WARTIME RAPE, GENDER, AND MILITARISM

THE BUKAVU PEOPLE'S CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE EMERGENCE OF WARTIME RAPE IN THE 2004 KIVU CONFLICT IN CONTRAST TO THE 1996 FIRST CONGO WAR

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Sociology, School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

By

ALICE MUSHAGALUSA KARHIKALEMBU

SUPERVISORS:

PROFESSOR KARL VON HOLDT and PROFESSOR GARTH STEVENS

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DECLARATION

I, **Alice MUSHAGALUSA KARHIKALEMBU**, Student Number **570690**, declare that this PhD thesis, **WARTIME RAPE, GENDER AND MILITARISM**: **THE BUKAVU PEOPLE'S CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE EMERGENCE OF WARTIME RAPE IN THE 2004 KIVU CONFLICT IN CONTRAST TO THE 1996 FIRST CONGO WAR** is my own original work submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. The thesis has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university. I further declare that I have completely referenced the sources I have used and quoted in this thesis. Also, there is not any conflict of interest regarding the drawings that figure in this thesis as these drawings were purposely realised for this PhD.

Signed: 

Date: **15th March 2023**

ABSTRACT

For more than a decade, armed conflicts in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have been characterised by widespread wartime rape against civilians. The purposeful utilisation of wartime rape as a weapon of war has owed to the country unflattering labels, such as the "rape capital of the world, the worst place to be a woman, or again the dark hole". The armed unrest in the DRC is rooted in the Belgian colonisation's land administration policies that shaped some groups as native (autochthones) while constructing others as foreigners. Following an anti-war feminist perspective, this PhD explores the Bukavu people's conceptualisation of the emergence of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War. I used participatory research methods, as dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic, to collect the data through focus groups and in-depth individual interviews with ordinary community members, former military officers, members of the civil society and community leaders in Bukavu (South Kivu Province, eastern DRC). The collected data made it possible to firstly recognise the absence of wartime rape as a weapon of war in the 1996 First Congo War; and to show that wartime rape has not always been ubiquitous in the DRC but became a lexicon that the perpetrators utilised to place divergent claims related to their customary land, military, political power ambitions, gendered ethnic identity, and citizenship aspirations. Secondly, the data allowed for disaggregating wartime rape into three categories based on the perpetrators' motivations and claims. The thesis maintains that the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, also recognised as the main authors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, resorted to rape in the eastern DRC for revenge and to (re)masculinise their troops while feminising the Congolese state. Next, this study demonstrates that the Rally for Congolese Democracy rebels, which claimed the Tutsi Congolese ethnicity, strategically resorted to wartime rape to claim customary land rights and citizenship recognition. Following, this thesis puts forward that the *Mai-Mai* militia, seen as native, perpetrated wartime rape to claim military respect and recognition while furthering the political agendas of their patrons. I maintain that patriarchy – as the shared norm between the perpetrators, the state and the victims (women, girls, men and boys) – makes it possible for wartime rape to be utilised as a lexicon and a destructive weapon against the victims' sexual subjectivities and the whole community's symbolic order. Hence, this study articulates a three-fold argument. This thesis firstly argues that the 2004 wartime rape is rooted in the Belgian colonisation and its lingering effects on forms of ethnicity, gender, land distribution and recognition of political rights in the present. Next, this thesis argues that wartime rape is a strategic weapon perpetrators utilise for revenge and to claim military recognition. Lastly, this study argues that the extreme violence of rape as an act of war aims to destroy the victims' subjectivities and their community's symbolic order. As such, this thesis weaves together three levels of analysis and examines wartime rape as multi-dimensional violence that interlaces into one act of wartime rape: the historical dimension (centring on land), the broader strategic considerations, and the destruction of victims' subjectivities and the community's symbolic order. At the same time, the combination of these dimensions varies considerably between the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, the Rally for Congolese Democracy rebels, and the *Mai-Mai* militias – that is, the context even in one province within DRC produces variations in motive and form.

Keywords: wartime rape, gendered identity, militarisation, anti-war feminism, patriarchy, sexual subjectivity, Democratic Republic of the Congo

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to:

My daughters: Chloe Malaika Kahasha and Camellia Malkia Kahasha. You have been my strength and motivation throughout the whole thesis process. Through this achievement, I hope you understand that no one and nothing has to prevent you from being the best of yourselves.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AFDL	*Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo*
ASF	*Association de Santé Familiale*
CNDP	National Congress for the Defence of the People
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
FARDC	*Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo*
FAZ	*Forces Armées Zaïroises*
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda
RCD	Rally for Congolese Democracy
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Force
UN	United Nations
WWII	World War II

Chapter 1:
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Wartime rape characterised several wars around the globe in countries such as Turkey during the 1915 Armenian genocide by the Ottoman Empire, Germany during World War II (WWII) when the Soviet Red Army raped German women, China during the rape of Nanjing committed by the Japanese soldiers in WWII, India throughout the creation of Pakistan and the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War (Carreiras, 2013). Also, during and years subsequent to the Cold War, the world has registered wars that were marked by the rape of civilians by armed groups. This can be seen in the case of the following wars: the Crimean War, the Vietnam War, the Cambodian War, and the conflicts in Latin America and Haiti. The wars in East Timor, Sri Lanka, Burma, Kashmir (India) and Papua, New Guinea also exposed the people from the Asian continent to wartime rape (Leatherman, 2007). The central Europe and Eurasia armed conflicts also exposed the population in Afghanistan, Turkey, Kuwait, Georgia, Bosnia and Kosovo to wartime rape (Henry, 2014). The African continent (Djibouti, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)) has also experienced and is still witnessing cases of wartime rape. The first time wartime rape was prosecuted and declared a crime against humanity was on February 22nd, 2001 (Bergoffen, 2003). On this date, three Bosnian Serb soldiers were declared guilty of crimes against humanity given their perpetration of wartime rape against Bosnian Muslim women during the 1992-1995 Wars of Yugoslav Succession (Bergoffen, 2003; Gottschall, 2004; Engle, 2005; Carreiras, 2013; Korac, 2018). Despite its criminalisation, wartime rape continues to be used as a weapon and a warfare strategy in armed conflicts around the world and in Africa particularly.

According to the 2021 United Nations (UN) Secretary-General report, the fighting in the eastern provinces of the DRC has gradually been associated with a choking rate of sexual violence attributed to state and non-state armed groups. For the last two decades, these armed

groups have utilised wartime rape as a weapon of war – a strategy and practice against civilians in the eastern DRC. Since the beginning of the Congo Wars in 1996, an estimated 400,000 victims/survivors of wartime rape have lived in the country (Carreiras, 2013; Daley, 2015). The 2010 International Health Report acknowledges that "attacks are often indiscriminate with Dr Mukwege's[1] patients ranging from 3 years-old to 75 years-old" (p.163).

In the single month of December 2021, the UN Secretary-General in the Security Report acknowledged an additional 1053 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, of which 675 women, 370 girls, three men and five boys were part. The alarming statistics of rape perpetrated by armed groups in the eastern DRC led, in 2009, Margot Wallström – former UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict – to christen the eastern DRC the rape capital of the world or, again, as the most dangerous place on earth to be a woman (Autesserre, 2012; Carreiras, 2013; Freedman, 2014; Aroussi, 2017; Korac, 2018). These sad labels attract aid workers, journalists and advocates who have not hesitated to use them *ad infinitum*[2] ever since. Such recuperation and framing of wartime rape in the eastern DRC have had negative impacts as they give rape power that perpetrators do not hesitate to manipulate. Despite the increasing attention and the international policymakers' effort to condemn this sexualised violence, wartime rape continues to be utilised by armed groups against the civilian population in the DRC in general and particularly in the eastern part of the country.

This thesis is based on the eastern DRC case and explores the Bukavu population's conceptualisation of the emergence of wartime rape during the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War to understand the intertwining of the different dimensions of wartime rape into a single synthesised whole with multiple dimensions. Based on the research

[1] Dr Mukwege is a Congolese gynaecologist and founder of the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu where he specialises in the treatment of women and girls victims/survivors of wartime rape. He also is a corecipient, with Yazīdī activist Nadia Murad, of the 2018 Nobel Price for Peace (Sherman, H. (2022). Denis Mukwege: Congolese Physician. In *The Editors of Encyclopedia Britanica*. Edit History).

[2] Throughout the thesis, italics are used for foreign words, emphasis and to draw the reader's attention to thematic links. Participants' direct quotes are also in italics. Single inverted commas are utilised to depict irony.

participants' interpretation of these two wars, I endeavoured to understand how wartime rape happened in one conflict (the 2004 Kivu Conflict) and not in another (the 1996 First Congo War) within the same geographical setting and same fighters despite being separated by eight years. I suggest that the relationship of perpetrators to wartime rape and the multiplicity of the dimensions of wartime rape are historically, geographically and culturally inscribed, and the discussion of such multiple dimensions has to be specific to the studied society.

This PhD articulates a three-fold argument. Firstly, the thesis argues that the 2004 wartime rape is rooted in the Belgian colonisation and its lingering effects on forms of ethnicity, gender, land distribution and recognition of political rights in the present. Next, this thesis argues that wartime rape is a strategic weapon perpetrators utilise for revenge and to claim recognition. Lastly, this PhD argues that the extreme violence of rape as an act of war aims to destroy the victims' subjectivities and their community's symbolic order.

Wartime rape in the eastern DRC is thus extremely complex and has a multiplicity of dimensions intertwined and combined in the same act of wartime rape. I maintain that this wartime sexual violence cannot be fully understood without exploring its historical dimension (centering on land), its destruction of the victims' subjectivities and the community's symbolic order through the perpetration of sexual violence, and its broader strategic considerations. Throughout this thesis, I endeavour to intertwine these dimensions of wartime rape into a single synthesised whole with multiple dimensions. At the same time, I maintain that combining these dimensions varies considerably between the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) rebels and the Mai-Mai militias. This means that the context even in one province (South Kivu) within the DRC produces variations in motive and form. Because these multiple dimensions of wartime rape are intertwined and talk to each other, one cannot, therefore, understand the nature of revenge carried through the act of wartime rape without understanding the impact that wartime rape has on the victim's subjectivity. Also, one cannot

comprehend the impact that wartime rape has on the community's symbolic order without exploring the impact that wartime rape has on the subjectivity of its victims of whom women and girls are the majority.

My central conceptual anchor is anti-war feminism, as it provides me with some conceptual tools to understand the enactment of wartime rape. Following this perspective, I thus maintain that wartime rape in the eastern DRC involves questions of gender, militarisation, ethnicity, land, power and domination that manifested differently in the 2004 Kivu Conflict compared to the 1996 First Congo War. The context of these two wars is thus worth presenting if one has to understand the persistence of wartime rape in the eastern DRC.

1.2 Context of the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict

In early 2022, the number of internally displaced people in the DRC was estimated at 5.6 million (Stearns, 2022). While the DRC has experienced internal conflicts following the 1960 independence from the Belgian colonisers, the analysis in this thesis starts from 1996 because this year represents the begining of the Congo Wars, also referred to as the Great Wars of Africa (Stearns, 2011). The wars in the DRC are polymorphic and marked with layers of overlapping agendas that can be situated at the regional, national and local levels (Baaz and Stern, 2010; Boone, 2013; Baaz and Verweijen, 2013; Bøås and Dunn, 2013; Vlassenroot, 2013; Bjørkhaug and Bøås, 2014; Meger, 2014; Stearns, 2014; Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015).

The regional dimension of the Congo Wars was tangled with the post-1994 Rwandan genocide that resulted in the displacement of Rwandan refugees who found shelter in the eastern regions of the DRC. Among these refugees were the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe[3] militias, who were identified as the authors of the Rwandan genocide (Brown, 2012; Stearns, 2014). These Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militias self-established in the North Kivu and South Kivu provinces of the DRC (then called Zaïre), from where they launched continuous attacks against

[3] Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militias are also locally referred to as Interahamwe. Hence I have used interchangeably the wording Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militias and Interahamwe

Rwanda (Brown, 2012). The military support (provision of armament) that Mobutu's government provided to these Interahamwe shaped Mobutu Sese Seko as an enemy that the newly constituted Rwandan government aimed to suppress (Stearns, 2022).

The regional agenda intertwined with the national dimensions of the Congo Wars in 1996 as Mobutu's 32 years in power, consistently criticised and tentative of at least three failed military coups, were registered since the 1960 ascension to independence (Barbant et al., 2013). In 1996, the train of wars started its trajectory within the DRC territory as a coalition of Ugandan, Rwandan, Burundian and Congolese rebels formed the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Liberation du Congo*[4] (AFDL) rebellion that toppled Mobutu from power and placed Laurent-Désiré Kabila as the new president of the DRC (Vlassenroot, 2013). Chapter 4 on the historical background of the Congo Wars presents how the AFDL rebellion found armed resistance from not only the *Forces Armées Zaïroises*[5] (FAZ) but also from community-based armed groups, such as the *Mai-Mai* militias, who saw this rebellion as an invasion from foreigners (Bøås, 2009; Bøås and Dunn, 2013).

Furthermore, the first empirical chapter of this thesis (Chapter 5) suggests that the nature of the 1996 First Congo War itself was preventive of wartime rape as the AFDL entered the country with the aim of fighting dictatorship and 'liberating' the country while promoting discourses around nationhood and inclusion. Hence, these combatants did not perpetrate wartime rape against women conceived, following patriarchy, as the reproducer of the nation's future. While the 1996 First Congo War had regional dimensions, the 2004 Kivu Conflict had local roots in the pre-war conflicts around land tenure that existed between the Banyamulenge, a Congolese Tutsi ethnic group and other cohabiting ethnic groups in the *Hauts Plateaux* of South Kivu (Boone, 2013). In contrast to the 1996 First Congo War, where the fighters' actions

[4] Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
[5] *Forces Armées Zaïroises* (FAZ), translated in English is Zaïrian Armed Forces, were the National Army of the then Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) (Stearns, 2011).

were directed against the dictatorship of the previous regime, the 2004 Kivu Conflict was marred by the strategic and weaponised utilisation of wartime rape. Through rape, the 2004 rebels hailed or called the state's attention to their claim of inclusion into nationhood. Wartime rape against the civilians thus aimed to destroy the state (that either included or excluded the ethnic group the RCD rebels claimed to be defending) through the destruction of its reproducer, the women and girls. This means that, in Ericsson's (2010) words, in times of war, armed perpetrators do not target women as individuals; instead women are violated as the nation's women: "the attack on their sexuality is an affront to the national collective of men" (p.71).

As pointed out throughout this thesis, gender, militarism, ethnicity and access to customary land are key elements in the wars under analysis. Henceforth this thesis distances its analysis from the political economy or the economic-incentive-of-conflict-minerals' explanation of wartime rape *without dismissing such conceptualisation*. Instead, as elaborated later in this introductory chapter, this thesis explores how notions of belonging and gender were politicised and militarised in service of political ends. This politicisation resulted in the recruitment of Banyamulenge male youths in 1996 and wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict. With the context of the wars under analysis in this thesis provided, one needs to bear in mind that the key coordinate of this PhD is to understand, through multi-dimensional analysis, the interplay between the different dimensions of wartime rape in the eastern DRC as this wartime sexual violence happened in one conflict and not in another in the same geographical location, despite being separated by eight years. That being said, the next section turns to examine the different conceptualisations of wartime rape.

1.3 Wartime rape: From being termed ubiquitous, then a weapon of war to being recognised as a crime against humanity

The term 'wartime rape' has two components, namely wartime and rape. While a variety of definitions of 'wartime rape' has been formulated, this thesis utilises the definitions first

suggested by Elisabeth Wood and Nancy Farwell. Wood (2009:133), on the one hand, sees rape as

> "…the penetration of the anus or vagina with any object or of any body part of the victims or perpetrators' body with a sexual organ, by force or by threat of force or coercion, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment, or against a person incapable of giving genuine consent."

Farwell (2004:391), on the other hand, conceptualises wartime rape as "a deliberate and strategic decision on the part of combatants to intimidate and destroy 'the enemy' as a whole by raping and enslaving women who are identified as members of the opposing group". From these two definitions, this thesis understands wartime rape as a form of rape perpetrated by armed groups in war to serve specific political purposes for the perpetrators while destroying the victim's (men, women, boys and girls) subjectivity and negatively impacting their communities as a whole. Nonetheless, I sustain that an analysis of wartime rape must critically consider the relational gendered processes of victimisation in ways that transcend the essentialist reduction of women to the mere victim status and men to the perpetrator category. By doing so, this thesis questions and challenges the dominant patriarchal notions of femininity and masculinity as inscribed within socio-cultural norms of a given patriarchal society.

The conceptualisation of wartime rape has evolved along with the variations within feminism. Given its recurrent occurrence in wars, wartime rape was wrongfully considered ubiquitous in wars (Baaz and Stern, 2013). During WWII, for instance, it is argued that approximately 1,900,000 women were victims of rape. During that period, rape was understood and acknowledged, yet silenced and framed as a by-product of armed conflicts (Hirschauer, 2014). However, second-wave feminism (the 1960s to 1970s) pointedly argued that rape, in general, is an issue of power and domination. For instance, earlier radical feminist works on rape conceptualised it as men's desire to dominate women (Brownmiller, 1975). The prevalent myth around wartime rape was that it is a result of "irrepressible male sexual drive" (Seifert, 1992:1); a myth that Gottschall (2004:130) refers to as the "pressure cook theory of rape". Such

a view categorised all men as potential rapists while women were reduced to the mere status of victim/survivor. This thesis will use the terms victims and survivors interchangeably to refer to males and females who have been victimised through wartime rape. In my view, using only the term 'survivor' would dismiss those who have not survived their rape, those who have taken away their own lives following their victimisation and their community's attitude, as was the case of a teenage girl acknowledged by my study participants. Hence, using 'victim' does not aim to obscure the agency of people who have experienced wartime rape. Furthermore, the categorisation of all men as potential rapists is problematised as evidence of women rapists and complicit to the violence of 'their' men were empirically provided in countries such as Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, the 2002 massacre of Muslims in Gujarat, during which women from the Hindu extremist wing pressurised 'their' men to "prove their manhood by killing and raping Muslim women" (Cockburn, 2010:143-144) or the white South African women who supported the apartheid regime (Cock, 1987; Gomez, 2007; Sjoberg, 2016). Stereotyping men as the perpetrators also works to silence the sexual violence, of which wartime rape is part, against men. However, this thesis believes that "men are also likely to suffer sexual humiliation, rape and all other forms of bodily fragmentation and abuse" (Segal, 2008:32). Hence the extension of the victim's category to include men and boys while remaining alert that women and girls constitute the majority of sexual violence in war.

Beginning in the 1990s, a period that corresponds with the beginning of third-wave feminism, unprecedented attention was given to the issue of sexual violence in war (Korac, 2018) as voices were raised globally to criminalise wartime rape instead of treating this physical violence as a by-product of war. Researchers and theorisation around the issue of wartime rape have also produced a shock-seeking phraseology to urge political and international agents to act and address sexual violence. Following the early 1990s wartime rape in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda, feminist activists, authors, states and international organisations pressurised the

UN to criminalise wartime rape (Enloe, 2004; Korac, 2018). Formulations such as "women's bodies as battles grounds", "rape as a weapon of war" and "the rape capital of the world", among others, have been progressively integrated within the global language on sexual violence in war intending to communicate the deliberateness and premeditation of sexual violence (Ayiera, 2010:11). I thus suggest that wartime rape is hardly a violent expression of sexuality. On the contrary, wartime rape is a sexual expression of aggression. In this sense, wartime rape is a weapon of war in that it terrorises, demoralises and holds destructive power over its victims and their communities at the same time as it constructs the perpetrators as powerful (Korac, 2018). Based on the theoretical and empirical evidence on the gendering power of wartime rape, this study gives patriarchal genders a central role while analysing wartime rape in the eastern DRC.

The creation of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was evidence that wartime rape would be regarded as a crime against humanity (Enloe, 2000; 2004; 2015; Cockburn, 2010). In 2000, Resolution 1325 constituted the first determination from the UN Security Council to explicitly address the impact that armed conflicts have on women. Also, Resolution 1325 stressed the need to recognise and acknowledge women's contributions to conflict resolution and sustainable peace (Henry, 2014).

From being conceived as unavoidable in war, wartime rape came to be termed gendered and gendering violence because it is constructed upon the patriarchal notions of masculinities and femininities. Critical masculinity authors, additionally, point out the widespread yet underreported and silenced wartime rape against men despite overwhelming evidence. Relatedly, Vojdik (2013:923-924) provides the example of the "Persian armies…carried plates filled with the penises of soldiers of the vanquished enemy, celebrating the symbolic and actual domination of the enemy". Following the critical masculinity theory, wartime rape against both

men and women is recognised as an issue of gendered power that works to maintain and enforce the established patriarchal gender order; to weaken, demoralise and destroy collectives of people; and to construct ethnicity, national and other forms of collective identity. Wartime rape (be it against women, girls, men or boys) masculinises and empowers the perpetrators while feminising their victims. It is suggested that theorising wartime rape in wars necessitates critically exploring the connexion between violence against male bodies and female bodies, social constructions of gender (masculinity and femininity), and the utilisation of specific masculinities to achieve ethnic, national and global power. At this point, it is worth reminding that following a constructionist epistemological stance, both femininity and masculinity "are not seen as stemming from individual women's and men's minds and bodies" (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015:5-6), but are rather socially produced and presented as being appropriate or 'natural' for each gender. As such, masculinities and femininities are socio-cultural codes.

Thus, wartime rape manipulates the gendered notions around appropriate manifestations of masculinities and femininities that are inscribed within the extensive contexts of economic, political, social and militarised violence, as Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2006) pointedly argue. Another way of putting this would be that the motivation behind the perpetration of wartime rape is the assertion of masculine domination (Bourdieu, 2001), where rape is used as a tool of domination, humiliation and mostly feminisation. Femininity, in this perspective, is conceived as an "insult to the male-bodied individuals" (Ayiera, 2010:17).

That being said, it is crucial to highlight that, except for framing wartime rape as ubiquitous in war, I do not choose any conceptualisation of wartime rape over another. This is because the anti-war feminist theoretical stance adopted by this PhD enables me to navigate from one variant to another while exploring the emergence of wartime rape in one armed conflict and not in another. In other words, I believe there are different ways of interpreting wartime rape, and I put forward that wartime rape in the eastern DRC is practised as a weapon and intersects

between civilians and non-civilians (military, rebels and militias). Mostly, wartime rape intersects gender (masculinity and femininity), power and domination, ethnicity and notions of (non-)belonging (land) within a patriarchal symbolic order. These are sequential ways of analysing this violence; thus, I am not choosing one necessarily as they all offer important insight into the analysis of wartime rape in the studied area. Throughout the next section, I expand on the approach that this study adopted to explore further and provide some light on wartime rape in the eastern DRC.

1.4 Wartime rape (and threat to rape), statehood and belonging in the eastern DRC

Overall, there has been a significant advancement in the study of conflict-related sexual violence, with the focus mainly oriented on the context, individual motivations, purpose and intra-group dynamics (Koos, 2017). Despite the large amount of literature on the Congo Wars, few authors from diverse disciplines have shaped a link between the Belgian land administration policies and the 2004 wartime rape. Also, a considerable number of authors mainly focus on the 'woman as victim/survivor' narrative and consequently overlook the perpetrators' narratives of their actions. Feminist authors such as Maria Eriksson Baaz, Maria Stern and Sara Meger are among the few authors who expand on the perpetrators' account of their violence in the DRC. For instance, Baaz and Stern (2013) focus on the wartime rape perpetrated by the DRC's national army, leaving the rape by militias, such as *Mai-Mai* and Hutu-dominated Interahamwe, or rebels, such as the RCD, slightly explored. Furthermore, the emphasis on women as victims leaves the impact(s) that wartime rape has on the community's symbolic order as a whole underexplored and how wartime rape destroys and/or redefines the constructed sexual subjectivities of its victims unaddressed. The latter call upon the victims' notion of manhood and of womanhood, and project light on the subjective and symbolic components of an individual or group of individuals.

Moreover, Meger (2014), a scholar from the international relations wing, mainly expands on the political economy of wartime rape and on the relationship between globalisation,

capitalism and armed conflicts in the DRC. The conflict-mineral or political economy explanation to wartime rape leaves unquestioned the part played by customary land tenure in the use of wartime rape by rebel groups, such as the RCD, that claimed the Banyamulenge ethnicity and perpetrated by *Mai-Mai* militias who paradoxically agitated their 'autochthony' as the reason why they perpetrated rape to protect their ancestral land.

What spot-lighted the 2004 Kivu Conflict, besides the number of rape victims/survivors registered, was how RCD perpetrators were going door-to-door to rape civilians and entitled the victims/survivors with specific messages regarding the recognition of Minembwe as the Banyamulenge's customary land (Human Rights Watch Report, 2004). Herein, this PhD attempts to address the gap highlighted above by suggesting that wartime rape in the eastern DRC is certainly related to questions of statehood, nationhood, belonging and community (de)construction. I put forward that wartime rape accomplishes social works in that it defines who has or does not have a stake, who is empowered or disempowered. Wartime rape in the eastern DRC thus vehicles the idea of hailing or calling the defined 'others' into statehood. The next lines present an overview of the participatory approach this thesis utilised in the collection of data to respond to the research question and sub-questions.

1.5 Methods

This PhD's main aim is to understand: ***How do the Bukavu people conceptualise the emergence of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War?*** In the attempt to answer this main research question, I asked the following central questions: ***How was the sense of belonging politicised and militarised in 1996 leading up to the 2004 wartime rape in the eastern DRC? What role(s) did wartime rape play for the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, the Mai-Mai militiamen and the RCD rebels in the eastern DRC? How did wartime rape affect its victims' subjective identities and their communities in the eastern DRC?*** Based on this study participants' accounts, this thesis overall argues that recognising wartime rape as a weapon or strategy of war is one step that needs to be augmented

by the recognition of wartime rape as a lexicon or the 'smoke-that-calls' for negotiations between the state and the perpetrators in the eastern region of the DRC.

This PhD's research was conducted in 2020 in Bukavu (South Kivu Province, eastern DRC) after obtaining the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee's (non-medical) approval. The research included 30 participants aged 31 and older willing to participate in this study. The participants were from varied social categories, namely the ordinary participants who were civilian women and men without any political or public servant function, key participants who were men and women community leaders (former senators, former activists and leaders of civil society), and former military officers, some of whom served under Mobutu's government and others served under the actual national army – *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) – and have either collaborated with the *Mai-Mai* or opposed this militia as it was dictated by the political wing of the moment. This point is expanded on in Chapter 4 with the historical background of the armed conflicts in the eastern DRC.

To answer the research questions, data were collected using a participatory method, which is amongst the qualitative approaches to data collection and analysis, inscribed within a critical paradigm. The Covid-19 pandemic obliged us to rethink qualitative methods and how we traditionally go about qualitative research. I initiated the data collection process with a pilot phase during which I had to pre-test the participants' willingness to interact with me using computerised mediated approaches. This phase revealed that participants were ready to interact with *"humans rather than talking to a computer"*, to quote one female participant. In Chapter 3, I reflect on how I had to occupy a back seat in my research to respect participants' will, even though I originate from Bukavu. For data collection, I worked with four fieldworkers who are my former work colleagues (two Medical Doctors (one male and one female) and two holders of a postgraduate degree in Communication (one male and one female)). As for my interaction

with the fieldworkers, we utilised WhatsApp video calls for group meetings and other interactions. The fieldworkers shared with me the collected data daily via Gmail.

Throughout the data collection period, I thus appreciated the importance of others as this approach challenged the extractive nature of data collection. Thanks to the fieldworkers' collaboration and participants' engagement (some offered their homes as the site for focus group discussion, as detailed in Chapter 3), my research was thus embedded in the community – even when I was absent from the field due to Covid-19 and shed light on the human dimension of this qualitative method, as detailed in Chapter 3.

I utilised a hermeneutic critical thematic content analysis of data to understand and provide an interpretation of the participants' interpretations of the emergence of wartime rape in 2004 and the absence of this violence in 1996. Furthermore, participants were invited to a data validation workshop during which the themes I initially developed from their accounts were presented, allowing the participants to validate, refute or suggest themes.

Participants' willingness was key to this study as researching topics such as wartime rape might raise some ethical concerns. This PhD is a continuation of my Master of Arts degree, during which I focused on the symbolic dimensions of wartime rape in the eastern DRC. During that period, I came to understand that wartime rape in the eastern DRC is a publicly discussed topic, and the community expressed the need to regain their voice through participation in research, either academic or developmental. Despite this, I took caution by providing participants with a toll-free number they could use (if needed) to get information on the nearest health facility to access free psychological assistance through counselling. It should also be mentioned that all identifying features that would point at participants were removed from this thesis. Instead, I use acronyms to guarantee participants' anonymity. I stored the collected data on a password-protected computer to prevent a third party from accessing them. The next lines provide the outline of this thesis.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2, ***Wartime rape, patriarchal gendered roles, militarisation and sexual subjectivities***, provides the conceptual and theoretical foundation of this thesis by examining different interpretations of wartime rape within patriarchy and the interplay between its multiple dimensions. The chapter aims to show that the analysis of wartime rape needs to be augmented to highlight other dimensions within wartime rape as dictated by the socio-cultural norms that mostly influence, shape and dictate the form that violence (wartime rape, in this case) takes. The chapter uses the anti-war feminism lenses to theorise the shift in paradigms around wartime rape. The chapter also imprints some conceptualisation from pro-feminist scholarships on violence in general, particularly wartime rape, as well as critical masculinity analysis. The chapter shapes a link between wartime rape and militarised masculinities while distinguishing concepts such as military, militarism and militarisation. To expose such a relationship, the chapter highlights the part patriarchy plays in constructing women's bodies as a battleground and a vessel of a battle between men. The chapter also provides the grounds to understand how the patriarchal construction of women's socio-cultural value has shaped wartime rape as 'the smoke that calls' for negotiations between the perpetrators and the national government.

Chapter 3, ***Researching wartime rape, gender and militarism: the methods and ethical challenges in a time affected by the Covid-19 pandemic***, focuses on the qualitative research methods I utilised to collect the Bukavu people's conceptualisation or understanding of the emergence of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War in the eastern DRC. Their accounts are based on their lived experience. The research was carried out in 2020 when I could not travel from South Africa to Bukavu to conduct fieldwork due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Chapter 3 thus reflects on how I resorted to a participatory research method by getting fieldworkers and seed participants to take ownership of the data collection after a pilot phase that helped determine the study participants' position vis-à-vis a

computerised communication for data collection purposes. The chapter reflects on the challenges I encountered as participants refused to interact with me via computers or telephones because they preferred the physical presence of the fieldworkers. Further, I critically reflect on my positionality as a backseat occupant – in research where I am the lead author – to respect the participants' will. At the end of the chapter, I highlight the ethical and methodological challenges that I encountered while conducting research on a sensitive topic such as wartime rape.

Chapter 4, ***The eastern DRC's armed turmoil as a legacy of the Belgian colonisation: From colonial indirect land administration policy to the 2004 wartime rape***, contextualises the study and gives the historical background of the Congo Wars. The chapter points at the Belgian indirect rule of land administration as one important factor of local conflicts around land, which later translated into wartime rape in the eastern DRC. I reflect on the importance of history in sociological analysis and to understand the development of community-based self-defence organisations into militia groups and rebels following the politicisation of the notion of belonging.

Chapter 5, ***Wartime rape, politicisation of belonging and militarised masculinities: A presentation and analysis of participants' conceptualisation of the 1996 First Congo War and 2004 Kivu Conflict***, represents the first empirical chapter of the thesis. The chapter explores participants' accounts of their lived experiences of the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict. Through the analysis of the participants' accounts, the chapter provides an empirical foundation for my argument that the 2004 wartime rape is rooted within the Belgian colonisation that segregated people into autochthonous and constructed foreigners. I suggest that the nature of the 1996 First Congo War was itself preventive of wartime rape as combatants' aims and roles were directed against dictatorship; they were claiming the nation. Mostly, with the politicisation of belonging, those who were constructed as foreigners by the

Belgian colonisers were led to believe that taking arms would counter their otherness and prove their belonging to the Congolese nation. Therefore, raping women who symbolise the future of a nation would be paradoxical to the 1996 rebels' claim of liberating the nation. In 2004, however, the aims and claims of combatants shifted as their actions were now directed against the government. In this war, wartime rape against civilians became, for perpetrators, a means to punch the state and claim their place within that state that excluded them militarily and or ethnically. Based on this, I conceptualise wartime rape as an issue of militarised protest masculinities, man-to-man violence about power and domination. I maintain through the chapter that the eastern DRC's wartime rape accomplishes for the perpetrators the role of 'the smoke that calls' for negotiations at the national level. The chapter highlights how wartime rape was used to attract the national government's attention and gave negotiation power to perpetrators. The chapter stresses patriarchy's role in constituting rape and the threat to rape as an effective means to access the military and dominant socio-political table.

Chapter 6, ***Wartime rape: The challenge to the victims' subjective identities and sense of belonging within a patriarchal system***, is the second empirical chapter of the thesis. It focuses on how wartime rape by the three identified groups of perpetrators (the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, the RCD rebels and the *Mai-Mai* militia) constitutes an attack against its victims' subjectivities and their community as a whole. After examining the participants' different categorisations of wartime rape based on the perpetrators' motivations, the chapter explores how wartime rape is a simultaneous imposition of power and dominance, as well as a destructor of the victims' subjectivities through the invasion of their bodies and an attack against the community's symbolic order. I maintain through the chapter that patriarchy is a searchlight to examine how women's bodies are culturally constructed in ways that raping a woman constructs her as a pariah, and shapes the child born from rape as an unfitted kid and men from the victims' community as unfitted masculinities.

This thesis ends with **CONCLUSIONS**, summarising the main arguments that I formulated around the Bukavu people's conceptualisation of the emergence of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War. I highlight the importance of intersectionality while analysing wartime rape and its multiple dimensions by pointing out the interplay between history (Belgian colonisation), belonging (land and citizenship rights), patriarchal genders, power, domination and militarisation. I stress that the power and domination carried through rape and the destruction of the victim's subjectivity and the community's symbolic order are two sides of the same coin.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Wartime rape, patriarchal gendered roles, militarisation and sexual subjectivities

2.1 Introduction

Wartime rape continues to be used as a weapon and a warfare strategy in armed conflicts around the world in general and particularly in Africa (Luckham, 1994; Farwell, 2004, Mama and Okazawa-Rey, 2012). In light of this, authors from diverse perspectives (for example, feminist, pro-feminist and critical masculinity) have developed different and sometimes contrasting paradigms, epistemologies and multiple data types to analyse and understand the occurrence and persistence of wartime rape. Some authors emphasised the importance of recognising the sexual dimension of wartime rape without reducing this physical violence to only sexual aspects (Enloe, 2004; Cockburn, 2010; Baaz and Stern, 2018). Other authors argued that the analysis of 'rape as a weapon and strategy of war' needs to be augmented to include other roles played by rape during armed conflicts (Seifert, 1994; 2002; Baaz and Stern, 2013; 2018).

Using anti-war feminism as a conceptual anchor, this chapter argues that an analysis of wartime rape needs to be multi-dimensional. Throughout the chapter, I endeavour to offer diverse ways of interpreting wartime rape by pointing out the patriarchal gendered power dynamics that construct wartime rape as a weapon against both men's and women's bodies and their lived subjectivities, as a strategy to impose victory by feminising the men from the opposing group and, in the case of the DRC, wartime rape will be seen as an act of revenge and reclamation of a place at the patriarchal military table; and, as a claim of ethnic and citizenship rights recognition to reach political ends (Bøås, 2009; Coles, 2009; Cockburn, 2010; Sjoberg, 2010; 2016; Autesserre, 2012; Baaz and Stern, 2013; Verweijen, 2015; Enloe, 2017). Moreover, authors such a Cock (1987), Seifert (1994), Enloe (2004; 2017), Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2006), Gqola (2007), Hunnicutt (2009) and Cockburn (2010) suggest that to understand wartime rape, one needs to critically analyse the relationship between men as wartime rape exposes and

establishes a gendered power hierarchy between the masculinised perpetrator and the feminised male enemy. These authors furthermore emphasise that such an analysis must be socially and culturally situated and mostly not hesitant to point out the part patriarchy plays in establishing gendered hierarchies that pave the way for violence, such as rape (Hunnicutt, 2009).

However, wars are never primarily fought for gender issues. Thus, patriarchy alone cannot help us understand the persistence and degree of the violence of wartime rape. Therefore, the analysis of wartime rape must associate gender with other systems of differentiation, such as ethnicity, religion, race and class, to comprehend the strategic use of wartime rape to gain socio-political and military power (Cock, 1987; Farwell, 2004; Connell, 2005; Henry, 2014; Verweijen, 2015; Aroussi, 2017; Marsha, 2017; Kümmel, 2018; Tapscott, 2020). After a brief presentation of anti-war feminism and the conceptualisation of violence against women, the chapter expands on the issue of wartime rape by providing the definition adopted throughout this thesis and distinguishing between some forms of wartime rape. Next, this chapter examines how patriarchy constructs women as the perfect target of wartime rape and raped men as feminised, unfitted masculinities while providing to perpetrators the means to place further claims. An analysis of wartime rape as a sexual expression of violence and destruction of the victims' sexual subjectivities and the affected community's patriarchal order is then provided. Finally, the link between gender, militarisation and wartime rape is provided in the section that precedes the chapter's conclusion.

2.2 Anti-war feminism and the conceptualisation of violence against women

Feminism allows us to critically pay attention to power distribution and the principles of inclusion and exclusion arbitrated by patriarchal logic and historical prevalence (Edwards, 2021). This thesis is inscribed within an anti-war feminist perspective and emphasises the importance of understanding the part played by patriarchy in shaping wartime rape as a weapon, a "bio-political strategy of war" (Anholt, 2016:3) and a negotiating tool '*par excellence'*. Anti-war feminism is also referred to as anti-militarist feminism and adopts elements of radical,

liberal and Marxist feminism as dictated by the situation under analysis. Anti-war feminists see women's marginalisation as "more than the by-product of political inequality or of an exploitative economic system" (Cockburn, 2010:144). Following this perspective of feminism, the analysis of women's lived experiences should include not only women's experiences of their motherhood, their inclusion or exclusion from the labour market, their survival and political or legal rights, but the analysis must also include women's experience of physical violence such as rape by pointing without hesitation at the role played by patriarchy in the perpetuation of such violence.

Like radical feminists, anti-war feminists argue that violence against women, of which rape is part, finds rationale in the prevailing peace-time gender subdivisions and hierarchies that position women at the bottom of the patriarchal social ladder. Recognising that the patriarchal system results in rape being shaped as a weapon is crucial not to conceptualise rape as an inevitable sad fact but instead as a form of violence that perpetrators can decide to use or not.

However, while radical feminism utilises biological traits to portray all men as perpetrators and all women as victims/survivors (Brownmiller, 1975), anti-war feminism recognises women's capability to infer violence at the same level as men and to be complicit to the violence committed by men (Gomez, 2007; Sjoberg, 2016). For instance, Cynthia Cockburn, who self-identifies as an anti-war feminist, provides the case of the 2002 massacre of Muslims in Gujarat during which women from the Hindu extremist wing pressurised 'their' men to "prove their manhood by killing and raping Muslim women" (Cockburn, 2010:143-144). Also expanding on the Indian case, Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2006) highlight the example of Dalit women who armed themselves to counter the violence they were subjected to from the upper classes. This suggests that the category of woman-perpetrator-rapist is not ahistorical or impossible. Additionally, Cock (1987) provides a case of white women who sustained the apartheid regime in South Africa on the one hand and, on the other hand, white women who militated to suppress

the apartheid regime. These three cases stress the importance of using the lenses of intersectionality while analysing violence as this enables us to realise that individuals' gender, social locations and their actions or the meaning they assert to a particular situation (in which they may be involved) do not always correspond with the socially constructed categorisations. Social location must be understood as the positioning of individuals along overlapping networks of social power at a particular time and in a given location (Yuval-Davis, 2010). This social location is a macro social category and may include people's gender, race, class, ethnic group, age group or kinship group, for instance (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Referencing the American pre-Civil war period of 1861, Gomez (2007:118) articulates that "even 'dedicated women' were part of that hegemonic complot, which suggests that women agreed with the horrors of the antebellum patriarchal institution". Gomez (2007) extends the concept of complicity, as coined by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), to present how some women and non-hegemonic men support and promote the continuation of patriarchal norms, which contrastingly are oppressive to the dominant group. The notion of complicity resonates well with Pierre Bourdieu's development of the concept of symbolic violence, defining it as "the coercion which is set up only through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator" (Bourdieu, 2000:170). In other words, complicity and symbolic violence find their rationale in the oppressed group's collaboration with a social order that contrastingly serves the interests of the dominant only. Nonetheless, one should be critical while employing the concept of complicity to women within patriarchal orders, given that what is seen as complicity may be, in fact, a survival mechanism that women adopt to gain something from the patriarchal system.

Furthermore, Cock (1987) criticises the radical feminist tendency to bring forward women's biology to suggest that women's special quality of reproduction predisposes them to be 'naturally' peaceful and to respond differently to violence as their motherhood predisposes them

to protect life rather than violating it. This way of thinking is an "equation of femininity with domesticity" and is essentialist and reductionist of the reality (Cock, 1987:25). Accordingly, Cook (2020) suggests that the spatial distribution of violence against women counters the idea of public spaces as masculine, political and dangerous and that of private spaces as feminine, domestic and peaceful.

In opposition to radical feminism's "maternal pacifism" view of women, Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2006:435) point out that the militarisation of women leads these later ones to "support some wars through particular construction of motherhood". In accordance with Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2006), Cynthia Enloe stresses that the militarisation of masculinities is only possible when motherhood, sisterhood or girl-friendship are also militarised by subscribing to and encouraging the idea that men must hold guns to defend their mothers, sisters or partners (Enloe, 2017). Accordingly, Abrahamyan (2017) argues that those men who deviate from their ascribed gendered roles (voluntarily or not voluntarily) are considered – following the masculinity hierarchy within patriarchy – as 'weakling, feminine', 'not a true man'.

As already mentioned, anti-war feminism also encompasses elements from Marxist feminists' conceptualisations of violence against women. Anti-war feminism takes from Marxist feminism the intersectional analysis of women's life, given that power is multi-dimensional and travels the social horizon as a whole. Thus, anti-war feminism criticises the capitalist system that sustains and emphasises class disparities. This form of feminism criticises imperialism and colonisation in both their old and new forms because the combination of capitalism, imperialism and colonisation builds a path to militarisation (Enloe, 2017). Militarisation, in turn, is built within a phallocratic ideology that perpetuates patriarchy as the norm. Importantly, anti-war feminists also take race, religion and ethnicity seriously, as these constitute elements of inclusion and exclusion of people. Finally, anti-war feminists are attentive to the meanings and operation of power since power is what is needed to be defined

as dominant or dominated. Marxist feminists stress the importance of analysing women's lived experience from the marginalised's viewpoint to build a counter-hegemonic approach that best suits the interests of the oppressed.

Furthermore, in accordance with liberal feminism, anti-war feminism agrees that equal political and legal rights for women may help to decrease the gender imbalance between men and women and that men and women should collaborate to address the gender gap effectively (Walby, 1990). However, liberal feminists have been criticised for being less sensitive to women's oppression that may result from their race, religion, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Liberal feminists emphasise the need for women to get equal access to great institutions, such as national legislatures or the army. Consequently, they do not question existing institutions that institutionalise and perpetuate patriarchy (Kennedy-Pipre, 2017). In this regard, anti-war feminists suggest that leaving the existing social structures without questioning them is problematic as this may, for instance, leave patriarchy unchallenged. For example, women's entrance into the military does not guarantee a change in the gendered, misogynist and patriarchal organisation of the military as an institution (Enloe, 2017). Also, anti-war feminists argue that "it will not be possible to end sexual violence in war unless deeper structures of militarism and war are dismantled" (Duncanson, 2017:41). Taking these institutions for granted would, therefore, participate in rendering patriarchy 'sustainable'. In her analysis of the patriarchal system, Cynthia Enloe develops the concept of "sustainable patriarchy" to point out how the patriarchal system of ideas and relationships renovates in the face of resistance and manages to survive despite that "so many women have risked their reputation and lives to challenge" it (Enloe, 2017:17).

From what precedes, this thesis could not afford to be merely radical, Marxist or simply liberal because this study believes that each of these perspectives has a crucial contribution while attempting to understand and interpret the prevailing wartime rape in the eastern DRC.

This thesis thus navigates from one perspective to another on women's condition depending on the situation(s) under analysis (Cockburn, 2010). Anti-war feminism is aware that there is a sexual division of war, just as there is a sexual division of labour; a strong gender skew that makes for gender-specific experiences. Yet it can hardly fail to be alert to anomalies. Most raped victims are women, but some are men. While most soldiers are men, a growing percentage are women. Conceptually, I thus approach the analysis of wartime rape through anti-war feminist lenses because this conceptual anchor helps to interpret women's conditions, not only in terms of victimisation. It speaks about resistance, womanhood, manhood and militarisation, and other complexities that surround the perpetration of wartime rape, such as the creation of a spectacle in which wartime rape becomes the lexicon, the destruction of sexual subjectivities and the victim community's symbolic order, the construction of them and us where the collective of men represents the nation and bodies of women represent the future of another nation (to protect or destroy). Bearing that in mind, the following section explores the definition of wartime rape adopted in this thesis.

2.3 Wartime rape as opportunistic, strategic and a lexicon

2.3.1 **Defining wartime rape**

In times of war, rape is a form of sexual violence utilised by armed groups (formal militaries, militias, rebels, etc.) against civilian populations (men, women, boys and girls) to systematically intimidate and humiliate the local population (Baaz and Stern, 2010). Sexual violence is to be understood as a broader category that encompasses rape, sexual torture and the mutilation of genitals and or other organs, such as breasts, forced impregnation, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and enforced sterilisation (Wood, 2009).

The definitions of wartime rape by Wood (2009) and Farwell (2004) were provided in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Wood's (2009) definition of rape had the merit of recognising that rape can be committed not only with a sexual organ but also with any object, as is the case in the DRC, where many wartime rape victims/survivors have been raped with

broken bottles, riffles and burning sticks, in some cases (Mukwege, 2010; Murdoch-Fyke, 2019). Farwell (2004), on the other hand, successfully problematises the then sadly popular understanding of rape during war as a by-product or inevitable spin-off of warfare. Farwell (2004) presents wartime rape as cautious and calculated violence on the part of perpetrators. Following Farwell's (2004) definition, wartime rape is understood to be a weapon and a strategy of war. This resonates with Koos' (2017) suggestion: in times of armed conflicts, rape is strategically used to debase and punish groups of people on the basis of specific characteristics, such as ethnicity, religious identification and the victims' regional identity or even based on an assumed collaboration with other enemy armies. As such, wartime rape differs from peacetime rape or everyday sexual violence that may be committed by spouses against one another, for instance. This difference may be noticed in that peacetime sexual violence has mostly individual dimensions whereas, in war, sexual violence has communal and symbolic dimensions. This, however, does not exclude the existence of individual dimensions in wartime rape, as provided below with the example of lust rape.

Nonetheless, I maintain that the definition of wartime rape needs to shift away from simplistic approaches and narratives that portray wartime rape and other conflict-related sexual violence as predominantly a strategy of war carried out by male perpetrators against female victims/survivors. We remain alert that some of these assumptions are correct. However, a part of story is silenced if one limits their analysis on such assumptions. Recently, scholarship and researchers, such as Baaz and Stern (2010), Cohen et al. (2013) and Shteir (2014), to only mention few, have pointed out existing variations in the perpetration of wartime rape and other conflict-related sexual violence. Following such an understanding, this thesis also endeavours to navigate within the intertwining dimensions of wartime rape in the eastern DRC to suggest that the history of colonialism, the feeling of exclusion from citizenship rights and access to land, the need for revenge and the claim for higher military ranks cannot be overlooked when

analysing the eastern DRC's conflict-related rape. The definition of wartime rape needs, therefore, to be augmented to include these interrelated dimensions and to recognise both men and women as perpetrators; and boys, girls, women and men as victims/survivors whose subjectivities are attacked and destroyed by wartime rape; and, how these attacks on subjectivities affect the whole community's symbolic order. As such, this thesis sees the eastern DRC's wartime rape as a weapon of war – invested with multiple historical motivations – that destroys, through the sexed body, the victim's subjectivity and their community's symbolic order.

Some other definitions of wartime rape by the 1993 UN Declarations on the Elimination of Violence against Women, for instance, appeared to be not inclusive as they limited the victim/survivor category to women and girls, overlooking circumstances when men and boys have been raped, thus suppressing the sexual dimension of rape to only focus on the gender or power dimensions of this violence (Djamba and Kimuna, 2015). By simply focusing on women, the UN-provided definition of wartime rape may obscure other meanings perpetrators and their victims may assert to rape and how wartime rape is an attack against a community as a whole.

Criticising the UN-provided definition, Debra Bergoffen argues that by focusing on only women as potential victims, the UN represents "the sexual difference…as a structure through which only one sex lives the humanity of vulnerability" (Bergoffen, 2003:131). Instead, Bergoffen (2003) suggests that for wartime rape to be effectively countered, institutions that self-present as defenders of the human cause need to reveal both men's and women's shared human vulnerability instead of considering women's finitude while obscuring men's limits and vulnerabilities. In a similar position as Debra Bergoffen, Maja Korac points out that in most armed conflicts, the sexual violence against men and boys is somehow silenced as recognising men and boys as victims of rape might threaten "the patriarchal notions of manhood and statehood", consequently challenging "the notions of men as protectors, victors, and superior"

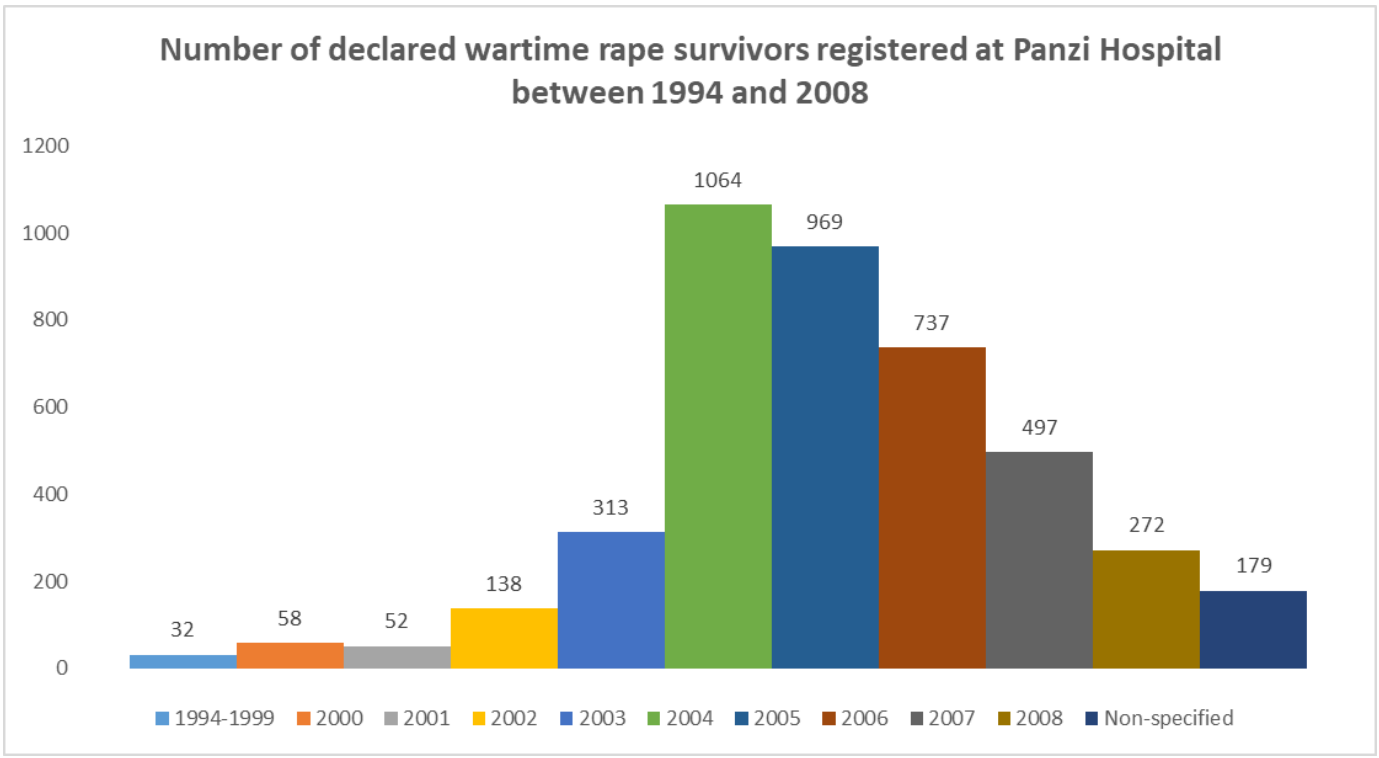
(Korac, 2018:9-10). Hence, wartime rape has social and political connotations; and the silence around this sexualised violence holds major cultural significances. By silencing wartime rape against men and women, the historical meaning of rape and this violence's "structural importance in gendered relations" are denied (Seifert, 1992:9). In other words, obscuring sexual violence against men appeared comfortable with patriarchy. However, rape in war plays multiple roles in such ways that there cannot be a one size fits all interpretation of this sexualised violence that may be perpetrated opportunistically, strategically and mostly as a means to convey a particular message. The next point covers the analysis of rape as being opportunistic, strategic and a lexicon.

2.3.2 **Opportunity, strategy and lexicon**

Wartime rape might play this or another role depending on the context that led to rape. In this sense, Baaz and Stern (2018) expand on the concept of opportunistic rape to expose how rape and looting are "the two sides of a same coin" (Skjelsbæk, 2010 in Ayiera, 2010:8). In other words, Baaz and Stern (2018) have presented, based on the DRC case, how some soldiers from the Congolese national army, as well as militia groups, opportunistically rape female civilians either on their way back from farms or market and even within their community during looting operations to extort the community from some material goods. As such, authors such as Maria Eriksson Baaz, Maria Stern, Ruth Verweijen and Sara Meger, to mention a few specialising in the analysis of wartime rape in the eastern DRC, have argued that it is less likely for opportunistic rape to take the form of genital mutilations or rape as incest given that perpetrators mainly aim to loot and use rape to intimidate the population. The point on punitive rape and incest rape is presented later in this chapter. Nonetheless, opportunist rape may result in the transmission of HIV to the victims/survivors, which would explain how victims are marginalised because they are supposedly HIV positive.

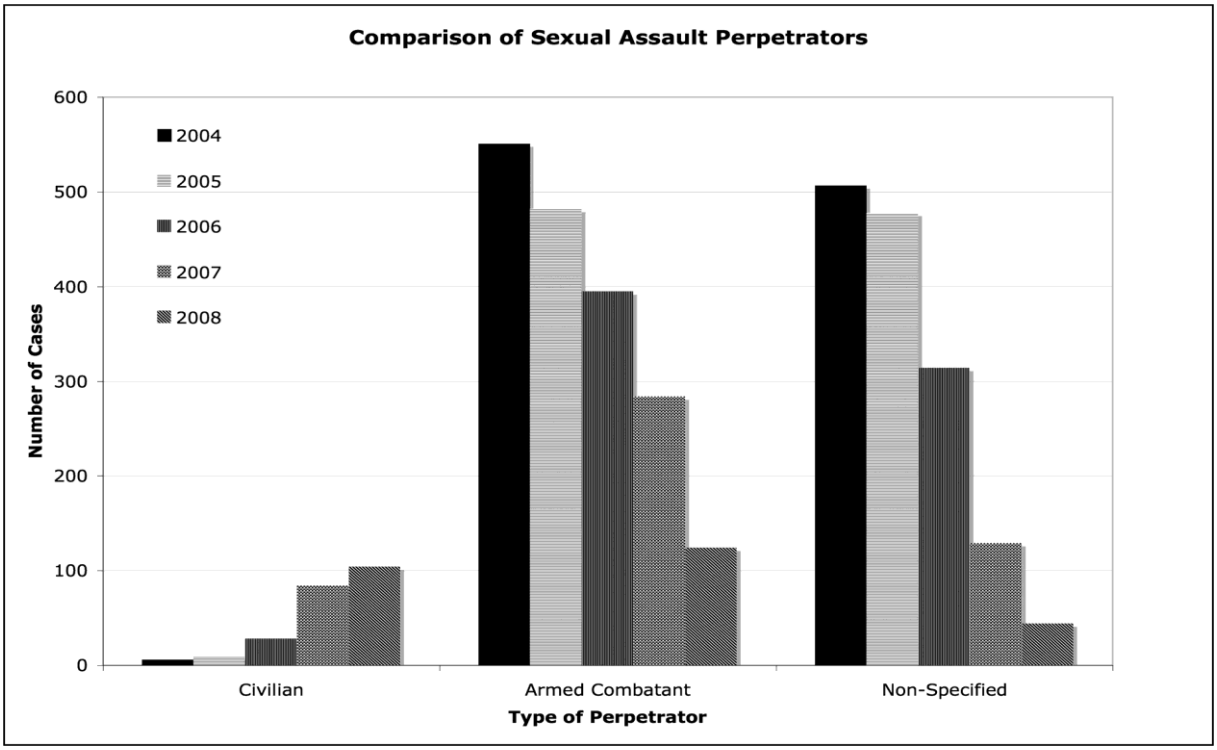
When it comes to its strategic use, two main conceptualisations are confronted: wartime rape as practice and wartime rape as a strategic military weapon. Wartime rape is seen as practice when commanders do not give orders to rape but tolerate the perpetuation of rape by their troops. Some armed conflict analysts argue that it is mostly difficult to prove the strategic use of wartime rape as evidence that commanders order their troops to rape civilians is hard to collect (Wood, 2018). This distinction is further exemplified in Wood's (2018) analysis of the 1968 wartime rape perpetrated in Vietnam by the United States' troops. Nonetheless, the conflicts in the eastern DRC provide cases of when wartime rape was purposefully espoused to further military objectives. For instance, Ayiera (2010:7) acknowledges that from July 30th to August 2nd 2010, UN agencies and international non-governmental organisations have "exposed a mass rape campaign carried out in Walikale, North Kivu province of the DRC in which more than 157 women and men were victimised". Similarly, Autesserre (2012) provides the case of the *Mai-Mai* Sheka that allied with the Interahamwe and ordered its troops to rape civilians in Walikale territory (eastern DRC). Also, Brown (2012) points to the 2004 Kivu Conflict when General Mutebusi told his RCD rebel troops: "for three days the City [Bukavu] is yours", which resulted in at least 1064 women being raped in Bukavu (Bartels et al., 2011). Figure 2.1 represents the number of declared wartime rapes that were registered at the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu between 1994 and 2008.

Figure 2.1 Wartime rape survivors registered at the Panzi Hospital between 1994 and 2008
Source: Bartels et al. (2011:410)



As presented in Figure 2.1, there were cases of wartime rape in the eastern DRC between 1994, when the Rwandan genocide translated into armed unrest in the eastern DRC, and 2008 when the national government was attempting to 'stabilise' the country. The few reported cases of wartime rape (without underestimating these) between 1994 and 1999 comforts this thesis' suggestion that wartime rape was not utilised as a military strategical weapon during the 1996 First Congo War. However, 2004, characterised by the outbreak of the Kivu Conflict, represents the year when the number of cases of wartime rape declared at the Panzi Hospital was higher.

Figure 2.2 Number of wartime rape by category of perpetrators.
Source: Bartels et al. (2011:410)



In their study of *Sexual Violence Trends between 2004 and 2008 in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo,* Bartels et al. (2011) presented how most sexual violence in the South Kivu province was perpetrated by identified armed groups, as demonstrated in Figure 2.2. Importantly, they acknowledge that rape classified as perpetrated by civilians is thought to be the actions of demobilised combatants who were reinserted into society without being provided with appropriate rehabilitation. In a similar vein, Specht (2013) points at the experienced loss of identity within demobilised combatants as a crucial factor that explains the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence following disarmament. Also, there were cases when the victims could not identify the exact identity of the perpetrators. Expanding on the analysis of the strategic use of wartime rape, Enloe (2004) explores the case of the 1991 Bosnian war, where Serb troops received permission to rape Muslim Bosnian women. Furthermore, Schoenfeld (2018) examines the 1994 Rwandan Civil War, during which wartime rape was clearly planned for genocidal purposes. However, unlike the Bosnia-Herzegovina War and the

Rwandan genocide, clearly ethnic wars, the wars in the DRC, although they manipulate notions of ethnicity at the local level, can hardly be termed ethnic conflicts as opposing armed groups mainly claim military and socio-political gains, as well as a recognised customary land (Verweijen, 2015).

Many authors have conceptualised wartime rape as mainly perpetrated to perpetuate hegemonic masculinities. For instance, Henry (2015:44) puts forward that,

> "the common threat between wars is that rape is a product of warped (yet normalised) militarised hegemonic masculinity, which arguably is structurally embedded in the pre-conflict gender inequality and unequal power relations."

Henry (2015) thus suggests that the militarisation of traits culturally and socially associated with hegemonic masculinities may have led to soldiers' perpetration of wartime rape to prove their dominant masculinity vis-à-vis their counterparts. In a similar vein, Parpart (2015:313) argues that "militarised masculinity has often been portrayed as the quintessential form of hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, radical feminists such Brown (2012) already mentioned pointed that hegemonic masculinity constitutes one of the main mechanisms through which patriarchy is kept in place. It is associated with conflict, bravery and military leadership, all regarded as proof of masculine right and capacity to rule". Both Henry (2015) and Parpart (2015) have successfully demonstrated how those masculine traits that are culturally and socially accepted as dominant, therefore reinforcing patriarchy, are utilised by recruiters to shape the military as a site where hegemonic masculinities are performed. These authors' conceptualisation does not fall far from the former military officers' views as presented by my thesis' data. These former military officers, participants in this study, considered themselves as part of the hegemonic masculinity since they served under the national army and saw themselves as brave and educated in contrast to militias.

Many authors, some feminists included, have thus not considered instances when it is the protest masculinity that is militarised to challenge the existing patriarchal gendered and military

hierarchies. This thesis thus attempts to explore the militarisation of protest masculinities as provided by this PhD's empirical data. In such a case, I put forward; wartime rape is utilised as a double-edged sword in that it simultaneously upholds the perpetrators' patriarchal order while fundamentally challenging and undermining the male counterparts' by questioning the latter's ability to protect their associated women.

Henceforth, this thesis sees wartime rape as an issue of protest masculinities. As such, wartime rape is communicative; it is a lexicon, a language; it is "the smoke that calls": an image this thesis borrows from Von Holdt et al. (2011:28). Before moving forward to using the 'smoke that calls' image, it is important to mention that the way this thesis deploys the term and the way that Von Holdt et al. (2011) has deployed it are different. Von Holdt et al (2011) have developed their analysis showing how violence from below, that involved in some cases burning down buildings and tires, aimed at calling the ruling class's attention upon the claims of the oppressed since the later ones believed that authorities paid attention only when violence was involved. While this thesis does not see wartime rape as violence from below, I extend the image of 'the smoke that calls' to the DRC case to explain how wartime rape is communicative, and the message is being sent to more than just political elites. It is addressed to the local communities, as well as to the national and international audiences.

The image of "smoke-that-calls" was constructed by Von Holdt et al. (2011:28) based on their study of a series of collective violence that emerged in 2008 from within different areas in South Africa as the population, animated by different grievances and anger, proceeded to burn state-owned buildings to catch the attention of the authorities. In fact, Von Holdt et al. (2011:28) argue that "young men who are emasculated by the dynamics of socio-economic deprivation seek to recover their masculinity, in this case, by recourse to the practices of militarised masculinity" through which they can confront that which stops them from accessing the targeted social position. Von Holdt et al.'s (2011) argument converges with Ratele's (2008:517)

suggestion, according to which the "effects of little or no income for males interacts with other psychological experiences and in turn flows into burdens of masculinity, prompting violent reactions against women's independence and feminism". Similarly, in her study of wartime rape during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, Gallimore (2008:24) pointedly asserts that "many Tutsi women (sexually mystified) were raped by the militia, whose members were recruited from underprivileged and destitute young men…many of whom had come to the city to make a living and failed". In the case of the DRC, the Banyamulenge ethnic group were deprived of a recognised customary land (Stearns, 2022), whereas the *Mai-Mai* militiamen were refused higher ranks in the army (Autesserre, 2006) as they were seen as *"shepherd*[s] *who call themselves military only because they accessed guns"*, to quote Jeshi, a former military officer who participated in this study. This point is further developed in Chapter 4 on the historical background to the Congolese Conflict and in Chapter 5, which is the first empirical chapter of this thesis. Using a generalised term, violence in its diversity (wartime rape in eastern DRC, collective violence as was the case in South Africa) serves specific roles; it is employed to communicate. Using wartime rape to speak to a particular audience regarding a particular issue is what constructs wartime rape as a lexicon. As suggested further in this chapter, different roles of wartime rape are also linked to different typologies or forms of this sexualised violence.

As a lexicon, wartime rape enables the perpetrators to gain the national government's attention, given that "rape causes public outrage and political embarrassment" (Enloe, 2004:119). By analogy, one can suggest that any political leader whose country sadly faces the current eastern DRC's fate may be willing to negotiate with the perpetrators with the aim of decreasing the still increasing number of rape victims or suppressing the country's issue of wartime rape. It can thus be understood, in some cases, that violence is used to attract the attention of the rulers upon the violence perpetrators' claims. In this sense, I endeavour to extend the image of 'the smoke that calls' to the DRC's case while remaining alert that the

South African and DRC crises are clearly different in terms of the form of violence under analysis.

This thesis sees violence (in its multiple forms) as a way of communicating that the perpetrators and the direct or indirect victims understand, and patriarchy, as later suggested, constitutes the common ground to interpret the message carried through rape. "*Violence is* understood as a language, a message, *a way of calling out to higher authorities* about the state of things in their town…" (Von Holdt, 2011 in Von Holdt et al. 2011:27, emphasis added). In Chapter 5, I will thus expand on how wartime rape in the DRC is used as 'the smoke that calls' the attention of the central government upon the perpetrators' different claims. The interpretation(s) attributed to the act of rape is not universal but instead is culturally and historically informed. The next section examines some forms of wartime rape that most authors on the eastern DRC crisis enumerate.

2.4 Different typologies of wartime rape accomplish various roles

Strategic rape may take the form of *gang rape, genital mutilation or incest rape*. Based on her analysis of the wartime rape occurring in the DRC, Murdoch-Fyke (2019) distinguishes four types of rape. The first form of rape is *gang rape*, committed by more than one perpetrator against a singular victim. This form of rape, Murodch-Fyke (2019) argues, results in several incidences of injury, given the brutality of the perpetrators. Koos (2017) furthers that the occurrence of gang rape, also called collective rape, is dependent upon the perpetrators' intragroup norms and dynamics. As such, Carlo Koos suggests that collective rape establishes cohesion within the group through the production of a shared "feeling of power and superiority" (Koos, 2017:1940). Also talking of gang rape, Seifert (1994) points out that this form of rape follows a certain ritualised pattern in that it exposes a man's status in the group of perpetrators because the highest-ranked perpetrator tends to be the first to rape. For that reason, Ruth Seifert suggests that "the main purpose [of gang rape] seems to be to prove one's masculinity to the other members of the group" (Seifert, 1994:2). More simply, gang rape exposes the hierarchy

that exists within the perpetrators' masculinities and works to construct the rapists as manly. Paradoxically, members of the armed group who refuse to perpetrate rape against civilians are seen as deviant from the perspective of the militarised masculinities of perpetrators (Korac, 2018).

Wartime rape is also used to spoil a race or an ethnic group – *rape as genocide* **–** through the purposeful impregnation of women from the enemy group, as was the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Rwanda. This means that by occupying the biological territory of their enemies, the perpetrators destroy the women's possibilities of bearing children of their own ethnicity or race. Airianna Murodch-Fyke terms the next type of rape "*genital mutilation"* to point out how "perpetrators will rape their victims and then mutilate their genitals with guns, glass, or heated metals" (Murodch-Fyke, 2019:30). The third type of rape mentioned by Airianna Murodch-Fyke is rape as a biological weapon, as the perpetrators intentionally transfer sexually transmitted diseases to their victims, such as the human immunodeficiency virus. The fourth and last form of rape mentioned by Murodch-Fyke (2019) is *incest rape* when victims from the same family are obliged to rape each other. Distinguishing these forms of rape is important as it exposes the violence carried through wartime rape and may enable us to explore the meaning such rapes may revert in the victimised community. The brutality with which it is carried out shows an intended message of destruction (physically and symbolically) and domination.

Highlighting one of the dimensions of wartime rape, Ruth Seifert suggests that this sexual violence intends to destroy the victim community's culture, as is the case of incest rape, among other forms. Rape as genital mutilation, a biological weapon or incest are clear examples that counter the arguments that rape is about sexual pleasure. On the contrary, this thesis agrees with Ruth Seifert, among other authors, who pointedly argues that wartime rape should not be

regarded as "an aggressive expression of sexuality, but instead as a sexual expression of aggression" (Seifert, 1994:1).

Additionally, Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern suggest the concept of *punitive rape*, which perpetrators utilise to discourage a given community from collaborating with the perpetrators' enemies. This resonates in accordance with Carlo Koos, who also argues that, in times of war, rape is used as a punishment against "groups of people based on certain characteristics (for instance, ethnic or religious identities, regional identities, assumed loyalty to other groups, etc.)" (Koos, 2017:1936). The author adds that these elements (ethnicity, religion and geolocation, for instance) that design a human body as rapable are what differentiate everyday (peacetime) rape from wartime rape. However, it should be mentioned that both *opportunistic and punitive rape* may take the form of *gang rape*, as developed above. As already mentioned, wartime rape is understood to be a lexicon, and, as I maintain, patriarchy provides the common ground between the perpetrators and their victims for understanding the message carried through rape. The next section turns to explore the role that patriarchy plays in constructing women as perfect victims and some men as unfitted masculinities.

2.5 Patriarchy and the construction of women as 'perfect' victims

In general terms, patriarchy denotes male domination and the relation of power by which men dominate women (Beeckey, 1979). This thesis understands patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990:20). Silvia Walby emphasises that the mention of social structure in this provided definition of patriarchy is crucial because it indicates the refusal of biological determinism, and also rejects the misunderstanding that every individual man is located within the dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one. Patriarchal gender arrangements are thus an "establishment of a necessary and legitimate asymmetry between masculinity and femininity" (Macé, 2018:8). This study conceptualises *masculinities* as socially constructed attributes, expectations and roles associated with biological males, whereas *femininities* are the attributes,

expectations and roles socially ascribed to people of the female sex (Connell, 2009). *Gender* can be seen as a set of norms, values, social expectations and behavioural patterns imposed on individuals based on their biological formation (Decker, 2017). Gender, I put forward, is culturally produced and established and mostly historical (Butler, 1999), henceforth not a fixed category, but goes beyond the distinction between manliness (masculinity) and femaleness (femininity) "as the significance of transgender indicates" (Walby et al., 2017:8). Nevertheless, for the purpose of the current thesis, the analysis will be limited to the relationship between masculinities and femininities to grasp the gendering role of wartime rape, the masculinisation of the military and the militarisation of masculinities. I thus maintain that different forms of masculinities and femininities exist, but also a hierarchical power between masculinities and femininities and essentially within masculinities themselves (Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 2009; Enloe, 2015; Connell, 2016; Marsha, 2017). Regarding wartime rape, I put forward that the peacetime gender inequalities provide the basis for wartime rape to be utilised as a weapon against the feminised. These inequalities are existent across and within genders.

Bringing patriarchy back on the discussion table is crucial as it is the patriarchal understandings of masculinities and femininities that needs to be questioned to discourage wartime and peacetime rape from occurring and being trivialised and naturalised (du Toit, 2009). Patriarchy as an analytical tool enlightens at the same time as it exposes patterns of causality (Cohn and Enloe, 2003). Talking of tradition, Enloe (2004:1) puts forward that,

> "If something is accepted as being 'traditional' – inheritance passing through male line, incoming officials swearing on a Bible – then it too can be swatched in a protective blanket making it almost immune to bothersome questioning."

Enloe (2004) suggests that, in the name of tradition, both men and women in a patriarchal society subscribe unquestionably to some practices even when these do not necessarily serve their (men and women) interests. The word tradition presents the same danger as using the word

'natural' that aims to suppress any questioning or resistance. It is natural that highly ranked military officials are male and that garment workers are female. Although these words (tradition, natural, normal, etc.) save a thinker some mental energy, they represent a serious danger to any society that takes them for granted. I thus suggest that it is this same patriarchal understanding of women – as being the 'natural' reproducer of a nation, the bearer of traditional culture, and the incarnation of 'purity' – that the perpetrators of wartime rape exploit in order to construct a woman as a womb to occupy.

Strikingly, women's bodies are regarded as the body of the nation and the nation's future. Analogically, raping women and girls symbolises the rape of the nation; the feminisation of the enemy males who are unable to protect their women (Enloe, 2004; Cockburn, 2010; MFecane, 2018). As such, Macé (2018:5) suggests that gender informs social power relations as it "assigns, orients, and legitimises hierarchies and the differential value of existence, and they are the fulcrum for resistance, for criticism, even for a transformation of selfsame power relations". Similarly, Bergoffen (2003:131) argues that "in being charged with the obligation to protect women, men are allowed to see themselves as invulnerable". The consequence of this social construct is that the failure to prevent rape against their women obliges men to question their masculinities as constructed within patriarchy.

Without diminishing the suffering to which rape victims/survivors are exposed through wartime rape, this thesis would rely on some feminist suggestions according to which wartime rape is destined to the males of the victims' community (Seifert, 1994; Enloe, 2004; Cockburn, 2010; Koos, 2017). Accordingly, Bourdieu (2001:52) suggests that "…one has only to think of all the situations in which, to kill, torture or rape, the will to dominate, exploit or oppress has relied on the 'manly' fear of being excluded from the world of 'men'". Hence, rape plays different rational roles within the patriarchal understanding of the expectations of manliness or manhood. Therefore, patriarchy is not a thought-stopper as previously conceived. Instead,

patriarchy is a thought-opening concept that enables us to explore the gendered power dimensions of wartime rape and provides the means of understanding the meaning society attributes to human bodies, as well as how power mutates in form and manifestation in the face of challenges (Cohn and Enloe, 2003).

Through the rape of their women, men from the opposing group are seen as default masculinities and are feminised as they fail to live upon the role of protectors that patriarchy imposes on them, whereas the perpetrators sustain their masculinities through the act of rape (Gottschall, 2004). This thesis adopts Laura Sjoberg's definition of the term 'to be feminised' that she defines as a way "to directly subordinate that person, political entity, or ideas because values perceived as feminine are lower on the social hierarchy than values perceived as neutral of masculine" (Sjoberg, 2010:3). Additionally, the stereotypical social construction of women as needing male protection – as women are passive and weak – is thus arrayed to reinforce the patriarchal framing of masculinities as rational, active and strong (Khalid, 2015 Korac, 2018). These social stereotypes that position masculinities and femininities as a complementary but contrasting binary, with masculinities occupying the dominant position compared to femininities, also shape women's bodies as battlegrounds. Importantly, this thesis takes from Ruth Seifert's analysis in '*War and Rape'* that wartime rape has a collective meaning that can communicate the emasculation of men in the dominated community and simultaneously communicate the manhood of and boost the morale of men from the perpetrator's group (Seifert, 1994).

Patriarchy utilises some wordings that apparently place women on a *piédestal* (pedestal) while, in reality, it works to control women's disposition of their bodies and monitor the expression of their full subjectivity. This explains how Gqola (2007:116) alerts against the outcomes of the "cult of femininity" that aims to gain women accomplices of the patriarchal system that, in fact, promotes male supremacy and the subordination of women. Based on her

study of wartime rape in the DRC, Murdoch-Fyke (2019:29) argues that in patriarchal societies, "women and girls are valued for their reproductive capabilities and their sexual purity".

The meaning of sex and sexual acts is geographically and culturally circumscribed as well. Expanding on the eastern DRC case, Mukwege (2010) puts forward that the success of wartime rape in the eastern DRC depends on patriarchal perceptions of women's sexuality as male-owned territory. This resonates with de Beauvoir (1953:96), who asserts that "for the male…woman constitutes a part of the property which each of these groups (men's) possesses and which is a medium of exchange between them". Accordingly, Bourdieu (2001:45) advances that, within patriarchy, women are seen as "men's assets" that can be owned and exchanged to create alliances between men. This ownership, this thesis would suggest, is materialised through sexual relations that reduce the sexual freedom of women and girls who are constrained to fit within the socio-cultural definition of respectable women (Hagen and Yohani, 2010). This explains how in some patriarchal societies, some female rape victims/survivors are condemned to remain with their rapists following the patriarchal ideology according to which "a girl must remain with her first sexual partner" (Murdoch-Fyke, 2019:34). The social imaginary associated with rape shapes female rape victims/survivors as "having lost their purpose at the heart of the community" (Murdoch-Fyke, 2019:34); they become culturally worthless. For instance, in her analysis of the Rwandan genocide, Hirschauer (2014:11) suggests that despite the fact that marriage constitutes a source of economic security in most parts of Africa, "after the genocide, many rape survivors were usually considered tainted, spoiled and unfit potential wives". Accordingly, Hale (2010:111) articulates that rape, directly and indirectly, wipes away its victims' subjective identity while it constructs some new identities; it is a "way of making" the victim at the same time as it expunges the victim's previous identity.

Following Levi-Strauss' (1963) analysis of the link between gendered relations and cohesion within societies, this thesis maintains that it is through women's sexuality that

communities are created as women create lives and establish, through marriage, bonds with men. Pointing out the *community-destroying role* that wartime rape accomplishes, du Toit (2009) stresses that the power of rape lies in that it not only destroys the woman's body as an individual and her subjectivity but also affects the community to which the victim belongs. Furthermore, Seifert (1994) argues that women represent their community and family structures' glue as they are what holds these structures together. As such, the perpetrators understand that to destroy a community's culture, they simply need to melt the glue that maintains the community's integral structure; these communities comprise different families. Hence Bergoffen's (2003) assertion that the structured patriarchal sexual difference can constitute a powerful weapon against the enemy. This is because "soldiers who use rape as a weapon are at least subconsciously aware of the ways in which the sensuous and desiring human body creates communal bonds" (du Toit, 2009:287). In other words, rape destroys communities not only because of the symbolic meaning of rape but also because human sexuality creates communities and relationships. This suggests that wartime rape is a weapon of war and more.

Following Elisabeth J. Wood, this study maintains that there is a variation in the occurrence of wartime rape from one conflict to another and even within one singular conflict in which a group of soldiers may opt to resort to rape against civilians, whereas another armed group restrained itself from raping the civilians (Wood, 2018). Based on such observations, Baaz and Stern (2013) criticise the reflexive use of the concept of wartime rape as a weapon of war to analyse all armed conflict contexts where wartime rape occurs. Baaz and Stern (2013) thus point out that the reductionist use of the concept effaces the noteworthy observed complexities of the related socio-cultural context and may obscure other roles accomplished by wartime rape. The merit of framing wartime rape as a gendered weapon is that this violence can now be understood as not accidental and thus avoidable. Nonetheless, by limiting the analysis on the conceptualisation of wartime rape as a gendered weapon of war, some other aspects might be

silenced, or this may dehumanise rape (Baaz and Stern, 2013). By way of illustration, Cynthia Enloe, Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern argue that the sexual dimensions of rape might be overlooked, and the victims/survivors might find it difficult to account for what was done to them through sex. Therefore, this thesis stresses that, along with the gendered story of wartime rape, one needs to analyse its sexual dimension as well to provide the full understanding of this physical violence because it is through the victims' bodies, through their sexes, that rape expands its physical and symbolic destructive power. This thesis maintains that it is because rape takes sexual forms that it deeply affects the victims/survivors who view their victimisation through the lenses of their community's patriarchal socio-cultural norms that provide certain connotations to sex. In the next section, I extend the analysis that points to the impact wartime rape has on the victims' (men and women) sexual subjectivities without reducing wartime rape to sex.

2.6 Wartime rape has sexual dimensions without being about sex

> "When men discovered that they could rape, they proceeded to do it…Indeed, one of the earliest forms of male bonding must have been the gang rape of one woman by a band of marauding men. This accomplished, rape became not only a male prerogative, but man's basic weapon of force against woman, the principal agent of his will and her fear...Man's discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times… From prehistoric times to the present, I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear." (Brownmiller, 1975:14-15; emphasis added).

Brownmiller (1975) successfully acknowledges one striking role played by mass rape as she points to the creation of bonds between male perpetrators. Relatedly, Cohen (2013:461a) refers to wartime rape's bonding role as the creation of "brotherhood in abjection" to emphasise

how soldiers create their groups' cohesion through the perpetration of mass rape against women. This is because "rape can be understood as, inter alia, a cross-cultural language of male domination, an agent of male bonding, a tool of genetic imperialism and method for committing genocide…" (Clark, 2014:462). In other words, through wartime rape, the perpetrator imposes power upon men and women, he or she redefines the way victims' self-perception of their subjectivities, he imposes his genes through forceful impregnation and may commit genocide by suppressing a race or ethnic group as was the case in the 1994 Rwandan conflict (Hagg and Kagwanja, 2007).

Also, Brownmiller (1975) points to the prehistoric period to emphasise that rape is an old socio-cultural phenomenon, even when the meaning of this physical violence may alter with time, location, culture and depending on the group of perpetrators. As already mentioned, radical feminists, such as Brownmiller, disregard instances when women perpetrate rape as they mainly focus on women as always potential and effective victims of rape.

Furthermore, Bergoffen (2003) argues that wartime rape has two divergent but interrelated facets, namely the individual aspect (physical) and the communal aspect full of symbolism. In this sense, one of the symbolic aspects is the communicative role that wartime rape plays, as this violence sends "powerful symbolic messages that are directed at warring parties, their communities and states…" (Korac, 2018:7-8).

Second-wave feminists' analysis enables us to frame wartime rape as an issue of power that plays itself through the lenses of sexuality and gender. This power traverses wartime to infiltrate the peace or post-war period to play itself in the everydayness of its victims because wartime rape is like a bullet in the spine of its victims who are reduced to carry it with them even in the so-called after-war period. The power of rape is thus found in the ability of this sexualised violence to manipulate the governing social and cultural understandings of masculinities and femininities to instil fear and advance war violence.

When exploring the individual sexual dimension of wartime rape, Baaz and Stern (2010:31) coined the term "lust rape" based on their study of wartime rape in the DRC. According to Baaz and Stern (2010), the Congolese national army (FARDC) soldiers declared that some troop members resorted to rape as a stress-release activity because of the warring conditions, and their precarious economic status did not allow them to pay a sex worker. These soldiers' arguments find their roots in what Gottschall (2004) terms the pressure cooker theory of rape or the "substitution argument" in Wood's (2009:135) words. According to the pressure cooker theory, male fighters are victims of their libido, which urges them to have sexual intercourse (even if it is by force) to regain their biological equilibrium. Without any surprise, the pressure cooker theory was heavily criticised for its essentialist, reductionist and phallocratic view of both men and women. Enloe (2004) also proposes the concept of *recreational rape* to point out the victorious soldiers' practice of raping mainly women from the conquered population to infer what Brownmiller (1993:38) calls a "sexual *coup de grâce*" to symbolise their victory. The substitution argument, according to which prostitution camps or willing civilians would decrease the occurrence of wartime rape, does not help us understand the level of violence or sexual torture that sometimes accompanies wartime rape. Hence, wartime rape is hardly a violent expression of sexuality. On the contrary, wartime rape is a sexual expression of aggression.

Feminist authors and activists who stressed the need to recognise the sexual dimension of wartime rape point out that it is through the invasion of the victims' sex as a physical organ that the symbolism takes form and is communicated. These feminist authors have also argued that, by erasing the sexual in sexual violence, it can be challenging for the victims to account for what was done to them through sex. Importantly, efforts have been mobilised worldwide to criminalise wartime rape precisely because it takes sexual forms, and it is a form of violence that the victims/survivors carry with them forever, like a bullet in the spine. Rape deeply

impacts the direct victims whose sexual subjectivities and identities are destroyed and (re)made by the simple fact of being raped. Rape is an attack against the victims' body at first, which later is translated into the destruction of their subjectivities that are lived through the physical body (Du Plessis, 2018). For this reason, I maintain that sex cannot be removed from the analysis of wartime rape because it is through sex that the male and female victims' bodies are affected. Rape has the potential to damage the sexual subject; it also is about the sexual subject and how this is constructed. I suggest that sexual subjectivity calls upon the male victims' manhood and the female victims' womanhood (du Toit, 2009). As such, wartime rape affects the victim's subjective and symbolic components. In other words, wartime rape is an attack against the subject and what that subject stands for. The sexual dimension of wartime rape thus helps us to explore the work of wartime rape at both the subject and symbolic level (community).

Furthermore, Cockburn (2010) suggests a sexual division of war as many victims of gun killing are men, and some are women, while many victims of rape are women, and some are men. This is what Korac (2018:1) refers to as *"*the gendered processes of victimisation", as she argues that violence in war is not only political but also highly gendered in its causes and consequences because war affects men and women differently. In relation to this, Sjoberg (2016:18) puts forward that,

> "sexual violence in war and conflict is neither sex- nor gender-neutral…because those committing the sexual violence are attentive to the sex of the bodies they are victimizing, both for their own sake and for the significance of the violation as an act of sexualized power."

Perpetrators of wartime rape consider the biology of women when they choose to victimise women through rape (Cockburn, 2010; Via, 2010 in Sjoberg and Via, 2010; Sjoberg, 2016; Enloe, 2017; Baaz and Stern, 2018). In the same perspective, Whisnant (2017) stresses the

importance of exploring why several rape perpetrators who (despite their diverse motivations) decide to harm women do so in sexual ways. Whisnant (2017) argues that acknowledging the sexual nature of rape is crucial to not only comprehend the damages and harms but also the cultural and political significance of sex in a given patriarchal culture, as provided in previous lines. Throughout the next section, I explore how some armed groups adopt wartime rape as an assertion of militarised masculinities.

2.7 Gender, military, militarism and militarisation

Throughout this thesis, the concept of militarised masculinities will be used to refer to "the assertion that traits stereotypically associated with masculinity can be acquired and proven through military service or action, and combat in particular" (Eichler, 2014:81), while *to be militarised* will refer to the adoption of the idea that armament is the solution to political conflicts (Enloe, 2004). It is thus critical to differentiate between the *military* – "a social institution, a set of social relationships organised around war, taking the shape of an armed force" (Cock, 1987:3) and *militarism* – "an ideology which values war and legitimates state violence as the solution to conflicts" (Cock, 1987:3), which are misleadingly used interchangeably in some literatures on wartime sexual violence.

These distinctions enable us to recognise that the military, as an institution, sustains and gives legitimacy to militarism, which is made of masculinised discourses and actions that underlie soldiers' practices. In this sense, Walby (1990) stresses how the nation encourages 'our' men to hold up arms to defend and protect 'our' women who, based on ethnonational discourses, symbolise 'our' culture and 'national territory'. This instalment of boundaries is what Bennett (2010:25) refers to as epistemological and discursive violence that wraps people into "categories of otherness alien to their own ways of being and working…" and only productive to the process of gender and class formation, as well as local labour extraction.

Militarism legitimises masculinised men as 'natural' protectors, as actors, as rational strategists, while it places feminised people in the role of the emotionally informed, physically

weak and "only parochially aware protected" (Enloe, 2004:154). In the same perspective, Eisenstein (2007:23) maintains that "protection of women along with children – as civilians – is…used as a justification for war" even when these protected categories paradoxically constitute most casualties of wars. Based on this ambiguous relationship between the protectors and the protected, we suggest that militarised masculinities are always in permanent relations with femininities given that, as Cynthia Enloe and Carol Cohn pointedly argue, militaries justify taking guns as a necessity to protect the feminine and feminised subjects (Cohn and Enloe, 2003).

Furthermore, I maintain that the recruiters of men to form armed groups are attentive to at least two factors, namely (i) the feeling of ethnic marginalisation (in Rwanda and the DRC, for instance) and (ii) the patriarchal construction of males as the 'natural' protectors and defenders. Hence, as in many armies globally, these recruiters thought carefully about masculinities and femininities. This view is in line with anti-war feminists' suggestion that war enables specific gender identities, such as armed masculinities, downhearted and irritated men, victimised femininities and temporally empowered women (Enloe, 2004; 2015; 2017; Cockburn, 2010). As will be presented throughout the chapters of this thesis, the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict manipulated the notions of belonging to recruit feet for the rebellion. However, it is only from 2004 that rape began to be referred to as a weapon of war in the eastern DRC for reasons presented in Chapters 4 and 5. This reminds us of Wood's (2009) suggestion that wartime rape is not always characteristic of all armed conflicts around the world. In some instances, the structure and purpose of an armed conflict prohibit the perpetration of armed violence, especially when that particular armed group seeks to construct a nation.

Cynthia Enloe highlights "the awkward fact that military conscription almost applies to only male citizens" (Enloe, 2005 in Mater, 2005:x). Although militarism targets men as fighters, it also targets women as mothers who sacrifice their maternity for the nation, daughters or

girlfriends of that fighter and the reasons why men should fight. Importantly, militarism refers to an ideology that presents the state's violence as a legitimate solution to conflict (Cock, 1987; Enloe, 2004). While stressing that all masculinities are not needed for the purpose of soldiering (as some masculinities might threaten the patriarchal and heteronormative understandings of masculinity), most anti-war feminists from the global north use the concept of hegemonic masculinity to analyse the actions of armed groups, such as the US military for instance, by pointing out the cultural embeddedness and acceptance that militarism and militarisation have secured within these societies.

Eisenstein (2007:9) argues that in some instances, "women's bodies themselves mask the continuity [of patriarchy] by occupying spaces that were once completely male". Calling upon a critical analysis of women's inclusion within the army, Enloe (2004) argues that militarisation is not equally applied to men and women. In the army, women are dared as masculine as their male colleagues while maintaining that femininity secures them in an inferior position compared to male combatants. Thus, it is not surprising that in some instances, women's anatomy and particularly their menstrual periods are put forward to justify how women must be kept from battlefields and occupy feminine roles, such as being the nurse, the secretary, etc. In relation to this, Cynthia Enloe stresses that patriarchal beliefs are perpetuated and sustained by enabling women's access to the space and institutions traditionally conceived as masculine. To sustain her argument, Enloe (2017) provides the example of the US Marine that has replaced male soldiers with female ones at warzone checkpoints to respond to the misogyny critiques. Pointing out the misogyny that shapes the military, Sjoberg (2016) criticises how women who are equally aggressive and or dominant as their fellow soldiers are perceived to be at the margin of a woman's normal behaviour. Herein, Walby (2005:1-2) puts forward that, although there is a tendency to treat women as a group, one should remain alert about the diversities within that particular group. These diversities may result from class, ethnicity and, importantly, from the

"changes in the forms of patriarchy, giving rise to significant generational differences". As such, a woman's normal behaviour is not a universal characteristic one may find within all women worldwide. On the contrary, as Enloe (2004:149) puts forward, feminism emphasises the necessity to "never lump all women together".

In their analysis of the DRC national army's perception of women's presence in the army, Baaz and Stern (2011) present how men within the Congolese national army consider women's presence in the rank as the feminisation of the army. Although the increasing inclusion of women in the army does not perturb the army's masculinity, the Congolese male soldiers in the national army acknowledged that women's presence in ranks threatens the notion that the army is "a particular masculine sphere where they [male soldiers] can be military men and where 'women' do not belong" (Baaz and Stern, 2011:565-566). Like many other armies around the world, such as the US and its military culture as discussed by Enloe (2017), the Congolese national army's soldiers believe that joining the military can help a man achieve his heterosexual masculinity; that is mostly linked to the ability and willingness to commit violence (Mama, 1995; Cohn and Enloe, 2003; Enloe, 2005 in Mater, 2005). As such, militarism as an ideology legitimises masculinised men as protectors, and in times of war, this notion of heroic protector imposed upon men is converted into the compulsion to kill and expectation to give their own lives for the nation. For instance, du Toit (2009) provides the example of the US's declaration of the 1991 Gulf War in the name of defending the Kuwaiti women against the Iraqi soldiers who perpetrated wartime rape during the invasion of Kuwait. In similar ways, Enloe (2017) points to G.W. Bush's decision to militarily invade Afghanistan following the 9.11 attack that feminised the US. As developed by Cynthia Enloe, the invasion of Afghanistan was meant to regain the threatened masculinity of the US marine and simultaneously discourage other nations that may have read the September 11 attacks as a sign of weakness from the dominant.

Without that group that needs masculine protection, militarism as an ideology would not succeed to embed, at a certain level, in the minds of male fighters, the imperative to take up arms in the name of defence and protection. However, this embeddedness or inculcation process is not self-sustaining or automatic. In any culture, the construction of militarised masculinities, anti-war feminists such as Cynthia Cockburn or Cynthia Enloe maintain, always depends upon the "construction of ideals of femininity that are supportive and complementary" (Enloe, 2004:107). Nonetheless, militarisation is never fully accomplished but instead needs permanent reactivation within soldiers (Eichler, 2014). The success of the militarisation process, at least to some degree, relies on patriarchal understandings of both masculinities and femininities in a society. In reference to socialisation theories, Walby (1990) suggests that these theories pay less attention to the variety of masculinities and femininities even within a singular society, especially within social classes, ethnic groups, generations or historical periods.

As already argued, the militarisation process is never fully accomplished, and sometimes it is backed by coercion. Enloe (2004) thus stresses the artificial relationship between soldiering and manliness. Providing the example of South African Zulu men, Enloe (2004:109) argues that "Zulu men have been deliberately encouraged by leaders of the Inkatha movement to imagine of their ethnicized manhood as rooted in the performance of warrior roles" even when not all Zulu men subscribed to such an idea. Men are thus urged to prove their manliness through toughness and aggression while simultaneously suppressing or at least camouflaging the femininity within them. The artificial relation between manhood and the military suggests that the masculinisation of the military is a pure social fabric. Furthermore, the militarisation of Zulu men, as presented above, was to counter the white colonisers' reduction of black men to the status of boys. Therefore, this thesis suggests that the process of constructing masculinities on the African continent was highly influenced by the colonial period in such ways that black males were ranked below white males on the patriarchal hierarchy of masculinities. Quoting

Andreas Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfame (1994), Thapar-Bjorkert et al. (2006:434) point out that "…new configurations of masculinities are produced when "masculinities imported from elsewhere are conflated with local ideas". Building on Amina Mama's analysis of gender as reconstructed by colonialism, this thesis puts forward that a patriarchal gendered hierarchy brought by colonisation has ranked black masculinities beneath white masculinities, consequently threatening the precolonial understandings of masculinities within the African socio-cultural context. However, hierarchies between masculinities are not only interracial but also intraracial, as the use of intersectionality and Nira Yaval-Davis's analysis of belonging has demonstrated. Hence, while feminist analysts of militarism located in the global north adopt the concept of hegemonic masculinity to theorise the military, militarism and militarisation, this thesis conceives of the wartime rape in the eastern DRC as a manifestation of differential protest masculinities that are claiming access to the powerful patriarchal table.

To explore a man's location vis-à-vis other men, I use Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) categorisation of masculinities into hegemony, complicity, subordination, marginalisation and protestation. These types of masculinities may be used in the analysis of wartime rape. However, for the current thesis, the concept of protest masculinity is used. As a reminder, *protest masculinities* are made of men at the bottom of the patriarchal masculine ladder and do not find their interest within the current order they challenge to gain access to the dominant status (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). From the provided definition of protest masculinity, the thesis categorises the militia and rebels in the eastern DRC as protest masculinities compared to the national army.

Following Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) definition of protest masculinity, it can be argued that some men who do not fit the criterion of hegemony may resort to violence as a way of claiming power and inclusion within the powerful circle. By analogy, this thesis suggests that protest masculinity characterises much postcolonial development of masculinities in

African countries. In the years following colonisation, countries such as the DRC saw many existent community-based armed groups developing into militias in service of political ambitions.

2.8 Militarised masculinities within militia groups

Some scholars have questioned the applicability of the concept of militarised masculinity to militiamen, knowing that this concept has been mainly utilised to analyse the actions of formal state armies. At this point, it is important to stress that militias also consider armament to be the solution to their particular political claims. Henceforth, it is necessary to provide an understanding of militia as adopted throughout this study.

Mama and Okawaza-Rey (2012) mention that African militias are mostly male-dominated fraternities, locally and transnationally networked. This means that most African militias are mainly male-dominated, and their existence and survival within historical times depend on their network, which provides mostly economic means and political reasons to engage in armed conflicts. In the effort to differentiate between the militias and gangs, for instance, which are both presented as sub-categories of community-based armed groups, Schuberth (2015) suggests that militias operate at a political dimension and within the framework of patronage and clientelism. Furthermore, Schuberth (2015) argues that, as a form of community-based armed groups, militias are, in some instances, created by state actors even when these militias are rarely established and structured formally by the given state's law. Most importantly, militias do not develop their actions against the state per se but instead against a particular leadership they seek to overthrow, and their action is located within what Hagg and Kagwanja (2007:12) refer to as "New wars", which are linked to identity and in most cases, are intra-state (in contrast to inter-states). The political dimension is thus predominant within the militia, even when this does not exclude pursuing economic incentives to make a livelihood. Hence, maintaining a connexion with the national state is imperative for the militias as the latter act on behalf of a

political actor who might or not be in power. Schuberth (2015) has distinguished between ethnic and popular militias; ethnic militias are of interest for this study.

Ethnic militias refer to those militias whose "patrons evoke notions of ethnicity or clan-based identity in order to legitimize their authority vis-à-vis their clients…" (Schuberth, 2015:10). Grievance is mostly the element put forward by ethnic militias. The *Mai-Mai* and *Twagineho* militias mainly operating in the eastern DRC and the South Sudanese '*Jeich mabo*' (white army) are archetypical cases of ethnic militias. This point is expanded on in Chapter 4 on the historical background of the Congo's wars. At this point, it is worth reminding that the *Mai-Mai* and the *Twagineho* (that played a central role in the formation of the RCD rebellion in 1998) are two of the three perpetrators of wartime rape under analysis in this thesis. As it will be argued in Chapter 4, as well as in Chapters 5 and 6, the *Mai-Mai*'s discourse of autochthony is "an artificial by-product of clientelist strategies used by political leaders to create a following" (Schuberth, 2015:10). For many years, the *Mai-Mai* groups have succeeded to secure their community's support by putting forward a discourse according to which their (*Mai-Mai'*s) existence aims to defend their ancestral land against foreign invasion in general and the Banyamulenge Tutsi Congolese ethnic group in particular (Baaz and Stern, 2010; Verweijen, 2015).

Perpetrating wartime rape by armed groups, such as the *Mai-Mai*, who do not receive formal military training, thus invites us to explore additional roles performed by wartime rape. For instance, Baaz and Stern (2010) suggest that the analysis of wartime rape in the DRC does not have to be limited to rape as a weapon of war or to rape as a military strategy conceptualisation as these two framings of wartime rape obscure other roles played by wartime rape. Baaz and Stern (2010:16) hence put forward that wartime rape in the DRC

> "must be understood in relation to a multitude of other circumstances, such as the realities of civil-military relations, learned behaviours, (failed) military integration processes, militarised ideas of masculinity and experience of imagined (and real) marginalisation."

Following Baaz and Stern's (2010) assertion, it can be comprehended that, in some instances, wartime rape is more than a weapon or a strategy as it can build bonds among soldiers who lack proper military training, for instance. Similarly, in her analysis of the 1992-1995 Bosnian War, Enloe (2004:109) argues that some men were attracted by the militias in compensation for the fact that they were "incompletely militarized in their manhood". The incompleteness of the Serb men in Enloe's (2004) account steamed from the fact that these men were judged less masculine (based on their pre-war lives) to fit the role of manly soldiers. Joining the militia thus provided an alternative and possibility to carry guns in the name of political ends. Being militarised, as already discussed, refers to subscribing to the belief according to which taking arms (in service of particular political aims as elucidated above) is the solution to particular situations. Hence, this thesis believes that, despite their qualification of non-state armed groups or informal armed groups, the concept of militarised masculinity can effectively be applied to analyse the actions of militias on the African continent in general and in the DRC in particular.

Baaz and Verweijen (2013:2) argue that "military integration processes have fuelled militarization" in the DRC in three different but connected ways. Firstly, this integration process has encouraged army desertion as groups given lower positions than they requested preferred to leave the national army and return to the bushes where their voices could be heard by perpetuating violence. In relation to this, Autesserre (2012:217) provides an example:

> "A local militia called *Mai-Mai Sheka,* which *allied with the foreign rebel group the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), gang raped 387 civilians* over the course of three days in a remote part of Walikale territory…*because he wanted to draw attention to his armed group and to be invited to the negotiation table*. He knew

> that *using sexual violence was the best way to* reach this goal, because it would *draw the attention of the international community*, and various state and advocacy groups would *put pressure on the Congolese government to negotiate with him – which exactly happened*" (emphasis added).

Autesserre (2012) thus emphasises the points formulated earlier regarding the use of wartime rape not only as a weapon or military strategy to defeat the enemy but also as the "smoke that calls" (Von Holdt et al., 2011:27); a tool for protest masculinities to accumulate power to place further claims, such as being invited to the negotiation table.

Inter- and intra-community conflicts have escalated in those communities where, in the name of autochthony on the one hand and on the other hand, in the name of ethnic marginalisation, young men are encouraged by customary leaders to form ethnic militias to defend the community's political interests. The hallmarks of autochthony mainly revolve around the opposition between foreigners and natives. This notion of autochthony is also seen as a significant element in the outbreak of collective violence within the African continent (Geschiere, 2009, mentioned in Verweijen, 2015). Nevertheless, the notion of autochthony has been criticised for its lack of substance compared to ethnicity, which is "defined by elaborated rules of both membership and content, relating to the specific characteristics attributed to members" (Fearon and Lautin, 2000 in Verweijen, 2015:160). One argument elaborated in Chapter 4 is that what takes the form of wartime rape today is rooted within the colonial period during which ethnicities were territorialised. The consequence of such territorialisation is the naissance of antagonism between the said autochthonous (*Mai-Mai*) and the Tutsi Congolese ethnic groups (Banyamulenge), as provided in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 of this thesis. The chapter now turns to its conclusion.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the anti-war feminism that constitutes the theoretical anchor of this thesis. As such, anti-war feminism provided this study with different conceptual tools for

interpreting wartime rape, a multi-dimensional violence. After defining wartime rape, the chapter differentiated some typologies of rape and argued that these typologies serve particular roles and are geographically, and culturally circumscribed. I suggested that wartime rape is, in some cases, opportunistically perpetrated to intimidate the victim population during operations such as looting. As a strategy, the chapter suggested that wartime rape intends to further military/fighters' goals and impose power and domination upon the victim population. Strategic rape, it was argued, may take the shape of gang rape and is intended to create a spectacle and instil fear in the mind of others while displaying in the face of the world the destruction of a nation. Henceforth, I emphasised that wartime rape is an issue of protest masculinities that utilise this violence as a lexicon. I thus suggested that wartime rape is 'the smoke that calls' the attention of the national government and international sphere upon the perpetrators' claims. Patriarchy, the chapter suggested, constitutes the common ground of understanding between the perpetrators, their male and female victims and the state. The chapter maintained that gendered patriarchal norms shape wartime rape as a property crime by constructing women as the perfect targets while constructing raped males and men from the victims' community as unfitted masculinities who are feminised and fail to protect their women. Accordingly, the chapter saw wartime rape as a double-edged sword that enables the perpetrators to reassert their patriarchal masculinities while destroying their male enemies' symbolic capital through the attack on women. Furthermore, it was argued that wartime rape has sexual dimensions without being about sex. As elaborated above, it is the socially and culturally inscribed meaning of rape that the perpetrators manipulate to impose physical and psychological suffering and power upon the direct victims and simultaneously destroy the victims'/survivors' subjective identities, as well as their community's order. I have put forward that wartime rape has the power to damage victim's sexual subjectivity. Because the physical attack is embodied and translated or interpreted (using the terms that the patriarchal society and culture provide), wartime rape thus

destroys the victims' sense of manhood and womanhood and affect the symbolic stances and subjective component of the victims and their entire community. The chapter proceeded by suggesting that militarised masculinities are features of many post-colonial African states where many previous male-dominated community-based organisations have converted into armed groups following the patriarchal definition of men as the 'natural' protectors. It was stressed that the process of militarisation and patriarchal masculinities are interlinked and need critical attention as one explores the issue of wartime rape. This chapter explored the notion of protest masculinity to examine wartime rape in relation to the location of militarised masculinities on the patriarchal ladder in the DRC. Also, the chapter suggested that, in times of war, women are not only victims. Women may also be complicit (sometimes as a survival mechanism) to the militarisation of their male youths and are sometimes perpetrators of sexual violence against both men and women (Thapar-Bjorkert et al., 2006; Sjoberg, 2016; Korac, 2018). Not all armed conflicts are, however, characterised by wartime rape as a weapon of war. The chapter thus suggested that, in analysing the perpetration or not of wartime rape, one needs to take into consideration the armed groups' formal or informal structures and goals that may prohibit or enhance the use of wartime rape as a weapon against civilians. As such, some armed groups may engage in the battle to create cohesion within the state, while others may hold guns and perpetrate wartime rape to reclaim space inside the state. This explains how we have maintained that the analysis of wartime rape as a weapon of war must be augmented to include other dimensions, such as the historical context within which the armed groups are formed and operate, the motivations (revenge, claiming citizenship rights and recognition, and the destruction of the enemy community's cohesion through the attack on the victim's subjectivity) to perpetrate rape in times of war. The next chapter examines the methods that this PhD employed in gathering the data for this study.

Chapter 3:

Researching wartime rape, gender and militarism: The methods and ethical challenges in a time affected by the Covid-19 pandemic

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the research methods this PhD employed in gathering and analysing the empirical material that constituted this research. This study aimed to examine ***How do the Bukavu people conceptualise the emergence of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War?*** The purpose of doing so was to explore the participants' understanding of wartime rape as it occurred to uncover the intertwining of the different dimensions of wartime rape into a single synthesised whole with multiple dimensions that are socially, culturally, and militaristically inscribed in the eastern DRC. Hence, the research is inscribed within a critical paradigm as I sought to critically interpret the participants' interpretation of the 2004 wartime rape and its absence in the 1996 First Congo War. My key departure was, therefore, understanding what participants say about their experience of the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict and then interpreting their interpretations.

The complexity of such an approach meant I would come across diverse perspectives and different interpretations that would necessitate qualitatively engaging the collected data. I thus believed that, as stated in Chapter 2, the anti-war-feminist perspective, which provided me with diverse conceptual tools to understand the enactment of wartime rape, was in accordance with participatory research and hermeneutic thematic content analysis – inscribed within the social constructionist epistemology –that this thesis adopted to collect at first and then analyse this study's data. The shift from more conventional data collection methods to participatory research was initially unplanned but rather dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic and its travelling restrictions, as further elaborated on later in this chapter. This chapter is, therefore, structured as follows. Firstly, the chapter presents a brief description of the research site. Then, the research method is explored. Next, the chapter reflects on how the participatory research approaches facilitated remote data collection during a time affected by the Covid-19 pandemic

and my positionality as a researcher. Following, the chapter expands on how data were analysed using hermeneutics thematic content analysis within the constructionist epistemological stance. Finally, the chapter addresses the ethical considerations and limitations of this research.

3.2 A brief description of Bukavu

The data that constitute this thesis were collected in Bukavu. Two interviews, however, were done via Skype with two participants who were born and raised in Bukavu but emigrated because of the ongoing wars. Bukavu is the capital city of the South Kivu province (eastern DRC), with an ethnically heterogeneous population estimated at 1,133,000 inhabitants in 2021[6]. Details on the demographical composition, culture and social organisation are provided in Chapter 4 because these will help to situate the study's argument.

Conducting this thesis' research in Bukavu was dictated by the fact that I originate from this city and because this city has experienced both the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict, also called the Bukavu Offensive because the city was the battleground between the RCD rebels and the Congo's national army (Stearns, 2021). Bukavu's ethnic heterogeneity constituted one of the challenges in conducting this research. Relatedly, during the individual in-depth interviews I conducted with Riziki, she mentioned how,

> *"I'm glad that someone finally decides to point at the big pink elephant in the room because, you know, hum even with my closest friends who are not Banyamulenge, we prefer to avoid the subject whilst it's important to talk [about the wartime rape that was attributed to Banyamulenge fighters] so we can all heal and progress…".* (Riziki, Participant 1)

In addition to Riziki, other male and female participants mentioned how the 2004 Kivu Conflict, which was marked by the strategic use of wartime rape, *"extrapolated the conflict between the Banyamulenge and other ethnic groups"* (a 36-year-old male participant) and *"established within the community a great sense of otherness…people started to pay much*

[6] PopulationStat.com

attention to others' ethnicity whilst it was not the case before…" (female participant). In addition to promoting the construction of them and us, wartime rape in the eastern DRC, in general, and particularly in Bukavu, has been utilised to impose power and domination, destroy the victims' sexual subjectivities, and disturb the socio-cultural norms and the community's order.

Bukavu is a resource-rich area: oil and gas have been discovered in the Kivu Lake that separates the city from Rwanda on the east side, and the fauna and the flora are remarkably varied, with the silverback gorilla being one of the species attracting tourism. These attractions also motivate some belligerents to engage in armed conflicts due to globalisation (Holmes, 2012). Bearing this in mind, this thesis mainly focuses on how land tenure and gender intersect in the mobilisation of armed conflicts and how hierarchies within militarised masculinities led to wartime rape, which, in turn, attacked and destroyed the victims' subjectivities in the eastern DRC.

Bukavu hosted a refugee camp following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, and this constructed the city as one of the sites of the Interahamwe Hutu insurgency in November 1996 (Turner, 2007; Trenholm, 2013) as a continuation of the 1994 Rwandan conflict. In 1996, the DRC experienced the First Congo War. The Second Congo War started in June 2004 as a former Congolese army General, Laurent Nkunda, backed by Rwandan rebels, sieged the city. Human Rights Watch and German news articles reported that the general told his soldiers: "The city is yours for three days", which led to the wartime rape of 16,000 women (Trenholm, 2013).

This part of the country is world widely referred to as "the rape capital of the world" (Ayiera, 2010:11), and the prevailing patriarchal symbolic order has constructed wartime rape as man-to-man violence that utilises women's bodies as the vessel of such violence. Critically analysing (the patriarchal) militarised gendered hierarchies and socio-cultural assertions around land as inherited from Belgian colonisers would, therefore, I hope, contribute to the existing analysis

of wartime rape in the eastern DRC, in general, and particularly in Bukavu in ways that expose and discourage wartime rape for what it is: an evitable war. The next section explores the qualitative research method adopted in this study.

3.3 Qualitative research methodology.

Researching entails the ability to apprehend and communicate the beliefs about the nature of reality, what can be learned about it and how the knowledge can be accessed (Rehman and Alharti, 2016). A simple definition suggests that a study is qualitative (as opposed to quantitative) as it,

> "…studies the meaning of people's lives, under real-world conditions, represents the views and perspectives of the people in a study, covers the contextual conditions within which people live, contributes insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help explain human social behaviour and strives to use multi-sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone". (Yin, 2011:7-8)

This assertion from Yin (2011) indicates that qualitative research allows us to explore diverse dimensions of social life and people's understandings and viewpoints of their daily lives, as well as the significance of the meaning they generate. The meaning and interpretation people attribute to their actions and experiences result from the daily social interactions these people are involved in. This suggests that humans "create reality and that these realities reflect our values, perception and experiences of the world, rather than an accurate or essentialist depiction of the world" (Burr, 1995 and 1998, in Stevens, 2008:172).

However, socio-cultural norms and policies of the moment constrain the possibilities through which individuals may navigate the process of meaning construction by analysing, interpreting and understanding the world around them (Thompson, 1990; Kafle, 2011). In the same perspective, Yin (2011) asserts that the studied population is at the core of knowledge production: their views and perspectives are multiple, contextual and shaped by the conditions of the real world surrounding them. These conditions may encompass gender, race, ethnicity,

culture, religion and politics that intersect to construct a social system. This social system shapes and impacts people's experiences far from being ahistorical (Rehman and Alharti, 2016). Therefore, this research has explored how the form that violence takes is dictated not only by militarism but also by power dynamics around gender, ethnicity, aspirations and grievances, as well as the cultural environment. The following lines present the process of data collection through participatory research approaches.

3.4 Data collection through participatory research

3.4.1 **Participatory research: contextualisation**

Wartime rape in the eastern DRC presents methodological challenges for researchers, urging them to distance themselves from extractive methods to adopt innovative and collaborative approaches. These approaches are believed to voice the research participants' will and empower them to play a central role in examining community-based problematic situations and formulating actions to improve the identified problem. The role of the social researcher would, therefore, be to participate in a critically engaged sociology that aims to research in such a way that the study promotes critical thinking that impulses positive change in the lives of researched individuals (Von Holdt, 2020; Webster, 2022). Engaging in critical sociology is, therefore, moving away from extractive research approaches (Wilmsen, 2008) that mostly benefit the researcher (access to the needed data) while perpetrating exploitative norms towards the researched subjects.

Resorting to participatory research approaches was dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic, as this thesis' data were collected in September and October 2020. Participatory research involves a collaborative process of research, education and action (Hall, 1981) explicitly oriented towards social transformation (McTaggart, 1997). Moreover, it refers to "collaborative methodologies", which "promote the joint design and implementation of the research project together with our research subjects-collaborators" (Arribas Lozano, 2018:452). Hence, participatory research, also called 'participants as co-researchers' (Boylorn, 2008), resembles

participant observation with clear actions and objectives and demarks itself from extractive traditional methods by including research collaborators or the studied community's members in the research process. In the same perspective, George Kelly avers that research participants are "personal scientists, continuously in the process of formulating hypotheses and testing them out of utility…" (Kelly, 1995 in Denicolo et al., 2016:41). This thesis' adoption of participatory research approaches is thus informed by the certainty that the study participants could identify their needs and to frame practical, context-based and durable solutions to the identified issues. It is however important to mention that this thesis did not implement participatory action research. This thesis did not intend to propose any political action as direct outcome. Instead, what made this research participatory was its aim to empower participants by giving them the opportunity to reformulate the interview schedule, and to validate or reject the themes I developed from their accounts or suggest new ones. Participants were also empowered to decide between computerised or in-person interactions with the researcher following the outbreak of covid-19 and its travelling restrictions. As such, this thesis distanced itself from extractive approaches and allowed participants' voices to be heard through the research process. The following lines detail how participatory research was put into practice to allow the participants and this research to meet their political knowledge on the one hand and to enable this study to reach sociological knowledge on the other hand.

3.4.2 **The importance of others during Covid-19: Obtaining institutional coverage and selecting fieldworkers**

The outbreak of Covid-19 paradoxically projected light on the importance of others and consequently challenged the extractiveness of data collection. Because of Covid-19, I had to rethink traditional research methods and how I would proceed to collect data qualitatively. I thus realised how important networking was as this is what provided me with institutional coverage and fieldworkers who collaborated with me for data collection purposes.

I obtained the institutional coverage from my former employer, the *Association de Santé Familiale* (ASF) – a national non-governmental organisation that works in public health – and *La Mosaïque* (community-based organisation) following an email I addressed to the ASF requesting such coverage as required by the Ethics Committee. The ASF and *La Mosaïque* facilitated institutional coverage, collaborating in mobilising participants and data collection processes. The fieldworker team consisted of two Medical Doctors (one male and one female) and two holders of postgraduate degrees in Communication (one male and one female). This thesis paid particular attention to the fieldworkers' profiles with the aim of decreasing any ethical concern regarding the assistance (psychological mostly and reference to health care facilities that are equipped to assist, for free, victims of wartime rape in Bukavu) that could be provided to participants in case of distress because of participating in this research.

I was benefiting from my previous professional network. Resorting to my former professional network showed the human dimension of the qualitative method, as this research could not have been carried out at that time without people willing to help without receiving a salary. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that the fieldworkers that facilitated the data collection are my former work colleagues. I knew them because of my previous work experience as a humanitarian agent. Importantly, the four fieldworkers were Bukavu natives and lived within the researched community. For communication purposes, we established a WhatsApp discussion group to share different practical aspects of the data collection process and address any general questions the fieldworkers had regarding the research. After obtaining the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee's (non-medical) approval to conduct this research, this study initiated its pilot phase, as presented below.

3.4.3 **Pitot phase of data collection**

Morrow (2006 in Fischer, 2006:147) asserts that, from the 1980s, researchers who adopted feminist perspectives increasingly encouraged the "participatory engagement with those who

are the subjects of investigation". The purpose of doing so is to ensure that the study participants' agenda was central to this research and that their voices were listened to throughout the research and in the research report (published on the University's website in this case).

On a practical level, the data collection of this research was done in two phases: the pilot phase, during which the research protocol was presented to the seed studied participants and the effective data collection phase through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, audio-document (radiobroadcasts) and documentary document.

3.4.4 **Critically exploring the preconceived research proposal: fieldworkers' insights**

The ideal would have been to include the co-researchers (research participants) and fieldworkers in all stages of the research, including the proposal writing process, "implementation, analysis, and dissemination of findings" (Sullivan et al., 2005:978 in Langan and Morton, 2009:166). However, because this research was conducted for academic purposes, the implication of the co-researchers and fieldworkers was only partial. This means that the study participants were firstly involved in the evaluation of the research question and the interview schedules, secondly in the research implementation phase through their participation in the in-depth interviews and focus groups and finally in the data validation workshop during which the initial themes I developed from collected data were presented to the participants for their validation, reformulation, or rejection.

3.5 Presenting the research to fieldworkers: Please, Orange, be kind!

This activity started in mid-September 2020, shortly after I received the Ethics Committee's approval. A week prior to the research presentation session, I emailed a French version of the research proposal to the fieldworkers' team for them to read through the document and explore the interview guides. WhatsApp constituted the main platform of interaction between the fieldworkers and me for direct questions of comprehension. I was glued to my phone and constantly saying, "Please, Orange (the cellular network provider fieldworkers used for

airtime), be kind!" as I wished for the network to be good because this was conditional for a proper conversation.

The research presentation section began when the fieldworkers sent their pictures in the meeting room to signal they were ready. I then proceeded to present to them what the research was about and how I envisaged the data collection process. My presentation was followed by a question-answer session during which the fieldworkers requested further explanations on the participants' inclusion criterion, the data collection methods and the geographical areas to be covered by the study. As Orange proved to be kind during the session, the discussion was successful, despite being one hour and 36 minutes long, and was concluded by some agreements regarding the duration and the initial selection of seed participants (Tiffany, 2006). As the preconceived research question was adopted, this research presentation session permitted the fieldworkers to bring the first amendment to the Swahili version of the interview schedules (I had translated the interview schedules from English to French and from French to Swahili). After four days, the fieldworkers and I collaboratively defined and agreed on the first amended version of the interview schedules and the inclusion criteria for the research participants in both the pilot and the effective data collection phases.

3.6 Researcher's positionalities

As the anti-war feminism and feminist social constructionist epistemology encourage reflexivity, the fieldworkers and I applied the reflexivity principle in evaluating how much we remembered of the two wars under analysis to determine the minimum age of participants. The self-reflexivity signals that researchers are holders of their knowledge dictated by their lived experiences and enter the field with their set of truths (their reality), which inform much of the position they take towards the research subjects. As mentioned in previous sections, the interpretation of the studied issue may differ from one individual to another based on the uniqueness of people's perceptions of the world.

Explaining the concept, Given (2008:747) notes that "reflexivity is critical and embraces an examination of the political and social issues that inform the research process". In other words, reflexivity points to the researcher's consideration of self-experience regarding the studied issues and how this informs some of the positionalities adopted. In relation to this, Von Holdt[7] (2019) articulates that past personal experiences may dictate the academic path we choose or the interests we develop towards a given social reality. It was then clear that I have always been puzzled by violence: as a child living in a country marred by civil war in 1996, as a teen whose classmates did not return to school because they were raped in the 2004 Kivu Conflict, as a teenager who saw people adopting popular justice (physically suppressing the robbers to discourage armed home-invasions) as a prevailing way of responding to other forms of violence in Douala, or again as a young adult who witnessed people's recurrence to suicide either to protest against the perceived South Korean state injustice or as a way to address personal deception in Seoul. These experiences in different counties were added to during my Honours and Masters degrees with the South African experience: violence seemed to be the normal way common people had adopted to address an unappreciated situation. From these encounters with violence, I came to learn (and still learning) that violence goes along with power, and this power is not always the power of the dominant because those who are traditionally defined as dominated or oppressed also voice or act on their subjectivities by resorting to their power from below because of "critical consciousness amongst subaltern" (Von Holdt, 2019:6). The critical constructionist epistemological stance adopted through this study has thus demonstrated that knowledge production is not the monopoly of the socially dominant groups, but instead it is a heterogeneous and democratic process that exists even within the oppressed group.

7 Arguing with Bourdieu: a South African encounter

Through self-reflexivity, I questioned my interest in studying wartime rape as conceptualised by the Bukavu population and the epistemological stance I adopted in critically analysing the interpretation I asserted to the participants' conceptualisations. Hence, the reflexive process allowed the fieldworkers and me to collaboratively decide that all male and female participants would be at least 31 years old and living in Bukavu during the First Congo War and the Kivu Conflict. Social class and educational background were not determining factors for participating in the study.

3.7 Selecting the study participants

3.7.1 **Purposive sampling**

Seven seed participants who also participated in the study's in-depth individual interviews were purposively sampled by being purposefully selected by the fieldworkers in the different communes of Bukavu based on the co-defined criteria described above. Also called judgement or purposeful sampling, purposive sampling refers to "a deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses" (Patton, 2014:402) in relation to the researched topic. In other words, purposive sampling included identifying and selecting participants that "are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest" (Etikan et al., 2016:2). Therefore, to be part of the seed participants, fieldworkers asked questions about the current age of the potential participant or how old they were in 1996 for participants who were not comfortable telling their current age. Potential seed participants were also asked whether they lived in Bukavu in 1996 and in 2004.

Patton (2014) notes that, in addition to their knowledge and experience, it is important that participants are available and willing to participate and have the aptitude to share their lived experiences and opinions clearly, expressively and thoughtfully (Palacios et al., 2015). Furthermore, Barusch (2011) observes that much research, in general, depends on human memory. It follows that participants in the current study had to be old enough (at least seven years old, as I had been) in 1996 to remember their experience of the First Congo War.

I observed a bias in the fieldworkers' selection of seed participants, as none represented the Banyamulenge ethnic group. When I pointed this out, fieldworkers mentioned how Banyamulenge lived aloof and were consequently very hard to reach people. To address such an issue of representability, through Facebook, I contacted some individuals I knew to be from the Congolese Tutsi ethnic group and who appeared to be very interested in participating in the study. Throughout the interview with a female participant from the Banyamulenge ethnic group, I asked whether she sees the Banyamulenge ethnic group as living in isolation from the other ethnic groups present in Bukavu. Answering the question, she then mentioned,

> *"…it's not as if we like isolating ourselves. It's just because of fear. For example, me, you know, after what happened in 2004 [talking of the wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict], me, uhm, I was going back to school after all that, and people started screaming "banarudiya banarudiya" [from Swahili: They are coming back]. I was so scared and was lucky that they didn't start jumping at me; I was afraid they would kill me…".* (Riziki, Participant 1)

The fieldworkers' avoiding participants from Banyamulenge was thus, as I later understood, their way of navigating and avoiding potential conflict or misunderstanding within the community. This also clearly pointed at the deep ramification wartime rape has within communities years after its occurrence and how the rape of women, girls, men and boys is simultaneously an attack against the direct victim's subjectivity and against the community as a whole.

3.7.2 **The cascade effect or participant-driven recruitment**

The access to this study's participants resulted from a cascade effect as I contacted my former employer and colleagues, who, in turn, mobilised their networks to reach seed participants. The seed participants also mobilised their networks to reach other ordinary and key participants of this study. The attitude of the seed participants mainly reinforced the study's participatory approach and highlighted community engagement even when they did not know me personally. The cascade effect is what Tiffany (2006) refers to as the participant-driven or

snowballing methods. These methods build on already existing relationships between the seeds and potential recruits. By using the snowballing method or chain referral sampling, this research aimed to decrease the doubt that participants had about participating mainly because of the questions around ethnicity and the link between ethnicity and wartime rape in the DRC in general and particularly in eastern DRC, which are highly delicate and politicised. Participant-driven recruitment helped establish a trust-based relationship between the participants who trusted their friends who recruited them at first and the fieldworkers after (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). Therefore, this sampling method facilitated access to research participants who would have been difficult to reach otherwise. These participants included three of the five former military participants, two of the three community leaders and ten ordinary participants in the focus groups.

However, the snowball sampling approach to participant selection has been criticised, given that "the sample of participants is largely reduced to those people with vast social connections" (Johnston and Sabin, 2010:39). It follows that individuals with poor social networks are less likely to be included as participants. Therefore, the research attempted to address this issue by using purposeful sampling to reach other ordinary participants in different communes of Bukavu.

3.8 Critically exploring the preconceived research proposal: Seed participants' insights

During the pilot phase, the fieldworkers purposefully invited seven participants (two females and two male ordinary participants, one female community leader and two former military officers) who met the inclusion criteria to participate in the pilot phase. The ordinary participants were purposefully selected in the neighbourhood of the *La Mosaïque* office, while the female community leader and the two former military officers were identified from *La Mosaïque*'s professional network. The amendment of the interview guides was realised within this community-based organisation's (*La Mosaïque*) meeting room, where the interview guides were projected. These sections were group discussions and were organised based on gender

(without implying that gender is to be reduced to biological traits) as the female participants worked with the female fieldworkers, as was the approach with male participants who worked with male fieldworkers. At this point, the role of fieldworkers was mostly to read each question, type in all the suggestions formulated by the participants, ask participants what their understanding of the research question was and how, if necessary, this question could be reformulated to address the social reality in Bukavu.

The participants were invited to (i) critically evaluate the approach adopted by the fieldworkers during the recruitment process and the potential interview room (*La Mosaïque*'s meeting room), (ii) amend the research question and the Swahili interview schedules when they judged it to be necessary, (iii) suggest other issues to be covered by the study, and finally (iv) pretest the computerised approach to data collection. During the computerised data collection pretest, participants had to decide whether they would participate in the interviews with me as interviewer through WhatsApp video calls or Zoom to palliate my absence from the research field due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated travelling restrictions.

3.9 The Covid-19 pandemic and the use of computerised data collection

Evaluation of the recruitment process, the interview room and critical assessment of the research question and interview schedules. As anticipated during this thesis' proposal redaction, the representative sample or seed participants expressed a pronounced reluctance to participate in the interviews in the meeting room we initially selected. During the recruitment stage, fieldworkers explained the different phases of the research to the seed participants. The seed participants, therefore, agreed to participate in the interview guide amendment sessions held in *La Mosaïque*'s meeting room because the interview questions were projected, and the fieldworkers were typing the modifications suggested by this group of participants.

Although the seed participants agreed to use the meeting to amend the interview guide, the interviewing process that came after took place at the participants' respective houses for some and at their offices or boutiques for others. Four amendment sessions were organised for six

days (10th to 16th September 2020, except Sundays). Each section was between 2.45 and three hours long because participants had to vacate to other activities. It must be mentioned that participants did not modify the preconceived research question. However, the Swahili translation was amended to include local terminologies. Following the amendment sessions, further sessions were planned to pretest the redefined interview guides, as presented in the following lines.

Interview simulation between the fieldworkers and myself. The fieldworkers and I proceeded with role-playing to ensure we all understood the amended interview guides similarly. During this simulation, I played the role of the main interviewer, and a female fieldworker played the role of the participant. Other fieldworkers were invited to judge the activity. All fieldworkers were in the meeting room, and I was remote on my telephone screen.

The first problem we encountered was the internet connection, which was sometimes interrupted. The other point raised by the fieldworkers was my tendency to lead the conversations in ways that may clash with the local context. Although I was initially sceptical about their remark, I realised, through the collected data, that the fieldworkers were correct in pointing out my biased approach to patriarchy. I had, therefore, to learn to listen to positions that contrasted with the initial definition of patriarchy as always oppressive for women and other marginalised groups. I was then left to acknowledge instances when patriarchy, in its embeddedness effort, offered some women the opportunities to accumulate social and economic capital through marriage, for instance.

Pretesting the computer-mediated interviews. Regarding the pilot phase, it was initially planned that I would lead two in-depth individual interviews with female ordinary participants and one former military officer to obtain their views on using this approach with the rest of the study's participants. The fieldworkers had to pretest, through face-to-face in-depth individual interviews, the amended interview schedules with the other four participants in the pilot phase.

The pretest results revealed that the study participants preferred interacting with the fieldworkers, given their physical presence in the research site, rather than *"interacting with a computer"*, as the former military officer formulated. My exchange with the participants in the pilot phase was limited to them asking why I was not physically present in the research field. The Covid-19 pandemic did not affect the eastern DRC at the same pace as South Africa. Therefore, the study participants did not understand the related travelling restrictions.

Additionally, older people from the ordinary participant group in Bukavu were predisposed to physical interaction with fieldworkers rather than a conversation mediated through computers. Although the computerised approach was not an issue for the female community leader because it is an approach she used for her work, this approach was resisted by the ordinary community members and the former military officers because they were concerned by a potential misused of their image (even though the participant's information sheet was presented, read, explained and given to them). At this point, it was co-decided that, for the progress of the research and in respect of the participant's will, I had to step back and enable the fieldworkers to proceed with the most effective means of data collection.

3.10 Data collection through in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions

In the case of the DRC, silence around the issue of sexual violence is no longer a problem since the country's experience has been publicised by local and global media. Instead, what constitutes the problem is "providing adequate theoretical and analytical frameworks and ways of understanding sexual and gender-based violence in particular circumstances" (Freedman, 2014:131). One reason is the exclusion of the studied communities from the formulation of contextualised solutions to address their lived experiences. Focusing on direct wartime rape victims prevents researchers from deeply considering how wartime rape affects the community as a whole.

Therefore, this research attributed to participants the role that goes beyond being simple interviewees, as presented above. In addition to the possibility of amending the research

question and interview guides, the study participants had the opportunity to validate the preconceived themes that were developed from the interviews (in-depth individual and focus groups) during the data validation workshop. However, before addressing the data validation process, I present the effective data collection process through in-depth individual interviews and focus groups.

3.10.1 **Collecting data through in-depth interviews**

Explaining the importance of interviewing in qualitative studies, Patton (2014:628) posits that interviewing asks people questions to gain access to their world and their perception of that world and to understand their experience. Similarly, Ritchie et al. (2003) posit that in-depth interviews are willed dialogues that warrant the confidentiality between the inquirer and the interviewee. Additionally, in-depth interviews are semi-structured conversations during which participants are "encouraged and prompted" (Cook, 2008 in Given, 2008:422) to speak in detail about the issue or topic around which the research evolves without having their answers influenced or their thoughts directed by the researcher' use of short answer-questions. Hence, this study's data collection process was an "open-ended dialogue" (Arribas Lozano, 2018:452) between the fieldworkers and the researched subjects.

This study adopted the peer-to-peer (Martinez, 2008) approach to the arranged 20 in-depth individual interviews with 12 ordinary participants (six male participants and six female participants), three key participants (one male and two female community leaders) and five former military officers. In addition to the one-on-one interviews, two focus groups with male and female participants (five participants in each group) were organised. Hence, 30 participants, aged between 31 and 63 years old, have provided their accounts of both the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict. The peer-to-peer approach was a way of decreasing gendered boundaries that may exist given "the highly charged and sensitive" topic (Martinez, 2008:191) around which this research was formulated. Moreover, the peer-to-peer interviewing approach

simultaneously addressed anticipated gender hierarchies and potential discomfort that would otherwise impede the research.

In contrast to traditional approaches to interviewing that insist on homogenous questions and steadiness throughout the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, "social constructionist interviewing places priority on individualized interactions and adapting the interview to the emergent relationship that is formed between the interviewer and the interviewee…" (Patton, 2014:636). The social constructionist thus encourages a level of flexibility during the interview so that the data collection process develops a relationship between the interviewer and the participants. For instance, most of the data collected through the interviews administered by the Medical Doctor fieldworkers also contained conversations regarding the participants' or their dependents' health issues as participants seized the opportunity to ask personal questions to which these fieldworkers responded before redirecting the conversation towards the research topic. The open-ended interview questions permitted this flexibility. Hence, participants were free to elaborate or suggest new directions (although related to the discussed topic) the study could take to address other issues within the study field. This is because providing a context within which co-researchers can express their respective understandings in their terms is, in fact, the fundamental principle of qualitative interviewing (Patton, 2014).

The semi-structured in-depth interviewing method was not without challenges. During the pilot phase, fieldworkers were encouraged to either note the difficulties encountered or to communicate their data collection challenges on the WhatsApp group. The first challenge was linked to the participatory approach that advocates for participants' empowerment – instances when participants controlled the interviews up to deviating from the researched topic were revealed. As previously mentioned, some participants engaged in personal topics (for example, health-related). This extended the interview time, and, consequently, moments of exhaustion

were manifested during the interview as I could hear participants asking *"ma questions zingali za mingi?"* (from Swahili: "Do we still have many other questions [to answer]?") or "*si presque saa mbili izi!"* (from Swahili: "it's almost two hours now!"). Those exclamations were clear signs of fatigue. At this point, I advised the fieldworkers to ask participants whether they preferred to stop the interview and continue with it later in the day or the next day. Fortunately, all participants preferred to finish the interview on the same day. Moreover, the interviews were interrupted by either the participants themselves or family members who had to interact with the interviewee.

Finally, I addressed a case where one male fieldworker acknowledged that the participant wanted to answer the questions only if he could write down the answers instead of speaking. This was challenging because participatory research advises putting participants' will first. However, in this case, it would have been challenging for me to guarantee the quality and trustworthiness of the data collected through writing because of my absence in the field. I was also puzzled whether the participant would prefer to write instead of verbally interacting with other participants during the data validation workshop. Given that the fieldworker asserted that the participant had no elocutionary difficulties, I asked the fieldworker to find another participant willing to speak and be recorded for data collection. This study also resorted to data generated through focus group discussions, as presented below.

3.10.2 **Focus group discussions**

The seminal work on research-oriented focus groups was initiated in the 1950s by the sociologist Robert K. Merton (Dilshad and Latif, 2013:192). A simple definition of focus group interviewing suggests that the focus group is an interview with more than one individual during which the researcher's role is more of a moderator. Patton (2014:965) insists that a focus group is not a problem-solving session but, instead, it is an "interview with a small group of people on a specific topic".

For this study, it was initially planned to organise three focus groups (one with female ordinary participants, one with male ordinary participants and one with former military officers). However, only two focus group interviews were held for the following reasons. As for the in-depth individual interviews, each focus group was organised based on a peer-to-peer approach, comprised of five participants and one moderator, lasting between two and a half and three hours. These group discussions took place in the seed ordinary participants' houses, which the participants considered comfortable and permissive environments (Krueger and Cassey, 2008 mentioned in Patton, 2014). Within each participant's category, one seed participant volunteered to host the interview and proceeded to invite four other ordinary participants. This environment provided participants with a meal that they shared during the 30 minutes-break.

During the focus group, it was admirable to hear how the seed participants promptly co-facilitated (other participants were addressing them by their name) the dialogues. For instance, the seed participant in the female focus group did not hesitate to rephrase the questions or encourage other participants to share their experiences. Most of the time, she pointed directly at other participants saying, *"Mama Clara, you too speak now…you are just listening without saying anything…"*. It must be reminded that at this point, seed participants had a broader understanding of what the research was about because (i) they had already participated in the interview guide's amendment process, and (ii) they were the first group of participants in the in-depth individual interviews.

It is important to mention that the focus group moderators were different from the fieldworkers who administered the individual interviews. This was planned to apply the investigator triangulation during the data analysis and validation stages. In contrast with the in-depth individual interviews, where the interviewee exchanges only with the interviewer, during the focus group interview, participants had the opportunity to hear fellow participants' variant perspectives, and this turned the focus groups into a social experience where participants could

agree, disagree or build on each other's points of views. Therefore, I suggested that the moderators use the focus groups as an opportunity to develop further some aspects I noticed as I transcribed the in-depth individual interviews daily. As the qualificator 'liberation' (applied to the 1996 First Congo War) was recurrent and problematised within the in-depth individual interviews with male participants, I asked the fieldworker who moderated the male focus group to probe participants' understanding of the 1996 First Congo War to assess whether they also perceived it as a liberator. Two main perspectives were noticed at this point. Firstly, some male participants in the focus group asserted that the First Congo War 'liberated' the country from former President Mobutu's dictatorship. However, this same group of participants criticised how negotiations were done in the years following the 1996 First Congo War. Conversely, the rest of the male participants dismissed the 'liberation' qualificator and suggested that the 1996 First Congo War was the source of the DRC's misery and it was, in fact, the entry door to a number of international, regional, national and local *"opportunists who were attracted by the DRC's mineral wealth"* (Male participant).

Participants in the male focus group pointed out the multi-layered aspect of wartime rape in the DRC and thus helped the research to consider that wartime rape that the eastern DRC experiences today has remote origins, long-dated motivations (ethnic, access to land, economic, etc.), as well as national and local triggers, as explored in Chapters 4, 5, 6 of this thesis. Generally, the focus group interviews allowed me to assess participants' perspectives and understandings, which were either reasonably consistent or diverse while similar to some extent.

Furthermore, the female focus group interview helped to capture how women did not, for example, reduce themselves to the victim status (see Chapter 6). During the female focus group interview, participants sang some songs chanted by the AFDL's *Kadogo* soldiers. *Kadogo* is a Swahili word for 'the little' and refers to child soldiers. This thesis adopts the UNICEF's

definition that presents the child soldiers as "any child, boy or girl, under eighteen years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force or armed group in any capacity'' (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] 2009 in Trenholm et al., 2012:205). It must be mentioned that these instances were bewildering at first as I was wondering why they sang. However, after repeatedly listening to those songs, I understood the informal military socialising roles such performances had in perpetrating militarised ideologies within *Kadogo* (discussed in Chapter 5).

- ***Reflection on the difficulties encountered in organising the focus group interviews***

Compromising on the time frame. This research faced a last-minute cancellation of the focus group interview with former military personnel. This cancellation, as acknowledged by one of the former militaries who also participated in the pilot phase and individual interviews, was because they had to participate in a PEPFAR[8] seminar (on the fight against HIV/AIDS) destined for military (active and retired) and their dependents. Moreover, although the focus group dialogues with ordinary community members were organised, these were not without difficulties. Reaching an agreement on the interview time with male participants was challenging. The fieldworker faced three postponements before effectively organising the male focus group interview regardless of the appointment he previously scheduled with the participants through messaging (SMS) and telephone calls. According to the fieldworker's daily report, the main reason for these postponements was the *'cop'* (a local term to refer to last-minute but lucrative deals) the male participants had to make.

Frequent interruptions. Another difficulty a fieldworker encountered, which I also noticed as I transcribed the interviews, was multiple interruptions during the female focus group interview. As mentioned earlier, this focus group interview took place at a female seed ordinary participant's house. The challenge was mainly linked to the environment as the focus group

8 The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

interview was interrupted from time to time by participants' relatives to ask a question about something in the house.

Managing the conversation. Moderating a focus group interview goes beyond asking questions (Morrow, 2006; Patton, 2014). The moderator had to ensure that all participants expressed their points of view, especially because some participants tended to be silent when they considered their point of view less inclined to the majority (Patton, 2014). This was also the case during the focus group dialogue with women, as some women preferred to remain silent. However, as mentioned previously, the seed female participant encouraged those who were silent to speak. Fortunately, Mama Clara decided to share her view, which she interjected in an exclamatory way saying, *"Mbone hamuko na sema bia ba auto-defence!"* (Translated from Swahili: But you guys are not talking about those *auto-defence*!). This is how this research came across the existence of auto-defence groups, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.10.3 **Document analysis: Radio broadcast and documentary movie**

In addition to empirical data from the interviews (individual and focus group interviews), this thesis relied on a radio broadcast aired in September 1996, some days before the invasion of Bukavu by the AFDL troops. The late Archbishop Muzihirwa resorted to Radio *Maendeleo*'s channel to warn the local population and international lobby about the AFDL rebellion that implicated not only the Congolese local and national actors but also regional and international belligerents. To explore the content of the audio, I listened to, transcribed and translated the French-recorded audio into English. The view expressed by the late Archbishop Muzihirwa sustained this study participants' accounts that presented wartime rape as an issue of gendered power and domination between militarised protest masculinities, as an expression of ethnic grievances, and as a call and claim for military recognition and respect.

The documentary movie I explored provided access to the wartime rape victims' accounts in Bukavu. This movie was realised in 2018 within the Panzi Hospital's City of Joy, where

wartime rape victims who do not want to return to their respective villages receive psychological help after receiving medical assistance (mostly reparation of fistula as a consequence of being gang-raped or raped with trenchant objects). This documentary enabled the research to uncover how wartime rape destroys its victims' subjectivities and the community as a whole and how the power that wartime rape imposes on the victims may be countered to some extent.

3.11 Occupying a backseat

Apart from two participants (one female and one male) who agreed to be interviewed by me via Skype, all other participants refused to interact through computer-mediated approaches. This has been a humbling experience and has mostly "facilitated my awareness of my own biases and assumptions" (Morrow, 2006 in Fischer, 2006:150). The pilot phase was a learning process for diverse reasons. I was left intrigued by the participants' refusal to be interviewed by me remotely using technology. Although I suspected that would be the case with ordinary participants over 60 years old, the attitude adopted by participants in their 30s, for example, left me puzzled, especially as I considered myself an insider because I originate from Bukavu. I, therefore, requested the fieldworkers to converse with the participants to understand their reluctance. One female community leader indicated that *"some developmental organisations and NGOs present in Bukavu sometimes misuse people's images for their own benefits".* This issue highlighted by this study's participants has been referred to by some authors as "rape tourism or commercialization of wartime rape" (for example, Baaz and Stern, 2013:99) that, in some instances, resulted in people developing a tactic agency (Utas, 2005) to gain access to humanitarian aids even when these individuals did not fit in the defined victim category.

Stepping back. I faced this enigma during the data collection period. It was either I insisted on interacting directly with participants (via WhatsApp video calls, Skype or Zoom group calls) with the risk of endangering the research as a whole or I (despite the intellectual difficulty of it) listened to participants' inquietude and trusted the fieldworkers to lead the in-depth

individual interviews and focus group discussions effectively. Although occupying a backseat in research where one perceives oneself to be the lead researcher is extremely challenging (intellectually and emotionally), – for the first interviews, I felt like giving my newborn baby under the care of an experienced nanny with great recommendations, but I hesitate whether I should trust them or not! – I selected the second option as it was clearly participatory research, as articulated in Cornwall and Jewkes (1995). The authors argue that what makes research participatory is, among other things, the location of power during the research process. As such, the researcher hands over the control and occupies a backseat as a process facilitator rather than as the leader. At this point, the power of the research participants or co-researchers was visible in deciding the channel through which their narratives had to be communicated. It is thus a misleading assumption to consider participatory research as not a form of power. However, the power here is emancipatory for the participants from the marginalised group and gives them an opportunity that they are usually denied: the ability to voice their experiences and be listened to.

3.12 Data analysis

3.12.1 **Critical thematic content analysis through the hermeneutics method**

The choice of a hermeneutics critical thematic analysis has been dictated by this thesis's research question as the study aims to understand the Bukavu people's conceptualisation of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War. This approach thus comprises the hermeneutics method of interpretation and understanding and critical thematic content analysis.

In qualitative research, hermeneutics enables us to explore how people use language to mediate their experiences of the world (Freeman, 2008 in Given, 2008). Hence, in analysing the data, this thesis paid critical attention to the language participants used to describe their experience: a language informed by the symbolic order they inhabited and shaped their interpretation. The hermeneutics method enabled self-reflexive, dynamic and dialogic

processes of data analysis. The analysis was done continuously throughout data collection (Davis, 2007). Importantly, this data analysis approach permitted exploring how women, in particular, and the victims' community, in general, critically construct meaning based on their complex experience of debasement due to wartime rape within a patriarchal system. Avoiding pronouncing the word 'sex' (most participants used instead '*kiungo ya ki mama'* or women's reproductive organs) pointed out the taboo that surrounds sexuality in the eastern DRC. Hence through the data analysis, as a researcher, I was "re-interpreting a pre-interpreted situation" (Thompson, 1990:275). In other words, I was interpreting the participants' interpretation of wartime rape, as well as its political and socio-cultural consequences on the direct victims and their communities. Those re-interpretations were organised based on the recurrent themes in the participants' accounts. Also, because data were provided from different sources (in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, radiobroadcast and documentary movie), I proceeded to organise and label these data based on their type to differentiate between data collected through in-depth individual interviews, focus groups or other sources.

The thematic content analysis establishes, classifies, describes and reports themes found in a data set (Thorne, 2000; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Anderson, 2007, Nowell, Morris et al., 2017). Simplistically, thematic content analysis may be defined as "a general approach to analysing qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns in data" (Kawulich and Holland, 2012:231). Following Braun and Clarke (2006), the process of thematic content analysis in this study started by building a relationship with the data as I progressively transcribed the audio-recorded interviews. These interviews were conducted in French or Swahili, depending on the participant's preference.

The interview transcription was laborious; however, this time-consuming activity was worthwhile as it provided the "opportunity to get immersed in the data" (Patton, 2014:767). By doing so, I gained a significant understanding of the perpetrators' multi-layered motivations for

resorting to wartime rape as I was reading line-by-line the verbatim – "the essential raw data for qualitative analysis" (Patton, 2014:767) – and highlighting catching words or sentences that either fit or conflicted with the study's conceptual framework. It was thus helpful to examine how participants' accounts were interconnected and how these accounts "related to the broader society in terms of cultural and political processes" (Kawulich and Holland, 2012:230).

In addition to transcribing, I translated the interviews from French or Swahili to written English texts. This process allowed me to examine each interview and attempt to picture the interaction between the fieldworkers and the participants. Following my engagement with the transcribed verbatim, I defined themes by uncovering words or sentences that appeared either unexpected, conflicting or hidden (Given, 2015). It is worth mentioning that the initial coding is "the process of generating ideas and concepts from raw data such as interview transcripts, field notes, archival materials, reports, newspaper articles, and art" (Given, 2015:85).

In the coding process, I used different coloured highlighters to create categories of data excerpts for issues that emerged from the individual interviews, focus group discussions and the radio broadcast. Following Bryman (2001), each code was accompanied by the verbatim that generated the particular code to avoid the loss of context. By the end of the data collection period, I reviewed the coding schema that presented the identified codes to enrich an overall perspective of my codes. It should be mentioned that the duplicated codes were rearranged under one. The developed themes were, therefore, the result of my interpretation of the research subjects' interpretation of their experience. In other words, the exercise was to offer the inquirer's construction of the constructions of actors one studies (Schwandt, 1994; Brandt et al., 2004).

3.13 ***Data validation workshop***

The data validation workshop was organised into three sessions in the *La Mosaïque* meeting room to present the initial themes I had developed based on their accounts to the participants. Organising this activity followed a similar logic to the peer-to-peer approach adopted for data

collection and was audio recorded. Of the 30 participants, 21 participants participated in the data validation workshop. To facilitate the participants' task, the themes I developed were projected and read to the participants. The participants were invited to appreciate (endorse, deepen, extend, dismiss or further discuss) the themes and to say whether these themes were faithful to their accounts. To avoid a 'yes or no' exercise, I purposefully introduced other themes that were either unrelated to the study or presented strictly contrary to the participants' accounts. I was amazed to hear how participants easily spotted the wrong themes. At the end of each data validation workshop, participants shared a modest meal and received transportation fees to travel back to their respective homes. My research funds financed the meal and transportation.

3.14 Ethical considerations

This study was conducted after obtaining the Wits Human Research Ethics Committee's (non-medical) approval. Although wartime rape in the DRC has been widely researched (Autesserre, 2006; Baaz and Stern, 2010; 2011; 2013; 2015; Bjørkhang and Bøås, 2014; Daley, 2015; Aroussi, 2016, to mention a few) and the population in eastern DRC constantly interacts with researchers from diverse disciplines (see Daley, 2015), researching wartime rape still presents numerous ethical challenges that researchers must consider.

These ethical considerations include the risk of exposing participants to violent memories they wished to leave in their past. Accordingly, Patton (2014:723) asserts that participating in an interview evokes both the interviewee and interviewer's "thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience". Therefore, the researcher must pay attention to any sign of the participant's discomfort. No participant in this study was a direct victim or perpetrator of wartime rape. However, participants acknowledged how they came across some lifeless bodies when they were fleeing the 1996 First Congo War. Following Daley's (2015) assertion that the research must make sure that the process of information gathering and documentation reduces the risk to participants, I obtained the informed consent of participants and acknowledged to them that they could access psychological help at any clinic of the *Confiance* network (free of charge) if

needed. Moreover, participants were given a toll-free number they could use in case they experienced any psychological discomfort following their participation. In addition to violent memories, this study's participants and fieldworkers could be exposed to security danger following the nature of the field, for example, the multiplicity of insurgent armed authorities as a result of a war-fragmented national government. Fortunately, the security situation in Bukavu was relatively peaceful at the time of the study as (unfortunately) armed conflicts between the FARDC and other rebel groups had shifted to rural areas. Thus, considerable effort was made to consider all these aspects during collaborations with fieldworkers and participants.

3.14.1 **Obtaining participants' informed consent**

Informed consent can broadly be understood as a procedure where the potential study participants are informed in clear terms about all the aspects of the research for them to decide to take part in the study after examining all aspects of the study and the extent of their participation (Subramani, 2019; Gunnarsson, 2020). Moreover, Gunnarsson (2020:37) invites us to see the participants' consent as an "open-ended process" instead of being fixed. As previously mentioned, the study's participants were at least 31 years old and had witnessed the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict. In addition to the fieldworker's field notes, the study's individual and focus group interviews were recorded, as consented to by the participants. The participants provided verbal consent that I could easily hear on the record since I advised the fieldworkers to ask for consent before recording and again when they started to record the interviews.

This study's participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation anytime. Although 30 participants consented to participate in the data collection process (in-depth and focus group interviews) and the data validation workshop, only 21 participants took part in the data validation workshop. Finally, this study was alert to what happens to consent after the interviews (Gunnarsson, 2020). This invited me to be careful about how "the ethical

principle of informed consent should be understood in connection to the progress of time" (Gunnarsson, 2020:38). Therefore, the participants were informed how their accounts would be turned into research data that constitute this thesis and published on the University of Witwatersrand online library.

3.14.2 **Assuring confidentiality and anonymity**

This study provided assurance of confidentiality to its participants. As presented by Given (2008), confidentiality refers to the protection of research participants' privacy. This means that the study's data were not unveiled in ways that could reveal the participants' identities. Based on their experience of researching sexual violence in South Africa, Jewkes et al. (2000 in Daley, 2015) provide insights on strengthening the confidentiality of the researcher and the researched. These insights include ensuring privacy by conducting interviews in spaces that do not expose the participants to the public. Hence, most participants selected their households to conduct the interview and focus group interviews.

Moreover, this research adopted the participatory research approach, advocating for a participant-centred approach that stipulates that the researcher should not impose anonymity on participants who may wish to be named. However, participants in this study did not wish to be acknowledged through their real identities. Hence, pseudonyms were used to quote participants directly. In addition, the participants' particular functions or political titles were not mentioned to avoid any disclosure of their identities.

The fieldworkers used their mobile phones to record the data. At the end of each interview, the recordings were sent to one of the fieldworkers who assumed the supervisor role. I received the recordings and field notes from the supervisor via email, which I downloaded on a password-protected computer.

3.14.3 **Reflection on the fieldworker's safety after the research**

The fieldworkers who facilitated the study's data collection work as humanitarian agents and have always lived in Bukavu. I stress each fieldworker's highly valued work, without which

this research could not be what it is under the pandemic restrictions. Although I was absent from the research field due to travel restrictions related to the Covid-19 pandemic, in November 2020 (data were collected from September to October 2020), when the travel restrictions were lifted, my supervisors suggested I consider travelling to Bukavu to conduct additional interviews as an additional way of verifying the data fieldworkers collected. After serious thought, I decided not to go to Bukavu to (re)collect or (re)validate the data for the following ethical reasons. Firstly, the data collected by the fieldworkers responded to the research question; I was thus satisfied with the data. Secondly, the fieldworkers had used their time to gather the data without being paid; our former professional relation was sufficient for them to assist. The only monetary compensation they received was a stipend (from my research funds) to help organise the interviews. Therefore, I considered it unethical to (re)collect or (re)validate the data, overlooking their efforts and time. Finally, travelling to Bukavu would provide me with only the academic gratification of mentioning that I collected the data in a red zone (Daley, 2015), even when this would not have added more than what was already provided by the fieldworkers. The power imbalance between humanitarian agents and the local community was also taken in consideration and was addressed through the fact that beside their work, these fieldworkers lived within the researched community.

3.14.4 **Providing participants with transport fees from *La Mosaïque* to their households after the data validation workshop**

It is traditionally perceived unethical to provide monetary compensation to participants in exchange for their participation in research (Patton, 2014; Daley, 2015; Cronin-Furman and Lake, 2018). Therefore, none of the participants in this study provided their accounts in exchange for monetary compensation. However, the participants were provided with transportation fees to facilitate their travel to the data validation workshop and to return to their homes. This stipend was provided at the end of the data validation workshop.

3.15 Conclusion

This chapter reflected on the research process and my data collection experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. I outlined the participatory research method. I highlighted how the data collection process was done in two phases: the pilot and effective data collection. The pilot phase pre-tested the potential participants' appreciation of a computerised approach to data collection. The pilot phase enabled the seed participants to evaluate the research question and interview schedules as a way of implicating participants in the early stage of data collection. The pilot phase also helped uncover the participants' attitudes toward a computerised data collection approach. It followed that I had to occupy a backseat to respect the study participants' will. I pointed to the ethical implications, critiquing the methods I used and demonstrated some of the ethical implications that ascend when leading qualitative research through a participatory approach. I explained the rationale for choosing participatory methodological tools (in-depth individual and focus group interviews), the challenges that arose during data collection and the resort to other sources (a radio broadcast and documentary movie). The documentary movie, for instance, enabled me to access wartime rape direct victims' accounts and conceptualisations of their experience, the impact of rape on their subjectivities and how, in some cases, they reconstructed such subjectivity. I also presented the hermeneutics critical thematic content data analysis approach. Finally, I reflected on the ethical implications that derive from researching wartime rape in the eastern DRC. The main ethical challenge I encountered was the dilemma between occupying a backseat and finding other means of personally leading the interviews, which would have resulted in endangering the research as a whole. I highlighted how I managed the position of back-seater and main researcher as I enabled the fieldworkers to lead most of the interviews with participants while I provided them with specific guidelines throughout the data collection process.

Chapter 4:
The eastern DRC's armed turmoil as a legacy of the Belgian colonisation: From colonial indirect land administration policy to the 2004 Kivu's Conflict

4.1 Introduction

To understand how violence came to take sexualised forms in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War ('Liberation' War), this chapter provides a historical account of land administration that highlights the link between customary territory, local power struggles and identity. I emphasise that the local armed violence in Bukavu, particularly in the June 2004 Bukavu Offensive, and the multiplicity of armed groups in South Kivu (eastern DRC) are rooted in the Belgian colonisers' territorialisation of ethnicity and ethnicisation of territories. This territorialisation has empowered collaborating customary chiefs and informed local conflicts around access and denied access to land. It followed that people's identities were politicised in ways that emphasised a binary opposition or dichotomy of us and them, resulting in the development of a pronounced sense of otherness. In the post-colonial era, territorial belonging and territorial aspirations informed the militarisation of ethnicity in two ways: communities that had legally recognised customary territories would engage in militaristic mobilisations to defend such a territory and communities without a territory they could call their own would also mobilise to claim and impose through armament a particular territory (Minembwe territory in this case) to be recognised as their legal customary land. With a particular focus on the South Kivu province, this chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I extend the presentation of the geolocation of the research field as initiated in Chapter 3. Secondly, I expand on the colonial territorial administration strategy section, divided into sub-sections. At the third point, this chapter explores the post-colonial period and shows how local conflicts, nourished by ethnicity and territorial claims, have been determining in the participation in national armed violence, such as the 'Liberation' War and in regional conflicts rooted in the Rwandan genocide. Moreover, I maintain that national and regional conflicts influenced the 2004 Kivu Conflict. Based on this, I thus argue in the following chapters that to

understand the scale of violence, the persistence and the biological, as well as the symbolic dimensions of wartime rape (physical violence), it is necessary to build an analysis of militarised protest and ethnic masculinities and femininities as a consequence of unmet territorial and or military claims that nourished local conflicts in South Kivu in general and particularly in Bukavu.

4.2 Geographical location, population and customary organisation of the research field

4.2.1 **Geographical location**

In its eastern part, Bukavu is separated from Rwanda and Burundi by Lake Kivu and the Ruzizi River. The amount of experienced armed violence and related wartime rape is always foremost when scholars present the county's history. Hence, a shadow is cast over the subtropical climate thanks to Lake Kivu (located at 1,500 metres above sea level) and Bukavu's attractive location to which the city owes its green hand, dipped in the lake characteristic as represented on the aerial view in Figure 4.1.

Image 4-1 Aerial view of Bukavu city surrounded by Lake Kivu. (*Source: Céline Ngusera via Messenger)*

Bukavu has two seasons: the rainy season for nine months (January to May, then September to December) and the dry season (June, July and August). The temperatures fluctuate between 14°C and 25°C in the rainy season, and a daytime maximum of 27°C is reached in the dry season[9]. These temperatures, combined with the prolonged rainy season, favour the region's agricultural activities.

4.2.2 **Population of Bukavu**

According to the oral tradition, when Belgian colonisers arrived in the actual territory of Bukavu, they were amazed by the number of cattle[10] that were on one of the city's hills. Pointing toward that hill, the colonisers asked one of the inhabitants what they called those animals. "Bu nkafu" (translated from Mashi[11] is 'farm of cows'), replied the inhabitant. From that moment on, the city's name was changed from Rusozi (Kisangani and Bobb, 2009) to Bukavu[12] by the Belgian colonisers who could not properly pronounce the Mashi language.

Bukavu's population is permanently growing because of internal displacement of people fleeing villages in quest of safer places in urban areas. As a result, the ethnically heterogeneous population in Bukavu has increased from 806,940 in 2012 to 1,133,000 inhabitants in 2021[13]. Despite this heterogeneity that implies a diversity of native languages, all inhabitants of Bukavu share Swahili, one of the four national languages (the others three being Kikongo, Tshiluba and Lingala), as the unifying spoken language. Thanks to its favourable climate, livestock and agriculture mainly characterise the livelihood of people in the rural areas around Bukavu. Hence, access to fertile land is of huge importance for this population. Fishing in Lake Kivu provides not only a variety of sea foods but Lake Kivu also contains petrol or gasoline.

[9] Weather-atlas.com
[10] Cows are the emblematic animals of the Bashi tribes, and the bridal price is estimated in terms of milky cows. The more valued the bride and her family are, the more milky cows they can claim as bridal price. A healthy cow is valued to at least $500 per head.
[11] Mashi or Shi is the native language spoken by all members of the Bushi kingdom.
[12] From 1927, Belgian Colonial authorities renamed Bukavu as "Costermansville" (in French) or "Costermansstad" (in Dutch).
[13] PopulationStat.com

However, the discovered dissolved carbon dioxide and methane expose the city to the risk of limnic eruption[14] in contrast to Goma's population in the North Kivu province, which is exposed to volcanic eruptions from Mount Nyiragongo, such as what happened at the end of May 2021, causing thousands of people to flee Goma.

Armed violence directly impacts the Bukavu population's composition. For example, the Kinyarwanda-speaking population of Bukavu significantly decreased after the 2004 Bukavu Offensive in fear of the repercussions following the wartime rape by the members of the RCD rebel group, as later developed in this chapter.

4.3 The customary chiefdoms and the rule of patriarchy

Culturally, the South Kivu province comprises chiefdoms administrated by a customary chief called *Mwami* (or King from Swahili). Patriarchy constitutes the socio-cultural symbolic order, which is sustained and perpetuated through the customary chiefdom organisation that characterises the South Kivu province and all other provinces of the DRC (Vlassenroot, 2013).

4.3.1 **Farmers and shepherds' tumultuous relationship**

According to historical speculations (for lack of written literature prior to colonisation), the relationship between the inhabitants of South Kivu was generally harmonious before colonisation, characterised by barter as exchange approaches between the practitioners of livestock and those practising agriculture. In his MA thesis, Rukundwa (2004) provided examples of these goods exchanges, mentioning how a community of Banyarwanda that self-installed in the Ruzizi *Plaine* (in the Bafuliiro Kingdom located in the southern region of South Kivu) exchanged the products of its livestock (cows, milk and meat) against agricultural products (cassava, beans, maize, etc.) from Bafuliiro, a cohabiting ethnic group. The Banyarwanda, who later adopted the name of Banyamulenge in South Kivu (while they continue to be referred to as "Banyarwanda" in North Kivu), were thus cattle keepers while the

[14] "Killer Lakes." BBC Two Thursday 4 April 2002, summarised at www.bbc.co.uk.

Bafuliiro practised extensive agriculture. Another example of the good social relations between the Bafuliiro and Banyamulenge was provided by Barbant et al. (2013:55), who explained how the "Banyamulenge children were under the care of Bafuliiro families during the transhumance period" that led the Banyamulenge men to leave their homes (wives and children included) in search of green prairies for their cattle. It must be stressed that only males could be and were shepherds within this community. This is important to keep in mind because it explains the gender dynamics within the community-based armed groups such as the *Mai-Mai* (militarised farmers) and the *Abagirye* who then became '*Twigwaneho'* (or the Banyamulenge's *Mai-Mai)*. "*Twigwaneho* means let's defend ourselves", translated from Kinyarwanda, meaning militarised shepherds (Barbant et al., 2013:86). Nevertheless, the relationship between these two groups of farmers and shepherds has not always been straightforward.

Local conflicts emerged as a consequence of a herd of cattle grazing and destroying the crops. However, the community had ways of dealing with such low-level conflicts. Barbant et al. (2013) explain how a system of *itulo* or customary tributes was installed in such ways that shepherds would pay this tribute to compensate for the damages caused by the cattle during transhumance. However, these low-level antagonisms were progressively instrumentalised by both parties. This led to progressive militarisation, on the one hand, of farmers forming the armed groups referred to as *Mai-Mai*, whose mission was to defend and protect their communities' interests, especially their land, that had a strong symbolic meaning, as later presented in this chapter. On the other hand, the shepherds also proceeded in the militarisation of their young men to protect their cattle from *Mai-Mai* looting. In South Kivu, therefore, the relationship between land and identity is intertwined in such ways that land as a symbol of belonging was central to the formation of armed groups whose members' identities are defined according to them being seen either as autochthons or migrants.

While goods exchanges were common between ethnic groups, it has been narrated how the territorialisation of identity (as it will be presented in the next lines) led to the territorialisation of social interactions, including marriage. This means that inter-ethnic marriages were discouraged through different practices, such as the overpricing of dowry or compulsory estimation of dowry in terms of the number of cows for various reasons; the main reason being the preservation of genealogical purity or what was referred to as the spirit of genealogy (Rukundwa, 2004).

4.3.2 **Land, women and cows: a symbolic transaction between families**

Despite the divergence in livelihood modes of organisation between the Banyamulenge (locally defined as migrants) and the rest of the cohabiting ethnic groups (seen as native), both groups shared patriarchy as cultural order. The patriarchal mode of organisation of these communities subjected men and women to gendered roles and practices. These practices varied from beliefs around inheritance to the social place a woman was given in the customary community, as well as ideas about what a proper woman is, as previously examined in Chapter 2 and extended on in Chapter 6. For instance, women would not inherit their families' goods since they were defined as 'travellers'. This meant that a girl's life purpose was to be given to another family in exchange for a bridal price that symbolised the established bond between two families. Making a girl an heir would thus waste her family's wealth since she may carry it into another family. This reminds us of Walby's (1990) suggestion, according to which patriarchy, as a system of social structures, provides multiple sites of a woman's oppression by denying her, in this case, the right to gain material wealth and by ranking her under male individuals to ensure and secure that woman's economic dependence on the associated man within the community. Following the same logic, only boys, regardless of their age, inherited their fathers' socio-economic status in the customary chiefdoms.

In South Kivu, allowing an individual or group of individuals access to land (inheritance (owner) or after paying the *itulo*) symbolised one's acceptance within a social network whose members were expected to be loyal and collaborative among themselves (Barbant et al., 2013). While women are still excluded from inheriting their families' goods (mainly land and or family houses) in many places in the DRC, some exceptional families, especially in the urban areas, have started revising these inheriting practices given that women have increasing access to higher education and employment outside of their respective family circle.

Before engaging in dowry discussions, interested families asked questions, such as 'Whose child is this?' or 'From which hill do they come from?' These questions revisit the genealogy and reputation of the families that aimed to build alliances. Estimating the bridal price was based on the economic and social capital of the families engaged in the exchange; the richer and well-reputed the girl's family was, the higher the bridal price would be (Barbant et al., 2013). Such practices aimed to discourage families considered poor to envisage marrying girls from wealthier families or to uncover families with doubtful reputations. A typical example was the Banyamulenge, who only accepted cows as dowry to discourage individuals from agrarian tribes from marrying within the Banyamulenge ethnic group. Another example is that of the Bashi ethnic group (practitioner of both livestock and agriculture) that usually settled higher dowry prices when the men from the Barega ethnic group (who were said to be hunters) sought to marry within the Bushi chiefdom. Elements, such as honour, reputation, social ties or what can be called the family's symbolic capital, as well as the material wealth or economic capital, were all taken into consideration before two families engaged in marriage. Hence, cows have a dual symbolic meaning in South Kivu, where the cow cattle provide cultural and economic symbolism (Barbant et al., 2013). Culturally, the number of cows an individual owns informs their social importance. Moreover, these cows can be accessed as bridal gifts (linked to the estimated value of the woman to be exchanged) in the form of *itulo* or exchange of money.

Similarities used to be drawn between women and cows to show how, as women who nourish their families (not necessarily as providers, though), communities that have cows cannot suffer from hunger since a good cow provides milk and other derivative products.

Economically, cows constituted living banks since they could be sold, and the obtained money could be used to send children to school, purchase medicine and buy any other goods (Barbant et al., 2013). The women's social value was thus linked to the economic and symbolic capital of her family of origin, as well as her husband's. This made marriage a family business between men rather than an understanding between the future spouses (Rukundwa, 2004; Stern and Nystrand, 2006; Barbant et al., 2013; Vlassenroot, 2013). It is thus to be understood how the practice of intra-ethnic marriage, while preserving the homogeneity of the lineage, would also constitute a source of interethnic local conflicts, especially when a particular tribe or ethnic group considers that it was undervalued by another one that refused to establish a marital alliance.

These local relations were further antagonised by the Belgian colonisation that promoted the construction of otherness as particular ethnic groups were defined as migrants and hence placed under the control of other ethnic groups that were considered to have birth rights on lands. As mentioned above, the South Kivu province was (and still is) divided into customary chiefdoms that the Belgian colonisers used as a reference for mapping their colonies. This practice was referred to as the territorialisation of identity or creation of tribal homelands (Boone, 2013), as presented in the following section.

4.4 The Belgian colonisers' territorialisation of ethnicity and the promotion of insider/outsider dichotomy

The following section presents how the colonial territorial administration strategy purposely manipulated territorial belonging, which resulted in othering those defined as migrants. It is important to emphasise that the focus on specific ethnic groups in this study does not aim to promote further grievance against these ethnic groups. On the contrary, the aim is to bring the

audience to recognise that part of the solution to wartime rape in the eastern DRC can be found if local conflicts around access or belonging to customary lands are taken seriously and addressed in ways that are inclusive rather than exclusive of particular ethnic groups' territorial claims.

4.4.1 **Customary chiefdoms as colonial administrative units**

Bukavu belongs to the Bushi Kingdom, which encompasses different customary chiefdoms and tribes in South Kivu under the leadership of a *Mwami* (translated to King from Swahili). The eight predominant Bushi chiefdoms are Burhinyi, Kaziba, Lwindi, Ngweshe, Kabare, Nindja, Chinda and Luhwindja. In addition to these chiefdoms, it is worth mentioning the Bafuliiro chiefdom in the territory of Uvira (located south of Bukavu), given the part it played in providing the ground for the 1996 First Congo War (Vlassenroot, 2013), as presented in the last section of this chapter. Each of these chiefdoms is subdivided into communities ruled by a representative of the *Mwami.* For post-colonial administrative purposes, the Kingdom and related chiefdoms collaborate with the provincial governor. Yet, in the name of self-defence, these chiefdoms use their relative autonomy to lead militarised activities. The ethnic armed groups are locally referred to as *Mai-Mai,* an appellation that differentiates them from the formal national army since the *Mai-Mai* gain their informal militarised training from traditional and magical practices, as discussed below. In contrast to the provincial governor, who is elected through legislative elections, the *Mwami* or King inherits his status, which is transmitted from father to son. The wealth of the Kingdom was measured through predefined assets, such as the size of cattle, the number of children and wives and the territorial scope (Burume, 1991) that belonged to the chiefdoms, to mention only a few. In addition to these, the *Mwami* gets other incomes from the taxes paid by the chiefdoms, especially the taxes on productive lands that have always been at the centre of local turmoil within these chiefdoms that primarily practised

subsistence farming and livestock. This last activity was particularly seen as the result of contact with migrating pastoral populations, such as the Banyamulenge (Barbant et al., 2013).

Hence, the link between identity and access to land has been a core element in the proliferation of conflicts at local levels and then translated to regional and national levels. The multiplicity of ethnic groups in the eastern DRC also informs the array of community-based militias that operate in that part of the country. While many examples of these local conflicts can be provided, this chapter will focus on the territory-based conflict between the Bavira and Banyamulenge populations who both inhabit the Bafuliiro chiefdom situated in the *Ruzizi Plaine*, south of Bukavu. The violence between these two groups is a typical example of how local underlying forces and agendas amalgamate with armed conflict at regional and national levels (Autesserre, 2006).

4.4.2 **Occupants, not owners: the Banyamulenge's refuted territorial aspirations**

The way the Belgian administration redefined its colonial administrative structures, with the aim of consolidating its dominance, had a serious impact on the livelihood of the Congolese population. On the one hand, the Bavira were recognised as native Congolese, and their Bafuliiro chiefdom was acknowledged as one administrative unit. On the other hand, the Banyamulenge saw their territorial aspirations denied by the Belgian colonialists who described them as outsiders from Rwanda and Burundi despite the many years they lived in the Ruzizi's *Hauts Plateaux* as a result of pastoral migration (Vlassenroot, 2013). The exact period of the Banyamulenge (previously called Banyarwanda (those from Rwanda)) and currently referred to as "Congolese Tutsi's migration to the DRC" is subjected to historical speculation. Some historian authors date this migration to the sixteenth century (Kagame, 1972 mentioned in Mutombo 1997:21), and other scholarships suggest the eighteenth or nineteenth century as the period when the Banyarwanda arrived in the DRC searching for fertile lands for their cattle (Weiss, 2000). These accounts are similar in that the Banyamulenge's arrival in the Congo

preceded colonialisation, and they self-installed in the *Hauts Plateaux* that provided auspicious lands for their cattle. These lands were already occupied by the Bafuliiro, and the arrival of the pastoral population was initially seen as beneficial for both groups since they used to exchange crops for livestock. Nevertheless, because of their origin, the colonisers placed the Banyamulenge under the leadership of the Bafuliiro customary chiefdom, perceiving land taxes or tribute from this pastoral ethnic group (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). This also meant that the Banyamulenge were denied customary power along with the Congolese identity following the policy according to which they could claim Congolese citizenship only with traditional land. Under the colonial era, the tribal homelands represented administrative entities that strengthened the social, cultural and political power of the customary chiefs who collaborated with the colonisers (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). Hence, a recognised tribal homeland gave legitimacy and civic rights to its native children. This explains how a recognised tribal homeland or ethnic territory was intertwined with people's identity.

In addition to facilitating the Belgian territorial administration, the constitution of tribal homelands resulted in othering those who were seen as outsiders. In 1998, for example, the adoption of the Banyamulenge appellation by the Banyarwanda living in South Kivu was thus a symbolic act that sought to gain recognition as Congolese by subscribing to a logic that previously excluded and oppressed them. To counter the outsider classification, the Banyamulenge opted for this particular toponym (instead of Banyarwanda, which was a constant reminder of their non-belonging) to symbolise their sole identity given that Banyamulenge means those from Mulenge (a hill in the Minembwe area in South Kivu province) (Lemarchand, 1999, Jackson 2006 mentioned in Court, 2013). This claim for sole rights was publicly declared and militarised in 1996 when Banyamulenge youths joined the AFDL rebellion. This means that from 1933 (when the Belgian colonisers left the Banyamulenge without a recognised territorial entity and identity) to the 1998 RCD rebellion,

the Banyamulenge were an ethnic group without a recognised customary territory. Hence, they were also not considered aspirants to political rights (vote and political representation) and were subjected to structural marginalisation in the form of reduced access to education and occupation of a particular type of employment, such as public administrative positions. One of the reasons for such marginalisation was said to be linked to the Banyamulenge's resistance to colonial rules as they were presenting their livelihood claims to their ethnic chiefs instead of doing so through the Bafuliiro customary chief who was recognised as the legitimate intermediary between the community and the colonisers. The ascension to independence in 1960 came with social imaginaries of a brighter future that, however, did not concretise the Banyamulenge's territorial aspiration.

4.5 The continuous struggle for customary land in the post-colonial period

4.5.1 **The permanent shadow of Belgian territorial policy in the newly independent DRC**

On June 30th 1960, the DRC was declared an independent country. However, this independence did not mean independence from colonial rules. It follows that the land administration policy, as initiated during the colonial era, remains influential in the current DRC. Ethnic-based chiefdoms still exist, and customary chiefs still rule their territories in parallel with provincial governors. Consequently, until 2002 the Banyamulenge were still subjected to the governance and political power of other traditional chiefs in the Bafuliiro Kingdom. As mentioned in Vlassernoot (2013), local elites were thus using the colonialists' land delimitations to justify their marginalisation of the Banyamulenge ethnic group, which was subjected to heavy taxes compared to the rest of the cohabiting tribes. This marginalisation was imputed to the Banyamulenge's 'isolationist' ways of living, which was seen by the rest of the cohabiting ethnic groups as arrogance due to having large cattle that gave the Banyamulenge a distinctive social and economic status (Barbant et al., 2013; Vlassenroot, 2013; Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). In addition to this, the Banyamulenge were accused of setting unfair barter rules since owning livestock (especially cattle) gave them economic capital that other ethnic

groups judged superior to their own. The same economic capital was used by this ethnic group to discourage extra-ethnic marriage since the bridal price was estimated in terms of the number of cows (a practice that was later adopted by many other ethnic groups, such as the Bashi from the Bushi Kingdom). Nevertheless, despite their potential economic capital, the Banyamulenge did not reach hegemony or a dominant position in the eastern DRC as they did not have customary power due to the lack of a tribal homeland and were portrayed as shepherds who lacked education (Barbant et al., 2013).

Although subjected to the rule of the Bafuliiro customary chief, the Banyamulenge did not always recognise the authority of the Fuliiro customary chief and were organised under the leadership of Budulege, their ethnic leader. This non-recognition of the Fuliiro customary authority was an autonomous source of local violence in the *Hauts Plateaux*, especially after the 1998 rebellion that placed the *Hauts Plateaux* under the control of RCD soldiers.

4.5.2 **Towards the militarisation and masculinisation of local ethnic identities: *Mai-Mai*, Abagirye and political subjectivity**

The Banyamulenge's territorial aspirations have been manipulated by the independent state. Three years after the ascension to independence, political turmoil began to emerge as Bafuliiro and Bavira ethnic-based Simba rebels, also called *Mai-Mai* Muleliste, sought to fight against Mobutu's regime (Barbant et al., 2013). The appellation *Mai-Mai* (from *Maji* or water as translated from Swahili) refers to the source of their magical fighting power that creates the groups' cohesion replacing formal military training (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). It is locally narrated how at their very early formation, the *Mai-Mai* were said to be immune to gun bullets thanks to their magical power; they (the *Mai-Mai*) only had to scream "*Maji*" or water for the bullet to traverse them without destroying them as if their bodies were liquefied.

The fight between the Simba rebels and the then Zairian army escalated, and the rebels were forced to retreat in the Ruzizi *Hauts Plateaux*, an area populated by the Bavira and Banyamulenge. The latter were thus victims of looting and unfair taxes from the Simba rebels

who had the support of the Bafuliiro customary chief (Vlassenroot, 2013). Facing these exactions, the Banyamulenge also organised, in the 1960s, their male youths into an ethnic militia called the "*Abagirye*, a noun imitative of *guerriers*; a French word that means warriors" (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015:196). It must be mentioned that the *Abagirye* existed before the fight between the FAZ and the Simba *Mai-Mai*. As mentioned previously, young men in the Banyamulenge ethnic groups armed themselves to protect their cattle during the transhumance. The initial mission of protecting their cattle was progressively extended to protection and revenge against perceived land-related injustices. The fact that only men were shepherds also explains how most community-based militias, be it the *Mai-Mai* or *Abagyrye*, were composed only of males. This is related to the patriarchal norms that define men as potential protectors and fighters (Enloe, 2004; 2015).

The *Abagirye* had the support of the Zaire government that provided them with military training and arms supplies to weaken the Simba attacks. This collaboration was explained by the fact that the *Abagirye* knew the territory occupied by the Simba rebels well for having lived there for decades. Resorting to the *Abagirye* was also interpreted by their community as the then government's formal recognition of the Banyamulenge as rightful occupants of the Ruzizi *Plaine*. Notwithstanding, the Banyamulenge's participation in this battle had a double effect. On the one hand, it escalated the existent local conflict between the Banyamulenge and the rest of the cohabiting ethnic groups (Vira, Fuliiro and Bembe). On the other hand, it allowed the Banyamulenge to enter and participate politically in the Zaire government. To reward their collaboration, Mobutu allowed some of the *Abagirye* to join the Zaire national army and enabled improved access to employment openings, which Banyamulenge civilians would not have accessed otherwise since they were prevented education since the colonial era (Barbant et al., 2013). The access to the public sphere (mostly to education and employment) helped this particular community to be less aloof, and the accumulated knowledge and network facilitated

the construction of political subjectivity. Therefore, the Banyamulenge example explains how "ethnicity gets converted into nationalist consciousness, how consciousness becomes organised, and how organised nationalism becomes militarised" (Enloe, 2004:101). However, the formation of the *Abagirye* was not initially for nationalist purposes but for local ethnic goals. The *Abagirye* militias vanished with the integration of most of its members in the then FAZ. With the insurgence of the 1998 RCD rebellion (see below), the remnant of the *Abagirye* formed another armed militia group they called Local Defence in 1999, which became *Twigwaneho* (let's protect ourselves, translated from Kinyarwanda) in 2000 in an unsuccessful effort to distance themselves from Rwanda (Barbant et al., 2013).

To concretise their political subjectivity, the Banyamulenge appointed Kabarule in 1966, then a school teacher, to assume the role of spokesperson because he had previously played administrative roles in the Bavira chiefdom at the time of the Simba rebellion. Kabarule's mission was to voice the community's demand, according to which the territory of Bijombo had to be turned into the Banyamulenge's independent territory (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). While this demand was resisted by other communities, frictions were also emerging within the Banyamulenge community itself due to divergent opinions. Two blocks were formed. On the one hand, educated youths suggested the departure from customary rules for modern ways of managing their aspired territory to embrace and adjust to social and economic changes brought about by the country's ascension to independence. On the other hand, the progenies of the Budulege resisted such a change that would lead to the loss of their symbolic power within the Banyamulenge community since the modernisation suggested that the leaders would be elected and not inherit their position (Autesserre, 2006; Vlassenroot 2013; Verweijen and Vlassenroot 2015). The Budulege's descendants explained their position based on the territorialisation of identity principle in the sense that a recognised customary territory would have made them similar to surrounding chiefdoms and thus would propel their chance to be

recognised as Congolese citizens. This internal tension was thus a consequence of two coexisting modes of governance within the Congolese nation, namely the customary (ethnic) and state (democratic) governance (Muchukiwa, 2006; Barbant et al., 2013).

After several controversies (the denied access to the national ID card in 1969, as an example), the year 1970 seemed promising since it was the first time that a Munyamulenge (singular form of Banyamulenge; *'Ba'* indicating a plural form of *'Mu'* in most eastern DRC's native languages) was elected at national level (Vlassenroot, 2013). Following this election, the Bijombo was formalised as a territory encompassing 18 villages predominantly headed by the Banyamulenge. However, the law that enabled the Banyamulenge to exercise political rights was revised in 1981 to (re)implement the colonial land policy that stipulated that they could claim political rights, and thus, only those who inhabited the country before August 1885 were Congolese citizens (Willame, 1997), knowing that the Banyamulenge were said to have arrived within the Congolese territory some years after the suggested reference date. In 1982 and 1987, all Banyamulenge politicians were thus forbidden to lead their electoral campaigns and were not elected. This was experienced as a return to the departure spot in the colonial era when subjectivities related to their territorial identities were subjected to structural violence.

Having gained symbolic and cultural capital in the form of education, a new generation of intellectuals arose within the Banyamulenge community. In 1985, together with another colleague, Azarias Ruberwa mobilised Banyamulenge students with the purpose of discussing the future of their community (Meger, 2014). Azarias Ruberwa became, in 1998, president of the RCD rebellion; this position later enabled his appointment as one of the four vice-presidents of the transition government that came into existence on June 30th, 2003 (the other three vice-presidents being Jean-Pierre Bemba, Abdoulaye Yerodia Ndombasi and Arthur Z'ahidi Ngoma).

4.6 The continuing local power struggles following the establishment of the territorialisation of leadership

Before the early 1990s, the permanent legislation shifts either included or excluded (depending on the political interests of the moment) the Banyamulenge as Congolese citizens. This shaped the Ruzizi *Plaine* as the ground for local power struggles between the Bavira and Banyamulenge. These struggles resulted in accumulated grievances on the part of the Banyamulenge, and these grievances took the form of open violence from early 1993 with the shift from the authoritarian regime to democracy. In his April 23rd, 1990 discourse, Mobutu, in tears, announced the end of "*O linga O linga tse oza nakati ya MPR*[15]" (translated from Lingala[16] is "like it or not you are part of the MPR", Mobutu's single-party). At that time, Mobutu's MPR was the only alternative to political participation. The end of the single-party thus opened the door to multi-parties in the then Zaire, allowing people to claim political inclusion (Turner, 2007; Meger, 2010; 2014; Stearns, 2011; 2014; Vlassenroot, 2013). Following this announcement, Mobutu established the territorialisation of leadership that stipulated that "high ranking provincial administrators…had to originate from the province where they were posted" (Vlassenroot, 2013:25). In other words, only those who were recognised by law as belonging to that province could claim political power, such as governing a province; a right the Banyamulenge did not have prior to December 2002. In fact, in December 2002, the Congolese government and fighting militias, of which the RCD (mainly constituted of the Banyamulenge) was the prominent member, signed the Global and Inclusive Agreement that promised to recognise the Banyamulenge as Congolese citizens at the same level as the rest of other ethnic groups (Barbant et al., 2013).

As mentioned in Vlassenroot (2013), the beginning of a democratic era in the DRC was characterised by open local violence between the Banyamulenge and Bavira communities now

[15] *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (Popular Movement of Revolution)
[16] Lingala is one of the four Congolese national languages, together with Swahili, Tshiluba and Kongo. French is ranked as the administrative language.

that people, in the name of democracy, had the right to express their grievances openly. What followed was the mobilisation of ethnic identities by local leaders who aspired to national political power. Male youths from both sides (the Banyamulenge and other ethnic groups) were called to form ethnic militias (the *Mai-Mai* and *Twigwaneho*) to back up the aspired national power of their customary chiefs. When it comes to the relationship between the *Mai-Mai* and community leaders, Barbant et al. (2013:64) caution not to overestimate the symbolic power (which the authors called "the respect to elderlies") of community leaders on the *Mai-Mai* since the relation between the two groups is not always straightforward. More precisely, the authors highlight how the *Mai-Mai* can easily obey the (customary) chief's command "when it comes to attacking a group but they [the *Mai-Mai*] can resist this chief's order when their economic interests are on the line…when they are ordered to leave an area rich in coltan for example" (Barbant et al., 2013:64). The *Mai-Mai* fighters, initially formed to defend their community's land, have also extended their actions to make a living from their guns they acquire either from the FARDC (they buy them) or as "*butin de guerre"* (spoils of war) after confrontations with other armed groups, such as the *Twigwaneho* (Barbant et al. 2013:57). Along similar lines, this thesis argues that *Mai-Mai* militias fight the Banyamulenge ethnic group not because of their ethnicity but because of the Banyamulenge's claim to customary land of their own. In fact, the *Mai-Mai*'s manipulation and volatility of the notion of autochthony are clearly visible through the collaboration between this militia and the Interahamwe Hutu who are Rwandan and live in territory controlled by the *Mai-Mai* (Autesserre, 2006). However, in contrast to this Hutu militia that does not claim any national recognition nor a customary land in the DRC as they fall without ambiguity under the foreigner category, the Banyamulenge claim their customary right to have a nationally recognised chiefdom. As discussed in this chapter, such a claim to customary land weakened the political power of the Babembe customary chiefdom following the principle according to which a leader of a given territory must originate from such territory.

Hence, to protect the political interests of their patrons, the *Mai-Mai* agitate notions of autochthony to justify their violence while pushing their (real) politico-military agenda.

4.7 From local land conflicts to the participation in the 1996 First Congo War and 2004 Kivu Conflict

Under this section, I argue that local conflicts around traditional land and customary power have been determinant in the militarisation and participation of ethnic groups, firstly the 1996 'Liberation' War and then in the 2004 Kivu Conflict or, more precisely, the Bukavu Offensive that occurred in a so-called 'post-war' society.

4.7.1 **Growing ethnic violence at the community level**

Mobutu's territorialisation of leadership led to pronounced stigmatisation of the Banyamulenge in South Kivu, the marginalisation of Kinyarwanda-speaking individuals in North Kivu and discrimination against the Bembe community in the Province Orientale, to only mention these. The year 1996 saw the escalation of ethnic conflicts against the Banyamulenge. It is said that the Banyamulenge's permanent shift of attachment between the DRC and Rwanda was reproached. This continuous shifting attachment between the DRC (of which the Banyamulenge claim citizenship) and Rwanda – from which they received military support to effectively occupy the Ruzizi *Hauts Plateaux* – has complicated the relationship between this particular ethnic group and the rest of the population (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). A common example was the September 9th, 1996 call from Bavira local leaders, backed by the Zairian army, to chase the snake's sons (referring to Banyamulenge, the snake here being Rwanda) out of the Congolese territory (Verweijen and Vlassenroot 2015:199). This call had a snowballing effect in such ways that a march of anger targeting Banyamulenge was organised in Bukavu. Banyamulenge's cattle, houses and other belongings were looted in Uvira during the same period and civilians were killed by community-based militias (Vlassenroot, 2013). In response to this, the already militarised Banyamulenge youth (*Twigwaneho*) invaded the city of Lemera on October 6th of the same year and killed nurses and patients in their hospital beds.

The militarised turmoil was thus launched. Congolese rebels against Mobutu's regime established alliances with the Rwandan Patriotic Force (RPF), mainly constituted of the Banyamulenge, Banyarwanda from Goma and other Rwandan Tutsi (Meger, 2010). Despite their opposition to Mobutu, the *Mai-Mai* did not align with the AFDL, given that this AFDL rebellion was interpreted as a Rwandan invasion.

To understand the interaction of local ethnic violence with the national and regional conflicts in the eastern DRC, some steps back to the 1994 Rwandan genocide are necessary. In addition to being one of the main entry points of foreign armed groups in the DRC, Bukavu, together with Goma (the capital city of North Kivu province), housed refugee camps following the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Court, 2013). These camps were mostly populated by Hutu refugees of whom the Interahamwe, accused of being the main instigators of the Rwandan genocide and members of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) militias, were part. Due to the camps' close location with Rwanda, it was said that the Interahamwe militias, with the support of the then Zairian government under Mobutu, launched several attacks against the newly established Rwandan government (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2004). The militarisation of these camps and the FDLR's multiple insurgences led to the Great Lakes refugee crisis (French, 2009) in the eastern DRC in late 1995. The eradication of the FDLR militia was thus presented by Rwanda as its main reason for participating in the 1996 'Liberation' War in the DRC, then called Zaire. Rwanda and the Banyamulenge concluded an alliance under the RPF banner with the objectives of fighting the Interahamwe Hutu who were a potential threat to the Congolese Tutsi or Banyamulenge (Stearns, 2014) and addressing the ethnic hatred against the Banyarwanda (Autesserre, 2006). However, economic motivations, such as access to Kivu's rich mineral wealth, have also to be taken seriously. Scholars on the DRC economic conflicts refer to the eastern DRC as 'the Gates to Hell' as the consequence of endless armed violence that targets access to mineral wealth (Eichstaedt, 2011). Local leaders,

militia groups, the national army, multinationals and UN agencies, such as MONUSCO, etc., are all listed as responsible for violence linked to mineral exploitation.

4.7.2 **The militarisation of (unmet) territorial claims**

The 1996 First Congo War ('Liberation' War), opposed the AFDL rebels to the FAZ, Zaire's national army. The AFDL rebels conquered the political power in eight months (October 1996 to May 1997) from the east (South Kivu) to the west (Kinshasa), as represented by Image 4-2.

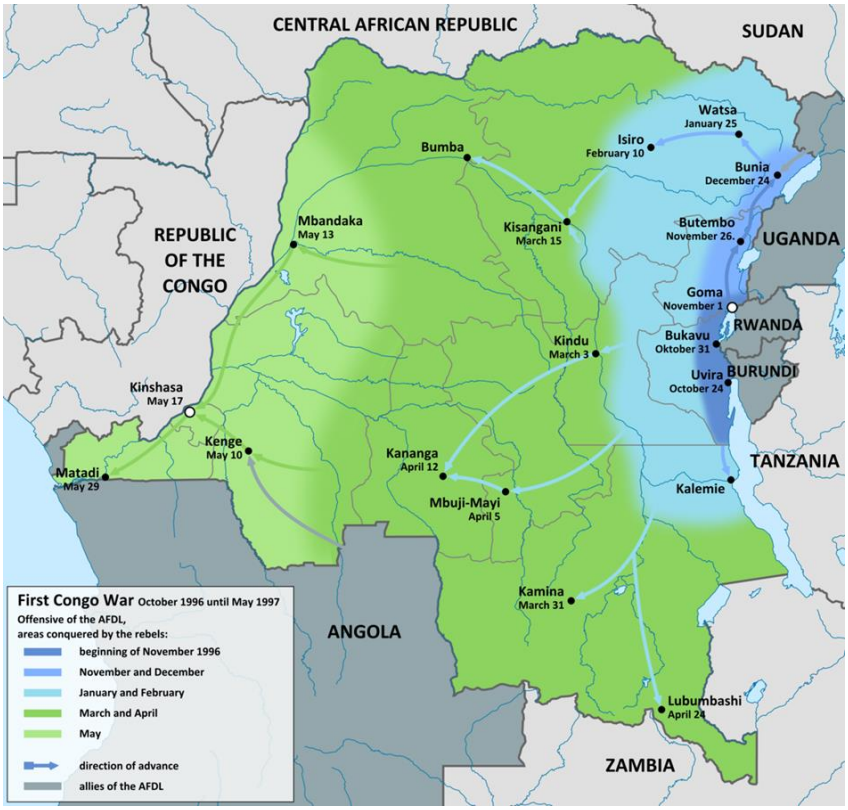


Image 4-2 The progression of the AFDL troops from eastern DRC to Kinshasa, the capital city
Source: Google maps

As represented by Figure 4.2, by May 1997 the AFDL had reached Kinshasa and took control of the entire Zaire territory. In 1998, the country's name was changed back to the DRC as Laurent-Désiré Kabila became president.

In a camouflaged attempt to avoid their action being seen as an invasion from outsiders, the RPF allied some long-dated Congolese rebels along with Uganda and Burundi and all together

formed the AFDL that was led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who became President of the DRC from 1998 to 2001. The 1996 First Congo War was driven by at least three declared agendas: destitute Mobutu (the national cause of the war), dismantle the refugee camps that constituted the bases of the FDLR (regional motivation) and finally, reparate the territorial injustice that the Banyamulenge had been victims of since the Belgian colonialisation (local agenda that motivated the participation of different (allies and enemies) ethnic groups).

4.7.3 **Participation in the 1996 First Congo War as the militarisation of future hopes?**

Uvira was the ground for the 'Liberation' War due to local land conflicts and contested identities, as presented above. The same city (Uvira) was also the entry point of the AFDL armed rebels in the DRC. This was facilitated by the geographical position of this city that has Burundi as its east-bordering country. Laurent-Désiré Kabila was a long-dated Congolese rebel against Mobutu's regime; however, he did not have an army that would have helped him to concretise his agenda. Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda offered the military support Laurent-Désiré Kabila needed. Due to the predominant number of Kinyarwanda-speaking soldiers within the rebellion ranks, the image of the AFDL movement was seen as a Rwandan invasion (Meger, 2010; Stearns, 2010; Verweijen and Vlassernroot, 2015; Vlassernroot, 2013). At the community level, the arrival of the AFDL rebellion revived the *Mai-Mai*'s action within the community with the purpose of resisting the Rwandan invasion that the AFDL symbolised due to the origin of its soldiers.

The strong participation of Banyamulenge fighters alongside the AFDL troops had a double effect locally. On the one hand, it exposed the Banyamulenge community to further violence from the *Mai-Mai* in the *Hauts Plateaux*. As presented by Vlassernroot (2013), the rest of the surrounding ethnic groups read the Banyamulenge's participation as a confirmation of their non-Congolese identity and this was used to justify the violence against the Banyamulenge civilians. On the other hand, the alliance with the AFDL enabled the Banyamulenge to access

exceptional military training, armament and increased political power, especially after the AFDL seized power in 1997 and led Mobutu to flee the country. Mobutu died in exile in Morocco in September 1997. The 1996 First Congo War officially ended in May 1997 and Laurent-Désiré Kabila was proclaimed president. The seizure of power was thus militarised (in contrast to being legislative), as was also the case in November 1965 when Mobutu, then serving as Chief of Staff of the national army, organised a militarised coup d'état against Joseph Kasavubu's government and ruled Zaire for 32 years. Since 1965, access to power has taken military connotations, and access to guns is significantly linked to access to political power and livelihood.

However, the continuous claim for a particular territory and their alliance with Rwanda made the Banyamulenge suspicious of balkanisation that would annex North and South Kivu to Rwanda. This led to armed unrest in the Kivu regions, and Laurent-Désiré Kabila, aiming to strengthen his power, broke his alliance with his then allies and urged all Kinyarwanda-speaking communities, including the Banyamulenge, to leave the Congolese territory. In addition to his divorce from his former allies, Laurent-Désiré Kabila's famous sentences '*le Congo restera un et indivisible'* (the Congo will remain one and united) and '*Ne jamais trahir le Congo*' (Do never betray the Congo) attracted the sympathy of the *Mai-Mai* groups who were always fighting against the Rwandan invasion. These sentences were an imprint of Patrice Lumumba's[17] successful fight after which the DRC obtained its independence from the Belgian colonisation. Being seen as a Lumumba follower had the merit of allowing Laurent-Désiré Kabila to gain the trust of *Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba* (Congolese National Movement-Lumumba), mostly constituted of people from the Tetela ethnic group to which Lumumba belonged. The Congolese National Movement-Lumumba, which became the *Parti Lumumbiste Unifié* (Unified Lumumbist Party), was founded in 1958 and was recognised as a

[17] Patrice Emery Lumumba was the main leader of independence and served as the first Prime Minister of the independent DRC from June to September 1960. He was assassinated a year later in September 1961.

main actor in the fight for independence. The new position adopted by Laurent-Désiré Kabila led to fragmentations within the old AFDL, and consequently, the Second Congo War erupted in 1998.

In addition to the mentioned armed groups, Laurent-Désiré Kabila has also allied with the FDLR, who were seen as potential fighters against both Rwanda and the Banyamulenge in the 1998 rebellion. Autesserre (2006) has critically analysed the shifting alliances between the militias and armed groups in the DRC. These alliances were forged according to which direction the political power wind blew. Regarding the persistence in the DRC of the internally divided FDLR group, Autesserre (2006) has highlighted how this group would not have survived in the DRC without the help from militias, such as the *Mai-Mai* and even the civil population in some areas of North and South Kivu. Of these areas, the city of Lemerra is recalled (previously mentioned), which was seen as a *Mai-Mai* and FDLR-controlled area (Autesserre, 2006). In 2004, the FARDC, under the transition government, fought against the FDLR and then against the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) in June 2004.

The reversal in Laurent-Désiré Kabila's position meant that the Banyamulenge's land aspiration remained, once again, unmet. In 1998, the RCD was created under the leadership of Azarias Ruberwa with the declared aim of giving the Banyamulenge customary land as this was the reason of their involvement in the AFDL war. The RCD was the result of "the mutiny of 300 Banyamulenge soldiers in Bukavu in February 1998" (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015:200) to mark their separation for the RPF (and thus from Rwanda) and the start of a new path toward individual and political subjectivities. Following the RCD rebellion, Minembwe was illegally[18] proclaimed a customary territory in 1999. The consequence of this was further armed conflicts that opposed the Banyamulenge to other ethnic groups that saw their symbolic reference threatened (Barbant et al., 2013). In fact, for other ethnic groups, "Minembwe was an

[18] Illegally because it was done through military action and against the national constitution

attempt to erase their cultural inheritance and identity" since Minembwe encompassed the territories of Mwenga, Uvira and Fizi (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015:201) and the recognition of this land as belonging to the Banyamulenge would mean that the previous population would lose their hold of local power and the newcomers would erase the memory of ancestral or "*mizimu ya mababu* (spirits of the ancestors translated from Swahili)" (Verweijen and Vlassenroot 2015:202).

With the purpose of creating a national army, Laurent-Désiré Kabila proceeded to remaniement within his rank by promoting some combatants to higher positions and integrating willing fighters from the former Zairian army and the *Mai-Mai*. Additionally, Laurent-Désiré Kabila created alliances with other bordering countries (Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe) to help fight against the new rebellion. These alliances created frustration among his old allies who decided to remain with Laurent-Désiré Kabila after the split with the AFDL. The group of combatants under the nomination of *Kadogo* (the little ones translated from Swahili) or child soldiers were portrayed as being more frustrated by the new alliances for two main reasons. Firstly, the frustration was seen as coming from the fact that they were relegated to lower positions, given that most of them were younger and uneducated. Secondly, the *Kadogo* were experiencing a sort of abandonment from this father figure that Laurent-Désiré Kabila represented to them. More significantly, the leader of the *Kadogo* faction, General Anselme Masasu Nindanga, was killed in November 2000 by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who suspected him of planning an internal coup. General Anselme Masasu Nindanga was an Advisor for Security and Acting Chief of Staff for Laurent-Désiré Kabila[19]. His suppression was said to be a lesson to all those who would consider betraying the Congo that Laurent-Désiré Kabila represented.

[19] Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): A rebel group led by the former Advisor for Security and acting army Chief of Staff for Kabila, General Anselme Masasu Nindanga and the treatment of its members by Congolese authorities (1997-November 1999), 1 December 1999, RDC33237.E, available at: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6ad746c.html [accessed 10 June 2021]

The consequence of this suppression was the assassination of Laurent-Désiré Kabila in January 2001 by his bodyguard, who was presented as part of the *Kadogo*.

4.7.4 **The 2004 Bukavu Offensive: a challenge to the DRC's transition government?**

Literature on the DRC's socio-economic development highlights Congo's crisis as being partially the manoeuvre of western countries, such as the United Kingdom and, particularly, the USA, to suppress Laurent Desiré Kabila who had socialist tendencies in a global economic era that was praising capitalism (neoliberalism) as the only alternative to economic development (Meger 2010; Stearns, 2011). Following the assassination of Laurent-Désiré Kabila in 2001, his son Joseph Kabila was appointed as president, and the transition government was formed in 2002. Joseph Kabila was president, and four other individuals who were representatives of the main rebel groups were appointed as vice presidents (Autesserre, 2006). The transition government was formed with the purpose of addressing the main issues that underlined the previous armed violence in the country. Azarias Ruberwa, a representative of the Banyamulenge group, was also named as one of the vice presidents. By this time, the Banyamulenge were occupying Minembwe, which they declared as their customary territory.

In the effort to make the transition government work, a peace accord was signed in April 2002 at Sun City in South Africa between the fighting parties, namely "the Government of the DRC, the RCD, the MLC[20],…, as well as representatives of the *forces vives* of the Country: the RCD-ML[21], the RCD-N[22] and the Mai-Mai" (UN Peacemaker, 2003; Autesserre, 2006:16). This peace accord also marked the official end of the Second Congo War launched in 1998. This accord promised a share in military and political power between the ex-combatants and the integration of all belligerents into one national army to constitute the FARDC.

[20] Movement for the Liberation of the Congo
[21] Congolese Rally for Democracy-Liberation Movement
[22] Congolese Rally for Democracy-National

However, the transition government faced difficulties shaped by the shadow of the previous territorial administration. The ground for the Kivu Conflicts – of which the Bukavu Offensive (during which wartime rape was strategically used by armed groups) is part – was established for two main reasons. Firstly, the Minembwe territory was declared illegitimate following its forcible establishment that violated the then Constitution (Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015). Secondly, the former RCD combatants were not given the military rank they were promised when the transition government was created. Following the nominations of the FADRC officials in 2004, frictions were registered within this new government and within the Banyamulenge themselves, given that some Banyamulenge officials made deals with the transition government, which was seen as egotistical by the majority of Banyamulenge fighters. In June 2004, the Bukavu Offensive was fought between the FARDC and CNDP, represented by Laurent Nkundabatware Mihigo (a Tutsi Congolese from North Kivu and former General in the FARDC), and joined by a group of Kinyarwanda-speaking soldiers under the leadership of Jules Mutebusi (a Munyamulenge from South Kivu who died in Rwanda in 2014). It was during this battle that wartime rape was strategically used by armed groups against civilians. After his apprehension in January 2009 (Kanyunyu and Bavier, 2009) and being charged with crimes against humanity, Nkunda claimed that his motive was to avert a potential genocide against the Banyamulenge who were attacked by both the Interahamwe (FDLR) and unhappy *Mai-Mai* (Kanyunyu and Bavier, 2009). This apprehension was said to be a result of an accord between Kigali and Kinshasa, according to which Kigali would be allowed, once again, in the eastern DRC to pursue its fight against Interahamwe's FDLR (McConnell, 2008).

Nkunda's claim was rejected by the UN represented by its MONUC[23] agency in the DRC. Starting in 1998 with the formation of the RCD rebels, wartime rape was strategically used by armed forces and adopted by civilians as the result of the militarisation of their everyday life or

[23] *Mission des Organisations des Nations Unis au Congo* (UN Peace Keeping Mission in the Congo)

inadequate demobilisation, as articulated in Chapter 2. One needs to develop a multi-dimensional analysis to explore the outbreak and persistence of wartime rape in the eastern DRC. To understand the adoption of militarised practices, such as rape by civilians, I suggest that the sexual violence in the DRC, while partially rooted in agrarian conflicts (and consequently in mutual relationships between land and identity (ethnicity)), has converted into a socio-cultural phenomenon. Because of this, I suggest analysing how masculinities and manhood are locally perceived within the Bukavu community, which carries a heavy influence on customary organisations. Moreover, I explore how these perceptions shape ideas around women and femininities and the relation between men and women. This will be developed in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that local conflicts within the eastern DRC are rooted in the Belgian colonisation's land administration policies that were adopted by the post-colonial DRC. In other words, the chapter expanded on the historical account of colonisation, gender, ethnicity, political rights and how wartime rape emerged in one conflict (the 2004 Kivu Conflict) and not in another (the 1996 First Congo War). I argued that land, as the symbolism of belonging, has been central in the mobilisation of young men into armed groups to either defend the ancestral land, as is the case with the Mai-Mai group, or to claim belonging to and create a particular tribal land, as what led to the formation of the Twigwaneho. Local conflicts rooted in access or denying access to land emerged as the Banyamulenge's land aspiration was permanently manipulated according to emergent political power games. In the post-colonial period, the adoption of the territorialisation of leadership reinforced the political exclusion of the Banyamulenge since these administrative units, as shaped during the colonial era, constituted electoral units whose governors had to originate from the particular territory. The local land conflicts were thus intertwined with national and regional power dynamics and were clearly linked with people's identities that were legitimised or questioned based on territorial

belonging. Alliances were created and dismantled, and ethnic identities were militarised accordingly. During the 1996 Liberation War, landless ethnic groups were brought to understand that their participation would be rewarded through reparation at local levels. However, two years later, the reversal of such promises led to the Second Congo War, launched by the RCD rebellion that created Minembwe as the Banyamulenge's tribal land. Alliances were forged and unforged, but land aspirations remained unmet. To counter the RCD rebellion, the Congolese government, under Laurent-Désiré Kabila, allied the FDLR, the Mai-Mai and other bordering countries (Zimbabwe, Angola and Zambia) to fight against what was presented as a Rwandan invasion, including the Congolese Tutsi or Banyamulenge. Following the assassination of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, his son Joseph Kabila came into power and unmade the previous alliance his father had with the FDLR, seen as the main perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. The transition government was formed in 2002 and aimed to include all the fighting forces under the same national army, the FARDC. However, the coalition of all involved armed groups under the same national army was not successful due to several difficulties, such as, among others, the violation of the 2002 Sun City accord regarding the share of high ranks in the new army and the non-recognition of Minembwe as a Banyamulenge's customary land. Following this, the Mai-Mai group retrieved in the eastern mountains and continued its alliances with the FDLR because they were given lower ranks in the army (their lack of education was the main reason). On the other hand, the Nkunda's CNDP also mutinied from the FARDC and launched, together with Mutebusi, the 2004 Kivu Conflicts in both North and South Kivu. Without overlooking the economic motivations, such as access to mineral wealth, of this armed violence, this chapter has mainly focused on the local land conflicts that shaped and informed the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict, during which rape was used as a weapon of war against the Bukavu civilian population, as developed in the following chapters. While chapter 4 set the historical ground for the study, it also helped to understand the political power

dynamics that led to the 2004 wartime rape by the RCD rebels as developed in chapter 5. The perpetrators of this sexualised violence were said to be, at first, Kinyarwanda-speaking soldiers, and later on, the practice of rape against civilians was also attributed to the *Mai-Mai*, the FDLR and even civilians.

In Chapter 5, I, therefore, suggest comparing the 1996 First Congo War to the 2004 Kivu Conflict as experienced by the Bukavu community to understand how wartime rape happens in one conflict and not in another within the same geographical setting even when separated by eight years. I will maintain that perpetrators have drawn upon history to strategically perpetrate wartime rape in the present. Throughout Chapter 5, I thus endeavour to explore the relationship between the different dimensions of wartime rape and how the mix of these different dimensions varies considerably between the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, the RCD rebels and the *Mai-Mai* militias. I suggest that the militarisation of Banyamulenge male youths was possible following the patriarchal definition of men as 'natural' protectors that intersected with grievance due to permanent territorial (and consequently local power, belonging or citizenship) uncertainties.

"These [armed] conflicts also make us aware that violence is not a privilege but a means of claiming and defending privilege…" (Suruchi Thapar-Bjorket, Karen Morgan and Nira Yuval-Davis)

Image 4-3: A Congolese male artist's representation of his understanding of the eastern DRC's socio-political situation24

[24] All the drawings represented in this thesis were requested by myself to the artists. Hence, there is no potential conflict around copyright.

Chapter 5:
Wartime rape, Politicisation of belonging and militarised masculinities: a presentation and analysis of participants' conceptualisation of the 1996 First Congo War and the 2004 Kivu Conflict

5.1 Introduction

As a reminder, this thesis endeavours to explore how the Bukavu people conceptualise the emergence of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to its absence during the 1996 First Congo War. The previous chapter provided a historical background of the Congo Wars to situate this PhD's argument around the eastern DRC's wartime rape. The wars in the eastern DRC have both material and ideational factors. Nonetheless, this thesis' introductory Chapter 1 articulated that the political economy of war also called the material interest or conflict mineral, left alone, does not explain the persistence of and degree of violence associated with wartime rape in the eastern DRC. Without dismissing the material interests that motivate some belligerents to engage in armed conflicts, this chapter focuses on how histories of gender, violence and ethnicity intersect in the pursuit of revenge, recognition of citizenship rights and military recognition through the perpetration of wartime rape. The analysis starts from the 1996 First Congo War. The purpose of doing so is to explore the first two research sub-questions of this thesis namely *(i) How was the sense of belonging politicised and militarised in 1996 up to lead to the 2004 wartime rape? and (ii) What role(s) did wartime rape play for the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, the Mai-Mai militiamen and the RCD rebels in the eastern DRC?* Answering these questions will help to explore the different but interrelated dimensions of wartime rape that speak to and reinforce each other.

In constructing the current chapter's argument, I have applied a hermeneutic thematic content analysis method to uncover this thesis participants' conceptualisation of wartime rape through interpretation. This point was explored in Chapter 3. Also, this thesis has drawn widely on the anti-war feminist perspectives, synthesising ideas from radical, Marxist and liberal feminist scholars on the one hand and theories of conflict and disorder on the other hand. I

suggest that while theorising violence against women, one needs to pay critical attention to male power struggles and domination within the patriarchal order. In this regard, I build on Gwen Hunnicutt's analysis of patriarchy and violence against women and extend Cynthia Enloe's investigation of military masculinities to suggest in the eastern DRC, male from excluded communities and militarily marginalised groups have drawn on histories of gender, violence and ethnicity in their pursuit of the recognition of rights (in terms of land ownership; citizenship rights) and military respect and recognition. To understand the role of violence from non-dominant groups, I extend Karl Von Holdt's examination of 'violence from below' to the eastern DRC's case to maintain that for these wartime rape perpetrators, wartime rape is the 'smoke that calls' the attention of the DRC government upon the perpetrators' differential claims.

Throughout this chapter, I maintain that women's bodies are objectified and used as a vessel of man-to-man violence and power struggles to establish masculine domination and to claim access to ethnic and military privileges. My position is based on the belief that patriarchy constructs wartime rape as a cross-cultural language that the government understands and responds to in order to avoid public outrage. I also acknowledge that wartime rape is simultaneously about power and domination and about attacking and destroying the victims' physical bodies, their subjectivities, symbolic capital and cultural values, as further developed in Chapter 6. Overall, this chapter argues that the 2004 wartime rape in the eastern DRC is informed by the Belgian colonialisation history of land rights attributed to some while excluding others, as well as by the search for revenge following the DRC's government reversal of several political and military agreements. As such, perpetrators sought power and domination through the use of wartime rape as a lexicon and an attack against the community's symbolic order and the victims' subjectivities.

The first section of this chapter examines how recruiters of male youths to constitute the 1996 AFDL rebellion army (that later fragmented into the RCD rebellion) built on the colonial and post-colonial history of land tenure to politicise young males' sense of belonging and how these recruiters paid close attention to at least two factors: the feeling of ethnic marginalisation and the patriarchal construction of males as the 'natural' protectors and defenders. The second section puts forward that the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia resorted to wartime rape for two main purposes. On the one hand, wartime rape by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe aimed to locally discourage the population from collaborating with enemy armed groups, as was the case in 1996. On the other hand, this study's data suggested that the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe raped to locally seek revenge and nationally (re)masculinise their members while feminising the Congolese national state that had reversed several military accords signed between this militia and the national government based on the political and military needs of the moment. The concept of militarised masculinities will be extended to examine the actions of female rapists. It is suggested that women perpetrators of rape challenge the normative social fabric and invites us to question patriarchal beliefs around gendered norms and practices. Afterwards, the chapter maintains that the RCD rebels utilised the 2004 wartime rape in Bukavu as the 'smoke that calls' or a lexicon to claim the recognition of Minembwe as the Banyamulenge's customary land locally and nationally. Participants in this study comprehended this claim for customary land through wartime rape in two ways. On the one hand, some participants articulated that the rape by the RCD rebels aimed to *"balkanise"* the Kivu provinces. On the other hand, the balkanisation theory was refuted by other participants who saw the RCD's violence as a call for recognition of Minembwe as the Banyamulenge's customary land. The last section of this chapter suggests that wartime rape perpetrated by the *Mai-Mai* group aimed to claim higher positions in the national army and respect from the national state. The following section of this chapter expands on the politicisation of belonging.

5.2 Politicisation of belonging in the constitution of the 1996 rebel army

5.2.1 **"…So Kabila used that to make them feel that they are accepted; they had this sense of acceptance."**

As already put forward in the introduction of this chapter, the recruiters of the AFDL rebellion were attentive to local notions around ethnic masculinities and principally around ethnic grievances as inherited from the Belgian colonisation and adopted by the post-colonial DRC. During an in-depth individual interview conducted with Riziki, a 33-year-old female participant and university student, she was asked what was (were), to her knowledge, the link(s) between the local land tenure and the 1996 First Congo War. Below is her account.

> *"The Banyamulenge people were always marginalised. And even during the colonisation, because you know, we resisted the Belgians, and I think that's why they punished us and said we were Rwandans whilst the Banyamulenge were here* [eastern DRC] *even before the colonisation. You know, before, no one wanted to live in Minembwe because it was too cold. And now that the place is warm; now everyone is now attacking and killing people because they want to take the land. I remember that some days after vita ya Mzee*[25] [*Mzee*'s war from Swahili, locally refers to the 1996 First Congo War], *armed groups used to invade the village. I even slept in a hole one day, hiding,* [and] *other days in the forest. As a kid, I was just scared but not too much worried. Some of us fled the village, but elderlies preferred to die than leav*[e], *and also some young men stayed to defend our territory… But in 2004, you know, it was like the children who doesn't feel accepted in the village, they burn it* [village] *down so that they can feel the warmth of that place…. **So Kabila used that*** [feeling of exclusion] ***to make them*** [recruited male youths from the Banyamulenge ethnic group] ***feel that they are accepted, they had this sense of acceptance**."* (Riziki, a 33-year-old female, Participant 1, emphasis added)

In the above quote, Riziki pointed out her understanding of the relationship between land tenure and wars in the eastern DRC. According to Riziki, the marginalisation of the Banyamulenge ethnic group in terms of land tenure dated since the colonial period during

[25] *Mzee* from Swahili means older or again father depending on the context. The word *Mzee* is also locally and nationally used in the DRC to refer to Laurent-Désiré Kabila, late President of the DRC and spoke person of the 1996 rebellion.

which, as she puts it, Banyamulenge were *"punished"* for resisting Belgian colonisers and consequently were declared foreigners even when they occupied Minembwe years before the Belgian colonisation. As in the above quote, land ownership is central to armed conflicts in such ways that some people preferred to lose their lives rather than abandoning what they considered their rightful land. Another notable acknowledgement is that some youth mobilised into the armed group to defend their territory. This reminds us of the formation of the Banyamulenge Abagirye and *Twagineho* community-based armed groups, as presented in Chapter 4. It is worth noting how Riziki shaped a link between the 1996 First Congo War (the Liberation War) and the 2004 Kivu Conflict. The last conflict is further developed later in this chapter.

Nonetheless, one needs to pay attention to how Riziki brilliantly used a metaphor to point at how the 1996 AFDL rebellion, represented by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the spokesperson of the 1996 rebellion and later invested president of the DRC in 1997 (Kalyvas, 2006; Barbant et al., 2013; Vlassenroot, 2013; Verweijen and Vlassenroot, 2015), used the Banyamulenge's feeling of exclusion and marginalisation "*to make them* [recruited male youths from the Banyamulenge ethnic group] *feel that they are accepted, they had this sense of acceptance".* This feeling of acceptance, I would suggest, to some extent facilitated the recruitment of young men from the Banyamulenge ethnic group. I would go further to suggest that the participation in the rebellion army was presented as a way for the Banyamulenge male youths to deconstruct their ethnic groups' otherness to become incorporated among the 'us'; the autochthons. The approach adopted by the AFDL coalition to get the Banyamulenge male youths to carry guns was a repetition of history, given that between 1963 and 1968 the former President Mobutu also adopted the same strategy: using the Banyamulenge's *Abagyrie* to fight the Mulelist militias, later giving place to the *Mai-Mai* (Barbant et al. 2013; Stearns, 2012; 2022). This point was detailed in Chapter 4.

Furthermore, other participants in this study pointed out how ethnicity was politicised and the feeling of marginalisation was manipulated to recruit young males from the Congolese Tutsi ethnic group; the Banyamulenge. For instance, Vumiliya, a 53-year-old female participant in the female focus group interview and the owner of an informal crop business in Bukavu, asserted that,

> *"…before vita ya Mzee, there was not these things of saying this one is Munyamulenge* [single form of Banyamulenge, 'Mu' points at the single form while 'Ba' points at the plural] *or this one is this or this is that. But with the AFDL war, people began to pay more attention* [to] *people's ethnicity. Tribalism always was there.* [Do] [y]*ou know those conflicts between Bashi and Barega? Bashi always say*[s] *that Bareka are witches but not like now that you have to hate someone saying they are Banyarwanda* [Rwandans]*…"* (Vumiliya, Participant 2)

Vumiliya points at how the 1996 First Congo War brought a great sense of otherness to eastern DRC's people as individuals within the studied area were now giving ethnicity an important place. Giving the example of Bashi and Barega, two main ethnic groups in Bukavu, Vumiliya, showed local conflicts between ethnic groups existed. However, what differentiates the conflicts between Bashi and Barega from that in which Banyamulenge are implicated is that the two preceding ethnic groups' belonging was not subjected to marginalisation or denial of recognised customary lands because they are presented as autochthonous (Aroussi, 2017). Both Riziki and Vumiliya's excerpts recall Michael Ignatieff's suggestion that "to belong means to feel safe" (mentioned in Yuval-Davis, 2010:276) and that a sense of identity loss may pave the way to violence to regain the threatened identity. A sense of identity loss may lead to "*burn it* [village] *down so that they can feel the warmth of that place…"*. I thus build on Tang's (2015) argument according to which localised conflicts that wear ethnic colourations are in most cases facilitated by "fear and ethnic domination and annihilation, or hatred spurred by previous episodes of conflict" (p.267), as well as anger.

Furthermore, a 63-year-old former senator and participant in the in-depth individual interviews was asked whether, to his knowledge, the ethnic identity of the Congolese Tutsi was threatened in the eastern DRC. This was his response:

> *"The Banyamulenge who self-identified as minority-represented, in 1997-1998, at least one hundred thousand people or approximately four per cent of the entire population here in the Kivus. And I, as a community leader, I have always asked them how a population that is* [a] *so-called minority can decide to attack the rest of the population that was approximately 45 million in 1998? But as a former senator, I was not really disturbed when they* [the government] *asked us to review the constitution in order to recognise the Congolese citizenship of* [the] *Banyamulenge. But again, the Congolese citizenship had to be one and exclusive. So* [the] *Banyamulenge had to renounce to any other citizenship…".* (Baraka, Participant 3)

Baraka highlights how the ethnic minority status of the Banyamulenge was questioned, given that, according to Baraka, the Congolese Tutsi ethnic group represented "at least four per cent" of the overall population in the eastern DRC (Kivus). Also, Baraka mentioned how the Banyamulenge's belonging to the DRC was subjected to discussion within the political arena. Baraka's account finds resonance within Venugopalan's (2016) analysis, which argues that laws were passed, adopted and revoked in the post-colonial DRC when it came to the Banyamulenge with the purpose of serving given political interests. This point was also developed in Chapter 4.

Following Yuval-Davis's (2010) analysis of the contrasts around identity, I maintain that the AFDL rebellion recruiters distorted the us and them dichotomy that characterises most extreme armed conflicts. The purpose of doing so was to bring the Banyamulenge recruited male fighters to believe that their politically, socially and ethnically constructed otherness would be deconstructed as a result of this Congolese Tutsi ethnic group's partaking in the Liberation War. Taking guns was thus presented to Banyamulenge male youth as a way to be closely bound with their attachment to the rest of the nation.

The analysis of armed conflicts in the eastern DRC, and their endogenous evolution that mobilised new actors with vested interests, needs to build on theories of social conflicts or disorder, which suggest that wars may emerge as a logic of governance in the face of a given historical and political context. The politicisation of belonging by the AFDL recruiters would have been challenging without the pre-existing local conflicts around land tenure, as expanded on in Chapter 4. However, belonging is not merely land only; it also involves the sense of feeling at home and emotional attachment. The AFDL recruiters purposely brought their fighters to put forward their (ethnic) group's interests before individual interests, as these groups' interests served the military ideology. Belonging is a great play within the military because fighters "experience physical and emotional dependence on these deeply masculinised groups" (Enloe, 2004:109). As mentioned by Riziki, this feeling of acceptance and belonging was created within the Banyamulenge male youths who joined the rebellion. The danger of ethnicity, however, is that it has led civilians to begin identifying each other in terms of us and them based on what was understood to be their shared culture or ethnicity.

From this study participants' accounts, as elaborated above, this thesis thus sustains that belonging and patriarchal definitions of males as 'natural' protectors were politicised and militarised to recruit the many young men who constituted the 1996 rebellion army. I have suggested that recruiters for the 1996 rebellion army linked military service to national belonging to recruit young men in the eastern DRC. Shaping a link between masculinity and militarisation, the 1996 AFDL recruiters built on patriarchy to remind males of their masculine duty to protect, defend and fight, and to kill and be killed. Joining arm groups may thus be seen as a way for young men to confirm and strengthen their masculinities. Hence, "masculinisation, nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and misogyny" are gendered seeds of war (Enloe, 2017:12-13). However, the link between masculinity and the military is artificial, and militarised masculinities must continuously be reactivated within an individual – through the promise to

be recognised as the rightful owner of customary land, in the case of the Banyamulenge for instance, – to be fully performed (without being fully accomplished).

Nonetheless, the AFDL rebellion army was not comprised of male youths from the Congolese Tutsi ethnic group only. Stearns (2022) acknowledges that young men from other ethnic groups in the Kivu and Katanga provinces, locally called the *Kadogo* or, literally, the little ones, were also either abducted or voluntarily joined the 1996 rebellion army. In addition to Kadogo and Banyamulenge male youths, participants have acknowledged that they were puzzled about other aspects, of which the identity of the AFDL fighters is part. This is presented in the following sub-section.

5.2.2 **"Confusion…and killings for no valuable reasons…but no rape of civilians"**

During the focus group interview with women from the ordinary population, all five participants agreed on how the 1996 First Congo War confused the population regarding its beginning and the identity of the fighters. For instance, when these female participants were asked "How would you characterise the 1996 First Congo War?" one female participant stressed:

> *"…Ehh! People were in wasiwasi* [state of panic], *we heard that they* [AFDL rebels] *had already seated Uvira, then someone else came to tell us that they are in Nyantende…then finally, it was a state of confusion and panic everywhere. We did not know where to start to flee…"* (Female focus group, Participant 4)

Pointing out how the 1996 First Congo War started, participant 4 acknowledged the state of confusion that prevailed within the local population in 1996. She acknowledged that the population were not given clear information regarding the progression of the 1996 rebel armed group, which prevented the population from taking proper measures to flee to safer places. The above quote found resonance with data collected from the individual interviews. For example, Ndamuso, a 53 female community leader in Bukavu and former provincial senator acknowledged that:

> *"…people in Kinshasa[26] when they hear most of the time sayings about war, they think that it is our business here in the east up until the magodio* [rainy boot from Swahili, these were used by the AFDL soldiers] *reached them* [in Kinshasa]. *But the entire political class did not believe us up until the war erupted and found us in a meeting with the late Muzihirwa here at the Cathedral in 1996. We spent a whole week under bullets, but still, people did not believe us despite the affluence of refugees from Uvira. And that day, when the AFDL entered here* [Bukavu], *we were in the Concorde meeting room. People in Kinshasa may easily say that they are living peaceful moments* [absence of shootings, forced displacement, bombing, etc.], *whereas here* [the eastern part of the county], *we are* [in] *a permanent state of war, especially in rural areas where days with and without bombing alternate without previous notice..."* (Ndamuso, Participant 5)

In addition to the confusion, Ndamuso highlighted the complexity of the DRC's wars that are unequally spread throughout the country, with the eastern region being more exposed to armed conflicts than the western side of the country, where the capital city (Kinshasa) is located. Ndamuso points out how the war started when the population went about its daily activities, such as attending meetings. As already argued in Chapter 4, the city of Uvira constituted the entry point of the 1996 rebellion that took advantage of the existing local conflicts around land tenure to militarise male youths from the Congolese Tutsi ethnic group.

Another element of confusion that then prevailed within the population was around the identity of the AFDL fighters. The late Archbishop Muzihirwa was aware of how the 1996 rebels manipulated the existing local conflicts around land tenure in the eastern DRC to recruit Banyamulenge male youths. In an effort to call the population's attention to the identity of the fighters and prevent any violent acts in retaliation against Banyamulenge, the late Archbishop radio-broadcasted the following:

> "*We have just learned that the small town of Uvira has been bombed overnight and is taken by the rebels. I would like to insist that it is not by the Banyamulenge… It is by a group of mercenaries, the majority of whom are Ugandans, Rwandans, Burundians,*

[26] Kinshasa is the capital city of the DRC

> *Somalians, blacks with smooth hair as the inhabitants portray them, but also Europeans… But very dear brothers 'Bukaviens'* [this is how the inhabitants of Bukavu are locally referred to], *I invite you not to take revenge against the innocent Tutsi brothers who are among us… No. Those who want to fight, let them go to the front and not be brave within the community, No..."* (Archbishop Muzihirwa 1996, Maendeleo Radiobroadcast)

According to historical literature on the DRC and this study's empirical data (individual interviews and focus groups interviews), the late Archbishop presented how the war erupted first in Uvira and how partaking fighters originated from different neighbouring countries (Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda) and the international sphere (Europe). Importantly, the participation of these nationalities in the conflict and the recruitment of a considerable number of the Banyamulenge male youths within the AFDL army deepened the existing representation of the Banyamulenge as outsiders. Hence, the late Archbishop insisted that the community did not misleadingly attack members from the Congolese Tutsi ethnic groups. In line with the late Archbishop's broadcast, Mawazo, a 58-year-old female participant who allowed her house to be used as the site for the female focus group discussion, asserted the following when the group was asked, "What, according to you, characterised the 1996 rebellion?"

> *"…I was really in shock when I saw Gaston in a military uniform. He was one of the guys I used to employ after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. He used to cultivate this garden… He came back to let me know he was with the AFDL and that they used the small money I was giving him to buy* ***guns to defend our country****… He told us it would be better to go to the villages. Surprisingly, villages were safer compared to what we see today..."* (Mawazo, Participant 6, emphasis added)

Mawazo suggested that she had recognised some 1996 fighters of whom Gaston was part. She pointed out that after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, she believed Gaston was a refugee from Rwanda; hence, she was surprised to see him returning as a rebel soldier. Importantly, there is familiarity between these fighters and the local civilian population that is not marred by violence, as the rebels presented themselves as the country's liberators. Elements such as

receiving safety advice ("*He told us it would be better to go to the villages"*) from the rebels lead one to suggest that this armed group did not consider the population a threat to their military operation. This can also be explained because I suggest these fighters felt linked to some extent to the people in the research area. Additionally, the military superiority occupied by the 1996 rebels, vis-à-vis the then national army in this particular war, prevented some forms of violence, such as rape, which soldiers use to impose a symbolic victory upon their opponents. Additionally, the rebels entered the DRC with the purpose of cohabiting with the local population. I, therefore, put forward that the use of wartime rape in that time would have been counterproductive for this army that sought to establish a new government.

Regarding the constructiveness of identity, a 58-year-old female ordinary participant participating in the focus group acknowledged what follows as she reinforced the idea formulated by another female participant who suggested that the 1996 First Congo War reinforced the sense of otherness within the community.

> *"…I was very young, around 33 or 34, I don't remember. I felt the pain as if my child* [had] *died before I* [died]. *My son was taken for a Rwandan, and people wanted to kill him, saying he was Rwandan because of his long height. An 11-year-old child but tall like a tree… Fortunately, there were there some people who recognised him, and that's how he escaped from being killed. This stigmatisation, because ooh! Rwandan ooh! Mushi ooh! Murega, will kill people, even innocent people."* (Female, Participant 7).

This female participant – who is from the Bashi (Mushi in a singular form) ethnic group that is seen as autochthonous in eastern Congo – narrated how her son was mistakenly identified as Rwandan and could have been killed because of collective violence by the local population. In a similar way as Vumiliya mentioned earlier, this female participant pointed out the Bashi and Barega ethnic groups as tensions existed between these groups. The particular incidence in the preceding excerpt exposes the danger and constructiveness of identity, the limit of morphology, for instance, in distinguishing the us from them; or the 'autochthonous' from the supposedly 'foreigners'.

While identity-based marginalisation may lead to wartime rape, as was the case in Rwanda and Bosnia and the case of the DRC; however, belonging to a community does not paradoxically stop perpetrators from enacting violence or raping the same people they claim to fight for. As argued in Chapter 6, the analysis of wartime rape as a weapon of war must be augmented. This is because the analysis must include instances when wartime rape has constituted an attack against the victims' physical bodies and embodied subjectivities – at the same time as it [wartime rape] imposes domination and emasculation upon the conquered men – to understand how perpetrators may commit rape within their communities. Therefore, it is suggested that the Congo Wars are marred by layers of agendas that dictate the performances and ideologies of the groups engaged in the wars. Nonetheless, as presented later, the shift occurred from the 1998 Second Congo War as the armed conflict evolved endogenously and implicated other actors for whom violence, such as wartime rape, was a negotiation tool.

Killing for no valuable reason? Participants in this study stressed that the 1996 First Congo War was characterised by mass killing. In some cases, victims were particularly targeted as they represented resistance towards the rebellion movement. Ndamuso provided a rare account of the circumstances that led to the assassination of Archbishop Muzihirwa.

> *"…we then left the meeting room to find out how to get back to our homes. But that's when another priest came and told the Archbishop: "it's as if we are already surrounded"… In the meantime, we saw these little ones with red bands on their heads, the Kadogo, roaming around the Archbishop's place… While walking behind, we saw how these 'ndugu'*[27] ['friends' from Swahili and it refers to the AFDL rebels] *stopped the Archbishop's car. We also stopped from a distance… We saw the Archbishop walking toward them* [AFDL rebels]. *We also saw his driver driving behind the Archbishop. Suddenly, we saw how they* [AFDL soldiers] *directly opened fire on him* [the driver]. *The Archbishop's bodyguard and the others who were in the two other cars started to jump in all directions to escape towards the Vision Shala radio but still, they* [AFDL soldiers]

[27] Ndugu literally means family members. But the word is also used to mean friends depending on the context and is ironically employed by the participant in the above quote.

were shooting at them. So the rest of us who were behind jumped toward the houses near REGIDESO[28]… We were crawling on our stomachs, but we were always wondering if the Archbishop did escape… We stayed in one of those houses since we could see the road here in Nyawera. In the night, we saw the Archbishop's car continuously flashing, so I told myself that it is as if the Archbishop did not leave that place. In the morning, we divided into small groups to leave without attracting attention. Once at the road, we saw Archbishop Muzihiwra… They had assassinated him and made him sit, leaning on one of those electric poles that are still there at the 'Place Monseigneur Muzihirwa'…" (Ndamuso, Participant 5)

Ndamuso remembered the day the AFDL invaded Bukavu as a *"bloody Tuesday, 29th October, 1996"*. She is one of the rare eye-witnesses of the assassination of the late Archbishop Muzihirwra, who was the reference for many civilians in Bukavu; they must be from Catholic Church or other religious wings. He was known to be critical of the way Mobutu governed and most importantly he was one of the few people who criticised the 1996 rebellion and warned against the invasion from foreign countries that would be permitted by this rebellion. This warning was done through the previously mentioned radio broadcast some days prior to the invasion of Bukavu by the 1996 rebellion (AFDL) troops. Also, *"during his Sunday preaching, he was continuously criticising the violation of human rights"* that he witnessed in the then Zaire and that *"would be aggravated by any rebellion"* (Baraka, Participant 6, individual interview).

When asked about what she thought was the reason for the late Archbishop's assassination, Ndamuso articulated, *"bali mu uwa ku bure* [they killed him for nothing]*… at least* [he] *was not afraid to point at the wrong when he saw it"*. It appears that, even when the motive of his assassination was not evident to the ordinary and key participants in this study (since most of them articulated their thoughts in the same direction as Ndamuso), the 1996 rebels did plan to

[28] REGIDESO (*Régie de Distribution d'eau)* is a company from the public sector in the DRC charged with the producing and distributing drinking water to individuals, and commercial and industrial clients.

eliminate any element and symbol of resistance. The Archbishop seemed to represent a potential danger to the progression of the rebels because he presented them as violating human rights and permitting the invasion of the country by foreigners. He thus questioned the Liberation assumption that was put forward by the AFDL rebels to gain the local population's support. Evidence suggests that the Archbishop was targeted: the presence of the *Kadogo* (predominantly male child soldiers) at the Archbishop's residence and the car he left in seemed to be easily spotted by the other AFDL rebels, who then executed him. The radio broadcast was also seen as a trigger for his elimination.

...But no wartime rape! While most participants pointed to the massive killings of the civilian population during the 1996 First Congo War, these participants were also confident about the absence of wartime rape as a weapon of war. During an individual interview, a 37-year-old woman and primary school teacher (Faradja) was asked whether she knew about any incidence of wartime rape that may have occurred in the 1996 First Congo War. She acknowledged:

> *"Hum! The 1996 Liberation War? Other*[s] *were saying that* [it was a] *rectification war. But, hum! But for me, it was aggression because it was difficult to talk of liberation with such violence and the guns. And this has created antagonism among people. They killed my neighbour, who was Rwandan, and that pissed me off. My Rwandan, they had killed him whilst he was not bad. It pissed me off. I wanted to hide him, but I didn't have the means* [to do so]. *The AFDL was so aggressive, and they killed people at shoot point blank. Lot*[s] *of civilians have perished. Yes, but there was no rape. They* [AFDL] *did not spend time in futilities like our soldiers today. In their* [AFDL fighters'] *heads, it was as if they were rushing for Kinshasa…"* (Faradja, Participant 7*)*

Faradja's account goes along with most participants' conceptualisation of the 1996 First Congo War. Most of this study's participants mentioned that they did not hear of or experience wartime rape as a weapon of war during the 1996 First Congo War. However, a male participant asserted, *"but there were some civilians who took advantage of the chaos and raped, but it was*

very isolated [incidence]*"* (Bahati, Participant 8). From these participants' accounts, it may be understood that wartime rape as a weapon of war is not inevitable during armed conflicts and that the type of violence perpetrated by armed groups depends on the groups' internal repertoire of violence. As for the 1996 rebels (AFDL), their repertoire of violence revolved around mass killing and pursuing their objective of regaining the capital city (Kinshasa). In accordance with this, during an individual in-depth interview, Furaha, another female community religious leader, pointed out that with the *"AFDL? Uhmm! The vision was a little bit more clear. It was about conquering the political power and not destroy*[ing] *the community …"* (Participant 10). Nonetheless, the wars in the eastern Congo have destroyed the community in different ways causing physical death, social death and psychological wounds, as developed in Chapter 6.

Similarly, Ndamuso also pointed out how, as a woman, she did not feel particularly targeted:

> *"…It was crackling everywhere. They* [AFDL] *had just killed an ISP*[29] *professor, Professor Rukati. While I wanted to go to see what* [was] *happening, I met here at the Nyawera Market some women vendors in Nyawera Market who were trying to sell despite the crackling of bullets. The AFDL then found us where we were and asked me to tell the rest of the women to go home as the town* [would] *soon be under siege. And I asked them* [that] *if it was with us women that they wanted to fight. They insisted and told me to evacuate since it was not a joke. And it was these same Messieurs* [Mr.] *who brought us the charcoal. It's then that we understood that in these bags of charcoal, they were also hiding their guns…"* (Ndamuso, Participant 5).

Ndamuso recalls that the AFDL soldiers did not attack them but instead asked them to return to their respective homes, traditionally seen as people's first safe place. Although the concept of home may have divergent meanings, as elaborated in Chapter 6, these women were asked to return to their houses (as construction buildings) to escape from the crackling riffles.

Following Wood's (2009) analysis of the scarcity of wartime rape in armed conflict, the quotes from different participants presented above suggest that some armed groups did not

[29] *Institut Superieur Pédagogique* [from French: Higher Pedagogical Institute]

engage in wartime rape as this would prove unproductive for the group's long-term ambitions (seizure of political power and instalment of a new regime in this case). While wartime rape may have been absent from the armed groups' repertoire of violence, these armed groups however could have engaged in other forms of violence, such as killing or forced recruitment. Speaking of the forced recruitment that characterised the 1996 rebellion, a participant in the male focus group discussion with ordinary participants, Shukrani (Participant 10), suggested:

> *"…in this war of AFDL, it was males who were more at risk during this war. This is when we started to hear about the Kadogo. They* [AFDL] *were taking every male. And I remember how we did hide under beds in fear of forcible recruitment by the AFDL."*

Shukrani's view of the AFDL as a war that mostly targeted males (boys and men) was relayed by all participants in this study, including Ndamuso, as mentioned earlier. The fact that men concealed under beds in fear of joining armed groups suggests that all men do not necessarily perceive the military as a site for building and confirming their manhood.

Shukrani's account resonates well with Trenholm et al.'s (2012) findings of an ethnographic study they carried out in the eastern DRC on child soldiers. The authors stress the existence of abduction and forced recruitment of child soldiers, as many of the young boys they interviewed "were kidnapped when carrying out their ordinary daily activities such as cultivating fields, attending schools…" (Trenholm et al., 2012:210). Nonetheless, this thesis remains critical of the use of the term child soldier as this term tends to suggest that boys and girls are equally likely to be abducted for military or rebel services, while Cynthia Enloe's work, among other anti-war feminists', has demonstrated that young boys are mainly targeted and forcibly recruited for military (rebel or militia) services while young girls are kidnapped to be mostly turned into sexual objects.

Nonetheless, targeting men and boys for military service finds, I suggest, its rationale within the patriarchal gender role strain (Connell, 2005) based on which the society constructs males as the 'natural' protectors, the fighters or warriors. Relatedly, Ruth Seifert suggests that the

military achieves a symbolic role in the form of a rite of passage that allows young men to pass from childhood to manhood or discover their male identity (Seifert, 1994; 2002). However, in line with anti-war feminists' assertion that all men do not subscribe to the idea that the military is the site for them to accomplish their manhood, Shukrani's quote shows that the celebration of masculinised manhood does "not however, automatically lead all men to take up arms all the time" (Enloe, 2004:108). On the contrary, the military habitus may be suspended by social realities that lead the socialised subjects to act in contradiction to what was expected from those socially constructed as 'natural' protectors. It follows that to be fully performed (without being fully accomplished), militarised masculinities must continuously be reactivated within an individual.

The manifestation of particular gendered performances is dictated by the enmeshed socio-cultural and historical circumstances of the time. The forcible enrolment that this study's participants referred to is a clear example of the army as not a self-sustaining structure, given that oppressive power is sometimes deployed to oblige men to perform the protector role patriarchy imposes upon manhood. This echoes Cynthia Enloe's analysis of the all-male conscription that has characterised countries worldwide, such as South Korea, Russia, North Korea, Japan and China, to mention a few (Enloe, 2015). Such a practice not only burdens young men with the obligation to protect the nation but also renders women's and men's lived experiences of war quite different.

Anti-war feminists, however, remind us that the polarisation between manliness and femininity is a pure social fabric resulting from the distortion of manhood by militarisation (Enloe and Cockburn, 2015). The choice to run in the face of danger contrasts with the folkloric imagination of the military (Enloe, 2004; Enloe, 2020 online interview), which obscures the humanity of combatants. Such accounts are rarely represented within patriarchal views of soldiering given that, as Enloe and Cockburn (2013) put it, they counter the idea of the military

as a self-sustaining masculine field. It follows that it is important to explore patriarchy critically to challenge rigid gender roles. The next section expands on the wartime rape committed by foreign armed groups, such as the Rwandan Hutu-dominated Interahamwe.

5.3 Wartime rape by foreign armed groups and the creation of inadequate protectors

The ideology carried through militarism is hierarchical and inscribed within patriarchal gendered relationships of dominant-dominated and ramifies within interpersonal relations. This section argues that wartime rape is man-to-man violence that uses women's bodies as vessels of such violence. Through rape, the perpetrators aim to feminise the defined enemy while (re)masculinising their troops. When it comes to the wartime rape perpetrated by female rapists, I maintain that their militarised masculinity questions the patriarchal imaginary and construction of manliness and femaleness as two opposing poles.

5.3.1 **Wartime rape by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe Militia in 1998: 'demasculinising' the enemy males, '(re)masculinising' the perpetrators and shaping the victims' behaviour**

Participants were invited to articulate their conceptualisation of the wartime rape perpetrated in the eastern DRC by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia. In an individual interview with Francesca, a 43-year-old female ordinary community member and participant in the female focus group interview Participant 12), she suggested that *"rape is a foreign culture that we saw coming from Rwanda. Those who were raping were Hutu who invaded our villages. Congolese soldiers knew how to steal but not how to rape."* These Hutu militias, also referred to as Hutut-dominated Interahamwe, designated Rwandan combatants who were said to be responsible for the 1994 Rwandan genocide and fled to the neighbouring regions of North and South Kivu in fear of repercussions (Austessere, 2006). Similarly, throughout an in-depth individual interview with Ishara, a 36-year-old male participant and tutor at one university in Bukavu, he pointed out that through wartime rape,

> *"... they* [Interahamwe] *weakened the man at first, and the woman is exposed to shame, to marginalisation, and it's the same for the kid, and it's the entire community that is*

affected. At the political level, you know, when they rape, they are looking to pass a message, and if the political leaders don't manage to deal with the situation, they lose their popularity in the face of the population and mostly the politicians are considered as weak. These ones only fight for their personal interests. There is a trust issue. But also, at the traditional level, it is worse that a child sees the nudity of [their] *father and mother. And* [it] *means it's our tradition that* [is] *destroyed…"* (Ishara, Participant 13)

Ishara acknowledged the multiple levels where wartime rape impacts the lives of the community: the socio-cultural levels where wartime rape exposes women and their children to shame, and weakens and emasculates men. This notion of shame is inscribed within the patriarchal logics around sexuality and women's cultural symbolic values, as expanded on in Chapter 6.

Participants stressed how the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia started to rape the population when they returned to the territories they were occupying before being attacked by the 1996 rebels. In the participants' views, the rape served two main purposes. Firstly, *"they* [Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia] *were raping to punish the population that acclaimed the AFDL and to humiliate the FARDC"* (Ishara, Participant 13). According to Ishara, wartime rape by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe intended to reprimand the civilian population for its supposed collaboration with the AFDL rebels. Rape was thus meant to shape the behaviour of the victim's community and warn against any future betrayal.

Moreover, participants understood wartime rape as a message from the perpetrators to other males from the victims' community; a way of establishing domination upon their victims. For example, a male participant in the in-depth individual interview, when asked how he comprehended wartime rape perpetrated by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe, responded:

"Rape was a symbol of the spirit of revenge, and it was a way to get the message out; a way to impose domination… Exactly, just tell a man if you don't do this or that we will rape and automatically you have people who fear you." (Safari, Participant 14)

Wartime rape by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia was thus seen as retribution against the population at first and, secondly, against the government that, once again, reverted its accord with the Interahamwe in the 2000s as the DRC attempted to reconstruct its national army (Stearns, 2014). It was a violent message that informed the males within the community and the national army of their dominant status. In this regard, Korac (2018:8) pointedly asserts that "acts of sexual violence in war, both against women and men, are manipulating the dominant socio-cultural notions of femininity and masculinity for spreading fear and for furthering war violence". As such, I maintain that sexual violence in war, of which rape is part, has a double and shared meaning indicating the emasculation of the enemy's nation while enhancing the masculine domination of perpetrators.

In other instances, the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militias did not need to rape effectively to gain the submission of the community's males. The quote above suggests that the threat of rape was enough to gain submission and fear from the dominated (feminised) males. Following the preceding quotes from participants 13 and 14, I put forward that the threat of violence may accomplish similar outcomes as an effective enactment of such violence, and the threat of violence constrains individuals' behaviour within a given society. The spectre of interpersonal physical violence (wartime rape) and the threat of such violence perpetrated by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia established gendered hierarchies between the perpetrators and the community as a whole. The preservation of the established hierarchies serves as regulatory mechanisms in contemporary human communities regardless of their sizes or socio-cultural backgrounds.

Moreover, participants pointed out how wartime rape and the threat of rape accompanied other forms of violence, such as threatening the community's access to food. For instance, Zawadi, a female participant in the focus group, acknowledged that,

> *"The AFDL war* [First Congo war] *of liberation? For me, hum, I was chocked* [by] *the Kadogo phenomenon. Yooo!! It was the first time that we experienced war in our country.*

> *All our kids became soldiers,* [I] *am telling you, especially within our villages. They murdered a lot of people, those AFDL. But now today, hum, soldiers are everywhere! Fhum! You may cultivate your farm, but during the harvest, you find the wives of these soldiers harvesting at your place, and their husbands are there to protect them with the guns."* (Zawadi, Participant 15)

The cohabitation between civilians, soldiers and other armed groups has negatively impacted the community's livelihood as those who hold guns feel empowered to make a livelihood at the expense of those who are unarmed. Preventing women from the dominant community from accessing their crops also constitutes an attaint to their basic economic activities through which these women support their families (Carreiras, 2013). Violence that is not necessarily physical may nonetheless be embodied and effectively impact people's livelihood and health because of denied access to crops in this case. The next subsection examines the wartime rape committed by militia women in the eastern Congo.

5.3.2 **"...So those things [wartime rape by women in armed groups] happen, and they exist": Confronting polarised gendered norms**

The empirical data of this study suggests that some women in armed groups challenged the radical feminist views of women as being naturally peaceful. At this point, two views were confronted. On the one hand, this study's former military official participants provided accounts that reproduced and sustained the patriarchal portrayal of women as unable to perform military masculinities and the associated violence, such as rape. On the other hand, other participants provided accounts of women in the armed groups who were also committing rape against women to destroy their victims' sense of femininity and womanhood.

When asked during the in-depth individual interview about the wartime rape potentially committed by women in the armed forces, a former military officer, who has served in the Congolese national army since 1975 and retired in 2001, laughed and said:

> *"A woman raping!* [Laughter]. *How can she proceed? I've never heard of that. I'm not in the army anymore, but I have never heard of such a story. A woman in the army? Raping?*

> *No, I've never heard of that. But there in Kamanyola it's* [the] *Mai-Mai* [who are raping]. *So unless she is Mai-Mai…*". (Jeshi, Participant 16)

Jeshi, with a phallocratic understanding of wartime rape, tried to legitimate the domination of masculinity over femininity based on biological traits. He thus excluded all individuals who do not have male biology from the category of perpetrators: *"How can she proceed?"* Additionally, Jeshi certainly had an essentialist conceptualisation of women that reproduces the patriarchal norms that govern people's minds in the studied community. In the same perspective, another former soldier from the national army interviewed in this study suggested:

> *"…in the army, women are at the same level as men except for the battlefield. They have the same masculinity in services like finance and logistics, but not on the battlefield, especially that they are not available all the 30 days of the month..."*. (Askari, Participant 17)

Askari's view represented what can be termed "sustainable patriarchy" (Enloe, 2017:17) or the way patriarchy reinvents itself to address some resistance encountered in society. Women's abilities in the army, the excerpt above suggests, are recognised only for tasks socially defined as feminine, such as *"finance and logistics"* but not on the battlefields. Askari's reference to women's menstrual cycle ("…*they are not available all the 30 days of the month"*) to sustain the unfitness of women within the fighter on the ground role suggests that a woman cannot be in the military fully. Askari added that "*…the normal criteria for army recruitment is that of physical strength that women don't have. So when we don't send them to the field, it was a way to protecting them because they* [women] *are so emotional"* (Participant 17). Jeshi and Askari's excerpts resonated with Baaz and Stern's (2011:566) analysis of the DRC's armed forces where the authors explore the "feminisation of the military". According to Baaz and Stern, male soldiers within the Congolese national army conceived women's presence within the ranks as an attack on the masculinity of the army, and these soldiers located women outside the battlefield and the violence associated with combat, clearly categorised as masculine. Jeshi and

Askari's views thus challenge the liberal notions around gender equality while simultaneously attempting to secure the post-colonial construction of the African woman as submissive and docile. However, women do rape.

During the in-depth individual interview with Ushindi, a 39-year-old male participant and former non-governmental organisation worker in Bukavu, he provided a case where war unsettles gender lines by pointing out the existence of women rapists. Ushindi suggested:

> *"There are militia groups in the Congo with women as leaders. There is this lady, I forget her name. It was said that she is Hutu. All the drivers who went to Shabunda said that if you have the bad luck of crossing her path, it is probably your death… She was so cruel, mostly to other women. So, the advice to women who travelled that road was that they should not wear makeup; they had to look dirty because the female militia used to ask why other women should look that pretty when her own life was wasted. So, she showed herself* [as] *brutal and cruel to other women. So those things* [talking of wartime rape by women in armed groups] *happen, and they exist."* (Participant 18)

The militia woman in the quote above is not *Mai-Mai*, as the former national army's soldiers would suggest. She is, as mentioned, a Hutu militia woman who operates in the Shabunda area, said to be cruel to other women who may appear good-looking compared to her. The cruelty of her actions involved *"either order*[ing] *the men under her command to rape the victims…or herself introducing sticks in the reproductive organs of her victims"* (Participant 18). Rape by the militia woman can be said to target her direct victims' physical bodies through which they live their embodied subjectivities. The woman rapist consequently sustains the patriarchal gendered hierarchies. In this case, performing violent militarised masculinity is particularly addressed not to men but instead to women as a feminine group. Female perpetrators of wartime rape are seen as "decoys [who] create confusion by participating in the very sexual humiliation that their gender is usually victim to" (Eisenstein, 2007:37). However, these apparent swapped gendered performances leave stable masculinist gendered ideologies. Some participants, of whom Jeshi is one, portrayed women perpetrators as exceptional and deviant from what is

socially understood as a normal attitude for women. Using the 2003 Abu Ghraib (Iraq) case, where white female prison guards tortured and sexually violated male prisoners, Eisenstein (2007) analyses the interconnectedness between females and women even when the two are not always determinant. On the contrary, gender changes in forms as dictated by circumstances.

The tendency to cast women's violence as exceptional may be understood because of the uncomfortable challenge this violence poses to radical and essentialist views of women as peace prone and thus disturbs the polarised gendered norms. Women perpetrators tend to benefit from a loud silence, given the instability they bring to the comfort of masculinity. The militia woman's performance is not an amalgamation of manliness and womanhood but is rather a clear example that questions the masculine/feminine dichotomy and reinforces the idea of gender as being socially constructed. It follows that wartime rape, regardless of the perpetrator's sex (biology), challenges the masculinist assumptions of femininity as what needs protection and must be protected.

Sadly, the militia woman was said to be a victim of rape in Rwanda in 1994 ("*…the female militia used to ask why other women should look that pretty when her own life was wasted"*). This challenges the master narrative, according to which only Tutsi women were raped during the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Ganguly, 2007). It also points to an important element: today's perpetrators of violence might be victims of yesterday's similar violence. Therefore, blurring the delimitation between victims and perpetrators, this research suggests that the roles of perpetrator and victim are not mutually exclusive necessarily. The next lines turn to the fourth section of this chapter regarding the wartime rape perpetrated by the RCD rebels, who claimed to be acting in the interests of the Banyamulenge ethnic group. It will be suggested that the hierarchies between militarised masculinities were established not only between the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe and the DRC national army. These hierarchies were also acknowledged between the RCD rebels vis-à-vis the national state.

5.4 Wartime rape by the RCD rebels in the 2004 Kivu Conflict: Balkanisation? Claim for ethnic rights? Personal motivations?

5.4.1 **"…it was no longer about liberating the country. It was now about balkanising the eastern DRC."**

Only a few participants were willing to address the question around the politicisation and militarisation of ethnic masculinities because, as posited by a 47-year-old male participant during an in-depth individual interview, *"this may deepen the existing social fissures since there is already some tensions when it comes to the Banyamulenge because of what happened in 2004…"* (Bahati, Participant 9). However, other participants who presented their views on the militarisation of ethnic masculinities invited us to pay attention to how those who were victimised may become perpetrators of violence against their former aggressors.

A 43-year-old male participant and owner of a car repair business pointed at the following when he was asked during the in-depth individual interview how he conceptualised the 2004 Kivu Conflict in comparison to the 1996 first Congo war:

> *"The AFDL war came with a liberating breath after 32 years of dictatorship. The purpose was to bring a new breath. Even when it* [1996 AFDL war] *came with a Tutsi-domination connotation. It was as time passed by that we understood that there were a lot of things hidden behind this war* [1996 AFDL War]. *We had* [a] *population that appreciated this war* [1996 AFDL war] *and we appreciated the direction things started to take in our country. Unfortunately, there was* [the] *assassination of our Laurent D. Kabila and the apparition of the RCD. We understood that the direction deviated* [from] *something else. It was not anymore about liberating the country, it was now about balkanising the country, and this is what we are still living today***"** (Maisha, Participant 19).

Maisha pointed out how the population was hoping for a new departure after the 32 years of Mobutu's reign. This was shown in the paradoxical suggestion that the population *"appreciated"* the 1996 First Congo War. Maisha acknowledged that the 2004 Kivu Conflict that opposed the RCD rebels to the national army was an attempt to balkanise the country.

The balkanisation theory was also presented during the male focus group discussion. For instance, a 54-year-old participant and healthcare provider stated:

> *"…there is one aspect that we always leave aside. The problem is that those Europeans want to balkanise the Congo, and that is where the problem is. For a long period, they have been using Rwanda. They saw that Congolese people, most of the time, we allow people to* [act] *as pleases but not when it comes to the country. Our territory? Never!"* (Auguste, Participant 20)

Another 42-year-old male participant in the same male focus group discussion, and a clinician in the same healthcare facility as participant 19, suggested:

> *"…and these events here in the east* [eastern DRC] *it is a political war and since 2004 and even now our political leaders keep their hands tied. Even Tshisekedi* [the current DRC president] *keeps his hands tied because he is afraid that the Americans may turn their back on him and then kill him the same way as they killed Lumumba and Mzee. Hum, this country!*" (Murula, Participant 21)

Participants 20 and 21 linked the wars in the eastern DRC to the international sphere by pointing out the implication of Europe and the United States in backing Rwanda to balkanise the eastern DRC, as pointed out by participant 20. Using the examples of Patrice Emery Lumumba (the national hero of independence) and the late Laurent-Désiré Kabila (the former President of the DRC and spokesperson of the 1996 Rebellion), participant 21 highlighted the inaction of Congolese political leaders due to their fear of being eliminated. The two preceding quotes thus remind us of the suggestion I formulated in the introductory chapter of this thesis: the wars in the DRC have international, regional, national and local dimensions. While I remain sceptical about the balkanisation theory around the 2004 Kivu Conflict, this theory shows the importance that land tenure occupies in the eastern DRC wars.

5.4.2 **"…the most important thing for a human being is to be valued and accepted…" Wartime rape as a claim for ethnic rights**

The long-dated manipulation of the land tenure policy provided an opportunity for the RCD rebels, who claimed to defend the Banyamulenge, to perpetrate wartime rape in 2004. As argued in the introduction of this chapter, the use of wartime rape by the RCD rebels provided two conceptualisations, of which the claim for ethnic rights was one. Importantly, these claims are

not placed from a powerful position but from a dominated masculine position to gain access to the powerful table. I put forward that wartime rape was thus utilised to attract the national government's attention to these rebel groups' claim for recognition.

Extending Von Holdt's (2011) analysis of South African society, where violence is a communication tool, this thesis suggests that wartime rape in the eastern DRC is the 'smoke that calls' for negotiations. These negotiations are rendered possible thanks to the power that patriarchy asserts to wartime rape by constructing women as the symbol of the nation, the culture reproducers and men's symbolic goods.

While providing her understanding of the 2004 wartime rape in Bukavu, Riziki asserted that the RCD violence was due to permanent rejections of the Banyamulenge customary land rights:

> *"…tell me: How can I survive when I am not accepted? You know…the most important thing for a human being is to be valued and accepted. Hum…the root of every war and every violence is based on when you don't feel accepted…".* (Riziki, Participant 1)

Riziki considered the 2004 wartime rape by the RCD rebels partially explained by the feeling of rejection. It should be reminded that the RCD rebels were mainly comprised of former members of the 1996 rebellion. Hence, some Banyamulenge youths were part of the RCD rebellion, and so were other young males from other Congolese ethnic groups. This explains why Riziki insisted that *"…there is no such an army as a Banyamulenge army…"* as she pointed out the agglomeration of ethnic identities within this armed group. However, Laurent Nkunda, the spokesperson of the RCD rebellion in 2004, maintained that his troop's actions aimed to defend the Banyamulenge from a supposed genocide (Brown, 2012).

Riziki's quote points to using violence from below, by a group that self-perceives as marginalised and thus finds wartime rape to be the way to counter its marginalisation. I would thus suggest that resorting to wartime rape by this group of rebels was not hazardous, given that wartime rape is a language that the state authority, the perpetrators, the victims and their associated communities understand based on the shared patriarchal norms. It communicates the

destruction of a country's national project and its symbolic national collectivity that women often represent. Mostly, the RCD rebels emasculated the state and its army, imposed power upon men from the victims' community and they attacked the victims' embodied subjectivities, as developed in Chapter 6.

The 2004 Human Rights Watch report also provides further quotes from Bukavu's inhabitants, one of whom suggested the following:

> *"On Thursday, June 3rd, two Banyamulenge soldiers came to my house. They pointed their guns at my head and demanded money. We were five men in the house and my little sisters were in the back room. They demanded phones and USD$ 100 from each of the men. I gave them USD$ 75 and a phone… Then they locked the men in a room and went to the girls' room. They attacked my seventeen year old sister. I heard her screaming… A soldier came back into the room and said: "Calm will come back to Bukavu only when you consider the Banyamulenge to be Congolese. Mbuza Mabe[30] killed our mothers, our sisters and our uncles. We entrust you with this message…".* (Male informant, Human Rights Watch 2004:6)

This event occurred during a looting operation by the RCD rebels who, after looting, raped the girls who were in that house. What is striking in the quote is the message these perpetrators entrusted the victims with. The message clearly stated their claim to be recognised as Congolese, which would mean holding recognised customary land, as already put forward in Chapter 4.

Rape perpetrated in 2004 in Bukavu resulted in the establishment of a chaotic environment as the RCD rebels attempted to impose domination while also gaining the attention of both the Congolese national government and the international arena. The 2004 mass rape in Bukavu occurred following the 2004 transition government's reversal of the previous accord regarding the legitimacy of Minembwe as customary land.

[30]Mbuza Mabe was the then General of the FARDC units based in Bukavu in 2004 and has served in Mobutu's presidential guard prior to the AFDL rebellion.

Wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict exposes a tension between the theoretical conceptualisation of wartime sexual violence and the reality of sexual violence in the eastern DRC. I maintain that the persistence of wartime rape in the eastern DRC could be seen as a repetition of a history of debasement sourced within the colonial period that amplified the otherness of Banyamulenge. Also, the persistence of this violence is due to how this physical and gendered violence is nationally and internationally conceptualised, and consequently, the solution is formulated accordingly. The understanding of wartime rape in the DRC must seriously consider how access to land is manoeuvred so that addressing this question would prevent using ethnic identities as motivation and justification to perpetrate violence. Here it should be reminded that ethnicity is not merely about ethnic identity. It also points to the collective meaning and sense of order (not necessarily coherence but agency instead) that people gain through the feeling of belonging. Ethnic identity, furthermore, opens the windows to how different, multiple and intersecting axes of socio-political power determine a group's social positioning in a particular time and space.

Contradictions were noticed in some participants' accounts. For instance, Riziki suggested that the 2004 Kivu Conflict was motivated by a collective feeling of marginalisation and simultaneously articulated that the 2004 Kivu Conflict partially resulted from the pursuit of some personal gains:

> *"…Those* [RCD] *were rebels, and you know all the community, it is not as if we were supporting them... The 2004 conflict was initially individual conflict between Mutebusi and Mbuza Mabe, and these guys took it to another level. Mutebusi raped, and* they [the non-Banyamulenge population] *took it on us while even all the Banyamulenge did not support it* [Mutebusi's violence]*…"*. (Riziki, Participant 1)

Riziki provided some other aspects of the 2004 Kivu Conflict by suggesting that this war was motivated by disagreements between two army generals, Jules Mutebusi from the RCD and Mbuza Mabe from the national army. Riziki further explained, *"…*[these] *conflicts revolved*

around the attribution of ranks within the 10th military brigade that controlled the South Kivu region…". The individual conflicts hence included accessing higher grades within the newly constituted national army, the FARDC, where the military-rebel integration policy was being implemented. The deployment of the 2004 Kivu Conflict thus points to how wars in the eastern Congo involve many political actors with layered agendas.

Following this study's participants' accounts of the 2004 Kivu Conflict, I position wartime rape as man-to-man violence, informed by dynamics of other elements (access to land, claim for recognition), as elaborated previously. My position builds on Gwen Hunnicutt's (2009) analysis of men's violence against women to suggest that men who are in the least powerful position within the scheme of masculinities are likely to resort to violence, such as wartime rape, following social pressure to gain more power and redeem their marginalised (ethnic) masculinities. Combining the concepts of militarisation, as developed by Cynthia Enloe, and protest masculinities, as presented by Gwen Hunnicutt, is thus important to understand wartime rape by the RCD rebels. This combination would help explore the complexities of the power relationship between men at first and, secondly, between men and women. The RCD rebels were marginalised within their ethnic masculinities, as presented in the first section of this chapter, and within their military ambitions, as articulated by the study's participants. Additionally, a former DRC army officer mentioned the following during the in-depth individual interview when he was asked what he considered to be the origin of the 2004 armed conflict:

> *"In 2004? Mutebusi? Ah!* [laughter] *It was just a reclamation from our 'Rwandophone'* [Kinyarwanda for speaking] *brothers who reclaimed control over the eastern territories. But you will notice that it was only a portion* [of Rwandophones]. *They are gendarmes from the neighbouring countries that have infiltrated the DRC to destabilise the country. And that's why you* [the population] *have noticed that the refuge of these generals, such as Mutebusi and Nkunda, is Rwanda."* (Soldier 3, Participant 22)

Soldier 3's quote sustains that the 2004 Kivu Conflict was enabled by the existing local land-tenure conflicts in the eastern DRC. The fact that the "Banyamulenge speak Kinyamulenge – a mixture of Kinyarwanda and Kirundi (Author's observation)" – and that "they constituted most of the RCD rebels backed by Rwanda" (Mamdani, 2001:260-261) has led them to be associated (indistinctively) with Rwanda even when they are Congolese. Accordingly, another participant in the female focus group discussion asserted:

> *"Mutebusi has led to hatred against Rwandans and to the stigmatisation of the Banyamulenge. In my house, three kids were victims of stray bullets, as the bullets found them in my own yard. We rushed* [to] *Panzi Hospital to get emergency treatment even when they* [the RCD rebels] *were still shooting outside. They* [medical doctors] *did surgery on my children, and they remove*[d] *the bullet in the hips of one. Now to insult someone, people call him Rwandan whilst that was not the case before…"* (Francesca, Participant 12)

Francesca's quote reinforces this thesis' suggestion that wartime rape has had multiple ramifications within the community. Francesca points out that being Rwandan became an "*insult*" as the 2004 wartime rape was publicly seen as perpetrated by Rwandans and the Banyamulenge. Sadly, the political and military arena in the DRC did less to address the volatility of the Banyamulenge ethnic group's right to land, as this ambiguity served particular political and military interests.

In the same vein as Riziki and Soldier 3, another male participant in an in-depth individual interview was asked what he considered led to the 2004 Kivu Conflict. In response to the question, he elaborated:

> *"Since the arrival of the AFDL, there was always an ethnic group that marginalised itself and self-pretended to be a victim. And with the AFDL, there was a race for power; everyone wanted to position themselves politically and militarily. With Mutebusi, it was a question of leadership at the level of the army, and this ethnic group that was victimising itself had, for example, found an opportunity to take revenge and show its strike force,* [and] *its capacity for destruction. This war destroyed the morality of the community.*

> *There were men from North Kivu who came to reinforce their friends here in South Kivu. In short, it is a war that has destroyed and impoverished the community. Rape was a symbol…; a way to spread the message; a means of imposing domination…".* (Safari, Participant 14)

Safari's account goes along with the previous account from Soldier 3. Situating the perpetration of wartime rape by the RCD rebels in the patriarchal symbolic order is crucial to enlighten the domination and gendered power at play through the act of rape. I maintain that the RCD rebels performed protest masculinity in their use of violence to claim a place at the military-dominant table and ethnic recognition. The concept of protest masculinity reminds us that all men are not equally included within the scheme of masculine domination. In other words, a hierarchy exists within masculinities (Connell, 2005). The RCD rebels, my data suggested, were structurally (militarily and ethnically) situated at the dominant position in the sense that their ethnic claims were relegated to second position, and the then transition government overlooked the previously signed agreement regarding the distribution of grades within the newly constituted national army.

Through the widespread use of rape, an amalgam of interests, claims, grievance, greed and personal endeavours that do not serve communal interests are at play. The 2004 wartime rape locally deepened the stigmatisation of the Banyamulenge ethnic group. The Human Rights Report (2004:2) asserts how Nkunda's and Mutebusi's claim to perpetrate wartime rape "to protect the Banyamulenge against a potential genocide" was nationally and internationally rejected. In contrast to the 1990s Bosnia-Herzegovina case, the 2004 wartime rape in the eastern DRC is not a spoil of the victors but a negotiation strategy within a continuous struggle in which the rapists did not prevail. Wartime rape is a language that the Congolese government understands, which gives perpetrators the power to negotiate. The next and last section of this chapter explores how notions of autochthony have been manipulated by the *Mai-Mai* militia to

perpetrate violence in service of their military interests and the political ambitions of their patrons.

5.5 Wartime rape perpetrated by the Mai-Mai militias

5.5.1 **"Shift from their [Mai-Mai] initial 'raison d' être'"**

As already argued in Chapters 1 and 2, this study adopts Moritz Schuberth's definition of the term militia, which he defines as community-based armed groups that operate at a political level, within the framework of patronage and clientelism and not against the state but instead against a given government or political figure (Schuberth, 2015).

During the individual in-depth interview with a 56-year-old female nurse, she acknowledged how young men were mobilised within the villages to defend their community against armed violence from outsiders:

> *"Me, before moving here* [to Bukavu], *we were living there in the Shabunda and after* [that] *in Kamituga. But it's because of permanent insecurity that the entire family relocated here* [to Bukavu]. *Uhm, I remember there was a time when there, in Kamituga, there was a meeting to identify young men who wanted to join armed groups. But those young men were not initially raping. We called them auto-defence…".* (Sifah, Participant 21)

Shabunda and Kamituga are both located in the South Kivu province (eastern DRC). While Shabunda is one of the largest territories, Kamituga is a mining area within the Mwenga territory in the South Kivu province. Sifah mentioned how she and her family had to move from one area to another because of insecurity. To respond to the exactions of external armed groups, Sifah explained, the Kamituga population mobilised their male youth into community-based armed groups for self-defence. While auto-defence did not commit violence in their early formation, or *"initially"*, they did a "*détournement de leur* [*Mai-Mai*] *première raison d'être"* (from French: *"shift from their* [*Mai-Mai*] *initial purpose"*) (Sifah, Participant 21). Wood (2009) suggests that an armed group may shift its repertoire of violence when it comes across other armed groups, attempting to position itself accordingly. As elaborated later in this section,

I put forward that the *Mai-Mai* militia turned to wartime rape to be taken seriously by the national authorities and have its claims heard. Nevertheless, the formation of the *Mai-Mai* militias reminds us that it is necessary to locate the socio-cultural construction and mobilisation of masculinities as fundamental to enable and structure the 'nature' of conflicts on the African continent. Without doing so, the number of young males joining non-state armed groups and the perpetration of wartime rape will not be understood.

Furthermore, during the individual in-depth interview, Ushindi was asked whether he considered wartime rape by the *Mai-Mai* militia as a strategic weapon of war. He acknowledged this:

> *"The question to ask is to know if there has been a time in history where people were given direct orders saying that let* ['s] *go and rape so that we can have this and that… we interviewed some soldiers from* [the] *FARDC, the Congolese army, and they said, no a soldier who has been trained will never do that* [rape]. *But the problem is that there have been so many militias at such a point it's hard to say who is the perpetrator… Do you know that during the time of the Mai-Mai, the very first formation of this group, it was hard to see a Mai-Mai raping woman? But now there are so many Mai-Mai groups at such a point we cannot say who is the perpetrator."* (Ushindi, Participant 18)

Ushindi doubted that there was a time in the history of the Congo wars when soldiers from the national army (FARDC) were ordered to rape. Ushindi's doubt finds resonance in Baaz and Stern's (2013) analysis as they emphasise that the strategic qualificator applied to wartime rape is sometimes difficult to demonstrate in the face of insufficient proof. Ushindi also highlights a recurrent argument within the accounts of the former national army officers interviewed in this study. These former officers denied the existence of wartime rape perpetrated by the national army and insisted that armed groups that rape are illiterate. Importantly, Ushindi also highlighted a shift within the *Mai-Mai* as these militias shifted from protecting their communities to perpetrating violence; wartime rape included. Similarly, other community members considered that the *Mai-Mai* groups' repertoire of violence was altered with time, to

the disappointment of the local population. During an individual interview with Shabani, a female community leader and member of the civil society in Bukavu, she suggested:

> *"Armed groups have different disciplines. In previous years, we knew that the Mai-Mai could neither rape nor steal because,* [in] *the beginning, they had their fetishes, which success depended on compliance with internal social norms."* (Shabani, Participant 22)

Shabani acknowledged that the military success of the *Mai-Mai* was conditioned by the militia's previous respect for social norms. In the same view as Shabani, most participants in this study pointed out that the *Mai-Mai*'s use of fetishes was associated with the groups' source of social norms that shaped and restrained their actions on the battlefield, simultaneously provided the armed groups' cohesion. Therefore, it can be articulated that male youths who constituted the *Mai-Mai* were turned into soldiers through ritualised practices.

Furthermore, the former military officers interviewed in this study recognised that the *Mai-Mai* were unequally incorporated and asserted lower grades within the army because the *Mai-Mai* and most RCD rebels were either 'uneducated' farmers or cattle herders. Jeshi, a former FARDC, presented their opponent fighters as *"…someone who yesterday was* [a] *shepherd becomes* [a] *Commander today only because he had access to guns…"* (Participant 16). All other former army officers insisted on how the lack of formal military training and education may lead to wartime rape. For instance, Askari (Participant 23) declared:

> *"The majority of rapists are not trained. For us who entered the army in 75* [1975], *we had values in the army. It means that we're avoiding theft, avoiding rape, but today they pick up anyone. For us, we knew that there* [are] *two remedies to survive in the army: not taking someone's wife and not stealing, but those* [armed groups] *of today, they do not know all these* [values]*. It's these Mai-Mai who rape. You know there is a 'diction'* [a saying] *that says: 'in the army, you don't steal grades; we take it from school benches'. Everywhere in the world, it's* [military grade] [is] *not given, it's earned at the school bench."* (Askari, Participant 17)

The militarisation processes of the RCD rebels (who formerly belonged to the AFDL rebellion army) and the *Mai-Mai* militia were thus contrasted with that of the former national

army officers. The latter proudly mentioned that they received formal military training compared to the RCD rebels and *Mai-Mai* militias, who became soldiers only by holding guns. Askari believed that an armed group's repertoire of violence is also dictated by the militarisation process through which the group builds their male recruits into soldiers. Interestingly, these former military officers attributed the rape perpetrated by the *Mai-Mai* to the lack of necessary capital to be manly militaries. As articulated by Jeshi, mentioned earlier, *"what paved the way for rape is people who go outside the law. They are military recalcitrant*[s] *who go outside of our military standards"* (Participant 16). Hence, wartime rape was presented as misbehaviour from some *"bad sheep*" and *"not an imposition of power"* (Participant 19). However, this thesis strongly doubts that the persistence of wartime rape and the associated violence (mutilation, rape with trenchant objects, incest rape, etc.) in the eastern Congo is the result of some *"bad sheep"* behaviours. Instead, I argue later in this chapter that the use of wartime rape by the *Mai-Mai* militia can be explained by the groups' shift in their repertoire of violence in the face of their shifting interests as dictated by the socio-politics of the time but also by the *Mai-Mai*'s confrontation to and positioning vis-à-vis other armed groups.

The question of what militarised masculinity is or is not is raised as former military officers in this study considered that gaining an education as instituted by colonial masters (school benches) is the only way of acquiring militarised masculinity. However, the African context marred by the history of colonialism contests this Eurocentric view, given how gender was colluded and challenged in the face of colonisation and socio-cultural expectations. The continuous social construction of manhood in the military that describes the ideal soldiers and simultaneously reflects the gendered identity of the nation is not a one-size-feet-all process but is instead culturally and geographically informed. As such, I suggest that the *Mai-Mai* militia's masculinities are militarised even though this militarisation might have taken other processes. Also, these militias' militarised masculinities are not to be reduced to gang-type masculinities

as the *Mai-Mai*'s militarised actions are destined to political and military ends. Whether or not they resort to wartime rape depends on the ideology and discipline within armed groups. The question one would, therefore, ask is: What led to such a shift in the *Mai-Mai*? I attempt to answer this question in the next subsection.

5.5.2 **Claiming higher military ranks and the manipulation of notions of autochthony in service of patrons**

The violence perpetrated by the *Mai-Mai* militia can be articulated in two ways: the mobilisation of notions of autochthony on the one hand and the claim for respect from the national government and higher ranks within the national army on the other hand. During the male focus group discussion, participants were asked how they understood the persistence of wartime rape in the eastern DRC and how this affects the community. One of the male participants and worker at a Bank in Bukavu asserted that,

> *"…beside all these wars we hear about, these rapes are used to psychologically affect one's enemy. And fear is a weapon that destroys the mental* [state]. *So, through the history of wars in our country, raping is* [a] *political war because of the accords that are not respected. So, rape is a means that those armed groups that come with these wars utilise maybe to pressurise the country's authorities so that the accords may be respected up to the end until they* [are] *sign agreements. At the social level, these rapes have inscribed hatred within people, and hatred is a source of all exactions we see today. These rapes are used to hurt others because it is an entire life that is marked. They mark other people's minds and the victims' minds. On the question regarding the restructuration of families, it is a whole process, and the victims will be invited to accept, and their families will also be invited to accept what happened."* (Matumaini, Participant 23)

Matumaini's quote links wartime rape to its psychological, political and social outcomes. He pointedly acknowledged how rape instils fear within individuals and how this fear attacks people's mental states. He also suggests that, based on the train of wars that marketed the DRC's history, wartime rape has become a political war. This, Matumaini explains, was the result of unrespected agreements signed between the state and armed groups. Matumaini points out that

"*…those armed groups that come with these wars utilise may be to pressurise the country's authorities so that the accords may be respected up to the end until they sign agreements".* Matumani's conceptualisation of wartime rape comforts my argument that wartime rape is 'the smoke that calls' for recognition and negotiation between the state and armed groups, such as the *Mai-Mai* militias and the RCD rebels.

When it comes to the notions of autochthony and how they evolved, this PhD thesis questioned the *Mai-Mai*'s use of autochthonous claim in justifying their violence, which came to be redirected against the same population they claimed to protect. Also, the military collaboration between the *Mai-Mai* and the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia came to question the *Mai-Mai*'s claim to fight to protect their ancestors' land against foreign invaders (Vlassenroot, 2013). Participants in this study went further to even question the ethnic homogeneity of this militia:

> *"…The Mai-Mai are the biggest scam we* [have] *ever had. I don't even know the identity behind it. They just want to be incorporated* [within the FADRC]. *I don't know if you know Justin Bitakwira. That guy, you know, he wanted to win the governor position in Bukavu.* [Do] *you know what he said? 'I will talk to my brothers', he even called them* [Mai-Mai] *ba ndugu yangu* [relatives, from Swahili]*, and 'I will tell them to calm down' if I become the governor of South Kivu…".* (Riziki, Participant 1)

Riziki suggested that it is now harder to clearly say to which identity group the *Mai-Mai* belongs because of the multiplicity of armed groups that claim the *Mai-Mai* appellation. As argued in Chapter 4, the initial *Mai-Mai* movement was born within the Babembe customary land, and the dynamic of the local conflict they were involved in was rooted in the relationship between territory and identity. However, with the multiplicity of the *Mai-Mai* groups, signalling internal fissures within these militias as previously articulated by Ushindi and its collaboration with the Interahamwe militia, the local population questioned this group's claim of autochthony. As pointed out by Riziki, the *Mai-Mai* was seen as a scam because they primarily

pursued their military ambitions on the one hand and, on the other hand, they militated for the political ambition of their clients (patrons).

Riziki also highlights how individuals with political ambitions utilise their patronage of the *Mai-Mai* to negotiate for a targeted political position. Justin Bitakwira, mentioned by Riziki, for instance, is a member of the National Assembly in the DRC who promised to dialogue with the *Mai-Mai* in favour of the government if or when *"he becomes the governor of Bukavu…"* (Riziki, Participant 1). This quote points to two important aspects stressed in this research: the use of violence to place the militia and rebels' (ethnic and military) claims on the one hand and, on the other hand, to sustain the political agenda of their patrons.

The implicit threat of armed violence and particularly wartime rape is used as 'the smoke that calls' for the national government's attention upon the armed groups and their patrons' claims. As already argued in Chapter 2 and earlier in this chapter, Von Holdt et al. (2011:28) developed the concept of "the smoke that calls" to show how physical and symbolic violence in South Africa were utilised as a communication means, which quickly captures the authority's attention and opens doors for negotiations. As already mentioned, this concept is extended to the eastern DRC case to show how *Mai-Mai* groups agitate the threat of rape or effectively commit sexual violence against the civilian population to call the national government's attention to their claims. However, in contrast to the RCD rebels who raped to claim the recognition of Minembwe as the Banyamulenge's customary land, the *Mai-Mai*'s resort to wartime rape was understood by this study's participants as a claim for respect and higher ranks in the army. In other instances, the *Mai-Mai* militia's violence aims to further the political agenda of their clients (patrons).

The *Mai-Mai* perpetrate violence because "…*they just want to be incorporated* [within the FADRC]*…"* (Riziki, Participant 1). Riziki's assertion goes along with historical accounts of the eastern DRC conflicts that acknowledge how the *Mai-Mai* Sheka, which collaborated with

foreign armed groups, such as the Interahamwe's FDLR, mass raped at least 387 civilians in three days because the leader (Sheka) "wanted to draw attention to his armed group and to be invited to the negotiation" (Autesserre, 2012:217). This evidences that in the eastern DRC, armed groups, such as the *Mai-Mai* and the RCD rebels, as discussed previously, utilised wartime rape as a language of brokering. Additionally, Vlassernroot (2013) pointed out how the local community progressively turned its back on the *Mai-Mai*, whose collaboration with the Rwandan Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia questioned the *Mai-Mai*'s old claim to defend the ancestor's land against foreigners.

In light of this, I suggest that the local armed conflicts is hardly an ethnic conflict even when it is sourced within rivalries around territory and identity. Instead, I put forward that the fight between the so called autochthonous (the *Mai-Mai*) and the constructed foreigners (the Banyamulenge) is mainly explained through the logic of the territorialisation of leadership, given that the recognition of Minembwe as the Banyamulenge's land has reduced the surface of territory under the control of the Babembe's customary chief. In other words, based on the principle of territorialisation of leadership, removing the Banyamulenge under the Babembe customary authority's leadership reduces the customary chief's political power. The bigger the territory under control, the greater the chances to occupy higher positions in the government. Hence, the Banyamulenge were not fought because they were considered foreigners per se but because of their claim of a recognised customary land that would weaken the local and national political power of the Babembe customary chief. Violence, such as wartime rape within a patriarchal society, becomes that special weapon that voice amplifier the perpetrators resort to, to challenge their subordinate position within the military and ethnic masculine field.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored and analysed the participants' conceptualisation of the emergence of wartime rape in the eastern DRC and has maintained that wartime rape is about establishing and maintaining gendered power and domination. However, it has been suggested that wartime

rape may be absent in one armed conflict while it may be utilised as a weapon, a lexicon and a logic of negotiation in another war. The analysis of participants' accounts provided insights into the absence of wartime rape as a weapon of war in the 1996 First Congo War and its strategic use in the 2004 Kivu Conflict. It has been suggested that the 2004 wartime rape in the eastern DRC is rooted in the Belgian history of colonialisation, during which some ethnic groups were recognised as autochthonous while others were declared foreigners. It follows that wartime rape in the eastern DRC is not an isolated phenomenon. Instead, this violence finds its rationale within the local conflicts around land tenure, within the national course to military and political power, and within the regional and international conflicts around access to minerals. This chapter focused on the intersection between gender, ethnicity and history (local land tenure conflict), and militarisation as I considered these to be useful units of analysis at all levels of socio-cultural and armed groups' hierarchies. Existing inequalities and the violation of signed accords were predominant and had an important part in the presence and persistence of wartime rape in the studied area.

The first section of this chapter suggested that the intersection between gender and ethnicity does not always lead to the strategic use of wartime rape in armed conflict. As provided by this thesis' participants, the ideology and repertoire of the 1996 rebels prevented them from raping civilians following the group's strong structure and ambition to establish a new government, thus cohabitating with the population. However, gendered notions of belonging to and holding customary land were politicised and manipulated during the militarisation of the Banyamulenge male youths in the 1996 First Congo War. The youths were allowed to believe that their participation in the 1996 'Liberation' War would deconstruct their otherness in the face of the national government following the 1996 rebellion spokesperson's (who later became the DRC's president) promise to raise Minembwe to the title of the Banyamulenge customary land. This reminds us of Stern and Nystrand's (2006) suggestion according to which politicians within the

global North, as well as those within the so called 'developing (postcolonial) countries', utilise nationalist ideologies to bring (for politico-military purposes) targeted groups to believe that they belong to a unique 'we'. Nonetheless, the history of making and unmaking political promises repeated itself, and Minembwe was not recognised as the Banyamulenge customary land. Consequently, the fissure within the then-1996 allies led the former 1996 rebels to form the RCD, which was recognised as the main perpetrator of wartime rape in the 2004 Kivu Conflict. The otherness of the Banyamulenge ethnic group was thus a legacy from the Belgian colonisers that post-colonial leaders manipulated for political and military ends.

The second section maintained that wartime rape in the eastern DRC accomplishes different roles. In the case of the Rwandan Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, wartime rape was used as a dissuading tool to discourage the cohabiting population from collaborating with the Interahamwe-defined enemies on the one hand, as a way of feminising the DRC's patriarchal government that has reversed several accords concluding with the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia. As a reminder, this militia constituted, along with the Mobutu's army and *Mai-Mai* militias, an important enemy to defeat following its main implication in the Rwandan genocide. The analysis of wartime rape perpetrated by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia enlightened the fluidity of gender because female rapists challenged the radical feminists' view of women as peace prone. It was suggested that wartime rape attacks the victim's subjectivity and sense of belonging regardless of the perpetrators' biological formation.

The third and fourth sections of this chapter expanded on the wartime rape perpetrated by the RCD rebels, who claimed to be defending the Banyamulenge's interests on the one hand and wartime rape perpetrated by the *Mai-Mai* militia on the other hand. It was put forward that wartime rape was used as 'the smoke that calls' for negotiations within the militarised masculine hierarchies. The RCD rebels utilised wartime rape as 'the smoke that calls' the national government's attention to the claim to recognise Minembwe as rightful customary land

and higher ranks within the newly constituted national army. The *Mai-Mai* rebels, on the other hand, were marginalised in their militarised masculinities as they were portrayed as shepherds who held guns and thus unfitted militaries. This portrayal ranked them at the bottom of the military hierarchies. In the face of this, this militia's repertoire shifted from protecting their local communities to perpetrating wartime rape against these communities, given that wartime rape was the only language the government understood. Using wartime rape as a weapon by the RCD rebels and the *Mai-Mai* militias points out that violence is not always counterproductive for these groups, as several *Mai-Mai* leaders were given higher ranks in the national army. In the eastern DRC, wartime rape – as an outcome of entangled agendas and violence rooted in the Belgian colonisation – as a form of physical and symbolic violence has its own moral, as Von Holdt suggests in his 2021 inaugural speech, and has been constructed as a bargaining tool within a patriarchal state.

Chapter 6 expands on how wartime rape threatens and even destroys the victims' communities' order and their sense of belonging, their lived experiences of the world or their subjectivities, and their symbolic capital and cultural values while simultaneously establishing and maintaining a power imbalance between the perpetrators and the victims. The power that wartime rape holds may, however, be countered when patriarchal gendered notions around men and women are critically assessed and questioned, as presented in the following chapter.

In a short conversation, I requested a young Congolese male artist to represent how he conceptualised women's lives in the eastern DRC. The image below illustrates this artist's conceptualisation of the eastern DRC women's lives marked by the armed conflicts. This illustration matches the accounts of most of this thesis' respondents.

Image 5-1 Drawing by another young Congolese male who describes himself as an activist drawer[31]

[31] The word *'Espoir'* written on the Congolese blue flag means 'Hope' from French. This artist sees women as the rebuilders of the country's future as they are able to overcome the trauma of bullets, rape and displacement.

Chapter 6:

Wartime rape: The challenge to the victims' subjective identities and sense of belonging within a patriarchal system

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 argued that while wartime rape was absent from the 1996 rebels' repertoire of violence, this sexualised violence came to be adopted as 'the smoke that calls' for negotiation between the perpetrators and the national government. I indicated how wartime rape could be conceptualised as man-to-man violence to impose power and domination through females' bodies, but less was said about how wartime rape challenged the victims' subjectivities and their communities' cohesion. In this chapter, I examine how the imposition of power and domination from one group of men to another also challenges the victims' subjectivities and their communities' cohesion.

The anti-war feminist perspective that inspires this thesis uses peacetime theories around rape to explain the widely adopted understanding of rape as a weapon of war because this wing of feminism considers peacetime and wartime to be two overlapping periods (Cockburn, 2003). Anti-war feminists strongly argue that peacetime gendered inequalities aliment the use of rape as a military weapon during wartime on the one hand and, on the other hand, they expand on how the war on women's bodies does not stop when bullets and bombs are silenced (Enloe, 2004; Ayiera, 2010). On the contrary, wartime rape victims carry with them, like a bullet in their spines, the personal and socio-cultural consequences of their victimisation. Bringing wartime rape to the status of a weapon was crucial to raise awareness of this issue and to criminalise this avoidable physical violence.

This chapter suggests that the analysis of wartime rape as a weapon of war needs to be augmented to include not only the imposition of oppressive power through rape but also other roles that wartime rape accomplishes. The weaponisation of sexualised violence, such as wartime rape, simultaneously includes the destruction of victims' subjectivities, the destruction of their families and communities and the production of victims' social death in the aftermath.

As mentioned in Chapters 3 and 5, in addition to the primary data obtained through individual in-depth interviews and focus groups with this study's participants, I resorted to a documentary in which wartime rape direct victims in the eastern DRC voice their experiences as they aimed to make sense of the wartime rape that destroyed their everydayness. This documentary was realised within the Panzi Hospital's City of Joy in Bukavu. While using this documentary exposed me to a dilemma between the commercialisation of misery or "SGBV [sexual and gender-based violence] tourism" (Baaz and Stern, 2010:7) on the one hand and the victims' path toward regaining their subjectivity on the other hand, I considered it to be useful in the sense that the agencies of wartime rape victims to recount their experiences (instead of being seen as mere objects of violence) has been acknowledged. Additionally, this documentary provided me with testimonies from direct victims of rape even when this study did not interview direct victims of wartime rape for reasons elaborated in Chapter 3.

This chapter endeavours to critically examine how wartime rape has challenged the victims' subjective identities or their self-perception and their relationship with their surroundings. While doing so, this chapter highlights how the identified wartime rape perpetrators (Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, the RCD rebels and the *Mai-Mai* militia presented in Chapter 5) invested either with personal or group motivations, objectifying their victims to destroy their victims' communities while emphasising their [perpetrators'] own masculine subjectivities. The chapter also expands on two main attitudes the community adopted vis-à-vis the victims depending on whether the perpetrator was from an armed group or a civilian.

Using patriarchy as a searchlight, this chapter examines how the attack against a woman's embodied sexual subjectivity through rape is culturally ascribed within a symbolic order that constructs women in antithesis to full personhood. Rape against men and boys, I put forward, aimed at simultaneously feminising the victims and challenging their sense of manhood.

This chapter is structured as follows. The chapter first explores the participants' different categorisations of wartime rape perpetrated by armed groups into revenge rape and sadistic rape and their impact on women's and girls' place within their community. Under the title *Home-frontline,* the following section examines how wartime rape alienates victims from their bodies by destroying the previous safety of their primary home (their bodies) and distorting the victims' view of self. Lastly, the chapter examines how wartime rape destroys one's cultural subjectivity and distorts the relationship between the victims and their community as victims are constructed as 'pariahs'; and children born from rape are nicknamed *"Ka Hutu"*, or unfitted children. Each section has subsections.

6.2 Participants' different interpretations of wartime rape by armed groups

6.2.1 **"…I will go and join the militia to retaliate and do the same to other women in some other communities": Revenge rape**

Participants conceptualised "*revenge rape*" as carried out for personal reasons and attributed this form of rape to the *Mai-Mai* militias that comprise child soldiers. Revenge rape, it was suggested, does not always take the form of gang or group rape but can be carried along with other forms of violence, such as genital mutilation. Take, as an example, the following quote:

> *"…These are people who have not only physical damages but also have psychological damages, and this has consequences on their psychological dimension. Hum! The social too; and economic consequences because men are leaving the villages and sometimes join themselves* [with] *militias, and it becomes a cycle. There are some villages in the eastern DRC where you can no longer find men because they have left and joined the militias; because, if my wife has been raped today, I will go and join the militia to retaliate and do the same to other women in some other communities. What about children who have witnessed that, and they have no occupation and still have to survive? They will definitely, soon or later, join the militias, and once they join the militia group, they will perpetrate that rape culture. It destroys our human nature."* (Ushindi, Participant 18)

During the individual in-depth interview with Ushindi, he acknowledged that some perpetrators of wartime rape act for personal reasons that have social, psychological and economic dimensions. Socially and psychologically, some men join armed groups to retaliate in other communities against the rape of their women. I suggest that failing to accomplish their traditional and imposed role of protector constituted a trigger for them to join armed groups and rape. By combining these two actions (joining armed groups and perpetrating wartime rape), I suggest that the perpetrators aim to regain their challenged masculinities and revenge the violence done in their former community. The revenge rape was mostly attributed to the *Mai-Mai* militias, whose action was seen as a way of challenging their protest masculinities through violence. I, therefore, suggest that what participants termed "revenge" rape aimed to counter or deconstruct the feminisation of males from the victims' community and simultaneously regain their threatened masculinities to conserve the patriarchal notions of men as protectors, victors and superiors. The danger of such patriarchal beliefs, however, is that revenge rape creates a cycle of violence that *"destroys our human nature".* The view that perpetrators have *"lost their human nature"* led some participants to suggest that these perpetrators *"have turned into monsters… you can even notice it by the way they look. When I was in Shabunda, I didn't see any of them who* [were] *clean… They always appear all smelly and always have red eyes…"* (Maombi, Participant 24). This description resonates with other studies realised on the case of child soldiers in the eastern DRC. The redness of these perpetrators' eyes, rather than being seen as a sign that they have mutated into monsters, can be explained by the mind-altering substances that they consume, as explained in Trenholm et al.'s (2012) ethnographic study on child soldiers in the eastern DRC.

Additionally, during the male focus group discussion, Bashimbe pointed out:

> *"…in our tradition, it's worse. Ha! it's taboo that a child sees the nudity of his father, his mother, and it means it's our traditions that are destroyed… And worse, when groups are formed by children from the same community, they start exactions for revenge against*

other communities or even against their own community when this community oppose[s] *their* [the young males'] *movement. And we have noticed that this culture has been adopted by civilians at different levels for revenge. When used as a destructive weapon, it* [wartime rape] *affects men, and it creates in you a spirit of revenge to retaliate what was done against your mother, your sister, etc.*…".(Participant, 25)

Bashimbe, also mentioned in Chapter 5, maintains that wartime rape establishes a "*taboo"* within the victims' communities as the rape occurs in public and children are exposed to the nakedness of their parents. The mention of taboo suggests that not only direct victims are affected by rape, and wartime rape holds symbolic dimensions. Indirect victims, such as the children that join armed groups as a consequence of being exposed to the rape of their family members, explain that wartime rape has psychological impacts even on indirect victims. Additionally, revenge rape carries very personal motivations in that the perpetrators may target their communities following the rejection from the latter. Importantly, Bashimbe points to the ramifications that wartime rape has within the attacked community, raising one's curiosity on how a violent act against women's physical bodies traverses the level of corporality to impact the symbolic order of such a community? I will attempt to answer this question in the section on the creation of pariahs through wartime rape.

Men participating in this study have pointedly suggested that wartime rape against women is in *"reality*" addressed to males from the victims' communities. During the individual interview with a university chemistry student, Fadzili was asked what the consequences of wartime rape within the community were. He suggested:

"…In the community, the effect of these exactions [is] *on men. They* [exactions] *bring to men a need for revenge because it is difficult to see your daughter, your sister* [or] *your wife being raped. And it is this that brings to men the need* [for] *revenge because, hum, in our African communities, women and children are considered like men's wealth. Hum! But women are also sometimes like men's 'suppléant'*[substitute, from French], *hum, like sub-categories vis-à-vis men. Because I mean, it is within our African culture where men are considered like strong beings; they hunt, and animals don't joke… But again, we have*

> *different sorts of men because we have some who take initiatives, they join the army following the rape within their families and others who, despite all they say,* [they] *can't go* [to] *the army or they can't become politicians, it's different, men are different…".* (Fadzili, Participant 27)

Fadzili portrayed wartime rape as addressed to men because, in what he defines as African culture, women and children are considered to be men's wealth or symbolic goods (Bourdieu, 2001). To reach the targeted men's pride, the perpetrators attack the men's symbolic goods through rape. This explains, as I maintained in the previous chapter, that wartime rape is about power and establishing domination. Wartime rape simultaneously objectifies women by reducing them to men's properties while it also establishes (or attempts to reverse) a power hierarchy within masculinities. Importantly, Fadzili also suggested that women's inferior position to men partly explains the wartime rape they are exposed to in the eastern DRC. In a similar vein as Fadzili, Shabani posited that:

> *"These cases of rape became recurrent in our country because of Mutebusi's war. And there were rapes that were done sometimes with the collaboration of the locals. We started to notice that more and more victims [they] were girls who were about to get married. And, uhm, and Shi* [from the Bashi ethnic group as presented in Chapter 5] *are so, they are so so jealous of their women, and because of that, victims are chassed as if it* [being raped] *was by their mistake or will…*". (Shabani, Participant 22)

Shabani, a female participant, pointed out how wartime rape became recurrent in the eastern DRC following the 2004 Kivu Conflict, also locally referred to as Mutebusi's war. She highlighted how most girls were raped when they were about to get married. As developed later in this chapter, wartime rape not only objectifies women but also destroys their symbolic capital, their ability to establish through marriage a relationship between the group of men. Not all women, I suggest, consider marriage to be a limit to their subjectivities. On the contrary, some women in the eastern DRC access some socio-economic capital they would not have otherwise through marriage.

Furthermore, Connell (2016) points to the differences between men, and this differentiation sheds light on the differences between masculinities. While experiencing wartime rape against their women may lead some men to join armed groups to regain their undermined masculinities, other men may react differently as they do not consider the army a field where their manhood may be (re)constructed. Talking about the different manifestations of femininities and masculinities within the African context, Ushindi suggested the following:

> *"Our culture was not perfect, but it was not a type of culture that encouraged rape or any sort of evil against women. But, as* [in] *other cultures, there* [were] *rebellious people who were trying to aggress women, especially during ceremonies such as marriage; I don't know what was the cause, maybe alcohol… it is important to retrace rape before colonisation. You know these narratives that portray the eastern DRC culture as one that does not respect women but, based on my understanding, I don't think it's true. And an example I can give you. Uhm, I don't know if you have undertaken an inheritance ceremony in which you can see the important role played by women. Of course. and we tend to think that women were subjected to hard labour. But if I can base my example on the US society or even the Massai culture, you can see women that build houses,* [and] *women in western society are working tirelessly; should we also call it hard labour? Massai women build houses, and men go hunting. In our culture in the eastern DRC, women go to work the land, and men would go hunt*[ing]*, and so on...".* (Ushindi, Participant 18)

Ushindi questioned the sadly famous portrayal of the eastern DRC as the rape capital of the world or the worst place to be a woman on earth (Author's observation). He points out the differences between cultures worldwide and suggests decolonising the narrative on the eastern DRC.

However, wartime rape is a complex issue, and this complexity was observed within the participants' accounts. For instance, Ushindi, who suggested that rape was sometimes a bad sheep's behaviour, also pointed out that *"who will want such a girl… even your own family cannot allow you to marry such a girl".* Wartime rape thus destroys women's socio-cultural symbolic capital, defined as women's and girls' ability to engage in marriage. While marriage

in a patriarchal society such as Bukavu constructs women as "instruments of production of symbolic and social capital" (Bourdieu, 2001:43), it also provides women with honorific status in society. In other words, wartime rape is a simultaneous attempt to obliterate the subjectivity of the woman at the same time as it destroys the symbolic capital of the community, i.e., its property, which means that these two elements (the destruction of the victim's subjectivity and the destruction of the community's symbolic capital) are combined.

From above, it can be noticed that the study's participants did not provide a homogenous conceptualisation of wartime rape. Some participants saw rape as property crime (rather than as a moral wrong). Such property crime follows Bourdieu's (1984; 2001) analysis of the patriarchal symbolic order's categorisation of women as men's symbolic goods. Following such conceptualisation, wartime rape, as mentioned by Bashimbe (Participant 25), *"…when used as a weapon of destruction, it* [wartime rape] *affects men and stimulate*[s] *in you a revenge spirit…"*. This means that most participants in this study, as already argued in Chapter 5, conceptualise wartime rape as man-to-man violence that uses women's bodies as a "symbolic instrument" (Bourdieu, 2001:42) of male politics. Wartime rape was conceptualised as an attack against men and against the victims' communities. The next lines explore what participants termed "sadistic rape" to explore how wartime rape attempts (and most of the time succeeds) to destroy the victim's subjectivity.

Wartime rape, as Khandoker (2021) puts it, negates the victims' embodiment of their sexual subjectivity and their choices to agree (or disagree) or their pleasure. The understanding of wartime rape as objectification of the victims' bodies is thus, left alone, unsatisfactory to examine victims' experiences in a heteronormative social order. This conceptualisation of wartime rape disorients one's attention from the 'nature' of rape, which is the effacement of victims' sexual subjectivities. In the following section, I analyse what this study's participants

termed *'sadique rape'* to analyse how wartime rape impacts its victims' everydayness and shapes their bodies as shameful social bodies.

6.2.2 **"…Wartime rape is a bacteriological weapon": 'Sadique' rape**

According to participants in this study, sadistic rape was mainly perpetrated by armed groups such as the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia and RCD rebels. In a documentary titled 'City of Joy' that was realised in the Panzi Hospital's City of Joy in Bukavu, wartime rape survivors recounted their lived experiences of rape by armed groups. Among these survivors, a former nun acknowledged:

> *"It was my first day, the day I said my vows to become a nun… But when they started burning all the other nuns, I screamed. They then came and kapuuu* [the sound she made pointing at the scar on her forehead where she was shot]. *I fell down, and I was dizzy… I was dizzy, but I saw it* [talking of the rape of other women and nuns] *with my own eyes… those pregnant women that they* [perpetrators] *had, and they were cutting their stomachs and put it* [the unborn baby] *aside, they cut they put it aside. They left no one in the village, but they took me to show them the way. After leaving the forest, they said they were tired of killing; that I was one lucky person. And so, they said they will show me the way to Bukavu because they told me to show them the way in the village. They walked through the forest up until we got to the main road when we started seeing people… then they left…"* (Former nun and survivor of wartime rape in the eastern DRC. She voiced her experience in the documentary 'City of Joy')

The former nun's account relates her experience of wartime rape and of other violence she went through, such as being shot in her forehead, seeing other nuns being burned alive and pregnant women having their stomachs cut open to destroy the life these women were carrying. Her account explains the victim's level of effacement from the violent experience that impacted her life. She mainly points out what happened to others and mostly the actions of the perpetrators. On the one hand, one may argue to some extent that wartime rape victims are obliged to relate their victimisation in the language of the perpetrators in the sense that the victims appear as those who were acted upon while the perpetrator is the actor. In this way, du

Toit (2009:87) articulates that "in rape, the victim is thus forced to share and affirm the world and truth of the rapist". In other words, through wartime rape, the victim's subjectivity is effaced while the perpetrator's is acknowledged. I further suggest that the only subjectivity allowed to the wartime rape victims is the fear the perpetrators allow and expect the victims to express. This would explain why the perpetrators left the nun to observe the bodily violation and violence other village members went through, and then "… *they said they will show me the way to Bukavu because they told me to show them the way in the village."* Allowing the victim to live, after raping and shooting her, was thus a 'compensation' this victim received for her coerced obedience. On the other hand, the nun's account of the experience of other victims rather than focusing on hers may be seen as an act of defiance and a willingness to speak on behalf of those who may lack the strength or the courage to testify. This is a purposeful expression or invocation of agency. This wartime rape victim's account could be read in two ways: her loss of subjectivity as she is seen as acted upon by the perpetrator on the one hand and as a regain of subjectivity through the use of a public platform to account her experience on the other hand. This suggests that one should avoid dualistic or one-dimensional depictions of agency that exist on polar ends of the spectrum, between disempowerment and empowerment. In short, the nun's account provided a case of complex subjectivities in which the victim's agency is enmeshed with her account of fear ("… *when they started burning all the other nuns, I screamed…"*) and pain.

Another account of sadistic rape was provided by a male participant who pointed out the following during an individual in-depth interview when he was asked whether he knew of cases when men were victims of wartime rape in the eastern DRC following the 2004 Kivu Conflicts.

> *"When you read Aime Cesaire, you will find out the French colonisers who used to say that for fun, they used to shoot at Negroes like you can shoot at trees, and this is what can happen to the DRC and almost everywhere in Africa. Africa has been transformed into a guns' bin, those guns that were in the ex-Soviet Union. And a lot of African nations*

> *have guns within their male youths' hands, and they* [male youths] *play and have fun with guns. They become sadistic, and it's sad for them. As a former leader of the Bukavu civil society, I know that all these youths in what used to be RCD, it became CNDP, isn't it? All those youths, all these friends of* [ours], *have pushed their sadism up to hang men from their testicles while they are raping your wife, your daughters you witness, and all these end up by the fact that you will be hanged from your testicles."* (Baraka, Participant 3)

Baraka highlighted the sexual violence that the eastern DRC was exposed to following the 2004 Kivu Conflict. He linked the armed conflicts in Africa generally to a broader international sphere by suggesting that a considerable number of guns in the ex-Soviet Union were dumped in the hands of young African male youths who unreasonably utilised these weapons. Furthermore, Baraka pointed to the RCD rebels, who restructured into the CNDP, as the main perpetrators of wartime rape, among other forms of sexual violence in the eastern DRC.

Importantly, Baraka highlighted that wartime sexual violence against men existed in the DRC. The male victims of sexual violence were not physically penetrated by the perpetrator's reproductive organs but instead were hanged from their sexual organs, their sign of manhood. This differentiation in the perpetration of sexual violence between men and women may be explained by the fact that the masculinity of the perpetrators may be questioned if they rape a male using his sex organs. The perpetrators may thus be seen as performing marginalised masculinity, of which homosexuality is part, within a strongly patriarchal society such as the eastern DRC. In most cases, male victims of sexual violence opt for silence as they attempt to silence how the experienced sexual violence ripped off their masculine subjectivity as the sexual violence constructed them as feminine. The silence surrounding sexual violence against men and boys in a patriarchal society, I maintain, may be explained through the fact that this sexual violence challenges the imaginaries around masculinities and blurs the boundaries between masculinities and femininities.

As pointed out by the former nun and other participants in this study, in most instances, *'sadique'* rape took the form of gang rape as more than one male perpetrator sexually attacked

a single female victim, and it was associated with other forms of bodily torture, such as breast or genital mutilation, shooting the women's vagina, etc. (Murdoch-Fyke, 2019). The associated forms of torture would lead one to argue that, through '*sadique'* rape, the perpetrators aimed to strip the female bodies of their otherness. Relatedly, as a wartime rape survivor accounted in the documentary, perpetrators did not give her the right to choose whether she would like to live or die after the physical violence and psychological torture she was subjected to. She presented her account in a detached way, effacing herself from the wartime rape she was violently subjected to and recounted mainly what happened to other victims.

Furthermore, '*sadique'* rape associated with other acts of brutality, as elaborated above, destroys the victims' ability to birth children. Victims who, for instance, had been shot in their reproductive organs had their cultural symbolic value of reproducer and transmitter of the community's culture to the next generation destroyed. As such, I build on Amanda Lea Victoor's suggestion that "wartime rape functions as an attack on the sexual integrity and reproductive capacity of the woman…" (Victoor, 2011:15). Additionally, I build on Kevin McSorley's analysis of the Sierra Leone conflict that begun in 1991, and put forward that, in addition to suppressing the victim's reproductive capacity and consequently her cultural capital, the act of genital mutilation also mutilates the victim's body-dependent projects: "the mutilation extends to her pragmatic understanding of the world and her being in it" (McSorley, 2009:77). To grasp Victoor's (2011) and McSorley's (2009) explanations, one needs to situate their arguments within a patriarchal socio-cultural context where subjectivities are specifically cultural and historical consciousness.

Nonetheless, the consequences of *'sadique'* rape are not limited to wartime. On the contrary, as Cockburn (2003) pointedly argues, it is challenging to demarcate between wartime and peacetime as the victims of rape carry their physical and psychological wounds in the so-called peacetime. Besides the physical destruction of her body, the woman or girl victim of wartime

rape is left with a psychological burden of making sense of their life given that rape denies the victim's past, present and future subjectivity. The next lines will turn to examine how wartime rape alienates the victims from their homes (habitat and body) as it simultaneously endangers the community's cohesion.

6.3 "…when you destroy the women and the children, we no longer have a community."

6.3.1 **"Home-frontline": Houses as traps**

Participants in this study frequently pointed out the blurred lines between the battleground and their homes. During the male focus group discussion, one participant referred to this blurred line as *"houses-frontlines"* as he recalled how in 2004, soldiers were looking for their victims within Bukavu inhabitants' houses. While providing the account of her experience of the 2004 Kivu Conflict, Uwezo, a 33-year-old female participant in the in-depth individual interview, remembered:

> *"…we saw the colonel's daughter running and screaming: 'they* [Mutebusi's soldiers] *are coming* [to] *this side'. We were scared because we were thinking that we were safe because of our proximity with the colonel… Our mum told us: 'go, go, leave the house and run to your grandma's* [from her mum's side] *in Kadutu'… We put on leggings, then jeans and a Kikwembe* [loincloth from Swahili] *on top. It was the four of us… I was with my baby sister, my female cousin and my aunt. We didn't know we could run that fast* [laughter]*…".* (Uwezo, Participant 28)

Uwezo detailed part of her experience of the 2004 Kivu Conflict in Bukavu and provided insight into coping mechanisms, such as wearing layers of clothes, which the female population adopted in Bukavu to discourage potential rape. Uwezo acknowledged that for the perpetrators to rape them, they would have to fight first before reaching their bodies or destroy the fences she had put around her body-home. She mentioned that the *Kikwembe* or loincloth was easily removable and did not provide appropriate protection. However, while she was explaining the choice of putting the loincloth on top of their jeans, Uwezo accounted that this *Kikwembe* helped them to pass unnoticed since it is used by almost all women and girls in the studied area.

Interestingly, Uwezo's account was supported by the 2004 Human Right Watch report that explored the 2004 Bukavu Offensive during the Kivu Conflict. As per Uwezo's account, the report stated that women resorted to layers of clothing to discourage rape.

Relatedly, anti-war feminists' analysis of the 1990s civil conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the DRC since 1996 epitomised the shift in warfare tactics as wars are no longer limited to the front lines but are now being fought on women's bodies through systematic and widespread rape. Hence, using 'home-frontline' in this chapter aims to highlight two aspects: women were found and raped within their houses, and women's bodies, which constitute their first homes, are invaded and their peace disturbed through rape. Thus the distinction between home as a physical building and home as a woman's body. It follows that wartime rape goes against existing distinctions between private and public lives.

What is more, Uwezo accounted:

> *"Ahoo!!* [Exclamatory word]*... when we arrived in Kadutu, we found my other aunties also leaving our grandma's house. So we joined them. We went to* [sit] *in the main road… I am telling you that it was as if all women and girls received the same information about staying in the road… we sat there listening to gunshots and bombing. No car was passing…".* (Participant 28)

This account acknowledges how women in Bukavu perceived the streets to be safer than their respective houses, which were then seen as traps. Also, staying in a group was, according to the excerpt above, perceived to be safer and preventive of potentially being raped. This situation contrasts with the argument that women had to be limited to their homes or private spheres because they were presented as safer under normal circumstances. However, with the continuous armed conflicts, 'normal' in the eastern DRC might be (sadly) the readiness to run at any time: Beni and Ituri, in the North Kivu province, as related in Bjørkhand and Bøås (2014) are typical examples.

Furthermore, Riziki also pointed out how wartime rape reduces the agency of the direct victim of rape and the silencing effect this violence has upon the victims and their families:

> *"…we were then fleeing in Kamembe, most of us who lived in Ngumba and Muhumba were crossing Ruzizi* [the border between Rwanda and Bukavu]*… I saw that little girl that was raped in their house, but everyone didn't want to talk about it. So I was also avoiding* [talking] *to her about it, and we all pretended like nothing happened…".* (Participant 1)

Riziki pointed out that some people were raped in their households before seeking refuge in the nearest city in Rwanda. Importantly, she stressed the silence people opted for to deal with the wartime rape of family members. This silence, as Riziki suggested, was the manifestation of the *"shame that our society put on women"*. This point is further developed later in this chapter. Importantly, Riziki's quote epitomises how some victims are reduced to silence following the broader society's construction of rape as being shameful for the victim, and this construction significantly contributes to how wartime rape is experienced and dealt with by the victims.

6.3.2 **Home-frontlines: Being reduced to a body, a sex**

Other participants, among whom a 51-year-old participant in the female focus group pointed out how guns and machetes were used by perpetrators to not only terrorise the victims' communities but also to decrease any resistance from and constrain the will of wartime rape victims.

> *"…you have never been in front of lisasi* [gun from Swahili]*. This same gun will be agitated in front of you and oblige you to remove those clothes. Isn't it how these Interahamwe did people in Shabunda* [a territory of the South Kivu province]? *They were not choosing: mother, they rape; Ka fille* [a small girl]*, they rape, and they were taking their time; they had guns and others* [had] *mipanga* [machetes from Swahili]*. We found ourselves circled,* [with] *no way to run… I was waiting for my turn, but God only knows why he preserved me… They were choosing compounds with communal playgrounds. Tshiuumm!* [Exclamatory sound], *musini kumbushe iyi laana* [from Swahili: don't remind

me of this malediction]... *When I witness a woman like me being raped, I feel the pain like it is to me that they are doing that…"* (Participant 7)

This participant stressed the limitations of wearing many clothes to prevent rape. She mentioned how the power of guns and machete suppressed resistance from the victims and their communities. She also pointed out how perpetrators, whom she identified as being from the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia, selected areas with grouped houses to perpetrate wartime rape against women and girls mostly. I maintain that the choice of the area where wartime rape would be perpetrated is not hazardous. As suggested in chapter 5, wartime rape was a behavioural regulation means as it intended to monitor the population's behaviour by spreading fear to discourage the inhabited community from collaborating with other armed groups. Furthermore, I argue that perpetrators *"were taking their time"* because they believed they had already dominated their victims (community and direct victims). Both dominance and the threat of rape (and effective rape in other cases) serve an analogous end to upholding a hierarchy of domination between the perpetrators and their victims.

Importantly, this 51-year-old female participant stressed how girls and women, regardless of their age, were targeted through wartime rape, and she was thus conceived that she was a rapable body by the simple fact of having female sex. She articulated the potentiality of being raped as she mentioned, *"…I was waiting for my turn"*. This *"waiting"* attitude points to the threat against the participant's agency as she felt powerless, and the only thing she could do was to wait for the perpetrators' will (subjectivity). Extending Louise du Toit's analysis of the contradiction of consent in rape law, it can be suggested that "rape explicitly destroys the necessary conditions for being a self and therefore for giving or withholding consent" (du Toit, 2012:147). This inability to express one's will because of the constraining power of the rapists who hold guns and machetes is thus an example of how wartime rape destroys the victims' agencies.

Furthermore, the question that one might raise would be to know when violence counts as such. The 51-year-old female participant was not subjected to physical violence, but she "*feel(s) the pain like it is to me that they are doing that…"* From this participant's experience, I would suggest that the absence of a physical attack does not refute the threat; instead, it uncovers the existence of other forms of violence such as emotional or psychological violence. Witnessing the rape of other community members resulted in the participant's self-identification as "a sexualised object of masculine subjectivity" (du Toit, 2009:188). Moreover, by witnessing other women and girls being raped, she emotionally carried the pain and the fear as if she was physically violated. The rape she thus witnessed effaced her individual identity as this 51-year-old female participant saw herself as rapable given that, despite what might have been the myriad of differences between herself and the direct rape victims, the witnessed rape reduced her to the sphere of corporality; to her dominated womanhood within the masculine symbolic order. Wartime rape reduces the victims (women, girls, men and boys) to their violated bodies and their experiences are accounted for in terms of what happened to them instead of in terms of them as humans. Additionally, wartime rape challenges (erases) the victims' prior-to-rape subjective lives by reducing them to whatever terms the socio-cultural patriarchal order uses to define the experiences or consequences of being raped. Therefore, I point out the importance of critically approaching patriarchy or masculine domination given that this symbolic order reinforces a relation of domination that alters and distorts how people perceive their world in relation to self and relationships with others. While understanding social relationships as interrelated, I maintain in the next section that the wartime rape against women and girls who are, following the patriarchal symbolic order and its notions of purity and female respectability, renamed 'pariahs' and mothers of "*Ka Hutu*" also impacts the community's system of meaning.

6.4 "… it is only treasure that can create treasure": Wartime rape and the creation of 'pariah' mothers of 'Ka Hutu'

6.4.1 **Becoming pariah: Social death of wartime rape victims**

The relationship between sexuality, gender and culture is highly intricate and tends to be naturalised within heteronormative discourses around the nation, the family and even around what it is to be human (Bennett, 2010). The social order into which women are included in the eastern DRC can hardly promote equality within social relations since patriarchy, as a system, is already dysfunctional. This thesis questions how one would know what is really damaged when the experience of being violated is uttered through the language of that same order, here patriarchy that establishes the basis for such violation. As already argued, wartime rape erases its victims' sexual subjectivities, and this erasing, I suggest, is embedded in the socio-cultural context of a given society. In relation to this, most participants in this study voiced how wartime rape erases the victims' prior existences and defines these victims in terms of the rape they were victimised through. Based on this thesis' data, I suggest that, consequently, wartime rape victims are seen as culturally and socially worthless and tarnished.

For instance, during the individual in-depth interview, Ushindi criticised how *"…in my knowledge, there is no*[t] *a family in this city that may be willing to pay its cows for a rape victim… You cannot exchange something worthless; it is only treasure that can create treasure"* (Participant 18). The pronounced patriarchal symbolic order in the studied field reinforces the belief that a woman or a girl is worthy when she can be exchanged through marriage. While marriage in a patriarchal symbolic order may be criticised as being trading one dependence for another, it may, however, paradoxically be said that wartime rape denies to the victim "her will to be the object of desire" (Khandoker, 2021:para 6); her choice or not to be her family's symbolic good in terms of customary norms. Following Ushindi's claim, it may be asserted that wartime rape destroys the symbolic value that women and girls had prior to being violated. This reminds us of Baaz and Stern's (2013:21) argument that "women are often cast as the symbolic

bearers of ethno/national identity through their roles as biological, cultural and social reproducers of the community…". Being subjected to wartime rape thus erases those cultural roles and, consequently, the very fabric of a community.

Furthermore, participants conceptualised wartime rape in the eastern DRC as mainly an attack against the patriarch rather than against the women or girls whose bodies were violated. See, for example, the quote below from Safari previously mentioned:

> "…*they* [perpetrators] *could be planning to weaken the authority of the father… and the reputation of such a family* [the victim's family] *is destroyed because she has been a victim of rape. And thus, it may be difficult for a young boy to go and marry such a girl* [talking of rape victim]*."* (Safari, Participant 14)

All participants in this study agreed that wartime rape brought another connotation to rape victims' socio-cultural values. As mentioned in the literature review of this thesis, the social imaginary associated with rape shapes female rape victims/survivors as "having lost their purpose at the heart of the community" (Murdoch-Fyke, 2019:34); they become 'pariah' or worthless. The view of the victim as 'pariah' is linked to patriarchy's denial of female sexual subjectivity, the latter being monitored through the notions of female respectability. Following the patriarchal notions around women's sexuality, wartime rape victims/survivors challenge, by being victims of this sexual violence, the patriarchal notions of a respectable woman. This is because they had sexual relations (even when these were coerced) before being married (for young girls) or with someone who is not their husband (for married women), and society makes them accountable for their rape.

This thesis sees wartime rape in the eastern DRC as political, and this politics is inscribed in war through the very specific language of violently harming human bodies. On the one hand, the oppressive power of wartime rape is seen in that this physical violence attacks a woman's subjectivity by reducing her to the private sphere (home as her body and home as a construction building) and denying her access to the public, as already argued. On the other hand, wartime

rape is political in that the meaning asserted to rape is continuously linked to the assertion of patriarchal control.

However, the participants acknowledged that victims raped by armed groups were considered *"worthless"* in contrast to those who were violated by civilians. During an individual in-depth interview, Furaha, a female community and religious leader, was asked in what ways, to her understanding, wartime rape had impacted marriage in the eastern DRC. She suggested:

> *"It is the vulnerability of women in peacetime that has placed women at the victim's status. She is weak physically, and she is afraid since that is what society has told her. And, uhm, it's that same society that doesn't defend her and condemn her. When she is raped like that, who will come to marry in that house where someone has been raped? They can't even give an ant as bridal price. The simple act of rape suppresses her value within the society, and this is worse when it* [is] *those Mai-Mai or Interahamwe who raped her. You don't know if she is not infected with HIV; you don't know who to point* [at] *because even five of them pass on a single victim. But you know when it's a civilian who rape*[s] *because even civilians are also raping now because the state crosses its hand. But when it's a civilian* [who rapes], *families easily negotiate, and the girl's family can receive some cows or 'mbuzi ya madharau'* [a goat of harm], *but you cannot negotiate with a gun. Victims are rejected at the bottom of the society's row as if she was marked with a disgusting stamp."* (Furaha, Participant 10)

As articulated by Furaha, when the perpetrator was a civilian, the victim's family was in a position of negotiating a bridal price in terms of the *"number of cows"* to compensate for the rape of their woman or girl. Receiving such a 'compensation' consequently removed the shame brought upon the victim and her family. It is thus important to critically problematise this notion of shame that society puts on the victims because shame may be understood diversely. For instance, the shame may be on men who failed to perform their protector roles and thus the victim mirrors the emasculation of the associated male and the full masculinity of the perpetrators. In other words, wartime rape simultaneously demasculinises the enemy male and

remasculinises the victor man. In short, wartime rape is not only an attack against women and girls' state of subjectivities but also an attack against the gendered scheme of masculinity.

Nonetheless, the shame associated with rape is also carried by the victims as their womanliness is reduced into "a mark of inferior existence, deviation and lack" (du Toit, 2009:83). At this point, I believe it is important to analyse instances when wartime rape victims have internalised the debasing message imposed upon their lives by the perpetrators and the consequences of rape following the community's marginalisation. However, it should always be kept in mind that this internalisation, in some cases, may be challenged, as will be shown later in the chapter, while in other cases, the victims adopt what du Toit (2009:84) termed "victim complicity" and feelings of self-betrayal. The victim's complicity is observed when wartime rape rescinds the victims' sense of self. In relation to this, participants accounted for instances when a wartime rape victim suicided following her rape and the community's rejection"

> *"…that young girl… she was only 17-years-old; an age when a person starts enjoying her own beauty, you know! She killed herself…* [I] *am not sure… but they said she did take a lot of pills following her gang-rape by five militia men and her family that was condemning her."* (Maombi, Female, Participant 24)

The severe act of taking one's life may project a light on the feeling of disempowerment and the need for effacement from wartime rape victims, who, in some cases, prefer not to live than be exposed to social marginalisation following the sexual violence. As pointedly articulated by Yuval-Davis (2005:202), "the emotional components of people's constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and less secure they feel". The condemnation and marginalisation that society puts on wartime rape victims/survivors constitute a threat to these victims' reconstruction of their identities that were destroyed through their victimisation. It may also be suggested that suicide results from the

internalisation and normalisation of patriarchy, which constitutes the basis for human interaction in the eastern DRC.

Another example of the destruction of the self or the victim's subjectivity was encountered as wartime rape forced its victim to adopt a view of herself as *"not deserving to be in the world"* but did not take her own life thanks to the medical and psychological help she received.

> *"I was the only one raped in my family. Then I was becoming someone with hasira* [a Swahili word for resentment]. *I was not talking anymore, and I was seeing as if I don't deserve to stay in the world…"*. (Wartime rape survivor interviewed in the 'City of Joy' documentary)

This quote represents the view of a wartime rape survivor brought to the City of Joy by other community members as she was rejected by her family even when she needed serious reparative chirurgical interventions following her rape. This victim pointed out how she was reduced to silence ("…*not talking anymore"*) and how the bitterness she felt made her believe that she had no other purpose in life. Hence the suggestion that wartime rape robs its victims of the belief that living is meaningful. Her belief that she should die points at what du Toit (2009:81) called the spirit injury, which the author defines as a state when "the self or subjecthood of victims is destroyed or severely undermined by the experience of being raped, to the point where she becomes humiliated, importantly also in her own lived experience". In light of this, I suggest that the victims of rape who see themselves in terms of corpses have thus undergone a spiritual death following the rape. However, it must be mentioned that this view of her body as lifeless is not necessarily shared by the perpetrator because a corpse carries notions of interdictions while the perpetrator sees the victim as a living body to objectify and abuse. This suggests that following patriarchal norms, woman and girl victims of rape become unacceptable not only to their patriarchal community but also to themselves. Building on Clark's (2014) argument, I thus consider patriarchy a basis for violence as it vehicles for unequal structures of power that are naturalised and accentuated in wartime. The attack against

one's fundamentally embodied ability to make sense of the world and one's place in it is what defines all violent phenomena; wartime rape being a perfect example.

Nevertheless, while some victims of wartime rape have embodied the patriarchal order that constitutes the basis of their marginalisation, many other victims have demonstrated their physical and psychological strength to overcome the perpetrator's power and view imposed upon them through rape. For instance, Aimée (a pseudonym), another wartime rape survivor and participant in the 'City of Joy' documentary, pointed out that (as she was admiring herself in a mirror while another survivor was doing her hair):

> *"…When I want to change my hair, we can go to the market, and we can buy weaves. And when I look in the mirror* [she smiles], *I now see, and I say so I am still a human…"*.

Aimée is a wartime rape survivor who preferred to stay at the 'City of Joy' instead of returning to her village where she was gang raped. She acknowledged that she has been in the 'City of Joy' for approximately ten years. Interestingly, she recognised that in the years following her rape, she did not consider that she was still human. Aimée mentioned that *"so she* [talking of their psychiatric doctor] *told us her story of how she was raped, I was shocked but comforted… I told* [to] *myself: so* [it also happens] *even in Europe and again by the father! That comforted me to know I was not alone…"*. Hence, what helped her, in addition to the medical and psychological help she received, was the realisation that she was not an isolated case.

Aimée's experience points out the importance of not dissociating the body from the psyche, given that wartime rape produces trauma that cannot be separated from its bodily suffering carried through sex. Because rape violates the victims' bodies and damages the victims' embodied subjectivities, rebuilding their sexual subjectivities or their view of themselves as humans through simple acts of self-care (doing one's hair in this case, or being able to admire one's reflection in the mirror) constitutes an important way of defying sexual violation. Hence, I argue that it is worth paying critical attention to the body as this is central to making sense of

ourselves, of the world that surrounds us and comprehending the disruptive forces carried through violence.

Patriarchy, as a system of gendered and sexed differentiation and hierarchy, constitutes the norm around which social, cultural and even political lives are organised in the DRC. Because of this, an emphasis on women's virginity is rampant in Bukavu and women's and girls' chastity is read as a sign of dignity, purity and respectability. The consequences of wartime rape were worse when the victim was impregnated by the perpetrators, as children born from rape were seen as human capital for the father's community and thus nicknamed *Ka Hutu*.

6.4.2 **"Ka Hutu: a child without identity"**

During the data validation workshop, a female community leader maintained that *"children born from rape are also exposed to a careless society. The child is without identity because we don't know the father's identity"* (Furaha, Participant 10). In a similar perspective, another woman replicated, *"isn't it that we call them Ka Hutu?"* Children born from rape are said to be without identity because, in some cases, rape victims cannot say with exactitude to which armed group the perpetrators belonged, especially in isolated rape as opposed to when a group of perpetrators invade villages. Furthermore, the community refers to these children as *'Ka Hutu'* to call attention to the rape perpetrated by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia. Whereas children born from rape are referred to as '*Ka Hutu'* or Snakes' Child in the eastern DRC, these children are called "Children of bad memories" in Rwanda (Schoenfeld, 2018:7).

Image 6-1: A child born from rape as interpreted by the artist

Figure 6.1 is a drawing realised by another young Congolese male artist to whom I requested to represent how he considered children born from rape. He suggested that the first words that came to his mind were *"isolation and shame";* thus, the covering of the face. This young male artist thus considered that society charges children born from rape with responsibilities that do not belong to them. As a result, these children are socially marginalised and sometimes self-isolate. This view echoes this study's participants' accounts according to society's indifference toward wartime rape victims and children born from rape. Accordingly, a female participant narrated that *"there are some women who confessed that they would prefer to go in jail, you know… rather than carry*[ing] *a snake's child…"*. The mention of jail was, as explained by participants, related to abortion as this is illegal in the DRC. This highlights another dimension where the legislative system constitutes a site of oppression and repression of women's freedom to dispose of their bodies.

Furthermore, the community's rejection of the children born from rape is also circumscribed within the patrilineal logic that defines children as belonging to their fathers' ethnic group. As such, these children do not constitute a symbolic resource for their mothers' community. On

the contrary, these children are reminders of the domination that the perpetrators imposed upon their mothers' communities. Nonetheless, although the eastern DRC is currently spoken of as the worst place in the world to be a woman, participants acknowledged that women were not always victimised through rape, even when patriarchy was the prevailing socio-cultural norm.

6.4.3 **"Women have always been women, but they were not raped as it is the case today": the part patriarchy plays in the outbreak of wartime rape**

There was a conflicting understanding of the link between the prevailing patriarchal social order and the occurrence of wartime rape in the eastern DRC. Some views challenged the definition of patriarchy as the root of sexual violence, while others agreed that patriarchy offers the bases for wartime rape in the studied field. Participants did not consider patriarchy as the source of wartime rape, as articulated by Sifah, the 56-year-old female nurse:

> *"…Men consider themselves superior to women only because of their sex, but for me, they are simply people, just like anyone else. Men and women can all exercise the same masculinity, but the masculinity of women is most of the time not considered even when being male biologically doesn't make you a man. But the rape here* [Bukavu] [doesn't] *result from masculinity* [in itself]. *That masculinity has to be associated with something else to lead to wartime rape, like joining these armed groups. So, it is not because of women's (social) status. It is more because of the wars during which masculinities are militarised. Women have always been women, but they were not raped as is the case today."* (Sifah, Participant 21)

Sifah suggested that masculinity alone does not lead to wartime rape; instead, it is the combination of militarisation and masculinity that may result in wartime rape. As such, Sifah posited that patriarchy has always been Bukavu's socio-cultural symbolic order without leading to wartime rape. She maintained that wartime rape became recurrent in the DRC with the train of wars that started its trajectory in the DRC from 1996. Baraka, the male community leader, also suggested:

> *"Patriarchy has nothing to do with rape. The rape we see today is the result of human decay. Women who are raped are the ones who* [are] *not defended by their men. First the*

army's failure, then the failure of their men. If only we could understand that listing rapists is unnecessary! Hum, if [laughter] *we could catch one, we apply* [a] *collective justice, and the deal is closed! And Jean Jacques Rousseau reminds us that God throws criminals in*[to] *hell, but why? Why* [do] *we have to negotiate with them? The Congolese mind is not ready to welcome a country without* [the] *death penalty.* [The] *DRC is ready to welcome the law of retaliation (eye for an eye) because only fire can fight fire. This is to say that antimilitarism has to fight against militarism. Militarism is self-destructing. It's the militarisation that is, in most cases, the source of much violence, including sexual violence!"* (Baraka, Participant 3)

With a similar perspective as Sifah, Baraka also distanced patriarchy from wartime rape and suggested, instead, that rape occurs when the army and men within the community are unable to defend their women. I thus read a contradiction in this quote, given that patriarchy constructs men as the natural protectors of their symbolic goods: their women. Baraka also suggested that collective violence may be envisaged as a solution to the persistence of wartime rape in the face of a law that chooses to negotiate with perpetrators instead of protecting the victims. However, Baraka has pointedly argued that militarisation may explain wartime rape in the eastern DRC.

The female and male participants in this study who clearly refuted the link between patriarchy and wartime rape in the eastern DRC have suggested that militarisation of masculinities led to wartime rape. This study agrees that militarisation produces violent masculinities that, in many instances, have been expressed as wartime rape. I also maintain that patriarchy and militarism are mutually constitutive. Building from Cynthia Enloe and Cynthia Cockburn's view of the relationship between the military and patriarchy, I thus put forward that "if we ignore the workings of patriarchy, militarism will rumble destructively for generations" (Enloe and Cockburn, 2013:118). The military as an institution is built upon patriarchal norms that propagate the idea of masculine protector and feminine parochially informed protected.

Although these participants recognised that women are given second-rate positions compared to men: *"regardless of the social status of a woman, the society considers her inferior*

to a man…" to quote Ndamuso (Participant 5), a female community leader, they nonetheless considered that wartime rape finds its explanation within the militarisation of masculinities and not in patriarchy, which they understood to be a form of *"domination but not violence"*. Such an understanding thus challenges the Eurocentric conceptualisation of patriarchy to some extent and invites us to pay attention to the multiple forms that patriarchy reverts. This is because "patriarchy is malleable…patriarchy does not always look like gun-wielding contractors or brass-bedecked generals…" (Enloe and Cockburn, 2013:120). Instead, the patriarchal system readapts in the face of confrontation.

Furthermore, participants who did not shape the link between wartime rape and patriarchy provided the example of pre-colonial practices in the eastern DRC when rape was not only discouraged but also condemned. However, a level of normalisation of rape was noticed on the one hand, and instances when rape was weaponised to exercise control over women but also to keep women and girls in their subordinated place on the other hand.

> *"In the Bushi and even in the Barega culture, there is what we called Muzombo, which was a set of practices and rules to punish men who would touch women in an inappropriate way. These are things you will not find in most scientific papers written after colonisation. However, there were these other aspects that can be accounted... It was a form of ritual that surrounded events such as the death of a queen or marriage… I can't recall when it started, but growing up, there was this thing we called 'shene' or disciplinary rape. This was done against the most beautiful woman in the compound because she was so arrogant. So a young man would try his best to get to her, and the rest of men will also pass through her…"* (Ushindi, Participant 18)

Ushindi's excerpt opposes two practices he recalled as characteristics of the Bushi and Barega chiefdoms' attitudes toward rape. At first, Ushindi suggested that the *Muzombo* was meant to discourage rape as the perpetrator was punished and chased from the community.

Ushindi mentioned the Idjwi[32] Island, where the rapists and other violent people were isolated. Moreover, Ushindi suggested a need to decolonise the analysis of rape because, in many instances, colonisers portrayed their colonies as *"barbaric and uncivilised"*. Ushindi's account resonates with Bell Hooks' analysis of the imperialism of patriarchy, where she suggested that the imperialists portrayed black men as disposed to perpetrate physical violence such as rape against both white and black women (Hooks, 2015). Relatedly, Jane Bennett also builds on the South African case to suggest how "the earliest legal codes against rape in Cape Town and in 'Rhodesia' were put in place explicitly to 'protect' the white settler women from the local men" (Bennett, 2010:25) while no existent law was then formulated to protect local women from white settler men's physical and sexual violence.

Nevertheless, despite the existence of *Muzombo*, Ushindi acknowledged that there was a level of tolerance and normalisation of the disciplinary rape or '*Shene'*. Ushindi presented '*Shene'* as a form of gang rape that was believed to purge arrogance from the prettiest girl or woman. The '*Shene'* was thus a way of *"pushing her down from her pedestal"*. This form of rape denies the autonomy of the rape victim and is thus meant to maintain women at their subordinated place compared to men.

In some other instances, participants clearly attributed the occurrence of wartime rape to patriarchal practices in the studied area. In the view of one female community leader, *"if men considered women as their equal, there would have never been* [many] *rape cases…"* This female community leader insisted on the socio-cultural equality between a man and a woman to prevent wartime rape. This account goes along with anti-war feminists' suggestion that peacetime gendered inequalities are deepened and exploited in wartime, and these inequalities may pave the way for wartime rape. In a similar vein, Maisha, a male participant in the

[32] Idjwi is an island in the Kivu Lake. International Alert. (2010). *The complexity of resource governance in a context of state fragility: The case of eastern DRC.* D. R. ink, www.d-r-ink.com

individual interview, considered that wartime rape is explained by how patriarchy constructs women in the eastern DRC:

> *"…the real victim of wartime rape in our country is the entire community. And if they attack a woman, it is because she is the tree that brings fruits within the community. When you destroy a woman and a kid, there is no future. At the social level, they weaken the man first, then* [the] *woman is subjected to shame and marginalisation, and it is the same for the kid and the entire community is affected…"* (Maisha, Participant 19)

This account enlightens the community-destroying role that wartime rape accomplishes because patriarchy constructs "the female body as a social territory representing the materiality of the nation" (Seifert, 2019:6) in an interstate armed conflict or as the materiality of a given community in an intrastate war. In relation to this, I maintain that the power of rape lies in that this sexual violence simultaneously acts upon women's physical bodies and affects the community to which the victim belongs. The "soldiers who resort to wartime rape as a weapon are at least subconsciously alert of how the desiring and sensuous human body generates connexions or bond intra- and inter-communities" (Seifert, 2019:12). Building from Ruth Seifert's analysis of wartime rape, this thesis argues that wartime rape's collective effects are found in that the victim's abjection is transferred to their communities "to not only violate their physical and psychological integrity, but to rob them of their social existence and denigrate the community as a whole" (Seifert, 2019:12). This reminds us of Debra Bergoffen's argument formulated in the literature review according to which structured patriarchal sexual differences can constitute a powerful weapon against the enemy. That being said, it may be a misleading assumption to conclude that women in a patriarchal system are simply acted upon and do not have the opportunity to subjectively act. The next section thus points out that women's agency must be in complicity toward patriarchal norms or in a way that challenges patriarchal understandings of a respectable woman or its views of a rape victim.

6.4.4 **"Customs…prohibited her from pronouncing those words…" Female respectability and resistance to patriarchal proscriptions**

Community leaders participating in the data validation workshop stressed the importance of addressing instances when women subscribed to repressive social conventions and values, especially when, for example, these women occupied socio-political positions seen as powerful. Both Baraka and Ndamuso criticised the attitude of women in powerful positions who, in the name of respectability, do not work to break the patriarchal chain. The following quote presents how Mama Mateso, a former female provincial senator, refused to defend a law on sexual violence because *"Customs… prohibited her from pronouncing those words…"*

> *"…she said that based on her culture, she couldn't speak clearly because they have customs which forbid her to pronounce certain words. She did not want to speak of the vagina when defining what wartime rape was… This woman* [Mama Mateso] *refused and asked me to speak… I assure you that as a X*[33] [the title of the political function of Ndamuso] *I had to call things by their names… So when I was speaking, you could hear some national and provincial deputies laughing loudly and asking me if I could say the word vagina in Swahili… When I said it, like children, all these deputies started to scream while hiding their faces. I think I defined wartime rape in all the national languages that I knew...".* (Ndamuso, Participant 5)

Ndamuso mentioned how a female provincial senator refused to defend a law regarding wartime rape because, in the name of her culture, it was not respectable for a woman to pronounce in public some words, such as vagina. Mama Mateso's attitude thus converges with Cynthia Enloe's argument, according to which "patriarchy is appealing not only to men but also to women; and it is this appeal that secure to patriarchy its perpetuation despite existing and vivid resistance" (Enloe, 2017:17).

Referring again to the 'City of Joy' documentary, the taboo around sexual organs was also noticed in the wartime rape victims' statements. In the documentary, Dr Mukwege told the

[33] I mention X instead of the participant's political title as mentioning this particular title may uncover an element of the participant's identity and consequently violate the principle of annonymity.

survivors, *"a reproductive apparel of a woman is called 'kuma'* [Swahili for vagina]*"* and then added, *"so why are you ashamed of saying it!"* (Dr Mukwenge, in the documentary 'City of Joy'). Following Dr Mukwege's exclamation, a female wartime rape survivor pointed out that *"when someone dared to say it, everyone treats her like she just commit*[ed] *some sins just by saying* [laughter] *kuma"*. Constructing some female body parts as shameful plays an important role in silencing wartime rape victims who do not find, within the patriarchal symbolic order that governs their lives, references to recount their violation in ways that do not take their respectability away. Not being able to pronounce the word vagina thus renders it difficult for the victims to express what was done to them through sex.

In contrast to Mama Mawazo, Ndamuso seized the opportunity that was provided to her to speak about and pronounce words that would classify her as unrespectable. The position adopted by the audience: "*laughing loudly and asking me if I could say the word vagina in Swahili… and covering their faces",* reflects upon the exceptionality of Ndamuso's action but also the shame that the eastern DRC society attaches to issues around female biology and sexuality. It is in such perspectives that Riziki suggested that *"the shame is what keeps us exploited because when we are ashamed we cannot talk… and it is because of shame that many rape victims in our country prefer to remain* [silent]*".* In other words, Ndamuso and Riziki see in speaking out the power to break the silence and the shame that wartime rape imposes upon victims. Interestingly, these two participants, along with Aimée mentioned earlier, resist – through simple actions such as the call to counter shame, to pronounce the shameful vagina or looking at oneself in the mirror and appreciate one's humanity – the overarching patriarchal attempt to impose upon them the silencing power of wartime rape. These, as many other women in the eastern DRC, are women who subjectively distance themselves from the perpetrator's efforts to efface a woman's sense of being self, her understanding of her relation with others; her bodily projects: her subjectivity.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that wartime rape is an example of how the physical dimension and symbolic aspects of a single violence may be intertwined in ways that it may prove difficult, if not impossible, to dissociate the body and mind or establish a hierarchy between the two by giving to mind a prevailing position over the body. The impacts that wartime rape has on the victims suggests that an individual's world is largely intersubjective, constructed, affirmed and sustained. As such, it is pure illusion to believe that one may create one's reality in isolation from others.

The chapter showed how participants attributed revenge rape to *Mai-Mai* militia while sadistic rape was seen as perpetrated by the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia and the RCD rebels. Importantly, it was maintained that the violence associated with sadistic rape, such as organ mutilation, damaged not only the victims' bodies that constituted their primary home and sense of identity but also their self-perception. In some cases, wartime rape victims adopted the vision of worthlessness and disempowerment that the perpetrators imposed upon them. It was presented how the act of rape severely undermines self-consciousness and the will to live to such an extent that some wartime rape victims self-perceived in terms of corpses or unhuman. This is because, as argued, wartime rape undoes the victims' prior-to-rape lived experience as a consequence of being alienated not only from their communities but, importantly, from their bodies. To understand the alienating power of wartime rape, it has been suggested that one needs to utilise patriarchy as a searchlight given that it is patriarchy, as a symbolic order, that governs people's interactions in the eastern DRC and their sense-making. I argued that patriarchy establishes an order in which men and women are diametrically opposed in ways that women are constructed as the other in a lack of agency, as those to be acted upon. Furthermore, I put forward that wartime rape destroys, deconstructs, redefines, marks a suspension in one's self-consciousness and mostly psychologically and physically kills the victims. Pregnant bellies are cut-opened, foetus smashed on the ground, breasts mutilated,

vaginas violated, psyches tortured and wounded, and voices are silenced. This silencing is vital to the continuation of the wars. Wartime rape, as this chapter developed, is war and not merely an effect of war. Wartime rape constructs woman and girl victims as worthless and suppresses their symbolic capital that patriarchy measures in terms of women's ability to create alliances through marriage and perpetuate their husband's lineages through birth. Children born from rape were thus seen as a reminder of the emasculation of the enemy and the remasculinisation of the perpetrators. The destruction of women's and girls' bodies and consequently of their cultural values thus destroys the communities' cohesion. In the last section of this chapter, I maintained that all women are not equally included within patriarchy as some obtain the benefit of this symbolic order and consequently participate in rendering patriarchy sustainable while other women, wartime rape victims included, resist the patriarchal order. The destructive power that wartime rape imposes upon its victims can thus be countered, and victims do reclaim their embodied sexual subjectivities by altering the vision of their bodies that the perpetrators imposed upon them. In short, I have been concerned with exploring other roles (other than the strategic use of wartime rape to further political and military ambitions, as developed in Chapter 5) that rape accomplishes in times of war. I expanded on the centrality of the body in making sense of the destructive power that wartime rape has upon the victim's subjectivity or their sense of being self in the world. The hope was thus to critically problematise patriarchy that enables the cultural shaping of individual's subjectivities within a socio-cultural order marked by unequal power dynamics between men and women. Importantly, I emphasised that people's subjectivities are complex, and wartime rape victims may reconstruct their subjectivities even in the face of patriarchal ideologies. Holding a sense of belonging, of not being alone (in addition to medical and psychological care), plays an important part in women's resistance toward the perpetrators' attempts to obliterate their subjectivities as the victims believe that they are becoming-subjects.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aimed to explore the Bukavu people's conceptualisation of the emergence of wartime rape during the 2004 Kivu Conflict in contrast to the 1996 First Congo War to understand the different but interlinked dimensions (historical, strategy and destructive power) of wartime rape. To explore such conceptualisation, this thesis utilised a participatory research approach as dictated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The data collection process started with a pilot phase that aimed to verify the participants' willingness to participate in this study through computerised approaches. As participants showed reluctance to the computerised approach to data collection, this study thus collaborated with identified fieldworkers. My research experience was, therefore, humbling as I had to occupy the back seat to respect participants' will. Giving participants the power to shape, to some extent, the course of the study they are involved in thus reflects the strength of participatory research. During the effective data collection phase, participants agreed to in-depth individual interviews and to participate in focus group discussions with the fieldworkers. These participants' interpretation of the emergence of the 2004 wartime rape was analysed through hermeneutics critical thematic content analysis that facilitated the development of the study's key findings. Anti-war feminism was used as the theoretical anchor, permitting navigation through different ways of comprehending the emergence of wartime rape as multi-dimensional violence. As such, this thesis pointed out that the analysis of wartime rape as a weapon of war needs to be augmented to include other historical and strategic dimensions, as well as the impacts on the victims' subjectivities and their communities' symbolic order.

The DRC's armed conflicts have been characterised as particularly difficult to comprehend as they are comprised of layers of actors, agendas and levels. To historically situate this thesis, I have put forward that the 2004 Kivu Conflict, during which rape was utilised as a weapon of war, was rooted in the Belgian colonisation and its indirect land administration rule. The post-colonial DRC adopted the Belgian land administration policy. Based on such land

administration, some groups were recognised as autochthonous, whereas others, the Banyamulenge, for instance, were labelled as foreigners given that they descended from Rwandans and Burundians but migrated into the eastern DRC years before colonisation.

The international, regional, national and local dimensions of the Congo Wars provide multiple ways of interpreting these conflicts and associated wartime rape. As such, this thesis articulated its main argument three-fold. I argued at first that the 2004 wartime rape is rooted in the Belgian colonisation and its lingering effects on forms of ethnicity, gender, land distribution and recognition of political rights in the present. Next, I maintained that wartime rape is a strategic weapon the perpetrators utilise for revenge and to claim recognition. As such, perpetrators utilised wartime rape as a lexicon; the 'smoke that calls' for the attention of the national government upon the perpetrators' divergent claims of ethnic land recognition for those who were defined as foreigners on the one hand; and on the other hand, of military respect and recognition for those 'autochthones' who were defined as unfitted militaries. As a lexicon, wartime rape is strategically and purposively chosen by the perpetrators with the need to create a spectacle and fear in the minds of others. Lastly, I put forward that the extreme violence of rape as an act of war aims to destroy the victims' subjectivities and their communities' symbolic order.

The thesis has differentiated the intertwined dimensions of wartime rape based on the three main perpetrator armed groups identified by the study participants. These perpetrators are the Hutu-dominated Interahamwe militia – also seen as the main authors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the RCD rebels who claimed to be defending the Banyamulenge ethnic group, and the *Mai-Mai* militia who claimed to be defending their ancestors' land.

It was argued that patriarchy as a socio-cultural symbolic order established hierarchies between masculinities and constructed wartime rape as man-to-man violence by asserting to women the place of men's symbolic goods. Hence, this thesis argued that wartime rape in the

eastern DRC is an issue of gendered power and domination, man-to-man violence: a property crime, and less about lust or desire. The concept of wartime rape evolved as the collected data pointed at not only the importance of gendered identities but also at how, through war, strongly (militarily and socio-politically) disadvantaged male youths were constructed into militarised masculinities thanks to the manipulation of their sense of belonging and their patriarchal masculine protector duties. At this point, I highlighted how the history of colonisation informed the utilisation of wartime rape as a weapon in the present.

While maintaining that gender is historically, culturally and geographically specific, this study argued that using patriarchy as a searchlight helps explore the oppressive power dynamics that pressurise men to live upon the socially constructed stereotypes around masculinities. The militarisation of masculinities, or stereotypical assertions around masculinities as pointed out, follows a gendered (imbued with power) and extreme construction of the expression of male sexuality. While military cultures differ in their expression, everything considered, they evince hierarchies, the exclusivity of manliness and a sense of entitlement, which are all profoundly rooted in patriarchal ideologies. It was, therefore, suggested that an intersection of gender and other systems of differentiation, such as ethnicity and access to land, for instance, helped explain the persistence of wartime rape in the eastern DRC as perpetrators sought revenge, citizenship rights and inclusion. Therefore, despite their different claims, the wartime rape perpetrated by these three groups of perpetrators was articulated as that drew upon histories of gender, violence and ethnicity in the pursuit of the recognition of rights.

Wartime rape in the eastern DRC exposed the paradox of the patriarchal system that resides in that wartime rape is particularly forbidden as men are supposed to be protectors; this prohibition provides different armed groups with incentives to exploit wartime rape as a negotiation tool. These armed groups thus utilised wartime rape to contest their location at the military and ethnic patriarchal ladder.

The last key argument developed in this thesis is that wartime rape is a simultaneous imposition of power and domination, and a destructive weapon against the victims' embodied subjectivities and their communities' symbolic order. The thesis suggested that one should pay attention to the sexual dimension of wartime rape without reducing wartime rape to a violent expression of sexuality. Wartime rape can destroy the sexual subjectivities of its victims and may lead male victims to question their manhood and female victims to interrogate their womanhood. I argued that wartime rape first attacks the victims' (women, girls, men and boys) physical bodies through their sexes, and it is that physical attack that is embodied and imbued with meaning based on the interpretations that both the perpetrators and their victims assert to wartime rape as dictated by their socio-cultural norms. Accordingly, this study argued that it is the socially and culturally inscribed meaning of rape that the perpetrators manipulate to impose physical and psychological suffering and power upon the direct victims and simultaneously destroy the victims/survivors' subjective identities and their communities. This means that the imposition of power and domination and the destruction of the victims' subjectivities and their communities are two sides of the same coin. As such, this thesis has maintained that because wartime rape attacks the subject and what the subject stands for, this violence holds both symbolic and subjective components.

In short, I argued that the nature of the 1996 First Congo War was itself preventive of wartime rape as combatants' aims and roles were directed against dictatorship; they were claiming the nation. Therefore, raping women who symbolise the future of a nation would be paradoxical to the 1996 rebels' claim of 'liberating' the nation. In 2004, however, the combatants' aims and claims shifted as their actions were now directed against the government. In this war, wartime rape against civilians became, for perpetrators, a lexicon, a means to punch the state and claim their place within that state that excluded them militarily and or ethnically.

By examining these two wars alongside each other, this thesis aimed to deconstruct the idea that wartime rape is ubiquitous in wars. Even in a country currently and sadly known as the rape capital of the world, wartime rape was not always characteristic of its armed conflicts years following colonisation until the end of the 1996 First Congo War.

By pointing out the sexual dimension of wartime rape, the thesis intended to remain alert that this violence acts upon human bodies that do not have to be sacrificed to the benefice of the power and domination narrative. I developed a multi-dimensional analysis to suggest that the eastern DRC's wartime rape is extremely complex, informed by the history of Belgian colonisation, and has a multiplicity of dimensions. The nature of revenge sought through wartime rape cannot be fully understood without understanding the impact wartime rape has on the victims' sexual subjectivities. Also, the impact on the victims communities' symbolic order cannot be understood without understanding the impact on the victims' sexual subjectivities.

The multi-dimensional analysis inspired by anti-war feminism has thus exposed areas where interventions may be carried out to effectively address the issue of wartime rape in the eastern DRC. This violence not only creates a climate of destabilisation for rights to be demanded but also reproduces community relations and subjects that maintain the continuous imagined or real threat of war rape as a potential outcome in the future. This reproduces a degree of uncertainty and destabilisation in a continuous loop in society at the very fundamental levels of social relations and the everyday, which is the very threatening basis on which to argue for the recognition of rights by marginal groups all over again.

Image 6-2: "Despite the wounds they endure, Congolese women give a new breath to the nation" [34]

[34] The artist's quote

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