is the FARDC. The FARDC often turned a blind eye to the stealing and passage of cattle in exchange for protection money (Verweijen & Brabant, 2015). Many of them are alleged to get involved in the illegal cattle trade. Nonetheless, lack of trust has not only existed from the Banyamulenge side. In truth, many FARDC officers chose to side with the Banyamulenge and help protect their cattle, which Mai-Mai then accused of a partial act conducted by Rwandophone actors (Verweijen et al., 2021).

The cattle looting activities of Mai-Mai groups were also actively assisted by foreign rebel groups. Foreign rebels, including RED Tabara and FNL, have also sided with Mai-Mai groups to participate in the cattle-looting activities, even though these foreign actors are irrelevant to the autochthony narrative. Not only Congolese armed actors and elites benefitted from this violence, but foreign actors who assisted armed actors actively in cattle-looting activities (ACCORD report, 2022)<sup>19</sup>. What RED Tabara has received by involving themselves in violence and the transaction with Mai-Mai

---

<sup>19</sup> Report: The situation of the Banyamulenge (from 2020 to March 2022)

consisted of shared profits of looted cattle, armed support against their Burundian opposition forces, and supplies to launch attacks against the state of Burundi (ACCORD report, 2022)<sup>20</sup>.

According to Verweijen and Brabant (2015), Mai-Mai groups targeted cattle also for symbolic reasons. It is symbolic, for it is reflected in, again, the autochthony discourse the Mai-Mai has framed to rally support from the mass population in the Kivu provinces and the elites, which then provided them with the resources and recruits. In this symbolic frame, Mai-Mai portrayed their looting act as a form of self-defense against the destruction of lands caused by the Banyamulenge's cattle (Verweijen and Brabant, 2015). Nevertheless, it would be hasty to extrapolate that the reason Mai-Mai rustled cattle was solely based on the autochthony discourse or symbolic reason without any monetary interest. Even though looting cattle could be interpreted as a self-defense or violent act to make the Banyamulenge suffer or a threat to Banyamulenge's livelihood, I purport that Mai-Mai looting activities often come with monetary interests. A convincing reason was that Mai-Mai factions have clashed with others over the benefits induced by looting cattle. For instance, on August 28th, 2021, Mai-Mai Ilunga clashed with Mai-Mai Mupekenya over the cattle looted from Mugogo (Kivu Security Tracker, August 28th, 2021)<sup>21</sup>. This clash happened although both Mai-Mai Ilunga and Mai-Mai Mupekenya declared to fight the Banyamulenge defense groups Twirwaneho and Gumino (Verweijen et al., 2021). On another occasion, Biloze Bishambuke clashed with Mai-Mai Mupekenya under the command of Malisawa near Maheta village over stolen cattle (Kivu Security Tracker, August 28th, 2021)<sup>22</sup>.

Such complex networks involving the national army, local armed groups, and foreign rebels in cattle looting have inflicted and sustained more violence in the High Plateaus. Violence was sustained in two different ways. First, due to a growing detachment from the communities they emerged from and a need to fund their operations, Mai-Mai continuously attacked the Banyamulenge, knowing they

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Why is violence in the Hautx Plateaus of South Kivu not ethnic? Retrieved from: <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/why-violence-in-the-south-kivu-highlands-is-not-ethnic-and-other-misconceptions-about-the-rixis/>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

possessed capabilities, justification, and impunity. Furthermore, cattle looting enacts and deepens the security dilemma, with the Banyamulenge community's self-defense groups starting to retaliate violently and deepening the existing intercommunal tension.

## ***2. Extra-military lucrative activities***

It is not the core of this research to explore how the social contexts, internal structure, and integration processes of the FARDC have shaped their involvement in shadow economies or lucrative activities. Instead, this research is more interested in why FARDC officers engage in "extra-military activities" or private agendas of armed groups and whether these activities sustain violence. Nonetheless, it is still essential to briefly scour the relations between ex-belligerents and military officers. In the Kivu provinces, military officers mainly originated from the region and were closely tied to politicians, administrators, or armed groups active since the beginning of the wars. This situation became possible because these ex-belligerents tried to manipulate and control the military integration process due to their ambitions to keep their spheres of influence (Eriksson Baaz & Verweijen, 2014). Thus, FARDC soldiers are detached from the central authority and shall no longer be seen as state representatives. They were embedded in a fragmented system where the FARDC structure was deftly molded and manipulated by beneficiaries (Baaz & Verweijen, 2013). In such a fragmented environment, most FARDC deployed in South Kivu forged alliances with mentioned actors and civilians to gather "loyalty, economic services, and influence" (Eriksson Baaz & Verweijen, 2014). In other words, FARDC has operated in different patronage networks across South Kivu provinces.

As evidence from chapter 2 clearly deduces, commanders engaged in an alliance with the Mai-Mai, such as Colonel Katembo and General Muhima, are a few prime examples of FARDC officers and Mai-Mai's collaborations providing the armed actors with impunity and information. What's more, in an interview with Alex Ntung, who came from a family of cattle herders, pastoralist people in South Kivu in the DRC, I asked about the reasons why FARDC soldiers entered into

alliances with Mai-Mai militias. He replied: "FARDC commanders have partnered with Mai-Mai for political reasons and additional support, and in return, they provided Mai-Mai with ammunition to attack the Banyamulenge" (Interview with Alex Ntung, March 28th, 2022)<sup>23</sup>. Even though the complex transactions of their collaborations largely remained unobvious and covert, Mai-Mai certainly enjoyed a large provision of ammunition, impunity, and information from the FARDC and some national elites, and these benefits enabled them to inflict more violence on the Banyamulenge community. Hence, Mai-Mai and foreign armed groups' activities would continue to linger inasmuch as violations were shielded from national interventions. Alliances between armed groups and a national actor, thus influencing violence in South Kivu by helping to cover the Banyamulenge's plight. Such impunity, along with Mai-Mai's mobilizing narrative surrounding ethnicity, creates a smoke-screen that challenges outside spectators to decipher the real trouble in the High Plateaus.

Armed groups are also extensively engaged in illegal taxation, since illegal taxation played an integral part in funding several Mai-Mai groups. Several sources revealed that some of the roadblock operators in Shabunda and Nzibira represented the Raia Mutomboki armed groups, who are in secret agreement with the local armed forces to collect money, goods, and gold (Matthysen, Spittaels, Schouten, 2019)<sup>24</sup>. The soldiers here harassed the traders and the few vehicles that passed through this village because they were likely gold traders between Shabunda and Nzibira (Matthysen, Spittaels, Schouten, 2019)<sup>25</sup>. "However diversely shaped, they share that they allow their operators—accepted or contested—to deploy the threat of force to stop passersby for examination and, more often, taxation." (Schouten, 2019, p.2). The example of Raia Mutomboki clearly illustrates that the income-generating activities of the national army and local Mai-Mai groups do not necessarily serve Mai-Mai's declared purpose of launching violence on the Banyamulenge or follow any ethnic narrative.

---

<sup>23</sup> The interview was conducted via Zoom with permission of the interviewee to disclose the information he stated

<sup>24</sup> Retrieved from: [https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/1904-IOM-mapping-eastern-DRC\\_versie03.pdf](https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/1904-IOM-mapping-eastern-DRC_versie03.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

The lucrative activities linked local armed actors and civilians with the national army to operate in networks, which enjoyed little or no intervention from the central government. Through these networks, violence against the Banyamulenge has been sustained to secure the benefits shared among the actors: economic service, protection, influence, and taxation. The culture of impunity constructed by the national army and local armed groups also provided favorable conditions for illegal circuits of trades and mining activities, which aggravated insecurity and violence in the region.

### ***3. Political advantages and protection networks***

Nabudere (1999) brings up the discussion on ethnicity from two angles. The first one focused on how identity could be employed to adapt African traditions to a "high modernity."<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, the second view exemplifies an instrumental aspect of ethnicity. That is, ethnicity is galvanized for self-serving interests, whether it be political or economic, by the elites. Within the scope of my research, I will focus on the second angle only. This may seem to contradict my argument here, for I argue that what sustained the conflict was a system of networks and brokerage, not elite schemes. Violence can be analyzed as a political strategy in this case, yet this single variable cannot account for armed groups' sustained attacks on the Banyamulenge for two reasons. First, prior research substantiates the belief that the mass did not blindly follow or consent to elites' plans. Through chapter 3, I illustrated the significance of historical intercommunal tensions emanating from traumas and grievances, so the recent violent episodes cannot be simply interpreted by elites' orchestration. Keen (2008) argued that elites could not just impose their will by whipping up ethnic hostility and deflect the mass antagonism. Second, as Verweijen (2020) contended, ordinary citizens were not organizing or joining the violent episodes. Between 2017 and now, Mai-Mai armed groups were the most accountable for the violence in the region. Hence, elite schemes and identity politics exist, yet they are

---

<sup>26</sup> "It appears that the phenomenon of ethnicity and other forms of cultural self-identity are characteristic of the whole general period of "late" or "high modernity" of which post-modernism and post-traditionalism are the intellectual, artistic, aesthetic, literary, and cultural manifestations of this dissent" (Nabudere, 2001).

embedded in the broader system of equally-benefiting alliances. The autochthony discourse is also a means for Mai-Mai groups and beneficiaries to justify violence and thus achieve their political means. In the meantime, political elites and armed groups rely on the ethnic card to widen the tension between the self-styled autochthonous and the labeled Rwandophone communities. The example illustrating Claude Misare in chapter 2 is one in many cases in which political actors forge collaborative relationships with Mai-Mai groups to back their scorched earth political campaigns. Identity politics is, therefore, highly relevant in this discussion; from what we have seen in the case of South Kivu, identity politics are employed by political elites and supported by local armed groups, which at the same time legitimize shadow economic and other illicit activities.

Likewise, the discussion in chapter 3 has shown that Mai-Mai groups relied on the autochthony ethnic discourse to garner support from elites and the population. As Vlassenroot (2013) put it, "Even a stranger to South Kivu would immediately be struck by the most salient characteristic of armed groups in the province: almost without fail, they rely on ethnicity to rally support and recruits." (p.14). In this case, the ethnic discourse became instrumental, and the *influence-peddling* concept seemed pertinent. Influence peddling happens when there is a use of position or political influence on someone's behalf in exchange for money or favors (Carayannis et al., 2018). Political networks could also be echoed in a complex network linking local actors with high-ranking politicians and officials (Carayannis et al., 2018). These high-ranking personnel can provide militias with protection and support for armed groups' local agendas (Ndanhinda and Mugabe, 2022). Carayannis et al. (2018) gave an example of Mai-Mai leader Bede Rusagara, who operated in the Ruzizi Plain in Uvira territory. Bede mobilized *his parapluie* (umbrella) in Bukavu and even the capital Kinshasa for them to influence decision-making processes on the local scale. By doing this, Bede became a broker to help his client "obtain land plots and jobs or exonerate them from judicial persecution" (Verweijen, 2016).

In the political arena, local armed actors have connected with political figures to conduct violence against the Banyamulenge. The actors' political campaigns mirror a heavy theme of identity

politics of political actors. In this case, the alliance serves as the elites' evidence of connections with a self-styled autochthony group once swearing to protect the native communities. It is a vital indication that these alliances were leaderless, and the production of violence benefits all parties. While the political actors gained a higher ground in political competitions, local armed groups relished impunity and protection over private activities.

In brief, the private agendas of armed actors and allies range from income-generating activities, lucrative services, and political campaigns to protection. This reality resonates with Keen's suggestion to see violence and conflicts as "alternative systems of profits, power, and protection" (Keen, 2008, p.15). The overemphasis on the fixated identities of local communities and their tensions has blurred away what Keen (2008) called the functions of violence. In this case, through the lens of alliance theory, the investigation illustrates that violence against the Banyamulenge serves self-serving economic, protection and political functions.

#### ***4. Endless and normalized violence***

As we have seen, the violence against the Banyamulenge disguised as ethnic tension and reinforced by a growing identity-based, ingroup-outgroup discourse provides both means and objectives for armed groups and allies' private agendas. As discussed in the previous chapter, the dominant ethnic narrative is hazardous and will only continue to maintain the unawareness of international actors in the region. Another important reason why violence will not be noticed soon is the complex network linking violent perpetrators with actors of many levels. Under the cloak of a dominant ethnic narrative, rational actors collaborate and inflict violence for their interests.

The term "symbiosis" of armed actors, coined by Jason Stearns, an expert on conflictual landscapes and the sociology of conflicts in the Eastern DRC, may also capture the violence's dynamics in South Kivu. To Stearns, as a conflict escalates, the protagonists have reasons not to stop it (Stearns, 2022). Correctly describing these transactions in disguise, Stearns (2022) contended that

violence is a form of bargaining. Mai-Mai groups, in collaboration with elite actors and military commanders, reap several benefits: from ammunition and weapons to information, support and impunity; in return, military commanders and political elites could secure material gains, including "opportunities for pillage, extortion, and embezzlement of funds" and consolidate their power (Stearns, 2022). A transaction deals and benefits exchange system transformed into a symbiosis system and involuted interests, where all actors have something to offer and receive. Furthermore, lying in the center of these transactions is violence that sustains a favorable condition and an aura of legitimacy for more violence. Stearns's work lent important insight in the studies of violent conflicts in the Kivus, for it captured the endogenous nature of conflicts and illustrated how armed actors had interests in maintaining the violence. In the meantime, prior research also confirmed that ordinary people supposed that violence is a solution to other social problems and conflicts (Carayannis et al., 2018). These perspectives, together with my investigation of networks and alliances in South Kivu, have manifested a pessimistic view of the situation - a situation that reflects a desperate plight of a community lying in a blind spot of the international community.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout four chapters, I have discussed the importance of concentrating on a micro-level, bottom-up analysis of violence in South Kivu, the prominent alliances in the region that directly get involved in the production of violence, the dominant ethnic narrative and its connection to a private sphere, and the private agendas that sustain the violence against the Banyamulenge. In this research, instead of focusing on how shifting and fragmented the nature of alliances can be, I study how different sets of alliances deployed in South Kivu between 2017 and now have pursued their private agendas through violent means. These networks link multiple local, national, and sub-regional actors together to sustain a lasting violent episode under the cloak of ethnic tension. These leaderless, complex networks invalidate the ethnic argument, for it doesn't add up if irrelevant actors of the ethnic



picture joined the alliances and inflicted violence on the Banyamulenge community. Also, the Mai-Mai groups, despite their declaration to be engaged in activities to wipe the outsiders out of the Congolese map, failed to act on such a declaration. Mai-Mai groups, with the help and support of their allies, extensively conduct income-generating activities, political competitions campaigns and protection networks.

To analyze armed groups' activities and collaborations does not mean I neglect a focus on colonial legacies and historical disputes over land and cattle. Instead, I treat this knowledge as variables that shape the inter-communal tension and construction of the ethnic narrative, yet not primary reasons for Mai-Mai and their allies to expand their operations against the Banyamulenge between 2017 and now. I, therefore, argue that an understanding of the intercommunal crack together with land and cattle disputes and communities' grievances is still essential to explain the communities' hatred and Mai-Mai mobilizing narratives. Nonetheless, we shall look further to understand how violence is sustained until this day with the involvement of various armed groups and political-military actors. Hence, by using alliance theory as my analytical frame, I found out that violence was frequently produced as a result of not inter-communal tensions but alliances of varied actors or groups of actors that forged alliances.

The research unravels the nature of alliances and networks in South Kivu. In chapter 1, I presented four characteristics generally found in alliances and collaborations in conflict settings: the informal nature of alliances, diverse agendas of each actor, the joint production of violence, and fluidity/fragmentation of alliances. It was proven throughout this research that the nature of alliances in South Kivu remained informal and constantly shifting. This high level of fluidity, however, not only created a favorable environment but also motivated the joint production of violence. The research also reveals that transaction deals are about income-generating activities, protection, and political popularity. Yet I also figured out that income-generating activities could fall into two categories: financing violence or satisfying personal interests. Commonly, it is challenging to spot which specific

activity falls in which specific category, yet it can still be concluded that private income-generating activities of armed groups falling to either type do contribute significantly to the production of violence against the Banyamulenge. In this case, the instrumentalization of the autochthony discourse shows that private agendas can be merged into a dominantly well-oiled autochthony discourse of armed actors. The ethnic narrative was also instrumentalized for political purposes that both armed groups and political-military elites enjoy. While armed groups can expand their local control and abuse activities under the protection of influential figures, political elites relying on the autochthony discourse enjoy a much broader political support.

The alliance theory of Kalyvas fits this research well because it helps spot and analyze collaborative relationships among the protagonists in South Kivu and the dominant ethnic discourse. The data retrieved and my interpretation surmises that various actors collaborate to pursue agendas that may or may not link to the master ethnic cleavage, eventually producing more violence against a marginalized community. These collaborative relationships link interested actors from the local, national and foreign levels together to pursue mainly economic and political agendas. These private agendas feed into the security dilemma, and the existing inter-communal crack between communities, thus resulting in ever-escalating discrimination violence. The ancient ethnic hatred narrative often instrumentalized by armed groups and fueled by past grievances, becomes not only a strong master cleavage but also the most dangerous weapon to put the life of a community at risk. Yet, as stated in the introduction, this research project aims to advance existing theory. In this case, I want to, through my research, advance the alliance theory of Kalyvas. There are two modifications I want to make: the context of alliances and the definition of private agendas. Kalyvas (2006) constructed alliance theory in contexts of civil wars, which did not consider the involvement of foreign actors. Yet, this research manifested the role of both foreign actors and sub-regional dynamics in South Kivu and proved that alliances could link actors across the border together over shared interests. Furthermore, Kalyvas (2006) implied that the private sphere bears no relation to the motivations of the belligerents or

something local actors take advantage of, yet I argued otherwise. Through this research, I define private agendas as objectives and goals of armed actors and allies that are not relevant to the master ethnic cleavage. These objectives reflect the functions of violence: profits, protection, and power.

After abstracting the finding of this study, I argue that in complex, violent settings often dressed as inter-communal tensions, multifaceted agendas of relevant actors are conducive to the joint production of violence. Hence, these agendas, not the master cleavage, shape and maintain the conflict or violence's dynamics. These private agendas are connected by an alliance mechanism, in which actors can collaborate to inflict violence in a leaderless sense, and the violence is a means to achieve the actors' agendas. The joint production of violence serves diverse private interests of allied actors from local, national, and regional levels for political, economic benefits, or protection. These private interests need not be personal or intimate; they serve as actors' and groups' interests in maintaining violence that may not be relevant to the master cleavage. To enable this climate of violence, relevant actors need to count on not only alliance mechanisms but discourses scapegoating the targeted victim and favorable conditions legitimizing the violent acts. Going up the ladder of abstraction helps expand the applicability of alliance theory to more empirical cases, especially those about post-conflict violence and violence labeled as ethnic tensions.

There are two main strengths of this research: the significance of the research and a selective yet effective use of evidence. First, this research realizes a need to tackle the underdressed areas of conflicts' networks including local, national and transnational dynamics. While many authors concentrate on the colonial legacies, the identity-territory nexus defining realities in South Kivu, anti-Banyamulenge hatred speech to explain the soaring violence in the region and I do agree that these are key components explaining armed actors' (re) mobilization and the root drivers of violence, I have considerable insights to add through this research. I started this research with the belief that my puzzle could answer if alliances or networks play a role in inflicting and sustaining violence, and the answer was yes. Second, I have sufficient and solid evidence to back up my arguments. For the parts that were

more about the construction of the autochthony discourse, I may rely more on literature review and thus lack an argument-evidence structure. Yet, for most of the parts, my arguments were followed by concrete evidence. I also ensured that my evidence was well-sampled and double-checked through techniques such as checking the impartiality of the sources.

However, this research is also subject to significant improvements. First, my research fell short of delivering a more extensive analysis on transactions. Even though I brought in ideas about what these transactions are, these ideas were still vague. This was because it was very challenging to know the transaction details of collaborative actors. For example, speaking of what the FARDC could receive in return when they provided the protection network to the civilians or armed groups, they could get protection money or other benefits for their families on a case-by-case basis. Second, this research did not draw much attention on a personal level. This means that my analysis solely pertains to intergroup or group-leader alliances and neglects inter-personal collaborations such as personal grudges/grievances or victims' intents on revenge. I acknowledge that this is a profound lack, especially when my approach is micro-analysis. What's more, although I strived to make sure every piece of evidence collected and statements made were neutral, I have to admit that I have a bias toward the Banyamulenge self-defense units. This can be clearly manifested in the fact that I did not analyze the activities and alliances of the Banyamulenge self-defense groups such as Gumino and Twirwaneho.

This research enabled me to see aspects or issues that can be further studied. Still, even though it almost achieved the aim to identify the connection between networks and violence, many aspects and puzzles can be further explored. Foremost, future research can investigate further interpersonal alliances, which I argue play a role in catalyzing the violence in the Kivu provinces. These alliances often stemmed from personal grievances or interests, such as grievances over indiscriminate violence from armed groups. Exploring these alliances will open more opportunities to understand the dynamics in the Eastern DRC. Furthermore, even though my research project departs from an instrumentalist standpoint, I contend that the violence against the Banyamulenge could not be understood by solely

analyzing armed actors' motives and deployments. I also found that an instrumentalist argument is reductionist and lacking in some aspects. The economic and political motivations of armed actors alone cannot account for the "brutality and sheer viciousness" (Kaldor, 2013) of the recent violence in South Kivu. Thus, future research can incorporate other aspects such as "theory of practice" in ethnicity or psychological functions of violence to explain armed groups and native communities' behaviors is highly desirable. Finally, network analysis and violence transactions are under-researched themes in South Kivu, even though they are essential to explore to explain violence here. Thus, future research should lend further insights into network analysis and how shifting alliances are helping to sustain violence in South Kivu. These research projects should also cover all relevant actors and their transactions.

## Bibliography

- Autesserre, S. (2006). Local violence, national peace? Postwar “settlement” in the eastern DR Congo (2003–2006). *African Studies Review*, 49(3), 1-29.
- Acker, T. (2019). *Africa Yearbook Volume 15*. Retrieved from: <https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004417663/BP000043.xml>
- Baaz, M. E., & Verweijen, J. (2013). The volatility of a half-cooked bouillabaisse: Rebel–military integration and conflict dynamics in the eastern DRC. *African Affairs*, 112(449), 563-582.
- Balcells, L., & Justino, P. (2014). Bridging micro and macro approaches on civil wars and political violence: issues, challenges, and the way forward. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 58(8), 1343-1359.
- Baumann, T. (2004). Defining ethnicity. *The SAA archaeological record*, 4(4), 12-14.
- Bencherif, A., & Campana, A. (2017). Alliances of convenience: assessing the dynamics of the Malian insurgency. *Mediterranean Politics*, 22(1), 115-134.
- Blattman, C. (2009). From violence to voting: War and political participation in Uganda. *American Political Science review*, 103(2), 231-247.
- Brass, P. R. (1997). *Theft of an idol: Text and context in the representation of collective violence (Vol. 8)*. Princeton University Press.
- Bush, K. (2003). *The intra-group dimensions of ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka: learning to read between the lines*. Springer.
- Carayannis, T., Vlassenroot, K., Hoffmann, K., & Pangburn, A. (2018). Competing networks and political order in the Democratic Republic of Congo: a literature review on the logics of public authority and international intervention.
- Christia, F. (2012). *Alliance formation in civil wars*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coleman, W. D. (2004). Distant Proximities: Dynamics Beyond Globalization. *Perspectives on Politics*, 2(3), 639-640.
- Collier, P., & Hoeffler, A. (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. *Oxford economic papers*, 56(4), 563-595.
- Duffield, M. (1996). The political economy of internal war: asset transfer, complex political emergencies and international aid!. *Macrae & Zwi (eds), War and Hunger*, 50-69.
- Eriksson Baaz, M., & Verweijen, J. (2014). Arbiters with guns: the ambiguity of military involvement in civilian disputes in the DR Congo. *Third World Quarterly*, 35(5), 803-820.
- Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. *American political science review*, 97(1), 75-90.
- Garfinkel, M. R. (1990). Arming as a strategic investment in a cooperative equilibrium. *The American Economic Review*, 50-68.
- Gates, S. (2002). Recruitment and allegiance: The microfoundations of rebellion. *Journal of Conflict resolution*, 46(1), 111-130.

Genocide Emergency: The Banyamulenge of the DRC -

<https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/genocide-emergency-the-banyamulenge-of-the-drc>

Grossman, H. I. (1991). A general equilibrium model of insurrections. *The American Economic Review*, 912-921.

Hayes, B. C., & McAllister, I. (2005). Public support for political violence and paramilitarism in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 17(4), 599-617.

Hoffmann, K. (2015). Myths set in motion: the moral economy of Mai Mai governance. *Rebel governance in civil war*, 158-179.

Hoffmann, K., & Verweijen, J. (2019). Rebel rule: A governmentality perspective. *African Affairs*, 118(471), 352-374.

Hoffmann, K., & Vlassenroot, K. (2014). Armed groups and the exercise of public authority: the cases of the Mayi-Mayi and Raia Mutomboki in Kalehe, South Kivu. *Peacebuilding*, 2(2), 202-220.

Horowitz, D. L. (2000). *Ethnic groups in conflict*, updated edition with a new preface. Univ of California Press.

Humphreys, M., & Weinstein, J. M. (2008). Who fights? The determinants of participation in civil war. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(2), 436-455.

Jackson, S. (2006). Sons of which soil? The language and politics of autochthony in Eastern DR Congo. *African studies review*, 49(2), 95-124.

Demmers, J. (2016). *Theories of violent conflict: An introduction*. Routledge.

Kaldor, M. (2013). *New and old wars: Organized violence in a global era*. John Wiley & Sons.

Kalyvas, S. N. (2003). The ontology of "political violence": action and identity in civil wars. *Perspectives on politics*, 1(3), 475-494.

Kalyvas, S. N. (2006). *The logic of violence in civil war*. Cambridge University Press.

Kalyvas, S. N., & Kocher, M. A. (2007). How "Free" is Free Riding in civil wars?: Violence, insurgency, and the collective action problem. *World politics*, 59(2), 177-216.

Kalyvas, S. N., Shapiro, I., & Masoud, T. E. (Eds.). (2008). *Order, conflict, and violence* (p. 397). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Keen, D. (2012). *Useful enemies: When waging wars is more important than winning them*. Yale University Press.

Kisangani, E. F. (2003). Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo: a mosaic of insurgent groups. *International Journal on World Peace*, 51-80.

Kivu Security Tracker (2020, June). Retrieved from:

<https://kivusecurity.nyc3.digitaloceanspaces.com/reports/36/KST%20Monthly%20Report%20N32%20June%202020.pdf>

Kivu Security Tracker (August 28th, 2021). Retrieved from: <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/10476>

Lichbach, M. I. (1994). Rethinking rationality and rebellion: Theories of collective action and problems of collective dissent. *Rationality and society*, 6(1), 8-39.

- Mahoro Peace Association (2020). Retrieved from:  
<https://www.change.org/p/united-nations-security-council-stop-genocide-against-banyamulenge-their-uprooting-dr-congo>
- Masoud, T. E., Kalyvas, S. N., & Shapiro, I. (Eds.). (2008). *Order, conflict, and violence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Matthysen, K., Spittaels, S., & Schouten, P. (2019). *Mapping artisanal mining areas and mineral supply chains in eastern DR Congo: Impact of armed interference & responsible sourcing*. International Peace Information Service vzw. Retrieved from:  
[https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/1904-IOM-mapping-eastern-DRC\\_versie03.pdf](https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/1904-IOM-mapping-eastern-DRC_versie03.pdf)
- Nabudere, D. W. (1999). African state and conflict in Africa. *Conflict in the Horn of Africa: What Can Civil Society Do to Bring About Solidarity and Cooperation in the Region*, 83-103.
- Ndahinda, F. M., & Mugabe, A. S. (2022). Streaming Hate: Exploring the Harm of Anti-Banyamulenge and Anti-Tutsi Hate Speech on Congolese Social Media. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 1-25.
- Ntanyoma, R. D., & Hintjens, H. (2022). Expressive violence and the slow genocide of the Banyamulenge of South Kivu. *Ethnicities*, 22(3), 374-403.
- Ntung, A. (2019). Dynamics of local conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo: challenges ahead for president Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo. In *The Fletcher forum of world affairs* (pp. 131-150). The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.
- Osiel, M. J. (1999). *Obeying orders*. Transaction Publishers.
- Prunier, G. (2009). *From genocide to continental war: The 'Congolese' conflict and the crisis of contemporary Africa*. Hurst & Company.
- Radio Okapi (2019). Retrieved from:  
[https://www.radiookapi.net/recherche?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=banyamulenge](https://www.radiookapi.net/recherche?search_api_views_fulltext=banyamulenge)
- Reynal-Querol, M. (2002). Ethnicity, political systems, and civil wars. *Journal of conflict resolution*, 46(1), 29-54.
- Skaperdas, S. (1992). Cooperation, conflict, and power in the absence of property rights. *The American Economic Review*, 720-739.
- Staniland, P. (2014). *Networks of rebellion*. Cornell University Press.
- Stearns, J. (2013). *Raia Mutomboki: The flawed peace process in the DRC and the birth of an armed franchise*. Rift Valley Institute.
- Stearns, J. (2022). Involution and symbiosis: the self-perpetuating conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. *International Affairs*, 98(3), 873-891.
- Stearns, J., & Verweijen, J. (2013). *Mai-Mai Yakutumba: resistance and racketeering in Fizi, South Kivu*.
- Verweijen, J. (2015a). From autochthony to violence? Discursive and coercive social practices of the Mai-Mai in Fizi, eastern DR Congo. *African Studies Review*, 58(2), 157-180.
- Verweijen, J. (2016). *Between 'justice and 'injustice': justice populaire in the Eastern DR Congo*. JSRP Policy Brief Series.



Verweijen, J. (2017). Luddites in the Congo? Analyzing violent responses to the expansion of industrial mining amidst militarization. *City*, 21(3-4), 466-482.

Verweijen, J. (2020). Why violence in the South Kivu highlands is not ethnic and other misconceptions about the crisis. Retrieved from:  
<https://blog.kivusecurity.org/why-violence-in-the-south-kivu-highlands-is-not-ethnic-and-other-misconceptions-about-the-crisis/>

Verweijen, J. (2021). In the high land of South Kivu, a political impasse and a chain of dissertation

Verweijen, J., & Brabant, J. (2017). Cows and guns. Cattle-related conflict and armed violence in Fizi and Itombwe, eastern DR Congo. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 55(1), 1-27.

Verweijen, J., & Iguma, C. (2015). Understanding armed group proliferation in the eastern Congo. Usalama Project Briefing Paper.

Verweijen, J., & Vlassenroot, K. (2015). Armed mobilization and the nexus of territory, identity, and authority: the contested territorial aspirations of the Banyamulenge in eastern DR Congo. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 33(2), 191-212.

Verweijen, J., Twaibu, J., Ribakare, M., Bulambo, P., & Mwambi Kasongo, F. (2021). Mayhem in the mountains. How violent conflict on the hauts plateaux of South Kivu escalated.

Verwimp, P., Justino, P., & Brück, T. (2009). The analysis of conflict: A micro-level perspective. *Journal of Peace Research*, 46(3), 307-314.

UNSC reports (UN Security Council, 10 June 2021).

Austrian Center for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation (2022). The situation of the Banyamulenge (from March 2020 to 2022).

UNJHRO Report (2020). Analysis of the human rights situation in May 2020. Retrieved from:  
<https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/analysis-human-rights-situation-may-2020>

General Muhima Dieudonné accused by three local communities of co-operation with the armed armed group. Retrieved from:

<https://acidicsecurity.blogspot.com/2020/05/general-muhima-dieudonne-accused-by.html>